A Thesis

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To
the memory of
Gabriel Pradal Rodríguez
teacher, adviser and friend
The purpose of this study is to make a complete analysis of the new genre "esperpento" both as a theory, and as a literary form, through Luces de Bohemia, the first "esperpento" of Ramón del Valle-Inclán. After explaining the theory of "esperpentismo" in relation to the works and various comments of Valle-Inclán, and after outlining his theory of grotesqueness, we will see how these verbal modifications of the "esperpento" are in harmony with the final composition of Luces de Bohemia.
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I

Introduction: **Luces de Bohemia** and the development of "esperpento."

"Me ha venido la ventolera de hacer versos funambulescos. Un puriste diría grotescos." *(La Pipa de Kif)*

The term "esperpento" is first applied to literature in **Luces de Bohemia.**¹ "Esperpento" according to the dictionaries refers to an "ugly person or thing;" it also means "nonsense, absurdity." In its derivative literary sense it may refer to elements which are grotesque, and therefore distinct from the elements which are accepted as "normal" or as "classically symmetrical." This term is employed for the first time by Valle-Inclán in the twelfth scene of **Luces de Bohemia** in a conversation between Max Estrella and Don Latino de Hispalis.

MAX.-¡Don Latino de Hispalis, grotesco personaje, te immortalizaré en una novelal
DON LATINO.-Una tragedia, Max.
MAX.-La tragedia nuestra no es tragedia.
DON LATINO.-¡Pues algo será!
MAX.-El esperpento. *(Luces, pp. 938-939)*

The term refers to a peculiarly distorted vision of everyday reality. There were already hints of this vision in the works of Valle-Inclán before **Luces** and it is characteristic of all his narrative and theatrical works after 1920. However, it is

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¹ **Luces de Bohemia:** esperpento, was published in 1924. It appeared originally however in 1920, in serial form in the review España. Citations from Valle-Inclán in my text are from Obras Completas, 2 vols., Editorial Plenitud (Madrid, 1954). I will abbreviate **Luces** which is included in Volume I, and OC for other works.
in Luces that the literary meaning of "esperpento" is defined theoretically and exemplified formally for the first time.

Two striking elements stand out which differentiate Luces from the earlier works of Valle-Inclán. On the one hand, the aesthetic pattern which is set forth propagates a systematic distortion of form. On the other hand, this "esperpento" is set in contemporary times. This is the first time that Valle-Inclán deals specifically with the contemporary scene and this preoccupation becomes very important in all his "esperpentos."

As Fernández Almagro points out, "una España perfectamente localizada en el tiempo—la coetánea del libro—es la que Valle-Inclán contempla."² In this contemporary setting, human elements will be deliberately portrayed in such a way that they will often appear distorted. Elements of surrounding reality will be stripped to the bareness of disgust, bitter humor, terror and grotesqueness. Thus, the "esperpento" represents a definite change in the works of Valle-Inclán and is in many ways a negation of the Modernist ideals that dominated his early literary production. The contemporary scene and the deformed vision are also the dominant traits of almost all the major works which followed Luces. A brief survey of the literary production of Valle-Inclán in relation to Luces will clarify better its role in his literary development.

The early prose of Valle-Inclán is refined, sensational and rhythmic. This is best exemplified in the portrayal of four seasons of love in the life of the Don-juanesque Marqués de Bradamón. The Sonatas represent a conscious attempt to create beauty of style through musical and rhythmical patterns. The literary preoccupations of Valle-Inclán were principally aesthetic. It was during this time that "los preocupados" of the generation of '98 were claiming that the beauty of style did not matter a great deal if the work of art had nothing relevant to say. One of their preoccupations was precisely the attempt to channel artistic expression in such a way that it would correspond to actual reality, in their case, to the reality of the Spanish

3. The most important early production of Valle-Inclán consists principally of the following major works: Femeninas, 1895; the four Sonatas: Sonata de Otoño, 1902, Sonata de estilo, 1903, Sonata de primavera, 1904, Sonata de invierno, 1905; Flor de Santidad; Historia milenaria, 1904; Tres Comedias BA firmas: Águila de blasón, 1907, Romance de lobos, 1908, Cara de Plata, 1922 (most probably composed earlier); La Guerra Carlista, three novels: Los cruzados de la causa, 1908, El resplandor de la hoguera, 1909, Gerifaltes de antaño, 1909; also we could add another Carlist episode in this group: Una tertulia de antaño, 1908; Voces de Gesta: Tragedia pastoril, 1912.

4. The other important early work of Valle-Inclán is Jardín Umbrío (1903). It is a collection and a mixture of criminal, miracle, superstitious and mystery stories. They are typical of exotic folklore in Galicia exemplifying its superstitions and its fears "de una cosa que no se ve."

problems and to the need of taking a closer look at this reality. The literary production of Valle-Inclán at this time shows no such preoccupation. 6 The content, for example, is far from being contemporary. "En el Valle-Inclán de las Sonatas, el pasado manda." 7 In the past he is not looking for a historical meaning, but for legendary heroes, exotic scenery, erotic subjects and generally a decadent refinement, based on sensuality and on an archaic sense of beauty.

Ortega y Gasset was one of the first to bring this to the attention of the public. He complained that Valle-Inclán's musical and poetic words were not serious enough for an essential literary undertaking. "¡Cuánto me regocijaré el día en que abra un libro nuevo del Sr. Valle-Inclán sin tropezar con princesas rubias que hilan en ruecas de cristal, ni ladrones gloriosos, ni inútiles incestos! Cuando haya concluido la

6. If we consider for example the Sonata de Primavera we may perceive an atmosphere of idleness, of people doing nothing, of "not earning" things. We see a picture of the aristocratic, drone society that many people had been criticizing. This view, however, has no social or satirical implications. What this Sonata advocates, if anything, is a type of activity that is satanic, directed to the act of seduction. For Valle-Inclán, woman is usually attracted to the satanic and to the demonically sensual. Sin can be beautiful (as in Darío) and exotic. This preoccupation was irrelevant to the social and national problems of the time.

7. Fernández Almagro, Vida, p. 211.
The wish—and prediction—of Ortega became a reality in the later works of Valle-Inclán. His later prose, represented principally by the "esperpentos," deals with actual and historical conditions which are set in more familiar surroundings. The mansions and palaces that Bradoín frequented have been replaced by common streets, small suffocating apartments, carnivals, houses of prostitution, taverns, and railway depots. The rhapsodic qualities of "princesas rubias" have been replaced by the common, vulgar characteristics of everyday people who constantly struggle for life. The people that populate the "esperpentos," be they peddlers, prostitutes, 


9. The works of prose following Luces which are esperpentic: Los cuernos de don Friolera: Esperpento, 1921 (in serial form in La Pluma); Retablo de la avaricia, la lujuria y la muerte, 1927, which is a collection of five different works: La rosa de papel and La cabeza del Bautista (both Novelas macabras) 1924, Ligazón and Sacriage, 1927, and El embrujado, 1913 (original composition); Tirano Banderas: Novela de tierra caliente, 1926; El Ruedo Ibérico, two novels: La corte de los milagros, 1927, Viva mi dueño, 1928; Esperpento de las galas del difunto, 1926; Esperpento de la hija del capitán, 1930. (We could also include Divinas Palabras which was published in the same year as Luces, 1920.)
generals, ministers, blind poor poets, policemen, frustrated women, drunkards, or bohemians, have, further, submitted themselves to the deforming forces of modern daily life. The attitude of Valle has changed, and the vision of the "esperpentos" has become critical. Max Estrella, for example, refers to the existing conditions seen in Luces as part of "toda la vida miserable de España." (Luces, p. 939.)

Such a statement is more polemic, full of social consciousness, perhaps even more human than the substance of the early Sonatas. A writer who had been socially unpreoccupied becomes in the end a bitter, satiric interpreter of life in his literary versions of Spanish reality. The dissatisfaction and sadness with Spain appears from here on with as much vigor in his works as in the works of the members of the generation of '98. His "esperpentos" mark a farewell to the delights of that colorful, pleasure-seeking Bradomín and his princesses, so severely condemned by

10. Contrast the change of attitude from 1904 to 1926. In Sonata de Estío (1904) we read: "Por aquellos días de peregrinación sentimental era yo joven y algo poeta... Decidido a correr tierras al principio dudé sin saber dirigir mis pasos. Después, dejándome llevar de un impulso romántico, fui a México..." (OC, I, p. 61). In Las Galas del difunto, Esperpento (1926) a veteran returns from Cuba and while he bargains with a prostitute he reveals an attitude which is the opposite of this "impulso romántico." "Allí solamente se busca el gasto de municiones. Es una cochina vergüenza, aquella guerra. El soldado, si supiese su obligación y no fuese un paria, debería tirar sobre sus jefes." (OC II, p. 965.)

Ortega y Gasset. "En el Valle-Inclán de los "esperpentos," domina imperiosamente la preocupación de un presente con salida a un futuro que lo remueve todo, y como el autor no es optimista, se desespera y hace de la sátira un duro instrumento de angustiosas revisiones.¹² Valle-Inclán had crossed the dividing line; behind him lay the Sonatas, ahead of him the elements that later constituted the "esperpentos." "Aunque Valle-Inclán se inició en las letras con preocupaciones casi puramente estéticas, coincidió luego con las de los hombres del 98."¹³

This, however, was not a sudden change. Although Luces is the first work of Valle-Inclán to show a historical conscience of the contemporary scene, there are many elements of form and content in Luces and in the other "esperpentos" that were previously foreshadowed at some point of his literary development.¹⁴ In the "esperpentos," however, everything is further projected to different conditions and perspectives. In this

¹². Fernández Almagro, Vida, p. 211.

¹³. Emma Speratti Piñero, La elaboración artística en "Tirano Banderas" (Mexico, 1957), p. 9. This becomes explicit in Luces. The first statement by Max Estrella in defining the "esperpento" is, "Los ultraístas son unos farsantes." (Luces, p. 939.) Valle-Inclán rejects movements that are preoccupied principally with capturing the pure elements of poetry such as images and metaphors. His "esperpentos" will be works of art but will have national and social consequences.

¹⁴. This evolution of certain elements pertaining to the "esperpento" before Luces, has been considered fairly extensively by at least four critics: Salinas, Esperpento, Fernández Almagro, Vida, Speratti Piñero, TB (pp. 86-94), and J. L. Brooks, "Valle-Inclán and the Esperpento," BHS, XXXIII (1956), 152-164.
respect it is the key work in Valle-Inclán's literary production.

For example, the first use of a general historical approach appears in the novels of *La Guerra Carlista*. Valle-Inclán remains conscious of history and in *El Ruedo Ibérico* it forms the substance of his novels. While the Carlist Wars are seen as a national and popular epic, the events of *El Ruedo* are seen as "un trasunto esesperpéntico del siglo XIX." The emphasis upon history is far greater than it was in the *Guerra Carlista*. The deformed vision of *El Ruedo Ibérico* is seen only in terms of historic meaning. Yet, this complete transition from history as a mere background to history as the main problem in

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15. It is as early as 1908 that Valle-Inclán joins, in many ways, the generation of 1908. He rejects the external historicity of Galdós' *Episodios nacionales*: "No le interesa la Historia externa que importaba a Galdós; pero tampoco busca una determinada aventura, ni un determinado personaje extraído del suceso histórico." (G. Gómez de la Serna, "Las dos Españas de D. Ramón María del Valle-Inclán," Clavel, No. 17 (1952, 19).) He clearly seeks to apprehend the "intrahistoric" aspect of life expounded by Unamuno in *En torno al casticismo* and *Paz en la Guerra*. Even the impressionistic technique that he employs is very appropriate, resulting in very short adventures, often incomplete. The emphasis is on episodes and therefore the personages (historical or not) are also incomplete from the novelistic or from the historical point of view. It is an attempt to "escenificar la historia." This technique gives a picture not of what exactly happened but the everyday, everlasting reactions, habits, etc., of the people that kept living despite the war.


17. This vision begins with the title itself: The Iberic Peninsula will be seen as a ring, an arena, a place of constant struggle and cruel spectacle. This attitude persisted even in Valle-Inclán's last attempts before he died. Emma Susana Speratti concludes in "Las últimas novelas de Valle-Inclán," Cuadernos Americanos, LXXVIII (1954), that "la energía
which human deformities are best exhibited is seen clearly for the first time in *Luces de Bohemia*.\(^\text{18}\)

The esperpentic vision which underlies the deformed, caricaturesque and satiric aspect of *Luces* and the works that followed can be seen also in the earlier *Comädias Bárbaras* and the later *Farsas*.\(^\text{19}\) For example, the world of *La cabeza del dragón* is that of fairy tales. However, in this ballet-like atmosphere we see strong roots of satiric elements, as for example in the mocking references to monarchs: "Al perder en regalías, perdieron en potencia estomacal. Los Reyes constitucionales sólo pueden ser vegetarianos." (p. 415.)

The satiric theatricality of *La Cabeza del dragón* is further intensified in *Farsa y licencia de la Reina Castiza*. Formally, there is a definite deformation of language and of character description so that the personages become caricatures and puppets. Thematically, the satiric elements are accentuated because we see them in a concrete historical context. This

estilística de Valle no había decrecido, sino que se había intensificado, llevando la esperpentización a extremos que muchas veces resultan crueles." (p.266.)

\(^{18}\) In many ways, the historical perspective related to the "esperpento" reaches even a higher artistic perfection in his later works, especially *Tirano Banderas* and *El Ruedo Ibérico*. See Sperratti Piñero TB, and Gómez de la Serna Dos Españas.

\(^{19}\) La Marquesa Rosalinda: *Farsa sentimental y grotesca*, 1913; *La cabeza del dragón: Farsa*, 1914; *Farsa de la enamorada del rey*, 1920; *Farsa y licencia de la Reina Castiza*, 1920.
"farsa" deals with historical figures such as Isabel II and her "Rey Consorte." In many ways the "farsas" are the first fruit of Valle-Inclán's esperpentic art, the result of a deformed technique which later turned to vehemence. In them we can detect a radical change in style; it is dominated by short, schematic sentences. The acotaciones are also shorter and full of caricaturesque elements. The vocabulary has also changed; words are more popular, more agitating, sowing clots of deformities in their path.

This tendency toward a disfiguring pattern in terms of a theatrical perspective undergoes a different development in Luces de Bohemia and in Divinas Palabras. The puppets and marionettes of the "farsas" acquire more human characteristics and follow two directions: one, the marionettes become the horrible, grotesque "fantoches" of El Puesto Ibérico and Tirano Banderas; while Isabel II is seen as "tan guapa y repolluda" and her king speaks with "adamada voz de eunuco" (OC I, p. 445), General Banderas is seen at his window as "un garabato de un lechuzo." (OC II p. 677.) On the other hand, the funny puppet

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20. The "farsas," of course, belong to a genre which is the antithesis of the "serious" and they are not easily put to such uses. Valle-Inclán's "farsas" are so consistently burlesque in tone, characterization, and plot that we cannot root out the serious content found in the "esperpentos" that followed. As Fernández Almagro has pointed out, "...aparecen, para dar fondo a figuras y pasos de pantomina, la intención de sátira política y la interpretación caricatural de la Historia que van a definir específicamente el "esperponto." (Vida, p. 203.)
of the "farsas" becomes the comic but painfully tragic caricature of the deceived tragic hero in the esperpentic farce of Los Cuernos de don Friolera. "Don Friolera, en el reflejo amarillo del quinqué, es un fantoche trágico." (OC I, p. 1006.) Friolera has the pain of an Othello, but not his tragic greatness because he has had to submit to an absurd and ridiculous scheme of life, such as the one that is depicted and presented in Luces de Bohemia.

Luces de Bohemia belongs neither to the group of "farsas" nor to the novelistic group. Historically it deals with a contemporary theme. The characters are everyday people, and the language resembles the slang spoken in the streets. The "esperpento," however, was derived from both the "farsas" and the historical novels. Before he destroyed, in El Ruedo Ibérico, the image of Spanish history, Valle-Inclán had to destroy the norms of seeing reality in Luces; and before he could present a deformed vision dramatically he needed the theatrical technique of caricature and puppet shows as seen in the "farsas."

All the elements that go to make an "esperpento" are united and defined in Luces de Bohemia. It is the central literary work of Valle-Inclán because it unites the themes, attitudes, techniques, and style that give the esperpentic vision which will dominate the rest of his literary production. It represents the completion of a new form, by Valle-Inclán. We are given to understand this by its very purposeful title: Luces de Bohemia: Esperpento sacado a luz por don Ramón María del Valle-Inclán. An analysis
and interpretation of it will give us a better understanding of the form, "esperpento," both as a literary theory and as a literary genre.

II

THEORY OF THE ESPERPENTO

"La fantasía, abandonada de la razón, produce monstruos, y unida con ella es madre de las artes." (Goya, Capricho no. 43.)

The attitude towards grotesqueness, clearly visible in all of Valle-Inclán's "esperpentos," is made more explicit in Luces de Bohemia, Los cuernos de Don Friolera and in various commentaries. In the aforementioned conversation with Don Latino in which he defines the "esperpento," Max Estrella employs two terms: "esperpentismo," which refers to an aesthetic attitude, and "esperpento" which refers to a literary genre. His explanations of "esperpentismo" are related very closely to the form and content of Luces. They are an attempt to explain in theoretical terms the attitude behind a new genre. The meaning of the "esperpento" is thus more clearly rendered.

Max begins by stating that the esperpentic way of looking at things is not new: "El esperpentismo lo ha inventado Goya." (Luces, p. 939.) That is, "esperpentismo" is associated with the same vision of life that filters through many of Goya's paintings and etchings, especially in his Caprichos. The
dominant feature of the Caprichos is a frightening and exaggerated presentation of human nature as seen in its ugliest and most repugnant form. The basic theme—implied even in the title—is that intangible power which can capriciously drive men to adopt fantastic attitudes and carry out grotesque actions. Goya himself explained the scope of his work: "He (Goya) has chosen as subjects adequate for his work, from the multitude of follies and blunders common in every civil society, as well as from the vulgar prejudices and lies authorized by custom, ignorance or interest, those that he has thought most suitable matter for ridicule..."21 The attitude of Goya implies, that, when the imagination of the artist probes the tragic evils which tend to distort mankind, there has to be an inevitable stress upon the ugly and absurd aspect of human appearance and experience.

The emphasis on the disfigured human appearance and experience which abounds in the Caprichos is essential to the aesthetic attitude of the "esperpento." Max points out that, "Los héroes clásicos han ido a pasearse en el callejón del Gato." (Luces, p. 939.) Thus Valle-Inclán gives a different interpretation of the fictional "classical hero."

In a narrow and dirty street near the center of Madrid, there were, on the outside wall of a hardware store, two mirrors—one concave, the other convex—which reflected objects and passers-by as distorted and ridiculous. Pedro Salinas explains that one of the mirrors used to stretch out the figures of onlookers making them thin, while the other would widen them: "Se nos apareciese nuestra personilla, delicadamente esbelta, o engrosada a lo monstruoso, anticipando así nuestros sinos de gordos o flacos, y ofreciéndonos un futuro somático que asustaba y daba risa, a la par." When Valle refers to the concave mirrors, he is mindful that literary heroes would also acquire a distorted shape if caught and reflected in them. "Los héroes clásicos reflejados en los espejos concavos dan el esperpento" (Luces, p. 939.) It is possible for the heroes of a modern writer to be distorted by man-made conventions so that they will resemble the twisted reflections of the everyday people who pass by the callejón del Gato. Therefore, the distorted creations of Valle-Inclán will symbolize real, everyday people; and the distorted interactions

22. Salinas, Esperpento, p. 95.

23. Valle-Inclán had always been obsessed with mirrors and their appearance is common in various works. In 1913, for example, the obsession to look in a mirror was rendered by Arlequín in La Marquesa Rosalinda: "¡Soñar, Colombina! ¿Quién pudo llegar al fondo de un espejo?" (OC I, p. 274.) However, in Luces as Emma Speratti has pointed out, "La novedad no está en la aparición de los espejos sino en su poder deformante." (TE, p. 86.)
of these creations, which give the "esperpento," will be no more than a symbolic representation of what is conceived to be an absurd contemporary scene.

As a concave mirror catches, distorts and reflects a given reality in a ridiculous form so Valle-Inclán takes and reveals in a grotesque framework an imaginative elaboration of reality. Max says: "Mi estética actual es transformar con matemática de espejo cóncavo las normas clásicas." (Luces, p. 939.) That is, Valle-Inclán will transpose the "classical" norms and will change the perspective of looking at the surrounding reality. He will portray certain realities by borrowing the "mathematics"—that is, the essential technique—of a concave mirror. Valle-Inclán is interested precisely in this aspect of the world and in his "esperpento" he will parallel the distorted and absurd vision of the mirror. The result is that; "Las imágenes más bellas en un espejo cóncavo son absurdas." (Luces, p. 939.) Thus, the reflection of the concave mirror is symbolic of the formal literary expression found in an "esperpento" like Luces de Bohemia.

Valle-Inclán himself is of course, the literary concave mirror who will reflect the grotesque and absurd aspects of contemporary reality. This contemporary reality is often none other than the concrete reality of the nation. The content of an "esperpento" will reflect the actual social and moral decadence of Spain because as Max says: "España
es una deformación grotesca de la civilización europea."

(Luces, p. 939.) The premise of "esperpentismo" is that grotesqueness is a part of a concrete surrounding reality, and that the "esperpento" is a deformed—and deforming—image of this reality, emphasizing its profound grotesqueness. By using his imagination, the artist may create monstrous or grotesque figures, but these creations will be symbols of a real and terrible circumstance. This reality may be national, communal, or individual, but it will be consequent to contemporary times. The essence of "esperpentismo" is best seen in this intimate relation between the artist's fantasy, the creator of grotesque and absurd subjects, and a surrounding reality which provides the models that a simple concave mirror will show as deformities. Reality will thus be imagined and created artistically, but, as we shall see, it will be examined from the objective point of view of an outsider, a superior being or a mathematician; in Goya's terms, a rational artist.

The reference to Goya on one hand and the desire to use a mathematical form on the other are the two significant clues to the form of "esperpentismo." Valle-Inclán refers to the misery and pain of suffering humanity and to the absurdity and senselessness of the human tragedy concentrated in Goya's etchings. These attitudes are perhaps crystallized in the single word, "¿Por qué?", used as a title for an etching
showing an unfortunate victim with a rope around his neck.

This cry of "Why?" will echo again in the "esperpentos" because Valle-Inclán will often depict precisely the senseless brutality and indifference often found in man, and he will recreate them, like Goya with perfect mathematical proportions, because as Max says, echoing Goya: "La deformación deja de serlo cuando está sujeta a una matemática perfecta." (Luces, p. 939.) The implication of this statement is two-fold: One, if deformation has been viewed in the objective accurate manner of mathematics, then it will not be merely a deformity but a work of art, that is, a reality. Two, if this deformation has been generated through an art form—like numbers through a mathematical formula—it will possess order and harmony and thus it could be, aesthetically speaking, beautiful. 24 Thus, for "esperpentismo," a vision—despite its grotesqueness—must have a beautiful form, it it is to be art, and an

24. It is evident that Valle is aware of both the Classic and Romantic traditions. In the Romantic vein he seeks for content the deformed and grotesque elements, that is, he prefers extreme aspects of reality. His esperpentos represent however, a conscious attempt to give harmony to the grotesque elements, that is, their form is classic in its arrangement. Valle is utilizing both traditions and puts them to his own use. Within the apparent chaos of grotesque reality he seeks order, law and design of presentation. Edgar Allan Poe has made an appropriate statement relating to this problem: "Thus, the range of Imagination is unlimited. Its materials extend throughout the universe. Even out of deformities it fabricates that Beauty which is at once its sole object and its inevitable test." (Selected Prose and Poetry (New York, 1950), p. 387.) The final pattern of an esperpento must therefore reconcile a grotesque truth (Romantic) with beauty (Classic).
objective basis, if it is to be accurate in terms of reality.  

The idea of creating distortions with the rationalism and objectivity of mathematics so that they correspond to an actual and true reality is developed further in Los cuernos de don Friolera which follows Luces chronologically. In the prologue, a heretical cleric named Don Estrafalario observes a painting in which the devil is laughing at mankind. He takes the occasion to make a few generalizations on the artistic reflection of life. He claims that: "Reservamos nuestras burlas para aquello que nos es semejante." (OC I, p. 992.) We do this because both tears and laughter are the result of contemplating those elements which are like ourselves. He adds: "Mi estética es una superación del dolor y de la risa... Yo quisiera ver este mundo con la perspectiva de la otra ribera." (OC I, p. 993.) That is to say, in order to be able to see things in an accurate manner one must look at them without being too involved with mankind. As J. L. Brooks has commented: "There can be no  

25. Up to now, Valle's reference to mathematics has been considered by critics only in terms of the inner formal harmonies of his "esperpentos." The following is typical: "Si el lector se ha mirado alguna vez en un espejo cóncavo, habrá visto deformarse su realidad, y no sólo una parte de ella, sino todo el conjunto—ahí está la matemática que sostiene la interna armonía de la imagen deformada. Esa imagen deformada es el esperpento," César Barja, Libros y autores contemporáneos (Madrid, 1936), p. 411. The inner harmony of a deformed image is only one aspect of "esperpentismo." It is in the relationship of this harmony of deformities to external, surrounding realities that the allusion to mathematics plays a big role.
question of laughter and tears but simply a dispassionate commentary on human foibles."\textsuperscript{26} Valle-Inclán is striving toward an aesthetic attitude that has the objectivity of mathematics, so that he can consider things over and above human evaluation.\textsuperscript{27}

The problem of "esperpentismo," both in \textit{Luces} and in \textit{Friolera}, is to represent both artistically and objectively certain tragic moments of life. To be objective means to see things as entities, as facts.\textsuperscript{28} Many of these facts happen to be absurd. Thus, the artist, through his creative imagination, can symbolize the grotesque aspect of reality by reassembling their essential qualities in a well-developed artistic form.

Valle-Inclán rejects as objectively insufficient many of the past literary forms that have dealt with human tragedy.

\textsuperscript{26} J. L. Brooks, "Valle-Inclán and the Esperpento," \textit{EHV}, XXXII (1956), 158.

\textsuperscript{27} Since it is impossible to observe life without being personally involved at all, that is, since one cannot suppress subjectivity completely, Valle-Inclán falls short in his efforts to be completely objective. In the next few pages we shall see how he regards objectivity and human emotions such as pity and sympathy.

\textsuperscript{28} Even in Goya's later \textit{Desastres}, his intense patriotism did not blind him altogether to the fact that there were brutalities on both sides. In the struggle between French and Spanish, he often purposely sets all love of country aside. He sees neither Frenchman nor Spaniard, only man in all his wretched perversity, man who is but one degree higher than the beast but who carries the beast within him. Goya too, looks from "la otra ribera" and sees the beast in men.
For example, Don Estrafalario points out that the attitude of
the artist who wants to reflect the modern tragic sense of life
cannot be that of the Spanish theatre because "La crueldad
española, tiene toda la bárbara liturgia de los Autos de Fe.
Es fría y antipática." (OC I, p. 996.) The Spanish theatre
portrays cruelty with a cold dogma and is therefore "una furia
eescolástica." It does not possess the magnificent cruelty of
Shakespeare which is not dogmatic but blind and violent, "con
la grandeza de las fuerzas naturales." But even Shakespeare is
rejected because he is overly involved with his own characters:
"Shakespeare rima con el latido de su corazón, el corazón de
Otelo. Se desdobla en los celos del Moro. Creador y criatura
son del mismo barro humano." (OC I p. 996.)

This is why Max Estrella said, before introducing the
"esperpento," "la tragedie nuestra no es tragedia," (Luces,
p. 939). Valle-Inclán means that the tragedian almost always
offers us a personal insight, for he is not completely object-
ive. He tries to make his fictional personages seem real to
us and capable of affecting us as intensely as human beings
affect us. He accomplishes this by identifying himself with
his creatures, by living their lives for them, and by seeing
both their sufferings and absurdities as they would see them.
If he succeeds in this, he enables us in turn, as readers, to
identify ourselves sympathetically with his fictional person-
ages and see that they are, perhaps, pathetic, but not absurd.
Our insight depends upon the artist's insight and not on truth as it might be. Therefore, such a portrayal of "nuestra tragedia" would be unreal. In his analogy of the mathematics of a concave mirror which distorts people, unlike the tragedian, Valle-Inclán intends to avoid any personal identification. In his "esperpentismo" he prefers the attitude of a puppeteer because the latter remains aloof and objective, because: "...ni un sólo momento deja de considerarse superior por naturaleza a los muñecos de su tabanque." (Don Friolera, OC. I., p. 997.) Unlike the dogmatist or the tragedian, the puppeteer does not stoop to the level of his characters; he has no motive in setting the wheels of tragedy in motion. In other words, the "esperpento," like a puppet show, must reflect the tragic and the ugly, the absurd and the grotesque in a calm, dispassionate manner so that the essence of human and social reality is presented objectively, and not in a dogmatic or tragic manner. 29

29. Valle-Inclán would also reject strict social dramas because they are not art. Their reliance on events and propaganda hamper creation. His ideas coincide again with those of Goya: "Painting (like poetry) chooses from the universal what it considers suitable to its own ends; it reunites in a single fantastic personage circumstances and characteristics that nature has divided among many. From such a combination, ingeniously arranged, results the kind of successful imitation for which a good artificer deserves the title of inventor and not that of servile copyist." (Goya's Caprichos, Op. cit. p. 79; from the 1797 caption of a drawing. Reproduced in Diario de Madrid, Feb. 6, 1799, pp. 185-186.) It is for this reason that Valle refers to a puppeteer as a true "demiurgo." He can reassemble scattered elements to create a composite truth (as a mathematician arranges scattered numbers and gives them order in a formula). With the attitude of a puppeteer the artist can imitate essential reality without being servile
Esperpontismo begins by considering modern tragic situations. Being detached, it perceives that grotesquenesses and absurdities are essential and real within these human tragedies. Something is usually "grotesque" if in the face of a tragedy, there is a lack of concern, sympathy, pity or other such emotions which make a human being sympathetic with another. If such sentiments are lacking and tragedy still remains, the elimination of pathos makes the tragic element appear brutal. The result is almost always a grotesque vision, essentially a true vision, since it is not softened by pity and association. The modern objective approach propounds a scientific necessity in viewing cruel realities, and a repression of human values which have their source in illusion and which often blur these realities. The "esperponto" strives for objectivity because pity and sympathy often mellow and deform an essentially grotesque view, elevating it thus to an artificial (and subjective) level. When a grotesque reality is seen in terms of human value, it does not appear as it is, because it has been evaluated. If a terrible situation is seen dispassionately, by necessity, it will not be merely grotesque but also real, as it is in life, for it does not acquire new connotations. Thus, if a

either to the subjectivity of his feelings and dogmas nor to the static quality of a photographer, or a "realistic imitator."
distorted view has come about by a vision analogous to the method of mathematics, which is not involved in emotional considerations, the importance of the distorted view lies in its truth, in its reality. The tragedy lies in the realization that a deformed image, unfortunately, is not only an image but also a concrete reality.

This is why "esperpentismo" must "superar el dolor y la risa." The "esperpentismo" is more grotesque than tragedy and more absurd than comedy because of its reliance on objectivity, and its lack of personalization or idealization of the human drama. Reality with its tragic and comic consequences must be viewed from the outside, by a superior being, by a concave mirror, or by a puppeteer. Valle-Inclán baptizes the result as an "esperpento":

Y hay otra tercer manera, que es mirar al mundo desde un plano superior, y considerar a los personajes de la trama como seres inferiores al autor, con un punto de ironía. Los dioses se convierten en personajes de sainete... Esta es una manera muy española, manera de demiurgo, que no se cree en modo alguno hecho del mismo barro que sus muñecos. Quevedo tiene esta manera... Esta manera es ya definitiva en Goya. Y esta consideración es la que me movió a dar un cambio en mi literatura y a escribir los "esperpentos," el género literario que yo bautizo con el nombre de "Esperpentos." 31

Valle-Inclán, like Goya with the words Capricho and Disparate,

30. Philosophically, "reality" is a sum total of many things, of many truths, both emotional and "mathematic." For example, in the reality of the Spanish problem there exist many realities, often contradictory. Valle-Inclán is concentrating upon one reality, grotesqueness.

employed a new term for his art because it reflects a new attitude and form in regarding the tragic realities of life. In the Caprichos, man is portrayed as unable to rise above the animal; thus, he often achieves a form of society which is governed by a lack of reason and conscience, equal to the irrational impulses which is usually characteristic of savage and uncivilized life. In the "esperpentos," it is seen that man is unable to rise above his own state of caricature or puppet, thus, disgracing his rational role in life.

Arturo Berenguer Carisomo has observed, that "el rasgo caricatural es ahora quien condensa una posibilidad de realismo; lo difforme, lo absurdo, lo extremado e incongruente son las formas normales de expresión en las que yace, indecisa y cáustica, la línea entreviable de lo verdadero." The mirror is concave because reality itself is concave and not symmetrical; it is more "esperpentic" than tragic. The basis of Valle's new genre will be the relationship between an already grotesque reality and a systematically deformed expression of art which reflects it. The vision of the "esperpento" attempts to sharpen our sensibility to realities determined historically, socially, politically and ideologically, and it also enables us to grasp the grotesque and absurd scheme of things in life, specifically, the life of Spain.

THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE ESPERPENTO: LUCES DE BOHEMIA

The "esperpento" belongs primarily to the sphere of action rather than to the sphere of thought. It is to be enacted, not to be discussed, affirmed, or refuted as a theory. An analysis of an "esperpento" can be established only by showing that there is an intrinsic relation between the essence of the esperpento's vision ("esperpentismo"), as it is conceived in theory, and the dramatic modes of the representation of this vision. The relation between the ridiculous actuality of human life and that life which is seen in the concave mirrors of Valle-Inclán's "esperpento" is underscored in those scenes in Luces de Bohemia where people appear abandoning themselves to grotesque and absurd practices. In Luces there is a union of an artistic technique which renders things grotesque and an immediate vision of grotesque reality. As a work of art, Luces is the achievement of "esperpento."

1

THEATRICALITY

Emma Speratti has observed that: "El elemento esperpentizante más característico de la novela es la teatralidad." Luces is written as a dramatic play with dialogue and "stage directions." It is full of theatrical references like "parodia grotesca," "crítico de teatro," "pantomima..., apartes y gritos," "buen

33. TE, p. 99.
melodrama," "gesto de actor," "la gran escena." The "esperpento" is however more complex than a play; it is written as a "drama," which is nevertheless not supposed to be produced in the theatre. Most dramas are designed primarily for the stage and for public exhibition. The "esperpento", while utilizing the "dramatic medium" is designed principally for the printed page, like a novel. Its dramatic form is more literary than theatrical. The "esperpento" is a novel in dialogue.  

A novel offers a full account of all pertinent action, speech and thought, but also a constant explanation and analysis which clarifies their significance. It is complete in itself whereas a play is often not a finished product; it needs the complement of a stage or at least an imagination of it. Of the total theatrical experience, the printed text—the script—of a play preserves only a meager vestige. The "esperpentos" of Valle-Inclán, beginning with Luces and Divinas Palabras, take advantage of the theatre's resources but become self-contained, complete, because they literarize the theatrical scene. Everything essential for the comprehension of the grotesque aspect of Spanish reality is contained in the printed text of an "esperpento." Thus the "esperpento" remains a novel which utilizes every conceivable stage technique and creates what we

34. Among other literary works that have similarities with the form of the "esperpento" are La Celestina, Lope de Vega's La Dorotea, Perez Galdós' Realidad, Casandra, El Abuelo, La razón de la sinrazón, and Pío Baroja's Paradox, Rey, and Unamuno's Dos Madres.
might call a "teatro de lectura."\(^{35}\)

If compared to a play, the "esperpento" is not a script to be adopted for theatrical production; it is the production itself. Valle-Inclán is the writer, director and producer of his show. Like "el compadre Fidel" of Don Friolera and his "tabanque de muñecos," he becomes a complete "demiurgo." Everything that goes into a theatrical production to create a dramatic spectacle is indicated in Luces; the gestures of actors ("el gesto abatido y resignado"), their poses ("actor... en la gran escena del reconocimiento"), their movements ("se tambalean"), their bodily exaggerations ("se fue rebotada, torciendo la gaita"), are all indicated in detail along with sound effects ("trote"), tone of speech ("destaca su esfuerzo por distinguir de esos y cedas"), colors, motions, etc. The result is a spectacle that has the wide scope of cinematography.

Acotaciones and Dialogue

Luces is divided in fifteen scenes. Every scene begins

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35. It is significant that Max Estrella, begins his discourse of the "esperpento" by referring to it as a novel: "¡Don Latino de Hispalis, grotesco personaje, te inmortalizaré en una novela!" (p. 938). The later "esperpentos", Tirano Banderas and El ruedo ibérico are written as novels but have essentially the same form as Luces. All the esperpentos are made of "dialogue" and "acotaciones" and spring from the same conception of form, the literarization of the scene in order to create a visual spectacle. In some, the dialogue predominates (Luces, Las galas del difunto, Don Friolera, etc). In Tirano and El ruedo the literary "acotaciones" are more abundant. The difference is one of proportion not one of form.
with a "stage direction" like most plays and during the dramatic dialogue there are also short descriptive notes. In these "acotaciones" Valle-Inclán expands the scope of the theatrical stage to that of a movie camera:

Noche. MÁXIMO ESTRELLA Y DON LATINO DE HISPALIS se temblaban asidos del brazo, por una calle enarenada y solitaria. Faroles rotos, cerradas todas, ventanas y puertas. En la llama de los faroles un igual temblor verde y macilento. La luna sobre el alero de las casas, partiendo la calle por medio. De tarde en tarde, el asfalto sonoro. Un trofe épico. Soldados romanos. Sombra de Guardias.—Se extingue el eco de la patrulla. La Puñolería Modernista entreabre su puerta, y una banda de luz parte la acera. MAX Y DON LATINO, borrachos lunáticos, filósofos peripatéticos, etc. (pp. 905-906).

The "acotación" is usually full of suggestions concerning not only scenery and actors but lighting, sound effects, color, movement, and even characterization, ("filósofos peripatéticos"). It engenders a spectacle of reality that is independent and self-sufficient, as in the novel or the cinema.36

Thus the "acotación" of the "esperpento" unlike in a play is not marginal but as dramatic and as dynamic as the dialogue.

"El drama está lo mismo en el diálogo que en las acotaciones. Contribuye de igual forma al desarrollo de la acción y del

36. Valle-Inclán began utilizing this technique early in his Comedias Bárbaras. The "acotaciones" are what Pedro Salinas has called "fondos plásticos y espirituales de las acciones y los diálogos." (Esperpento, p. 93. See sections "Efectismo y Barberie," and "La prosa de 'acotación escénica'" pp. 91-94.)
We constantly get the impression of sweeping movements, characteristic of cinematography. "La patrulla desemboca por una calle traviesa" (p. 909). Many such examples give the impression of things coming out suddenly at the reader, or at the camera. Other such cinematographic impressions: "Una ráfaga de emoción" (p. 904); "Tumulto de coches y galopar de caballos" (p. 916); "El grupo se mueve en confusa y medrosa alerta." (p. 937).

The "acotaciones" are made of short, simple sentences. They are direct and above all lucid. A series of them creates rhythmic modulations and often move like the sharp, staccato speed of a machine gun. Notice the succession: "...salen empujándose, revueltos con otros parroquianos. Corren por la calle tropezos de obreros. Resuena el golpe de muchos cierres metálicos!" (p. 905). The word "corren" increases the tempo set down by "salen" and the simultaneous echo of many iron curtains renders the scene visual, auditory and cinematographic. Since a deformity of characters and action is intermingled in this vision, the panoramic view of the "acotaciones" is ideal for the projection of Spanish reality because it gives it the proportion of a grotesque spectacle as we shall see.

The most important factor of all the "esperpentos" is

dialogue: "Hombre de teatro Valle, su habla, su idioma dialectal, o dialecto idiomático, era teatral. No lírico ni épico, sino dramático y a trechos, tragicómico." Dialogue advances the action directly through people in their everyday environment. As the characters speak, they implicitly explain what they are, and in doing this they often reveal many distorted characteristics. That is, the character often develops and deforms himself alone. Thus Valle-Inclán makes clear the circumstances which give rise to grotesqueness principally through the use of dialogue.39

Since deformities are revealed through dialogue, the author is not needed to explain or comment, he can be detached. The characters, by talking, bring about their own distortion. No further interpretation is necessary. Valle-Inclán in the theatricality of his "esperpentos" employs thus the most objective medium of the arts. Theatricality is essential because it creates a spectacle of grotesqueness in an objective manner.

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39. There are never extended speeches of explanation or recapitulation as in many dramas. Dialogue becomes auxiliary to the spectacle, usually growing directly out of the immediate action; Acotación: Faroles rotos, cerradas todas, ventanas y puertas; Dialogue: MAX.-Yo estoy pisando vidrios rotos. And later: "También aquí se ríen cristales rotos" (p. 936). Or, Dialogue: EL MINISTRO.-¡Adiós! ¡Adiós! Créeme que no olvidaré este momento." Acotación: Su Excelencia, tripudo, repintado, mantecoso, responde con un arranque de cómico viejo, en el buen melodrama francés" (p. 926). Dialogue bears out the "acotación" and vice-versa.
DEFORMITY OF CHARACTER

Caricature

"¡Yo la tragedia
la veo en cartón!.."
(La pípa de Kif).

Our first impression of distortion comes from the fictional characters. They are carried to some extreme state of appearance and behavior through a transposition of their constituent characteristics; thus, they resemble caricatures. The very mirrors which appear here and there in Luces, and which might reflect them, are not perfectly normal. For example, we read that Max and Don Latino enter: "Un café que prolongan empañados espejos... Los espejos multiplicadores están llenos de un interés folletinesco. En un fondo, con una geometría absurda, estravaga el Café" (p. 928). As a result, the characters that populate Luces, like the people who walk by el callejón del Gato, usually appear like human caricatures. At times they appear like puppets: "Dorio de Gadex, Clarinito y Pérez, arrimados a la

40. This process of distorting appearances had begun earlier. Especially in the "farsas," Valle-Inclán already began to depict the traits which break down the idea of man. This was in line with Valle-Inclán's changing attitude to the state of exasperation. As Emma Speratti has mentioned, "Desde las Sonatas el humor de Valle-Inclán se ha ido oscureciendo y se ha convertido poco en desencanto, angustia, desesperanza, acritud. Con el humor han cambiado también los modelos pictóricos que influyen sobre su expresión delicadamente visual" (TE, p. 88).
pared, son tres fúnebres fentoches en hilera" (p. 949). Other times the distortion is more specific: "ENRIQUETA LA PISA-BIEN, una mozuela golfa, revonida de un ojo..." (p. 901); "Un golfo largo y astreo..., la cara en una gran risa de viruelas" (p. 903). Often, people gesticulate from a physical form which betrays a pose of caricaturesque distortions: "DON LATINO guña el ojo, tuerce la jeta, y desmaya los brazos como un pelele" (p. 956). Sometimes, characters acquire jerky and puppet-like movements of a caricaturesque pantomime: "DON FILIBERTO toma la trompetilla y comienza una pantomima de cabeceos, apartas y gritos" (p. 921).

Valle-Inclán follows certain principles in his deforming technique of humans. First, he performs an external disfigurement. A "vieja pintada" who picks up Don Latino in a park, looks sordid: "...bajo la máscara de albayalde, descubre las encías sin dientes, y tienta capciosa a Don Latino" (p. 933). The contrast of her ugly external features and her attempts to tempt Don Latino, himself seen with his asthmatic cough "del tabaco y del aguardiente," underlie even more her caricaturesque appearance. Second, each caricature that Valle-Inclán draws is an unmistakable type; a poet, a bookdealer, a tavern-keeper, a street-walker, a police officer. Each characterization is changed from its model in that the striking elements that constitute his being are exaggerated. For example,

41. Many of Valle's fictional characters are additionally
Max Estrella is often distinguished from a past tragic personality in that his actions are hyperbolic, macabre and often ridiculous. Descriptively, his head looks especially ruffled and blind, his body curled up, his white hair scatter on his chest. In short, the elements that might make him a tragic figure are carried to extremes of portrayal and Max becomes also a caricature. Third, Valle-Inclán integrates the grotesque effects of the individuals to those of the atmosphere and the situation. For example, after Max and Don Latino have been seen in their deformities, they enter a cafe which is described in its "geometría absurda."

"Las sombras y la música flotan en el vaho de humo, y en el lívido temblor de los arcos voltaicos... El compás canalla de la música, las luces en el fondo de los espejos, el vaho de humo penetrado del temblor de los arcos voltaicos cifran su diversidad en una sola expresión" (p. 928).

The elements fuse in their diversity giving a strange, vivid aspect of environment. Max and Don Latino become one with based on historical personalities, and although they are subjected to caricature they maintain a number of their original characteristics. Besides Rubén Darío, there is good reason to believe that Max Estrella himself and some secondary characters like Don Peregrino Gay were perhaps drawn from historical figures. Don Gay's historical model was perhaps Ciro Bayo (1859-1939) who was known around 1920 more for his novelesque life than for his prose. Max Estrella's model could have been Alejandro Sawa (1862-1909). The parallel with Max is obvious. Sawa lived in the Bohemian section of Madrid and of Paris, and died blind and crazy. (See for further elaboration, Fernández Almagro, Viña, pp. 208-209.) All of these figures, however, are moved by Valle-Inclán.
this background, transfigured in the same expression of diversities. The atmosphere and the characters become integrated because usually the deformity of the one interacts upon the other. Lastly, an inter-relationship is developed among the caricatures themselves. The result is an action which appears mimetic and distorted, and which is similar to everyday reality. No matter how strong the external disfigure-ation, it leaves recognizable the deformed subjects. Thus, the distortion of each character or situation corresponds directly to a true reality, usually to the social reality of Spain. Through caricature, Valle-Inclán brings about a sharpness of social satire by showing a performance of malformed human beings in shapeless surroundings. In the interactions of his caricatures, Valle-Inclán sees, as in the interaction of humans, a debasement of human rationality and, consequently, a distortion of its corresponding plastic expression.

Technique of Caricature: Distortion and Humanization

The deformity of literary characters in Luces is brought about by direct description and by dialogue. The sketch of an old bookdealer is a good case in point. No sooner does he appear, and he is immediately charged with deformities. It is like putting one's hand on his figure and pressing down until the lines of his profile are distorted to such a degree that it may look disproportionate. In the description, a hump is
drawn on him; his arms are knarled and elongated; his hands bony and shrivelled; his legs almost shapeless, are wrapped in some rags. His whole body is hunched. His face looks old and appears grisly. A scarf which looks like a green snake is placed around his neck. This is Zarathustra, the ragged, miserly, cunning bookdealer of Luces, "con su caracterización de fantoche, una aguda y dolorosa disonancia," sitting in an old, ragged dwarf chair, "con los pies entrepados y cepones en la tarima del brasero, guarda la tienda" (p. 846).

Next, his movements are drawn. He walks over to a dark room and comes out with a lighted candle. It is a greasy candlestick and it trembles as Zarathustra advances with the slow gait of a puppet. "La mano, calzada con un mitón negro, pasea la luz por los estantes de libros. Media cara en reflejo y media en sombra. Parece que la nariz se le dobla sobre una oreja" (p. 898). Zarathustra appears to be a grotesque deformation of a human being.42

42. We notice that it is not Zarathustra who is advancing actually, but "la mano" which is distorted by the fact that it is "calzada," and with a "mitón negro." This impressionistic technique—not new in literature—seems to emphasize the grotesque as Valle-Inclán uses it, because the "impression" underlies tremendously one part of the human figure at a time, and this is important in the technique of caricature, especially in Goya. There are many such examples and we will see the impressionistic technique in more detail in the next chapter. Notice how Don Latino, another caricature, enters Max's room: "Una mano cautelosa empuja la puerta..." (p. 894). The protruding of the hand gives the impression that it belongs to a contorted body of a caricature. The technique is both impressionistic and cinematographic as we will see.
Before any action begins Zarathustra is seen also in relation to his environment, his bookstore, which will serve as the stage for action. It is described as a den:

"Rimeros de libros hacen escombro y cubren las paredes. Empapelen los cuatro vidrios de una puerta cuatro cromos espeluznantes de un novelón por entregas. En la cueva hacen tertulia el gato, el loro, el can y el librero" (p. 896).

A rat sticks out his snout and the parrot, like a human repeats "Vive España," when suddenly the bookdealer has visitors standing at the door. The action will begin in an atmosphere that has been deformed along with its protagonist. Before the structure of this background, the exploiting, puppet-like gestures of the old bookdealer are all the more obviously caricaturesque. Soon the whole scene acquires an air of absurdity and grotesqueness:

"Un retén de polizontes pasa con un hombre maniatado. Sale alborotando el barrio un chico pelón montado en una caña, con una bandera." (p. 898).

The two sentences of description represent a perfect dichotomy. The first, represents a tragedy, the second, the carefree play of a hoy. The tragedy of the arrested man is completely overlooked in the ensuing dialogue:

EL PELÓN.-¡Viva España!
EL CAN.-¡Guau! ¡Guau!
ZARATUSTRA.-¡Está buena España! (p. 898).

Suddenly, everything appears dehumanized. There is no care, no pity, no sympathy. The emphasis here, through caricature, is on the grotesque and burlesque elements of the character.
and his environment.

Next, this puppet is put to perform in an everyday human circumstance. This is done through dialogue between Zarathustra and the people who visit his book store. Zarathustra is seen to be shrewd, hypocritical, always ready to make a profitable deal. He bargains, he cheats. He will not hesitate to take advantage of a blind, helpless, penniless poet like Max by collaborating with Don Latino, his guide. He always complains of bad times, defends religion because it provides good faith in commerce, and he lies constantly. His purpose is to exploit anything and anyone that enters his book store. Three people are in Zarathustra's shop. Figures begin to gesticulate in the background; the troops, the noisy little boy, the animals. The scene is quick-moving with the sweep of cinematography. However, Valle-Inclán keeps our eyes on Zarathustra and his visitors: "Divagan ajenos al tropel de polizontes, al viva del pelotón, al gañido del perro, y al comentario apesadumbrado del fantoche que los explota" (p. 898). This colorful vision of a moving background, and the constant interaction of the personages, makes this scene almost real. As a result, in the ensuing dialogue, we see a humanization of this distorted human figure whose disproportion makes him almost an inanimate object.

In short, this is what the technique implies, as explained by Max and as it is seen throughout *Luces*; the distortion of something real to grotesque proportions, followed by its behavior in a real, human situation. The caricaturesque figures
are related to each other, not only plastically but above all through the actions that they express; the way they talk, feel, argue, suffer or discuss. Caricature, as employed by Valle-Inclán, does not emphasize the uniqueness of the human figure. Rather, through a series of human behaviors and interactions it emphasizes an absurd and grotesque scheme of things.

Valle-Inclán fills the human interactions of his caricatures with many details—little extra gestures, looks, or statements—that enrich and vivify both the caricaturesque elements and his vision and criticism of contemporary Spain. Three statements about religion, by three characters may serve as an example:

ZARATUSTRA.- Sin religión no puede haber buena fe en el comercio...(p. 899).

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DON GAY.- (Ha entrado en la cueva un hombre alto, flaco, tostado del sol... Es el extraño DON PEREGRINO GAY, que he escrito la crónica de su vida andariega en un rancio y animado castellano.) Maestro, tenemos que rehacer el concepto religioso, en el arquetipo del Hombre-Dios. Hacer la Revolución Cristiana, con todas las exageraciones del Evangelio (p. 899).

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DON FILIBERTO.- (Al extremo, fuma y escribe un hombre calvo, el eterno redactor del perfil triste, el gabán con flecos, los dedos de gancho y las uñas entintadas.) Teosóficamente podría explicársela a ustedes, si estuviesen ustedes iniciados en la noble Doctrina del Karma (p. 918).
The above statements on religion are as stock, meaningless, stereotype and as caricaturesque as the individuals who mouth them. They do not propagate anything new in terms of ideas; nor do they contribute to the development of character. They are a good example of ideas and views used merely for gesticulation and not for reason. In this respect Valle-Inclán is strictly a caricaturist, a handler of puppets and clowns, but not an idea-monger. In his description of characters and in his development of action, the word, the movement, the gesture, the posture of a personality is more expressive than an idea or a psychological development. The caricatures of Luces demonstrate only certain relevant traits. They are not psychological portraits of complete human beings. Valle-Inclán, in his use of caricatures, follows Aristotle's dictum that drama is an imitation not of men, but of an action and of life, that is, an image not of individual psychology but of a developing situation that is representative of actual life.

This process serves the critical purpose of an "esperpento." It is done as follows: the caricatures, in their interactions, imitate certain aspects of reality. Their imitations do not reproduce exactly the movements imitated or symbolized because a caricature, by definition, is a transposition of reality. However, as caricatures they give an indication of these movements. Although the movements are not precisely like those imitated, they are in themselves very
precise in what they attempt to express, usually depicting human stupidity and indifference. In *Luces* we see man, who, like the figures of the *Caprichos*, misshapes himself by professing absurd beliefs and behavior which are in conflict with the nature of reason. From humanity to grotesqueness and absurdity, lies the lack of reason and understanding which makes caricatures and puppets out of human beings.

Max Estrella: The Rejection of Caricature

Max Estrella is the only principal character in *Luces* who is not completely a caricature. Valle-Inclán keeps his tragic story in motion as in a puppet show but gives him both human and caricaturesque qualities. He is using him to depict the passage from humanity to caricature amidst the chaos and disorder of contemporary life in Spain. Most of the caricatures appear at one time or another ridiculous and incongruous. The incongruities of Max, however, are more complex. They are almost always meaningful and sentimental because he has the ability to recognize them: "Yo nunca tuve talento. He vivido siempre de un modo absurdo!" (p. 902). This statement has a tinge of profound sadness. Often, especially in the beginning, his face is not at all that of a caricature: "...y en los ojos ciegos un vidriado triste, de alcohol y de fiebre" (p. 902). His is the face of a suffering, tragic man. His white and dignified head is imposing, his blind eyes sad, his mouth
austerer; he constantly makes an attempt to keep an erect—even though weak—posture. As the story moves, however, the angles of his physical appearance change also to that of a caricature: "Max Estrella aparece en la puerta, pálido, arañado, la corbata torcida, la expresión altanera y alocada" (p. 922). His wife and daughter see in Max a human being; Don Latino and the rest look at him as one of them, as another caricature (a puppet). As an old friend tells him amidst his sadness: "Eres siempre el mismo calvatrueno" (p. 925).

Valle-Inclán has placed Max in this dual position and is exploiting the passage from pathetic looks to grotesque appearance. Max constantly ranges between a complete and often gracious humanity at one end and a complete and rather frightening caricature at the other. One moment he speaks with the illusions of a sensitive human being: "Donde yo vivo siempre es un palacio" (p. 912). Another moment he sounds as coarse and absurd as the rest: "Idos todos al diablo" (p. 895). "Le devuelves el décimo y le dices que se vaya al infierno" (p. 901).

Max is the one character in Luces who constantly stands outside his final role as a puppet. He constantly attempts to humanize a caricature. He retorts to a policman: "Porque tú, gusano burocrático, no sabes nada. ¡Mi soñar!" (p. 912). He constantly insults the caricaturesque humans around him for abandoning human qualities. But in the end, before dying, he also has to imitate the movement and actions of the others and
thus follow the directions of the puppeteer. Max clearly sees
that the passage from humanity to caricature is exemplary of man's
stupidity which leads to malignity and which, if exaggerated a
little, results in immediate harm to himself and others. Max is
the only caricature that has any pride, that struggles to maintain
any dignity as a human being. As Valle-Inclán himself said: "Sólo
el orgullo del hombre le hace suponer que es un animal pensante." When Max loses even his pride, he loses with it his independence
and becomes another cog in the puppet show.

Caricatures and Humans

To conclude the analysis of Valle-Inclán's technique and
use of caricature, we must consider the characters that are not
caricaturesque at all. They are the wife and daughter of Max,
a prisoner, and a mother with a dead child in her arms. Everyone
of these dies, or is in contact with death, like the helpless
mother. Death, in their case, provides a motive for awareness
in life, for humanity. All of them show pain, suffering, empathy
for others and generally pathos; Claudinita's terse, simple scream

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43. Letter by Valle-Inclán quoted by Cipriano Rivas Cherif, in Speratti, TE, p. 70, n. 30.

44. Emma Speratti has observed that "el único tema que permanece con valor dominante en las últimas obras de Valle-Inclán es la muerte" (TE, p. 104). The deformed aspect of death will be examined later in the "Death of Max Estrella."
is penetrating: "¡Mi padre! ¡Mi padre! ¡Mi padre querido!" (p. 948). All the rest are caricatures. 45 They have no adequate motive, no real purpose for what they do or observe. They betray a suggestion of the mechanical doll; they suggest a sense of ever-winding, ever-gesticulating movement without any initiative of their own. "Son figuras vivas a las que se les pasó la hora o no saben vivir la que les corresponde." 46

In the relationship between the caricatures and non-caricatures is found one of the basic themes of an "esperpento." There is a contrast between the "humans" who deal with death, which represents tragedy, and the attitude of the live puppets whose general indifference makes death look grotesque and absurd. Between the humans and the puppets is Max Estrella who forms the bridge from the one to the other. He represents both a parallel and a contrast to either side.

The contrast between the humans and the caricatures in Luces points out the lack of reason and feeling. The

45. Even the old favorites of Valle. Emma Speratti observes; "acaso el mismo Bradomín que aún tiene ironía para asegurar que con su carga de años, más que Hamlet, está próximo a ser la calavera de Yorik" (TE, p. 90). Rubén Darío must also be considered as such, for he is a caricature of himself, living according to the myth created around his personality: "Rubén se recoge estremecido, el gesto de Ídolo, evocador de terrores y misterios" (p. 931). As Max tells him: "¡Eres un farsante, Rubén!" (p. 930).

46. Emma Speratti, TE, p. 90.
caricatures which dominate Luces serve to reinforce a terrible truth of modern times, as Valle-Inclán sees it from his demiurgic position of puppeteer. He himself said: "Creo cada día con mayor fuerza que el hombre no se goberna por sus ideas ni por su cultura. Imagino un fatalismo del medio, de la herencia y de las tareas fisiológicas, siendo la conducta totalmente desprendida de los pensamientos." The miserable life of contemporary Spain is therefore best exemplified by the caricatures that participate in it. Valle-Inclán does not justify grotesqueness nor creates it for art's sake. He creates grotesque and absurd caricatures because he sees their counterparts

47. Letter quoted by Cipriano Rivas Cherif, in Emma Speratti, TB, p. 93.

48. This is not uncommon with Spanish thinkers who have been preoccupied with the problems of Spain. Almost a hundred years earlier, Larra also, in viewing the absurdities of Spain, tried to look from the outside, with complete indifference: "No saludo a ningún amigo ni conocido que encuentre, porque esto sería hacer yo también un papel en la comedia de que pretendo ser únicamente espectador, y que sólo para divertirme a mí creo por entonces que representa el mundo entero... Recibo insensible las impresiones de cuanto pasa a mi alrededor; a todas me dejo amoldar con indiferencia y abandono... e imparcial, ajeno de consideración que a él (mundo) me ligue, véola tal cual se presenta en cada fisonomía, en cada acción que observo indolentemente." "Varios Caracteres," in Artículos de Costumbres, Clásicos Castellanos (Madrid, 1922), pp. 181-182. This attitude, as Valle-Inclán said, is very Spanish, and the result is almost always the same: Caricature.
(as such) in reality. Had he wanted to justify distortion he could have easily chosen a story and invented a less sympathetic character than Max. Max is both appealing and pathetic, and it is terrible that he too has to submit to the forces of deformity and become a caricature. But, this is the job of the modern artist if he is to be demiurgic. Like "el compadre Fidel" in Don Friolera, he must create but communicate his creations by means of puppets, because man, abandoned by reason, is a caricature, and Valle-Inclán sees him "en cartón."
**Animalization**

"El mono acrobático salta y hace del mundo trampolín Mima y esmalta cada salto con un mohín." (La Pipa de Xif).

Besides caricature, Valle-Inclán also compares man to animals in his characterization. Sometimes, humans are described in terms of animals: El rey de Portugal, "...ríe asomado a la puerta, y como perro que se espulga..." (p. 903); Basilio Soulínake's eyes are seen: "...bajo el testuz de bisonte obstinado" (p. 945). When La Pisa Bien sees a lottery ticket: "...se apresura a echarle la zarre" (901). Other times, it is the animals that are given human-like qualities. In Zaráustre's den:

EL GATO.- ¡Fú! ¡Fú!
EL CAN.- ¡Guau!
EL LORO.- ¡Viva España! (p. 896).

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EL FELON.- ¡Viva España! (p. 898).

The parrot is seen as an animal which is acting like a human fool. Or, a dog is seen with: "El ojo legañoso, como un poeta, levantado al azul de la última estrella" (p. 941). 49

The allusion to animals shows humans who betray animal-like qualities.

49. This comparison is a good parallel with the dying Max whose blurred blind eyes are looking in vain at the sky.
behavior such as stupidity, subservience, gullibility, stubbornness, etc; that is, behavior that is part of humanity, but which is not complimentary to men's high calling which is reason. Thus, el chico pelón repeats with the stupidity of a parrot; el Rey de Portugal exhibits a physical action with the crudeness and awkwardness of a dog; Basilio Soulisneke's insistence and obstinacy resemble that of a brute animal; and La Pisa Bien's movement recalls that of a clawed animal.

Valle-Inclán animalizes the posture and behavior of men, not his physical appearance. For example, his portrait of Don Latino as a dog, is an obvious symbol of servility and pretentiousness: "Don Latino interviene con ese matiz del perro cobarde, que da su ladrido entre las piernas del dueño" (p. 897). The similarities with an animal are emphasized further by Max Estrella who says: "Don Latino de Hispalis: mi perro" (p. 925); or, "Seguramente que me espera en la puerta perro" (p. 926). The likeness of Don Latino to a servile dog is made even more evident by the use of parallel construction. Don Latino first appears with "un perrillo." Valle-Inclán parallels later the dog's behavior to that of his master. Latino bends over Max's dead body and his little dog strikes a pose similar to that of Latino toward Max earlier: "El perrillo, a los pies de la caja, entre el reflejo inquietante de las velas, agita el muñón del rabo" (p. 944). Descriptively, both pictures strike
an analogous attitude, and stand on similar grounds. First, Don Latino's servile behavior is compared to that of a dog, and later, his own dog reinforces this comparison by re-enacting the same posture. This likeness to a dog which renders Don Latino as a pretentious man who "de su ladrido," is substantiated further by another parallel. As the dog imitates his master in action, Latino imitates Max's speech. Max tells Darío: "¡Salud, hermano, si menor en años, mayor en prez!" (p. 928). Later, over the dead body of Max, Don Latino acting the sad role, repeats:

DON LATINO.- Max, hermano mío, si menor en años...
DORÍG DE GADFÉX.- Mayor en prez. Nos adivinamos (p. 943).

The individual appears to be conditioned like a dog; he lacks imagination. Everything becomes a pattern. Don Latino's speech remains "un ladrido," and this, again, underlies the debasement of man, who is often acting like a conditioned animal.

Just as revealing is the scene at Zarautstra's: "Ante el mostrador, los tres visitantes, reunidos como tres pájaros en una rama, ilusionados y tristes..." (p. 892). The three, Latino, Max and Don Gay, are like birds of frustrated craving, helpless, at the hands of the puppet Zarautstra and removed from any participation of what is taking place around them.

50. Valle-Inclán also alludes to birds in order to ridicule Modernism and its emphasis on sounds: Latino.- "¿Y qué hace un clásico en el tropel de ruidíones modernistas?" (p. 908).
When the animalizing process is reversed, and the animal's behavior mirrors that of the human being, the resemblance that is created has a social significance. The likeness of the parrot to a patriot is obvious, and it points out the ridicule and gullibility of patriotic sentiments. Many writers associated with the generation of '98 voiced at one time or another the lack of personality and personal initiative among the so-called "traditionalists" and "patriots" who together kept on repeating with the same fervor, "Vi-va Es-pa-ña." This repetitive and stale attitude was abhorrent to Valle-Inclán's mind and was a target of ridicule in almost all his later works. His portrayal of traditional patriotism embodied in the vocal exercises of a parrot, shows the backwardness of Spain for the sake of tradition, nationalism, and other such sterile ideals. Valle-Inclán captures a parrot-like nature of patriotic beliefs which perverts the dignity of man's idea of love for his country.

In conclusion, we see that the resemblance of a human being to a given animal is not what really matters in the animal allusions just considered. Valle-Inclán attempts to intensify his grotesque vision of human behavior. Man—as in the etchings of Goya—is shown unable to use his reason and thus incapable of rising above the animal. That is, he has achieved human relations which are governed by irrational impulses which are more appropriate to animal like than to human reason. This behavior is related to modern times and specifically to what Valle refers to as "El ruedo ibérico."
THE LANGUAGE OF THE ESPERPENTO

"Mi musa moderna
enarca la pierna,
se cimbra, se ondula,
se comba, se achula
con el ringorrango
rítmico del tango..."
(Farsa y licencia de
la Reina Castiza).

Things lose their normal texture and appear deformed through the selection of language. Max Estrella, in his explanation of "esperpento" states: "...deformemos la expresión en el mismo espejo que nos deforma las caras..." (p. 939). The artist must use words which contain or emit a sense of distortion and thus create an esperpentic vocabulary. Emma Speratti, in her study of the esperpentic effects that words evoke in the works of Valle-Inclán says: "Un nutrido y pintoresco vocabulario chirría con la ridícula mentalidad o el comportamiento trágicomico de los personajes, convierte en caricaturas determinadas descripciones, y se combina en imágenes satíricas." 51 Valle-Inclán, by a selection and arrangement of language, creates a contortion of reality. We have already seen this in his caricaturesque technique. Words like careta, bulto, cavernoso, astroso, feo, refer directly to the physiognomy and posture of people. This deformity is augmented by insulting

51 Speratti, EB, p. 102.

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remarks like canalla, majadero, pelma, marica, chabacano, golfo, botarate. Ideas are also seen distorted: Death is referred to as a carantoña ensabanada, religion as chochez de viejas, and morality as chabacana sensibilidad.

The function of such a vocabulary is to capture a concrete deformity and to strengthen the contrast between normality and grotesqueness. Words and expressions intensify the esperpentic vision because Valle usually places them in opposition to accepted standards seen in everyday reality. For example, a word like canalla disfigures the conception of the Press, while the word maricas does the same for la Acción ciudadana. Both the Press and La Acción are supposedly respected institutions, and both are inverted, thus appearing ridiculous. Sometimes, the inversion is carried further, as when Max refers to the police as la canalla más canalla, or as sicarios.

Generally, the vocabulary found in Luces does not offer a smooth balance. The musicality of the words is often found in a deliberate dissonance and not in the internal harmony of rhythmical sounds that we saw in the Sonatas. Valle-Inclán, however, has not abandoned exterior beauty and rhythmic effects in his descriptions always believing that "el secreto de las conciencias sólo puede revelarse en el milagro musical de las
palabras" (OC II, p. 571). For example, in scene nine we see the description of a cafe. The beat of the music, the smoke and the lights are diverse elements which nevertheless "cifran su diversidad en una sola expresión" (p. 928). Harmony is found in dissonance. This is followed by a very rhythmical sentence: "Entran extraños, y son de repente transfigurados en aquel triple ritmo, MALA ESTRELLA Y DON LATINO." Besides the assonance of extraños--transfigurados, ritmo--Latino, we get an additional musical effect from the alliteration of the sound tr which enforces the rhythm and unites perfectly with the effect that is desired, the description of "triple ritmo." The harmony and rhythm of sentences, and the sound of single words are still evident, but not for the sole purpose of play and beauty. If reality is distorted, the language which will express it must also be distorted. Grotesqueness can also be captured in a striking and imaginative manner. In Luces the imposition of

52. Valle-Inclán is above all an artist who has worked extremely hard with style which also influences the form and theme: "Y cuando del arcano de mis nervios lograba arrancar la sensación, precisarla y exaltarla, venía el empeño por darle vida en palabras, la fiebre de estilo..." (La lámpara, OC, II, p. 560). He often reworked words and patterns continually until he could accomplish the desired effect. Many critics have pointed this out. (See Ortega y Gasset, Sonata de estilo; also "Cambio, supresión, y adición de palabras," an admirable study on the language of Tirano Banderas by Emma Speratti, TE.) Valle, himself has expressed this attitude toward words in La lámpara maravillosa. "El poeta debe buscar en sí la impresión de ser mudo, de no poder decir lo que guarda en su arcano, y luchar por decirlo, y no satisfacerse nunca" (OC, II, p. 571). In Luces he is very careful with his manipulation of the language inasmuch as the style represents a transition to a different vision of reality.
distortion is evident, and this is presented vividly and colorfully with a vocabulary that is different from that of the Sonatas, but which has its own music and colors and its own images. The sophisticated, leisurely-moving and musical language of the Sonatas has moved over to the exhilarating "ringorrango/ritmico del tango."

**IMPRESSIONISM**

The stylistic presentation of imprecise sensations has always preoccupied Valle-Inclán. He elaborated on this in *La lámpara maravillosa*: "Pero antes del empeño febril por alcanzar la expresión evocadora, ha sido el empeño de fijar dentro de mí lo impreciso de las sensaciones" (OC, II, p. 560). This attitude which often leads to a portrayal of silhouettes in place of complete figures, and generally captures a diffuse and imprecise picture of reality, was used by Valle in his earlier works. In *Luces*, however, this descriptive technique is also channeled towards a distorted aspect of things, thus reinforcing the espermepentic vision and capturing the general instability of reality.

**Nominal Constructions**

The slow, eloquent elaboration of style in the Sonatas is supplanted by the nominal constructions which form the nucleus of Valle-Inclán's impressionistic technique. The nominal
sentence creates a picture which conveys to the reader only impressions of objects and movements. For example: "Paseo con jardines. El cielo raso y remoto. La luna lunera. Patrullas de caballería. Silencioso y luminoso rueda un auto" (p. 932). Elements do not appear as they are, but as they affect the senses. More than a complete picture, the effect is that of a partial vision. Moreover, if the eyes which reflect this vision were the glass of the concave mirror, a visual impression of things not connected normally would be created. From the drive, we turn our eyes up to the remote sky, to the moon which is closer, down to the horse-patrols whose noisy hoofs contrast with the silent rubber of the auto tires on the asphalt pavement. There is constantly an awareness of movement:

"Un café que prolongan empañados espejos. Mesas de mármol. Divanes rojos. El mostrador en el fondo, y detrás un vejete rubiales, destacado el busto sobre la diversa botillería" (p. 928).

The café itself is not pictured totally. Rather, we see it through the glass of a reflecting mirror, with an impression of sudden movement which makes our eyes move like a moving camera: the prolongation to the bar, the background, the tables in between. This movement gains solidity by a striking diversity of colors—white (mármol), red and gold (rubiales)—and the figure of the man against the row of diverse bottles at the bar. From the entrance of the café to the bar the things in between are captured one by one, in a succession of
temporary stops.

The impression of reality communicated by nominal sentences is not complete but rather assembled here and there by certain words, colors, allusions, etc., to create a visual image of many parts. Often each word or phrase crystallizes in itself a given picture of reality. "La impresión, en ciertos casos, puede no estar manifestada directamente, pero determinadas palabras la construyen." Therefore, a reality appears to be made of different objects, all complete in themselves. As a result, the eyes are obliged to move from object to object thus creating an impression of a sudden, rapid and expansive movement.

This is often effected by the scarcity of verbs. One of the most tragic episodes takes place in the following setting: "Una calle de Madrid austriaco. Las tapias de un convento. Un casón de nobles. Las luces de una taberna. Un grupo consternado de vecinas, en la acera" (p. 936). There are no verbs to connect the short sentences and create a unified picture, for each

53. Emma Speratti, TE, p. 79.

54. Also Ortega y Gasset in Sobre el punto de vista en los artes: "...el impresionismo no dibuja el objeto, sino que lo obtiene amontonando pequeñas manchas de color, cada una informe, pero capaces en su combinación de engendrar ante los ojos entornados la vibrante presencia de aquel" Apud, Julian Marías, Diccionario de literatura española, 2nd edition (Madrid, 1953), p. 371. A good way for Valle-Inclán to bring about visually an exterior distortion is, of course, to give an impression of reality by putting forth certain component parts and make each one emphatic, more independent than connected.
sentence achieves an independent descriptive function. There is not much action or movement in this scene, but the whole outline gives the impression of things to happen through the word *consternado* which underlies a sense of restlessness and apprehension. Other times, the lack of verbs creates a picture where impressions move rather than objects. The vision of a park: "Los focos de un auto. El farol de un sereno. El quicio de una verja. Una sombra clandestina. El rostro albayalde de otra vieja peripatética. Diferentes sombras" (p. 935).

The sense of movement comes from nouns like *auto*, *sereno* and *sombras* which are obviously moving, and especially from the adjective *peripatética* which more than motion implies a general slow-down of movement. We get the impression of movement, rather than movement itself. This intensified the additional impression of mystery and vagueness aided by the word *clandestina*. Things seem to be detached, like the lights of the car and the lantern of the night watchman, but leap into the picture to light up the silvery face of the old woman and to cause shadows which give a floating sensation. On the other hand, whenever the verb is used in sentences, it is usually hidden: "Remotamente, sobre el asfalto sonoro, (se acompaña) el trote de una patrulla de Caballería" (p. 935). The verb is not actually needed. 55

55. Of course the verb plays a different role in this case. Musically, it unites the two words that imply sound, "sonoro" and "trote." This clever device arouses the auditory senses to the noisy, rhythmic trot upon a road.
Other times the impression of movement comes to a sudden stop within a descriptive passage by the use of only one word. "Se abrazan;" "El calabozo;" "Noche;" "Tumulto;" "Cuchicheos;" "Reaparece;" or, following a long descriptive introduction, a character's name: "Detrás, despeinada, en chaucletas, la falda pingona, aparece una mozuela: CLAUDINITA" (p. 895). The sudden appearance of one word creates an impact because it suddenly draws all the visual and auditory attention to it causing an abrupt stop of the description.

CONCRETENESS AND INSTABILITY OF VISION

The nominal construction, with its visual effects, gives a sense of concreteness both in space and time. "La construcción nominal es elíptica y supone la evocación pura, la enumeración inmediata de los hechos o de las cosas, al mismo tiempo casi que nos suceden o que las estamos percibiendo." It has two functions within Luces: first, it creates a vision of concrete reality because solid, concrete objects stand out by themselves; (calles, tabernas, mesas, paseos, autos, focos, asfaltos, cabellos, calabozos, viejas, pingonas, etc). Second, because there is a constant movement from one object to another and because often we only get an imprecise picture of things, concrete objects appear unstable. This creates an impression of instability and perhaps chaos in reality which plastically is, of course,

56. Segura Covarsi, Acotaciones, p. 50.
essential to the distorted vision of the "esperpento."

One way of creating a plastic instability is the use of adjectives which dilute somewhat the concreteness of objects within a descriptive passage; we see a "lágrima trastienda," "zaguán oscuro," "sótano mal alumbrado," etc. Another way is the use of nouns like bulto or sombra to describe a human being, thus minimizing the human form visually: "Repartidos por las sillas del paseo, yacen algunos bultos durmientes" (p. 932). The word bultos has no value by itself, but the association that these "forms" provoke as they are distributed, is that of a reality that looks vague, a reality where persons appear dehumanized. Also, "En la sombra se mueve el bulto de un hombre" (p. 913). The human being seems to have surrendered to the shadow, becoming a mere bulto, that is, a shade of humanity.

Next, these allusions are stabilized. Throughout various scenes there are fleeting glimpses of concrete shadows which through repetition, become constant in the background: "Sombras en las sombras de un rincón;" "sombra triste;" "sombra de Guardias;" "diferentes sombras;" "vienen paseando y dialogando dos sombras rezagadas;" "las sombras negras de dos SEPULTUREROS;" this succession creates the impression of things appearing and going, of special things concrete in time but yet unstable, in a rapid succession of visions and dramatic effects. Also, there is a constant reappearance of cars with their moving lights, of
the patrols on horses, of the street lights, etc., which create a background of fleeting objects.

This fleeting quality is also brought about by the sudden appearance of various adjectives grouped together: "LA NIÑA PISA-BIEN, despintada, pingona, marchita, se materializa bajo un farol con su pregón de golfa madrileña" (p. 906). She is there all the time, and yet she becomes visual in one sudden glimpse. The various descriptive elements about her (despintada, pingona, marchita) appear all at once under the light. Her sudden appearance reminds us of the cinematographic technique, of a camera moving slowly behind a figure and catching it by surprise. This technique is common in Luces: "Las dos próximas han evolucionado sutiles y clandestinas, bajo las sombras del paseo" (p. 933).

Other Impressionistic Traits

Words in a sequence often appear disconnected from the main sentence or verb, thus drawing more attention to them: "Entra el cotarro modernista, greñas, pipas, gabanes repelados, y alguna capa" (p. 917). "Se lo lleva sonriendo, blanca y

57. This point will be discussed later. What reinforces moreover the vividness of the picture graphically, is the even distribution of the syllables (11 + 11): "Se materializa bajo un farol/con su pregón de golfa madrileña." We will discuss this in the musicality of the language.
fantasmal" (p. 933). "Asoma la chica de una portera.—Trenza en perico, caídas calcetas, cara de hambre" (p. 900). In all three cases, the disconnected words give a deformed or absurd view of that which they define.

At times, reality is not seen in a normal manner: "Otro rasgo vinculado con la actitud impresionista es el ver que determinadas cosas actúan o proceden en forma especial, si bien las causas reales no se acomodan a la visión." In Luces we see: "Las sombras y la música flotan... en el lúcido temblor de los arcos voltaicos" (p. 928). "Traen la luna sobre los cascos y en los charrascos" (p. 909). Of course, neither the music floats, nor is the moon carried on the soldiers' helmets but this is how Valle-Inclán sees things, or, as Emma Speratti states: "...así desea hacerlos ver—y es indudable que la vivacidad de la descripción se acrecienta." The second example especially gains in esquerpentic quality.

We saw in our discussion of "caricatures" the technique whereby elements of a person appear first, before the human being. Besides emphasizing the caricaturesque appearance, this also draws attention to the grotesque, because we get an impression of certain exaggerated parts: "el farol, el chuzo,

58. Speratti, TB, p. 79.
la caperuza del sereno, bajan con un trote de madresmas por la acera" (p. 937). Valle-Inclán could have said, "el sereno con un farol, un chuzo, etc," but he prefers to project the lantern, the pike and the pointed hood making them stand out (as with the hand of Zaratustra and Don Latino) and creating through them a sense of nonsensical or dehumanized movement. We don't see a human person but the movement of the person. It is a perfect impressionistic caricature, the elements standing out above the human being. Or; "De la oscuridad surge la brasa de un cigarro y la tos asmática de Don Latino" (p. 935). Again, the light protruding the darkness and the sound of the cough stand out over the human puppet, Latino. Others: "Detrás, asoman los cascos de la guardias" (p. 911). "...Se agrupan, bajo la luz de una candileja, pipas, chalinás y melenas del modernismo" (p. 911). Both give a dehumanized impression.

Sometimes there is not even a silhouette of figures but only parts: "Policías de la Secreta. Hongos, garrotas, cuellos de celuloide, grandes sortijas, lunares rizados y flamencos" (p. 911). The police are distinguished by what surrounds them, making their profile almost non-existent, made up by a mass of elements put together. Valle-Inclán uses impressionistic constructions to capture people without drawing concrete figures of them.

We might also mention here the abundance of exclamation marks. Valle-Inclán had always been concerned with the visual
appeal in print of his graphic arrangements. Often the exclamation marks reinforce sounds, making reality appear stupid and noisy: "LA PISA-BIEN.- ¡5775! ¡El número de la suerte! ¡Mañana sale! ¡Lo vendo! ¡Lo vendo! ¡5775!" (p. 906). In the written page, they often underlie the exasperation of speech: "Max.- ¡Canallas! ... ¡Todos!... ¡Y los primeros nosotros, los poetas!" (p. 936). Each anguishing utterance of Max is flanked graphically by marks which resemble spikes jabbing at the terrible, painful reality uttered.

IMAGERY

Within the impressionistic style, we find numerous images which merely aid the visual effect of the nominal constructions, but also some which stand out in reinforcing the grotesque appearance of things. This is usually accomplished through the development of an adjective. Let's trace this technique in scene seven and see how the repetitive technique functions in the creation of a grotesque image. We first see, in a newspaper office, "un hombre calvo" (p. 916). Next: "DON FILIBERTO, el periodista calvo y catarroso" (p. 920). The adjective is reiterated and becomes a fixed epithet. Then, we see him "cubriéndose la calva con las manos amarillas y entintadas" (p. 920).

60. Valle-Inclán always strove for elegance. In his early works, especially in the Sonatas, he reinforced the beautiful, sensual leisurely visual pattern and design with drawings, big and elegant capital letters, etc. He maintained the practice of having his bookcovers decorated.
The adjective is transposed and becomes a substantive, thus drawing all the attention, and taking away some importance from the human personality. Finally, he reappears "en toda la ancha redondez de su calva" (p. 921). The substantive "calva," gains strong adjectivation and becomes the complete image of Don Fibiberto. The little incidental detail of the adjective "bald," has expanded into a grotesque image which predominates completely, and weighs heavily upon the human entity of the newspaper man. He is not merely a bald man now; rather, he hides under his baldness. The picture is more vivid, more picturesque and more distorted.

Epithets

The explicative phrases attached to the different names of characters underline an impression, a characteristic trait that is usually distorted and thus reinforce grotesque images of human personalities rendering them as "types." Epithets describe (Latino is "el vejete asmático"), distort (Dorio de Gadex is "versallesco y grotesco"), ridicule (the police inspector is "El pollo chulapón"), caricaturize (the Minister is "tripudo y mantecoso"), contradict comically (Don Fibiberto is "el hombre lógico y mítico"), and above all stereotype (Max is "el hiperbólico andaluz," while Rubén Darío is "el evocador de terrores y misterios"). These qualifying terms are permanent, giving the figures more vividness which further distinguishes
the individuality of the role that each one enacts. Darío will always be the stereotyped "Idolo," or "Indico y profundo," Don Filiberto "el eterno redactor," etc. Often, these epithets take over completely from the name; we see "la golfa madrileña" (La Pisa Bien), "el ciego" (Max), "filósofos peripáticos" (Max and Latino), "su Excelencia" (used constantly ironically for the Minister). The epithet becomes the symbol of the personality and usually gives a vigorous image of it.

Images and Similes

Valle-Inclán prefers similes which often transpose reality into images of a colorful and espermepic vision: "...los quevedos pendientes de un cordón, como dos ojos absurdos bailándole sobre la panza" (p. 923). Reality is transposed to absurdity and from there to grotesqueness, as the image of the eyes dancing on the belly predominates. It is a very picturesque and energetic image. "DORIO DE GADEX, feo, burlesco y chepudo, abre los brazos, que son como alones sin pluma, en el claro lunero" (p. 908). The image reinforces the physical deformity of "feo," "burlesco" and "chepudo." The deformed comparison of a human does not make him like another, but another. Reality is transposed and yet the image remains reasonable in its

61. Sometimes, even the name of characters has image qualities. Under the moon, the prostitute Lunares attempts to make love to Max Estrella.
The reference to a "plucked state" is very imaginative for the arms being featherless could easily resemble plucked wings if projected against the moon. The image is a reality, but a grotesque reality.

There is a large number of similes. Again the linguistic comparison often emphasizes the grotesque and absurd scheme of things. When a person is compared to someone or something else, the comparison is usually not complimentary creating disfiguring images. We see, "Manos de esqueleto memorialista en el día bíblico del Juicio Final" (p. 920). This grotesque image is very similar to the visions of Goya's Caprichos. Various others are ironical, cynical, insulting, absurd and generally all very imaginative, colorful and animated: "...recita lento y cadencioso, como en sopor" (p. 931). "...Gesto egoísta de niño enfadado" (p. 928). "Un vejete renegado... parejo de aquellos bizarros coroneles" (p. 916). "...Con magno además de estatua cesárea" (p. 928). "EL LLAVERO, con jactancia de rufo" (p. 916). "Olor frío de tabaco rancio" (p. 911). "...Jovial como un trasgo, irónico como un ateniense, ceceoso como un cañf" (p. 907).

Some of the metaphors are more complex and disordered, comprising an independent image, for its own sake: "De repente el grillo del teléfono se orina en el regazo burocrático" (p. 922). Possibly the reason for this is to ridicule the fantastic metaphors which were the end result of many 1920 movements such as ultraism, dadaism, futurism, etc.
Valle-Inclán has always been preoccupied with the sound of words, beginning with his own name. He worked painfully in his early years to develop the sonorous, elegant style of his Sonatas. Within many of his short sentences he created a musical effect of slow rhythm. In Luces, however, the short expressions, often reduced to a minimum of words, become rapid and abrupt, discharged by an accelerated rhythm. While the music of the Sonatas is sentimental, melancholic and languid, that of Luces is energetic, angry, and sudden. While the linguistic music of the Sonatas evokes the past, that of Luces is attuned to a quick-paced present. In Sonata de Primavera, we read: "La silla de posta seguía una calle de mirtos, de caserones y de conventos, una calle antigua, enlosada y resonante." This is musical, but sentimental and slow. The short words and phrases of Luces are in themselves sharp, abrupt, almost panting like the constant

63. The majestic sonority of his full name was the evident inspiration of the famous poem celebrating him by Rubén Darío: "Señor, que en Galicia tuviste cuna, mis dos manos estas flores te dan, amadas de Apolo y de la Luna, cuya sacra influencia siempre nos une, don Ramón María del Valle-Inclán" (OC, I, p. xxiv).
beat of the colorful notes of jazz: "El compás canalla de la música" (p. 928). *Luces* is moreover full of phrases which insinuate or allude to noise and shouts: "el grito ronco," "ruido de descargas," "el asfalto sonoro," "rompe a sonar el timbre de teléfono," "redobla la risa," "la voz achulada," "el trote sonoro de la patrulla," "el pregón," "grupos vocingleros," etc. Sometimes the sound is high-pitched; doors open "con largo chirrido," and close "con golpes metálicos." The change in sound patterns is perhaps seen in the following description: "Piano y violín atacan un aire de opereta, y la parroquia del café lleva el compás con las cucharillas en los vasos" (p. 932). The operatic music of the Sonatas will often be drowned by the shrill noise of metal against glass. The new sounds, however, will have their own rhythm and musical quality.

**Rhythm**

Through the sounds of the esperpentic vocabulary we get an ebb and flow imparted to speech and description. For example, we often see a consonantal rhyme of dual words: "silencioso y luminoso," "periodista y florista" (p. 901), "empujando y tropicando" (p. 913), "implorante y suspirante" (p. 911).

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64. Valle often utilizes exaggerated rhythmic patterns to satirize others, especially the Modernists. The following suggests this: "Y en el ritmo de las frases, desfila, con su pata coja, PAPA VERLAINE" (p. 932). Max hears:

DORIO DE GADEX.- El Enano de la Venta.
CORO DE MODERNISTAS.- ¡Cuenta! ¡Cuenta! ¡Cuenta! (cont.)
The rhyme is usually in assonance: "un hombre alto, flaco, tostado, del sol..." (p. 897). In dialogue, an uneven rhythm is often accomplished by the contrast between short sentences and brief, direct, sharp retorts of a staccato movement:

LA LUNARES.- Mira que limpios llevo los bajos.
MAX.- Soy ciego.
LUNARES.- ¡Algo verás!
MAX.- ¡Nada!
LA LUNARES.- Tócame. Estoy muy dura.
MAX.- ¡Un mármol! (p. 933).

The rhythmic effect of conversation is often very abrupt and matter-of-fact, as in the above passage.

We also find an abundance of metricisms in the acotaciones.65 "Su inclusión en la prosa destaca rítmicamente, mejor aún, musicalmente, un rasgo descriptivo" (Speratti, TR, p. 84). "Entre traspies y traspies/ da la pelma," 8 + 4 syllables (p. 953). "Quitándose las gorras/ saludan y se alejan," 7 + 7 (p. 952). "Llegan a la puerta/ rechina la verja negra" (p. 952). The repetition of the assonance e---a aids the proseic rhythm of 6 + 8 syllables.

"—Al hombro las azadas luciéntes—/ se acercan por la calle de tumbas" (10 + 10) (p. 950). The accent on the second, sixth and ninth syllables (instead of 3, 6, 9) eases a little the beat of the traditional decasyllable. The following is inserted in the

DORIO DE GADEX.- Y es un Tartufo Malsín.
CORO DE MODERNISTAS.- ¡Sí! ¡Sí! ¡Sí! (p. 908).

65. The use of meter in Valle's prose has often been discussed critically. See Rafael Benítez Claros, "Metricismos en las Comedias Bárbaras," Revista de Literatura, III (Madrid, 1953), 247-292.
scene where Max dies: "Remotos albores de amanecida" (p. 938).
The slow hendecasyllable emphasizes the melancholic tone of the
description and its calmness contrasts with the discussion between
Max and Latino. Other times, rhythm is accomplished by alliteration:
"Veros es ver al verdugo!" (p. 937), "La luna lunera"
(p. 932).

**Tone Color**

Valle-Inclán uses many words that have inherent tonal quali-
ties in vowel and consonant combinations. These are often arranged
in such a way that they stand out: "Resuenan pasos dentro del
zaguán. Don Latino se cuela por un callejón" (p. 941). The
allusion to "echo" of the verb "resuenan" is emphasized by the
position of the two oxytone words zaguán, callejón, both sonorous,
both standing out as the result of their position at the end of
the sentence. Luces is full of such examples. Often, there is a
stress of oxytone words like balcón, pelón, cordón, pregón because
of their sonority. This is evident from the fact that instead of
"Terrón," for "torpe," "torpón." The tone color enhances often
the esperpentic vision. Instead of the common "maldita tierra,"
Valle-Inclán uses "terrón maldito de España." The choice of
"terrón" with its sound and meaning places this vision of Luces
near that of El ruedo ibérico. Some words are like a squeak,
conveying by sound the shrill, sharp, high-pitched brittleness
of their meaning: guindilla, cabalatrina. Others are anomato-
poetic: miao, chi, hú, guáu, chirrido, chanclear.

Considered together, the tone color and rhythm of the
esperpentic vocabulary generally reinforce the distorting
sense with sound. The musicality of this style like that of
the Sonatas is very disciplined and very expressive, but always
subject to reality. There is a contrast in Luces between música,
opereta, violín and piano on one hand, and ruido, pregón, chirrido,
trote on the other. The latter often prevails and underscores the
esperpentic vision. The esperpentic style of expression does not
have the inner, musical accords of the Sonatas but it has probably
more life, more vividness and more animation. There is music to
be sure, but its beat is very restless.

Color

Colors are even more important than music. Both adjectives
and substantives refer to colors. There are plastic colors such
as rojo, blanco, albayalde, amarillos, etc., and suggested colors
through nouns; chaparro, brasa, mármol, rubiales, focos, etc.
There are also references to colors; pintada, despintada,
entintadas. A writer is usually limited plastically, because he
cannot produce the definite sensuous reaction that the painter
can. Writing is predominantly an art of one dimension. Valle-
Inclán attempts to break this by constantly creating an impression
of color in the background which he effects by spreading words
of color throughout, thus establishing a chromatic effect. This is done additionally by the contrasts of darkness and light and the substantives whose constant movement makes the colors even more evident. "Sótano mal alumbrado por una candileja" (p. 913). "Las luces en el fondo de los espejos" (p. 928).

By coloring the expression Valle solidifies his images of reality. By continual colors, chromatic allusions ("círculo luminoso y verde"), etc., he gives a density to his picture, he provides a continuous physical layer which underlies the quick action, thus providing a concrete visual background, a second dimension. The eye is continually carried within, to the yellow lights, the red divans, the white tableclothes, etc. The colors too, provide continuous shifts and movements of the eye which creates a colorful view of the movement of puppets on real physical surroundings. In short, the ear has been replaced more by the eye in Úlces through the impressionistic technique and the intensity of concrete colors. This adds to the effect of speech and action giving it solidity.
"Where words are scarce, they are seldom spent in vain, For they breathe truth that breathe their words in pain." (Shakespeare, Richard II).

The majority of the poetic expressions are found in the dialogue. Their content is almost always the expression of grief and personal woe. Their form is often metrical and rhythmic and their musical effect enhances the sad meaning of words and intensifies their emotional appeal. The result is an evident beauty in the thought, feeling and expression of the various sad sentiments. Max tragically says: "Yo soy el dolor/ de un mal sueño" (p. 914). The dichotomy of syllables (5+5), the shift from oxytone to paroxytone syllable, and the change of alliteration from (s) to (l) and (l) to (s) give a melody to the sad meaning.

Valle-Inclán has placed a poetic style in the mouths of those who see tragedy and those who taste it. The cues of sorrow and disaster are expressed by the humans and not the puppets. Collet, mutters over her husband's dead body: "Y toda la vida has trabajado para matarle" (p. 945); while a mother with a dead child in her arms shouts: "¡Negros fusiles,/ matadme también con vuestrros plomos!" (p. 937). The passage from five to ten syllables, captures rhythmically the effect of sadness drawing the attention and directing it to the tragic and destructive reality of the words negros, fusiles, matar, and plomos. Other times, words are

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full of poetic beauty. The pain of the mother results in tender, heart-rending images of her dead child: "Este rosal de mayo," "tan fría, boca de nardo" (p. 937). The imagery is both poetic and tragic for these are "words in pain," full of pathos.

But the real poet in this "esperpento" is, of course, Max Estrella. He loves to spend himself in poetry and his manner of speaking is immediately recognized: "Tiene usted luces que no todos tienen," a prisoner observes (p. 914), while a prostitute tells him, "Tú eres un poeta" (p. 934). His talk is often big and his rhythm majestic. When asked in what way he is unemployed, he retorts: "Cesante de hombre libre/ y pájaro cantor" (p. 912). Max becomes especially poetic when he dramatizes his sorrow; he is blind, "como Homero y como Belisario," (p. 924), and reminds others, "Para mí,/ siempre es de noche" (3+6 syllables). His is a full-noted grief, often enunciated with the sounds of ironic sentiment. He tells Darío: "Esta tarde tuve que empeñar la capa,/ y esta noche te convido a cenar" (p. 929). The irony of the situation is emphasized by musicality brought about by an even distribution of syllables (12+12), parallelism and a shift from llano to agudo. His is the most imaginative manner of expression, tragic and poetic, within a reality otherwise given over to absurd and indifferent expressions.
Deterioration of the tragic style

The poetic expressions of Rubén Darío in *Luces* often represent the lack of tragic effects in poetic language. Darío's language is graceful with an alteration of short and long words, with constant alliteration and rhythm: "recita lento y cadencioso" and his manner of expression has an accomplished and elaborate ease with music: "Mar y Tierra, Fuego y Viento, divinos monstruos" (p. 930). His poetic voice is first drowned by the weight of contemporary reality seen in *Luces* which has no time for "divinos monstruos" and "La Dama de Luto." Second, the melancholic tone of Rubén is not tinged by real tragedy as in the case of Max.

"Max, amemos la vida, y mientras podamos, olvidemos a la Dama de Luto" (p. 929) (syllables are 6+6+11). This melancholic expression appears banal and even ridiculous within the atmosphere of an "esperpento." Max himself helps to destroy Darío's melancholy spiking his sad reflections on afterlife with the cynical comment: "Para mí no hay nada tras la última mueca. Si hay algo, vendré a decírtelo" (p. 930). The sorrowful, poetic language of Darío sounds like a mannerly sadness compared to the hard pain of Max whose tragic expressions often spring from actual tragedy. Rubén's theme is himself and the poetry about himself is something he seems to love more than anything or anyone.

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66. We see Max's willingness to partake in actual, concrete tragedy:

FRESO.- Usted lleva chalina.
MAX.- ¡El dogal de la más horrible servidumbre!
   Me lo arrancaré para que hablemos" (p. 914).
in the world. His poetic style represents a contrast with that of Max and the other humans. His words sound beautiful but they are not really the words of pain, they are alien both to the world of surrounding reality and to Max's poetic tragedy.

Often the poetic style is completely destroyed, usually in the hypocritical manner of caricatures like Don Latino. Uttered with his asthmatic tone, poetic expressions become harsh, discordant and turn tragedy into foolishness. During the tragedy of Max's death Latino attempts to be sad and poetic: "¡Ha muerto el Genio! ¡No llores hija mía! ¡Ha muerto y no ha muerto!... ¡El Genio es inmortal! ¡Una huérfana ilustre!" (p. 943). It appears like a feigned pain and his rhetoric is sham poetry. Claudinita herself feels that this trite sentiment has gone far enough and stops him abruptly: "¡Usted está borracho!"

67. The first description of Darío's feelings by Valle-Inclán is the following: "Ante aquella aparición, el poeta siente la amargura de la vida, y con gesto egoísta de niño enfadado, cierra los ojos, y bebe un sorbo de su copa de ajenjo" (p. 928).

68. Oddly, it is not Max but Darío who still poetizes the decadent Bradomín:

La ruta tocaba a su fin, nos repartimos un pan duro en el rincón de un quicio oscuro con el Marqués de Bradomín!! (p. 931).

69. There are other examples; when Max asks a tavern boy to run and sell his coat the boy retorts: "Como la corza herida" (p. 902). Max sarcastically comments: "Eres un clásico."
SLANG

"Las palabras son humildes como la vida. Pobres ánforas de barro, contienen la experiencia derivada de los afanes cotidianos, nunca lo inefable de las alusiones eternas" (La lámpara maravillosa).

The speech in Luces is often that of the colloquial expressions spoken in the lower districts of Madrid. Slang words used by the appropriate people who generally frequent these sections accentuate the color and intensity of the ambient. Words like camarrupa, so pelma, filfe, chalado, etc., make the sections of Madrid appear even more vivid. There is an astonishing wealth and variety of vocabulary spoken by La Pisa Bien, El Rey de Portugal and various other inhabitants of Madrilenian Bohemia including Max: "Señor Centurión, yo también chanelo el sermo vulgaris" (p. 909). We see a different way of saying things: bebida becomes bebecua, monedas, beatas, callado, afónico, naturalmente, naturaca. Sometimes words are deformed; Latino to Latí; others are sonorized; borracho to borrachín, pirata to pirante. At times a slang expression emphasizes the general meaning: to be without money, "estoy apré." Other times it creates tension; to ask for pay becomes "apoquinar en pasta," counterpart of the English "to come across."

70. This emphasis on colloquial speech culminates in the americanisms of Tirano Banderas and "el lenguaje de germanía, de gitanos y de bandoleros" (Barja, Autores contemporaneos, (p. 416) of El Ruedo Ibérico. In Luces the dialectal elements
Valle-Inclán has recreated the language of the sections where Luces is set, but at the same time uses slang and vulgar expressions common to all Madrid (chulo, golfo, etc). This gives the "esperpento" a realistic, almost a documental, flavor. Slang draws our attention to everyday habits such as décimo de nardos (lottery ticket) etc., adding to the verisimilitude of the atmosphere. Such a use of language creates a frame of a concrete historical landscape with its types, incidents and hangouts.  

71

Documentation is not however, the most important factor for a conscious stylist like Valle-Inclán. His main purpose is not

are used for the first time to capture human interactions in a real ambient, to capture relations "de preocupación humana, de reales repulsas, simpatías o inquietudes del hombre por el hombre" (Speratti, p. 107).

71. Valle, like many other writers was most probably influenced by the theatrical género chico which became very popular in Madrid. The scenes were always set in the different sections of the city and the dominant speech was based on popular, vulgar phraseology. This style of discourse was very picturesque and often very sonorous: Rubén Darío wrote at the time: "En cuanto al verso libre moderno..., no es verdaderamente singular que en esta tierra de Quevedos y de Gongorases los únicos innovadores del instrumento lírico, los únicos libertadores del ritmo, hayan sido los poetas del Madrid Cómico y los libretistas del género chico?" (Preface to Cantos de Vida y Esperanza, Colección Austral, Buenos Aires (1946), 20). Although Darío is referring to the words adapted to music, this emphasizes the attention that artists who were preoccupied with style and sound effects might have paid to the rich, popular vocabulary with its idiomatic twists used in the género chico. Valle-Inclán was interested in a synthesis of popular language (see Tirano Banderas), and the género chico was one of the first to create a combination of sounds of the popular everyday slang locutions. As Unamuno said: "Y él sabía, Valle—como sé yo—que haciendo y rehaciendo habla española se hace historia española, lo que es hacer España" (El habla de Valle-Inclán, p. 417).
to show that this is the way people speak or to record popular peculiarities of language, nor to limit _Luces_ to one known section. The uses of slang are related to "esperpentismo" in the effects of its sound, its humor, its vividness and, of course, the inherent deformity that it possesses. Out of the heap of common slang, Valle-Inclán assembles and combines many words and expressions in such a way that he creates a language which has the ring of everyday reality but also the sonority and precision of a highly cultivated style. Such a linguistic texture, without losing its Bohemian flavor, expands the scope of action from a limited geographical section to an esperpentetic vision of all Madrid and of all Spain with its problems and everyday plights. Slang helps to present an alive combination of the Spanish language.

Slang expressions vitalize the dialogue, enliven it and give it a sense of spontaneity:

LA PISA BIEN.-- En cuanto me la mida Pica Lagartos.
PICA LAGARTOS.-- ¿Qué has dicho tú, so golfa?
LA PISA BIEN.-- ¡Perdona, rico! (p. 902).

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72. Unamuno's observation on the language of Valle is appropriate: "No hay que buscar precisión en su lengua. Las palabras le sonaban o no le sonaban. Y según el son le daba un sentido" (El habla de Valle--Inclán, p. 409).

73. Even within vulgar expressions a metaphorical style is accomplished. Following a complaint of hard work, the prostitute Lunares affirms: "Yo guardo el _pen de higos_ para el gachó que me sepa camellar" (p. 934). The metrical quality (6+12) add rhythm and bring out more the allusion.
The exchanges acquire the speed of everyday retorts and add not only drama but also humor in real speech and gesture:

EL CAPITAN PITITO.- ¡Por borrachín a la Delega!
MAX.- ¡Y más chulo que un ocho!

Through such dialogue, the action gains more agility and the pace of verbal exchanges increases. Sometimes, sarcasm is delivered with the tonal qualities of slang, increasing its critical purpose. As soon as Max is brought under arrest to the Police building he says: "¡Traigo detenida una pareja de guindillas! Estaban emborrachándose en una tasca, y los hice salir a darme escolta" (p. 911). This is humorous and critical, pointing to the wasted efforts of the Police in arresting a blind poet.

Much of the vocabulary used by Valle-Inclán—plin, mulé, bocón, chalado, etc.—was very common in 1920, referring usually to degenerate, vulgar, profane and ridiculous states of reality. In conclusion, they play a dual role within the highly organized linguistic expression of Luces. The very innate deformity of slang words, their brevity and matter-of-fact delivery, strengthen the vision of grotesque reality and render more authentic its relation to history. Besides the grotesque effect, they also add drama and humor in real speech and gesture, thus increasing the tempo of action.
The intermingling of poetic and slang expressions creates a contrast between an ideal conception of reality and reality as a constant struggle. Slang is symbolic of an experience more akin to the trying problems of modern life. Max says that: "Las letras son colorín, pingajo y hambre..." (p. 924). An embellished poetic expression of a cruel reality is only gesture and far removed from a reality of hunger. Ideal expressions are destroyed often by the dynamic reality and distorting quality of slang. Slang reduces tragedy to everyday reality and brings it down from the clouds of poetic imagery. MAX. - "La miseria del pueblo español, la gran miseria moral, está en su chabacana sensibilidad" (p. 899). The word chabacana brings down the tragic idea of misery. The sound of words like mulé, chulo, etc., comes rasping like a file, their edge cuts and saws the architectonic structure of the ideal figures of expressing reality. They are found in short phrases, often in one word, often ugly, niggardly, curt. Their strident sounds make the poetic expressions appear as mere figures, and the poetas become cráneos.

Max Estrella loses himself in poetry and he himself often destroys it with abrupt slang which is often forcefully hostile to his own images. His vocal expressions are exemplary of the esperpentic technique, the passage from tragedy to absurdity.
"Yo soy el verdadero inmortal, y no esos cabrones..." (p. 908).

One language destroys the other, but this destruction is done effectively, beautifully. Insulting slang destroys an accepted idea of reality.

Often, a common expression becomes additionally effective because it is found in an ironic framework. It stands out and adds beauty and intensity to the ironic context, by suddenly inverting an accepted idea. The situation between the humiliated, penniless, blind Max and the well-to-do Minister is a good example:

MAX.- El mundo es mío, todo me sonríe, soy un hombre sin penas.
EL MINISTRO.- ¡Te envidio!
MAX.- ¡Paco, no seas majadero! (p. 926).

First the jocular tone of Max is tragic. The acid reflection "majadero," abrupt and dramatic, underlies the foolishness of Paco, making Max's first statement not only ironical but sarcastic. It shows sentimentality to be absurd when it is foolish and underscores Max's sarcasm that the world is his.

The brief, short expressions such as the above, are not

74. This is also in line with other Spanish artists preoccupied with Spanish reality. Quevedo wrote love poems using beautiful metaphors and with metaphors he would destroy the poetry of love: "Pero si fueran oro los cabellos, calvo su casco fuera, y diligentes mis dedos los pelaran por vendellos."

Also his poem Putidoncella; vulgar puti is put first to destroy the ideal doncella. The ugly destroys the beautiful as Quevedo often destroys reality.
merely negative factors, they are also positive in that they enrich and intensify a grotesque vision of contemporary reality.  

**Explanation of the Esperpento: Two styles**

In Scene Twelve Max and Latino each use an appropriate vocabulary in their conversation concerning the "esperpento." Max is theorizing; he is formulating an aesthetic norm. He relies on conceptual elements of expression and therefore employs a corresponding language: estética, sistema, deformación, civilización, imagen, bello, matemática perfecta, transformar, normas clásicas, expresión. These theoretical abstract words are ideal for the exposition of an aesthetic norm and as used by Max, refer specifically to an idea that is derived from the nature of an esperpentic reality. The pure or essential form of esperpento is abstracted from the concrete deformed details seen in a specific esperpento, Luces de Bohemia.

Don Latino de Hispalis juxtaposes a different brand of language to the theoretical explanations of Max. He has been defined as "grotesco personaje" by Max, and the absurdity of his role is revealed very appropriately by his vocabulary.

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75. This technique of "reversal meaning" was continued by Valle-Inclán and became one of the basic linguistic techniques of the esperpento. In Las galas del difunto, a veteran talks to a prostitute about the war and about the medals he carried: LA DAIFA. - ¡Has sido un héroe! IVANITO VENTOLERA. - ¡Un cabrón! (OC, I, p. 967).
His expressive repertoire at the moment Max is delivering his theoretical explanation, consists almost totally of words like carcunda, tuno, curda, miau, me quito el cráneo, etc. These words differ additionally from the abstract terms of Max in that they have their origin in the experiencing of everyday concrete reality. They do not "explain" but actually "represent" a grotesque aspect of reality. Since they are mostly directed at Max, the theorist of the esperpento and the most prominent poet, they are even more conspicuous in their use.

MAX.- ...Los héroes clásicos han ido a pasearse en el callejón del Gato.
DON LATINO.- Estás completamente curda (p. 939).

The word curda refers to an intoxicating state but also to a physical deformation. The most absurd reaction to a well formulated view and imaginative conception that the tragic sense of Spanish life can be given by a systematically deformed aesthetic is the expression Miau. 76

The two modes of expressive language correspond to opposite dispositions in this scene. One type of vocabulary refers to a temperament, to a theory, the other to actual expression. There is a true correspondence of one with the other and this artistic process gives a concrete vision of deformity. The correspondence is obvious in the manner that Valle-Inclán uses a distorting style

76. The onomatopeya of a cat's "maullido" meaning "baloney" in this case. It recalls Galdós' novel Miau where the word expresses the meaning of the hero's life which is a meaningless life.
which is clearly propagated in the theory of esperpento. He has deformed the expression itself. The esperpentic style presented by Max is a formal mode of expressing the merits and mechanisms of grotesque deformities. But the manner of this esperpentic style, the actual workmanship of esperpento by Valle-Inclán (the choice of words, the alluded visions, the development of images), occurs simultaneously side by side with the explanation.

The correspondence and fusion of one with the other occurs because linguistically they both reach their perfections. The manner in which this esperpento has been written is worth of the theoretical form because its language has transformed the surrounding reality and its ideal conception with the mathematic precision of a concave mirror. On the other hand the abstract explanation of the esperpento is worthy of the deformed reality for it has formulated and defined it clearly and correctly. The exemplification of the theory, in this particular scene brought about by Don Latino’s expressions, is every bit as appropriately deformed as the theory says it should be.

77. As a matter of fact, Valle-Inclán in his later works concentrated principally in the visual propagation of deformed reality and not on its explanation. Tirano Banderas which in the opinion of Emma Speratti is the work of Valle "que ofrece el esperpento perfecto" is a deformed vision with the rapid movement of cinematography and never touches the theoretical aspect. The same is true for El Ruedo Ibérico. Only the consequence of the theory is seen in these works.
The presence side by side of both slang and clear language and the penetration of one with the other is so well integrated in *Luces* that it leaves no doubt of the prescribed pattern of looking at the grotesque side of reality on one hand, and its actual application to the surrounding, historical reality on the other. The intention of Valle-Inclán seems to be to lead us through the language to a comparison between the esquemantic realization of *Luces* and the surrounding reality whose deformed aspect is the content of *Luces*. The inner development of moving from the theoretical to the actual, of going from the conception of style to the actual texture (and vision) is parallel to the artistic vision of *Luces* and the vision of everyday Spanish reality. The language of *Luces* leads constantly to something visual, specifically to a concrete experience of grotesque life.

In conclusion, we see that the linguistic characteristics project and highlight visually or audibly the distortions and absurdities of a modern world. The language achieves two goals: one, its distorted forms may produce shocking effects and the reader may lose himself in the rhythm of the description, in the style. Two, the linguistic deformities create a vision of a surrounding reality which is inescapably distorted, and as such, it is painful, problematic, horrifying, and grotesque.
ELABORATION OF THE PLOT

As in the majority of the "esperpentos," there is no sustained action in _Luces_. The plot is made of various dramatic situations which, as we will see, are not organically united. Many of these situations appear grotesque through the absurd and ridiculous performance of individuals in the face of what should be tragic situations, psychological reactions, emotional responses, and tense moments which break down into incongruities. The actions best dramatized are those concerning death because in death the deformity of human condition reaches its maximum expression. The cumulative effect of all the dramatic actions in _Luces_ is focused on the death of Max. The whole plot is drawn together in this scene because as Max is dying, he gives coherence and meaning to the elaboration of the whole plot in an "esperpento" by defining the new genre.

In _Divinas Palabras_, death is seen through the grotesque appearance of a hydrocephalic idiot: "El enano había tenido el último temblor... la enorme cabeza azulenta, con la lengua entre los labios y los ojos vidriados, parecía degollada. Las moscas del ganado acudían a picar en ella" (OC, I, p. 763). In _Los Cuernos de don Friolera_ the plot reaches an absurd climax when the wrong person has been killed. "Doña Pepita.- ¡Qué drama! No mató a la mujer! ¡Mató a la hija!" And the Coronel seriously adds: "¡Pepita, la vida de un hijo es algo serio!" (OC, I, p. 1041). In _Tirano Banderas_ the horrid deaths of Zacarias' child (eaten by pigs) and of "el gachupín" (dragged by Zacarias' horse) culminate in the violent death of Banderas and his daughter with which the novel ends: "Sacó del pecho un puñal, tomó a la hija de los cabellos para asegurarla y cerró los ojos. Un memorial de los rebeldes dice que la cosió con quince puñaladas..
The grotesque vision that Max's theory implies has actually been generated from a number of horrible situations within the action of Luces. When it is formulated, it is inseparable from the terrible situation of Max's death. A complete fusion between the conceptual presentation of "esperpento," the theory, and the grotesque dramatic action is evident in the structure of this scene, and is analogous to the language that we have examined. Whatever Max explains is never more distorted than the action which is taking place around him.

The Death of Max: Deformation of Action

"Absurda tarde. Macabra mueca de dolor"
(La Pipa de Kif).

Max will define what is an "esperpento," but in the action that will occur at the moment that he is theorizing, he himself will be projected in the concave mirror and appear grotesque. He is seen lying on the threshold of a door near a church yard on a very cold morning. He is freezing but cannot get up. The previous night, full of tragic and absurd episodes, has taken a heavy toll on his poor health and has embittered him. He had been cheated, had to sell his coat, and became intoxicated; then he was put in prison and humiliated. He was later picked up by a street-walker, Tirano Banderas salió a la ventana blandiendo el puñal, y cayó acribillado. Su cabeza, befada por sentencia..." (OC, II, p. 830).
and was present when the brutal events of the labor strikes were taking place. The whole night was a long series of exasperating experiences that left him disgusted and helpless. All he could say toward the end was: "Latino, ya no puedo gritar" (p. 937).

It is here, on the threshold of a door, looking at the bulk of a baroque church, at a time when everybody is beginning to awake from their slumber that Max has come to die. Like the pierrots and clowns of the carnivals in *La Pipa de Kif*, Max will also end his performance with a painful grimace which the spectacle of a grotesque life imprinted on his face. Don Latino has noticed this and tells him: "La verdad es que tienes una fisonomía algo rara!" (p. 938), Max’s face expresses the pain and terror of what he has experienced. The grimace frightens even Don Latino to the point that he pleads with Max: "Deja la mueca."

In this setting, which already approximates grotesqueness, Max begins his exposition of the "esperpento." His starting point is Don Latino whom he calls "grotesco personaje," telling him that he will immortalize his grotesqueness. Don Latino, however, is not impressed with Max’s theory. He tells Max to leave all jokes aside and to try to get up. He bluntly states

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79. This macabre atmosphere of death had already been foreshadowed in a scene from *La Pipa de Kif*, at the "fin del carnaval" (OC, I, p. 1139). The absurd evening has merely changed into dawn, but the macabre grimace of pain has remained.
that he is completely drunk. Don Latino is impressed only with Max the man and his actual behavior. He is not concerned with his theory of the "esperpento" and thus the scene becomes one of dramatic action. Our attention is centered not only on the theory of literary deformity but also on the action generated by the behavior of Max and Latino. While Max is developing his theory, Don Latino constantly interrupts to point out first, the deformed physical appearance of Max: he tells him not to twist his mouth, that his behavior is fearful ("Me estás asustando"), that he should stop being ridiculous; in short, he implies that Max is catching the deforming disease: "¡Miau! ¡Te estás contagiando!" (p. 939). As they talk about deformed reality they themselves become the protagonists of a literary scene that represents a distortion of reality. The esperpentic vision is thus materialized because deformities occur dramatically and plastically at the moment Max explains in theoretical terms what are the deforming elements of the "esperpento." Plasticity of deformity is achieved through the physical appearance of Max; dramatization through his death.

Don Latino tells Max: "No tuerzas la boca" on two occasions. The first time immediately after Max mentions the word "esperpento;" the second when the explanation of the "esperpento" has ended and the norms of the concave mirror have been clarified. We get a sense of repetition of the twisting and a reiteration of Max's physical appearance. The expression of Max's face has been
deformed in the same mirror which, as he claims, deforms the appearance of the classic heroes. The explanation of esperpento has taken place within the bounds of an actual, plastic view of grotesqueness, because it has a visual texture. Before the clear structure of his esperpentic theory the pathetic gestures of dying Max are the more grotesque. Valle-Inclán has tellingly rendered his twisting face; his agitation; his quivering body, by having Don Latino refer to them at the precise moment that the theory of esperpento is explained.

Max is theorizing, but he is also dying. His death, however, is viewed beyond the norms of tragedy. Don Latino again sets the concrete vision of deformed death. When Max cannot get up because he is dying, Latino tells him: "Deja esta farsa" (p. 939). Max's death will not be viewed as a tragedy but as a farce, as the simplest form of ridicule. Death is associated with blundering and misapprehension. When Max says: "No me siento las manos y me duelen las uñas. Estoy muy malo," it is the truth. Don Latino cannot understand it for actually he does not care. He tells Max jokingly: "Quieres conmoverme, para luego tomarme la coleta." Don Latino sees a real tragedy as a joke and it becomes one because he, a "grotesco personaje," distorts a tragic reality and reduces it to absurdity. When he reiterates: "Debías dejar esa broma," death becomes almost horseplay and slapstick. But slapstick that is macabre and horrible. (Don Latino: "Si continúas con esa broma macabra te abandono"). The following
events underline this macabre action of a poet's death. It is Max who now renders his death absurd. As he is dying he says sarcastically to Latino: "Latino, entona el gori-gori" (p. 941). A situation of death that contains pathos and could be tragic appears ridiculous as it tends towards exaggeration, beyond the bounds of tragic probability. And this farcical situation of Max's death becomes grotesque in its sudden end. First, Max says that he is dead ("Estoy muerto"); Latino again does not believe him, asks him to respond. Max answers that "Los muertos no hablan," and as a final incongruity he simply tells Latino, "¡Buenas noches!" and dies. The incongruity is especially emphasized through the simplicity of the acceptance of such a horrible reality. A shock is created by the antithesis between the ridiculous expression of this situation and the inherent tragedy of death.

Even descriptively this dramatic action of Max's death is related to absurdity through allusion. Exactly at the moment he is dying a stray dog runs close by, "en zigzag," and in the center of the scene "encoge la pata y se orina" (p. 941). Max's death is seen plastically together with the dog's action. The fact that Latino returns and whispers to the dead body of Max--"Procura incorporarle hablándole a la oreja" (p. 941)--as though he were still alive, is an anticlimax to this grotesque scene of death.
The Grotesque Sense of Action

The cruel fact of suffering and death is evident in this but it becomes grotesque because it is looked upon without compassion. Max had earlier complained to an officer of the law that he was blind, unable to walk alone, and received this answer: "¿Quiere usted que un servidor le vuelva la vista?" (p. 909). This complete indifference, looking at blindness merely as a fact, without any feeling, makes a tragic situation appear ridiculous. Max himself crystallizes the absurdity of the situation: "¡Señores guardias, ustedes me perdonarán que sea ciego!" (p. 909). Cynicism overshadows tragedy.

As an action, Max's death is exemplary of the whole of Luces and the technique with which it is brought about—the simultaneous presentation of tragedy and ridicule and their interrelationship—is typical of the elaboration of plot in an "esperpento." It is a miniature "esperpento" of one

80. Luces is full of such situations: Max at one time is so tired, he wants to lie down someplace and sleep:

MAX.- ¡Pues yo tengo sueño!
SERAPÍN EL BONITO.- Aquí no se viene a dormir (p. 912). Man's indifference to man's suffering and needs is tellingly captured by Valle-Inclán.

81. Even after Max's death this is continued. Over the dead body a big argument occurs whether Max is dead, or is in a cataleptic state. The fact of his death is never doubted and yet through misunderstandings and foolishness we have a situation of mad confusion:

LA PORTERA.- ¡Que no está muerto! ¡Muerto y corrupto!
BASILIO SOULINAKE.- Usted, sin estudios universitarios, no puede tener conmigo controversia. La
individual case which perhaps points out that the tragic sense of modern life in general, especially that of Spain, could be captured by "una estética, sistemáticamente deformada." The explanation of Max is designed to make more explicit the relationship between literary and historical distortion; the plot of Luces makes this relationship comprehensible and more effective. The death of Max clarifies the dramatic significance of various other experiences by making us perceive them as an absurd nightmare.

**Dramatization of the Esperpentic Theory**

The considerable degree of the distortion of the above action is brought about by a precise and logical order of development. The dramatic structure of the action is patently systematic, almost geometrical in its presentation. We see four steps in the process:

MAX. - La tragedia nuestra no es tragedia.
DON LATINO. - ¡Pues algo será!

(1) MAX. - El Esperpento.
(2) DON LATINO. - No tezras la boca, Max.

(3) MAX. - El esperpentismo lo ha inventado Goya. Los héroes clásicos...
(4) DON LATINO. - ¡Estás completamente curda! (p. 939).

democracia no excluye las categorías técnicas, ya usted lo sabe, señora portera" (p. 947). Valle-Inclán exploits the mechanism of error arising from foolish misconceptions and selfish insistence to produce a situation of complications that could be almost hilarious, if it were not for Max's death and his wife's tragedy. Confusion is piled upon confusion creating a distorted sense of action and a situation of chaos and disorder in the midst of the most terrible tragedy, the death of a human being. This aspect is very common in all the "esperpentos."
First, the name of a new genre is mentioned. It is used in two senses. It will replace tragedy because it will deal with something that is even beyond tragedy. It also has a literary connotation for it will reflect a reality in a fictional form. (Max had said earlier: "Don Latino de Hispalis, grotesco personaje, te inmortalizaré en una novela" p. 938). From the moment this new term appears, it refers both to a vision of life and to its reflection in literature.

Second, the idea of "esperpento" is immediately exemplified. Valle-Inclán activates the implications of the new genre. The visual picture that Latino's statement implies actually prepares the ground for the explanation of the "esperpento."

Third, the aesthetic norms of esperpento are set forth. The theoretical presentation as we saw in Chapter II, has a logical order. In a few lines, the origins, mechanics and actual purpose of "esperpento" are presented with clarity.

Finally, the definition of the "esperpento" becomes dramatic action. Max explains something theoretically and Don Latino interrupts with a deformed expression. Max creates a literary concave mirror and since both Max and Latino are distortions in flesh and blood, the mirror is held up to reflect their actions. The consistent development from explanation to vision makes the structure of this dramatic action such that during the transposition of reality to grotesqueness through the theoretical mirror, the concrete transfiguration of a death to something absurd also
takes place. The literary form of Luces is subjected to "mathematics" and its distorted elaboration of plot gains both clarity and beauty.
ARTISTIC ELABORATION OF SURROUNDING REALITY

"La leyenda negra, en estos días menguados, es la Historia de España"
(Max in Luces de Bohemia).

An "esperpento" almost always deals with historical or contemporary situations. Throughout Luces there is a mention or an actual brief dramatization of political events that took place shortly before the book was written. The most important of these events are the strikes of the year 1919 which began in Barcelona and spread all over Spain. In Luces we see a dramatization of the disturbances that were the result of strikes. There are statements, for example, like "Viva la huelga de proletarios." Streets are full of broken glass, the result of skirmishes between strikers and the authorities. There are discussions about the problem of Property and Labor, about the Catalanian employers and their treatment of workers, and the problem of anarchists in relation to the strikes. The material Valle-Inclán took from actual events that centered around the strikes from 1916-1919 and his elaboration of this material in the development of Luces illustrate the close relation between the deformed vision within Luces and the surrounding reality. As he said: "Creo que la novela camina paralelmente con la historia y con los movimientos políticos" (G. Martínez Sierra, Valle-Inclán).

The labor events of 1919 which turned Spain into a place of
assassinations and terror began in Barcelona during 1917-1918, during the last years of the War when there had taken place a rapid growth of terrorist gangs related to the organization of labor. By 1919 the reign of Alfonso XIII had become one long catalogue of political and social upheavals. This, together with the continuous corruption of the bureaucracy, the emergence in 1917 of the "Juntas de Defensa" which again strengthened the army, and labor unrest, plunged Spain into a constant internal strife. When labor began to organize and demand better living conditions using the strike as a weapon, violence broke out.

During February of 1919, the strike situation in Barcelona was serious. More than fifty thousand persons were on strike and the city had been without water or light. By the time the military

82. There is reasonable proof that a large portion of the "strike" material in Luces is based on 1919 events or a little before. There is definite reference to Antonio Maura when he had formed a cabinet in April 1919. Max Estrella visited him (Ministro-Paco) and after Max's death, Don Latino said: "Don Antonio Maura estuvo a dar el pésame en la casa del Gallo" (p. 954). There is a clear reference to the Russian revolution implying its success which did not come about until 1919: "El ideal revolucionario tiene que ser la destrucción de la riqueza, como en Rusia" (p. 914). Also many of the actual strikes coincide with those seen in Luces. Valle-Inclán actually unites in this work the events of few years. For example, Rubén Darío appears, although he had died in 1916. However, certain strikes and practices like "la ley de fuga" which were intensified by General Anido in Barcelona early in 1919, are recreated in Luces. Fernandez Almagro believes that many parts of Luces were written in 1920: "Dice Clarinito: "Maestro, nosotros, los jóvenes impondremos la candidatura de usted para un sillón de la Academia. Contesta DORIO DE GADEX: "Precisamente ahora está vacante el sillón de D. Benito el Garbancero. Esto es, D. Benito Pérez Galdós, muerto en 1920" (Vida, p. 908).
put down the strike, Romanones resigned because of the acts of violence and Maura took over. Meanwhile strikes began to spread all over the peninsula and even Mallorca. Troops began to occupy the chief streets of many cities in order to insure the carrying out of the public services. Strikes would come to an end (often violently) and spring up again. Military law was declared in Barcelona, many labor leaders were imprisoned and gangs of pistoleros were let loose. For the next months, rival gangs of terrorists were roaming the streets and assassinations took place every week. Famine, violence, unemployment, rained disaster on a country which was already poor and could ill afford prolonged paralysis of production. After a year, the situation was not improving.

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83. The situation in Spain received press coverage throughout the world. Here are some examples which document our presentation, taken from the daily reports in the New York Times: "The situation has been complicated by strikes in Barcelona, Madrid and other cities which have sometimes led to bloodshed" New York Times, March 8, p. 6, Col 5 (Referred as NYT).

84. "The syndicalist pistoleros replied and the situation went from bad to worse. In Andalusia, where there was a general effervescence, military law was declared and troops were sent down to suppress the strikers on the large estates" Gerald Brenan, The Spanish Labyrinth, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 1950), p. 71.

85. "The labor situation in Madrid and Barcelona has undergone no improvement, the situation in Madrid becoming more serious. Strikes are spreading all over Spain" (NYT, Dec. 25, p. 23). We also read that on Christmas day "workmen at Madrid, at Barcelona, Valencia and other cities where lockouts are in force may be seen on the streets begging for a few pennies" (NYT, p. 23).
This is briefly what Valle-Inclán either saw or followed in the news during the terrible years between 1916-1919. The longevity of the strikes, the lack of compromise, the continuous acts of violence, etc, could easily appear exasperating. He chose from the whole conglomeration of events the particular elements that were most suited to show the deformity, ridicule and brutal reality that these events exemplify. Out of the vast repertory of violence, atrocities, killings, imprisonments, hunger and political maneuvers, and documentary material relating to the strikes, Valle-Inclán attempted a synthesis of the important results and effects of all that had taken place in those years. Then he integrates everything through the grotesque vision thus making the synthesis of events both more striking and more true.

Many of the above events are elaborated in Luces. They are introduced in the squalid atmosphere of the tavern of Pica Lagartos and form a constant background throughout the work. The workers ("Corren por la call tropellos de obreros"), the confusion of crowds ("Salen empujándose"), the closing of shops ("Resuena el golpe de muchos cierres metálicos") are captured by Valle-Inclán as a panic-infested situation. These strikes which flared up in violence all over Spain have this in common with the esperpentific

86. We cannot know if Valle-Inclán lived through some of these events but his keen interest in everyday incidents is well known and he was certainly very familiar with the important events through the newspapers.
vision: they can always offer a view of brutality, injustice, confusion, unnecessary killings, ridicule and a sense of helplessness. Like a war, they can show many terrible aspects of humanity. Valle-Inclán could never exaggerate the terrible events that actually took place. What he did is to choose the parts that were outstanding for their distress confusion and tragedy, and integrate them in the development of *Luces*. This occurs when Max is arrested as a drunk by the patrols during street disturbances.

The actual events of the strikes enter the life of the protagonist of *Luces*, and until his death they are elaborated artistically only in terms of Max and the escherpentic vision which he formulates. The events will remain terrible and tragic but will be also intensified in their cynical and grotesque presentation. Valle-Inclán concentrates on the most terrible result of such violent events, death.

The events of the strikes, at first fairly documented, rapid in their presentation, and violent in their appearance, are now concentrated in two major, dramatically elaborated scenes: the

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87. Many of the situations in *Luces* correspond with the actual events reported by various newspapers. Below are only a few examples: 1). "All the stores and cafes have been closed" (*NYT*, Feb 20, p. 1:1). "Faroles rotos, cerradas todas, ventanas y puertas" (p. 905). Or, "La Buñolería Modernista entreabre su puerta,..." (p. 906). Or, "...se cierra con golpe pronto la puerta de la Buñolería" (p. 909). 2). "Martial law has been declared in Madrid, and troops are patrolling the streets!" (*NYT*, Mar. 2, p. 3). Valle-Inclán is as brief in his description: "Soldados romanos. Sombras de Guardias.--Se extingue el eco de la patrulla" (p. 905-906). Or, "...la patrulla de soldados romanos desemboca por una calle traviesa" (p. 909).
scene in a prison cell between Max and an arrested striker, and
the scene in a street where Max has to listen to a mother whose
child has been shot accidentally by the troops. Both portray
the profound drama of the tragic sense of death but also underlie
its absurd side.

The episode between Max and the Catalan prisoner is
easily one of the most moving and dramatic scenes in Luces.
The blind poet discusses the situation of the strikes with this
young man. He is a worker from Barcelona blamed as "rebelle"
because he says that "No quise dejar el telar por ir a la guerra
y levanté un motín en la fábrica. Me renunció el patrón, complí
condena, recorrí el mundo buscando trabajo, y ahora voy por
trénitos reclamando de no sé que jueces" (p. 915). Valle-
Inclán unites the personal problem with history. The fate of
this man is a terrible one but one that became common in 1919
under General Anido, known as ley de fuga. The police arrested
syndicalists and shot them as they were being conducted to the
police station; they were reported as shot trying to escape." 89

88. The New York Times reported on March 26: "The workmen
of Barcelona declared a general strike yesterday because of the
continued detention of mobilized strikers. Forty men were
arrested by the authorities, after refusing to obey orders to
return to work." It is not explained how this prisoner got to
Madrid from Barcelona. It is not important because Valle-Inclán
is trying to concentrate the action of both places in one
situation.

89. Gerald Brenan, Labyrinth, p. 73.
This is the fact related to the strikes that Valle-Inclán has dramatized, treating it as another occasion for man to indulge in stupid brutality. This thirty year old prisoner will be shot "while attempting to escape" merely because as a worker he took part in the strikes. But Valle-Inclán carries it even a little further bringing out all the possible brutality of the episode:

EL PRESO.— Conozco la suerte que me espera: cuatro tiros por intento de fuga. Bueno. Si no es más que eso.
MAX.— ¿Pues qué temes?
EL PRESO.— Que se diviertan dándome tormento (p. 915).

The picture captured in only three lines becomes an overwhelming revelation of barbarity. Even the tragedy of a useless death is surpassed by the horror of torture. The protest against all this is crystallized in Max's one-word comment: "¡Bárbaros!"

After the tumultous scenes at Pica Lagartos, in La Cibeles, in the streets, in the Police headquarters, in which a quick movement presented the events of the strike in a frenzy and made violence and death almost a trivial matter, Valle-Inclán now chose the most terrible moment of all to slow the external action completely and examine this triviality with which one single life is handled, a little before the resounding volley of the "cuatro tiros" would take the life of an unfortunate striker. In the dead darkness of the prison cell, where the prisoner, "Bajo la luz se le ve esposado, con la cara llena de sangre" (p. 913), these moments of quiet, slow suspense between Max and the striker reach an unbearable degree of tension. But this is not an
agonizing tension, because both the victim and his listener are completely helpless and the whole situation appears both tragic and ridiculous at the same time:

EL PRESO.— Por siete pesetas, al cruzar un lugar solitario, me sacarán la vida los que tienen a su cargo la defensa del pueblo (p. 915). Quickly a guard enters to take the prisoner away. Valle-Inclán in this scene which resulted from an everyday affair, the strikes, indicts not only man’s cruelty to man but the general indifference towards cruelty, as though death is no longer a tragedy but a common occurrence.  

EL PRESO.— Van a matarme... ¿Qué diré mañana esa Prensa canalla? MAX.— Lo que le manden (p. 916).

Valle-Inclán expands this individual tragedy to embrace the whole nation again, represented by a Press that is unable to do anything in the face of something so terrible. Max, the one

90. The fact is that the authorities were becoming more and more hated for such brutal practices. The New York Times reports: "The newspaper ABC says that of the civil guards, who heretofore have been greatly respected in Spain, eight have been killed, twenty-four wounded and fifty-two others attacked during the year 1919" (Dec. 24, p. 5:1).

91. The aspect that Valle paints of the guard is far from human. He says: "Pues andando. Gacho, vas a salir en viaje de recreo" (p. 915). Acting with machine-like precision, he does not even seem to look at the human victim. Such figures are not, of course, representative only of those times during the strikes; they typify those who would shoot their fellow men, any time, at any place. This is why Max refers to them as barbarous.

92. The press was not generally favorable to labor or to the strikes. It reacted favorably to a postponement of different bills to improve labor conditions: "The newspapers generally approve
who will later say that this whole tragedy is no longer a tragedy, but something more distorted, an esperpento, cries at this scene, not only from sadness but "de impotencia y de rabia" (p. 916). 93

This impotence and anger are exaggerated in the scene before his death when the events of the strike are viewed for the last time. Max and Latino cross a street and come upon a group of people. In their midst, a woman with a dead child in her arms screams. "¡Sí-caríos! ¡Asesinos de criaturas!" (p. 936). The people are divided in their opinions of the strikes. El Empeñista, el Tabernero and el Retirado are against strikes and they think that they should be put down to preserve order. All that the tavern-keeper can tell to the poor mother is that "Son desgracias para el restablecimiento del orden" (p. 936).94 On the other hand, a suspension of the Cortes, and praise Count Romanones, the Premier, for his action" (NYT, March 1, 1919, p. 1:4).

93. This is a merciless exposé of Spanish society as well as a terrible tragedy. The artist is unable to do anything about the brutality against the man of the street, the Catalanian striker. There is a grim humor in the man's realization as to what the "canalla prensa" will say. This grim humor carries us not only to the pathos of Max's tears but straight to the senseless absurdity of the inability to cope with such a tragic reality, straight to Max's impotence.

94. "Employers here have published a manifesto in which they declare the three weeks' lockout inaugurated by them was to show workmen the advantage of order and discipline and to avoid a condition of anarchy" (NYT, Dec. 24, p. 5:1). The tavern keeper's comment is molded around the above channel of thought which blamed strikes for the disorders. In the face of stark personal tragedy it sounds cynical and again emphasizes the honor of indifference.
striking mason and a Trapera are more sympathetic with the mother. Even the interest of the mason, however, is concentrated mainly on his problem, the strikes and lockouts: "La vida del proletario no representa nada para el gobierno" (p. 937).

In the midst of the argument "llega un tableteo de fusilada" (p. 937), Our attention is directed again to the external view of strikes. But towering up in full protest this time is the dominating figure of the mother with her dead child, the end result of these events. The meaning of Valle-Inclán's elaboration of these historical strikes is suddenly reduced for one moment to the shapeless corpse in the hands of the weeping mother. Her cry of pain is now integrated with the presence of Max and Don Latino, with the artist who views reality and the "grotoso personaje," whose grotesqueness is analogous to, and perhaps symbolic of, the terrible events that are taking place:

LA MADRE DEL NIÑO.- ¡Que tan fría, boca de nardo!
MAX.- ¡Jamás oí voz con esa cólera trágica!
DON LATINO.- Hay mucho de teatro.
MAX.- ¡Imbécil!

Stylistically Valle has accomplished a visual stage of progression from tragedy to esperpento. Looking at the page, the last words are in succession, trágica, teatro, Imbécil. A tragedy is seen as theatrical sham by the same person who in a few hours will see Max's death as a farce. The tragedy of the strikes now becomes complete. The night watchman reports that the shots were for "un preso que ha intentado fugarse." In one moment
Valle-Inclán has made us look at the most terrible possible results of an actual reality; amidst the indifference of the press and the people, and the cynicism of Don Latino, Valle-Inclán projects the shooting in the back of a prisoner and the murder of an innocent child. Max exclaims:

"¡Me muero de rabia! Estoy mascando ortigas. Nuestra vida es un círculo dantesco. Rabia y vergüenza. Me muero de hambre, satisfecho de no haber llevado una triste velilla en la trágica mojiganga" (p. 938).

Again the choice of the right word (mojiganga) vitalizes this scene. What is happening around Max is tragic, but even worse than that, it is a clownish tragedy. The next step is for Max to define and explain what is a tragedy performed by clowns: El Esperpento.

The strikes, another part of the tragic problem of Spain, have been presented and then dramatized to become a part of a general distorted reality. Structurally, the events have been taken from the surrounding reality and are generally well documented. Then two of the most terrible results of this reality are dramatized and integrated perfectly with the esperpentic vision. The problems that they carry have been generated from within Luces; they are integrated in a specific dramatic action involving Max. Structurally the events of the strikes become inseparable from the unique distorted vision with which Luces is involved. After explaining the aesthetic norms of looking at the distorted side of reality and just before he enacted the last
part of his farcical death, Max states: "¡Yo soy el muerto! ¿Qué dirá mañana esa canalla de los periódicos, se preguntaba el paria catalán?" With this statement the reader is obliged to regard the esperpentic vision not only as a literary tool but also as parallel of, and identified with, surrounding reality.

Unity of Artistic Elaboration

The documentary material relating to the strikes was actually spread over the period of more than a year and took place in many regions of Spain. In Valle-Inclán's elaboration of this historical material these events are crowded in one section of Madrid and take place in a matter of a few hours, from early evening to late night. "A prolongation of the strike produces acts of sabotage and of conflict with the police, whilst a failure produces an atmosphere of resentment..." Although the essential elements of these prolonged strikes take place within hours, these few hours are filled with so many terrible events in Luces that they give the impression of being endless and thus maintaining the conflict due to prolongation. Meetings, patrols, skirmishes, closed shops, fights, arrests, prisons, the press, the government

95. The concentration of time which is typical of almost all the esperpentos is utilized with care in Luces. The action begins as the sun is setting. As Max dies: "el reloj de la iglesia da cinco campanadas bajo el gallo de la veleta" (p. 940).

96. Gerald Brenan, Labyrinth, p. 70.
workers, mobs, authorities, prisoners, deaths, murder, violence, everything essential (and reported in the newspapers) that is common not to one strike, but to a synthesis of many strikes is concentrated together. Valle-Inclán has reassembled several events and places them together to create a composite picture. Thus the reader is led to see many terrible events all at once, which together compose a grotesque scheme in everyday reality.

Valle-Inclán dramatizes some of the events that were familiar to everyone most probably utilizing everyday news. This process relates more readily the esperpentic vision of Luces to common

97. This technique of filling short intervals of time with many events is one of the predominant characteristics of Tirano Banderas. Emma Speratti discusses the amount of events that take place: "Son hechos que ocurran de manera más o menos simultánea en diferentes lugares, y quizá a esto se refería Valle-Inclán cuando afirmaba: 'Ahora, en algo que estoy escribiendo, esta idea de llenar el tiempo como llenaba el Greco el espacio, totalmente, me preoccupa!'" ("Autocritica", en España, Madrid, 8 de marzo de 1924, p. 6, TE, p. 43). On the other hand the presence of an actual setting like these well known sections of Madrid (La Cibeles, etc.) serves to concentrate the action of the strikes in one specific locality. This is advantageous to the purposes of esperpento because the cruelty which was often the result of these strikes is viewed collectively in one concentrated space, like in a spectacle. The result is an impression of the co-existence of past, present and perhaps future actions. Valle-Inclán explained this in La Lámpara maravillosa: "Cuando se rompen las normas del tiempo, el instante más pequeño se rasga como un vientre preñado de eternidad." This technique, enhances cinematography. It is of course put even to better use in Tirano Banderas: "Valle-Inclán pone ante nuestros ojos una suma de hechos que ocurren no sólo casi en el mismo momento, sino hasta en el mismo minuto" (Speratti, TE, p. 71). This technique gains effectiveness for the first time in Luces.

98. Others have shown Valle-Inclán's practice of reworking actual chronicles, news items, etc. William L. Fichter, "Sobre la génesis de la Sonata de estío," NRFH, VII (1953) 526-535. See also Emma Speratti, "Reestructuración general," in TE.
reality. First, it establishes an initial common ground with surrounding events that were the concern of many people. There is no need for an elaborate exposition of them since the reader knows them. Therefore, there is no moral comment, no judgment. Second, these events are concerned with episodes and people that are typical of the tragic and ridiculous appearance of the contemporary situation. Valle-Inclán's aim was not to create a distorted vision (drama) out of these strikes but to expose and dramatize the grotesqueness inherent in them. He was therefore able to fuse these incidents of the strikes with the deformed perspective within *Luces*. The effect of the strikes is to divert attention from the simple explanations and channel attention to the treatment and significance of the deformed aspect that such everyday facts betray. This is, of course, one of the concerns of the "esperpento." In short, since the general outcomes of these strikes were known, Valle-Inclán was able to concentrate mainly on a quick dramatization of their deformed significance.

All the significant elements of tragedy are implicit in the events that Valle-Inclán chooses. He begins from there and exposes these tragic elements but does not stop at their tragic sense. He carries them beyond tragedy, to exasperation as we saw for example

99. Valle-Inclán could hardly have selected a more helpless situation for elaboration. "The number of political assassinations in Catalonia between January 1919 and December 1923 totalled over 700" (Gerald Brenan, *Labyrinth*, p. 74, ft. n. 2). Valle-Inclán seems convinced that often the bald facts of life are more dramatic and meaningful than any fabrication of art.
in the dramatization of the prison episode. Max's cry of "ya no puedo gritar" unites the fictional and the real because even though the exasperation is generated within the fictional realms of the drama, his cry is caused by a reality that has been elaborated artistically to reveal its painful "trágica mojiganga."

The events concerning the strikes might appear incidental and decorative at first. They are not related directly to the protagonist Max, until their decisive interconnections are expressed by means of some action. There is a relation between the broad foundations of deformity on which this "esperpento" is built and its pointed actions dealing directly with the strikes. The purpose of the strike-events is to give explicit expression, in action, to the distorted elements that are already contained in the broad foundation of the "esperpento."

The elaboration of the strikes, however, is generated in Luces as an oyster creates a pearl; around an irritant. That is to say, the dramatic action based on the strikes is constructed around a problem of human life whose distorted characteristics exist independent of the deformed vision in Luces but which characteristics Valle-Inclán illuminated by elaborating them in his "esperpento." Thus, the distortion generated by the strikes is recreated and revealed in Luces but it does not grow only out of Luces. It is created in Luces because it exists in reality. An "esperpento," as Max implied, grows out of the external cruelty,
from the grotesqueness of which it derives its own final broad foundation of a grotesque vision. The vision of Luces is generated artistically from within the esperpento (play) itself but this same distorted vision is also deliberately subordinated to the surrounding reality of Spain. Its ultimate concern is to create an intimate union between an esperpentic vision dramatically evoked and the conditions of reality which provide such a vision.

In short, if the strikes are reflected in the deforming, concave mirror, it is because their own distortion has shattered the even surface of a normal mirror. Therefore they are distorted so that they may be better revealed. Valle-Inclán presents convincingly the distorted view of social problems because the circumstances (strikes) that he has selected coincide with the testimony of actual experience.
THE TRAGIC HERO IN THE ESPERPENTO

MAX.- ¡Soy un espe'tro del pasado!

_Luces de Bohemia_ is the story of a blind poet who is forced to perform tragically before an unsympathetic audience, and who finally rejects his tragic role as an absurdity. The theme of this "esperpento" is the transition of tragic values to a modern setting and their consequent destruction. The point is that a new attitude must be adopted toward "the tragedy of life," and a new hero must be found to perform in it.

Max Estrella is the principal character of _Luces_ and the most tragic. Physically, he is described with: "Su cabeza rizada y ciega, de un gran carácter clásico-arcaico" (p. 894). Emotionally, he suffers more than anyone else. Faced with pain and death, Max might arouse a sense of pity and wonder, as in old tragedies, through his ability to struggle, endure, and above all, to suffer. Tragedy is normally concerned with what Schopenhauer has called the singular swing toward elevation of a personality. Such a self-realization does not receive its impetus from the outside surrounding reality but is cultivated within. To the extent, however, that outside reality hinders self-realization in the face of the hero's adverse destiny, the tragic pattern tends to break down. Max Estrella has to perform precisely under such circumstances and thus represents the redefinition of the tragic hero.

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Max is constantly pulled by two forces. One, by his own inclinations which, in the face of adverse circumstances urge him to maintain his composure and dignity, his illusions and a sympathy for others by identifying himself with their pain. Two, by the surrounding reality which forces Max to see the foolishness of his dignity, which puts restrictions on his illusions and which is completely indifferent to his own suffering. Against Max and his tragic role is pitted the whole grotesque environment which has its seeds in contemporary society. Max represents the major force that can go either way and thus reflects both, the conditions under which a modern tragic hero must perform and the position that he is to adopt in relation to them.

Dignity vs. Deception

MAX.- "¡Y soy el primer poeta de España! ¡El primero! ¡Y ayuno! ¡Y no me humillo pidiendo limosna!"

In the opening scene we see Max blind, unable to earn a living and support his family. "¡Estoy olvidado!" he cries despairingly to his wife. From the beginning, Max is faced with a situation beyond his capabilities. His wife recognizes his helpless position and implores him not to go out: "Max, no debes salir" (p. 895). But even though he is aware of his tragic situation, Max cannot accept such a humiliation, refusing to believe that he is completely helpless. He confidently retorts,
"¡Claudinita, mi palo y mi sombrero!" (p. 896). Collet wants Max to stay at home, so that he will be protected from the tragedy of his blindness. Don Latino encourages him to go out, insisting that his presence will be enough to break an agreement concerning the sale of certain books. Max is faced with one of two decisions: accept his misery and thus become a helpless, pathetic figure, that is, submit to his destiny, or, accept his destiny and thus continue struggling despite adversities, like a true tragic hero. One way for Max to struggle successfully with his blindness is to maintain his dignity and pride. This implies a degree of responsibility, that is, some personal accountability for his own actions that would prove him not to be completely helpless. Dignity and pride help him to face and endure his cruel destiny, and open the way for him to reach personal heights of greatness in the face of overpowering forces.

Max has given Don Latino some books to sell. Don Latino reports that he received very little for them, that the deal was "una indignidad, un robo," adding: "Me han cogido de pipi" (p. 895). This is a lie, for he conspired with the bookdealer to deceive Max and thus make a profit. Inasmuch as Max's family depends on

100. Don Latino represents, of course, the "outside" forces. He is the bridge between the tragic situation in which Max finds himself at home and the cruel, indifferent, grotesque environment outside. His role increases by the fact that it is he who will lead the blind Max around.
the money to eat this is a tragic deception. Max does not lose his composure at the loss of money. This deception will be carried to an extreme, however, for Don Latino wants to maintain the trust of Max and continue this exploitation of his talents. To do this Don Latino tries to appeal to Max's sense of pride. He convinces him that the prestige of his presence will be enough to break the deal and gain the money he needs. "Basta con hacer el ademán" (p. 895), he assures Max. Don Latino is taking advantage of his sense of dignity.

The situation of Max is now very ironical. He is helpless but his sense of dignity makes him believe that he is not. Dignity becomes a flaw which inevitably converts his tragic situation into a state of complete humiliation. Although he has good reason not to trust Don Latino he begins to act confident. In the presence of the bookdealer he appears elegant, authoritative with movements full of dignity: "El poeta saca el brazo entre los pliegues de su capa, y lo alza majestuoso, en un ritmo con su clásica cabeza ciega" (p. 897). For a moment, Max still believes in his prestige, he is still blind but struggles, enacting well his role as a tragic hero. But only for a moment, because his pride and dignity, so well exploited by Don Latino, are immediately shattered. Zaratustra lies, Max knows it, but all he can do is lose his temper and his composure. He has lost the money which he needs desperately, but in addition his pride and dignity suffer terrible degradation. The surrounding reality
is interfering with his personal struggle and his efforts appear as mere gestures of a frustrated puppet. Nowhere is the weight of his blindness more evident than when: "el librero, al tiempo que habla, recoge el atadijo que aún está encima del mostrador, y penetra en la lóbrega trastienda cambiando una seña con DON LATINO" (p. 897). Max's personal tragedy has been carried beyond the point of his blindness. He is no longer struggling with his destiny but with surrounding reality.

This humiliating experience will lead to many others and will set the tempo for many of the early incidents. The culminating point is reached in the Minister's house when Max himself understands his deception, that he is not struggling with his blindness, that he has no dignity.

MAX.- Conste que he venido a pedir un desagravio para mi dignidad, y un castigo para unos canallas. Conste que no alcanzo ninguna de las dos cosas, y que me das dinero, y que lo acepto porque soy un canalla" (p. 926).

Max has been reduced to what he considers to be a terrible reality.

The will and capacity for greatness in the face of disaster are present in Max, but he does not have the opportunity. Even

101. MAX.- "Niño, yo hago lo que me da la gana" (p. 902). Next moment he is forced to sell his coat.

102. Nowhere does he appear more pathetic than in his complaint to the Minister: "Paco, tus sicarios ho tienen el derecho a escupirme y abofetearme, y vengo a pedir un castigo para esa turba de miserables" (p. 924).
though we know he is helpless, he acts his part well until the play switches to a dramatization of the outside forces. Max himself, is capable of tragedy. It is the surrounding world, no longer inhabited by Gods, and with no regard for ennobling efforts, that rejects his performance. His pride and dignity do not receive the recognition of tragic heroes. Instead of a tragic flaw—exalting, magnificent, frightening—pride and dignity degenerate to a defensive mechanism against a crushing reality. They are a flaw in that they are exploited by others and thus appear naive and absurd. The irony comes at first from the disproportion between Max's will to struggle and his lack of ability to cope with an actual situation which is hostile to such sentiments. When this disproportion becomes too great, even irony appears ridiculous.

Max's position is now more pathetic than tragic and out of this difference, the new hero of the "esperpento" takes shape. A tragic effort is destroyed completely, and dignity, no matter how sincere or courageous, appears foolish. Deception is carried too far and with it the irony of tragedy. The only thing

103. The disparity between the hero's estimate of reality and the actual fact which creates deceptions and grotesque situations, is a constant motif in the "esperpentos." For example, the concept of Don Friolera's honor appears completely absurd in the 20th-century setting of the drama. The Daifa's (La Galad el difunto) insistent belief in the magnanimity of her father and the latter's indifference result in the ridiculous pathos of the last scene when she faints and the other prostitutes read aloud the sentimental letter to her father. In La hija del capitán there is an incongruous disparity between the actual Spanish situation and the way it is viewed by the "loyal Spaniards."
that seems to remain is misery. Max, however, refuses to become a pathetic figure whose every movement is the gesture of a puppet. He sees that the flaw in a world reflected by an "esperpento" is the inability to perceive reality as it is. When Max cannot see the truth, when he is blinded by older—even though ennobling—tragic sentiments, his tragedy is carried further, to the state of a farce or an "esperpento." So, the first thing that a hero of an esperpento must do is to abandon his mantle of dignity, to refuse to be deceived by reality. This happens fairly early in Luces, when Max thanks the Minister for his charity: "¡Gracias en nombre de dos pobres mujeres!" (p. 926). His pride and dignity will never deceive him again.

Illusions and Reality

"A que rodar por los caminos
como antes,
si no he de ver en los molinos
los gigantes"
(Arlequín, in La Marquesa Rosalinda).

If Max should abandon his sense of dignity, he still has his illusions to combat both the destiny of his blindness and also the surrounding reality. When we first meet him, he sees only one door open, "La de la muerte" (p. 893). But he soon reacts independently to the external circumstances through his imagination and his illusions. He exclaims with a spirited gesture: "¡He recobrado la vista! ¡Está hermosa la Moncloa!
¡Veo y veo magnificamente!" (p. 894). To avoid constant despair,
to avoid being helpless he often with draws into himself. There
he can rule his own spirit, live free with his imagination, and
create thoughts that do not disgrace but exalt humanity. His
illusions, called hallucinations by Don Latino, like a dream
world, provide a background of sensitivity opposed to devastating
reality. If he has lost his dignity, he can at least find a valid
expression of tragic reality, he can live nobly with his terrible
pain, and as a tragic poet, he could be part of the past and not
a mere spectre of it.

Max's illusions, like those of other tragic heroes, represent
the individual efforts to surpass the circumstantial. Against
the constant battering of reality his illusions last a little
longer than his dignity, until they deteriorate towards the end
into mere escapes from reality and not an attempt to go beyond it.

This deterioration is exemplified well in his interchange
with a streetwalker. He immediately exalts her:

104. Stylistically, the words that Max uses in his illusions
are magnifying: Apoteosis, hermosa; renover aquellos tiempos; veo
el mundo; bello; y las canto como un flamenco. Valle-Inclán
gives him few illusory lines, but he contrives to give these lines
maximum weight. His two scenes of hallucinations, one in the
opening scene and the other just before he dies, are breath-
taking theatrically, as Max appears almost mad, but with the
magnificent insistence of a Don Quijote:

MADAMA COLLET.- Estás alucinado, Max.
MAX.- ¡VeO, y veO magnificamente!
MADAMA COLLET.- ¿Pero qué ves?
MAX.- ¡El mundo!
MADAMA COLLET.- ¿A mí me ves?
MAX.- ¡Las cosas que toco, para que necesito verlas! (p. 894).

Max has the imagination, and often the power to go beyond the
immediate reality.
Max, in a situation analogous to that of Don Quijote and Maritornes, is trying to impose his illusion upon reality, substituting a poetic nymph for the prostitute. But she retorts: "Tienes el hablar muy dilustrado... ¡Verás como te cachondeo!" (p. 934). She reduces his illusions to mere verbal exercises (again the idea of gesticulation), and his aspirations of beauty and love to vulgar sex. But he attempts again: "Huelas a nardos." "Porque los he vendido" (p. 935), she answers, and destroys the illusion.

Max persists with the will of a Quijote, and feeling her face with his hands begins to recreate it. He refuses to accept the reality that this girl is a prostitute. Her physical appearance contrasts with his imaginative statements like Maritornes' looks and Don Quijote's idealizations: "...mozuela pingona... risa desvergonzada... La pindonga ríe con dejo sensual de cosquillas" (p. 935). Max's recreation: "¡Eres pelinegra? ¡Cómo tienes los ojos? ¡Verdes?" (p. 935). Reality is reinforced by her reaction: "No me palpes más la cara. Pálpame el cuerpo" (p. 935). We can see Max's desperate effort to preserve his illusions. After suffering so many blows, he cannot endure reality, and his illusions are his only escape. He is grasping for them, even for a moment, forgetting that he and La Lunares in reality make a ridiculous combination, thinking only of the black hair, green eyes, smell of nards, and gypsy appearance that he
has imprinted on her with his illusions. This meeting comes to a complete stop as we hear: "...la tos asmática de DON LATINO" (p. 935). Max is back to reality. Don Latino is still the grotesque personage, La Lunares is a pick-up, the troops are still patrolling the streets, and his helpless situation has not changed. The wind-mills are no longer giants. 105

The incapability of Max to reach at first a serene detachment in terms of reality, is related to his aspirations as a human being which spring from intense personal feelings, which are ennobling in themselves and which often reflect irrational impulses as when they reach the extreme of hallucinations. His illusions, like those of Don Quijote are symbolic of the aspirations of humanity to go beyond the bounds of an oppressing reality. His tragic struggle comes from the fact that he is aware of the forces against him but still struggles, as in his repeated efforts to avoid discouragement with La Lunares. But for such ideals to remain ennobling, that is, to appreciate the full significance of a person's truths (his dreams and struggles),

105. There is no doubt that Valle-Inclán was deeply impressed with the problem of illusions as treated in Don Quijote. The Arlequín of La Marquesa Rosalinda seems as pathetic as Don Quijote in the end, when he has lost his capacity for illusion which was a symbol of his early vividness:

"Ahuyentaron los desengaños
mi alado sueño,
y los rebaños son rebaños,
y mi Pegaso, Clavileño" (OC, I, p. 312). Many such parallels are found in his works including Luces, especially centered around Max Estrella.
it is necessary to identify oneself with Max, to put oneself in
his precise situation, and to share his point of view and unique
reactions. But La Lunares, like the rest, is not capable of
doing it. Max does not have a Sancho in whom to project his
illusions. Since no one participates in the human experience
of his illusions, they, of course, seem ridiculous.

It will be very difficult for him to accept again the
enchantment of an illusion. He will look at life more objectively,
more coldly, with the past well removed, and with no future:

LATINO.- ¡Hay que pensar en el mañana, Caballeros!
MAX.- ¡No pensemos! (p. 929).

He can no longer see magnificently. Instead he begins to see
the others, devoid of illusions, rushing stupidly about in their
role of servile puppets. Max begins to be very harsh with
surrounding reality. He comes out of his inner world and uses
his imagination to paint the world in his conception of the
"esperpento." His imagination, which looked for the "magnificent"
and represented the heights sought by a tragic hero, creates now
a nightmare—similar to that of Goya—which represents a negation
of man's rational dignity. This is the second stage in the
evolution of the esperpentic hero, the abandonment of the inner
illusions and the concentration on everyday reality.
Chance vs. Causality

From the opening scene the little garret where Max lives becomes a symbol in the development of Max. Indoors and outdoors are the chief spatial entities. There is order and sympathy in his home, chaos and indifference outside. Max lives in a protected world, where he is loved and appreciated where he himself is responsible for his deceptions and his hallucinations. Once outside, there is no room for dignity and illusions. In his home the tragedy of Max makes sense. It is the pain of not being able to see and the struggle to face his tragic destiny. What happens on the outside is not Max's own tragedy or struggle, it is not his destiny.

This idea of in and out of the house becomes an image of Max's transitional role as a tragic hero. The inside and outside refer eventually to Max who passes from inner hurts and feelings to an outer, cold objectivity of viewing reality. His inner world provides at least an outlet which might cheat reality, but after he moves outside, this is no longer possible. Inside, his pain makes sense for there is someone to share it, to care for it; outside, he is another entity at the hands of chance.106 His

106. The spatial image inner-outer in terms of Max is reinforced by cross-references. Claudinita in the first scene: "¡Papá, no salgas!" (p. 896). She later claims at his death: "¡Si papa no sale ayer tarde, está vivo!" (p. 944). Max himself constantly refers to his home. Before dying he tells Don Latino: "Idiota, llévame a la puerta de mi casa y dámeme morir en paz" (P. 940). Max would like to rejoin his original tragic state.
adventures become misadventures, that is, they are not his own and his tragedy is subordinated to outside forces.

While a tragedy is based on causality, accidents play a very important role in the life of Max once he is outside. The tragic lives of heroes are caused by well-ordered events which are set in a pattern so that they explain everything logically. There is a direct relationship between the downfall of the tragic hero and the forces (whether inner or outer) that are causing his doom. In *Luces*, chance is contrasted with logical causality.

Every phase in the decline of Max's fortunes provides a link in the visual chain of concrete deformities. Every single happening, while helping to reveal a deformed vision of reality, is in itself accidental. That he was cheated, arrested, humiliated, picked up, or found on the threshold of a door dying are all accidental happenings with which he himself had nothing to do. He did not set them in motion. 107 Since tragedy depends on a direct relation between cause and effect, the tragic concept of *Luces* (through Max) gains little by this device of chance happenings from everyday life.

107. It is interesting to note that the Catalonian prisoner was arrested for a good reason, like all the strikers who deliberately opposed the authorities. They suffered for a cause that they themselves created. Max was arrested for the absurd reason that he asked an officer if he knew the four Greek dialects. His only blame is to be a little high-spirited at the moment. Ministro.- ¡No estás sin niguna culpa!" His blame? "¡Eres siempre el mismo calvatrieno!" He was not arrested for the reasons that people were arrested at this time, strikes, violence, etc. He was not a part of the social tragedy.
What happens to Max is related to everyday reality, not to his tragedy. An accident in his life, no matter how well founded causally, is still an accident into his tragic conflict with blindness and poverty, and therefore, not having any cause or reason, his tragic problem usually becomes grotesque. More than ever it is subject to surrounding reality.

Identity vs. Indifference

Tragedy's principal preoccupation is with suffering, and Luces opens, as we saw, on this note. There must be, however, identification with tragedy, there must be an evidence of sympathy for the tortured, if there is to be greatness in suffering. If not with others, the tragic hero has been able to at least identify himself with his own pain, to have sympathy for his tragedy, (Prometheus, Richard II, Othello are good examples). This is what makes Max Estrella stand out from the others, for he can suffer greatly and as any tragic hero he can often express

108. It is tantamount to the observation of George Lukash that a good medical explanation of why Achilles sprained his ankle while pursuing Hector, or a brilliant medicopathological explanation why Anthony lost his voice through a throat infection before his speech over Ceasar's body would still be grotesque accidents.

109. I am referring to the paradox of a tragedy whereby we see pain and yet enjoy ourselves. "The greater the suffering depicted, the more terrible the events, the more intense our pleasure. The most monstrous and appalling deeds life can show are those the tragedian chooses, and by the spectacle he thus offers us, we are moved to a very passion of enjoyment" Edith Hamilton, The Greek Way to Western Civilization, New York, 1952, p. 128. This is because the human being reaches his greatest moment in the most adverse circumstances.
his pain, thus making us see in him the dignity of a soul in agony. In the end, however, Max removes himself from his inner agony and expresses not pain, but ridicule and bitterness. From inner identity with his problem, he moves to indifference and thus he himself destroys irrevocably the tragic basis of his role in life. He is no longer the passionate soul that can feel greatly, but one who can think and examine things objectively.

This transition from sympathy to indifference has been drawn very carefully and logically. Max throughout Luces comes in contact with various suffering people. Not one of them has the stuff of a tragic hero, but their situations reflect for Max the tragic sense of Spanish life. He too was a bohemian and cannot easily find a place in the changed world and so, he shares a common tragic fate with many of them. The criticism that Don Estrafalario expounded in Don Friolera applies to Max's attitude, for he is too involved with the characters around him and suffers with them. But the problem of tragedy in modern dress, as Eric Bentley has pointed out, is that the characters, not being life-size but rather below it, excite pity without admiration and therefore without terror.

111. Now if this is carried further, and

110. It is interesting to note that if Don Friolera had been endowed with a greater ability to express his pain he would have been a tragic hero. In Max we still see this possibility for he is in a transitional state, passing from one to another.

there is not even pity as Max comes to realize, tragedy results in absurdities because if there is no pity things often become meaningless.

Max is the artist in *Luces* and his insight while describing reality is extended by sympathetic identification with others, until he finally sees others as he sees himself. But when he examines himself in terms of reality, he realizes that he is being looked upon as a mere fact. All his qualities such as art, dignity, imagination and courage on one hand, and the suffering of his blindness and poverty on the other, are seen from "la otra ribera," indifferently, without genuine interest or personal attachment. Max becomes another undersized character, a nonentity; he is looked upon without compassion, like a puppet which happens to possess human characteristics. This indifference drives him to exasperation. When someone points out to him that he is behaving like a crazy man, he readily answers: "Loco de verme desconocido y negado" (p. 983).

This is what makes Max abandon his insight for others and even for himself and look at reality in a detached manner. He

112. The only ones who feel pity and terror at Max's tragedy are Collet and Claudinita; they are the ones who attempt an "ennobling identification" with Max. They think him great, and his ridiculous situation is tragic for them only. "Siéntate. Voy a cerrar la ventana. Procura adormecerse" (p. 894), she tenderly tells him. But this identification remains in the house, never out. When a woman finds Max dead, her only preoccupation is with her own problem: "Ya se me voló un cuarto de día!" (p. 942).
cannot save the tragic sentiments from the consequences of a brutal and unsympathetic reality, nor does he attempt to do so in the end. He also looks from "la otra ribera" and is no longer concerned with the meaning of human destiny and struggle. He dies, but unlike the tragic hero, he does not accept his fate, he is disgusted with his own tragedy. This is the final stage in the evolution of the esperpentic hero. He has completely dissociated himself from all that a tragic role in life implies.

Max looks at himself unemotionally, becomes detached. In this he represents an important shift, from viewing his life in terms of perennial human experience, to seeing it in the context of specific temporal circumstances. His personal disaster is overshadowed by his daily experience which surpasses and destroys any tragic "attitudes." In his daily experience there is no tragic climate, no identification with pain or greatness. In undergoing this transition, Max represents the fading of the older tragic conception to modern times, pointing out that environment as it is, history, is a dominant influence on human destiny and is indifferent to inner self-realizations in the face of tragedy. Max sees clearly that the external conditions of his own human existence have acquired a new reality and the reflection of this reality on the concave mirror is as objective as it is concrete. All he can do is expose the ridiculous incongruity of a tragic hero's performance under such conditions by examining himself in these conditions. He sees that to continue struggling
would be foolish. By becoming detached, he at least acquires some independence, he is above the other puppets for he himself can afford to have a laugh even if at the expense of his own tragedy. And this is the tragic sense of the esperpentic hero, that this is the best he can do.

**The Esperpentic Hero**

HERALD.- Submit, you fool, submit. In agony learn wisdom. *(Prometheus Unbound, Aeschylus).*

What makes Max stand out is precisely his ability to look at himself with an esperpentic point of view, that is, without self-pity at all, with absolute objectivity. Since this impersonal act occurs during the extremes of personal suffering, as in a tragedy, we could say that the difference between a tragic hero and the esperpentic hero is the lack of personal identity; the fact that the latter looks at himself suffering as a stranger would do it, or a mathematician or a puppeteer. This gives him a double role; he is a suffering and ridiculous puppet, but also the puppeteer who can laugh at his own performance.

This development of *Luces* corroborates the difference between a tragic hero as we know him and Valle-Inclán's conception of him. Edith Hamilton has the following to say on the ennobling qualities in a tragedy: 113

Pain, sorrow, disaster are always spoken of as depressing, as dragging down—the dark abyss of pain, a crushing sorrow, an overwhelming disaster. But speak of tragedy and extraordinarily the metaphor changes. Lift us to tragic heights, we say, and never anything else. The depths of pathos but never of tragedy. Always the height of tragedy.

Valle-Inclán was aware of this and he makes it his starting point in his explanation of the esperpentic hero. In a letter to Gregorio Martínez Sierra, he has this to say:

Comenzaré por decirle a usted que creo hay tres modos de ver el mundo artística o estéticamente: de rodillas, en pie o levantado en el aire. Cuando se mira de rodillas—y ésta es la posición más antigua en literatura—, se da a los personajes, a los héroes, una condición superior a la condición humana... Se crean, por decirlo así, seres superiores a la naturaleza humana: dioses, semidioses y héroes. Hay una segunda manera, que es mirar a los protagonistas novelescos como de nuestra propia naturaleza, como si fuesen nuestros hermanos, como si fuesen ellos nosotros mismos,... Con nuestras mismas virtudes y nuestros mismos defectos... Esto es Shakespeare, todo Shakespeare... Y hay otra tercer manera, que es mirar al mundo desde un plano superior y considerar a los personajes de la trama como seres inferiores al autor... Los dioses se convierten en personajes de sainete.

Max fulfills the transition from one to the other, both as a literary protagonist and as a creator of literature, a "demiurgo."

As a protagonist he first appears both physically and spiritually as the possessor of the stuff that makes a tragic hero great. But the people around him do not associate themselves with him in his suffering and struggle. When Max eventually falls, never to speak again, they don't feel purged by pity and terror, they rather laugh, feign sadness, or get bored. A scene at his funeral is

As a creator of art, Max sets the same pattern of looking at reality as his creator Valle-Inclán. Up to a point, he sees reality as part of himself, he feels a tragic situation like a Shakespeare would: "¡Me ha estremecido esa voz trágica!" (p. 936), he says upon hearing a woman lamenting her lost child. But in the end, he looks at reality from a superior plane, including his own life, and converts his lofty tragic role to that of something that is analogous to a sainete or a puppet show.

Detachment actually implies self-control, and this is perhaps the only way to avoid ridicule and not surrender completely to absurdity, by feeling superior to the reality one depicts. The characters of the "esperpentos" are humans driven to act like puppets because they are under the sway of a force that has deprived them of their reason. Max gains his reason and sees that a tragic role is an absurd role. Tragedy is not negated, but rather redefined. And in its redefinition it appears more terrible, for man is seen very susceptible to ridicule and grotesqueness because he is a puppet with enough human characteristics to make a fool of himself, even during the most tragic moments. Max's show in the end may be ridiculous but he is not just a puppet; rather, like a puppeteer (like El Compadre Fidel of Don Friolera) he is laughing at the expense of others, even
at the expense of his old role. And this is the tragic sense of the esperpentico hero, that his choice is limited either to being a pathetic puppet, or to a detached stranger. Perhaps the reaffirmation of his will to laugh—even though bitterly—in the face of his tragic situation, is the heroic essence—if any—of Max Estrella. For this means that he resents playing a bad role in life. His role then is one of protest.

He recognizes that tragic feelings in a climate of grotesqueness and indifference would at best result in banal pathos. Defining the modern times as a setting for tragedy Edith Hamilton says: "No heights are there for the soul to mount to, but only the dark depths where there are tears for things." After one of his most painful and humiliating experiences Max expresses the same idea: "...me das dinero, y que lo acepto porque soy un canalla. No me estaba permitido irme del mundo sin haber tocado

115. This is not unlike the role that Valle-Inclán enacted every day for the citizens of the cafes of Madrid. His clowning was the result perhaps of a profound pessimism in regard to the human situation, especially in Spain. But like Unamuno, Valle-Inclán's pessimism was not passive. Unamuno cried and shouted, Valle-Inclán laughed and ridiculed. A realist, he accepted reality and acted out its absurdity. Unamuno's "congoja" and Valle-Inclán's "chuckle" are both tragic. Valle-Inclán's tragic personality which filters into the "esperpentos" has been drowned by his reputation through anecdotes. Some, like Unamuno, may suffer crying, other may suffer laughing as Valle-Inclán and Max Estrella. The difference lies in the fact that Unamuno accepts tragedy while Valle-Inclán rejects it.

alguna vez el fondo de los Reptiles" (p. 926). As he utters these words he is more than ever a pathetic figure, pitiful and ridiculous at the same time. This Max cannot stand, and he refuses to take part in it. At least, in abandoning his tragic role and beginning to ridicule it, he is brilliant, witty and imaginative once more. He has had the intelligence to see the tragic farce and from a performer—the object of ridicule—becomes a spectator. He is ironically a hero now, because he refuses to act out what was once a noble role in what he calls a "trágica mojiganga." The others lack his objectivity and cannot see this, they do not know, they are not heroes but performers in an "esperpento," that is, they are not as independent as Max for they are the puppets.
ELABORATION OF FORM IN AN ESPERPENTO

The events of *Luces* represent two levels of significance. On the one they reveal a personal problem which can be paralleled by Max's experience. On the other, they embody a vision of Spain's reality, both historical and contemporary. *Luces* is thus composed of a central narrative and a general vision which Valle-Inclán has developed by employing two dramatic structural patterns. The narrative about Max is related in a logical, closely-knit order; the vision is rendered by a very loose dramatic structure. The final meaning of *Luces*—and of all the esperpentos—comes from the total effect of grotesqueness produced by the union of these two structural forms. The story of Max is what finally gives clarity to the loose episodic structure of *Luces*. Thus, in the end, a synthesis of every grotesque scene is created and presents a harmonious picture of grotesque reality.

The formal structure of the Narrative

The circumstances of personal tragedy as well as the seeds of its destruction are exposed as soon as the story of Max begins. Also his sense of dignity, his illusions and the sense of sympathy with which he will combat his destiny are well developed in the first scene. Along with Max, the other principal characters—Collet, Don Latino—are introduced and with them we
witness Max leaving the house, the incident which will precipitate the dramatic action and put to test Max's tragic role. The situation of the opening scene contains every component of the tragedy and the future deterioration of it.

The initial stage of Max's tragedy is developed through many scenes until it begins to look more and more ridiculous. The narrative culminates when Max dies. The development of the esperpentic hero and his attitude has such a solid structure that Max's transition is seen as a logical inevitability. He first loses his dignity. This is logical because it is the most external aspect of his tragic behavior, the most vulnerable to outside attacks and deceptions. His illusions are part of his psychological makeup; they are more intimate, less vulnerable, and are therefore destroyed later. And, of course, sympathy is destroyed last, inasmuch as it is the most internal part of a human being, almost an instinct. Alongside this progress of deterioration, Max's own reaction to the surrounding reality from scene to scene is also developed, culminating in his formulated attitude of the esperpento. The deterioration of an old tragic attitude and the formulation of a new vision are inseparable in the end. The coherence of the narrative in Luces illustrates the successive phases in the development of a new hero, who represents a new attitude.

This esperpento therefore, begins at a point near the climax, brings the existing factors to an end, and clarifies their
significance by revealing them progressively. Every scene
accumulates an attack on tragedy and a corresponding exasperation
which together lead to Max's grotesque vision of contemporary
reality. It thus contains a logically related beginning, middle
and end as in a tragedy. In the end, the attitude of Max is
clear and final. Nothing can alter or add to his meaning of
"esperpentismo." The formal unity of the narrative is appropriate
because it makes the theme clearer.

The Esperpentic form

In every esperpento, the formal emphasis is upon the individual
scene. Externally, Luces, like any "esperpento" is composed of
many short scenes. The basic structure is dramatic but neverthe-
less the various scenes resemble the short episodes of the
picaresque novel in that they are loosely connected. Although
each esperpentic scene contains the subject matter of a distorted
reality, a great number of the incidents do not contribute directly
to the central development of the plot. Valle-Inclán is concerned
more with painting successive pictures than with telling a story.
This lack of tight formal unity in the esperpento helps to capture
Max in various grotesque situations and thus create a composite
picture of reality.

Each one of these episodes is complete and is connected with
those which precede or follow not so much by what happens to Max
but by his vision of the surrounding reality. Luces is a story
of the commonplace. Its aim is to present formally a vision of wide social implications in terms familiar to Spanish reality. Its attention is focused on the ordinary activities of a small section of Madrid, and its characters—except Max—are chosen to represent the usual kinds of people likely to be met anywhere in Spain. Such a loose form provides a convenient device for a systematic distortion of the vision of Spain. The formal looseness is intentional in order to create an effect of disorganization. Symmetry is gained by distorting the pattern through which everything is reflected. In his exposition of esperpentismo, Max claims that the artist must impose upon the chaotic, and grotesque reality of Spain an analogous, loose but comprehensive form in order to reflect this reality correctly. The relationship between a distorted reality and a deliberate loose form must be rendered with a "mathematic perfection."

The experience and vision provided by each single scene is purposefully selected for the clarification and expansion of a distorted vision of contemporary reality. Each episode is directed to a specific concrete vision. Each scene is a unit which reflects a specific degeneration and thus, it stands by itself episodically. At Zaratustra's a degeneracy of friendship takes place; at Pica Lagarto's the degeneracy of the spirit of strikes; at the Buñolería Modernista, the degeneracy of art and at the Police Headquarters that of order and protection; at Filiberto's that of the Press; at the Ministro's that of
sentimentality; and generally, there is in every scene a
degeneracy of human interest and empathy in the face of painful
and pathetic situations. The result is a vision of different
aspects of reality which are, however, related as we shall see.

Union of two forms: Formation of the Concave Mirror

Max's narrative is what finally tightens the loose structure
of the "esperpento." Max is in contact with the above degenerate
states and is almost always involved directly in them. He gathers
them up together and sees that although each one is different,
they have one thing in common, and that is a distortion from their
original state. The feeling of sentimentality is distorted in
the same manner, for example as the idea of law and order.
Metaphorically, not one episode is a whole, clear mirror but rather
a broken glass. Max gathers up the shattered pieces and puts them
together in spite of their diverse form and composes something
analogous to a concave mirror. When he ends his exposition of the
"esperpento," every piece of broken glass has been pasted together
to create a synthetic concave mirror, and thus every loose scene
is part of a complete vision of a distorted reality. The unity
of the loose external form lies in the fact that each scene
imparts a grotesque view of Spanish life.

The scenes are important not only because they relate a story
in terms of the protagonist Max, but because they offer a multiple
view of surrounding reality. Thus the deformity of a reality which is created through looseness is systematic: "El sentido trágico de la vida española sólo puede darse con una estética sistemáticamente deformada" (p. 934), because reality is Spain, as we shall see.

In this respect, the form of the esperpento is different from that of tragedy. A tragedy expands a human life to a drama of essential humanity in its eternal struggle with destiny. It reduces a single experience, like that of Oedipus, to that of a universal experience. The "esperpento" by concentrating on the singular aspects of everyday life remains an entanglement of immediate place and time. The external form of Luces breaks the rational, well-ordered norms of tragedy, and thereby moves from something universal to things specifically concrete. The well-ordered form of a tragedy leads logically to an understanding of human horror. It provides a mental mirror. The loose form of

117. The picaresque novel offers a parallel case of multiple vision. The pícaro also sees a broad view of reality. Formally this is accomplished in two ways; one being through a dogma which sets a pattern as in Guzmán de Alfarache. Above all, however, this becomes possible through the form employed, which is loose and episodic enough to offer many visions of reality, such as life with beggars, nobles, priests, butchers, thieves, officers, etc. Most of these scenes are not needed in the characterization of the pícaro, or in the development of a general plot. The structure of the picaresque novel makes possible the representation of a great number of "everyday realities" that destroy "ideals" such as "honor," "love," etc. In the esperpento a number of deformities appear which unite to distort everyday realities like the press, honor, the king, tradition, the church, etc.
esperpento leads logically to a view of social and human horror, and to concrete everyday tragic circumstances. It provides a concrete mirror like those found in the "Callejón del Gato." 118

118. This technique is typical of all esperpentos. They begin with a common place incident, usually grotesque and their loose structure expands this incident to the visual distortion of Spanish reality.
A loose, episodic form which offers a multiple view of the grotesque aspect of contemporary reality lends itself easily to satire. Satiric devices crop up in Luces and by means of ridicule Valle-Inclán brings about a critical repudiation of a number of the perennial ways of Spanish society. The politics of the day and some of the politicians (Maura, Romanones); the art forms and the artists; political institutions and its officers; religious discussions, patriotic sentiments, current political theories, traditional themes such as honor, Catholicism, and a great deal more, have been objects of his mockery. The satiric quality forms the nucleus of the parody and burlesque elements of the esperpento, adding both piquancy and venom to Valle’s contemporary criticism.

The satiric elements play an important role in the esperpentos, reinforcing the impression that there is a consistent critical intention behind them. Under the scrutiny of a

119. This does not contradict Valle-Inclán’s point of detachment. He feels that Spanish conditions are such that a criticism of them is inherent in their presentation.
satiric spectrum an esperpento achieves a critical and censorious role. The aim of Valle-Inclán is to quicken the Spaniard's sense of himself as a person and to make him aware of Spain's present condition. He held his country and his time to be the worst possible. He examines some of the reasons for this; for example, he questions traditional ideas which are kept superficially alive by the press and the ignorant public, and shows them to be incompatible with sound reason so that they appear either ludicrous or contemptible. "El principio de Autoridad es inexorable" (p. 937). Satiric reproof, besides aiding the grotesque vision, points out specifically the actual ways in which man degrades himself as a human being. In short, Valle-Inclán's satiric thrusts being based on historical conditions demonstrate his preoccupation with Spain's degeneracy. 120 Below are some of the typical examples.

In a political discussion of the strikes Max comments: "Y en último consuelo, aun cabe pensar que exterminando al proletario también se extermina al patrón" (p. 915). This cynical observation points to the ridiculous stages that characterize political discussions and to the degeneration of ideals. Sometimes criticism is personal:

MAX.- ¡Pareces hermana de Romanones!
LA PISA BIEN.- ¡Quién tuviera los miles de ese pirante! (p. 906).

120. Sometimes they are attributes of conversation and they are merely comical. FILIBERTO.- ¡Baje usted los pies! ¡Dónde se ha visto igual grosería! DORIO DE GADEX.- En el Senado Yanqui" (p. 920). In one case Valle-Inclán pokes light fun at Catholicism when Bradomín maintains his religious belief, "Yo espero ser eterno por mis pecados" (p. 949). Of course, this is also typical of Bradomín.
Spanish politicians have the reputation of being thieves and opportunists. There is also a jab at the King himself: "El primer humorista es Don Alfonso XIII... ha batido el record haciendo presidente del Consejo a García Prieto" (p. 919). Thus Valle-Inclán steps on many toes, and his success depends upon comic treatment such as the above which alleviates the sting without diluting the bitterness of his satire. 121

Historically, Valle satirizes both traditionalists and "europeizantes." The traditionally minded Zaratustra justifies the dirty and unhealthy state of Spaniards: "Es verdad que se lavan mucho los ingleses... Por aquí entran algunos, y se les ve muy refregados. Gente de otros países, que no sienten el frío, como nosotros los naturales de España" (p. 900). Later he reiterates: "Nuestro sol es la envidia de los extranjeros."122

121. Satire of political figures reaches the extreme of ridicule in Tirano Banderas, in the effeminate behavior of the Spanish ambassador: "El Excelentísimo Señor Don Mariano Isabel Cristino Queralt y Roca de Togores, Barón de Benicarlés y Maestrande de Ronda, tenía la voz de cotorrona y el pisar de bailerín... Hablaba con nasales francesas y mecía bajo sus carnosos parpados un frío ensueño de literatura perversa... La sombra de la ardiente virreina, refugiada en el fondo del jardín, mirando la fiesta de amor sin mujeres, lloró muchas veces..." (OC, II, p. 684).

122. Traditional jargon was savagely satirized in La hija del capitán. In the last scene, at the platform of a railway station, El Golfante and La Sinibalda, the young mistress of a ridiculous general who will take over the country (possible reference to Primo de Rivera) are waiting for a train. The royal train stops and as the monarch makes his appearance a woman (appropriately called doña Simplicia), as representative of other women's "traditional organizations" makes a speech, full of silly clichés and stock phrases: "Señor: Las mujeres españolas nunca
The European-minded Don Gay is ready to attack Spain by comparing it to other countries: "No hay país comparable a Inglaterra. Allí el sentimiento religioso tiene tal decoro, tal dignidad, que indudablemente las más honorables familias son las más religiosas. Si España alcanzase un más alto concepto religioso, se salvaba" (p. 898). This is very ironical due to the fact that religion receives top priority in Spain, and satirizes the extreme ideal views that many "europeizantes" adopted.

Max points out the degeneracy of religion. For Spaniards "el Infierno (es) un calderón de aceite albando donde los pecadores se achicharran como boquerones..." (p. 899). Valle-Inclán constantly satirizes the theologians and their mouthpieces who violently attacked modern-oriented schools of Medicine, new discoveries in the physical sciences and generally opposed the new medical theories as arising from "damned sciences." Valle-Inclán has in mind this dogmatic rejection of human knowledge, when he uses statements that were typical of their criticism. When Max

han sido ajenas a los dolores y angustias de la Patria. Somos hijas de Teresa de Jesús, María Pita, Agustina de Aragón y Mariena Pineda. Como ella sentimos, e intérpretes de aquellos corazones acrisolados, no podemos menos de unirnos a la unión regeneradora iniciada por nuestro glorioso Ejército. Un Príncipe de la Milicia levanta su espada victoriosa y sus luces imundan los corazones de las madres españolas!" (OC, I, p. 1075). In the face of national disaster this "rhetoric" typical of traditionally minded Spaniards is very sarcastic. The vanity of traditional Spain is commonly satirized in the esperpentos.
criticizes Don Latino as hypocritical on religious views, Don Latino answers: 

"¡Max, esas bromas no son tolerables! ¡Eres un espíritu profundamente irreligioso y volteriano!" (p. 930).

The name of Voltaire is, of course, anathema to Catholics and became a stock stigma of "terrible atheism" in attacks against liberal-minded people in Spain. Valle-Inclán also satirizes pseudo-sciences: BASILIO SOULINAKE.- En España son muy buenos los médicos... Sin embargo, una autoridad completamente mundial les falta a los españoles... Yo tengo estudiado durante diez años medicina y no soy doctor..." (p. 946).

The traditional code of honor still kept superficially alive by the army, does not escape satire. In the midst of tragedy a retired army officer argues so as to justify the death of a child for the sake of order. His best proof is his honor: 

"Mi palabra es sagrada" (p. 937). 123 Patriotism is of course a favorite target of Valle-Inclán. Don Filiberto defends Maura when someone calls him "¡El Rey del Camelo!," and talks fervently of "our country:" "Para ustedes en nuestra patria no hay nada grande, nada digno de admiración. ¡Les compadezco! ¡Ustedes no sienten la patria!" (p. 921). Such generalities and more are abundant in the social criticism of all the

123. The concept of honor is, of course, what is mostly satirized in Los cuernos de Don Friolera. EL TENIENTE ROVIROSA.- "Comienzo por advertir a mis queridos compañeros que, en puntos de honor, me pronuncio contra todos los sentimentalismos" (OC, I, (p. 1023). This results in the tragic farce where Don Friolera is induced to shoot his wife for reasons of honor.
In artistic matters, Valle-Inclán satirizes almost everything. He begins with the historical institutions like the Royal Academy. Max introduces himself once saying: "Tengo el honor de no ser académico" (p. 911). Satire is carried to an extreme to show that the Academy is not really preoccupied with art or philology:

- CLARINITO.- Maestro, nosotros los jóvenes impondremos la candidatura de usted para un sillón de la Academia.
- DORIO DE GADEX.- Precisamente ahora está vacante el sillón de Don Benito el Garbancero.
- MAX.- Nombrarán al Sargento Basallo (p. 908).

But Valle-Inclán also satirizes the other extreme of the Academy, the bohemian artist Dorio de Gaxex who is its enemy. After talking about art more than creating it, ("Los poetas somos aristocracia" (p. 907), he eventually passes to the topics that seem to interest him more, his amorous exploits:

- DON FILIBERTO.- ¡Otro vicio tendrá usted!
- DORIO DE GADEX.- Estupro criadas.
- DON FILIBERTO.- ¿Es agradable?
- DORIO DE GADEX.- Tiene sus encantos, Don Filiberto.
- DON FILIBERTO.- ¿Será usted padre innúmero?
- DORIO DE GADEX.- Las hago abortar... (p. 919).

Through this perverted sense of humor, Valle-Inclán satirizes the preoccupations and the wit of these young artists.

This leads him to comment upon the degeneration of art-forms in Spain. We have already mentioned Valle-Inclán's satire of the

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124. These attacks by Valle-Inclán were foreshadowed in La Pipa de Kif one year earlier: "La gran caravana académica/ saludo con risa ecuménica" (OC, I, p. 1135).
Modernist poets and the more modern initiators of the -isms like ultraism, etc. He also satirized the modern state of the novel and the lack of popular taste by showing the popularity of the "novela por entregas."

ZARATUSTRA.- Niña, díle a esa señora que es un secreto lo que hacen los personajes de las novelas. Sobre todo en punto de muertes y casamientos... Estaría bueno que se divulgase el misterio. Pues no había novela" (p. 900).

This satiric twist shows the view that the novel depends not on artistic undertakings, but on artificialities such as suspense, whodunits, etc. 125 He also criticizes the sterile imagination of the contemporary theatre. EL MARQUES: "Querido Rubén, Hamlet y Ofelia, en nuestra dramática española, serían dos tipos regocijados. ¡Un tímido y una niña boba! ¡Lo que hubieran hecho los gloriosos hermanos Quintero!" (p. 951). And generally he satirizes the lack of imagination and wasted efforts of artists: Don Gay after returning from England boasts: "Ilustres amigos, en dos meses me he copiado en la Biblioteca Real el único ejemplar existente del Parmerín de Constantinopla" (p. 898). 126

125. Valle-Inclán often attacked many of the degenerated popular forms of literature because they cheapen art. This is especially evident in Don Friolera. DON ESTRAFALARIO: "Esas coplas de toreros, asesinos y ladrones son periodismo ramplón" (OC, I, p. 996). Or, DON ESTRAFALARIO.- Don Manolito, gástese una perra y compré el romance del ciego. DON MANOLITO.- ¡Para qué? DON ESTRAFALARIO.- ¡Infeliz, para quemarlo! (OC, I, p. 1046).

126. There is, of course a big difference from Valle-Inclán himself, who after returning from Mexico spread an amazing number of imaginative yarns about his life in America. A lot of this was made evident in his literary production like Niña Chole, Sonata de estío, Tírano Banderas.
There is nothing unusual in the satiric devices employed by Valle-Inclán. He employs irony, sarcasm, cynicism, etc., satirizing Spanish society and its institutions, by showing that people who don't recognize their country's absurdities are either naive or hypocritical. The function of the satire is subordinated to the grotesque vision of the "esperpento." After a scene of terrible confusion which takes place around the mother with the dead child, where everybody is injecting a different ridiculous opinion, Max appropriately states: "Latino, sécame de este círculo infernal" (p. 937). The device of social satire in a grotesque setting was employed also by Quevedo in his Sueños, and other artists like Goya.

Valle-Inclán's satire differs. Usually a satirist, like Quevedo for example, offers a picture of a grotesque reality, but also confronts the reader with a truth that has moral or ethical consequences.127 Valle-Inclán satirizes man's and society's weaknesses seeing that they are the result of the lack of reason, without any attempt to moralize or analyze the physical or metaphysical causes. It is the clear objectivity and reason expounded by the esperpento, that make it possible for the reader to see the absurdity of human errors in society. His works do not have the moralization often common to satire.

127. For example, in some of the Sueños, the visions of Quevedo portray the infernal nature of the world, from which man can free himself by heroically working his way to an awakening in the presence of God. In other words, man's weaknesses are satirized but also explained in religious terms.
In spite of the many kinds of corruptions, absurdities, etc., that are satirized in _Luces_, or any esperpento, there is no indication whatsoever of any punishment that might distinguish evildoers from others. Rather, man's stupidity, malignity and indifference result, as in Goya, in immediate harm for himself and for Spanish society. The satiric devices clarify the Spaniard's absurd beliefs and actions which take place when the mind is deserted by reason. They point to a Spanish society and how Spaniards themselves have misshaped it. Satire becomes a tool for the esperpento in that it helps to portray the severe setting of Spain. _Luces_, for example, is grotesque because its satire is based on national rather than artificial situations. Within this grotesque setting, the satire gives shape to the typical Spaniard's ridiculous beliefs which stand in the way of rational truth.
Key to Abbreviations

César Barja, Autores contemporáneos; César Barja, Libros y autores contemporáneos. Madrid, 1936.


Martínez Sierra, Valle-Inclán; Gregorio Martínez Sierra, "Hablando con Valle-Inclán. De él y su obra," ABC de Madrid, 7 de diciembre de 1928, p. 1, apud G. Gómez de la Serna, Dos Españas.


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