Back from Oblivion: Society and Literature in Ventura Ruiz Aguilera's *Ecos nacionales* and *Proverbios ejemplares*

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents Theresia Annette Cole Jones and Bruce Milton Cole Sr. Without their unwavering support, I would not have had the will to take on such an arduous task, let alone complete it.

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ABSTRACT

Ventura Ruiz Aguilera (1820-1881) enjoyed great popularity and influence throughout the mid-19th century in Spain. He was most famous for his book of poems *Ecos nacionales* (1849), which was inspired by the people. Although he continued to attract attention amongst literary critics, shortly after his death Aguilera's popularity declined. This investigation explores the representation of society in both Aguilera's *Ecos nacionales* and his prose collection *Proverbios ejemplares* (1864). By reexamining these two texts, I reveal how Aguilera's works partake in discussions of both literary and social issues with an emphasis on progress and modernity.

When Aguilera published *Ecos nacionales*, he found inspiration in traditional forms, particularly the *romance*, and infuses in it elements of the European ballad to create a contemporary and innovative venue for the representation of Spanish issues. I show that *Ecos* communicates and seeks change by airing social ills in the voice of the Spanish masses. The inclusion of the masses aims to democratize Spanish poetry by giving a presence to marginalized groups who did not have a role in the representation of the nation at the time of the publication of *Ecos*.

This investigation also explores Aguilera's representation of the middle class in *Proverbios ejemplares* as well as this work's contribution to the development of Spain's modern novel. Aguilera is one of the first Spanish authors to integrate in prose fiction representation of middle-class life and values, which would come to be the focus point of the Realist novel. I show how this depiction of the middle class displays the problematic relation between modernity and tradition in Spanish society. I discover that Aguilera, writing against an imposition of modernity from outside, aims to give modernity in Spain a Spanish face from within.

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Introduction

Ventura Ruiz Aguilera

(1820-1881)

"I hoped to be a singer of the present without, however, turning my eyes from the horizon, to see if there loomed even a beam that would let me sense what the times would bring with them."

"Yo pretendí ser cantor del presente, sin apartar, empero, los ojos del horizonte, por ver si vislumbraba en él un rayo siquiera que me hiciese presentir lo que los tiempos habrían de traer consigo" (*Ecos nacionales* 157).

> "Incomplete would be the literature of a people, in a given epoch, if it did not respond to the dominant spirit, if it did not portray (although fleeing from servile imitation) the different stages that characterize it and give it its own physiognomy" (Ruiz Aguilera, *Inspiraciones* 1865).[1]

With these words of Ventura Ruiz Aguilera (1820-1881) in mind, this dissertation seeks to shed light on his literary work, which has not received proper attention. Several reasons point to the limited study of this author's oeuvre. The first reason is that Aguilera wrote during a period of Spanish literary production that is scarcely studied. I am referring to the period following the conclusion of Spanish Romanticism and the beginning of Realism. In the case of Aguilera, the period of his most active literary production spans the years 1849 and 1879. However, by 1849, the majority of Romanticism's canonical texts had already been published, whereas in the 1880s, the famous novelist Benito Pérez Galdós (1843-1920) ushers in Realism with the publication of some of his most influential novels.[2] Unsurprisingly, scholarship concerning 19th century literature revolves around the most salient authors of the two mentioned periods, leaving works published more or less between 1850 and 1870 in limbo.[3]

Consequently, the study of Aguilera's oeuvre remains in an archival state. In contrast to canonical works, texts like Aguilera's are, as John Guillory would say "shelved in the archive," but "their noncanonical status is not necessarily equivalent in anyone's judgement to a zero-degree of interest of value" (30). Similarly, Wadda C. Rios-Front observes the perpetuation of

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[1] "Incompleta sería la literatura de un pueblo, en una época dada, si no respondiese al espíritu en ella dominante, si no retratara (aunque huyendo de la imitación servil) las diferentes fases que la caracterizan y le dan fisonomía propia."

[2] I fully take into account the fact that some critics, like Alison Peers have proven the persistence of Romanticism throughout the second third of the 19th century. See Chapter VI in Edgar Allison Peers, *A History of the Romantic Movement in Spain*, vol. 2 (Cambridge UP, 2014).

[3] Both Wadda C. Ríos-Font and Alda Blanco recognize the lack of attention given to Spanish novels written between 1850 and 1870. See Alda Blanco, 466 and Ríos Font, 40.

Galdós as "the creator of the modern Spanish novel" and his opinion that Spain had no novel of importance until the 1880s, an idea that relegates most prose fiction published between the 1840s and 1860s to almost complete oblivion (35). Aguilera's prose figures into this list of works. It is my objective to show the relevance of Aguilera's oeuvre—his prose and poetry—in 19th century Spanish literature. In turn, my work will hopefully help reshape the way scholars look at the canon which encompasses this time period.

This dissertation aims to vindicate and extract two of Aguilera's most influential works from the archive. The first is his book of poems, *Ecos nacionales* (*National Echoes*) (1849), in which he essentially establishes his poetic creed. The second work is his collection of short stories entitled *Proverbios ejemplares* (*Exemplary Proverbs*) (1864). The former and most widely known work of Aguilera enabled him to become a highly esteemed poet who was committed to portraying the national and social needs of the age. Furthermore, it is my contention that *Proverbios*, a lesser known work, influenced and helped to shape not only the work of important 19th century writers, like Benito Pérez Galdós, but the Realist novel in general.

In light of these ideas, chapter 1 constitutes a review of Aguilera's life. Most of the facts concerning his biography and career have been taken from Carlos Peñaranda's book, *Ventura Ruiz Aguilera y Carlos Peñaranda* (2005).[4] I also expound on Aguilera's arrival to Madrid, his first dabbles in literature, and the connections he shared with other writers of his time period, for example, Juan Eugenio Hartzenbusch (1806-1880). I believe this cordial relationship with Hartzenbusch to be among the most original findings of this chapter, thanks to unpublished letters I uncovered in Biblioteca Nacional de España (National Library of Spain) while in

[4] I am in debt to Francisco Toro Ceballos for his assistance in my receiving a copy of this text along with other valuable manuscripts and texts of Ventura Ruiz Aguilera.

Madrid. This chapter lays bare Aguilera's minor involvement in the Spanish student protest 'Noche de San Daniel' ('Night of Saint Daniel') in 1865, a previously unknown fact that further highlights his political and social engagement.

Chapter 2 reviews the criticism Aguilera received concerning his works. The primary reason for this chapter is to provide a foundation for what has been said about Aguilera's works throughout his lifetime and afterwards. This chapter further aims to discover any details that might explain why the figure and work of Aguilera have been forgotten in spite of his popularity in the 19th century.

In regard to Aguilera's social outlook, chapter 3 focuses on *Ecos nacionales* and its poetic representation of Spanish society as Ventura believed that literature reflects the spirit of the age. Through Aguilera's *Ecos,* I examine not only the issues that affected 19th century Spain but also how Aguilera undertakes the representation of the Spanish people and social change through his poetry. My first task is to analyze how Aguilera's *Ecos* participate in the larger context of the Revolutions of 1848, which at first sight, did not seem to affect Spain as dramatically as elsewhere in Europe. My second objective is to explore Aguilera's use of the ballad to renovate or modernize Spanish literature, while attempting to understand how his *Ecos* oppose and agree with the major poetic currents of the time. Thirdly, I focus my attention on *lo popular* (the popular element) in the collection, particularly its showcase of Spain's underrepresented classes.

My fourth and final chapter explores the broader representation of society across Spain's middle class in Aguilera's collection of short stories, *Proverbios ejemplares*. My objective here is to show how the collection represents a transitional period between the Romanticism and the Realist novel. To this effect, Aguilera uses Romantic techniques and infuses them with what

became the primary focus in the Realist novel, the middle class. In the 1870s, Galdós commended Aguilera's efforts and considered this literary formula to be essential in the modern novel that, according to him, had not yet appeared in Spain. I also explore how several genres (*cuento*, *novela corta*, *artículo de costumbres*) have been used to describe this collection. I problematize these terms in hope of reaching an understanding of Aguilera's own take on the issue.

Given these objectives, I hope this investigation will aid in bringing other authors to the foreground, particularly those writers belonging to Aguilera's period and with whom he and his works interact. Indeed, many of the writers who will be mentioned throughout this dissertation are in a situation similar to Aguilera. However, this exploration will help to reveal what Aguilera's works have to offer in terms of their significance and role in the history of Spanish 19th century literature.

> "The poet should not sing only for the learned people, . . . the nation . . . comprises the wise and the ignorant, the poor and the rich, women, children, the young and the old" (Ruiz Aguilera, 1878).[5]

1. From Success to Oblivion: Life & Works of Aguilera

Upon reviewing contemporary scholarship, Ruiz Aguilera would suffer an inevitable disappointment now that his works, praised in his day, receive consideration only in passing. Moreover, some of the bold pathfinders who undertake the study of his work and who I will mention throughout this work, often lack a foundational basis upon which to appreciate and judge them mainly because criticism concerning him is rather piecemeal. This chapter aims to rediscover a writer and revisit both his life and the literary epoch in which he is found.

One reason, albeit a lesser one, Aguilera is unknown to many scholars lies in the difficult attempt of grouping and studying him in relation to his peers. Labeling writers is still staunchly entrenched in scholarly tradition. Unfortunately, those writers who do not fit within the limits of this periodic gauge are scarcely studied or labeled inferiorly "authors of transition," while those who succeed them are commonly regarded as having perfected what others might have inspired. This is the situation of Aguilera, whose works stretch across different literary epochs, at moments disputing and struggling in opposition with them and agreeing with them at other times.

Aguilera produces a majority of his works alongside the contours of both Romanticism and Realism, the former having reached its preeminent peak in the 1840s, precisely when the

[5] Cited from a letter written from Aguilera to Antonio Luís Carrión in 1878 a couple of years before Aguilera's death. See Antonio Luis Carrión, *Ecos del Tajo* (Málaga: Revista de Andalucía, 1878) xii-xiii. "El poeta no ha de cantar solo para gente culta . . . el pueblo—preciso es repetirlo mucho . . . —se compone del sabio y del ignorante, del pobre y del rico, de las mujeres, de los niños, de los mozos y los ancianos."

literary career of Aguilera takes off. The heyday of Spain's Realism is generally understood to have begun in 1880, a time in which Aguilera had already published most of his works.

Hoping to illustrate more clearly the boundaries or limits in which Aguilera could be approached within the panorama of 19th century literature, I dedicate a section of this and the following chapter to criticism concerning his social and literary milieu in several of his works and to their reception. I survey those critiques and analyses that span from his own time period up until around the end of the 20th century. With this approach, I hope to provide readers with an objective viewpoint and basis for how critics have approached Aguilera's work and career. It is also my contention that the trajectory of these judgments will shed light on possible reasons for Aguilera's falling into disfavor.

1.1 Life & Literary Beginnings of the "Spanish Beranger"

Ventura Ruiz Aguilera was born in 1820 in Salamanca, Spain.[6] Enrique Toral Peñaranda, based on official records, notes that he was baptized as Ventura Eustaquio, the son of Domingo Ruiz de Aguilera and Francisca Bellido (9). During my own investigation, I happened upon a newspaper article that paints a strikingly different account of the aforementioned facts that Peñaranda discovered, specifically the names of Aguilera's parents and his place of birth. It was published in the Salamanca newspaper *El Adelanto* in 1925 by the writer and journalist José Sánchez Rojas (1885-1931). In Sánchez Rojas's account, Aguilera is born to a humble family.

[6] Perhaps, the most comprehensive biographical review on the life of Ventura Ruiz Aguilera can be found in the investigations of the recently deceased historian and bibliophile Enrique Toral Peñaranda in his book *Ventura Ruiz Aguilera y Carlos Peñaranda: estudios sobre la vida y obra lírica del poeta salmantino y su correspondencia con el poeta sevillano* (Alcalá la Real: Asociación Cultural Enrique Toral y Pilar Soler, 2005). This book has served in bringing to light the coming, both political and literary, of Aguilera's career. Due to the scarcity of published resources touching on the figure of Aguilera, whenever I refer to historical facts about him in this chapter, unless otherwise noted, Toral Peñaranda's study will be the principal source.

His father is a *boletero* (billet-master) and is described as hardworking.[7] Aguilera's mother, according to Sánchez Rojas, is Elisa Aguilera (not Francisca Bellido), and she is portrayed as "ingenious and vivacious" ("Crónicas de Sánchez Rojas") ("Chronicles of Sánchez Rojas").[8]

Sánchez Rojas's detailing of Aguilera's childhood education is also of particular interest, especially since it is the only account I was able to discover.

> Aided with the protection of the Marquises of Cerralbo and of Almarza, "perhaps" Elisa's parents, which like them has the last name of Aguilera, Ventura goes to secondary school. Afterwards, he studies Medicine. He reads his favorite books: Meléndez Valdés, Jovellanos, Quintana. He learns French, and the Irish Noblemen of the Archbishop College teach him the English language. Lord Byron, Victor Hugo, Musset, Manzoni, Leopardi, are readings that are discovered easily in Ruiz Aguilera. (*"*Crónicas de Rojas Sánchez")[9]

As mentioned before, in Toral Peñaranda's account, Aguilera's mother was not Elisa but Francisca Bellido. Aguilera, in fact, did have a daughter named Elisa which is why Sánchez Rojas may be confused. Toral Peñaranda makes no mention of the assistance of the Marquises of Cerralba in Aguilera's upbringing nor does he discuss in general this portion of Aguilera's life. These wealthy aristocrats carried the last name de Aguilera and actually resided at the San Boal palace where Sánchez Rojas marks Aguilera's birthplace. It is unclear whether Ventura had any

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[7] Boletero: "The person who, on a march, precedes the troops to prepare the lodgings and distribute the billets [tickets that informed soldiers where to lodge] to the officers and men." José M. Lopes and Edward R. Bensley, *Nuevo diccionario inglés-español y español-inglés: el mas completo de los publicados hasta el dia* (París: Garnier Hermanos, 1887) 110.

[8] "La madre es muy ingeniosa y vivaracha." All English translations from Spanish throughout this dissertation are mine unless otherwise noted.

[9] "Ayudado con la protección de los marqueses de Cerralbo y de Almarza, "tal vez" parientes de Elisa que como ellos se apellida Aguilera, va Ventura al Instituto. Después estudia Medicina. Lee sus libros predilectos: Meléndez Valdés, Jovellanos, Quintana. Aprende francés y los Nobles Irlandeses del Colegio del Arzobispo le dan a conocer la lengua inglesa. Lord Byron, Victor Hugo, Musset, Manzoni, Leopardi, son lecturas que se descubren fácilmente en Ruiz Aguilera."

kinship with this family. According to official documents gathered in Peñaranda's study, the last name Aguilera belonged to his father and not his mother as Sánchez Rojas suggests. Whatever the case may be, Sanchez Rojas's thought-provoking introduction of Aguilera's life raises many questions about the author's childhood, which neither my nor Peñaranda's investigation are able to corroborate.

In regard to Aguilera's later years and professional path, it does not differ much from that of his contemporaries. A reserved and private individual, he studied medicine to end up as a writer. A few years after his birth, his family moved to Catalonia whose inspiration would certainly end up crystallized in his poem *Balada de Catalunya* (1863), which he dedicated to Catalan poet and friend Victor Balaguer (1824-1901) who is most widely known for his influences on the literary movements of Catalonia. I include a part of this poem here, which William C. Bonaparte-Wyse (1826-1892) translated to English in 1868.

—Cataluña, noble madre, Un vestido te he de dar, Y del frio los rigores A sentir no volverás.—(*Ecos* 178)	"Catalunya, noble mother! 'T is my duty thee to clothe; Hark! To free thee from the rigour Of the frost I take an oath." (*Ecos* 336)

In 1836, the family would turn back to Salamanca, and in 1837, Ruiz Aguilera enrolled as a volunteer in the *Milicia Nacional* where he would remain until 1844. Here he presented himself, according to Enrique Toral Peñaranda, for an expedition against the Carlists.[10] During this time, precisely in 1838 and at the age of 18, Aguilera began to dabble in poetry, according to Federico Villalva. In his biography of Aguilera, Villalva recounts a poet's desire to "rebel again

[10] Referring to the Civil War fought in Spain from 1833 to 1839 between the "carlistas," supporters of Don Carlos María de Isidro as pretender to the throne, and the "isabelinos" who supported Isabell II.

the absurd in literature" (in *Elegías y armonías*, 296).[11] He includes Aguilera's poem, perhaps his first, entitled "Amor en soledad" or "Love in Loneliness," a representation of years of loneliness and jealousy. Already, one can discern the faint and distant access of a popular poet blended with a lyrical style.

Denme las perlas que la mar esconde En sus profundos senos ignorados; Los tesoros guardados Con afanosa agitación mezquina, … Y yo los cambiaré, Laura amorosa Por un ramo de guindas, … (*Elegías y armonías* 297).	Give me the pearls that the sea hides below In her deep forgotten bosom; Shielded treasures With miserly arduous unrest … And I shall exchange them, sweet Laura For a cluster of cherries …(my trans.; 297)

Not only did Aguilera cultivate poetry, but his propensity for theater developed sometime around the 1840s when he began a literary correspondence with Juan Eugenio Hartzenbusch (1806-1880), a well-regarded Romantic playwright best known for his work *Los amantes de Teruel* (*The Lovers of Teruel*). In unpublished letters found at the Biblioteca Nacional de España and which I have transcribed and translated here below, Aguilera writes to Hartzenbusch on at least three occasions to request literary advice for upcoming plays. Nothing has been written about these letters to my knowledge. In the first letter, Aguilera asks Hartzenbusch to consider the value of his work and its possible presentation in the theater, La Cruz. A copy of this letter can be found in Appendix A.

> Señor D. Juan Eugenio Hartzenbusch:
>
> Muy señor mío y amigo: Dejo en poder de mi amigo Batiparano una comedia titulada "Pagar en igual moneda" para que la ponga en manos de usted y tenga la bondad de revisarla, por si la juzgase digna de la escena presentarla en la Cruz. Me valgo de la amistad de usted porque creo que nadie mejor puede aconsejarme e influir para la representación de mi pobre obra, si mereciese su aprobación.

[11] "se levanta contra lo absurdo en la literatura."

He sentido muchísimo no pasar a despedirme de usted, pero no me ha sido posible, porque, según el dueño de la mensajería salimos hoy a las nueve y no a las once como me dijo ayer. De todos modos, en todo aquello que usted lo considere útil, tiene en Salamanca pronto a complacerle a su mejor amigo.

SS.G.B.S.M

(Firma) Ventura Ruiz Aguilera

Madrid octubre 16 1841

Mr. Juan Eugenio Hartzenbusch:

My honorable and much respected friend, I leave in the hands of my comrade Batiparano a comedy titled "Pay one with the same coin" so that he can put it in yours, with hopes that you will have the kindness to review it, in case you deem it worthy of presentation in *la Cruz*. I make use of your friendship because I believe that no one can better advise me and influence the performance of my poor work were it to merit your approval.

I have felt great remorse for not saying goodbye, but it has not been possible because, according to the owner of the messenger, we are to leave today at nine and not at eleven as he told me yesterday. Anyhow, in everything that you consider useful, you have your best friend in Salamanca ready to please you.

Very sincerely yours

(Signed) Ventura Ruiz Aguilera

Madrid October 16 1841

The work which Aguilera references in the letter has not been located and is most likely lost. However, more than a year later, Aguilera addressed an additional letter to Hartzenbusch from Salamanca regarding another play that he co-wrote with Juan de Alba y Peña (1820-1892). In it, Aguilera requests that Hartzenbusch allow him to dedicate the work to him as a gesture of his appreciation for his friendship and support. This manuscript (also found in the archives of Biblioteca Nacional de España), like the previous one, until now has neither been translated nor transcribed. A copy of this letter can be found in Appendix B.

Señor D Juan Eugenio Hartzenbusch:

Salamanca

Diciembre 6 1842

Mi estimado amigo y señor: Faltaría a la buena correspondencia si en la primera ocasión que se me presenta, no le manifestase mi agradecimiento, por las pruebas de amistad que he tenido el honor de deberle.

Se va a poner en escena, en el teatro de este capital, una comedia en verso escrita por D. Juan de Alba y por mí, y esperamos que, si el escrito fuese favorable, nos dé usted su permiso para dedicársela al tiempo de imprimirla.

Bien pobre es nuestro obsequio, pero no dudamos que usted le aceptará, como protector de sus más apasionadas admiradores.

Con este motivo me ofrezco de usted nuevamente su mejor amigo. S.S. Q. S. M.B

(Firmado) Ventura Ruiz Aguilera

Mr. D. Juan Eugenio Hartzenbusch:

Salamanca

December 6 1842

My dear and respected friend: I would be in breach of good correspondence if on the first occasion that presented itself to me, I did not show my gratitude for the signs of friendship that I have had the honor of owing you.

They are going to put on stage, in the theatre of this capital, a verse comedy written by Mr. Juan de Alba and me, and we hope that, if the work were favorable, you would give us permission to dedicate it to you when it is printed.

Very modest is our gift, but we do not doubt that you will accept it, like a protector of your most enthusiastic admirers.

For this reason, I, your best friend, come to you once again. Very sincerely yours.

(Signed) Ventura Ruiz Aguilera

This play entitled *Un don Juan de Calderón* was performed in June of 1844 in the theater Variedades in Madrid where it received tolerable reviews. Like the previous drama, I was unsuccessful in locating a copy. Nevertheless, these two unpublished letters expand upon Aguilera's literary connections with well-known poets and writers before he sought residence in Madrid.

Aguilera finally moved to Madrid in 1844 where, upon arriving, he had few friends and acquaintances. Although in the possession of commendable letters of recommendation to continue to study medicine, he decided to abandon his studies. He was adamant about dedicating himself enthusiastically to the art of letters. However, he would soon become disappointed in the Romantic idea of Madrid that he had previously conjured for himself. It was in no way what he dreamed it to be, later stating that "the people and the things in nothing resembled the beautiful phantoms created by my imagination before observing them up close" (*Libro de las sátiras* xiv).[12] Aguilera somewhat naively considered Madrid to be a place of hope and opportunity but later would come to identify it as a city full of vices. Nevertheless, he eventually made his acquaintance with other literatos, namely his inseparable friend Francisco Zea (1825-1857) to whom he grew close at literary gatherings. José de Castro y Serrano (1829-1896) recalls the disoriented nature of these literary reunions:

> There was at the time in Madrid (we mean 1846) an almost embarrassing literary gathering where, without knowing why, most of the youngsters would get together, who ten years later have obtained an advantageous position in what is called the republic of letters . . . . There reunited Florentino Sanz, Mariano Cazurro, Antonio Trueba, Ventura Ruiz Aguilera, Antonio Cánovas, Manuel Fernández González, Antonio Hurtado, Eduardo Asquerino, José Albuerne, Caferino Suárez Bravo, Rafael Gálvez Amandi, Antonio Arnao, and some others. (qtd. in Zea *Obras en verso y prosa* ix-x)[13]

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[12] "los hombres y las cosas en nada se asemejaban a los bellos fantasmas creados por mi imaginación antes de observarlos de cerca;"

[13] "Había por entonces en Madrid (nos referimos a 1846) una reunión literaria casi vergonzante adonde concurrían, sin saber por qué, la mayor parte de los jóvenes que diez años más tarde han conseguido un puesto ventajoso en lo que se llama república de las letras. . . . Allí concurrían Florentino Sanz, Mariano Cazurro, Antonio Trueba, Ventura Ruiz Aguilera, Antonio Cánovas, Manuel Fernández González, Antonio Hurtado, Eduardo Asquerino, José Albuerne, Caferino Suárez Bravo, Rafael Gálvez Amandi, Antonio Arnao, y algunos otros."

Toral Peñaranda adds Romantic author Carolina Coronado (1820-1911) to Aguilera's group of acquaintances for the friendship the two shared.

During the time, one can witness a progression in both Aguilera's endeavors in journalism and the tenacity of his political ideology as influenced by liberalism, which would inform every aspect of his literary endeavours. It is indeed a matter of utmost importance in Aguilera's life upon which he would later reflect in a collection of poems entitled *Libro de las sátiras* (*Book of Satires*) (1874):

> Nevertheless, I, who had just given up on the future that laid before my eyes the practice of such a profession as honorable and lucrative as medicine, had to throw myself into journalism, enlisting myself to a flag that at the time only offered its supporters misery, travails, and persecution. I loved the ideas supported by the liberal party, had deep faith in them, and all the gold in the world and the most advantageous positions would not have made me depart from the path which my convictions had drawn for me." (xiv)[14]

In 1848, and due to these same liberal ideas, Ruiz Aguilera was imprisoned and exiled to Castellón where he received the support of then governor and poet Ramón de Campoamor. As Toral Peñaranda notes, what could have been an unbearable situation ended up a tolerable exile (16). From Castellón, Aguilera was able to publish his first novel *Un conspirador de a folio* (*A Huge Conspirer*) (1848), and in its prologue, he reiterates his appreciation to the inhabitants of Alicante for the hospitality that they bestowed upon him. Here he also published his book of

[14] "Sin embargo, yo, que acababa de renunciar al porvenir que abría ante mis ojos el ejercicio de una profesión tan honrosa y lucrativa como la Medicina, tuve que lanzarme al periodismo, alistándome en una bandera que, por entonces, únicamente ofrecía a sus partidarios miseria, trabajos y persecuciones. Amaba las ideas sustentadas por el partido liberal avanzado, tenía fe profunda en ellas, y todo el oro del mundo y los puestos más ventajosos no me hubieran hecho apartar del camino que me trazaban mis convicciones."

poems entitled *Ecos nacionales*, his best known work, which accomplished six editions in his lifetime.

The collection earned him the title 'The Spanish Beranger,' a sobriquet that, since the early part of the 20th century, has been forgotten. After some research, I have discovered that the name has quite an interesting trajectory. Pierre-Jean de Béranger (1780-1857) was a famous French poet who wrote poems and songs of a popular element. Regarding Aguilera, the name was probably first used in a review of *Ecos* carried out by Álvaro Gil Sanz (1813-1891) in 1851 in the newspaper *Revista Salmantina* (*Periodical of Salamanca*). I include the referenced quote here: "Are his *Ecos* anything more than the songs of Beranger, to whom the literary world observes as perhaps the best poet of France?" (83).[15] It would not be long before other critics and authors nodded in agreement to this outlook for which the epithet later appeared in another review in *Adelante (Revista salmantina) (Onward* (*Periodical of Salamanca*)) published under the initials M.G.S. I include this quote below in its entirety.

> Mr. Aguilera, a profound connoisseur of national literature and competent, furthermore, in those of other nations, has understood the true nature of modern poetry and followed the luminous path of Beranger, the greatest poet of France in the present century. His *Ecos nacionales* are not a servile imitation of the songs of the author of "Le dieu des bonsgens;" they belong to the same school, however, they have their own character, their undoubtable originality, which determines a noticeable difference and establishes a dividing line. We will not take our sympathy with Mr. Aguilera, so far as to parallel him

[15] "¿Son otra cosa más que *Ecos* suyos las canciones de Beranger, a quien el mundo literario acata como el poeta tal vez mayor de la Francia?"

with Beranger. What we will say is that the harmonious and sensuous verses of Mr. Aguilera's songs are in no way inferior to those of the previously mentioned poet.[16]

In addition to these writers, in 1880 José Martí (1853-1895) also referred to Aguilera as a "kind of Beranger" (31).[17] Afterwards, as Aguilera became less popular, so did the name.

Back in Madrid and free from exile, Aguilera met his future wife, Doña Antonia García Sánchez, in a masked ball, and he married her in 1851. Two years later, Elisa, his only daughter is born, but she would meet her end in an untimely death at the young age of 8, inspiring a mournful Aguilera to compose *Elegías* (*Elegies*) (1862), a collection of some of the most intimate and heartrending elegies of Spanish literature. Carolina Coronado, in the collection's prologue, deemed these verses characteristic of a woman's for the profoundness in their execution. Readers openly saw unfold before them a grieving father and poet who slowly had to come to terms with the death of his only daughter:

XIV
¡Silencio!... ¿Oísteis?
Suena en su estancia
Un rumor tenue,
Cual si dos alas
Un invisible
Ser desplegara,
A las acordes
Voces lejanas,
Muy lejanas,
Muy lejanas,
Más que la luna,
Mucho más altas,

XIV
Silence! ... Did you hear?
Sounds in her room
A faint rumor,
As if two wings
An invisible
Being unfolded,
To the sound of chords
Far away voices
Very far,
Very far,
Farther than the moon,
Much higher,

[16] "El Sr. Aguilera, profundo conocedor de la literatura patria, y versado además en la de los otros pueblos, ha comprendido la verdadera índole de la poesía moderna, y seguido la luminosa senda de Beranger, el poeta más grande de la Francia en el presente siglo. Sus *Ecos nacionales* no son imitación servil de las canciones del autor de "Le dieu des bonsgens;" pertenecen a la misma escuela, empero, tienen su carácter propio, su originalidad indudable, que determina una diferencia marcada, y establece una línea divisoria. No llevaremos nuestra simpatía hacia el Sr. Aguilera, hasta el punto de nivelarle con Beranger; lo que sí diremos es, que los armoniosos y sentidos versos de las canciones del Sr. Aguilera en nada desmerecen al lado de los del expresado poeta."
[17] "una especie de Béranger"

Nunca oídas	Never heard
Ni soñadas,	Nor dreamt,
Así como ecos	Like echoes
De liras y arpas,	Of lyres and harps,
Con que otros niños	With which other children
La llaman de los cielos	Call her from the heavens
En los abismos.	In the abyss.
XV	XV
Ya se la llevan	Now they take her
En mansa nube,	On gentle cloud,
. . . . . (18-19).	. . . . . (my trans.)

During this period of mourning, Aguilera's administrative career began to take off when he was appointed as an official in the department of Administración Civil in Ministerio de la Gobernación (Civil Administration in the Department of Governance). Over the next two years, Aguilera was promoted to a number of similar civil duties in the Department of Governance until General Narváez's return to power in 1856. Aguilera's unemployment would last 12 years, and in 1868 he succeeded Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer (1836-1870), one of the most representative poets of post-Romanticism, as director of *Mueso Universal*, which was considered one of the most important journals of Spain during the mid 19th century. Aguilera would occupy this post during three years.[18]

During his direction of *El Museo Universal*, I now know that, based on an unpublished manuscript letter that I happened upon in BNE, Aguilera would appeal once again to

[18] Regarding this facet of Aguilera's career, there is no better study, which exhaustively covers both the intellectual and journalistic aspect of his life, than that of Lledó Mercedes Patiño who, in her doctoral dissertation titled *"Ventura Ruiz Aguilera: Escritor y periodista," Doctoral Dissertation, Universidad de Salamanca, 2006.*, deems Aguilera a pioneer of modern journalism. She effectively shows how Aguilera's literary and journalistic tendencies symbiotically function at a time when Spanish journalism was undergoing revolutionary changes. Although Mercedes Patiño's primary focus is not the literary and social representation of Aguilera's prose and verse, her scrupulously elaborated investigation on the multifaceted figure of Aguilera and his activism in *tertulias* and literary groups which she deems "la vanguardia progresista" is an authoritative work of invaluable relevance and merit in terms of Aguilerian scholarship. Ultimately, some of the literary sources found here in my dissertation can be found in Patiño's dissertation as well, although Patiños's analysis of the authors of these literary sources is minimal. Also worthy of mention, especially for future scholarship on Aguilera, is Patiño's collection of manuscripts, many of them previously unpublished, except for those included also in Toral Peñaranda's work which appeared one year prior to Patiñó's work.

Hartzenbusch's aid, this time in the hopes of receiving material for publication. This letter can be found in Appendix C.

Sr. D. Juan Eugenio Hartzenbusch

Enero, 12 de 1867

Muy señor mío y respetable amigo: El Museo Universal necesita, ahora más que nunca, para cumplir un compromiso con el público, que las personas que han de favorecerlo y honrarlo con su colaboración en el presente año, según anunció en el Prospecto, le proporcionen escritos, en prosa o verso. En la confianza de que no ha de ser usted el último que contribuya al mayor lucimiento de aquel semanario, me dirijo a usted y le ruego que me envíe algún trabajo, el cual, me dice el Sr. Gaspar, será remunerado como ha sido . . . en otras ocasiones.

Con este motivo, se repite a las órdenes de usted y b. s. m. s. afmo. s.s. y amigo

(firmado) Ventura Ruiz Aguilera

S.C.
Calle de S. Pedro Mártir, 12- 2º dcha.

Mr. Juan Eugenio Hartzenbusch

January 12, 1867

My dear and respectful Sir: El Museo Universal [The Universal Museum] needs, now more than ever, in order to fulfill a commitment to the public, that the people who will favor and honor it with their collaboration this year, as announced in the Prospecto, [Announcement] provide it with texts, in prose or verse. In the confidence that you will not be the last to contribute to the greatness of that weekly, I turn to you and ask you to send me some text, which, Mr. Gaspar tells me, will be remunerated as it has been . . . in other occasions.

For this reason, your servant and friend writes you.

(Signed) Ventura Ruiz Aguilera

One of Aguilera's last administrative jobs would be held in the Museo Arqueológico Nacional (National Archeological Museum) where he was director from 1868 until 1872. Thanks to Peñaranda Toral and the scarcely remarked letters that he includes in his book, I am able to recompile them here, recounting this stage of Aguilera's career while complementing Toral Peñaranda's analysis. The situation is that Aguilera, having supposedly resigned from his post

twice, vacillates in taking a final resolution to leave while the famous Romantic poet Antonio García Gutiérrez aspires to fill the vacancy. Juan Valera (1824-1905), who was a writer, literary critic, diplomat, and politician (not to mention an influential liaison in Museo Arqueológico), promoted García Gutiérrez's cause in a letter written to Abelardo López de Ayala, Ministro de Ultramar (Overseas Minister). It is clear, and it will become even clearer as this dissertation develops, the complete disregard that Juan Valera had towards Aguilera.

> Ministerio de Fomento, Dirección General de Instrucción Pública.
>
> Excelentísimo señor don Abelardo(sic) López de Ayala.
>
> Mi querido amigo: los ruegos de Cisneros y de Núñez de Arce han amansado lo poco que de la arisca condición radical sobresalía en el alma, blanda por lo demás, y amorosa, del poeta popularesco y melifluo Aguilera, el cual mudando de aviso, como suele el sabio, ha comprendido que las conquistas de la revolución de septiembre, los derechos individuales y demás primores de que gozamos ahora, no peligrarán, ni más ni menos de lo que peligran, porque él siga cuidando o deje de cuidar de todos aquellos chirimbolos que hay en el Museo Arqueológico. Bien penetrado de esta verdad y asimismo de que por emplearse, bajo mi sabia dirección, en el buen orden de los vasos peruanos, de los ídolos indios y de los instrumentos de la edad de piedra, no habrá nadie por desaforado que sea, que se atreva a mirarle y declararle cómplice en la reacción espantosa a que nos encaminamos, el dicho buen Aguilera ha desistido de hacer dimisión. No se ha hecho pues el vacío. Ni García Gutiérrez, ni el *innominato*, tienen que aspirar a llenarle. No extrañe usted por tanto que no le envíe el reglamento del Cuerpo de Archiveros, Bibliotecarios y Anticuarios, ya que a nada conduce y para recreo no es la lectura más amena.
>
> Mande otra cosa en que acierte a complacerle mejor. Su afectísimo. Juan Valera. (qtd. in Toral Peñaranda 72)
>
> Ministry of Development, General Administration of Public Instruction.
> His Excellency Mr. Abelardo(sic) López de Ayala.
> My dear friend, the pleas of Cisneros and Núñez de Arce have soothed what little of the unsociable, radical condition that stood out in the otherwise soft and loving soul of the popular and mellifluous poet Aguilera who, after changing his mind, has understood that the conquests of the September revolution, the individual rights and other advantages that we enjoy now, will not be endangered, no more or less than they are endangered, because he continues to care for or stop caring for all those thingumajigs in the Archaeological Museum. Well penetrated by this truth, and just as well, that, under my wise guidance, in the proper order of Peruvian vessels, Indian idols, and instruments of the stone age, there will be no one, no matter how unruly, who dare look at him and declare him complicit in the appalling reaction to which we are headed. The good Aguilera has given up his resignation. The vacancy has not passed. Nor Garcia Gutiérrez, nor the *innominato*, have

> to aspire to fill it. Do not be surprised, therefore, should I send you the regulations of the Assembly of Archivists, Librarians and Antiquarians, because it would be for nothing and for recreation, reading is not the most pleasant.

It is here where Toral Peñaranda—apparently vexed by Valera's "lightness" with which he handled official business—holds back on a proper analysis of the letter. It is obvious that Valera had some misgivings about Aguilera as a "poeta popularesco" (popular poet) as he uses the Spanish diminutive –esco here in a pejorative and disdainful sense. I will expound on this issue in the following chapter.

The September revolution to which Valera refers is known as the Glorious Revolution of 1868, often referred to simply as *La Gloriosa*, a military revolt which took place in Spain, causing Queen Isabell II's exile. It favored a constitutional monarchy and individual rights while proclaiming reforms that were uniquely democratic and liberal. Aguilera identified with the ideals of the revolution, and it was his faith in the revolution that in part secured his position as director of Museo Arqueológico. Nevertheless, Valera, in the most ironic of ways, assures López de Ayala that the rights guaranteed by the Revolution will not be infringed upon Aguilera's dismissal. Aguilera is convinced with the help of the author Enrique de Cisneros (1826-1898) and the poet Gaspar Núñez de Arce (1834-1903) whom Valera references in the letter. With his resignation, Aguilera is able to free García Gutiérrez from the agitation that his inability to occupy the "vacancy" had caused. García Gutiérrez, according to Toral Peñaranda's notes, would remain as director of Museo Arqueológico until the restauration of the monarch. Upon this event, Aguilera would return to work in the museum until his death in 1881.

With a growing concern for social issues around him, Aguilera became an activist for the Sociedad Abolicionista, a foundation established in 1864 which sought to end slavery in the Spanish Antilles. Lledó Patiño has shed some light on this time in Aguilera's career: "[t]he anti-

slavery issue is an incessant motive of interest to Ruiz Aguilera, who devotes most of his time to his passion, the letters, reclaiming them as an instrument for justice and progress from his literary beginnings" ("Ventura Ruiz Aguilera: Escritor y periodista" 205-6).[19] The commitment for which Aguilera felt the need to voice his aversion to slavery undoubtedly led to his composing the poem "A la hija de un negrero" ("To the Daughter of a Slave Trader"), which I have taken the liberty of partially revealing here, perhaps for the first time apart from its original publication, from Aguilera's sixth and final edition of *Ecos nacionales* published around 1875:

En la cuna, cuando niña,	In the crib, as a child,
Cariñosas y leales	Affectionate and loyal
Tu dulce sueño arrullaban	Your sweet sleep lulled
Las negras con sus cantares.	Black women with their songs.
¡Ay! aquellas infelices	Oh! Those unhappy ones
Eran hijas o eran madres,	They were daughters or mothers,
Compradas por mercaderes	Purchased by merchants
De alma dura y miserable.	Hard-hearted and miserable.
Si a ti te compraran otros	If you were bought by others
En otro mercado infame,	In another infamous market,
Con los tuyos arrancada	With your loved ones dragged
Al suelo que tanto amaste;	To the floor that you adored so much;
¿Con qué derecho diría	With what right could he say
El que de ti su Dios hace:	He that maketh a God of thee:
"Devolvédmela, crueles,	"Give her back to me, cruel,
"Tened compasión de un padre,	"Have compassion on a father,
"No hay dolor como el mío,	"There is no pain like mine,
"No lo hay más grande?" (260-61).	"No bigger pain than mine?"

Abolitionism would not be the only right for which Aguilera fought. We now know that Aguilera took part, whether intentionally or coincidentally, in 'Noche de San Daniel' ('The Night of Saint Daniel), a student protest in response to the dismissal of the head of Universidad

[19] "La cuestión antiesclavista es motivo incesante de interés para Ruiz Aguilera, que dedica la mayor parte de su tiempo a su pasión, las letras, reivindicadas por él como un instrumento al servicio de la justicia y el progreso desde sus remotos inicios literarios."

de Madrid by the Moderate Party.[20] One newspaper recalls the event in the following way: "[t]he distinguished poet Mr. Ventura Ruiz Aguilera, who was slightly injured on the night of the 10th, is now restored. . . ." (*La Época*).[21]

In addition to Aguilera's social activism, Lledó Patiño also points out his involvement in intellectual circles which highlights his literary profile in 19th century Madrid as an authentic man of letters. Recalling his representation in the *Ateneo*, a prominent cultural society established in 1835, Lledó Patiño states the following:

> Another meeting place was the Ateneo where the most prestigious intellectuals of the time met and it was the place preferred by Ventura Ruiz Aguilera in the sixties to exchange his viewpoints with those who led the Spanish philosophical and ideological intellectual shift and cultural regeneration that set its focal point in the philosophical-political movement of Krausism.[22] ("Ventura Ruiz Aguilera: Escritor y periodista" 184)

In the *Ateneo*, Aguilera would provide the renowned Pérez Galdós with drawings of Salamanca that would serve the latter in his notorious and landmark collection *Episodios nacionales* (*National Episodes*). Lledó Patiño includes the recounting of the relationship of the two authors written by Armando Palacio Valdés (1853-1937), which I incorporate here: "Don Benito came by daily to have Don Ventura Ruiz de Aguilera, the old singer of optimism and tenderness, draw

---

[20] "Between 1820 and 1868, the *Partido Moderado* or *moderado*s represented the more conservative strand of the Spanish liberal tradition. . . . At a political level, the *moderado*s were concerned with maintaining a strong monarch, a high property franchise, centralizing power, and ensuring social order through heavy-handed use of the security forces. Socially, they wished to effect a reconciliation between liberalism, and the old order, by ensuring that the nobility should retain both its property and a powerful voice in the nation's affairs. . . ." Angel Smith, *Historical Dictionary of Spain* (Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, 2009) 478.

[21] "El distinguido poeta Sr. Ventura Ruiz Aguilera, que fue herido ligeramente en la noche del 10, se halla ya reestablecido. . . .". See *La Êpoca* (Madrid), 17 April 1865.

[22]"Otro lugar de encuentro será el Ateneo donde se reunirán los más prestigiosos intelectuales de la época y será el lugar preferido por Ventura Ruiz Aguilera en los arios sesenta para intercambiar sus puntos de vista con aquellos que protagonizan el relevo intelectual, la regeneración cultural, filosófica e ideológica española que fija su Norte en el movimiento filosófico-político del krausismo."

a map of Salamanca, which the author of the *Episodios nacionales* confesses it served him in *Arapiles* in 1875" (qtd. in "Ventura Ruiz Aguilera: Escritor y periodista" 207).

Aguilera would be one of the first authors of considerable fame to recognize Galdós's merits in 1880 which he reveals in a review of Emilia Pardo Bazán (1851-1921). My inclusion of the review in question below is novel. In fact, prior to this discovery, I could not locate any texts of Aguilera's that included allusions to Galdós's works, not to mention the work of Pardo Bazán.

> I do not know if I will be as fortunate in the present occasion as I was when in a brief letter addressed by me to a newspaper in this capital on the occasion of Pérez Galdós's first two novels *La Fontana de oro* and *Un radical de antaño*—of which little mention had been made from any indolent column, while articles were being devoted, not only to the praise of the good (a most natural thing) but also to the lengthy examination of buffooneries that fought against each other and were condemned to eternal forgetfulness—I indulged in calling the benevolent attention of the critics, several of them agreeing with my indications and announcing the modest author of those works, then unknown, as a first-rate novelist.[23] (*El Diario de Lugo*)

The importance of the relationship between Galdós and Aguilera will resurface as the dissertation unfolds, especially in my chapter on Aguilera's *Proverbios ejemplare*s. For now, it suffices to say that the two enjoyed an amiable relationship that saw Aguilera as an influential figure in Galdós's own novelistic endeavours.

[23] "No sé si seré tan afortunado en la ocasión presente, como lo fui cuando en una breve carta dirigida por mí a un periódico de esta capital, con motivo de las dos primeras novelas de Pérez Galdós *La Fontana de oro* y *Un radical de antaño*--de las cuales apenas había hecho ligera mención alguna gacetilla perezosa, en tanto que se dedicaban sendos artículos, no ya solamente al elogio de lo bueno (cosa muy natural) sino también al examen prolijo de bufonadas que en ellos mismos se combatían y se condenaban al olvido eterno--me permitía llamar la benévola atención de los críticos, correspondiendo varios de ellos a mis indicaciones y anunciando al modestísimo autor de aquellas obras, entonces desconocido como un novelista de primer orden."

In summary, the highlights of Aguilera's life detailed in this chapter show the makings of a committed author in both the literary and political arena of 19th century society. This in addition to his epistolary correspondence with influential writers such as Hartzenbusch undoubtedly influenced his works. Other possible influences may be seen in more or less neoclassical authors (Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos, Manuel José Quintana, Juan Meléndez Valdés) that Sánchez Rojas cites in his problematic biography of Aguilera. In Sánchez Rojas's account of Aguilera's life, he calls Aguilera's mother Elisa, although this was his daughter's name. Furthermore, he claims that Aguilera has maternal kinship to the wealthy family de Aguilera, although Peñaranda's account shows that this last name belonged to Aguilera's father. While I may not be able to corroborate these conflicting points about Aguilera at this point in my investigation, what his life ultimately reveals is that the love of country and people were constants that influenced both his intellectual development and his political activism

2. Critical Reception of Aguilera

In order to undertake the revival of a forgotten author, it is necessary that one compiles and reexamines in what ways his contemporaries and our own have viewed him and his works. Such a task as this requires a reflection of those critical judgments and commentaries that concern the assessment of Aguilera's literary production. Some of these judgements will be expanded upon and even problematized as the dissertation develops. Nevertheless, in light of the gradual yet significant increase on the awareness of Aguilera, I seek to help fill the void where there currently exists the need for a recapitulation of the scarce works and materials regarding the author's literary career. In this way, one will better understand, not only to what extent critics valued Aguilera's works, but also how Aguilera converses with his peers, debating and exchanging ideas in a Spanish literary period scarcely studied compared to others.

In this section, I organize data chronologically across three sections: prior to and after 1881 (Aguilera's death) and 1981 to present. Also, I separate general criticism carried out by poets and authors from those completed by critics. As I move towards the 20th century, there will be no need for this division as the boundary between pure criticism (value statements made mostly by contemporary peers) and critics, at least in the case of Spain, becomes more clear.

For the most part, critics have emphasized Aguilera's poetry despite the fact that his production of prose fiction is equal to, if not larger than, his poetry. Aguilera wrote around twenty works of prose fiction and approximately ten collections of poetry. However, much of his prose remains unstudied.

2.1 A Jury of His Peers: Criticism on Aguilera (until 1881)

The first book of poetry for which Aguilera would come to be viewed as an exceptional writer was *Ecos nacionales*.[24] One of the earliest appraisals this collection received is actually found in a review which Francisco Zea (1825-1857), Spanish poet and friend to Aguilera, wrote two years after its publication in the periodical *La Ilustración* (*The Illustration*). Under the pseudonym Sansón Carrasco, he credits Aguilera as having "introduced a new kind of national or popular anthems in Spanish literature, and he, being capable of all the beauties of poetry, dresses them always or almost always with modest garments, so that even the least intelligent of the uneducated masses is attracted to them" ("Crítica literaria" 10).[25]

Francisco Zea would not be the last poet to recognize Aguilera's talent. Perhaps one of the first renowned contemporary poets to praise Aguilera's work was Carolina Coronado, an eminent Spanish poet of Romanticism, who in 1862 dedicated a prologue to Aguilera's book of poems *Elegías*. Coronado, after a time of retreat from the literary world, recalled Aguilera as "that poet who made our hearts vibrate with the valiant accent of *Ecos nacionales*, seeming as if he had no other love than that for his country" (in *Elegías* xiii).[26] According to Coronado, *Elegías*, written upon the premature death of Aguilera's only daughter, heralded a kind of domestic setting which no previous poet knew how to convey: "It is a new scene that this book

[24] The first edition was published in 1849 (Alicante: J Marcili) in 2 volumes under the title *Poesías.* This volume includes both *Sátiras* and *Ecos nacionales.* A second edition was also published in 1849 (Alicante: Pedro Ibarra), and it did not include *Sátiras*. The third edition would be published in 1854 (Madrid: Joaquin René) with the removal of some poems and the addition of others. The sixth and final edition printed in the author´s lifetime was published in 1875 (Madrid: Biblioteca de Instrucción y Recreo) under the title *Ecos nacionales y cantares*. This edition will be used throughout this dissertation.

[25]". . . introducido en la literatura española una nueva raza de himnos nacionales, o populares, que siendo capaz de todas las bellezas de la poesía, las viste siempre, o casi siempre, con modestísimo traje, para que aun el menos inteligente del ignorante vulgo se les aficione y acerque" (10).

[26] "aquel poeta que nos hizo vibrar nuestros corazones con el bravísimo acento de los *Ecos nacionales*, y él mismo que parecía no tener amor sino por su patria" (xiii).

presents, new not because it has not been presented before, but because it has lacked an artist to illustrate it on the canvas with its soft forms, its delicate and tender colors" (*Elegías* xiii-xiv).[27]

Equally important is Pérez Galdós's observation of Aguilera's work. Galdós is often credited as the forerunner of the modern Spanish novel, and he is perhaps the coeval who wrote the most criticism regarding both Aguilera's prose and poetry. In 1868, he pointed out the elements that most outlined three of Aguilera's works upon affirming that

> Few poets have properly penetrated, as Ventura Ruiz Aguilera has, that harmonious and sacred union of truth and beauty. Not even as a realist in *Ecos nacionales*, nor as a humanist in *Arcadia moderna* has he ceased to be an eminent poet, while in *Elegías* he would strike with unique delicateness and exquisite tenderness the most songful fiber of the human sentiment.[28] (Galdós, *El Pabellón*)

It could also be said that the most influential essay that Galdós would compose on the Spanish novel was in fact written two years later in 1870 in reference to Aguilera's *Proverbios ejemplares*. Published in *Revista de España*, Galdós's "Observaciones sobre la novela contemporánea" laments the absence of the novel of manners or *la novela costumbrista* which had entailed an authentic representation of Spanish life: "The great novel of customs has still not emerged in Spain, the vast and complex work that must come by necessity, as an artistic expression, from that life" (168).[29] Galdós felt the need for a social expansion of the novel that would ultimately incorporate the "middle class, the most forgotten by our novelists . . . the grand

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[27] "Es un espectáculo nuevo el que presenta este libro, nuevo, no porque no se haya presentado antes, sino porque ha faltado pintor que le traslade al lienzo con sus blandas formas, su delicado y tierno colorido."

[28] "Pocos poetas habrán penetrado tan rectamente como D. Ventura Ruiz Aguilera, ese armonioso y sagrado consorcio de la verdad y la belleza. Ni al ser realista en los Ecos nacionales, ni al ser humorista en la Arcadia moderna ha dejado de ser poeta eminente, al mismo tiempo que hería con singular delicadeza y exquisita ternura la más sonora fibra del sentimiento humano en las Elegías."

[29] "No ha aparecido aún en España la gran novela de costumbres, la obra vasta y compleja que ha de venir necesariamente como expresión artística de aquella vida"(168).

model, the inexhaustible fountain" (167).[30] *Proverbios ejemplares* helped to meet this demand, provoking Galdós's response:

> Those [stories] which have made a wide stride are the *Proverbios ejemplares* by Ventura Ruiz Aguilera . . . . There we all are with our flaws and virtues painted with fidelity and put in motion in a series of events that are neither more nor less than those that are ordinarily happening to us day after day in the course of our hectic 1ife ("Observaciones" 168).[31]

Antonio Trueba, a contemporary of Aguilera with whom he shared similar poetic qualities, regarded Aguilera positively. Although little information has been found that would corroborate a literary relationship between the two writers, Trueba briefly mentioned Aguilera in his works on several occasions, namely in his collection *Cuentos de color de rosa* and again in *El gaban y la chaqueta*. Trueba acknowledged Aguilera's composition of attractive *cantares* in *Arte de hacer versos* (*The Art of Making Verses*), which appeared in *Libro de las montañas* (*The Book of Mountains*), where he cites Aguilera alongside the contemporary poets Augusto Ferrán (1835-1880) and Eduardo Bustillo (1836-1908) (337).

Contrasting with the favorable opinions of Zea, Coronado, Galdós, and Trueba, other writers would not take such a liking to Aguilera's works. In 1855, Carlos de Pravia, a lesser known Spanish novelist, in a review of Antonio Trueba's *Cantares* points out Aguilera's influence on the *cantar* or Spanish folk song, however, not without mentioning what he perceived as defects:

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[30] "Pero la clase media, la más olvidada por nuestros novelistas, es el gran modelo, la fuente inagotable" (167).
[31] "Las que más boga han alcanzado son los *Proverbios Ejemplares* de Ventura Ruiz Aguilera . . . ." "Allí estamos todos nosotros con nuestras flaquezas y nuestras virtudes retratados con fidelidad, y puestos en movimiento en una serie de sucesos que no son ni más ni menos que estos que nos están pasando ordinariamente uno y otro día en el curso de nuestra agitada vida" (168).

> Two writers of great talent had in part preceded Sr. Trueba on the path that he decided to follow, Mr. Rubio y Ors and Mr. Ruiz de Aguilera. . . . The second, in his *Ecos nacionales*, decided on a more political than literary end, and if he armed himself with the concise and clear style of the people, it was only to make the doctrine that he looked to spread in every one of his pages more perceptible. In all else, Mr. Ruiz de Aguilera does not stand out for his originality; his *Ecos* are outpours of an enthusiastic heart that aspires social reform, and this makes him too frequently follow other foreign authors . . . ."(*El Correo de Ultramar* 370) [32]

In summary, among Aguilera's most noteworthy admirers were Carolina Coronado, Pérez Galdós and also Augusto Ferrán who wrote positive comments concerning his patriotic and social literary features. In contrast, writers like Carlos de Pravia showed a certain degree of hostility toward these same qualities, claiming them to be of a propagandistic nature. Nevertheless, these attitudes and viewpoint contributed to Aguilera's profile as an esteemed and influential writer in the mid-19th century literary scene. The next section expands on this profile by rounding out Aguilera's reception with the positions of Spanish critics during his lifetime, especially near the end of his career when Spanish criticism frequently appears to be markedly less ideological.

2.2 Reviews Conducted by Literary Critics

In 1865, Manuel Milà i Fontanals (1818-1884), who was one of the leading scholars of 19th century literary criticism on folklore and comparative literature, affirmed that Aguilera's

[32] "Dos escritores de mucho talento habían precedido en parte al Sr. Trueba en el camino que se proponía seguir, los Sres. Rubio y Ors y Ruiz de Aguilera. . . . El segundo, en sus *Ecos nacionales*, se propuso de un fin más bien político que literario, y si se revistió del estilo conciso y claro del pueblo, fue solo para hacer más perceptible la doctrina que quería difundir en cada una de sus páginas. Por lo demás, el Sr. Ruiz de Aguilera no se distingue por su originalidad: sus *Ecos* son efluvios de un corazón entusiasta que aspira a la reforma social, y esto le hace seguir con demasiada frecuencia a otros autores extranjeros . . . ."

masterpiece was *Proverbios ejemplares*. He shared the same opinion as Galdós who would make a similar observation five years later. Furthermore, Milà i Fontanals considered Aguilera's *Proverbios* the greatest collection of short stories at that time (*Obras completas* 186).

Following the comments of Milà i Fontanals, one year later in 1866, the Puerto Rican intellectual Eugenio María de Hostos (1839-1903), most famous now for his progressive ideals regarding the role of women in society, wrote a favorable review of Aguilera's book of poems *Inspiraciones*. It is a collection of some of Aguilera's most known verses, many of which first saw publication in *Ecos nacionales.* In his analysis, Hostos accentuates the artistic persona behind each book of poems: "In these *Inspirations*, there is a patriot (*Ecos nacionales*); there is a moralist (*Baladas*); a dreamer loses himself meditating (*Armonías*); a believer subdues his reason (*Odas*); a father weeps silently (*Elegías*); a citizen comes into view (*Cantares*); a troubadour ridicules the century (Idilios humorísticos)" (Hostos 62).[33] Hostos confirms Aguilera's eclectic poetical orientation.

Others considered the multifacedness of Aguilera's work. Francisco Giner de los Ríos (1839-1915), a distinguished pedagogue who is well-known for his leadership in La Institución Libre de Enseñanza (Free Institute of Education).[34] Giner de los Ríos published various essays and treatises regarding literary aesthetics, making him an authority on the subject. In 1865, after already having published favorable criticism on Aguilera, he stated that "the works of Ruiz Aguilera possess the precious and rare quality (and even more in our times), of responding to the emotion and the artistic appetite of all social classes, whatever their literary education may be"

[33] "En estas *Inspiraciones*, hay un patriota (Ecos nacionales); hay un moralista (Baladas); divaga meditando un soñador (Armonías); somete un creyente su razón (Odas); solloza quedamente un padre (Elegías); se expone a la vista un ciudadano (Cantares); se mofa del siglo un decidor (Idilios humorísticos)."

[34] This revolutionary institution, founded in 1876, was based on Krausism and supported progressive educational reforms. Krausism, cemented in the philosophy of Karl Christian Friedrich Krause (1781-1832), encouraged academic freedom and freedom of thought in educational institutions.

(268).[35] Indeed one of the most genuine characteristics that Giner de los Rios considered to be outstanding in Aguilera consisted in his ability to incorporate morality in a way in which characterization and reality were not sacrificed. More importantly, Giner de los Ríos's comments on Aguilera's social impact point out the latter's literary style and interests.

Of course, not all critics praised Aguilera's works. Armando Palacio Valdés (1853-1938), an important Spanish novelist and critic, who belonged to a generation of writers after Aguilera, evaluated Aguilera's literary career in 1873. Referring to Aguilera's *Armonías y Cantares* published in 1865, he held that "the Spanish folk songs are the masterpiece of our poet, in which he has not had nor is it probable that he will have a rival. Aguilera's songs will never die, because they come from the depths of the heart (275).[36] However, Valdés, and perhaps indicative of Aguilera's waning fame, criticized the poet's patriotic traits as unfashionable and obsolete modes of artistic expression.

> What else can one see in the depths of Aguilera? The love towards his fatherland; the love for Spanish soil. The fatherland! What is the fatherland? The fatherland is a filthy and ragged man. . . . On the other hand, fatherland is outdated. Philosophers have recently shown that patriotic feelings do not align with the demands of the human spirit that are more expansive and universal each day." (273-4)[37]

Although written at an early point in his career, Palacio Valdes's comments no less seem to insist on a shift in the reception of patriotic themes, and even in 1879 in a letter to Antonio Rubio Lluch (1856-1937), Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo (1856-1912), a renowned literary critic who

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[35] "Las obras del señor Ruiz Aguilera poseen la cualidad, tan preciosa como rara (y más en nuestros tiempos), de responder al sentimiento y al gusto artístico de todas las clases sociales, cualquiera que sea su educación literaria."
[36] "A mi juicio, son los cantares la obra maestra de nuestro poeta, y aquella en que no ha tenido, ni tiene, ni es probable que tenga rival. Los cantares de Aguilera no morirán jamás, porque salen del fondo del corazón"
[37] "¿Qué más se ve en el fondo azul del señor Aguilera?—El amor a su patria; el amor a la tierra española. ¡La patria! ¿Qué es la patria? —La patria es un hombre andrajoso y sucio. . . . Por otra parte, la patria ha pasado de moda. Los filósofos han demostrado recientemente que el sentimiento patriótico no se acuerda con las exigencias cada día más amplias y universales del espíritu humano."

belonged to the same generation as Palacio Valdés, apologetically highlighted the same facets: "Aguilera is well-known and still popular, in spite of his progressivist and patriotic traces. . . (qtd. in Toral Peñaranda 75).[38]

In contrast to the rather auspicious comments belonging to novelists and poets presented earlier regarding Aguilera's patriotism, neither Palacio Valdés nor Menéndez y Pelayo hold the poet's love for his country in high regard and both deem it a meddlesome defect. And unlike Giner de los Ríos, Palacio Valdés was no admirer of Aguilera's moralistic tendencies, holding the opinion that "they are more suitable in a conversation of Holy Week. One thing is composing poetry, and another address pastorals to Catholics of a dioceses" (277).[39]

Comparatively, Luciano Cordeiro, a Portuguese critic and historian, well known at the time, dedicated an analysis to Aguilera's *Elegías* in 1874. After having some difficulty in locating Aguilera in Madrid, the historian acquired three of his works, and shortly after he outlined some of Aguilera's most salient artistic features which, according to him, were comprised of a strong religious faith and a certain fanaticism:

> Aguilera is a highly humanitarian and democratic poet; in his vigorous and good faith, he achieves a kind of mystical union—*unio mystica*— like the scholars say, of theological revelation and historical evolution. If it is true that man creates God in his own image, Aguilera, like others, creates in the exuberance of his conviction a religion and a philosophy in which primitive faith and emancipated reason, far from being incompatible

[38] "Aguilera es bastante conocido y aún popular, a pesar de sus resabios progresistas y patrioteros. . . ." Enrique Toral Peñaranda compiles fragments of letters exchanged between Menéndez y Pelayo and Juan Valera.
[39] "Puesto ya a censurar, también diré que el Sr. Aguilera introduce alguna vez en sus poesías lecciones de moral que encajarían mejor en una plática de Semana Santa. Una cosa es componer poesías, y otra dirigir pastorales a los católicos de una diócesis."

and supplanting one another, embrace in a social, humanitarian and even cosmic conception. (411-2)[40]

Cordeiro would go on to identify this *mystic union* as "racionalismo cristiano" ("Christian rationalism") an incompatible concept outside of the subjective conscious of the individual: "Indeed, nature and science has a right to rebel against this kind of Arianism of affectivity, and it itself is fruitless outside of the individual's psychology" (412).[41]

Cordeiro's remark concludes my account of criticism carried out during Aguilera's lifetime. Nonetheless, what this diverse range of critical perspectives helps to corroborate is the fact that Aguilera was regarded as an eminent poet whose works represented the innovative and ingenious features of his style. On the other hand, just as I have observed with Pravia's comments in the first section, distinguished authors of a later generation like Palacio Valdés and Menéndez y Pelayo began to view patriotism as a defect in Aguilera's literary output, signaling a marked shift (when compared to Aguilera's contemporary poets) in regard to the aesthetic value of this literary device. It would appear that Ventura Ruiz Aguilera was beginning to become outdated.

2.3 Criticism Beyond Aguilera's Death (1881-1980)

During the period immediately following the death of Aguilera, criticism concerning his life and works did suffer a decline. Clarín (Leopoldo García-Alas) (1852-1901) and Emilia Pardo Bazán (1851-1921) and a few other writers recalled Aguilera's poetry on occasions. However,

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[40] "Aguilera es un poeta altamente humanitario y democrático; en su fe vigorosa y buena se realiza una especie de unión mística-*unio mystica*-como dicen los doctores, de la revelación teológica con la evolución histórica. Si es cierto que el hombre hace un Dios a su imagen, Aguilera, como otros, crea en la exuberancia de su sentimiento una religión y una filosofía, en la que la fe primitiva y la razón emancipada, lejos de excluirse y de reemplazarse, se abrazan en una concepción social, humanitaria, y hasta cósmica."

[41] "Ciertamente, la naturaleza y la ciencia tienen derecho a rebelarse contra esta especie de arrianismo del sentimiento, y 'el mismo es infecundo y absurdo fuera de la concentración de la psicología individual."

there is no need in dedicating an exclusive section to those authors whose writings concern him in this time period because these are limited and unsubstantial.

In 1889, almost a decade after Aguilera's death, the Spanish realist novelist and critic Clarín criticized the Russian writer Boris de Tannenberg's (1864-1914) *La poésie Castillane contemporaine* (*Spanish Contemporary Poetry*) for not including Ruiz Aguilera amongst 19th century Spain's eminent poets. This "injustice," as Clarín called it, will echo Menéndez y Pelayo's grievance with Valera's negligence in leaving Aguilera out of his *Florilegio* (1902) (*Ensayos y revistas* 242). Clarín writes:

> One may or may not agree with Boris de Tannenberg regarding the criticism that he has done concerning our illustrious bards: Quintana, duque de Rivas, Espronceda, Zorrilla, Campoamor, Bécquer and Núñez de Arce; one might agree that they are the most important ones, or miss one, like Valera rightly misses Avellaneda with regard to American authors, and like I miss Aguilera amongst the contemporaries in the Peninsula. (Clarín *Ensayos y revistas* 234)[42]

Even for an important critic like Clarín, Aguilera's exclusion amongst Spanish most representative authors is unacceptable. The point here is that Aguilera was once again excluded from Spanish literary history, not long after his death.

By 1905, the figure of Aguilera is already approaching oblivion. In a prologue written for José María Gabriel y Galán's *Nuevas castellanas* (1905), Pardo Bazán aptly discerned an artistic kinship in the rustic poetry of the two. She would then comment on Aguilera's fame in a

[42] "Se podrá estar o no conforme con Boris de Tannenberg respecto del juicio que este ha formado de nuestros ilustres vates: Quintana, Duque de Rivas, Espronceda, Zorrilla, Campoamor, Bécquer y Núñez de Arce; se podrá convenir en que son esos los principales, o echar de menos alguno, como Valera echa de menos a la Avellaneda, tratándose de los americanos, y con razón, y yo a Ruiz Aguilera entre los contemporáneos, de la Península;"

particular light that echoes Menéndez y Pelayo's remark on his progressive and patriotic traces. Nevertheless, what stands out is how she describes the author who years earlier had written a favorable review *Pascual López* (1879), her first novel. Pardo Bazán states:

> There was a Salamancan poet who died some years ago, almost forgotten, Ventura Ruiz Aguilera, in whom I believe discovers a twin soul with Gabriel y Galán. Ruiz Aguilera never managed to feel the rustic element with sincerity like the author of *Las sementeras*; he did not cross the threshold, like this [author], in the silent soul of those that wield the plow or herd in the fold; perhaps his political and literary interests were to blame . . . ." (xviii).[43]

Only 20 years after his death Aguilera is referred to as the forgotten poet. Indeed Aguilera's literary interests were deeply rooted in the social and political movements of his time period as he often directly criticizes opposing parties in a time (after 1870) where poetry concerning politics was often discouraged.[44] Pardo Bazán's comments raise the question on whether these political and literary ideals caused his disfavor.

Francisco Blanco García (1864-1903), a Spanish literary historian, also criticized Aguilera's poetry in *La literatura española en el siglo XIX* (Spanish Literature in the 19th Century) (1909) which influenced literary circles at the end of the 19th century. In addition, some of his opinions would later reverberate in Juan Valera's criticism of Aguilera. Blanco García

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[43] "Hubo un poeta salmantino, muerto hace pocos años, ya casi olvidado, Ventura Ruiz Aguilera, en quien me parece descubrir un alma gemela de la de Gabriel y Galán. Ruiz Aguilera no llegó a sentir lo rústico con la sinceridad que el autor de *Las Sementeras*; no entró, como éste, en el alma muda de los que empuñan el arado o pastorean en la majada; quizás fue culpa de sus aficiones literarias y políticas . . . ."

[44] See, for example, Barrantes' letter in *Días sin sol*: Barrantes, after publishing his controversial poem "A los poetas", where he condemned degenerative poetry, issued a justification of his remarks in a letter addressed to the director of *La defensa de la sociedad*. In response to Aguilera's criticism, Barrantes believed that instead of advocating political interests, poetry should deal with the social aspect of the nation: "nuestro ideal debía de ser la *patria*, no tal o cual fórmula política pequeña y miserable." ("our ideal should have been the *fatherland*, not some kind of minute and miserable political formula.") (118).

censured Aguilera's work in 1891 on the account that it failed, in his opinion, to accurately convey the teachings of Christianity. Blanco García bases his opinion on Cordeiro's earlier comment regarding "mystical union" in Aguilera (Cordeiro 411).

> The legendary muse, notably luminescent during Romanticism and immortalized in *Los cantos el trovador,* died with Espronceda, Arolas, y Zorrilla, and it was useless to insist on the resuscitation of songful poems of decayed castles and memories of the Middle Ages. Such was the belief of the author of *Ecos nacionales* upon covering, on behalf of art, antiquated traditions with a didactic character of a certain vulgar philosophy dedicated to the propagation of morality and patriotism. Both seem to be based in *Ecos nacionales* in the Christian faith, but only to a certain extent, because, as the Portuguese critic Luciano Cordeiro adequately notes, Ruiz Aguilera's [faith] belongs to a Christian rationalism of doubtful sincerity that excessively lends itself to affectivity. (Blanco García 125)[45]

In his analysis of Aguilera, Cordeiro did condemn "mystic union" what he himself called "Christian rationalism," not as an art form of individual expression which was, according to Cordeiro, justified in Aguilera, but rather as an alternative to positivism: "It [Christian rationalism] has been the strong obstacle, which has brought the greatest disgrace to contemporary erudition and essays of democratic and social organization" (Cordeiro 412).[46]

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[45] "La musa legendaria, lozanísima en los tiempos del romanticismo e inmortalizada en *Los cantos del trovador*, murió con Espronceda, Arolas y Zorrilla, y era inútil empeño el de resucitar las cantigas de los derruidos castillos y los recuerdos de la Edad Media. Así lo comprendió el autor de los *Ecos nacionales* al revestir las tradiciones antiguas con el carácter didáctico de una cierta filosofía vulgar enderezada a la propagación, por el arte, de la moral y el patriotismo. Ambos aparecen basados en los *Ecos nacionales* sobre la fe cristiana, pero sólo hasta cierto punto; porque, como nota muy bien el crítico portugués Luciano Cordeiro, es el de Ruiz Aguilera un cristianismo racionalista, de sinceridad dudosa y que se paga excesivamente del sentimiento."

[46] "Él ha sido el poderoso obstáculo, y el que ha traído el mayor desprestigio a las formaciones y ensayos contemporáneos de organización democrática y de organización social."

Blanco García also reflected on Aguilera's prose, which had been practically forgotten in comparison to his poetry. According to Blanco García, the *cuento* (story), primitive in nature, had lost its appeal in the 18th century and, although there would be some attempts at its revival, it would not be successfully revisited by the Romantics. Among these Romantics, he includes Trueba, Aguilera, Hartzenbusch, Fernández Bremon, and others. However, concerning Ruiz Aguilera's prose, he stated the following:

> Ventura Ruiz Aguilera's *Proverbios ejemplares* and *Proverbios cómicos* enjoyed fame. Notable for their ingenuity of invention, for their pureness of style, and sometime for their depth of emotion, apart from their moral intention that preoccupied the author so, they were and will be read with pleasure . . . . Critics, well versed in the material like Pérez Galdós have addressed praises on these short and interesting narrations that would take too long to repeat (310-11).[47]

Although Aguilera's popularity showed signs of decline at the turn of the century, important figures like Juan Valera continued to debate his legacy. In 1902, Juan Valera published *Florilegio de poesías castellanas del siglo XIX* (*Anthology of 19th Century Spanish Poetry*), which, like Blanco García's *La literatura española del siglo XIX*, took account of the most representative poets of the century along with their woks. Valera would include two of Aguilera's poems, "El canto de la espiga" ("The Song of the Wheat Spike") and "Balada de Iberia" ("Ballad of Iberia"). Valera also dedicated some essays in his collection to particular authors and, although he neglected to include an essay on Aguilera's poetry, he confesses that he

[47] "De más notoriedad gozaron los *Proverbios ejemplares* y *Proverbios cómicos* de D. Ventura Ruiz Aguilera. Notables por lo ingenioso de la invención, por la limpieza del estilo, y a veces por la profundidad del sentimiento, aparte del fin moral que tanto preocupaba al autor en sus obras, fueron y serán leídos con agrado. . . . Críticos tan autorizados en la materia como Pérez Galdós, han hecho de estas cortas e interesantes narraciones elogios que sería largo reproducir."

should have included one. Still, Aguilera's work would not be enough to secure a position in Valera's group. In fact, the 19th century literary critic Menéndez y Pelayo in a letter to Valera would contend the latter's disregard for Aguilera:

> "With whom I believe you have been extremely frugal is Ventura Ruiz Aguilera who wrote many good works and in many genres, and he is, in my opinion, one of the best and most complete poets of his time. Perhaps you did not have at hand the collection of his works, but there are better things than the two that are collected in *Florilegio*." (qtd. in Toral Peñaranda 75)[48]

Valera's motive behind the exclusion of some authors was, according to his reply to Menéndez y Pelayo, not due to any personal agenda, but rather an issue with space. However, a few years later in another collection of essays written between 1901 and 1905, Valera would specify his opinions of Aguilera, recalling Blanco García's standpoint:

> The undeniable merit of Ventura Ruiz Aguilera alongside the sincerity, the delicacy of all of his works, during his lifetime neither achieved nor have they yet to achieve the entire celebrity and high esteem that they demand. Perhaps the bad taste and the extremely passionate deviation of religious and political ideas and sentiments are to blame for this injustice. In our country, where it is hardly believed that one can be a fervent Catholic and liberal and progressivist at the same time, perhaps, it has not been possible to respect, as it is owed, a poet, who with equal faith and vehemence, is liberal, progressivist and Christian. . . . Father Blanco García, in spite of the impartiality that normally trumps the

[48] "Con quien más siento que haya sido Vd. demasiado parco es con Ventura Ruiz Aguilera, que escribió mucho bueno y en muchos géneros, y es, a mi juicio, uno de los mejores y más completos poetas de su tiempo. Acaso no tuvo Vd. a mano la colección de sus obras, porque allí hay cosas mejores que las dos que se ponen por muestra en el Florilegio."

> concerns of his rank, is frugal with the praises he gives to Ruiz de Aguilera, and he is distrusting and suspicions with his orthodoxy, as if beneath the abundant mass of his poetic flowers one sees the seething of poisonous vipers of heretic gravity, of rationalism, and of disbelief. (Obras completas *Obras completas: La poesía lírica y épica en la España del siglo XIX II* 336-7)[49]

Valera seems to suggest that Aguilera's reputation suffered, not only due to his contradictory worldview, but also due to the political intolerance of his peers. However neither Blanco García nor Valera specify this concern, but Emilia Pardo Bazán stressed the same burden. While there were few republications and collections dedicated to Aguilera's works, subsequent comments regarding criticism on the work of Aguilera would dwindle for some time following the works of Valera and Blanco García.[50]

In 1940, a resurfacing of interest in the works of Aguilera took place. During this year, Edgar Allen Peers (1891-1952) included Aguilera in his *Historia del movimiento español* (*History of the Spanish Movement*), a landmark text in the scholarship of Spanish Romanticism, featuring Aguilera in the period he called "El romanticismo después de 1860" ("Romanticism after 1860). This period encompasses those writers to whom Peers refers as poets of disillusion:

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[49] "El mérito indudable de D. Ventura Ruiz de Aguilera y la ingenuidad, el primor de todos sus escritos, no lograron durante su vida ni han logrado aún toda su celebridad y alta estimación que reclaman. Acaso el mal gusto y el extremoso y apasionado extravío de las ideas y de los sentimientos religiosos y políticos tengan la culpa de esta injusticia. En nuestro país, donde apenas cree nadie que puede ser fervoroso católico y liberal y progresista al mismo tiempo, acaso no ha podido estimarse como es debido a un poeta, que con idéntica buena fe y vehemencia afectuosa es liberal, progresista y cristiano. . . . El mismo Padre Blanco García, a pesar de la imparcialidad con que suele sobreponerse a las preocupaciones de su estado, escatima las alabanzas que concede en parte a Ruiz de Aguilera y se muestra desconfiado y receloso de su ortodoxia, como si debajo de sus flores poéticas viese bullir las ponzoñosas víboras de la gravedad herética, del racionalismo y del descreimiento."

[50] In 1908, Alfredo González Pitt, under the request of the director of Biblioteca Universal, compiled some of Aguilera's poetry to include them in the 45th volume of *Colección de los mejores autores* (*Collection of the best authors*) in which the foremost authors' works were collected and published. See *Biblioteca Universal. Colección de los mejores autores antiguos y modernos, nacionales y extranjeros.*, vol. 45 (Madrid: Perlado, Páez y Compañía, 1908).

> Next to Rosalía de Castro, Bécquer y Núñez de Arce, whose works spans the last fourty years of the 19th century, the remaining poets who follow the romantic tradition relatively lack importance. Nevertheless, their number is so significant that it is necessary to mention the most important. Three of these are fundamentally poets of disillusion. Ventura Ruiz Aguilera, the oldest, wrote prosaic epigrams, satires, and fables in the vein of Campoamor, but also a volume of elegies in which during hours of sadness he united nature with his romantic disposition of spirit . . . . (*Historia del movimiento romántico español* 439)[51]

The others who, according to Peers, follow this trend are Federico Balart (1831-1905) and Joaquín María Batrina (1850-1880), lesser known poets who were active during the 1870s.

In 1948, José María Martínez Cachero (1924-2010) aided in returning Aguilera's figure to the forefront when he published "El poeta Ventura Ruiz Aguilera y Asturias" ("The Poet Ventura Ruiz Aguilera and Asturias") drawing, not only on the literary connections that tied a young Aguilera to Asturias, but also the reverence that Aguilera would pay the province in some of his final poems. A year after Martínez Cachero's finding and on the one-hundredth anniversary of Aguilera's *Ecos* (1849), Angel del Río linked both Aguilera and Pau Piferrer i Fàbregues (1818-1848) to a purported return to popular poetry in his discussion of Romanticism in Spain. It bears expounding that in spite of Martínez Cachero's remarks Aguilera does not easily fit the profile of a Romantic, which is probably why Peers labels him a postromantic. In a revised edition of *Historia de la literatura española* (*History of Spanish Literature*) (1963), Del

[51] "Junto a Rosalía de Castro, Bécquer Núñez de Arce, cuya obra conjunta comprende los últimos cuarenta años del siglo XIX, los restantes poetas que siguen la tradición romántica resultan faltos relativamente de importancia. Sin embargo, su número es tan considerable que se impone mencionar a los más importantes. Tres de estos son fundamentalmente poetas de la desilusión. Ventura Ruiz Aguilera, el más viejo, escribió epigramas prosaicos, sátiras y fábulas en vena de Campoamor, pero también un volumen de elegías en que en horas de tristeza uncía la naturaleza a su romántica disposición de ánimo . . . ."

Río also groups Aguilera alongside José Carrasco Selgas (1822-1882) and Vicente Wenceslao Querol (1836-1899) as poets whose fondness for sentimentality, elegiac tones, and intimacy connects them to Romanticism. He goes on to categorize these two authors as belonging to minor poetry although exemplary of progressivist tendencies.

In 1949, Mariano Baquero Goyanes published *El cuento español en el Siglo XIX* (*The Spanish Short Story in the 19th Century*) what had been considered one of the most authoritative and exhaustive books of its time with regard to the *cuento*. Baquero Goyanes begins with a brief retelling of the semantical evolution of the term *cuento* tracing its usage during, and departure from, medieval literature up until the late 19th century. Excluding Galdós, Baquero Goyanes is perhaps the only critic at this point in time to have ever highlighted Aguilera's prose alongside other important novelists of the century, and this is indeed what makes his work essential to understanding Aguilera's involvement and contribution to 19th century prose writing.

One of Baquero Goyanes's opening remarks concerning Aguilera's prose is its hybrid nature which defies a straightaway classification: "Ventura Ruiz Aguilera was a prolific writer of "artículos de costumbres" and a skilled satirical narrator.[52] It is difficult to differentiate, amongst his narrations, which of them are simply "artículos de costumbres" and which are "cuentos," so mixed are the elements of one and the other genre" (*El cuento español* 448).[53] Baquero was also first in calling attention to the literary affinity between Aguilera and Valdés, particularly between Aguilera's *cuento* titled "En arca abierta, el justo peca" ("*Opportunity Makes the Thief"*) (1866),

[52] There is no adequate English translation for the 19th literary movement *costumbrismo* which dealt with the portrayal of Spanish local and social types alongside their mannerisms and traditions in various literary forms of art and literature, and more specifically, in *artículos* (essays) and *cuadros* (sketch or paintings), which were works that depicted these same types in a picturesque style. Here I have retained the Spanish terms where authors and critics use *costumbrismo* and its forms, such as *artículo de costumbres* (essay on customs or manners), *cuadro, cuadro social* (social sketch), and *cuadro de la sociedad* (sketch of society).

[53] "Fecundo articulista de costumbres y fino narrador satírico fue Ventura Ruiz Aguilera. Es difícil diferenciar, entre sus narraciones, cuáles son simplemente costumbristas y cuáles se acercan al cuento, tan mezclados están los elementos de uno y otro género."

which according to Baquero, "is summed up as an anticipated and likeable miniature of *Pepita Jiménez* (1874)," an affirmation that deserves more investigation (*El cuento español* 600). While Baquero Goyanes exceeds at contextually placing authors in the evolution of the 19th century *cuento*, his investigation falls short, outside of its compendious cataloging of genres, in providing an extensive framework on the individual artistic expression of Aguilera. Aguilera's longtime standing as a secondary author may be to blame.

In spite of Baquero Goyanes's placing of Aguilera within the framework of the 19th century *cuento*, it would still not be enough to vindicate Aguilera's prose. In 1956, José María de Cossío (1892-1977) published an article after having investigated much of Aguilera's poetry. It is indeed perhaps the most conclusive of its time. In his essay, Cossío examines several of Aguilera's works: *Ecos nacionales* (1849), *Las Sátiras* (1849), *Elegías* (1862), *La Arcadia moderna* (1867), *Leyenda de Noche-Buena* (1872) and *Elegías y armonías. Rimas varias* (1873). Among them Cossío perceives Aguilera's fondness of both traditional and historical themes as a Romantic tenet which Aguilera advances.

On the other hand, Cossío also points out that Aguilera diverges from the Romantic past to announce the contemporary social atmosphere, introducing topics about prostitution and exile in *Ecos*: "Aguilera uses these profoundly romantic topics in a cautionary and sentimental way, and not as inciters of rebellion or praises of glorification. . . . The attraction for these subjects served a completely different intention from that of the Romantics" ("Papeles de Son Armadans" 133).[54] He sees Aguilera as a poet who would not only be remembered for *Ecos nacionales* but also as a writer whose "ingenuous progressivism urged him to be, through his verse, an active

[54] "estos temas, profundamente románticos, los utiliza nuestro poeta como admonitivos y sentimentales, pero no como incitadores a la rebeldía ni dignos de la glorificación. . . . El gusto por estos asuntos servía una intención completamente distinta de la de los románticos."

laborer of social change" (133).[55] Cossío is one of the first to emphasize the social aspect of Aguilera's poetry (over his patriotism), an essential element of his literary interests.

Another other important finding of Cossío acknowledges Aguilera's renovation of the elegiac style. According to this critic, both Romantic and Classical writers had regarded the elegy as a genre comprising melancholic tones and garrulous discourse. However, Aguilera would instill in it a degree of sincerity and modesty, which Cossío calls revolutionary and innovative (139). To prove his point, Cossío reproduces the affirmation of Manuel Milá i Fontanals (1818-1884) in which he too ascertains the novelty of Aguilera's elegies: "the extreme liberty of the metric form and the disjointed succession of ideas produce a somewhat strange combination . . . " (140).[56] That is, Aguilera, instead of adhering to the more conventional tercet, embraces a nontraditional form much like he puts forth in his prologue to *Ecos nacionales*.

At the closing of his argument, Cossío ponders whether or not Aguilera is to be considered a grand poet, regarding which he cannot provide a definite answer, although this does not prevent him from modestly backing down from this attempt:

> Ruiz Aguilera has personality, vigor, deeply knows what he intends to do in his verse, and is capable of resuscitating a genre that only in him can have serious consideration even to constitute a chapter of our poetic history. But there is always the impression that, to put it graphically, he falls short. He lacks liveliness, geniality, that which makes a poem or poet unforgettable (151).[57]

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[55] "ingenuo progresismo le instaba a ser con su verso un activo obrero de los cambios sociales."
[56] "la extremada libertad de forma métrica y la inconexa sucesión de las ideas producen en un conjunto algo extraño. . . ."
[57] "Ruiz Aguilera tiene personalidad, aliento, conoce profundamente lo que intenta hacer en su verso, es capaz de reanimar un género que tan sólo en él pudo tener consideración grave hasta constituir un capítulo de nuestra historia

Neither Aguilera's poetry nor his persona would be too forgettable because Cossío almost 10 years later would revisit both in his 1960 publication of *Cincuenta años de poesía española: 1850-1900* (*Fifty Years of Spanish Poetry*) in which he dedicates a chapter to the ballad within the context of Spanish poetry composed at the turn of the century. His opinion of the author's work did change for the better:

> His efforts to bring the *Ecos* closer to the sensibility of the people were not lost, and they achieved the popularity to which a refined composition can aspire. I think Ruiz Aguilera, more so than for his folk songs . . . will always be the poet of *Ecos nacionales*. He knew how to give life to a genre that only in him could have true poetic importance, and an anthology of them will always be his best crown. Because of them he shall be remembered in the history of Spanish poetry as one of the most effective and fruitful efforts to bringing poetry to the popular taste, even achieving that people did not reject it as foreign (197).[58]

In addition to these claims, Cossío clarifies and further develops some arguments made in his previous essay, such as the debt he thinks Aguilera owes to the Spanish Romantic poet Salvador Bermúdez de Castro (1817-1883) for Bermúdez de Castro's belief that the poet should be inspired by the society in which he lives. It is also Cossió's contention that Bermúdez de Castro was the first to lay claim to this creed. Cossío, like Angel del Río, also sees literary kinship between Aguilera and Selgas y Carrasco (1822-1882), who also wrote ballads in the style

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poética. Pero siempre da la impresión de que, por decirlo de una manera gráfica, se queda corto. Le falta brillantez, genialidad, lo que hace indeleble el recuerdo de un poema o de un poeta."

[58] Sus esfuerzos por aproximar los Ecos a la sensibilidad del pueblo no fueron perdidos, y lograron la popularidad a que una composición culta puede aspirar. Creo que Ruiz Aguilera, más que de los cantares . . . será siempre el poeta de los Ecos nacionales. Supo dar vida a un género que sólo en él pudo tener importancia poética verdadera, y una antología de ellos será siempre su mejor corona. Por ellos ha de ser recordado en la historia de la poesía española como uno de los casos de esfuerzo más eficaz y fecundo para aproximar la poesía al tono popular hasta conseguir que el pueblo no la rechace como extraña."

of Aguilera. However, it is worth noting that this influence is not very strong. In my opinion, the most dialoged poems of Selgas, especially those in *La primavera y el estío (1866)* lack the degree of social reality found in Aguilera. Cossío also dedicates a piece to Antonio Trueba (1819-1889) whose *El libro de los cantares* (1851) bestowed him considerable fame. Trueba is another poet who was possibly influenced by Aguilera, according to Cossío, although Aguilera's poetic forms were much more diverse than Trueba's (*Cincuenta años* 213).

Finally, the *cantar* or Spanish folk song and its revitalization is discussed. The *cantar* was more popularly cultivated in Andalucía (Cossío *Cincuenta años* 460). As a result, they would come to be associated with this region more than any other. In this regard, Cossío names Augusto Ferrán among the top poets of the *cantar*. In the case of Aguilera and specifically his *cantares*, Cossío concludes the following, shifting from Armando Palacio's view that purported that Aguilera had no rival concerning the *cantar*:

> As in the rest of his poetic production . . . he [Aguilera] lacks personality, and he remains in a point of equilibrium and of harmony, which is not the greatest appeal of his *cantares*. They could not be sung truthfully in the style of neither gypsy nor Andalusian song, but rather with the serious melodies of Castille in which passions are bridled, like in the flat and rugged countryside beneath the sun." (*Cincuenta años* 467)[59]

Cossío's view changes here, and Aguilera is no longer seen as the poet who "has personality" and "vigor" (*Don Ventura Ruiz Aguilera* 151) but rather the opposite. In other words, in spite of his artistry in crafting poetically appealing ballads, Aguilera could not and would not excel at the

[59]"Como en el resto de su producción poética . . . le falta verdadera personalidad, y se sostiene en un punto de equilibrio y de templanza que no es el menor aliciente de sus cantares. No podrían cantarse ciertamente con estilos de cante gitano ni aun andaluz, sino con las tonadas graves de Castilla en las que se serenan las pasiones, como el paisaje llano y severo bajo el sol."

cantar, according to Cossío, because he had the misfortune of being born in a region of Spain not particularly suitable for singing the rustic songs of the south.

By 1961, when Juan María Díez Taboada published his article, "El germanismo y la renovación española" ("German Influence and the Spanish Renovation"), Aguilera's *Ecos nacionales* and *Elegías* had already become the focal point of his ouevre. Díez Taboada's article attempts to signal key contact points between German modalities and 19th century Spanish lyricism. Díez Taboada cites both Spanish poets José Selgas Carrasco (1822-1882) and Ramón de Campoamor's (1817-1901) as influences on Aguilera. Campoamor's *Doloras*, according to Díez, can be seen as an inspiration because of Aguilera's implementation of scientific and technical subjects in *Ecos nacionales*. However, even Aguilera would expose his disconformity with this style in the prologue of the 8th edition of Campoamor's *Doloras*, stating that

> whenever science trespasses the frontiers that have been marked by the empire of art, then comes the decadence of this [art] . . . . Poetry that is not understood with the heart, or better yet, that is to be understood with the mind alone, runs the risk of not being poetry; rhymed science is a bird of low and clumsy flight which will never succeed at climbing the high summits where the eagles have their nest . . . . (in Campoamor xxi)[60]

It is essential to point out that Aguilera's poetry serves neither science nor the philosophical mind as can be seen in Campoamor, but rather it pretends no other objective than portraying and discussing the national and social issues of the Spanish people.

[60] "siempre que la ciencia traspasa las fronteras que tiene marcadas en el imperio del arte, vienen las grandes decadencias de éste. . . . Poesía que no se comprende con el corazón, o mejor dicho, que haya de comprenderse con la cabeza sólo, corre peligro de no ser poesía; la ciencia rimada es pájaro de vuelo bajo y torpe, y que nunca logrará escalar las altas cimas donde tienen su nido las águilas"

In 1965, Emilio González López (1903-1991) published *Historia de la literatura española: La edad moderna* (*History of Spanish Literature: The Modern Age*), an ambitious and chronological study on the history of Spanish lyric and prose up until that point. González López does not abandon Aguilera in his investigation and regards him as the most distinguished poet in terms of the ballad. According to González López, Aguilera's ballads have more contact with the European ballad than with the traditional Spanish *romance*. On the contrary, Vicente Barrantes whose ballads also stood out, was more lyrically inclined to the Spanish romance than the European ballad in his *Baladas españolas* (1853).[61] But this should not come as no surprise being that Barrantes sang the virtues and glories of the past, for which the *romance* was of use.

Donald L. Shaw, in his book *A Literary History of Spain: The Nineteenth Century* (1974) and in a similar vein as Cossío, recognizes that Aguilera follows in el Duque de Rivas's footsteps in acknowledging that the *romance* and other traditional poetic compositions could no longer satisfy the needs of contemporary society, although Aguilera sought to nationalize the European ballad with Spanish scenes. Shaw also notes the importance and innovation of *Elegías*:

> Aguilera's other major contribution to Spanish poetry is *Las Elegías* (1862). Here we also perceive a refreshing novelty of subject and manner. Just as in the theater bourgeois values reasserted themselves, with marriage replacing romantic love as a theme, so in the lyric the home, the family, the poet's wife and children became an increasing source of inspiration, bringing with them the charm of simplicity and sincerity. (61)

Shaw adds, like Angel del Río, that the domestic theme illustrated in *Elegías* would influence Vincente Querol's (1836-1889) *Rimas* (*Rhymes*) (1877), echoing Del Río's placement of Aguilera alongside this poet. Similar to Cossío, Shaw also points out the similarity with Antonio

[61] González López erroneously refers to this work as *Baladas extremeñas* in his text.

Trueba whose moral tendency and scenes of regional life share commonalities with the popular poetry of Aguilera.

González López ascertained the significance of Aguilera´s *Ecos* while simultaneously identifying its defects:

> His [Aguilera's] fame rests principally in his *Ecos nacionales*. . . . In the prologue of this work, he reveals his poetic creed, which aspires to introduce a social aspect in the Spanish *romancero*, which had ensured with el Duque de Rivas and Zorrilla a period of splendor in Romanticism. In order to sing legendary themes and provide them a sense of a national, patriotic example, Ruiz Aguilera took to the ballad form, giving them a certain air of the traditional *romance*. But he lacked imagination and the necessary poetic breath to elevate the subject to the high level of national standard that he ambitioned. He was more fortunate when he limited himself to presenting in *Ecos nacionales*, generally in dialogued form and of a certain realistic tendency, a lively portrait at times of the War of Independence, and at other times of the civil wars of the 19h century. (331)[62]

González López's comments mirror Cossío's in that both critics believe that Aguilera lacked character or distinctiveness as a poet, which seemed to diminish his poetry. However, the two differ on the importance of Aguilera's *Cantares* as González López excludes them from his investigation.

[62] "Su fama de poeta descansa principalmente en sus *Ecos nacionales*. . . . En el prólogo de esta obra expone su credo poético, que aspira a infundir un sentido social en el romancero español, que había tenido, con el duque de Rivas y Zorrilla, un período de esplendor en el romanticismo. Para cantar los temas legendarios y darles un sentido de lección nacional patriótica, Ruiz Aguilera se sirvió de la forma de las baladas, dándoles cierto aire de romance tradicional. Pero le faltaban al poeta salmantino la imaginación y el aliento poético necesarios para elevar el tema al alto nivel de ejemplaridad nacional que ambicionaba, y, en cambio, era más feliz cuando se limitaba a presentar, en esos *Ecos nacionales*, generalmente en forma dialogada, un cuadro vivo de cierta tendencia realista, unas veces de la guerra de la Independencia y otras de las guerras civiles del siglo XIX."

Furthermore, in the section corresponding to prose fiction, González López neglects to mention Aguilera and his connection and possible influence on Pérez Galdós. Pérez Galdós's "Observaciones sobre la novela contemporánea en España" ("Observations on the Contemporary Novel in Spain"), although frequently turned to by critics for insight regarding the famous novelist's literary outlook, was actually written as a critique of Aguilera's *Proverbios ejemplares*. This is a fact often disregarded. This text is significant because it highlights those ideas that Galdós believed essential for the development of the modern novel in Spain. Moreover, Galdós claimed that Aguilera *Proverbios* had advanced Spanish literature toward that goal (Pérez Galdós, *Observaciones*, 168).

One would have to wait until 1974 for the connection to be made. Reginald Brown at the 1977 International Association of Hispanists (Asociación Internacional de Hispanistas) in Bordeaux presented "Una relación literaria y cordial: Benito Pérez Galdós y Ventura Ruiz Aguilera" ("A literary and cordial relationship: Benito Pérez Galdós and Ventura Ruiz Aguilera"), not only asking why scholars had never stopped to ask who the figure was to whom Galdós paid homage, but also highlighting the possible influence that Aguilera had on Galdós in terms of technique and character development.

Bringing Aguilera's fiction back to the foreground, Brown bases his findings on Galdós's novel *La de Bringas* (1884) and the former's short story "Al freír será el reír." Written in 1863 and published the following year in his collection *Proverbios ejemplares*, the story recalls the incidents of Isabel, a frivolous spender who, unbeknownst to her husband Lozano, is loaned money by don Julián. When she is unable to return the loan, don Julián forces her to repay it by abandoning her home and accompanying him. Apart from the theme of an indulgent and corrupt

middle class, Brown also emphasizes the analogy of popular language that Galdós admired in Aguilera.

In 1979, Stephen Miller would take up a similar point using the same work as Brown, Galdós's "Observaciones sobre la novela contemporánea en España: Proverbios ejemplares y Proverbios cómicos de don Ventura Ruiz Aguilera" ("Observations on the Contemporary Novel in Spain: *Exemplary Proverbs* and *Comical Proverbs*"). This essay, scarcely studied in the literary context of Ruiz Aguilera, is well known as it reveals a young Galdós assertion that there is no novel of value in the 1870s. According to Miller's analysis, Galdós was able to hone the "object of imitation" that Aguilera develops in his approach to contemporary society. Miller goes on to add that it is improbable that Galdós was more influenced by foreign writers such as Dickens and Balzac because the world depicted in contemporary novels of Galdós corresponds to that of Aguilera's *Proverbios ejemplares*. He also states that Galdós took more notes from Aguilera's novels than those of Balzac.

2.4 Aguilera: A Century After His Death

1981 signaled 100 years following the death of Aguilera. It is also when Enrique de Sena Marcos (1921-1998) published the prologue "Un salmantino olvidado" ("A Forgotten Salamancan") in a new edition of Aguilera's *Ecos*. Here, Sena recalls Reginald Brown's interest in Aguilera. Sena reflects on his own determination to fill in some gaps concerning the writer's life. He was awaiting to receive Brown's study. Sena also notes that Brown's investigation was to be the most comprehensive body of data concerning Aguilera as, at the time, nothing had been written. For this reason, Sena was anxious to see the work of another North American who was completing a similar project. There is no doubt that Sena is referring to Stephen Miller who, as I

recall earlier, investigated the affinities between Aguilera and Galdós. Sena's prologue serves as a reminder of the importance and of the ongoing research regarding the Salamancan author.

Following the anniversary of Aguilera's death, not much has been done to advance scholarship on his production. Much of what has been said more than a decade ago is now outdated, having the sole function of characterizing the author as a figure of transition between Romanticism and Realism or as an archival author famous for his *Ecos nacionales*. Nevertheless, some investigators deserve mention as they have in some respect continued to forge a place for the author.

One of these critics, Ricardo Navas-Ruiz, is one of the foremost authorities on 19th century Spanish literature. In his book *El romanticismo español* (*Spanish Romanticism*) (1982) which, since its initial publication in 1974, has seen four editions, he briefly mentions Aguilera's work. In his first edition, the critic excluded Aguilera and others (Antonio Trueba, José Selgas y Carrasco and Victor Balaguer) from the late generation of Romantics born between 1810 and 1820 because none of these authors, excluding Balaguer, were "first class figures," and they belonged to Post-Romanticism, a notion that conveniently excludes Aguilera's poetry from careful consideration.

María de Castro García clarifies Donald L. Shaw's earlier connection between Trueba and Aguilera in her article entitled "El auge del cantar popular: 1850-1900" ("The Height of the Popular *Cantar*: 1850-1900"). She makes evident that, in spite of Trueba's self-proclaimed title as pioneer of the *cantar* and *poesía popular* (popular poetry) for his publication of *El libro de los cantares* (1851), Aguilera had already published his *Ecos nacionales* (1849), a point that he himself would make in a letter to Manuel Murguía, husband of Rosalía de Castro.

In 1989, Claude Poullain incorporates the lyric of Aguilera in his study, "Romanticismo de acción y romanticismo de evasión" ("Romanticism of Action and Romanticism of Evasion") in which he accounts for emerging tendencies after the zenith of the Romantic movement. According to Poullain, chronological approaches present limitations and do little to characterize Romanticism in Spain. So, Poullain divides romantics under two facets, that of action and that of evasion, focusing particularly on the latter group that encompass more or less those years between 1850-1870. In this group of *intimistas* or intimists, Cossío's term which Poullain advances, there is a prevailing notion of melancholy, pessimism, and disinterest of the exterior world as in works of Eulogio Florentino Sanz (1822-1881) Ventura Ruiz Aguilera (1820-1881), Antonio Arnao (1828-1889) and Augusto Ferrán (1835-1880). This style would reach its culmination in Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer (1836-1870). Poullain begins his study with Aguilera and underscores the importance of Aguilera's literary development, which spans from his publication of *Ecos nacionales to Elegías* and *Armonías*. He concludes that the rebellion that springs from Espronceda's and Larra's discontent with the century as illustrated in some of their works becomes resignation in Aguilera.

Also, worthy of mention, are other investigations that briefly allude to or include Aguilera's works. Among them is Jorge Urrutia's anthology *Poesía española del siglo XIX* published in 1999. He mentions Aguilera's contribution to the ballad. However, Urrutía's selection of Aguilerian poems ("Profana-tumbas," "La locomotora," "El árbol de la libertad," "El alma de un ángel," and "El dolor de los dolores") are not very representative of his most outstanding work. In 2002, Jesús Rubio Jiménez published "Escritura y pintura en los años sesenta: Ventura Ruiz Aguilera y Francisco Ortega" where he highlights the realistic portrayal

of Aguilera's novel of manners as representative of a literary style whose depiction of Spanish society would bridge the connection between it (*costumbrismo*) and Realism.

Mercedes Patiño Lledó has published various articles regarding Aguilera's career in journalism. She is perhaps the academic who has written most on this figure, although it is not the poet's literary production that makes up the primary emphasis of her work.[63] She considers Ruiz Aguilera a pioneer of modern journalism for having promoted innovative forms, like the *artículo de costumbres*, to depict contemporary issues.[64]

Certainty up until the centenary of Aguilera's death, criticism regarding this author's literary production has been divided, especially in terms of its value. Earlier criticism saw his swaying from Christian values and his progressivist political and patriotic ideals as reasons for the exclusion from his being considered an eminent poet. Critics and authors like Juan Valera, Blanco García, and Emilia Pardo Bazán expressed their dislike of Aguilera's patriotic and political inclinations. These comments coincide with the decline of Aguilera's reception, primarily at the beginning of the 20th century, as an eminent and influential writer.

On the other hand, influential critics, like Menéndez y Pelayo, Clarín, and Pérez Galdós insisted and argued for Aguilera's place in the literary history of Spain while defying his decline in persuasive writings on Spanish literary history. What these comments illustrate is the heavy influence that ideologies and politics played in Spanish literary criticism. What is certain is that Aguilera's works have been considered problematic for several reasons. However, the disregard of Aguilera due to his patriotism is not enough to discredit his name altogether. What is more, one cannot diminish the fact that contemporary critics, such as Baquero Goyanes, Donald L.

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[63] See both her dissertation "Ventura Ruiz Aguilera: Escritor y periodista," Doctoral Dissertation, Universidad de Salamanca, 2006., and her article "*Perfil de un intelectual salmantino*," Revista de Estudios 55 (2007).

[64] The *artículo de costumbres* has no English translation. A close translation would be an "essay on manners or customs." They depicted various types along with their traditions and typical customs across Spanish society. They were very popular during the 19th century.

Shaw, Allison Peers, José María de Cossío, and Stephen Miller have seen and continue to see the value in Aguilera's production, which is receiving increasingly more attention in Spanish literary scholarship.

3. Society in *Ecos nacionales* (1849)

> "The duty, then, of all modern poets, must be to study the spirit of the century; acquaint themselves with the society in which they live."
> (Aguilera, *Ecos nacionales*, 1849)

Despite the limited awareness concerning the figure of Ventura Ruiz Aguilera, there remains a gradual yet renewed interest evidenced over the last 30 years in the investigation of his works. Admittedly, much of the criticism regarding his works consists of critical judgments carried out over a century ago that continue to serve as an anchor for scholarship surrounding his work today. Moreover, *Ecos nacionales* (1849), initially well-received amongst critics and writers alike, now suffers an undeserved neglect within literary scholarship. This oversight is due in part to critics' ideological aversion to Aguilera's kind of patriotism that fell out of favor at the turn of the 20th century. Consequently, this rejection of patriotism led to further disregard of the more social aspects of Aguilera's work.

These dismissals clash with the endorsement of *Ecos* by critics who have credited Aguilera as forerunning a distinctively innovative and fresh turnabout in 19th century Spanish poetry. Although originally praised by some of the most representative writers and critics of the 19th and 20th centuries, *Ecos nacionales* serves the lamentable function of an archival footnote. That is, scholars acknowledge that *Ecos* signal and point to a lyrical renovation that indeed happened, but few researchers have delved through these verses to explore what *Ecos'*s *poesía popular* has to offer in terms of its social and historical value.[65]

[65] Although the English term "popular" is not as precise as the Spanish cognate, I used this term to refer to the literary mode that is reflective of the traditions and customs of the lower class often believed to oppose those of the more cultured elite. From here on, I will use the Spanish term 'poesía popular' and 'poeta popular' (popular poet) when referring to this notion.

This chapter aims to investigate not only in what ways *Ecos* represents Spanish society at a time of revolutionary change but also how certain goals for this society are channeled to compel social reform. In terms of artistic strategies that Aguilera used in his conception of *Ecos,* this chapter also explores the influences of the Spanish *romance*, the European ballad, and their connection to the notion of *pueblo* and *vulgo* within *Ecos*.[66] The representation of *pueblo* and society will be further analyzed in poems I have termed *ecos populares* (popular echos) based on their popular and prosaic character. These stand in contrast to the *eco nacional* (national echo) whose description will also be examined. Finally, the patriotic theme, or *patriotism popular*, for which *Ecos* owes its reputation will also be explored against the backdrop of the War of Independence (1807-1814) that helped to give birth to this theme. Likewise, the Spring of Nations (1848), which encompassed social upheavals that took place across Europe, will also be studied for its connection to *Ecos*.

3.1 Early Criticism and *lo popular*

One of *Ecos*' first appraisals appeared in 1849 (the same year of its publication) in the theater critic Ramón Medel's shortlived newspaper *El Historiador Palmesano* in which he points out Aguilera's preoccupation for noble and contemporary concerns: "To speak to the soul of the day's vital questions, to find examples of heroism and generosity, and to remember with enthusiasm our Spanish glories, are worth more than wandering through the imaginary spaces of

[66] In this context, *pueblo* metaphorically refers to a people or nation. *Vulgo*, which will be expounded upon later, refers to the masses. It can be pejorative. Pablo González Casanova's description of the term provides insight into the history of the word: "The word "pueblo" comes from the Latin *populu*s. Since Roman times, it has been used in relation to government. . . . In the Modern Era, particularly since the French Revolution, it became an essential category. Montesquieu considered the pueblo as a force, which when it does not have the obstacle of the Republic, . . . it surrenders to its passions and instincts and provokes "popular revolutions," in which it triumphs even if for a day, and in which it demolishes everything." "La palabra "pueblo" deriva del latín *populus*. Desde la época romana se usa en relación al gobierno. . . . En la Edad Moderna, particularmente desde la Revolución francesa, se vuelve una categoría esencial. Ya Montesquieu consideraba al pueblo como una fuerza que cuando no tiene el freno de la República, . . . se entrega a sus pasiones e instintos y provoca "revoluciones populares", en que gana aunque sea por un día, y en que todo lo derrumba (111)."

Parnassus and feeling cold sensations" (2).[67] The degree of contemporary and historical awareness in Aguilera's poetry is intimately aligned with the social context that responded to the dynamic and changing atmosphere that marked the 19th century experience. To accomplish this, Aguilera's collection follows a chronological timeline where the poet begins in a medieval setting singing the brave and untamed gallantries of Charlemagne and Bernardo del Carpio in the poem "Roncesvalles" and ends in modernity with the poems titled "En los últimos días de 1848" and "El futuro".[68] Thus, Aguilera is not only concerned with contemporary issues, but also the Spain of yesterday as a source of inspiration.

In addition to Medel's comments on *Ecos*' contemporary context, in 1851, Francisco Zea, Spanish poet and friend to Aguilera, devoted a fictional story in the form of a review in celebration of *Ecos*. He composed his criticism under the pseudonym bachelor Sansón Carrasco in *La Ilustración* and stated the following of the work: "Our poet has introduced a new brand of national or popular hymns in Spanish literature which, being capable of all the beauties of poetry, dresses them always, or almost always, with modest garments so that even the least intelligent of the uneducated masses may come forth and take an interest in them. . ." (10).[69] Other critics would concur with Zea's interpretation of *Ecos*'s novelty, making it essential that I revisit the notion of *lo popular,* or the popular element, within the context of 19th century

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[67] "Hablar al alma de las cuestiones palpitantes del día, encontrar ejemplos de heroísmo y generosidad, y recordar con entusiasmo nuestras glorias españolas, vale más que divagar por los espacios imaginarios del Parnaso y sentir frías sensaciones."

[68] The first edition of *Ecos*, published in 1849 under the title *Poesías*, was also accompanied by a second volume, *Sátiras*, dedicated to José Zorrilla. Five years later, the collection was published again under a third edition but this time without *Sátiras.* In lieu of *Sátiras*, a new volume of *Ecos* was published undoubtedly due to the work's positive reception. The third edition is similar to that one of 1849, except for the suppression of two poems, "¡Qué hermanos!" and "Los niños" that were both included in the first and second edition. The previous poems would be recollected in the sixth edition of *Ecos* published in 1873. Unless otherwise noted, the aforementioned edition published in 1873 will serve as my point of reference when citing *Ecos* as it was Aguilera's final edition published during his lifetime.

[69] "Nuestro poeta ha introducido en la literatura española una nueva raza de himnos nacionales, o populares, que siendo capaz de todas las bellezas de la poesía, las viste siempre, o casi siempre, con modestísimo traje, para que aun el menos inteligente del ignorante vulgo se les aficione y acerque: . ."

Spanish literature. Certainly, this inclusion of *lo popular* in *Ecos* drives Aguilera's ambition to bring the lower classes into the fold of modern poetry.

The idea of *lo popular* is fundamental in *Ecos* because it encompasses the representation of a group of individuals that were not predominantly found in 19th century poetry. Aguilera defined *poesía popular* in the following way:

> I find in *poesía popular* a distinction that in my opinion is very important. I divide it in two parts: *poesía popular* in itself, that is, *poetry that is inspired in the people alone*, and vulgar poetry, that is, *poetry that is inspired exclusively, with rare exceptions, in the lowest class of the people*; or in other terms, *in the uncultured class*. (*Ecos nacionales y cantares* 153)[70]

In addition, Aguilera notes that most Spanish authors, before his publication of *Ecos* had already abandoned *poesía popular* (*Ecos* 153). Indeed, it practically did not exist before Romanticism, at least not outside the boundaries of the refined Spanish *romancero* that sometimes was instilled with a popular tone, although not in the vein of contemporary issues and language.

Many years after Zea's review, Pérez Galdós, referring to several of Aguilera's works, in 1868 alluded specifically to *Ecos*'s "realistic" quality in a critique that later appeared in Aguilera's *Libro de las sátiras*.[71] He summed up Aguilera's production in the following way: "Not even as a realist in *Ecos nacionales*, nor as a humanist in *Arcadia moderna*, has he ceased

[70] Yo establezco en la poesía popular una distinción, a mi ver importantísima. Divídola en dos partes: poesía popular propiamente tal, es decir, *poesía que se inspira en el pueblo todo*, y poesía vulgar, esto es, *poesía que se inspira exclusivamente, con raras excepciones, en la última clase del pueblo*; o en otros términos, en *la clase inculta*.
[71] As mentioned in chapter 2, Carolina Coronado (1820-1911) was also fond of the collection as she recalled Aguilera's love for his country in her prologue to Aguilera's *Elegías*.

to be an eminent poet, while in *Elegías* he would strike with unique delicateness and exquisite tenderness the most songful fiber of the human sentiment" (34).[72]

The notion of realism in the works of Aguilera is yet to be explored in detail, although the attention to true-to-life affairs in Spanish society provide ample justification for the investigation of this topic. Nevertheless, I take considerable caution in applying such an overarching notion as realism to his work mainly because there are still vestigial remnants of romantic idealism in Aguilera's vision of society. Also, Spanish Realism is often encapsulated around an alleged Generation of 68 composed of novelists like Pérez Galdós, Juan Valera and Armando Palacio Valdés, all of whom at some point reviewed the works of Aguilera.[73] Pardo Bazán also figures in the list of preeminent writers of this generation. Although *Ecos* is pre-Generación del 68, Aguilera is active during the time of these writers, and I will explore some of his prose in chapter 4. However, in terms of *Ecos*, realism should be regarded as Aguilera's representation of and engagement in Spain's contemporary issues, its customs and everyday language in addition to the social dynamics of its people.

While *Ecos nacionales* enjoyed popularity among some of the most celebrated contemporary writers of the time, there were those who did not sympathize with the collection, especially its religious ideas as previously presented in the comments of Father Blanco García who was mistrustful of Aguilera's alleged evangelical approach. Grounding his findings on a

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[72] "Ni al ser realista en los Ecos nacionales, ni al ser humorista en la Arcadia moderna, ha deja- do de ser poeta eminente, al mismo tiempo que hería con singular delicadeza y exquisita ternura la más sonora fibra del sentimiento humano en las Elegías." Borrowing Jeremy Medina's term, I regard the realism that Galdós alludes to as "realism as retrato." Jeremy Medina bases his comments on Morrón Arroyo's *Nuevas meditaciones del* Quijote. This form of realism, according to Medina, is said to be that which represents or portrays the local color and traditions of ordinary people. See Ciriaco Morón Arroyo, *Nuevas meditaciones del Quijote* (Madrid: Gredos, 1976). Jeremy Medina, *Spanish Realism* (Potomac: José Porrúa Turanzas, S.A., 1979) 40-3.

[73] Although excluding some authors, Juan Ignacion Ferreras popularizes this "generation" in "*La generación del 68*," Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos LXXXIII (1970).

previous review of *Elegías* carried out by Cordeiro, Blanco García contrived to sketch *Ecos* as a piously delusive counterfeit:

> It is true that the poet performs a solemn profession of his religious beliefs in his invocation *A Dios*; true that he has sung the poetic customs of Catholicism, that he talks to us about our servitude and rendition, and about our future destinies; true that for him prayer is:

Vaso lleno de lágrimas	Cup full of tears
Y de alegrías cáliz	And of happiness chalice
Que a Dios ofrece el hombre	That man offers to God
De amor y gratitud en homenaje;	In tribute of love and gratitude;
Tabla de sus naufragios	Planks of his shipwrecks
Cuando la rota nave	When the wrecked vessel
No halla puerto en la tierra,	Finds no port in the land,
No ve socorro humano que la salve;	Sees no human relief to save it;

> But all of these expressions are very wrong and, unfortunately, tending to the spirit that informs them, obey, not so much the Catholic idea in all of its integrity, but the ambiguities of theism more or less divorced from the evangelic teaching. (125-6)[74]

Blanco García's censorship can be disregarded on the grounds of bias concerning Aguilera's political outlook which defended progress and liberalism. However, any "customs" that Aguilera wished to portray would not necessarily adhere to Catholic doctrines because, as Blanco García points out, Aguilera's principal concern lies with traditions often rooted in the history of the people and the social, not necessarily dogma. Further remarks of Blanco García confirm that his intolerance of Aguilera had much more to do with the former's conservatism than anything else:

[74] "Verdad que el poeta, en su invocación *A Dios*, hace solemne profesión de sus creencias religiosas; verdad que ha cantado las poéticas costumbres del Catolicismo; que nos habla de nuestra esclavitud y rendición, y de nuestros futuros destinos; que la oración es para él. . . .Pero son muy equívocas todas estas frases, y, por desgracia, atendiendo al espíritu que las informa, obedecen, no tanto a la idea católica en toda su integridad, como a las vaguedades del teísmo más o menos divorciado de la enseñanza evangélica."

"the moralities of *Ecos* . . . usually boil down to a few, such as the influence of individual efforts in the eternal and indestructible work of progress, the yielding of the world for labor, equal rights and common duties to all men, and similar ones like these, some irreproachable and others of suspicious origin" (127-8).[75]

Certainly, Blanco García does discern the social implications of Aguilera's work although he is distrustful of the liberal ideals that it advocates. Blanco García, like others who denounced *Ecos* as a chauvinistic enterprise, were deeply invested in the politics and ideology of their time period which negatively inform their opinions of the work. It is precisely due to this reason that one must explore the multifaceted context under which *Ecos* was published to better judge its intentions. On the other hand, comments such as Zea, which celebrated Aguilera's novelty and "popularity" demand that one investigates Aguilera's literary orientation in *Ecos* to problematize this claim. Only then can one arrive to an understanding of the true representation of literature and society, specifically the people in *Ecos*.

3.2 The Social, Historical, and Intellectual Contexts of *Ecos nacionales*

To understand the representation of society in Aguilerian poetry, the historical context cannot be neglected, especially since Aguilera was considered one of the most liberally progressive of his time period. Blanco García, inspite of his distaste for Aguilera's overall liberal outlook, would proclaim in his chapter entitled "La poesía filosófica y social" regarding Tassara y Ruiz Aguilera that "about him [Aguilera], one will be able to say, uniting encomium and censure, that he was the most poetic progressivist of his generation" (Blanco García 136).[76] The importance of this claim within the social, political and intellectual context of Aguilera lies in its

[75] "las moralidades de los Ecos . . . suelen reducirse a unas pocas, como la influencia de los esfuerzos individuales en la obra eternal e indestructible del progreso, la redención del mundo por el trabajo, la igualdad de derechos y deberes comunes a todos los hombres, y otras tales, irreprensibles unas, y otras de sospechosa procedencia."
[76] "De él se podrá decir, uniendo el encomio a la censura, que fue el progresista más poeta de su generación.

relevance to his literary agenda and his loss of popularity. I recall Pardo Bazán's comment regarding the decline of Aguilera's fame: "perhaps his political and literary interests were to blame" (Gabriel y Galán xviii). [77] Menéndez y Pelayo echoed the same sentiment after Valera disregarded Aguilera in his *Florilegio*. He insisted that Valera should have spoken more to Aguilera's merits in his work "in spite of his [Aguilera's] progressivist and patriotic traces" (qtd. in Toral Peñaranda 75).[78]

Aguilera's progressivism is motivated by the political and social agitations of the time period. He would profess such grounding in the prologue of *Ecos* whose poems were composed between 1846 and 1849 before, and after, 'Spring of Nations.' This Europe-wide revolution began in France in February of 1848 and eventually spread across other countries. It sought to dismantle the conservative order in favor of liberal and democratic reform. Although the events of the Revolution were short lived, causing little political change, its social and cultural effects are patent in authors such as Aguilera during this time period. Aguilera's *Ecos* are in tune with this revolutionary spirit that distinguishes their progressive character. The prologue is informed by this life-force for revolution:

> Humanity finds itself in one of those interesting periods, in which the noblest questions that can be posed to the philosopher's consideration are shaken up. The Ancient Regime, the robust Samson who has desperately fought against the modern idea, stripped of his hair, is threatened by dislocated columns and by the ruinous dome of the old temple, which is dismantling. Everything is staggering; everything trembles. There is no doubting it: the fire concealed in the guts of the world, has defeated the force that suppressed it, and today roaring fires appear in almost all of Europe. In Switzerland, in Italy, in France,

[77] "quizás fue culpa de sus aficiones literarias y políticas."
[78] "a pesar de sus resabios progresistas y patrioteros"

in Germany, in Ireland…. everywhere there is sign of fire. The nations, as if the times of the knights had resuscitated, hurry to the palisade to conquer the trophy, but there is no dispute over a lady's gaze, over the possession of a domain, over the ownership of a castle; they compete for the most noble of interests, the well-being of man, the future of the present and forthcoming generations. So all poetry, all literature should undergo a transformation in harmony with the transformations that are happening in the towns of the old continent which are the ones that are at the head of human progress." (Ruiz Aguilera *Ecos nacionales y cantares* xix-x)[79]

Aguilera alludes to the cultural and social conversion from the Ancient Regime, a social and economic seigniorial system whose gradual decline would play out across several political episodes, one of them being the ephemeral Constitution of 1812 that, in some ways, modeled both France's 1789 'Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen' and the 1791 Constitution. However, with the return of Ferdinand VII to Spain, constitutional guarantees were abolished, and politics of the Ancient Regime were not reinstated until the 'Trienio Liberal' of 1820.[80] Reinstituting the constitutional monarch, the 'Trienio Liberal' would last three years when in 1823, Louis XVIII would step in to rectify the strides made by the liberal government,

[79] "La humanidad se halla en uno de esos interesantes períodos, en que se agitan las más altas cuestiones que pueden presentarse a la consideración del filósofo. El cuerpo social antiguo, robusto Sansón que desesperadamente ha combatido contra la idea moderna, despojado ya de su cabellera, está amenazado por las columnas desencajadas y la cúpula ruinosa del viejo tiemplo, que se viene abajo. Todo vacila; todo tiembla. No hay que dudarlo: el fuego reconcentrado en las entrañas del mundo, ha vencido la fuerza que lo comprimía, y hoy aparecen grandes hogueras en casi todos los pueblos de Europa. En Suiza, en Italia, en Francia, en Alemania, en Irlanda. . . en todas partes hay señales de incendio. Las naciones, como si hubiesen resucitado los tiempos de la caballería, acuden presurosa al palenque a conquistar el premio. Pero no se disputa la mirada de una dama, la posesión de un feudo, la pertenencia de un castillo: se disputan los más altos intereses, el bienestar del hombre, el porvenir de las generaciones presentes y futuras. Así toda poesía, toda literatura debe sufrir una transformación en armonía con las transformaciones que se verifican en los pueblos del antiguo continente que son los que caminan a la cabeza del progreso humano."

[80] Ferdinand VII, crowned king of Spain in 1808, abdicated shortly after. He had previously participated in the Escorial conspiracy against his father Charles IV in 1807. When the plot was revealed, Charles IV forgave his son, although a year later, supporters of Ferdinand VII would force Charles IV to abdicate. Napoleon imprisoned Ferdinand VII, and he would not return to occupy the throne until 1813.See H. Michael Tarver and Emily Slape, *The Spanish Empire: A Historical Encyclopedia* vol. 1, 2 vols. (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2016) 153.

restoring once again absolutism and power to Ferdinand VII until his death in 1833. The death of Ferdinand VII would ignite the First Carlist War, a civil war fought between the Carlists, who supported Carlos de Borbón's absolutist reign upon his brother's death, and those that supported the future rule of Isabell II, Ferdinand VII's daughter.[81] This war would end in 1839 with the triumph of the liberals who supported Isabell II. During this time, the Spanish Constitution was reinstated in 1837 and would remain active until its replacement by the Constitution of 1845 under the Moderate Party headed by Ramón Narváez. Narváez governed Spain with an iron fist in order to prevent insurrections in 1848 amidst the Revolutionary Wars. The turmoil of this time period would result in Aguilera's exile, an ordeal that permeates *Ecos nacionales*.

Aguilera probably found his poetic inspiration for *Ecos* in the ideals of democratic socialism which was popular in the 1840s amongst some politicians. According to Iris Zavala, its members

> aspired to the creation of a society that would reestablish justice, and they incorporated in their thinking diverse tendencies of socialism . . . . Their objective was to highlight the antagonism between the poor and rich, searching for a social harmony by way of the promotion of laws and activities that accelerated progress and industrialization (*Ideología y política en la novela española del siglo XIX* 86).[82]

Among those authors who divulgated socialism, Zavala names Manuel Fernández y González (1821-1888) and Wenceslao Ayguals de Izco (1801-1878) for having popularized Eugène Sue's

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[81] The Ley Sálica (Salic law) practically denied the right of succession to female heirs. Upon his death, Ferdinand VII, in an attempt to ensure Isabel's possession of the throne, enacted the Pragmática Sanción de 1830 (Pragmatic Sanction of 1830) which made it impossible for Carlos María Isidoro, the legitimate heir to the throne, to succeed Ferdinand VII. This ignited the Carlists Wars or Guerras Carlistas as it is known in Spanish.

[82] "Este grupo de demócratas aspiraba a la creación de una sociedad que restableciera la justicia, e incorporaron a su pensamiento las diversas tendencias del socialismo . . . . Su propósito fue destacar el antagonismo entre pobres y ricos, buscando una armonía social mediante el fomento de leyes y actividades que aceleran el progreso y la industrialización.

socialist ideas and for his translation of Sue's *The Wandering Jew* (1844). Wenceslao frequented the same literary gatherings as Aguilera during the 1840s (87). Although Aguilera and most poets of his time do not fall into the specific group Iris Zavala deems as followers of socialism, the notions of progress and the divide between the rich and the poor are just as prevalent in his *Ecos*. Also in *Europa Marcha* (1849), which will briefly be discussed later, Aguilera makes the claim for a reconciliation of the old and the new: "far from wishing to bring down all of the ancient rights, what the real socialists want is *to reconcile* in the best way the *ancient* rights with the *new* ones. In this sense, we do not hesitate in calling ourselves socialists through and through" (53).[83] For this reason, when one considers the foundation of *Ecos*, the inspiration that socialist ideas might have had on the work must be taken into account.

The revolutions of 1848, born in France, heralded liberalism and progress across many nations of Europe. Ángel Duarte summarizes those circumstances that contributed to a climate of social and political discontent:

> Near the middle of the century, the unrest of some segments of the nation's elite class, along with a decisive presence of the middle and the small bourgeoisie of businesses, converged with the discontent of the popular masses. If the former [the nation's elite class] were upset by the narrowness of the representative limits that the electoral system set out, the latter [the popular masses] were unhappy particularly with the work and life conditions that they had been obligated to bear" (23).[84]

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[83] Lejos de pretender echar abajo todos los derechos antiguos, lo que los verdaderos socialistas quieren es conciliar del mejor modo los antiguos derechos con los nuevos. En este sentido nosotros no titubeamos en declararnos socialistas."

[84] "A punto de alcanzar el ecuador de la centuria, la indisposición de algunos segmentos de las elites sociales de la nación, con una presencia determinante de la mediana y de la pequeña burguesía de negocios, convergía con el malestar de las masas populares. Si aquellas estaban disgustadas por la estrechez de los límites representativos que fijaba el sistema electoral, éstas se mostraban descontentas, en particular, con las condiciones de vida y de trabajo

While the uprisings may not have had a significant effect on Spanish politics and society in comparison to other countries in Europe, the revolutionary atmosphere can be said to have had an impact in Spanish literature at the time. For instance, Aguilera who, although never traveled outside of Spain, was still cognizant of foreign affairs as his poetry exemplifies. This is especially true considering the fact that General Ramón Narváez's efforts to prevent uprisings in Spain had a direct result on Aguilera and his exile. At the time of Aguilera's arrest, in 1848, most of Europe was experiencing revolutionary wars, but in the case of Spain, as Mike Rapport points out in *1848: Year of Revolution*,

> Not all European countries experienced violent revolution in 1848. . . . The government of the day, led by General Ramón María Narváez, reacted to the European revolutions in March by pushing through the Cortes the suspensions of civil rights, extra funds to meet any insurrection and the temporary dissolution of parliament (which in the event lasted for nine months). Narváez sometimes appeared to be the epitome of Spanish militarist reaction: on his deathbed when asked to forgive his enemies, he replied, 'I don't have to, because I've shot them all.'" (93)

In 1849, the same year that *Ecos* was published, Aguilera and Agustín Mendía collaborated to publish *Europa marcha.* The two also founded the newspaper *Los Hijos de Eva*, but due to its trenchant criticism of the political authority at the time, the Spanish government prohibited its further publication. *Europa marcha* is a philosophical analysis of Europe's political and social history up until the last phases of 1848 revolutions. It, *like Ecos*, advocates political and social reform along the tenets of the Spanish progressive party to which Aguilera

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que se veían obligados a soportar. Ángel Duarte, "Dinámica política y de las relaciones internacionales: Introducción," *El mundo desde 1848 hasta nuestros días: La construcción del presente*, eds. Jordi Casassas, Juan Avilés, David Casassas, Ángel Duarte, Juan Carlos Pereira, Santiago Riera and Ismael Saz (Barcelona: Ariel, 2005).

and Mendía belonged at the time, although Mendía later adopted more Moderate Party views. While the work failed to receive remarkable success, much of Aguilera's explicit ideology can be found within its pages.

Europa marcha attracted some attention in 1851 when Aguilera wrote to the newspaper *El Clamor público* regarding their attributing to Mendía ideas of *Europa* that Aguilera indeed wrote. *El Clamor*, after reaching out to Mendía, mockingly decided to attribute the liberal and socialist views to Aguilera and those more conservative views to Mendía. *Europa* is referenced as it offers a philosophical and ideological perspective of Aguilera's views on politics and society.

Like Mendía and Aguilera, many Spanish writers responded to Spain's political situation in vigourous and creative ways. According to Tom Lewis in *Culture and the State in Spain* (1999),

> Across the spectrum of bourgeois writers—from writers with sympathies for moderate, progressive, and even socialist politics—the events of the year 1848 provoke an astonishingly singular and highly revealing response in terms of aesthetic strategies. Whether we consider works by José Zorrilla, Carolina Coronado, or Ventura Ruiz Aguilera, in each case Spanish writers confront the specter of revolution from below . . . " (268-9)

Aguilera would tackle the revolution by way of the *romance* and the ballad which I will discuss later.[85] Indeed, not all responded in the same manner nor did they use the same techniques. Zorrilla and Coronado are distinctively Romantic writers. Aguilera, in an attempt to invoke and

[85] The *romance* is a genre or metric form of octosyllables, originating in Spain. They began as epic poems composed around the 15th century. It was revived by Romantics such as Zorrilla.

represent the popular masses, would cast aside conventionality to argue, as I have briefly and previously noted, that not only Spanish society but Europe itself was precisely in a period of social transformation for which certain genres of poetry were incompatible with contemporary urgencies: "Every era has its needs, and the ambition in believing that the intellectual necessities of the present age are to be satisfied solely with *romances* to flowers and with madrigals to some eyes is absurd" (x).[86]

Aguilera viewed classical forms as unsuitable anachronisms for interpreting the modern human experience precisely because these genres, at least in form, were inappropriate mediums for depicting the masses. In *Ecos nacionales*, Aguilera puts aside the Anacreontic and idyllic styles of the past because he understands that, amidst the revolutionary spirit of the age, the mission of the modern poet should not serve aesthetic or ornamental purposes but rather analytical and objective means of integrating the disparate elements of society, mainly the masses. Aguilera thereby promotes his own attempt to democratize Spanish literature. To this effect, Aguilera would proclaim in both the first and second edition of *Ecos* that

> The duty, of all modern poets, then, must be to study the spirit of the century; acquaint themselves with the society in which they live; investigate which vices corrode it and what virtues honor it; examine the justice or injustice of the aspirations that manifest themselves now more than ever; so that, from the union of these and other scattered and diverse elements, from the collection of so many and such varied objects and issues, there emerges a clear and precise whole, that it be an exact copy of the physiognomy of the

[86] Cada época tiene sus exigencias; y es absurda la pretensión de creer que las necesidades intelectuales de la época actual, han de satisfacerse solamente con romances a las flores, y con madrigales a unos ojos."

people, of the great social character, or which is the same, the copious source from where poets take their inspiration (x-xi).[87]

What Aguilera calls "the great social character" finds its roots in what the German philosopher Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803) conceptualized as the *Volksgeist* or spirit of the people, a Romantic tenet that was central to many writers of the period. It encompasses the nation and its people, their history, customs, and popular lore: "he [Herder] believed that every nation (Volk) to be endowed with its own idiosyncratic spirit (Geist), an innate God-given character, which can be made to flourish through national culture and education. Herder viewed each nation as an organic whole bound together by a mother tongue and a community of blood ties (Blutsgemeinschaft)" (Murray 1194). The essentialist notion of the "organic whole" surfaces in Aguilera's language in *Ecos* as an attempt to unify what he saw as a fragmented and disenfranchised Spanish society in the hope of offering an all-encompassing view of this community.

During Romanticism, most Spanish writers metaphorically evoked the "people" as a collectively conscience nation, which was historically cemented partly in its expulsion of, and victory over, the French in the War of Independence (1807-1814). Through this war, the Spanish population united to purge the French from their lands as a sign of revitalized national fortitude. This victory would not only reinforce a collective identity in Spain, but the triumph also helped

[87] "La tarea, pues, de los poetas modernos debe ser estudiar el espíritu del siglo; conocer la sociedad en que viven; investigar qué vicios la corroen y qué virtudes la honran; examinar la justicia o injusticia de las aspiraciones que se manifiestan ahora más que nunca en ella; para que, de la unión de éstos y otros elementos esparcidos y diversos, del conjunto de tantos y tan variados objetos y asuntos, resulte un todo claro y preciso, que sea un traslado exacto de la fisonomía del pueblo, del gran carácter social, o, lo que es lo mismo, la copiosa fuente de donde han de tomar los poetas sus inspiraciones." Ventura Ruiz Aguilera, *Ecos nacionales y cantares*, con traducciones al portugués, alemán, inglés, italiano, catalán, gallego, polaco y provenzal (Madrid: Biblioteca de Instruccion y Recreo, 1873).

to forge a place for the working class, prodigiously involved in the guerrilla, in Spanish literature.

The idealized and virtuous feelings related to a unified and democratic Spanish people would be a popular theme of some 19th century writers which were, to an extent, rooted in the War of Independence, and Aguilera would be no exception in that his visionary model of a more upstanding Spanish society depended upon this representation of the people. When the Spanish politician and writer Fernando Garrido y Tortosa (1821-1883) reflects on the dynamism of the popular participation in the War of Independence, he does so under the conviction that their spirited call to arms and heroic acts led to a kind of democratization in the viewpoint the common people:

> Truly, the conduct of the Spanish people was as admirable as it was unexpected. The spontaneous movement of the masses, that great revolution showed to what extent the sentiment of personal dignity was rooted in the popular masses. Mina the laborer, Manso the miller, Juan Martín the Undaunted, stable boy, Jáuregui the shepherd, and so many other men emerging from the darkness, to whom the statesmen and the aristocracies call plebian and *low* classes, rising up against the giant of the century, defying and conquering him, are not only the glory of Spain, but an evident proof that there cannot be what they call high classes between us; because in reality there are no low ones; for the lowest day-laborer, any rustic can give lessons on dignity, bravery, honor, heroism, to those who have the ridiculous pretension of symbolizing these great qualities of the soul in their classes or categories. For this reason the Spanish nation, perhaps more than any other, cannot consider itself nothing more than a democracy dominated by the sentiment of

equality, that is the result of the dignity of each individual, which is not inferior to anyone." (110)[88]

Garrido, whose discourse was published 17 years after Aguilera's *Ecos*, substantiates a continuation in the idea of a society whose constituents are to be judged ideally on their level of virtuousness. For Aguilera, too, no other class exhibits more effective ideals of rectitude and morality than that of the masses, and when he sets out on the scrupulous pursuit of inspecting these incorruptible values, he turns to them. This class will also figure into the notion of *patriotismo popular* that is also deep-seated in the events of the Spanish War of Independence.

Aguilera advocates a "clear and precise whole" from the "union of these and other scattered and diverse elements" to achieve a faithful representation of the people (*Ecos nacionales* xi). These "elements" are the dispersed and disregarded voices of society which Aguilera unifies under a panoramic and inclusively imaginary space. He would not be the first to take to such a social project aligned with an analysis of the people's character. Outside of poetry, one finds the case for the less fortunate class in Wenceslao Ayguals de Izco. Within the framework of poetry, Cossío cites a similar approach in Salvador Bermúdez de Castro (1817-1883) in the latter's *Ensayos póetcos* published in 1840. Bermúdez states "what is he [the poet] to write but his impressions, which are the impressions of society" (qtd. in *Cincuenta años*

[88] "Verdaderamente, la conducta del pueblo español fue tan admirable como inesperada. Movimiento, espontáneo de la plebe, aquella gran revolución mostró hasta qué punto el sentimiento de la dignidad personal estaba arraigado en las masas populares. Mina el labrador, Manso el molinero, Juan Martín el Empecinado, mozo de cuadra, Jáuregui el pastor, y tantos otros hombres salidos de la oscuridad, de las que los hombres de Estado y las aristocracias llaman plebe y clases *bajas*, alzándose ante el gigante del siglo, desafiándole y venciéndole, no solo son la gloria de España, sino prueba evidente de que no puede haber entre nosotros lo que se llaman clases altas; porque en realidad no las hay bajas; porque el último jornalero, cualquier destripaterrones puede dar lecciones de dignidad, de valor, de honor, de heroísmo a los que tienen la ridícula pretensión de simbolizar en sus clases o categorías estas grandes cualidades del alma. Por eso la nación española, acaso más que ninguna otra, no puede considerarse más que como una democracia dominada por el sentimiento de la igualdad, que es el resultado de la dignidad de cada individuo, que no se cree inferior a nadie."

194).[89] Nevertheless, even the "impressions" of Bermúdez de Castro do not rest entirely with the masses, and therein lies the difference in his impressions and those of Aguilera. The humble voice of the people, their issues, are never heard, and Bermúdez de Castro, unlike Aguilera, remains faithful to the exalted passions of Romanticism.

Donald L. Shaw also cites Bermúdez de Castro as having outlined this new perspective that advanced the Romantic idea of the social, although most manifestations of it in Romanticism, as Shaw also notes, found difficulty in transcending the specific issues it highlighted with such broad-brush strokes. Aguilera, on the contrary, sought an evolution in this poetic representation of society and looked to include more specific and precise illustrations of individuals and national issues, such as the question of education in rural areas, the welfare of Spanish veterans, prostitution and other contemporary topics of debate that are rarely seen problematized in the Spanish poetry of the 19th century.

The social agenda was also seen in Nicomedes Pastor Díaz (1811-1863) who, like Bermúdez de Castro, belonged to the group of Romantic authors who produced major works during what Allison Peers refers to as the *annus mirabilis.*[90] In his prologue to *Poesías* (1840), Pastor Diaz recognizes that, "poetry should have a social purpose, and a productive, moral and civilizing mission" (iii).[91] But not even Pastor Diaz is able to disenfranchise his Romantic 'I' for the sake of a society seen as a collective group of individuals with their respective social apprehensions.

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[89] "Y si escribe, ¿qué ha de escribir sino sus impresiones, que son las impresiones de la sociedad?"
[90] See Peers, *Historia del movimiento romántico español*, 1973 in which he claims 1840 was the heyday of Romanticism that saw representative publications from Espronceda, Pastor Díaz, and Campoamor.
[91] "la poesía debe tener un fin social, y una misión fecunda, moral y civilizadora."

In Aguilera's *Ecos nacionales*, the poet renounces the Romantic 'I', and from his privileged position, assumes a voice that speaks for the underrepresented. For this reason alone, the impetuous decision to label Aguilera alongside these egocentric poets, as Claude Poullain has done, seems somewhat untenable, at least in the case of *Ecos* and the *Cantares*. He notes "All of them [V. Ruiz Aguilera, Antonio Arnao, Augusto Ferrán] belong to the "intimista" group that culminates in Bécquer's *Rimas* and partially in the work of Rosalía: "they seek out their source of inspiration in themselves, in their own intimacy, and have a tendency of being disinterested in the exterior world" (Poullain 351). But I argue that Aguilera's poetry persistently dialogues with the social, except perhaps in the case of *Elegías* where a mournful father, after having confined himself to his quarters, cries out helplessly as Elisa's innocent aura slowly wanes from his presence.

Aguilera was not a Romantic per se although some of his earlier poems published in the newspaper *El Nalón* in 1842 show some traces of Romantic themes.[92] One could consider him a transitional poet in whom the idea of society gains importance, encompassing the masses. The fact that Aguilera's oeuvre has so many facades makes him hard to characterize. His objectives for a faithful representation of Spanish society, a balance of description and action alongside his use of a simple and accessible language make him more of an early realist than a romantic,

[92] The earliest poems written by Aguilera are compiled in the newspaper *El Nalón*, which was published in Oviedo in the 19th century. Most of these poems, in the style of hendecasyllabic sonnets, show an inexperienced Aguilera. One of the first poems, untitled, looks to the Orient for inspiration as Europe is illustrated as the dominate culture whose reign knows no limit: "Sultanes, arrojad los camafeos / de los ricos turbantes, sois vasallos / y vuestros dueños son… los europeos." The second, titled "Mirando un cuadro de María Magdalena", has all the sentiments of passion and unbridled love that is expected of much Romantic poetry written in the time period. The last poem "El matón" has an experimental technique in that it seeks to transcribe the everyday and colloquial language of the people of Andalusia: "-Pué zeñó, como iba a Uzté contando / empué de que zalimo e la taberna, / no hise ma que agarrarle por la pierna / y cayó zin zaber como ni cuando." "-Well sir, as I was telling you/ after we left the tabern, / I only grabbed him by the leg / and he fell without knowing how nor when." Ventura Ruiz Aguilera, "Poesias de Ruiz Aguilera," *El Nalón* 29 my.1842: 175-6.

although it is not uncommon to find a considerable degree of idealism behind a veil of moralism and patriotism in his poetry.

I now turn to the popular elements of Aguilera's poetry as he was commonly deemed as a *poeta popular* for having wrote poetry that invoked or referenced the sentiments of the masses and *lo popular*.[93] Composed in 1849, *Ecos nacionales* sought to modernize Spanish poetry by paradoxically embracing the popular tradition, which in terms of literary representation, had not yet been fully incorporated in the poetry of the 19th century. This form of popular poetry, embedded in the social, would capture the interest and attention of the literary scene in the mid-nineteenth century, with Aguilera in the forefront.

María Isabel de Castro García examines the genesis of *poesía popular* while shedding light on the debate concerning the originator of modern *poesía popular* between Antonio Trueba and Aguilera when the former credited himself as the renovator of the *cantar popular*, a type of popular poetry. In 1866, Aguilera writes to Manuel Murguía, Rosalía de Castro's husband, to question Trueba's claims:

> What would he [Trueba] understand to mean popular poetry? Because if he understands and limits this to *cantares*, never in his life has he composed one or he stored them away, having been Ferrán the first between modern [poets] who produced a regular number of them, and if he understands it as another genre, it seems to me that before he was able to

[93] *Lo popular* refers to that which is popular. I retain the Spanish phrase, "poeta popular" or "poesía popular," and while English also understands the concept of "popular" as representative of the common people or the nation as a whole, I prefer the Spanish term and the literary tradition that it encompasses.

recall being born or a little before his literary life, I had already published *Ecos* (in Castro García 113).[94]

But popular poetry took on many forms in the 19th century, mainly as a continuation of the romantic tendencies characteristic of the legendary and historical *romances* epitomized in the works of authors such as José Zorrilla and Duque de Rivas. One such form manifested itself in the compositions produced by certain balladists, a group within the post-Romantic school and in which Emiliano González López includes Ventura Ruiz Aguilera for having composed *Ecos nacionales* (1849) alongside Vicente Barrantes (1829-1898) for his *Baladas españolas* (1853).[95] I also add Tomás Aguiló (1812-1884) to this list for his *Baladas escritas en mallorquín* (1858) and Manuel Ossorio (1839-1904) for his *Odas y baladas* (1865), which although not well known, serve as testimony of the heightened interest proffered to the ballad during the 1850s and 1860s. Almost in every manifestation or defense of the ballad, there is a visibly unapologetic determination for more relevant forms that would prove capable of possessing an innovative and fresh outlook, not only to awaken and appeal to the sentiments of a wider audience, but to also invoke it by inclusion.

On the whole, the historical and social context of both Spain's War of Independence and the European 'Spring of Nations' play an important role in the shaping of *Ecos nacionales*' literary and social formula which corresponds to both the needs and the spirit of the people and the age. *Ecos* takes part in a popular liberal initiative in evaluating the many facets of Spanish

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[94] "¿Qué entenderá por poesía popular? Porque si entiende y la limita a los cantares, él en su vida ha hecho uno o se los ha guardado, habiendo sido Ferrán el primero entre los modernos que hizo un número regular de ellos, y si entiende otro género, me parece que antes de que él se acordara de nacer o poco menos a la vida literaria ya había yo publicado los Ecos"

[95] See Emilio González López, *Historia de la literatura española: La edad moderna (Siglos XVIII y XIX)* (New York: Las Américas, 1965) 330-2.

society not only by looking to its past glories but also by focusing on its present ailments and strengths to inspire a more progressive future.

3.3 The Influence of the Ballad and the *romance*

It has been contended that Aguilera's *Ecos* finds their inspiration in both the Spanish *romance* and European ballad.[96] The *romance* is a genre or metric form of octosyllables, originating in Spain.[97] They began as epic poems composed in the 15th century. On the other hand, the traditional ballad of the 14th and 15th centuries has three stanzas most of which end with a refrain or *estribillo*. Like the *romance*, they are also frequently composed of octosyllabic lines, although it is not uncommon to find ballads of decasyllables. In its primitive form, the ballad was commonly sung and accompanied by dance, however it later took on a distinct and primarily dramatic poetic form.

This would inspire the popular ballad that was cultivated mainly in the Romantic period during the 18th and 19th century, for instance, the ballads of Walter Scott (1771-1832), which were influenced by the ancient history of Scotland or Schiller's German ballads that sung of old legends, or also the French ballads like those of Victor Hugo. However, these poets remained true to the ballad's original model, rarely venturing outside of the historical and legendary past. This is not entirely true for William Wordsworth (1770-1850) and Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) whose experimental *Lyrical Ballads* incorporated themes of common life, ordinary language, and rustic subject-matters, all of which can be appreciated in Aguilera's *Ecos*. *Ecos* drew on the lives of the rural people, and although literary critics such as William Hazlitt saw in them "a new style and a new spirit," they received criticism for their "vulgar" and "simple"

[96] See González López 331; Shaw 61; Cossío 194.
[97] Concerning an overview of the ballad and the *romance*, see Étienne Souriau, *Diccionario Akal de Estética*, trans. Ismael Grasa Adé, Xavier Meilán Pita, Cecilia Mercadal and Alberto Ruiz de Samaniego (Madrid: Ediciones Akal, 1998) 173-74.

language (Lynch and Stillinger 27). One cannot but wonder if *Lyrical Ballads'* rustic and simple language had any influence on *Ecos*.

But Cossío recognizes the *romance* as the genre of choice for Romantics while simultaneously making the case for an analogous current running alongside both the European ballad and the *romance*.

> The origin of this genre is manifestly foreign, especially German, and its appearance in our literature had to be unavoidably late. I believe the reason for this is because we had a legendary tradition that Romanticism glosses and accepts. . . . The ballad is, well, a romantic genre that achieves in such countries the mission of the *romanc*es or legends."(Cossío 186)[98]

For his part, Ramón Menéndez Pidal notes in his *De la poesía heroia-caballeresca a la poesía popular* (1959) a trajectory in which the European ballad and the Spanish *romance* share a relation in terms of the evolution of the latter. For Menéndez Pidal, it is precisely the ballad that infused the *romance* with a type of subjectivity its primitive form did not possess. He comments on the listener's alteration of the epic poem after hearing troubadours recite them. The auditor then, upon hearing the poem, would later fragment it, creating a stand-alone poem known as the *romance*:

> This *romance* sometimes conserves intact, or somewhat less, the poem's verses, but sometimes the fragment is transported from the epic style to a new epical-lyrical style; this is, the narration detailed from the episode or fragment taken from the poem is

[98]"La procedencia de este género es manifiestamente extranjera, especialmente alemana, y su aparición en nuestras letras tenía que ser forzosamente tardía. Creo que la razón de ello está en que nosotros teníamos una tradición legendaria que el romanticismo glosa y acepta. . . . La balada es, pues, un género romántico que cumple en tales países la misión que entre nosotros los romances o leyendas"

> substituted by a brief intuitive vision, or by the emotional impression that the episode provokes in the attitude, conserving only a few verses of the original tale. In this change of style the *romance* was undoubtedly influenced by the new popular genre, that of the ballads, which flourished in Europe, between the 14th and 15th centuries . . . . (Menéndez Pidal 139)[99]

Taking notice of Menéndez Pidal's distinction of *romance* and ballad, I will revisit this topic briefly later. What is presently essential is the evidence that both genres share kinship, and Aguilera only amplifies the lyrical aspect that the ballad infused in the *romance* by expanding on and incorporating the popular tales of the people, which the ballad in Spain had not generally considered.

For Aguilera, the *romance* alone was not sufficient in meeting the needs of a vast society essentially because its traditional themes afforded a voice to the legendary and historical past that could neither entirely capture nor lend itself to the historical present:

> The *romanceros* are not read; moreover, they are not understood by the people: they are monuments that should be restored if a sacred respect for their beauty and their venerableness did not hold back poets, but since this is neither feasible nor perhaps convenient, the traditions, the legend, and the annals from those centuries lend plenty of material, still intact, to make modern poetry popular, to take it out of the men of letters'

[99] "Este romance conserva a veces intactos, o poco menos, los versos del poema, pero otras veces transporta el fragmento de estilo épico a un Nuevo estilo épico-lírico; esto es, la narración circunstanciada del episodio o fragmento desgajado del poema es sustituida por una breve visión intuitiva, o por la impresión emotiva que el episodio suscita en el ánimo, conservando solo alguno que otro verso del relato original. En este cambio de estilo el romance fue sin duda influido por un nuevo género popular, el de las baladas, que florecía en Europa, entre los siglos XIV y XV. . . . Ramón Menéndez Pidal, *La epopeya castellana a través de la literatura española*, 2nd edition ed. (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, S.A., 1974).

cabinet, the only altar where we could say it is worshipped, and make it penetrate the middle class . . ." (*Ecos nacionales y cantares* 154-55)[100]

Breaking with a long tradition, Aguilera would turn away, although not completely, from conventional Spanish genres: "the present societies, whose heart, in order to be moved, needs impressions of another kind" (*Ecos nacionales y cantares* x).[101] He would resort to the ballad for such impressions while remaining faithful to the *romance* by incorporating the legendary themes that it articulates.

Barrantes, in his *Baladas españolas* was also inspired by the similar leitmotiv of wishing to inspire "an epoch deaf to poetry" by utilizing unconventional forms (vii).[102] In his prologue, where he bade farewell to the literary scene, he pleaded in order to be understood that "foreign literature lend him a formula and a genre" (viii).[103] It would appear then, at least for both Aguilera and Barrantes, that one of the driving forces behind the predilection for the ballad and nonconventional forms in all of their flexibility over the more prevalent *romance* rests in the ballad's ability to communicate effectively to contemporary society in a way that previous poetic "formulas" were no longer able to do.

For Aguilera, the *romance* as a genre was at a contemporary and social disadvantage which rendered it insufficient as a convenient genre capable of representing 19th century society and its issues. As a 19th century Spanish writer, Aguilera sees himself as a part of the literary

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[100] In the first edition, Aguilera would use the word "revocarse" (revoke) instead of "restaurarse" (restore), which certainly softens the tone of his regard for the *romance*. "Los romanceros no se leen: es más, no se comprenden por el pueblo: son monumentos viejos que debieran restaurarse, si un respeto sagrado a su belleza y a su antigüedad no contuviese a los poetas. Pero ya que esto no sea factible, ni tal vez conveniente, las tradiciones, la leyenda, los anales de aquellos siglos prestan sobrada materia, intacta aún, para popularizar la poesía moderna, para sacarla del gabinete del literato, único altar donde puede decirse que recibe culto, y hacerla penetrar en el círculo de la clase media. . . " (xiii-xiv).

[101] "las sociedades presentes, cuyo corazón, para conmoverse, necesita impresiones de otra especie".

[102] "una época sorda a la poesía. . . ."

[103] ".para que alguno le escuche ha pedido a las literaturas extranjeras de prestado una formula y un género."

tradition, yet he aspired to forge his own place where he would rely partially on old forms that would then incorporate themes dealing with social injustice, poverty, and social ills like prostitution, which were not commonly associated with the *romance*. He would take up this idea at length in the fourth edition of his *Ecos* as it related to the *romances* of Duque de Rivas and Zorrilla:

> I was not the only author that composed national popular poetry: the illustrious Duque de Rivas attempted it with fortune in his precious *Romanceros históricos*, even though these were of a retrospective character; but especially our great Zorrilla. . . . But Zorrilla . . . permit me the phrase, was the troubadour of ruins, and not only the depth of the legend, his word itself was an echo of other civilizations, of other ages; . . . . Zorrilla was the singer of the past; and I, with much ambition, but with scarce strength, aimed to be the singer of the present." (*Ecos nacionales y cantares* 156-157)[104]

In spite of the admiration for the ballad throughout the 19th century, there is still a lack of analyses concerning its revival. In regard to the use of the term "ballad" in Spain, according to Colin Smith, "in modern Spanish, *balada* appears from the mid-19th century with reference to ballads outside Spain but this is a loan word" (8). However, even prior to the 19th century, there was a distinction between the European ballad and the Spanish *romance*. Although this division can be said to have been partially dependent upon an unwillingness on the part of the Spanish to adopt what some critics considered a European ballad that was coarse and unrefined. Already in

[104] No era yo el único autor que hubiese compuesto poesía popular nacional: el ilustre duque de Rivas lo intentó con fortuna, en sus preciosos *Romanceros históricos*, si bien eran éstos de carácter retrospectivo; pero especialmente nuestro gran Zorrilla . . . . Pero Zorrilla . . . era –permítaseme la frase—el trovador de las ruinas: y no ya solamente el fondo de sus leyendas, su palabra misma era eco de otras civilizaciones, de otras edades; . . . . Zorrilla era el cantor del pasado; y yo, con mucha ambición, pero con escasísimas fuerzas, pretendí ser cantor del presente.

1839, there was at least in some critics, a prejudice against the ballad as one unnamed author exemplifies in the journal *El Museo de Familias*:

> When we compare the primitive literature of Spain with those of other countries, for example, with Scottish ballads, we are surprised by the manifested superiority of the former in regard to fineness and nobility . . . . Well known is the indifference regarding morality and decorum that is seen in the Scottish ballads, as well as the vulgarity of the matters that they describe. The English and Scottish balladists do not seem to make a distinction between noble deeds and the most reprehensible ones." (328)[105]

This attitude demonstrates, although not conclusively, the idea that the European ballad was not regarded positively in early19th century Spanish poetry, at least alongside the more historically and culturally prestigious *romance* for which certain Romantic authors like Zorrilla and Duque de Rivas sought new-found interest after resuscitating it from the decadence in which it had fallen during the 18th century. But like the anonymous author, even when Cossío references Aguilera's initiative to instilling a traditional tone in *Ecos*, he does so with contempt for the ballad: "But to maneuver about the terrain of traditional poetry, he had to seek out weaker and less autochthonous forms, like the ballads are, to confront social problems. . . . (194).[106] The reappearance of the *romance*, according to Allison Peers, was due in part to a Germanic

[105] "Cuando comparamos la literatura primitiva de España con las de otros países, por ejemplo, con las baladas escocesas, quedamos sorprendido de la manifiesta superioridad de la primera en punto a finura y nobleza. . . . Bien conocida es la indiferencia en cuanto a la moralidad y el decoro que se echa de ver en las baladas escocesas, así como la vulgaridad de los asuntos que describen. Los copleros ingleses y escoceses parece que no hacen distinción entre las acciones más nobles y las más reprensibles. "*Bosquejo de la poesía española anterior al siglo de Carlos V de Austria*," El Museo de Familias 2 (1839): 328.

[106] "Pero así como para moverse en el terreno de la poesía tradicional tuvo que buscar formas más débiles y menos castizas, como son las baladas, para afrontar los problemas sociales . . . ."

influence that saw numerous translations carried out by German writers, such as Herder's translation of *El Cid* (1865) and Jacob Grimm's *Silva de romances viejos*.[107]

The ballad has some kinship to, and is sometimes used interchangeably with, the *romance*. Even the majority of ballads collected in Guy Le Strange's *Spanish Ballads* (1924) are actually *romances* of the traditional sort, and little to no distinction is made between *romance* and ballad. With time this distinction has been established. For instance, in 1974 Carlos García Prada discerns a difference, albeit vague, in the two forms:

> Ballads and Spanish *romances* are almost all short compositions and are distinguished in that in the former prevail subjective, musical and more or less novelistic elements, and in the latter, objective, plastic, and epic or narrative elements. Such a distinction is useful, but not very rigorous because there are many epic-lyrical *romances* and ballads known under the name of novelistic *romances* (10).[108]

Due to the subjective nature of the *Ecos,* "ballad" is an appropriate term as it captures the influence that it might have had on Aguilera's collection. But what is striking is that even Aguilera was at first reluctant to refer to his own poems as ballads. This is especially true in his first publication of *Ecos* in 1849 where none of the poems received such a subtitle. Most of the poems that Aguilera titles ballad follows a fixed meter, the *octava aguda,* a form made popular by Nicomedes Pastor Díaz (1811-1863) in the Romantic era, as exemplified by his poem "La

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[107] For an observant analysis of the Germanic influence in Spanish Romanticism, see Edgar Allison Peers, *Historia del movimiento romántico español*, trans. José María Gimeno (Madrid: Gredos, S.A. , 1973) 120-37.

[108] Las baladas y los romances castellanos son casi todos composiciones cortas, y se distinguen en que en aquellas predominan los elementos subjetivos, musicales y más o menos novelescos, y en éstos, los elementos objetivos, plásticos y épicos o narrativos. Tal distinción es útil, aunque no muy rigurosa, porque hay muchos romances épico-líricos, y baladas conocidas bajo el nombre de romances novelescos.

mariposa negra" ("The Black Butterfly"). With this form the fourth and eighth verses of a stanza have an accent on the final syllable, as I note here in Aguilera's ballad titled "Roncesvalles":

-Cuéntame una historia, abuela	-Tell me a story, grandpa
-Siglos ha que, con gran saña	-Centuries ago, with great fury
por esa negra montaña	By that black mountain
Asomó un Empera**dor**.	Appeared an Emperor
Era francés, su vestido	He was French, his dress
Formaba un hermoso juego	Formed a beautiful union
Capa de color fuego	Cape of fire red
Y plumas azul co**lor**	And blue feathers

With the exception of a few, more than half of the poems that make up all six editions of *Ecos* follow this form, the octosyllable or both. However, this fact is not what binds the ballads of *Ecos*, but rather the act of narrating from various points of view on both political and social issues while simultaneously depicting Spanish customs. I have divided Aguilera's ballads into two types, which are not at all to be considered rigorous categories: popular and national echoes. It is Aguilera's peculiar conceptualization and use of the ballad that led me to choose *eco* or echo to underline the differences.

3.4 Popular Echoes

I base my adaptation of the term 'popular echo' on similar terminology that Aguilera uses. In his fourth edition of *Ecos nacionales,* he states "But not only these—included in *Ecos*—but rather the majority of my poems (*Sátiras, Odas, La Arcadia moderna, Cantares, Elegías, La Leyenda de Nochebuena* and the satire, unpublished in its entirety, titled *Grandezas de los pequeños*) have, some of them, the national and popular form and content, while others have

only the content" (162).[109] My objective here will be to establish what Aguilera understood to be popular and its relationship to *el vulgo*.[110] It must be noted that the 'national echo' will not be the primary focus of this chapter. However, I will provide a brief account of its tenets and some exemplary poems in which its themes manifest. Furthermore, I will limit my study to the poems of *Ecos nacionales*.

The national echoes are cosmopolitan in that they do not center on the nation of Spain and refer to other nations as well. Revolving around both provincial and national concerns of the past and present, they resemble chronicles, recalling the glories, triumphs and hardships which uplift and afflict different nations. The poems that most saliently adhere to this description are "Roncesvalles" "Numancia" ("Numantia") "Balada de Iberia" ("Ballad of Iberia"), "Balada de Cataluña," ("Ballad of Catalonia"), "Balada de Castilla" ("Ballad of Castille"), "Balada de Polonia" ("Ballad of Poland") "Irlanda" ("Ireland"), "Grandeza nacional" ("National Grandeur"), and "El convenio de Vergara" ("The Convention of Vergara"). Unlike the popular echo, the subject matter of the national echo and its poetic voice are more refined and less rural. The national echoes are neither centered on the countryside nor do they place an emphasis on dialogue. Although some can be labelled as patriotic, this term is imprecise for those poems that are inspired in other countries If anything, they accentuate Aguilera's concern for universal progress.

Channeling the consciousness of the masses, the popular echo is almost always presented under a dialogued and/or prose form in which the agrarian voices, occasionally accompanied by

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[109] Mas no solamente éstas—incluidas en los Ecos,—sino la mayor parte de mis poesías, como las *Sátiras*, las *Odas*, *La Arcadia moderna*, los *Cantares*, las *Elegías*, *La Leyenda de Nochebuena*, y la sátira, inédita en casi su totalidad, titulada *Grandezas de los pequeños*, tienen unas la forma y el fondo, y otras el fondo eminentemente nacional y popular.

[110] *Vulgo* from the latin *vulgus,* meaning "the great mass, the multitude, the people, public." "Vulgus."Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford/Clarendon Press, 1879).

a juxtaposing voice of the urban or ruling class, problematizes, and sometimes satirizes, social issues or historical events in a seemingly simple tone. Essentially, they argue specific issues that distress the masses and signal alternatives for their progress. Like the national echo, its function, as its name implies, is to address the needs and concerns of everyday people.

According to Aguilera, his predilection for the echo's dialogued form is due to its lending itself to registering with the Spanish reader of the day:

> Regarding the form of the majority of *Ecos nacionales*, I believed that none was more adequate than the dramatic form. In effect, the dramatic form, like no other, can in my opinion, convey the soul, the movement, and the contrasts of the national life in the small sketches in which I have attempted to paint some of its scenes. . . drama is truth, it is the most faithful reflection of the social, political, and religious customs, with all of its conveniences, its coloring, its topography. (*Ecos nacionales y cantares* xii)[111]

Indeed, these contrasts are captured through social interactions which are frequently confined to the virtues of the home and the countryside. This makes the echoes a picturesque work. In effect, the scene is just as important as the dialogue while certain issues and concerns are specific to rural or urban areas, although these spaces are seldom depicted in detail. Some poems that fall into this category are "El maestro que no viene" "Lo peor," "El veterano," "La noche de Navidad," "La prostitución," "El expósito," "La expiación," and "El abuelo."

This future of representing the customs of society through dialogued form is further played out in the exploration of social dynamics amongst individuals divided by class and

[111] "Respecto de la forma de gran parte de los *Ecos nacionales*, he creído que ninguna había más adecuada que la dramática. En efecto: la dramática, puede, como ninguna, en mi concepto, comunicar el alma, el movimiento y los contrastes de la vida nacional a los pequeños cuadros en que he pretendido pintar algunas de sus escenas . . . el drama es la verdad, es el reflejo más fiel de las costumbres sociales, políticas y religiosas, con todas sus conveniencias, con todo su colorido, con todo su relieve; . . . ."

position. Although these individuals may have distinctive qualities, such as a given name and a unique voice, their issues are not individual nor are they isolated but rather a representation of the collective. In "El veterano," the focal point is the plight of the veteran who speaks with his son. In "El maestro que no viene" ("The Teacher Who Never Comes") the uneducated and disenfranchised student in need of a teacher enters the scene, and disappointedly converses with his grandmother. With the presence of individuals with personal apprehensions , Aguilera carries out the social mapping of the nation.

Both the characters and their stories make up the notion of *el pueblo* in Aguilera's poetry. Aguilera's delineation of *el pueblo* stems from 'Las Siete Partidas' (The Seven-Part Code).[112] In regard to *el pueblo*, Aguilera stated ". . . it is nothing more nothing less than what the Wise King of *Querellas* (*Partida* II, Title X, First Law); that is, the combination of all men commonly, from the greater, the middling and the lesser) (Ecos nacionales y cantares 270).[113] *El pueblo* for Aguilera is the collective, all-encompassing nation which is inclusive of all class groups. Within the representation of pueblo, one encounters *lo popular* which Aguilera believe was rooted in the home and the family as well as in the "intimate life" of the nation, its spirit and personality (*Ecos nacionales y cantares* 163-4). The idea of "intimate life" bears similar ingredients of *costumbrismo* of such Romantic writers as Mesonero Romanos (1803-1882) and Mariano José de Larra (1809-1837), famous for their depictions of Spanish customs and traditions.[114]

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[112] These were a body of laws and codes established by Alphonso X, the wise in Spain during the XIII century.
[113] The ranking of "Greater, Middling, Lesser" refers to the three economic classes used in Medieval Spain to classify social groups. ". . . es, ni más ni menos, lo que entendía el Sabio rey de las *Querellas* (Partida II, Tit. X, Ley1.ª); es decir, "*el ayuntamiento de todos los omes comunalmente, de los mayores, e de los medianos, e de los menores*;""
[114] The Spanish literary phenomenon, *costumbrismo*, primarily concerned itself with the representation of both urban and rural aspects of the nation. It often depicted the behavior and mannerisms of characters specific to a region of Spain.

Aguilera's portrayal of local characters and locutions is an evolution of the techniques belonging to this genre and to a generation of writers who precede him.

On the other hand, Aguilera considered *el vulgo* as intellectually distinct from the more idealized *pueblo*. There is no better explanation of this division than in his 1874 publication of *Cantares* which he published when some anonymous imitations of his poems surfaced. Before its publication, Aguilera was conducting some research on the notion of *pueblo* for his *cantares* or cantos, Spanish epic folk songs that were popular in the 19th century with such works as Antonio Trueba's (1819-1889) *Libro de Cantares* (1852). According to Aguilera's interpretation, unlike the *pueblo*, the *vulgo* was incapable of cultivating art. Nevertheless, Aguilera believed that in order to nationalize poetry, that is, to give it a Spanish character, the poet had to descend to the lower class of society. Only then would he be able to interpret the sentiments of this group:

> The inferior layers of society are not exposed to such frequent alterations like those at the surface: the work of time, aided by different circumstances, is slower in the former than the latter; as such, the poet that wishes to impose national character in his works, should descend from the *pueblo* to the *vulgo*, assimilate it, identify with it to a certain extent, conduct a serious and constant study of its way of feeling, thinking, and expressing itself. (*Ecos nacionales y cantares* 273)[115]

Although this quote belongs to Aguilera's *Cantares*, the idea of the conscientious study and portrayal of the *pueblo* remains a creed in his entire oeuvre.

[115] "Las capas inferiores de la sociedad no se hallan expuestas a tan frecuentes alteraciones como las de la superficie: el trabajo del tiempo, auxiliado por circunstancias distintas, es más lento en las primeras que en las segundas; así pues, el poeta que desee imprimir a sus obras carácter nacional, debe descender del pueblo al vulgo, asimilársele, identificarse hasta cierto punto con él, hacer un estudio serio y constante de su manera de pensar y de expresarse;"

A majority of Aguilera's poems in *Ecos* centers on the domestic theme of the nation as family while taking on social issues that directly affect the less fortunate members of Spanish society. When Aguilera sings the betterment of nations and society itself, he does so because the institutions that should aid in these improvements do not exist or are not aligned with the interest of national progress. In "El maestro que no viene," (51) ("The Teacher Who Never Comes"), the poet criticizes the lack of education in the village. The deficiency here is not unduly censured since many educational plans had failed due to lack of consensus among politicians throughout the 19th century.[116] Indeed, the topic of education in Spain would be of great interest from the Enlightenment, throughout the 19th century and beyond. According to Alberto Luis Gómez, "education and culture were considered the foundation for the progress of nations, both in its material and moral dimension. Due to this, education was not conceived only in the narrow sense of the word; rather it also includes the necessary knowledge for the development and formation of the individual" (39).[117]

"El maestro que no viene" tunes in on this issue through the eyes of a provincial adolescent. Aguilera is interested in the consequences that the failure to provide an adequate education engenders in Spain. Actually, Aguilera discussed the state of education in *Europa marcha*, particularly the level of abandonment in the primary education of what he calls the new generation:

> Primary education, the fundamental base of the prosperity of a nation, in all aspects, has not been worthy of the exceptional predilection that it is given in other countries.

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[116] See Alberto Luis Gómez, *La geografía en el bachillerato español: (1836-1970)* (Barcelona: Edicions de la Universitat de Barcelona, 1985) 48-50.

[117] "La educación y la cultura van a ser considerados como el fundamento del progreso de los pueblos, tanto en su dimensión material como en su dimensión moral. Debido a ello, la educación no se concibe sólo de una manera estrecha como una simple instrucción, sino que comprende también los conocimientos necesarios para el desarrollo y la formación del individuo."

> Confusing methods of teaching systems; books that are not at par with the necessities of the age, or that exceeds the capacity of the children; poor organization of the corresponding institutions; lamentable ignorance or abandonment of the teaching profession; miserly wages for teachers, not always punctually remunerated…Here is the first thing that has been done for the new generation. (419)[118]

The instability of educational policy for a series of programs that would die shortly after birth characterizes the contentious atmosphere of educational reform in Spain. One need only refer to the failure of the Plan Pidal of 1845, of Pastor Díaz in 1847, of Bravo Murillo in 1849, among others. Aguilera believed that one of the keys to progress and social reform was found in the young people. With them, the political system of Spain had the potential to become modernized and ideologically aligned with the revolutionary changes of the age. In *Europa marcha*, Aguilera further recognized the importance of youth by criticizing the inability of the government to maximize on the talent and progressively liberal ideas of recently licensed students:

> Have we looked to that youth for the execution of public posts? No. Have they been relied on to represent the people in the Courts? Not even. Pity the lad who has not had another income apart from his talents, another backing apart from his scientific merits,

[118] "La educación primaria, base fundamental de la prosperidad de un pueblo, en todos los ramos, no ha merecido de ellos la singular predilección que se la dispensa en otros países. Confusos métodos o sistemas de enseñanza; libros que no están a la altura de las necesidades de la época, o que sobrepujan a la capacidad de los niños; pobre organización de los correspondientes institutos; lamentable ignorancia o abandono del profesorado; mezquinas dotaciones a los maestros, no siempre puntualmente remunerados…. He ahí lo primero que se ha hecho por la nueva generación."

another influence other than his aptitude to intervene in the government of the nation! (421)[119]

The notion of the youth's inclusion in the progress of the nation is manifest in "El maestro que no viene". In this poem, Aguilera focuses on a select population which did not have a voice regarding national representation as youth and their invisibility in the progress of the nation would become a matter of growing concern. Aguilera's goal is to bring these dispersed and excluded voices to the foreground. In this dialogued poem between a grandmother and her grandson, Tomás anxiously runs to town to witness the promise of the arrival of a new teacher fulfilled. But as he waits, his dreams of an education become less real, and the certainty of a burdensome life more inescapable:

-Abuela, ¿cómo es que tarda? Mucho me temo otro engaño; Ya se le espera hace un año, Y él no acaba de venir (51).	Grandmother, why does he tarry? Deeply another ruse I fear; Already we await him for a year, And still he has yet to appear.

Although initially Thomas is full of hope while awaiting the teacher's arrival, moved by his naivety, his experienced grandmother is less optimistic about the promises as indicated in her satirical refrain:

No vendrá; mas si viniere *Como aseguran, Tomás* *¡Ya verás cuánto te quiere* *Ya verás!* (53)	*He'll never show; but were he to show* *Tomás as guaranteed* *You shall see, how he loves you!* *Any day now you shall see!*

Satire constitutes an important element in some of *Ecos'* poems. Linda B. Hutcheon in "Ironía, sátira y parodia" (1981) defines satire as "the literary form that has the objective of

[119] "Se ha buscado a esa juventud para el desempeño de los destinos públicos? No. ¿Se ha contado con ella para representar al pueblo en las Cortes? Tampoco. ¡Desgraciado el joven que no haya tenido otra renta que sus talentos, otro apoyo que sus méritos científicos, otra influencia que su aptitud para intervenir en el gobierno de la nación."

correcting, ridiculing some vices and ineptitudes of human behavior" (179).[120] In this case, the ineptitude lies with the Spanish government because of its inability to ensure an adequately stable education system.

Yet the grandmother's forewarnings fail to subdue Tomás's expectations of a better educator than previous charlatans. Simultaneously, the rural space is introduced where such flaws occur.

Ese sí que será bueno Y no el que en el pueblo había: Aquel triste no sabía Leer, hablar, ni escribir (51).	Indeed this one shall be good And not like the one who was in the village: That sad man had no knowledge To speak, nor read, nor write.

There is criticism of the education provided in rural areas. As the poem progresses, the repercussions of inequality will be made manifest when compared with education in urban settings.

Education is the starting point for any plan that could ensure the prosperity of the people, precisely the working class

-Diz, abuela, que los libros Hacen buenos ciudadanos Corteses a los villanos Y compasivo al cruel. Y diz también que en sus hojas El gran secreto se encierra, Para que la dura tierra Grandes cosechas nos dé (51).	Grandmother, they say that books Make good citizens A gentleman of a villain The cruel, compassionate. And they also say that between their leaves The great secret is enclosed, So that the hard soil Gives us great harvests.

The development of the social individual and his prosperity hinges on his being properly educated. With this bourgeois logic, true citizenship based on the individual's character is

[120] "La sátira es la forma literaria que tiene como finalidad corregir, ridiculizándolos, algunos vicios e ineptitudes del comportamiento humano."

unattainable without education, and deprived of that adequate education, Tomás's only option is the military lifestyle:

-Ya me amenaza la quinta Me llevará de contado Y siempre seré soldado, Y siempre al hombro el fusil (52).	Already the draft haunts me It shall take me straight away And I will always be a soldier And forever at my shoulder the rifle.

Tomás's fate entails a removal from his grandmother's home under the threat of a military lifestyle where he would learn values different from those of the "good citizen" mentioned in the previous stanza. He is also subject to a tumultuous life of uncertainty and perhaps death. Tomás would not undergo the prescribed process to become the ideal citizen.

The lack of education in rural areas presented major obstacles on both a cultural and economic level in the nineteenth century. This is exemplified in the humble voice of the lower class where he assumes a role that initially appears relegated to the passive position of listener. Carrying out the role of listener, Tomás marginalization is depicted, illustrating the barrier between him and his more fortunate and urban counterpart.

De la ciudad vino un niño, Y era el oírle una gloria Cual relataba la historia, La historia de la nación (51).	A boy came from the city And hearing him was like glory As he told the history, The history of the nation.

Tomás has a dual function here. On the one hand, he emodies the exclusion of the voices of the lower class in the national history. After all, unlike the boy that comes from the city, Tomás does not have the luxury of relating the nation's history because he has not been taught this subject. Consequently, he is incapable of participating in this narrative, which seems to him the official account of Spain's history. On the other hand, when Tomás recounts *his story* where he passively

stood by on the margin of Spanish society to hear the urban boy narrate the nation's history, he is empowered to refute his exclusion in the story of the nation by voicing his own personal story.

Nevertheless, Tomás is still not equal to the boy from the city. While he has been empowered to tell his story, he cannot tell this country's history. In other words, he figures into the collective sum of *pueblo*, but he does not share an active role in the nation's history like the urban boy.[121] Aguilera captures the tremendous disparity between the education provided to the wealthier class and that of the underprivileged. The upper class is legitimized with the power to narrate and participate in the national history while restricting the participation of the lower class by denying them knowledge and inclusion.

Shortly after the publication of "El maestro que no viene," Aguilera would receive a letter from a literary acquaintance who criticized what he deemed the poem's abrupt and unresolved conclusion. Aguilera in reply attributed the poem's failure to provide closure to the fact that the teacher, for whom Tomás desperately waits, had indeed not shown. That is, there had not appeared a suitable project to ensure a proper education in rural areas. However, Aguilera ironically assured the critic that upon the anticipated educator's arrival, he himself would accompany Tomás to greet him. In 1869, more than twenty years after the original poem's

[121] Aguilera seems to make the contrast between Spain's "intrahistory" and its official history. Miguel de Unamuno (1864-1936) would establish this distinction in *En torno al casticismo* (1902) (*On Casticism*). About *casticismo*, Iris Zavala states "It is rather difficult to render in English the idiom *casticismo*, an ideological unity comprising religious, ethnic, and cultural intersections. . . . Purism is but one of its many connotations" (*Colonialism and Culture* 212). Unamuno stated "This intra-historical life, silent and continuous as the very source of the sea, is the substance of progress, the true tradition, the eternal tradition, not the false tradition that is tended to look for the past buried in books and papers and monuments and stones." "Esa vida intra–histórica, silenciosa y continua como el fondo mismo del mar, es la sustancia del progreso, la verdadera tradición, la tradición eterna, no la tradición mentira que se suele ir a buscar al pasado enterrado en libros y papeles y monumentos y piedras" (*En torno al casticismo* 57).

publication in 1847, Aguilera followed up on this promise with an epilogue.[122] In what one could call a conclusion, the figure of the grandmother is no longer present and Aguilera himself stands in her stead to accompany Tomás:

El Poeta: -Miradle bien, ya se acerca;	The poet: -Look at him well, he's arriving;
Mordazas su voz ahogaba,	Muzzles smothered his speech
Cadenas le sujetaban,	Shackles subdued him,
Por eso en venir tardó.	That's why he tarried so.
Tomás, a cumplir yo acudo	Tomás, I've come to fulfill
La antigua promesa que hice;	The old promise that I made;
Conmigo aplaude, y bendice	Applaud and give thanks with me
Al que sus hierros partió.	To he who broke the iron.
Tomás: -Con su retrato, en la escuela	Tomás: With his portrait, in the school
Pondré su nombre además:	I shall place his name too:
Allí los verás, abuela,	There you'll see them, Grandmother
Los verás (53).	There you will see.

Tomás's newly assumed role in the history of the nation is definite regardless of the ironic tone of the piece. No longer does he stand aloof to national glories, but now he contributes to them ("I shall place his name") with an ability to participate in the construction and the narration of national history similar to the urban boy in the original poem. However, twenty years have transpired, and the adult Tomás, unfortunately, would have already suffered the plights that he so enumerated in the original poem. At best, he is able to draw a painting and engrave the name of the unidentified liberator alongside Aguilera, whose visibility and active role in the poem strengthens his presence as an artistically and personally engaged poet and citizen. He is not a poet removed from the proximity of the social questions, but actively allies himself with the issues of the lower class.

[122] This follow up of "El maestro que no viene" was undoubtedly inspired by the *Sexenio Revolucionario* in which the October 21 Decreed of Manuel Ruiz Zorrilla and the October 25 Decreed reformed the Spanish education system by expanding on primary education. Gómez, *La geografía en el bachillerato español: (1836-1970)* 58.

Similar to Tomás's new position in the national history, the liberated educator also assumes a valuable role whose access years of oppression had made impossible. "El maestro que no viene" and its follow-up poem illustrate that there can only be true progress for the individual and for society at large where there is liberty. The national and social progress, particularly in terms of education, is contingent upon free access to knowledge which ensures a citizen's subsequent inclusive and active role in the nation's history and advancement.

In the same vein, Aguilera criticizes other institutions, like the jails, which he thought to be a gruesome school of vices and moral ineptitude. Wenceslao Ayguals de Izco wrote on the matter of prisons in 1849, three years after "El maestro" was published: "There are men, unfortunately, that enter innocent in the penitentiaries, and there they learn to become evil up to the extreme point of anxiously leaving to carry out larceny or murder; but if all the correctional houses functioned like reason imperiously demands, Spain would report immense advantages from it (204).[123] In "Como entran y como salen," or "How They Enter and How They Leave," Aguilera satirizes the illogical practices of an incarceration system in which inmates are not rehabilitated but rather imparted lessons on the carrying out of immoral acts.

-Levanta los ojos, Curro;	Lift your eyes, Franky;
¡Criatura, no estés triste,	Creature, don't be sad,
Que si a la cárcel viniste,	Because if to the jail you've come,
No tardarás en salir!	Before long you'll be leaving!
Hoy cumplo yo la condena,	Today I finish my sentence,
Aquí se quedan mis vicios	Here lay my vices
Y a ejercer voy los oficios	And to practice my trades I'm going
Que me han enseñado aquí.	That they've taught me here
-Pues comienza a relatar (41)	-Well begin your tale.

[123] "Hombres hay, por desgracia, que entran inocentes en los presidios, y aprenden en ellos a ser malvados hasta el extremo de salir con ansiedad de ejercer el robo y el asesinato; pero si todas las casas de corrección se montasen como la razón imperiosamente reclama, inmensas ventajas reportaría de ello la España."

Aguilera begins the poem with a framed narrative, a technique enriched by the addition of a popular touch with the name Curro, a very common hypocorism given in Andalusia for the Spanish name Francisco. Although not in such an explicit manner, this narratological technique has been seen in other poems, such as "El maestro que no viene" and even "El veterano" to be studied later. The poetic voice constructs a story or scene around a setting where the tale is being told. This form of prosaic poetry complements the aim of veracity through an act of testimony that achieves its maximum productivity with dialogue.

-Aquí he venido Por no haber sido Bastante diestro… *Pero al mes, era maestro* *En el arte de ROBAR.*	-Here I have come For not having been Skilled enough... *But after a month, I was master* *In the art of ROBBING.*
-Solo hallarás una contra, Si es que despacio lo miras, Y es que el aire que respiras Es aire de corrupción. Mi cuerpo, antaño más fuerte Que el árbol de la montaña, Débil es hoy como caña Que vegeta en un rincón. -Sigue, no dejes de hablar. -Aquí he venido Por no haber sido Bastante diestro… *Pero al mes, era maestro* *En el arte de escalar.* . . . . . (42).	-You'll only find one fault, If you look at it slowly And it's that the air that you breath Is the air of corruption. My body, yesterday stronger Than the mountain tree, Weak it is today like a reed That vegetates in a corner. -Carry on, don't stop speaking. -Here I have come For not having been Skilled enough… *But after a month, I was master* *In the art of climbing.* . . . . .

Poems like this incorporate satire to illustrate the incompetence of Spanish institutions. The unnamed poetic voice claims to have entered the jail for not having been "skilled" enough, but he does not mean skilled in the virtuous sense of the world, but rather in the immoral sense of it. It is not until he is incarcerated that he learns to perfect his criminal arts, which he will use in society.

In "Las aristocracias," satire is used to criticize the history of the aristocrats in order to define what it means to be one in contemporary society. Aguilera ridicules the Aristotelian model of aristocracy defined as "the rule by a few—not many but more than one—who look to the common benefit either because the best people rule, or because they rule with a view to what is best for a polis and those who share in it" (in Inamura 52). In *Europa marcha* (1849), Aguilera and Agustín Mendía spoke of the aristocracy as incompatible with the progress and liberal agenda of the nation thanks laws that excluded much of the Spanish population from participating in the country's development as citizens.

> "What do such laws yield? Closing the door to certain doctrines and certain men in the country's representation. Truths so familiar to all do not need more explanation. It is therefore necessary that the electoral law be reformed in a broader, more equitable, more liberal sense, more in harmony with our traditions, which are truly popular. It is necessary that the official Spain, that Spain that consumes the treasures of the nation, adorns its chest of crosses and ribbons and its carriages of coat of arms, which rises like an aristocracy a thousand times more unbearable and more proud than the noble aristocracy, it [Spain] must begin to understand its false position in a society that does not want to recognize castes or legalized inequalities." (472)[124]

In brief, the official nation as a whole is represented as an aristocracy that stands in opposition to *lo popular* (the popular element). Aguilera dismantles this whole by turning

[124] "¿Qué resulta de semejantes leyes? Que se cierra la puerta de la representación del país a ciertas doctrinas y a ciertos hombres. Verdades tan conocidas de todo el mundo no necesitan más explanación. Preciso es, pues, que la ley electoral se reforme en un sentido más amplio, más equitativo, más liberal, más en armonía con nuestras tradiciones, que son verdaderamente populares. Es preciso que la España oficial, esa España que consume los tesoros de la nación, que adorna su pecho de cruces y de cintas y sus coches de escudos, que se levanta como una aristocracia mil veces más insoportable y más orgullosa que la aristocracia nobiliaria, es preciso que principie a comprender su falsa posición en una sociedad que no quiere reconocer castas ni desigualdades legalizadas."

aristocracy into a polysemic concept that, ironically, has no intrinsic meaning. In the first stanza, the poetic voice alludes to the disappearance of Madam Aristocracy: "they say that MADAM ARISTOCRACY is lost, / Let us go out to look for her, perhaps she'll appear;" (31).[125] This initiates a pursuit in which the medieval past is revisited and where the now uninhabited quarters of the "feudal tower" presents various scenes of decadence that the poet personifies as "RUIN." These ruins are a direct result of the "hurricane of the century" which, signaling revolution and change, has "broken the crenels" of the feudal tower (31).[126] In addition, Madama Aristocracia's "ancient coats of arms painted on the wall / only reveal grandeur of another age" and unrestrained vanity (31).[127]

Once demanding deference and respect, these broken relics and landscape are now simply memories, echoes of the past. "Las aristocracias" aims to represent the dismantling of one group (the aristocrats) and the rise of another (the middle class and bourgeoisie) which had implications in political reforms during the 19th century. As Mary Vincent states

> "Under the liberal reforms of the 1830s, 1840s, and 1850s, land became simply a commodity, a particularly valuable one, it is true, but something which could, nevertheless, be sold or disposed of as its owner saw fit. Similarly, despite the continued popularity of noble titles, they now carried no privileged legal status. Aristocrats might still be wealthy and powerful but they were no longer a feudal class. . . ." (Vincent 19)

The poetic voice is referencing the interests and values of the Old Regime, specifically the aristocratic ruling class, which slowly declined in number in the 19th century as the growing

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[125] "Dicen que se ha perdido MADAMA ARISTOCRACIA, / Salgamos a buscarla, tal vez parecerá;"
[126] "El huracán del siglo ha roto sus almenas,"
[127] "Y sus escudos viejos en la pared pintados / Revelan solamente grandezas de otra edad."

power of the middle-class emerged. The middle-class replaced or merged with the aristocracy, and according to Aguilera's representation, assumed new values that were different from their regard to coats of arms and other relics. Jesús Cruz sums up the history of the two groups, getting close to Aguilera's representation of the aristocracy and its transformation.

> [A] new social class, the bourgeoisie, seized power and then reformed law and society to serve its own interests, that is, to promote capitalist development. With the passage of time this bourgeoisie, consisting of a group of new landowners, merchants, and bureaucrats, who had maintained a revolutionary position between 1812 and 1843, became increasingly more conservative until they merged with the landed aristocracy. The threat of a popular revolution inspired by the rural and urban proletariat led to this confluence of interests between the new bourgeoisie and the old aristocracy. (*Gentlemen, Bourgeois, and Revolutionaries* 4)

"Las aristocracias" introduces the representation of the new aristocracy across Spanish society which contrasts with the images of the rural and lower-class in previous poems. Nevertheless, Aguilera's idea of *pueblo* envisions all Spanish citizens, making aristocracy and the middle class an important part of the national whole.

Tras un mostrador nuevo, caladas sendas gafas,
De obeso comerciante despunta la nariz;
De azúcar y canela, vainilla y chocolate
Circúndale cien sacos, si acaso no son mil.
¿Qué diablos a él le importa que el mundo baile o gima
Que viva o que se rompa la nuca Jelachich,
Si a todos causa envidia formando en batallones
Ese metal sonoro que han dado en llamar *vil*?
-¿Está aquí, por ventura, MADAMA ARISTOCRACIA?
Oigamos al DINERO: -HA TIEMPO QUE ESTÁ AQUÍ (31).

Behind a new counter, fastened both lenses,
Of the obese businessman the nose stands out;
Of sugar and cinnamon, vanilla, and chocolate
Surrounded him one hundred sacks, if perhaps, not a thousand.
What on Earth does he care that the world may dance or moan?
That Jellachich's neck be broken or that he live,
If it causes envy in everyone forming in battalions
That melodious metal that they've taken to calling *vile*?
"By chance, is MADAM ARISTOCRACY here?"
Let's lend an ear to MONEY: "SHE'S BEEN HERE A WHILE."

We are now in modern times based on the historical reference to Joseph Jellachich (1801-1859), the Austrian army general notable for his involvement in the Hungarian Revolution of 1848. Unlike the first group of aristocrats, these individuals have no ties to noble coats of arms or lineage and are primarily interested in capital, which Aguilera simply calls "MONEY." The man of trade, portrayed here as indifferent to the world around him, is driven solely by the accumulation of wealth. The scene stands out for its satirical representation; that is, the sprouting of the nose and the obesity accompanied by abundance.

In the third stanza, Aguilera goes on to reference other incarnations of aristocracy, which manifests itself in military power and politics. This group, referenced as "FUERZA," is criticized as being comprised of warmongers and swallowers of children and women on the backs of whom they obtained their claims to aristocracy:

No hay ley como una bomba, ni paternal gobierno
Como un bien atracado cañón de a treinta y seis;
Ni títulos más bellos que los que el hombre adquiere
Tragándose mujeres y niños a la vez.
Tal es el catecismo político de algunos;
Con el han escalado la cima del poder;
Sus testas se levantan sobre las testas reales;
Con pólvora compraron el puesto en que se ven.
—Está aquí, por ventura, MADAMA ARISTOCRACIA? —
Oigamos a la FUERZA: —PARA SERVIR A USTED (31-32).

There is no law like a bomb, nor paternal government

Like a well-docked thirty-six pounder;
No titles more beautiful than those that men acquire
Swallowing women and children at the same time.
Such is the political catechism of some;
With it they have climbed the peak of power;
Their heads are raised above the royal heads;
With powder they bought the position in which they are seen.
"By chance, is MADAM ARISTOCRACY here?"
Let's lend an hear to FORCE: "At your service."

For his part, the historian Manuel Tuñón de Lara offers further insight into the conditions and circumstances under which these individuals came to possess power and nobility: "that grand bourgeoisie which had ascended vertiginously in the 19th century (colonial deals, civil war deals, mineral exportations, mines. . .)," integrating with nobility would "come to be one, with a clear calling to political power, sometimes through direct realization and at others acting above institutionalized power: the State. This interpenetration is carried out both via familiar bonds and economic transferals, as well as "ennoblement"" (36).[128] Aguilera takes the union of Madam Aristocracy and the agents of force to another level, where unscrupulous men are represented as immoral in their climb to power, trampling over anyone who would impede their progress.

Aristocracy is personified as "TALENTO" depicted lastly. The poet depicts a young boy whose studies have aged him both physically and spiritually: "The head of that lad study has grayed / insomnia dried his strong heart; / his dull eyes sunk in their orbits / he is not himself, nor is his voice his." (32).[129] However, his fault lies in his selfish ambitions: "But he is not dispirited: he knows that with his pen of gold / he excites the enthusiasm of a generation; / He knows that

[128] ". . . esa gran burguesía que ha ascendido vertiginosamente en el siglo XIX (negocios coloniales, negocios de guerras civiles, exportaciones de minerales, minas . . .)" "van a llegar con el tiempo a no ser más que una, con evidente vocación de poder político, unas veces mediante su ejercicio directo y otras actuando sobre el poder institucionalizado: Estado. Esa interpenetración se realiza tanto por vía de enlaces familiares, como de transferencias económicas, como de "ennoblecimiento.""

[129] "La frente de ese joven encaneció el estudio, / Secaron las vigilias su fuerte corazón; / Se hundieron en las órbitas sus ojos apagados / no es sombra de sí mismo, / ni es eco de su voz;"

there are applauses, wreaths, and crowns / for he who carries in his soul a creative seed" (32).[130] Aguilera paints this last group, the intellectual aristocracy as privileged with "pens of gold" and driven by their own self-interest. However, in the final stanza, Eugenio Hartzenbusch is introduced as a member of this group which is redeemed by the presence of the Romantic author Aguilera admired.

La sangre y los guarismos, la fuerza y el talento
Son cuatro Aristocracias, o yo no sé la Q:
Las unas, usurparon sus tronos sin bullicio;
Las otras, con razones de hierro y abedul.
Sin duda es la más digna aquella en cuyas filas
Milita, con mil honras, mi colega Hartzenbusch,
Pero a ninguna de ellas le corresponde el cetro,
Otra hay mejor, y vale más oro que el Perú.
-Quien debe ser, entonces, MADAMA ARISTOCRACIA?-
Nuestra razón lo dicta: MADAMA LA VIRTUD (32).

Blood and figures, force and talent
Are four Aristocracies, or I don't know what is;
One group, usurped their thrones without noise;
The others, with reasons of iron and birch wood.
No doubt the most dignified is that in which whose rows
Serves, with a thousand honors, my colleague Hartzenbusch,
But to none of them belongs the scepter,
There is one better, and it's worth more gold than Peru.
-Who is, then, MADAM ARISTOCRACY?
Our reason dictates it: MADAME VIRTUE.

In neither of the four representations of the aristocracy is there an interest in the common good of all, the Aristotelian concept of aristocracy. Their chief concern is that of class and self-interest. Nevertheless, there is some progress in the last group of talent, although it is not clear whether their interest in provoking enthusiasm in a generation is not to propel their own egocentric goals. What remains patent about the notion of aristocracy that certain social groups

[130] Mas no se abate; él sabe que con su pluma de oro / Subleva el entusiasmo de una generación; / Él sabe que hay aplausos, guirnaldas y coronas / Para quien lleva en su alma un germen creador.

assume in this poem is its apparent lack of virtues. Therefore, MADAME VIRTUE remains an unreachable state.

Aguilera's examination of vices and virtues continues in "El perro que ladra," composed in May of 1848 while carrying out his exile for his liberal ideas and his belonging to the opposition.[131] He recounted the experience 7 years later to court secretaries:

> The undersigned, Assistant Officer of the Ministry of the Interior has the honor to present to the consideration of Your Excellency the following facts: In one of the days of May of 1848, serving as editor of the liberal newspaper entitled *La Prensa*, one of the opposition that never ceased publication, was driven from his home, between four to five in the morning, to the police Headquarters by a guard under the pretext that by order of the Chief he had to present him to said authority, who would manifest the purpose of his call. But nothing was said to him. And without further ado, arriving at the Headquarters, the exponent remained in a narrow cell, along with some poor unfortunates, who according to reports, were detained there for similar crimes (in Toral Peñaranda 153).[132]

Although due to his friendship with Campoamor, the governor of Alicante at the time, Aguilera's sentence was not unbearable, it exemplifies the distressing, political climate of the era.

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[131] At the time of *Ecos*'s publication, Aguilera supported liberal reforms that opposed General Ramón Narváez of the Moderate Party. "Between 1820 and 1868, the *Partido Moderado* or *moderado*s represented the more conservative strand of the Spanish liberal tradition. . . . At a political level, the *moderado*s were concerned with maintaining a strong monarch, a high property franchise, centralizing power, and ensuring social order through heavy-handed use of the security forces. Socially, they wished to effect a reconciliation between liberalism, and the old order, by ensuring that the nobility should retain both its property and a powerful voice in the nation's affairs. . . ." Smith, *Historical Dictionary of Spain* 478.

[132] "El que subscribe, Oficial auxiliar del Ministerio de la Gobernación tiene la honra de exponer a la consideración de VV.EE. los hechos siguientes: En uno de los días de mayo de 1848, hallándome redactor del periódico liberal titulado *La Prensa*, único de la oposición que no dejó de publicarse, fue conducido de su casa, entre cuatro y cinco de la madrugada, a la Jefatura política por un celador de policía, bajo el pretexto de que por orden del Jefe tenía que presentarle ante la referida autoridad, quien le manifestaría el objeto de su llamada. Pero nada se le dijo. Y sin más formalidades, llegados a la Jefatura, el exponente quedó en un estrecho encierro, juntamente con algunos miserables, que, según noticias, estaba allí detenidos por delitos comunes."

Aguilera also alludes to his stay in Alicante and the composition of "El perro que ladra" in a note in the fourth edition of *Ecos*, shedding some light on the specific context and conditions under which the poem was written:

> This composition was written in the Old Court Jail, located behind the building of the Madrid Court, where the author stayed for about a month, being led to it one night in bayonets from a political government's dungeon tied alongside many liberals as a result of the events of May 1848. . . .[133] From prison the author was banished to Castellón de la Plana, before finally being transferred to Alicante, where his friend, the famous poet of the *Doloras*, governor of both towns successively, bestowed the most generous protection and brotherly affection. (385).[134]

"El perro que ladra" satirically denounces the Spanish government's authoritarian administration of the country in order to ward off the influence of revolutionary uprisings in Spain. The Prime Minster at the time, Ramón Narváez, embarked on a political agenda to silence any dissidents that opposed his party's ideology, and "constitutional guarantees regarding arrest, imprisonment and unreasonable search and seizure are suspended from March to December 1848" (Lewis and Sánchez 268). The poem unfolds with a dialogue between a boy and a Minister, perhaps Narváez, who is in poor condition due to a Spanish bulldog whose constant barking hinders his official obligations. The authoritarian Minister's refrain is constant

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[133] "[I]n less than six weeks, between March and May 1848, civil and military revolts and conspiracies occurred in different parts of Spain, some of which, in spite of their weakness, emulated the insurrections taking place in the rest of Europe. . ." Clara E. Lida, "The Democratic and Social Republic of 1848 and its Repercussions in the Hispanic World," *The European Revolutions of 1848 and the Americas*, ed. Guy Thomson (London: Institute of Latin American Studies, 2002) 55.

[134] "Esta composición fue escrita en la Antigua Cárcel de Corte, situada detrás del edificio de la Audiencia de Madrid, en la cual estuvo el autor cerca de un mes, a consecuencia de los sucesos de Mayo de 1848. . . . De la cárcel salió desterrado el autor a Castellón de la Plana, siendo finalmente trasladado a Alicante, donde su amigo, el insigne poeta de las Doloras, gobernador sucesivamente de una y otra provincial, le dispensó la más generosa protección y fraternal afecto."

throughout the poem: "¡que ladra el perro muchacho, / que ladra el perro" (the dog is barking, boy / the dog is barking). In the opening stanza, the boy (referred to throughout as *muchacho*) introduces the Minister's condition behind a veil of feigned sympathy that borders on satire.

-El ministro está malito; ¡Pobrecito! ¡Pobrecito! Y no puede dar audiencia: ¡Dios conserve a su Excelencia Para bien de la…nación! (24).	-The minister feels a bit bad; Poor lad! Poor lad! And is unable to grant audience: God conserve Your Excellence For the good of the…nation!

Although the welfare of the nation initially appears to be dependent upon the Minister's good health, the suspension of the word "nación" satirically challenges this postulation. The vacillation, which the ellipsis denotes, is indicative of both oppression and skepticism in the poetic voice. This becomes even more evident as the poem progresses, especially when one learns the breed of the particular canine that causes the Minister's illness:

Los ladridos del *Hispano* (Perro alano) Le han causado el mal terrible ¡Ya se ve!... ¡si es tan sensible Tan sensible mi señor! ¡Quiera Dios que no haya entierro! -*¡Que ladra el perro, muchacho* *Que ladra el perro!* (24)	The barks of the Spanish (Spanish bulldog) Have caused the ill so terrible There's no doubt!... he's so sensible So sensible milord! God Willing there shall be no burial! -*The dog is barking, lad* *The dog is barking!*

The term *Hispano*[135] immediately stands out, and Aguilera's delaying of the term's meaning is essential to understanding the poem. Obviously before arriving to the second line, the reader is led to believe that the barks are indeed those of the Spanish citizen. The parenthetical commentary serves a similar purpose as the ellipsis in the first stanza, which aimed at concealing

[135] "Hispano: el natural de España, o lo perteneciente a esta nación." "Hispanic: native of Spain or that which belongs to this nation." Vicente Salvá, *Nuevo diccionario de la lengua castellana* (París: Vicente Salva, 1846).

any obvious misgivings that the poetic voice has against the Ministry. It mocks Spanish government and its persecution of those who disagreed with their ruling. Aguilera, being both a journalist and a poet, was very aware of the threats that lay before him as Narváez famously stated in a letter "it is not enough to confiscate the papers; to end bad newspapers, it is necessary to kill bad journalists" (in Castro Alfín 57).[136] The turbulent social and political climate is essential in understanding the impulse behind Aguilera's poetry.

Exiled in Castellón, Ruiz Aguilera saw the need to self-censor his poetry and therefore relied on subtle techniques for incorporating a dissident accent that could metaphorically criticize the government and its illogical resolutions regarding opposing ideologies:

¿Cómo quieren que le dome, Si no come, Si no come, Y de enjuto, es un alambre? Cuando un perro ladra de hambre Fuerza es darle que engullir. Querer darle de alimento Solo viento, Y que engorde así hasta el colmo Es pedir peras al olmo Y al ciruelo perejil (24).	How am I to tame him meek If he doesn't eat If he doesn't eat And he is as scrawny as a wire? When a dog barks and food he desires It's vital to let him engorge. Wishing to give him of fare Only air, Until he's stuffed to the gills Is to tilt at windmills Feat impossible to fulfill.

The hunger that the *Hispano* experiences by the hand of the Minister as a means to his subordination is reflective of Narváez's brief suspension of constitutional guarantees and Aguilera's own period in police custody. Feeble and confined to a dark room, the *Hispano* is deprived of sustenance to prevent any liberation. His sole nourishment is air, signifying a void and emptiness of the most basic needs.

Rationalization, as opposed to illogical indoctrination and abuse is offered as a mean of understanding the *Hispano* comportment.

[136] "No basta con recoger los números: para acabar con los malos periódicos es preciso matar a los periodistas."

Si de Enero con la brisa En camisa Paseáseis una hora Vos, que estáis en cama ahora, ¿Dejaríais de ladrar? Dispensadme si os aterro. -*¡Que ladra el perro, muchacho,* *Que ladra el perro!* (25).	If through the January breeze, Your shirt half-sleeved, An hour you were made to tread You, who now lying in bed, Would you cease to bark? Pardon me if I'm terrifying. -*The dog is barking, boy,* *The dog is barking!*

The minister, indifferent to the *Hispano*'s suffering, is also reluctant to apprehend the cause and justification of his condition, an illustration of a ministry that was believed to be deaf to the nation's grievances. At the same time, the poetic voice portrays the conditions under which the ministry and the society are directly dependent upon each other. When the malnourished *Hispano* suffers and is deprived of liberties at the hands of the Minister and the government he represents, it protests by barking. In turn, the unrest causes the Minister greater agitation, even retarding its operation.

The closing of the poem advocates for a harmonious collaboration of the *Hispano* and the Minister which would result in mutual betterment and progress. However, the Minister is unwilling to cooperate and would rather undergo further unrest than see the *Hispano* free from his chains.

¡Pobre can! ¡ladra con pena! Mas quitadle la cadena Y que salga a ver la luz Que abandone el cuarto oscuro Y yo os juro, Señor mío, que en albricias, Os hará tiernas caricias Y dormiréis en quietud. ¿Lo saco, pues, de su encierro?... -¡QUE LADRE EL PERRO, MUCHACHO QUE LADRE EL PERRO! (26).	Poor hound! He barks with such pain! Yet release him of the chain And he may see the light From the dark room give him leave And to you I guarantee, Milord, in reward Gentle hugs are yours this day forward And you shall sleep in peace. I'll free him then, from his cage? -MAY THE DOG BARK, BOY MAY THE DOG BARK!

Aguilera provided an explanatory footnote for the term "cuarto oscuro," translated here is as a "dark room." According to Aguilera's annotation, the term was actually used in Spanish jails to refer to the "room" where prisoners would endure utter solitude. The poem culminates at an impasse in which the liberty of the *Hispano* is deferred to ensure the ministry's benefit and the *Hispano*'s continued subjugation.

In other poems, Aguilera challenges the disparity between the rich and the poor by taking on "the social question" entailing the 19th century phenomenon that in part sought to remedy the socioeconomic challenges on an increasingly poor class. During this period, Spain still relied heavily on an agrarian economy, and a great majority of the Spanish population worked these lands which, before *la desamortización* or disentailment of 1835, essentially belonged to nobles and the Church. Putting the land into circulation was in part for the benefit of the farmers who worked them and who would ideally become landowners. However, in the end, it was the bourgeoisie who benefited from the purchasing of land while the conditions of the day-laborers and farmers became more precarious. Similarly, the *desamortización* saw the dissolution of some charitable establishments belonging to the Church which in turn converted many workers into public beggars.

Pedro José Cabrera in his book *Huéspedes del aire: sociología de las personas sin hogar en Madrid* (1998), sizes up the Spain's poverty issue in the 19th century when he states,

> Nevertheless, the truth is that in this age, begging is found, more than ever up until then, linked to the structural conditions of the economy. The lack of basic nourishment, the excessive unemployment, just like the conditions in which the workers carried out their duties in the factories . . . turn many workers dirt-poor, whether permanently or during certain periods. In Madrid, as the nation's capital and as a large city, it becomes

especially evident this flowing of the poor that enter and leave the social condition of laborer to cross to that of beggar" (Cabrera Cabrera 65-6).[137]

Having lived in Madrid, Aguilera would have certainly bore witness to the plight of the laborer and much of the social and political facets of their situation. This is especially true since charity and pauperism were instilled in Spanish society through religious discourse. The Christian's duty, especially if he was wealthy, in the presence of the poor was to provide them with alms.[138]

"¡Qué hermanos!" ("What Brothers!"), and analogous poems like "La Caridad" ("Charity") take into account the state of poverty in Spanish society and its impact on the conduct of the lower class. Both poems build on principles of Christianity, specifically fraternal union that morally binds fellow believers alike. According to Tom Lewis, Aguilera makes use of these religious tenets of "preconstructed discourse and religious feelings" to "dissolve class antagonisms into an all-inclusive embrace of the nation" (269). This is especially true in "La caridad" where unrestrained hospitality has religious implications.

-Triste y lluviosa es la noche:	Sad and rainy is the night;
¡Desgraciado el peregrino	Hopeless is the traveler
Que haya perdido el camino	Who has lost his way
Del monte en la oscuridad!	From the mount in the darkness!
Pero han llamado a la puerta:	But they've knocked at the door:
-¿Quién es? –Un mísero anciano:	-Who calls? –A wretched old man:
Abrid, por el cielo, hermano,	Open up, for Heaven's sake, brother,
El cielo os lo pagará.	Heaven shall reward you.
-Entrad en mi humilde choza,	-Enter my humble hut,

[137] Y sin embargo, lo cierto es que en esta época, la mendicidad se encuentra, más que nunca hasta entonces, ligada a las condiciones estructurales de la economía. La carestía de los alimentos de primera necesidad, el paro desorbitado, así como las condiciones en las que desarrollan su trabajo en las fábricas los obreros. . . convierten a muchos trabajadores en pobres de solemnidad, bien sea permanentemente o durante ciertos periodos. En Madrid como capital de la nación y como gran ciudad, se hace especialmente evidente este fluir de pobres que entran y salen di la condición social de jornalero para pasar a la de mendigo.

[138] Even in the 19th century, one could find current translations of Pablo Segneri's *El Cristiano instruido en su ley: Discursos morales y doctrinales* which advised the almoner on his comportment in relation to the poor. ". . . If he [the almoner] doesn't owe anything, he owes [the poor] good words, something that doesn't cost him anything." Pablo Segneri, *El cristiano instruido en su ley: Discursos morales y doctrinales* (Madrid: H. Reneses, 1858) 337.

Sin temor ni pesadumbre;	With neither fear nor grief;
Para el frío, tendréis lumbre,	For the cold, you shall have wood,
Para el hambre, tendréis pan.	For the hunger, you shall have bread.
-El cielo os escucha, hermano,	-Heaven hears you brother,
Y el cielo os lo pagará (56)	And Heaven shall reward you.

The previous scene is presented as the ideal model on how the virtue of charity should unfold amongst individuals or "brothers" in society. There are no signs of class antagonisms here. On the contrary, the humbly spirited tenant opens up his modest home, accommodating the traveler's most basic needs and human rights. The tenant's sole reward is that heaven will hear him, and a religious discourse is made manifest in this act of being heard. Aguilera looks to tradition in those proverbial and biblical maxims. These instruct on how to lead an exemplary Christian lifestyle through charity and the consequences that await him if he fails to carry out these instructions, as one adage in the Book of Proverbs states: "Whoever refuses to listen to the cry of the weak, will in turn plead and not be heard" (*New Jerusalem Bible*, Prov. 21:13). Tending to the needs of the unfortunate is a collective duty.

The importance of the collective is further developed in "¡Qué hermanos!," where the ironic use of the term "hermanos" symbolizes the societal or national and thereby familial relationship between a *jornalero* (day laborer) and a *caballero* (gentleman) who is unwilling to provide the former with alms. Like in "La caridad," religion remains important but ignoring the cries of the poor no longer has just religious repercussions but social ones as well because of the negative social ills that arise from inequality.

The poem begins with the *jornalero's* addressing the *caballero*:

-¡Caballero, una limosna;	Sir, spare some change
Por la Virgen, caballero!	For the Virgin Mary, Sir!
Soy un pobre jornalero	I'm a poor laborer
Que no lo puede ganar.	Who can't earn his crust
Trabajo busco… ¡ay! en balde	I look for work… Oh! in vain

Me dicen que no hay trabajo, Y andando de arriba abajo Llevo seis días Nada tengo, señor, nada; En mi situación repare. *-¡Cómo ha de ser! Dios le ampare* *Que es quien le puede amparar* (60).	They tell me there is no work And walking up and down I've been for six days. I have nothing, sir, nothing Recognize my situation. *-How it must be! May God protect you* *Who is he that can protect you.*

Signs of inequality are immediately established between the *caballero* and *jornalero*. The former represents the small wealthy class while the latter symbolizes the situation of the masses. This inequality clashes with the nation's religious belief system where all men are understood to be brothers and equal in the eyes of God. Aguilera seeks to expose the hypocrisy in those who perpetuate the legitimization of such inequality.

First, the *caballero* is inserted and bound to a social and religious structure that he is made to confront, while the realization of certain duties will either corroborate or refute this title. The expectations concerning the duties of the *caballero* preexist the poem and is are lready infused with both social and religious implications. While Padre Lorenzo Molina's book *La Salvación en la Mano o modo de conseguirla por convencimiento en la sociedad con Dios* (1850) was not one of the most well-known and authoritative texts on the Catholic faith and its practices, his contemporary outlook helps to shed some light on the Church's standpoint and discourse regarding the notion of the modern-day *caballero*:

> The true gentleman, a true man of honor, is not understood by the world that says: *Mister X is a man of true honor: a gentleman. Because he has behaved like what he is. . . .* But let us move on to his gentlemanly honor, as a Christian, which is in what it consists. Let

us not consider but his conduct with the poor, and farewell honor, farewell courtly bearings in many of them (179).[139]

Honor is judged based on social interactions with fellow citizens, especially the role of the almoner, and Aguilera discusses inequality through his own poetry in order to introduce the issue of poverty into the national consciousness and awareness. He problematizes the legitimacy discourse of the privileges of the wealthy social class. For example, the Christian and popular saying "Dios le ampare, hermano" or "God protect you, brother" was used to dismiss the poor, specifically when an individual wished to excuse himself of the obligation of giving alms.[140]

In 1848, the Spanish writer and politician Antonio Alcalá Galiano (1789-1865), reflecting on the absence of fraternity in France, referenced the Spanish proverb stating "One calls the beggar brother after bidding him farewell with a *God protect you* or *God forgive you*, without making the denial of the solicited alms more pleasant for him by recalling the kinship" (108).[141] Although her work falls outside of Aguilera's time period, Isabel María del Carmen Castellví's conduct manual, *Urbanidad (estudio de las reglas de conducta)* (1917), serves as another example of how this expression was socially and culturally employed to dismiss the poor. "If a poor person requests alms of you and you are not disposed to give, tell him: "God protect you, brother." If he still insists and becomes annoying, repeat it to him, and do not push him aside

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[139] "El verdadero caballero, el hombre de honor verdadero, no es como lo entiende el mundo cuando dice: *Fulano es un hombre de honor verdadero: es un caballero: pues se ha portado como lo que es*.. Pero vamos a su honor caballeresco, como Cristiano, que es en lo que consiste. No nos metamos en más que en el porte con los pobres; y adiós honor; adiós caballería en muchos."

[140] A contemporary explanation of this phrase can be appreciated in *Homiletica*: "Frase cristiana en un principio, pero que ahora tiene el sentido de "a mí qué." Antes, el prójimo pedía auxilio a otra persona; si ésta tenía, le ayudaba y si no, al menos le mostraba un buen deseo." Christian phrase in the beginning but that now means "Why do I care?" Before, the fellowman would ask someone for help; if he could, he helped him, and if he could not, he would at least wish him will." *Homiletica*, vol. 23 (Santander: Sal Terrae., 1977) 206.

[141] "Hermano se llama al mendigo al despedirle con un *Dios le ampare o perdone V. por Dios*, sin que el recordarle el parentesco le haga más grata la negativa de la limosna solicitada." *Breves reflexiones sobre la índole de la crisis* (Madrid: Ramón Rodríguez de Rivera, 1848).

with harsh words" (76).[142] This authoritative language reflects an ideological position, mainly that of the wealthy class, which Aguilera questions when he places the popular voice of the masses and the privileged voice of the wealthy at a crossroads, where their respective ideologies meet and collide.

The first instance of collision manifests with the gentleman's enunciation of the refrain "Dios le ampare" which has the same function of a proverb. According to Peter Burke, proverbs can be considered statements of strategic positions, that is, they tell us how to maneuver certain situations in a more or less didactic manner.

> . . . they are strategies with authority, formulating some part of a societies common sense, its values, and way of doing things. . . . Their air of authority is heightened by another feature, their impersonality. Offering stereotyped advice on recurrent problems, they take no notice of what individuals in a situation may feel to be unique or personal about it; and whether metaphorical or abstract, they make their point in an indirect, third person manner, leaving it to the hearer to draw his own conclusions. Anonymous, traditional, authoritative, they have an existence of their own, independent of authors, speakers, and hearers alike. (44)

Indeed, the position of the gentleman in "Qué hermanos" is not his alone. It belongs to his class. When the gentleman denies the poor alms, he removes himself from the day-laborer's plight, and the refrain stands in as the authoritative and legitimized stance of the nation. Its function is to cue the day laborer to leave.

[142] Si un pobre solicita de ti una limosna y no está dispuesto a dársela, dile: Dios le ampare, hermano." Si todavía insiste y se hace pesado, repíteselo, y no le apartes de tu lado con palabras coléricas."

The laborer attempts to overcome the *caballero*'s inflexibility by humanizing his condition. He introduces his family in hopes that he may strike a chord in the *caballero*'s heart.

-Tres niños tengo, y fallecen	Three kids I have, and they're dying
De miseria los tres niños;	From misery the three kids;
¡Si los vieseis! Como armiños,	If you were to see them! Like ermines,
Blancos cual la nieve son.	White as snow they are
He de traerlos mañana	I will bring them tomorrow
Y los veréis al traerlos;	And you shall see when I bring them;
Seguro estoy de que al verlos	Certain I am that upon seeing them
Se os partirá el corazón.	Your heart shall break.
¿Aún no me oís? ¿Más miserias	Still you don't hear me? More misery
Queréis al fin, que os declare?	You would have me declare?
-Le digo que Dios le ampare,	*-I tell you that God protect you,*
Que puede ampararle Dios (61).	*That God can protect you.*

The enunciation of the refrain works as an inoculation that prevents the gentleman from sympathizing with the day-laborer's plight even when this predicament takes on greater proportions in his household, affecting the indigent's innocent children. All the same, no signs attest that the *caballero* receives the message even when it is presented under modes of rationality, reasoning and ethical rhetoric.

-Opulento sois; ¿quien debe	-Opulent you are: who should
Dar, si no da el opulento?...	give, if the opulent won't?...
No os pido yo un aposento	I don't ask for a lodging
Grande y de lujo sin par;	Of great and unparalleled luxury
Ni vesitdos que me abriguen	Nor suits to keep me warm
(¡Para el pobre no hay vestidos!)	(For the poor man there are no suits!)
Ni esos anchos y encendidos	Nor those wide and burning
Braseros, que calor dan.	Braziers, that give heat.
Con un poco de pan negro	With a bit of blackbread
Que a sus perros les quitare…	That you may take from your dogs…
-(¡Voto a un rayo!) Dios le ampare,	*(Curses!) God protect you,*
Que es quien le puede amparar. (61-2)	*Who is he that can protect you!*

Unsuccessful, the beggar compassionately confides to the gentleman his children's' moribund condition, beginning a process of dehumanization in which he relegates himself to the same

space as the gentleman's dog: "share with me their scraps" (61).[143] No longer does he request monetary but rather sustenance and companionship based on equality: "let them eat with me today / as a guest, a friend". The space of equality between the beggar and the dog that the beggar himself establishes is negated upon the gentleman's refusal. This reaffirms the notion that the gentleman and the beggar are brothers neither in spirit nor in humanity because of the former's callousness.

The lack of equality is exacerbated when it implicates elements that divide the realities of the beggar and his wealthy counterpart. Because of the social class to which the beggar belongs, suits do not exist. They are outside of his physical reach and do not form part of his immediate reality. The beggar is denied inclusion in the reality that his more fortunate "brother" experiences, a reality where the rich are afforded shelter and heat from the cold.

A more distressing revelation is that the nation's indifference does not end with apathy and "may God protect you." On the contrary, the consequences can be far-reaching when the beggar's economic need and the society's indifference to these needs engender crime and vice.

-La puerta vais a cerrarme….
¡Bien! me voy de vuestra puerta:
Otra me dejáis abierta,
Y es *la del crimen*, señor.
La mano de la justicia
Me persigue…y vuestra mano;
¿Qué ha de hacer el artesano?
Más que ir a su perdición?
No hay jornal, ni una buen alma
Que del crimen me separe…
-*¡Vaya fuera, y Dios le ampare,*
Y si no…DÉJELE DIOS! (62).

-You would shut the door on me…
Alas! I'll leave your door:
Another you leave open to me,
And it is *that of crime*, sir.
The hand of justice
Pursues me….and your hand;
What is the artisan to do
But go to his undoing?
There is no work, not even a good soul
That may turn me from crime
-*Go away, and may God protect you*
And if not, leave him God.

[143] "Conmigo compartid sus sobras"

The social antagonism between rich and poor does not end. Instead, there is a social demotion in the gentleman's rank, who initially addressed as *caballero*, is now a simple *señor* or sir, deprived of any social honor associated with *caballero*. The case of the poor *jornalero* is similar, in that because of the society's indifference toward him, his fate is now that of a poor criminal where he may embark on a more perilous path than that of the "pobre jornalero."

The problem is no longer the individual but rather society as a whole because the jobless *jornaleros* were many as so were the *caballeros*, and the vice of the latter affected the social structure negatively. In this sense, Aguilera breaks with the idea of the hygienist Pedro Felipe Monlau in1846, one year before the poem's composition, attributed corrupt societies to the poor:

> . . . poverty is naturally affected by an incurable desolation, by an extreme neglection: hence the habits of lack of foresight, drunkenness and debauchery observed in the indigent population. Not without reason, well, it has been said that pauperism was one of the greatest scourges that shall afflict human societies. Yes, gentlemen pauperism weakens the state; decreases the population; waists physical and moral forces of the same part; corrupts all classes; degrades human dignity and the freedom of citizens. . . ." (60)[144]

Aguilerian poetry, then, responds with a return to the individual and his reality; what he sees and perceives. I recall Aguilera's intentions to "investigate which vices corrode it and what virtues honor it" society (*Ecos* xi). But in no way does he look to scientific methods found in the works

[144] Reproduced here from *Enciclopedia del pauperismo*, ed. Gonzalo Capellán de Miguel, vol. 2 (Castilla-La Mancha: Ediciones de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 2007).
". . . la pobreza está naturalmente afectada por un abatimiento incurable, por un descuido extremado: de ahí los hábitos de imprevisión, de embriaguez y de libertinaje que se observan en la población indigente. No sin motivo, pues, se ha dicho que el pauperismo era uno de los mayores azotes que podrán afligir a las sociedades humanas. Sí, señores: el pauperismo debilita al Estado; disminuye la población, gasta las fuerzas físicas y morales de una parte de la misma; corrompe las clases todas; degrada la dignidad del hombre y la libertad del ciudadano. . . ."

of those like Monlau who define the poor as detrimental to national progress: "The poor are those who neither cannot, nor know or want to work. This classification is of the most governmental and practical importance" (Monlau 55).[145] On the contrary, what inhibits national progress, according to Aguilera, is the forfeiture of moral values by the upper-class and the failure to acknowledge equality in all human beings. "¡Qué hermanos! seeks to bring attention to the hypocrisy in charity while illustrating the disparity between Spain's rich and poor classes.

The popular echo is not only rooted in society and the issues of the people, which inspired Aguilera. It also has patriotic overtones. Patriotism in the work of Aguilera cannot be conceived as the chauvinistic propaganda or outdated and vulgar expression of jingoistic sentiments that some have attributed to it. I recall Palacio Valdés' criticism of Aguilera's patriotism:

> What else can one see in the blue depth of Aguilera? The love towards his fatherland; the love for Spanish soil. The fatherland! What is the fatherland! The fatherland is a filthy and ragged man. . . . On the other hand, the fatherland is outdated. Philosophers have recently shown that patriotic feelings do not align with demands of the human spirit that are each day more expansive and universal." (Palacio Valdés 273-4)[146]

Patriotism in the poetry of Aguilera is, first and foremost, popular. It does not convey the voice of the politician, but rather the virtues and ideals of potential liberty and equality for the masses. Indeed, it is not so much what the nation or *patria* is, but what it could be. As suggested earlier, *patriotismo popular*, at least in the case of *Ecos*, is born out of involvement of popular

[145] "Son pobres todos los que no pueden, o no saben, o no quieren trabajar. Esta clasificación es de la mayor importancia práctica y gubernativa.

[146] "¿Qué más se ve en el fondo azul del señor Aguilera? –El amor a su patria; el amor a la tierra española. ¡La patria! ¿Qué es la patria?—La patria es un hombre andrajoso y sucio. . . . Por otra parte, la patria ha pasado de moda. Los filósofos han demostrado recientemente que el sentimiento patriótico no se acuerda con las exigencias cada día más amplias y universales del espíritu humano."

guerrillas in the Peninsular War, aiding in the liberation of Spain. It is this same spirit of optimism that Aguilera seeks to invoke in the masses to ensure their own emancipation. But to truly understand what patriotism is in Aguilera's poetry, one must look to his description of the *patria*, which he does in the poem "La patria". Here *patria* is described as an experience which practically defies conceptualization because it is ineffable: "there are no words / to explain it clearly" (171). The *patria* is conceived in its territorial and domestic dimensions as well as through the spiritual connection between the people and land:

Allí, donde eleva	There, where the roof
Su techo la casa	Elevates the house
De nuestros mayores…	Of our elders…
Alli está la Patria	There is the Fatherland
"El valle profundo	"The deep valley
Y enhiesta montaña,	And upright mountain,
Que vieron alegre	That saw blissful
Correr nuestra infancia;	Our infancy pass;
Las viejas ruinas	The old ruins
De tumbas y de aras,	Of tombs and sacred stones
Que mantos hoy visten	Dressed today of mantles
De hiedra y de zarzas (171).	Of ivies and blackberries;

Indeed, Augilera's vision of the *patria* can be said to be a manifestation of Herder's *Volksgeist* which I briefly touched on earlier. Herder believed "every nation to be endowed with its own idiosyncratic spirit, an innate God-given character, which can be made to flourish through national culture and education" (Murray 1194). For Aguilera, the spirt of Spain is made up of their language and the intimate memories of its people, two important elements of the echo.

"Recuerdos, amores,	"Memories, loves,
Tristeza, esperanzas,	Sadness, hopes
Que fuentes han sido	That have been fountains
De gozos y lágrimas;	Of joys and tears;
"La imagen del templeo	"The image of the temple
La roca y la playa,	The stone and the seaside
Que ni años, ni ausencias	That neither years, nor absence
Del ánimo arrancan;	Can uproot from the spirit

"La voz conocida, La joven que pasa, (172)	"The familiar voice, The girl that crosses

This form of popular patriotism is sometimes associated with the presence of the masses in the Peninsular War. According to José Alvarez Junco

> "From then on the 'War of Independence' would be a pillar of the century's most ambitious effort to construct a Spanish nationalist mythology . . . . The populist content of this nationalist mythological elaboration (it was the 'People' who had saved the fatherland, when the elites had abandoned it) gave particular legitimacy of the event with the onset of the period of Romanticism and *volksgeist*" (93).

Alberto Ramos Santana, in his book *1808-1812, Los emblemas de la libertad*, sees a misrepresentation or exaggeration in the activism of the guerrillas in the war; something that he calls "la leyenda patriota" or the patriotic legend. According to Ramos Santana, although one can certainly speak to the guerrilla contribution, many of these parties were comprised of banditti who ideally transformed from dishonorable to model citizens overnight, sporadic individuals belonging to other troops, and regiments that had regrouped after losing their way (83-4). Be that as it may, Aguilera sees in this group, especially in the youth, the incarnation of sacrifice and a model of resistance as in the poem "Por la patria":

-¿A dónde vas, hijo mío, Que así dejas la cabaña? -A combatir por España, Como bueno a pelear. -¿A mis lágrimas no atiendes? ¿No sientes mis manos yertas? -Al dintel de nuestras puertas Ya los franceses están. -¡Guárdate Dios! ¡Corre a morir por la patria!	-Where are you off to, my son, That you leave the shack thus? -To combat for Spain, Like a good lad, to fight. -Don't you see my tears? Don't you feel my rigid hands? -At the lintel of our doors The French are there. -God protect you! -Run to die for the country!

-¡Adiós!	-Farewell!
-¡Adiós! (43).	-Farewell!

The Peninsular War (1807-1814) was a watershed moment in Spain's official history at the time of *Ecos's* publication (1849). However, it also serves as an illustration of the power of the masses to recognize their interests and ensure revolution and social change. What may appear to be staunch patriotism is in reality a call to arms.

"El veterano" ("The Veteran") is perhaps one of the most telling poems. Marcos Blanco-Belmonte included it in his selection of the most patriotic poems of Spanish literature.[147] Notable for its sharp and vivid sentiments, the poem illustrates an aging Spanish veteran's affection for his country, even when it forsakes him.

-Sigue, padre, yo te escucho.	-Go on, Father, I'm listening.
-Aun entero en la memoria	-Still intact in my memory
Vive aquel tiempo de gloria	Lives that age of glory
Para el soldado español.	For the Spanish soldier.
Paréceme que mis ojos	It seems that my eyes
Aún ven el choque sangriento,	Still see the bloody clash
Y el polvo que, por el viento,	And the dust that, due to the gust
A oscurecer iba el sol.	To eclipse the sun it went.
-Y la patria te abandona?	-And motherland abandons you?
-¡En el invierno, hijo mío,	*-In winter, my son*
Tiemblo de frío!	*I tremble from cold!*
¡Yo que gané su corona,	*I, who won her crown,*
Tiemblo de frío! (35).	*Tremble from cold!*

The distressing tragedy, which the veteran experiences, finds its maximum expression in the exaltation of patriotic feelings tied to French occupation of Spain and the Battle at Bailén.[148] In a series of striking terms ("gory clash," "gust," "wind") marked by the sentimental and compassionate voice of the veteran, the soldier revisits historic greatness. This is subsequently

[147] See Marcos Blanco-Belmonte, *Las mejores poesías patrióticas* (Madrid: Sáenz de Jubera, 1919) 34.
[148] The Battle at Bailén was fought in 1808 and the victory and resistance of the Spanish people over the French occupation would be remembered as an act of national strength and unity.

eclipsed and interrupted by his present state of misery accentuated by the absence of warmth in the last stages of his life. The memory of the conflict intensifies with sensations that briefly constitute a source of heat, which the Motherland can only provide through its past memories, but not in terms of economic support:

-¡Pobre padre! ¡Pobre padre!
-Otra vez, nuestra arrogancia
Arrodillarse hizo a Francia
En los campos de Bailén.
A la voz de ¡¡"Fuego"!! ronca,
Bramaba la artillería:
¡Oh! ¡Cuánto francés caía
Bajo mi sable también!
-¡Y la patria a tu querella
-¡*En el inverno, hijo mío,*
Tiemblo de frio!
¡Yo, que combatí por ella,
Tiemblo de frio! (35)

-Poor Father! Poor Father!
-Again, our pride
Kneel it made France
In the fields of Bailén
To the rasping voice of "Fire!"
Roared the artillery:
Oh! How many French fail
Beneath my saber too!
-And motherland to your call!
-*In winter, my son,*
I tremble cold
I, who combatted for her,
Tremble cold!

Finding any scholarship on the Peninsular War veterans and their fate after having provided service to his country has proven difficult for me. But the poem alone serves as an interpretation on the relationship between the State and its retired soldiers whose patriotism stands fervent and unwavering to the country he defended. However, retired and no longer youthful but still remembering boisterous cannonry, he is dispirited by the abandonment. In 1844, one correspondent of the newspaper *Eco del Comercio* would seek the help in ensuring that these veterans were appropriately paid. Writing from Pamplona, he gives an account on the veteran's condition in the city, and here I include this testimony.

> The pitiable state in which the passive military classes[149] are found in this province for the nonpayment of their salaries, I see it appropriate to turn to you, so that in your appreciable newspaper you may interest yourselves in the relief of the many disadvantaged, veterans, and widows of *Montepío militar*[150], etc., completely abandoned by the current government; for years one has not seen an equal indifference to some of the most praiseworthy classes of the State. Hunger is the reward that these unfortunates have achieved after having shed their blood so that others, healthier and more robust, could enjoy the comforts and all the riches that are collected in Treasury chests. Yes, Editors, these unfortunates walk begging from door to door . . . ; the most worthy Spanish veterans and disabled, for their love to the motherland, are seen hopeless and reduced to the most frightful misery due to the most horrible ingratitude with which they are treated. . .[151]

The impulse to interpret the feelings and anxieties of the underrepresented class is a driving force in Aguilera's work, so much so that he is able to capture the veteran's affection-hostility relationship between the motherland or *patria* and politics that the description above

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[149] "Pasivo" or passive: 3. "It applies to the pension enjoyed by some people in virtue of services rendered or of this right which was transmitted to them"(my trans). "Aplícase al haber o pensión que disfrutan algunas personas en virtud de servicios que prestaron o del derecho que les fue transmitido." Elías Zerolo, Miguel De Toro y Gómez and Emiliano Isaza, Diccionario enciclopédico de la lengua castellana: contiene las voces, frases, refranes y locuciones de uso corriente en España y América... (Paris: Garnier Hermanos, 1895), vol. 1, 484.

[150] Military pension paid to the widows or orphans of soldiers who died in combat.

[151] "El lastimoso estado en que se encuentran las clases militares pasivas de esta provincia por la no paga de sus haberes, me veo en la precisión de acudir a protección de Vds., a fin de que en su apreciable periódico se sirvan interesarse por el alivio de tantos desvalidos, retirados, y viudas del Montepío militar etc., abandonados totalmente por el gobierno actual; pues hace años que no se ha visto una indiferencia igual hacia unas clases de las más beneméritas del Estado. El hambre es el premio que han conseguido estos infelices después de haber derramado su sangre para que otros sanos y robustos disfruten de las comodidades y de cuantos caudales se recaudan en las cajas de Erario. Sí, señores redactores, estos desgraciados andan mendigando, de puerta en puerta . . . ; los más dignos españoles veteranos e inutilizados por su amor a la patria, se ven reducidos a la más espantosa miseria, desesperados por la ingratitud más horrible con que se les trata; "Noticias de España: Pamplona," *Eco del Comercio* 25 jul. 1844: 1.

entails. Aguilera construes this conflicting angle in the dialogue between the father and son when the latter blasphemes the motherland for her abandonment:

-¡Maldita la patria sea!	-Cursed be the homeland!
-¡Oh! No, es mi amor, mi consuelo;	-Oh! No, she is my love, my comfort;
Primero te mate el cielo	Heaven strike you first
Que escuchar tu maldición.	Before hearing your curse.
La patria es tu dulce madre,	The motherland is your sweet mother,
Y si oye nuestros enojos	And if she hears our anger
Ya nos tenderán sus ojos	Soon her eyes will lend us
Miradas de compasión.	Gazes of compassion.
-Sí, nuestra madre es España	-Yes, our mother is Spain.
-¡Si ella nos mira, hijo mío,	*-If she looks upon us, my son,*
No tendré frío!	*I won't be cold!*
¡Huyendo de esta cabaña	*Fleeing this cabin*
Pasará el frio! (37)	*The cold shall pass!*

The "homeland" or *patria* carries with it an idealized expression of love for the country notwithstanding politics. This has been shown in Aguilera's conceptualization of *patria* as inclusive of the popular or the people, its customs, memories, and love for Spain. It is not the *patria política*, cold and indifferently cursed by the veteran's son.

In "El perro que ladra" ("The Barking Dog"), the tyrannical suppression of rights ensures an impedance of progress. Here, the acting government is understood to be the dictatorial inhibitor of liberties and justice. In "El veterano," the veteran does not suffer because of the *patria*, presented as the nurturing mother of society but rather because of the governmental administration that fails to satisfy the needs of veterans. The national leaders are to blame, not the nation.

The nation, *la patria* as it were, encompasses all the echoes and voices of the *pueblo* and their fight for liberty in the name of the country. In "La noche de todos los santos" ("All Saints' Night"), it is the mother who recounts with affection the departure of her son. He has abandoned his home to fight for the homeland but unfortunately will not return.

–Cuando el pobre me escribía,	"When the poor boy wrote me,
Me escribía desde allá,	He would write me from over there,
……	.....
Me decía: “Una venera	He would tell me: "A badge
Hoy en el campo me dan,	They’ll give me in the field today,
Delante de la bandera,	In front of the flag,
Del pabellón nacional.”	In front of the national banner."
…….	.....
–Otras veces me contaba	-He told me other times
Me contaba, sin pesar,	He told me, without sorrow,
Los trabajos que pasaba	The work that went on
En la vida militar.	In the military life.
Cómo, desnudo y hambriento,	How, naked and starving,
Al son de un himno marcial,	To the sound of a warlike hymn,
Marchaba, el pobre, contento	He walked, the poor boy, happy
Por la patria a pelear. (34)	To fight for the homeland.

In “Por la patria” (“For the homeland”), *la patria* are the wives, mothers, and children who suffer the absence of the loved ones they see off to war. The orphan child cries out to lament the loss of his father, but the father must join the people in their expulsion of the French on Dos de Mayo (the Second of May) in events that would lead to the Peninsular War.

–¡Huérfanos, padre, quedamos!	"Orphans, father, we’ll be!"
–La sangre de MAYO clama,	"The blood of MAY cries out,
Y todo el pueblo se inflama	And the entire nation blazes
Al grito de libertad.	With cries of freedom.
–¡Te van a quitar la vida!	"They're going to take your life!"
–Siempre por la patria es tarde,	"It is never too soon for the homeland,
Y no se sufre a un cobarde	And cowards are not allowed
En esta nación leal.	In this loyal nation.
-Guárdate Dios!	"God save you!
¡Corre a morir por la patria!	Run to die for the country!
–¡Adiós!	-Farewell!
–¡Adiós!	-Farewell!

The idea of *la patria* is epitomized in “La vuelta del voluntario” (“The Return of the Volunteer”) where the volunteer, after having combatted in war against the French, ventures

home as neighbors tell him of the disgraces that have befallen his family. As he returns, he finds his brother blind and his children murdered:

A la puerta de la villa	At the village gate
Encontró a su hermano ciego,	He found his brother blind
Y una lágrima de fuego	And a tear of flame
Le rodó por la mejilla.	Fell down his face.
-¡Sin ojos tú, hermano mío!	-Lacking eyes, you, my brother!
-Por amparar con mi brío	-For protecting with my vigor
A tus hijos, sin fortuna,	Your children, without fortune,
Degollados en la cuna,	Slashed in the crib,
¡Pobre Juan!	Poor Juan!
-¿Y los franceses, están?	-And the French, are they about?
De echarlos España acaba,	-Just now Spain purged them
A su tierra van marchando…	To their land they go marching…
Y Juan iba andando…andando…	*And Juan, marched on…marched on*
Y de júbilo lloraba. (73).	*And tears of joy he cried.*

Far from chauvinism, Aguilerian poetry encompasses an admiration for liberal causes and individual freedom for the sake of national progress.

In conclusion, the influence of the *romance* and the ballad instilled populist values in the poetic sensibility of Aguilera's *Ecos Nacionales* which allowed him (having been inspired by Romantic writers like Zorrilla) to both modernize and nationalize 19th century Spanish poetry. *Ecos* gives rise to a new form of dialogized poetry which, fundamentally democratic coincides with the voice of the *pueblo* while shedding a new light on the social questions that perturbed the less favored groups of 19th century society. Few scholars have made use of *Ecos* to gain insight on this aspect of his poetry, which in my opinion is one of the few of its period to forthrightly address contemporary concerns with a social awareness. Furthermore, *Ecos* participates in the transitional process not only towards a new delineation of modern Spanish poetry that included the masses, but that also incorporates a realistic aesthetic based on the everyday social

interaction and anxieties of the Spanish people. This is an approach that Aguilera would refine in his prose by shifting his view from the lower class to the middle class.

4. The Workings of Oral Tradition: *Proverbios ejemplares* (1864)

Ecos nacionales, with its exaltation of *lo popular* and the masses, is undoubtedly the ultimate model for Aguilera's early poetic impulse and inspiration for social commentary. However, it is in his collection of stories where one acknowledges a maturity of style in which *lo popular* is expanded upon to take on new meaning, no longer strictly accompanying the rural accent of the lower class but rather including the values of a developing Spanish middle class through popular adages. Like the traditional *romances*, whose origins are generally anonymous and oral, these Spanish proverbs, of a similar popular beginning, are reconstituted under a new and modern focus mostly by and for the middle class.

This chapter examines the evolution of the representation of society in one of Aguilera's most important collections of short stories, *Proverbios ejemplares* (*Exemplary Proverbs*). First, Aguilera's prose will be contextualized alongside other literary currents of the 19th century to shed light on what ways this relationship conditions the discourse concerning Spanish society, the 19th century novel, and the middle class. For example, a primary concern for Aguilera during this time period is the conservation of some national literary traditions through *costumbrismo* without abandoning the sense of modernity in his progressive outlook on society.

In an attempt to preserve traditional values, Aguilera focuses on Spanish culture, specifically Spanish proverbs as a receptacle of Spanish tradition and authenticity vis-a-vis the emergence of a new set of values characteristic of a maturing middle class ideology. Since Aguilera's *Proverbios* are in a sense sententious, the narrative techniques that he utilizes in order to portray the issues and solutions will also be examined in this chapter. These issues mainly unfold within the manifestation of the individual's conduct, which the proverb seeks to either highlight as exemplary or adjust as alien to Spanish traditions and values. Indeed, *Proverbios*

aspires to "reveal the infinite features that constitute the physiognomy of our people," making the exploration of mimesis as it relates to 19th century Realist novel essential to my analysis. (*Proverbios* i)[152] In effect, Aguilera's own contributions to the modern Realist novel is discovered in his influence on its leading author Benito Pérez Galdós as well as in Aguilera's literary approach which Galdós considered conducive to the formation of the modern novel. This chapter comments on the importance and relevance of these two authors in order to further assess this observation which other critics such as Stephen Miller and Reginald Brown have noted.[153]

4.1 Literary Climate Surrounding *Proverbios*

During the mid-19th century, Romanticism continues to hold a solid grasp on few Spanish authors, causing those boundaries that separate it with Realism to become less clear and more problematic for transitionary writers such as Aguilera. On the one hand, Romanticism's *costumbrismo* persists in Aguilera's literary agenda. On the other hand, the emerging realist tendency—albeit an integral and constant feature in the literary history of Spain at least since Cervantes—becomes a leading question in the development of the modern novel, and Aguilera is no exception in the number of writers who contribute to its formation, his *costumbrismo* serving as a bridge to one of the key components and referents of the realist novel, referred to by Pérez Galdós as the "forgotten middle class" for whose representation Aguilera uses traditional costumbrismo techniques to paint this modern class.

The notion that Spain, during the year *Proverbios* was published, that is 1864, had no novel of its own has consistently been a topic of debate. Pérez Galdós believed that, in spite of Aguilera's advances toward it, the modern novel was still inexistent in 1870. For his part, Juan

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[152] ". . . dar a conocer algunos de los infinitos rasgos que constituyen la fisonomía de nuestro pueblo. . . ."
[153] See both Stephen Miller's and Reginald Brown's studies regarding the literary relationship between Galdós and Aguilera.

Ignacio Ferreras situates the emergence of the realist novel between the years 1868 and 1875 which, for us, is more than enough to stir interest on the relevance of *Proverbios* in the trajectory of the modern novel. He states of this period that "it goes from the dethronement of the Bourbons until their restauration; Spain tries out various regimes, a new Monarchy and their first Republic, revolutions and communes break out, etc. From the literary point of view, it's during these misreckoned seven years when the typical realist or bourgeois novel appears" (*La novela en España* 430).[154] Certainly, this does not mean novels were not being produced in Spain prior to 1868. Even Ferreras confers a place to Fernán Caballero (Cecilia Francisca Josefa Böhl de Faber) (1796-1877) as a realist novelist preceding Pérez Galdós who is often viewed as the founder of the Realist novel in Spain.

Regarding the novel, it had undergone changes, not just in Spain, but all over Europe. France's influence, as we will see, is paramount in the transformation of Spain's novel with its introduction to new realist techniques. However, there is also the belief that "realism" is an autochthonous product in the literary history of Spain. French techniques may be new, but it is generally contended that Spanish realism is evidenced in authors such as Cervantes, specifically in *Don Quitjote*.

Other authors made strides toward the notion of modern realism in the novel. Fernán Caballero is perhaps the most eminent storyteller at the time Aguilera composes *Proverbios*, making her relevance here unquestionable. Although no correspondence exists between Fernán and Aguilera, both were defenders of a common purpose that sought to point out vices and virtues in Spanish society while simultaneously purporting a faithful representation of the

[154] ". . . va desde el destronamiento de los Borbones hasta la restauración de los mismos; España ensaya varios regímenes, una nueva Monarquía y su primera República, estallan revoluciones y comunas, etc. Desde el punto de vista literario, es durante estos siete años mal contados, cuando aparece la novela típicamente realista o burguesa . . . ."

people. I recall Aguilera's literary pledge in *Ecos* in 1849 that resonates in subsequent works, even in *Proverbios* as one shall see: to acquaint oneself with society and investigate the vices and virtues that respectively corrode and honor it (*Ecos* x-xi). One encounters a similar analytical commitment in the words of Fernán Caballero, namely in her novel *La* Gaviota, also written in 1849, in which she claims to "give an exact, truthful and genuine idea of Spain, and especially of the current state of its society. . . .", *heralding*, in a sense, a kind of realistic approach in the novel (v).[155] In addition, concerning her novels, she wrote "they are portraits of characters, of the ridiculous vices of the era and of the beautiful virtues (qualities) that are disappearing (cited en Comellas Aguirrezábal and Román Guitérrez 776).[156] Aguilera would explore an analogous concern for virtues and vices not only in both *Ecos* and *Proverbios*.

While Fernán Caballero figures in the list of distinguished storytellers of the 19th century, and although she and Aguilera share common perspectives on virtue and vices, Aguilera is rarely discussed beside her. This is, in part, due to the wide focus on his poetry and their overshadowing his short stories, at least up until the publication of Baquero Goyanes' *El cuento español en el siglo XIX* (*The Spanish Story in 19th Century*) (1949). This critic was one of the first to bring Aguilera's fiction to the forefront, referencing *Proverbios* several times across his exhaustive treatment of the literary story in the context of 19th century Spanish literature.

Apart from Fernán Caballero, when it comes to contextualizing Aguilera amongst other novelists, Esteban Gutiérrez Díaz-Bernardo in his *El cuento español del siglo XIX* labels Aguilera a transitionary author alongside others, such as Antonio de Trueba, José de Selgas y Carrasco and Victor Balaguer. He characterizes these authors as Romantic writers who had already begun publishing in the 30s and 40s, and who continued to write prose throughout the

[155] ". . . dar una idea exacta, verdadera y genuina de España, y especialmente del estado actual de su sociedad."
[156] "Son pinturas de caracteres, de los vicios ridículos de la época y de las hermosas cualidades que desaparecen."

mid-century. As mentioned in chapter 2, members of this same group of writers have been linked for their kinship in poetry, especially the popular ballad. Trueba and Aguilera, apart from the literary gatherings they both frequented upon the latter's arrival to Madrid, share many commonalities, especially when one considers that both produced famous *cantares* and short stories along the same vein inspired in the people.

Returning to the figure of Fernán, just as Aguilera and she share commonalities in their social outlook, the worlds in which society plays out are somewhat different. Fernán Caballero's representation of Spain is bound by her strong Catholic and traditional values, giving her description of society a certain sense of didactic idealism and subjectivism. Aguilera's literary world is represented in a seemingly more objective view of society that works along with his didactic style. As Estéban Gutiérrez Diaz Bernardo notes, the didactic function behind the moral story becomes increasingly less explicit in the followers of Fernán Caballero throughout the 19th century (254). While Aguilera is not a follower of Fernán (because the two more or less toe the same line in their literary careers) this brings Aguilera closer to Realism and the realist novel. This is especially true when one considers the representation of society, particularly *Proverbios*' middle class which, according to Juan Ignacio Ferreras, is the central component of the modern novel of the 19th century (*Los orígenes de la novela* 311). In a similar light, Baquero Goyanes understands Aguilera's *Proverbios* as one of the representative texts regarding the period's social atmosphere, asserting that this collection, made up *of artículos de costumbres* and stories, represented the contemporary social climate in a way that the story or *cuento* failed to do at the time (*El cuento español* 409). Essayistic in nature, *artículos de costumbres* were short works that depicted typical customs and traditions of a certain region, locality or culture.

The social component manifested itself in a number of ways in the story, but as Baquero Goyanes points out, it was of an ideological or moralizing quality (408). Baquero Goyanes seems to point out that the story, in spite of its ideological claims, was not fully engaged in paining a complete portrait of society. If one stops to consider the literature dedicated to the *cuento popular* during the second half of 19th century, one realizes that at first glance the idealized representation of society trumped any direct social preoccupation. Take for instance Fernán's collection of folkloric stories and poems *Relaciones* (1857) *Cuentos y poesías populares andaluces* (1859) and *Cuentos, oraciones, adivinas y refranes populares e infantiles* (1877) or Antonio Trueba's *Cuentos populares* (1853) *Cuentos de color de rosa* (1859) and *Cuentos campesinos* (1860). Most of these narrations take place in rural areas of Spain. With just cause Baquero Goyanes asserts that "Fernán y Trueba are drawn to the lower social classes, not attracted by their miseries, but rather searching in them morality, resignation and virtues that they do not find in their society" (*El cuento español* 397).[157]

Proverbios turns from the rurality predominant in authors like Trueba and Fernán to the urbanity that would dominate the narrative of realist authors such as Galdós. Restraining the idea of the lower classes as a model of virtue, Aguilera focuses on the direct source of flaws in the middle class in his manifestation of the growing pains inherent to the process of modernization. This would bring Aguilera's literature closer to the realist novel.

Indeed, when Aguilera sets about publishing his *Proverbios* in 1864, he is at a revolutionary period for European literature. Already between 1830 and 1870 the realist novel had begun to flourish with exemplary authors such as "Balzac and Flaubert, in France, Tolstoy in Russia, and Dickens and George Eliot in England" (Nicol 18). Nicol defines realism as "a mode

[157] "Fernán y Trueba se acercan a las más bajas clases sociales, no atraídos por sus miserias, sino buscando en ellas la moral, resignación y virtudes que no encuentran en su sociedad.

of production in literature, art and film which attempts to sustain the illusion that the fictional world we view or read about is a plausible versions of the real one, replicating how it looks, how people in it behave, the kind of things which happen to them. . . " (18). More than an "aesthetic practice" it is "a system of belief which revolves around the conviction that the work of art not only is capable of replicating the sensible world . . . but has a duty to do so" (18).

But, according to Peter Brooks, the everyday lives of ordinary people are not what constitute the Realist novel but rather the European bourgeoisie, their growth, and the moral and psychological implications of one's actions (12). Peter Brooks studies the works of several authors as they relate to the Realist movement. Among them are Honoré de Balzac (1799-1850), Charles Dickens (1812-1870), Gustave Flaubert (1821-1880), George Eliot (1819-1880) and others. The last two are exact contemporaries of Ruiz Aguilera (1820-1881). The French writer Honoré de Balzac, according to Peter Brooks, wrote most of his major works after the failure of the Restoration in the July Revolution of 1830 (21). Although a reactionary author, he creates the "novel of modern society" while representing "the decline of the landed gentry, the coming of the cash nexus, and the end of what he nostalgically saw as an ordered, organic society with each persona in an assigned role" (22).

In the case of Dickens, Brooks turns to his novel *Hard Times* (1854) as representative of Realism, especially the effects of industrialism on workers in the novel (42). While Flaubert was not fond of the term "realist," his meticulous descriptions and details in his novel *Madame Bovary* (1856) nevertheless distinguish it as a model of Realism (69). Finally, *Daniel Deronda*, written by George Elliot in 1876 is understood to have "confront[ed] the question of its relation to the tradition, in its evocation of all the scenes of visual inspection—especially, the looking-over of women by men—so characteristic of realist fiction" (96).

However, in the case of Spain, it is not until 1870 that one witnesses alongside one of the most influential novelists, Pérez Galdós, a point of maturity in Realism with his publication of *La Fontana de Oro* (González López 376). As Romantic poetry had given way to prose, the novel became the emergent platform of intellectual stimulation and of human experience. During the same year as his publication of *La fontana*, a young Pérez Galdós in a critique of Aguilera's *Proverbios* is hopeful about the arrival of the novel that included a more accurate representation of current society and the middle class often forgotten by novelists. He saw vulgar and mediocre compositions in the great number of short stories and *artículos de costumbres* produced in Spain, all of which fall short in representing the vast and growing middle class. At the same time, he saw potential for the Spanish novel in Aguilera:

> Those [stories] which have made a wide stride are the *Proverbios ejemplares* by Ventura Ruiz Aguilera . . . . There we all are with our flaws and virtues painted with fidelity and put in motion in a series of events that are neither more nor less than those that are ordinarily happening to us day after day in the course of our hectic 1ife (168).[158]

The fact that this canonical article, with which many critics have often outlined Galdós' novelistic criticism regarding Realism, is often cited with absolutely no mention of Aguilera (although the full title of the article includes both Aguilera's name and the title *Proverbios*) demonstrates that we are not considering the significance of Aguilera in the bringing about of the Spanish novel. And I repeat the words of Juan Ignacio Ferreras: "Galdós has no reason to being the "result" of a realist evolution that "started" with Fernán Caballero, because amongst other reasons, Pérez Galdós is not an end, but rather another link in the chain; neither is Fernán

[158] "Las que más boga han alcanzado son los *Proverbios Ejemplares* . . . . Allí estamos todos nosotros con nuestras flaquezas y nuestras virtudes retratados con fidelidad, y puestos en movimiento en una serie de sucesos que no son ni más ni menos que estos que nos están pasando ordinariamente uno y otro día en el curso de nuestra agitada vida"

Caballero born from nothing, and in the same way she is not an end, she is neither the beginning, etc." (*Los orígenes de la novela* 309).[159]

Essentially the attraction that Galdós had toward Aguilera's fiction can be found in its ability to move primarily through the urban lifestyles and attitudes of middle-class Madrid, which Galdós would also praise as archetypal of what the novel should encompass:

> The world of *Proverbios*, both *Ejemplares* and *Cómicos*, recently published, is one in which we all make up in the ordinary and real life. All of those gentlemen and ladies have come from the middle class . . . . In that imaginary society, the society that dominates is the same that dominates in the real one, and the viewpoint for such a vast scene is this circle in which we all live, circle formed by our friends, our acquaintances, a multitude of people that we see perfectly and does not know, some others who we hear badmouth, many about whom wonders are told, others at whom we laugh happily, the horde of those who want to cheat us, the phalanx of those who we point at with the finger . . . . (169).[160]

One can understand the importance of the middle class for Galdós whose *Novelas contemporáneas*, published between 1881 and 1889, focuses on social issues that deal specifically with Spain's bourgeoisie. According to Galdós, no author, contemporary or otherwise, had represented the middle class in a way that Aguilera's *Proverbios* aimed to do, neighboring "real-life."

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[159] "Galdós no tiene por qué ser el "resultado" de una evolución realista que "comenzó" con Fernán Caballero, porque entre otras razones Pérez Galdós no es un final, sino un eslabón más de la cadena; tampoco Fernán Caballero nace de la nada, y de la misma manera que no es un final tampoco puede ser un principio, etc. y etc"

[160] . . . que el mundo de los *Proverbios*, lo mismo el de los *Ejemplare*s, que el de los *Cómicos*, publicados recientemente, es el que formamos todos nosotros en la vida ordinaria y real. De la clase media han salido todos aquellos caballeros y señoras . . . . En aquella sociedad imaginaria domina la clase que domina en la real, y el punto de vista para tan vasto cuadro ha sido el de este círculo en que todos vivimos, círculo formado por nuestros amigos, nuestros conocidos, una multitud de personas que vemos perfectamente y no conocemos, otros tantos de quienes oímos contar pestes, muchas de quienes se cuentan maravillas, otras de que nos reímos con buenas ganas, la muchedumbre de los que quieren engañarnos, la falange de los que señalamos con el dedo . . . ."

As stated throughout Chapter 1, Galdós and Aguilera shared a mutual admiration for each other's works, and this respect inevitably influenced Galdós's novels. Even in contemporary Madrid, some critics detected this inspiration as one review of Galdós's first novel *La Fontana de Oro* proves which appeared in *El Correo de España* in 1871: "The characters, the background of the painting, the development of action, are eminently national; The spontaneity of the patriotic genius transpires throughout the novel, and like the *Proverbios* of Ruiz Aguilera, and more so than *De Villahermosa a China*, recalls those [novels] of our good days (22).[161]

Nevertheless, Galdós sees the force behind these characters, this growing middle class, whose power influenced the Glorious Revolution of 1868. In terms of its political context,

> The Revolution of 1868 was the rebellion of the Spanish middle class, presided over by the progressive party and indoctrinated by intellectuals brimming with theories and opinions of many kinds. . . . It was not the strength of the middle class, but the common people's disaffection and the aristocracy's ineptness that had really caused the downfall of the monarchical institution. For the middle class did not become a social force in Spain until well after establishment of the Restoration (López-Morillas 118)

While it may not have been the middle-class, based on López-Morillas's view, which guaranteed the monarchy's demise, this does not take away from their perceived force in Spanish society, a force that even he recognizes at the beginning of his comment.

In a more literary context, for his part, Francisco Caudet in *El parto de la modernidad: la novela española* warns that the presence of this group in the novel was interrupted and Galdós was not able to immediately yield the desired novel:

[161] "Los personajes, el fondo del cuadro, el desarrollo de la acción, son eminentemente nacionales; la frescura del genio patrio traspira por toda la novela, y como los *Proverbios* de Ruiz Aguilera, y más que *De Villahermosa a la China* recuerda las de nuestros buenos tiempos."

> There is a cause/effect relation between the bourgeois class and the realist novel. If Galdós in 1870, in "Observaciones sobre la novela contemporánea en España", established the programmatic basis of the future great novel of customs in the Spanish terrain, he could not put that project in practice until the beginning of the decade of 1881—this is, until having published *The Disinherited Lady*—because though the revolution of 1868 opened the political-social horizon to the bourgeois revolution, the then week bourgeoisie, the army and the Church closed that horizon—which was their own—restoring the Monarchy (43).[162]

I will not further insist on the eclipse either of Aguilera's influence in this contended establishment of "the programmatic basis of the future great novel of customs in the Hispanic terrain" or on the disregarding of his work which the Galdós original article critiques and Caudet neglects to take fully into account. Nevertheless, it must be argued, even if for the record, that Aguilera's *Proverbios* paved the way, however subtly, for Galdós ultimate adaptation and precision of the middle class in the Spanish novel, an idea that still deserves further attention.

Aguilera's own conception of the novel, although detailed in the prologue of *Proverbios*, has yet to be analyzed closely, but his concise premise of the novel adds new insight in understanding both its attractiveness for Galdós' and its overall connection to 19th century debate on esthetics concerning mimesis. For Aguilera, there are only three types of novels:

> One that belongs almost entirely to the dominion of the imagination, of fantasy, blending itself with it, taking no more from reality than names; another in which the subordinate

[162] "Es más, hay una relación de causa/efecto entre clase burguesa y novela realista. Si Galdós en 1870, en "Observaciones sobre la novela contemporánea en España", sentó las bases programáticas de la futura gran novela de costumbres en el solar hispano, ese proyecto no lo pudo poner en práctica hasta comienzos de la década de 1881—esto es, hasta haber publicado *La desheredada*—,porque si bien la revolución de 1868 abrió el horizonte político-social hacia la revolución burguesa, la débil burguesía de entonces, el Ejército y la Iglesia, cerraron ese horizonte—que era el suyo propio—restaurando la Monarquía."

> meticulosities and accidents of real life make up the whole; and another that studies the two manifestations of the individual, the internal and the external, the physiological and the psychological phenomena of the human being, his intimate personality in relation with the social environment in which he lives. (*Proverbios ejemplares* vii-viii)[163]

This notion of "real-life" that both Aguilera and Galdós echo (the former in the aforementioned prologue and the latter in his review of *Proverbios*) brings us to the important topic of mimesis, as the attempt to recreate society becomes increasingly important in writers like Aguilera. However, like Benito Varela Jácome states in his *Estructuras novelísticas del siglo XIX*, literature during this time in Spain is contradictory and characteristic of waning Romantic ideas (35). Such contradictions, especially regarding the debate between idealism and realism can be found in transitionary and central authors like Pedro Antonio de Alarcón (1833-1891) and Juan Valera for their idealistic tendencies alongside supporters of more objective portrayals of society in which heavy doses of subjectivism is discouraged. Both of these prominent authors, belonging to the early group of novelists in 19th century Spain believed that, more than copy reality, art should serve purposes aligned with moralism, and that it was the duty of the author to ensure this. Already in 1864, echoing the opinion of Alarcón, Valera was of the opinion that "novels should be moral or at least innocent" (*Estudios críticos sobre literatura* 244).[164] More than a decade later, Valera's own famous quote regarding the author's responsibility becomes an even greater testimony of art's purpose:

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[163] "uno que pertenece casi por complete al dominio de la imaginación, de la fantasía, confundiéndose con ella, y que apenas toma de la realidad más que los nombres; otro en el que los pormenores, las minuciosidades y accidentes subalternos de la vida real constituyen el todo; y otro que estudia en las dos manifestaciones del individuo, la interna y la externa, los fenómenos fisiológicos y psicológicos del ser humano, su personalidad íntima en relación con el medio social en que vive."

[164] "Las novelas han de ser morales o por lo menos inocentes."

> All literature, always, and more so in our time, has to be *literatura de tendencia*. It is false that an author disappears. His personality always informs the work that he writes. If he is atheist, his book shall be atheist; if he is a believer, his book shall be full of religious feeling. The democratic, conservative, republican, monarchic or socialist spirit is infused in the work of every author, although he may not wish it, although he may not want it, although he may attempt to prevent it. (201)[165]

Under Valera's view, art inevitably mirrors the author's ideals and a strong sense of moralism, essentially rendering itself idealistic, but this way of thinking, which Fernán Caballero defended, was already on the decline as authors began to follow more realistic tendencies. For his part, Aguilera's *Proverbios* follow a more or less moralistic purpose in that they seek to correct social vices by presenting infractions on codes of conduct and values, values that are reinforced in the proverbs.

While this moralism serves as a glossing of Spanish proverbs, Aguilera's inclination towards a didactic style is subdued by his presentation of true-to-life, autonomous characters and human conditions. For example, although some characters in *Proverbios* ultimately choose to abide by the prescribed proverb that governs their actions, they defy and rally against them as sovereign beings. Indeed, *Proverbios* toes the line between idealism and realism which are completely compatible in the work. The former reveals itself in the ideals that the proverbs perpetuate as virtuous modes of living while the latter manifests in the mindset of his characters.

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[165] Toda literatura, siempre, y más en nuestros días, tiene que ser literatura de tendencia. Es falso que el autor se eclipse. Su personalidad informa siempre el libro que escribe. Si es ateo, su libro es ateo; si es creyente, su libro está lleno de sentido religioso. El espíritu democrático, conservador, republicano, monárquico o socialista, se infunde en la obra de cada autor, aunque él no lo pretenda, aunque no lo quiera, aunque procure evitarlo."

Aguilera's eclecticism is a direct result of the time period in which he writes, a time period characterized by literary and social changes. In 1864, just four years before the Glorious Revolution takes place in 1868, Aguilera writes his *Proverbios* which includes a representation of the middle class that helped to shape it. The importance of the middle class in the modern novel and in Aguilera's *Proverbios* is best seen in Galdós's insistence that Aguilera was indeed foreshadowing the onset of what would become the Realist novel in Spain.

4.2 Seeking *lo español* in *Proverbios*

Aguilera wrote *Proverbios ejemplares* under the same inspiration and mission with which he authored *Ecos nacionales*: to reveal "an exact copy of the nation's physiognomy and of its great social character" (*Ecos* xi). And like *Ecos*, *Proverbios* is born out of the desire to represent Spanish society or as the author himself postulates "to make known some of the infinite characters that constitute the physiognomy of our people" (*Proverbios* i). With *Ecos*, Aguilera looks to democratically modernize popular poetry with the help of *romances* and ballads whose values he considered inaccessible and no longer relevant to modern society. With a similar approach in mind, Aguilera borrows once again from oral tradition—this time, the proverb—as a means to represent 19th century Spanish society and modernize its literature.

Aguilera, departing from conventional proverbs, believed that they were not only the receptacle of national wisdom and morality but also a measure of the nation's vitality, stating in the prologue of *Proverbios* that

> "Proverbs and idioms are, not only maxims, precepts and rules of conduct, under whose point of view they have with reason been called *wisdom of nations* or little gospel truths, but also the blood, the life itself, the most deeply subjective, the most personal part, so to speak, of a language. A hundred proverbs escaping from the mouth of an artisan or a

woman from the lowest class of society can yield a great book of philosophy. Its simple, spontaneous and pure form is also pleasant, and with such conditions, it becomes popularized, it becomes familiar"(ii-iii)[166]

These proverbs attributed here to the lower class qualify this group as the ideal and authentic moral compass of the nation simply because its members, the modest artisan and woman, are the epitomical voices of such moral wisdom. This, in turn, enables proverbs to function as a sign of both Spanish moral and national identity since, according to Aguilera, they purport to represent the "wisdom of the nation" and its "rules of conduct." Echoing Herder's *Volksgeist*, for Aguilera, the proverb embodies the spirit of the people. And Aguilera, understanding the popular class (made up of artisans, day laborers, shopkeepers, etc.) to be the *non plus ultra,* the great protagonist of Spanish society puts them at a moral advantage above others, especially those whose moral values do not align with Spanish ones.[167]

Indeed, what Aguilera believed to be un-national and un-Spanish ideas and characters are what moves him towards a greater emphasis on what he considered authentic portrayals of Spanish life and customs, and this maneuver is not novel since many Spanish writers before him, like Larra, also pursued literary renderings based on these same ideas. In search of a modern articulation of what it means to be Spanish and write Spanish, when it comes to Gallicisms and

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[166] Los proverbios y los modismos son, no solo máximas, preceptos y reglas de conducta, bajo cuyo punto de vista con razón se han llamado *sabiduría de las naciones* o *evangelios pequeños*, sino la sangre, la vida misma, la parte más profundamente subjetiva, más personal, digámoslo así, de un idioma. Una docena de proverbios, salidos acaso de boca de un artesano o de una mujer de la última clase de la sociedad, puede proporcionar elementos para un buen libro de filosofía. Su forma fácil, espontánea y castiza es también simpática, y con tales condiciones se populariza, se hace familiar; . . . ."

[167] Clara E. Lida addresses the difficulty in defining the ample and complex popular class of the 19th century in her study "¿Qué son las clases populares?" In her investigation, Lida discusses the political and social aspirations to which this democratic class aspired. Amongst those goals, one finds their defense of equal suffrage, labor rights, and freedom of expression.

any other foreign object not born on Spanish soil, Aguilera emphatically prefers national articles over them, even when it comes to characters:

> I am not a Francophobe; but it hurts my soul that, having in the treasures of our language to give and sell, like the saying goes, we beg in someone else's house for what we have excessively in our own, and we entertain ourselves in gnawing at bones, instead of treating ourselves to delicious pastries. I open our books, books I do not disdain, and I promise under word of honor that, with rare exceptions, I do not entirely recognize the characters, customs, passions, and language found in them: even if someone tells me that the scene takes place in Spain, for example; that the hero of the novel, if it is a novel, calls himself Mister, and although I may see Castilian words with their letters intact, I affirm and maintain that the scene could perfectly take place in Paris, in London or in Saint Petersburg, without losing its theme; there is no inconvenience that the *don* calls himself *monsieur* o *mister* So-and-so, without anyone protesting; and that the indigenous terms and phrases anarchically mixed with others of French origin, form a combination with neither a determined odor nor color or flavor, a pitiful galimatias. (v)[168]

The ultimate concern that Aguilera expresses in regard to the 19th century Spanish novel, or more specifically, the novel at the beginning of the second-half of the 19th century, rests in its heterochtonous nature. Although some Spanish novels are written in Spain, for Aguilera, many

[168] No soy galófobo; pero me duele en el alma que teniendo nosotros en los tesoros de nuestra lengua para dar y vender, como dice el refrán, mendiguemos en la casa ajena lo que en la propia nos sobra, y nos entretengamos en roer mendrugos, en vez de regalarnos con sabrosísimas tortas. Yo abro libros nuestros, libros no desdeñados, y aseguro bajo palabra de honor que, fuera de raras excepciones, enteramente desconozco los caracteres, las costumbres, las pasiones y el lenguaje que en ellos encuentro: aunque se me diga que la escena pasa en España, por ejemplo; que el héroe de la novela, si es novela, se llama D. Fulano, y aunque vea yo voces castellanas con todas sus letras, afirmo y sostengo que la escena puede pasar perfectamente en París, en Londres o en San Petersburgo, sin que pierda nada el asunto; que el *don* no hay inconveniente en que se llame *monsieur* o *mister* Tal, sin que nadie proteste; y que los términos y frases indígenas, anárquicamente mezclados con otros de origen francés, forman un conjunto sin color, color ni sabor determinados, un lastimoso galimatías.

fail at representing the country's most characteristic traditions. It is his contention that these novels succeed instead at denaturalizing themselves upon relinquishing native literary ties to Spain in order to acquire a more cosmopolitan appeal. Add to this the fact that, according to Pérez Galdós in his review of *Proverbios*, "the great novel of customs has still not emerged in Spain, the vast and complex work that must come by necessity, as artistic expression, from that life" *(Observaciones* 168).[169] It becomes Aguilera's mission, then, to bring veritable, modern Spanish characters to the foreground in Spanish literature.

> If in these *Proverbios*, scenes of contemporary Spanish society, something from the spirit which enlivens it is reflected; if after exhibiting my characters, Manuel and Roman from *El beso de Judas*; Angelita and Dolores from *Al que escupe al cielo*…. Antonio and Carmen from *Quien con lobos anda*… Lozano, Isabel, and Don Julian from *Al freír será el reír*; the blacksmith from *Amor de padre*; etc., etc., if after exhibiting them, I repeat, the reader exclaims to himself: "I know those people, or at least I have seen them; those people live and drink and walk and we bump into them night and day and everywhere;" if one of them catches a smile from you, and another even a tear; if you disagree with this one, but you sympathize with the other, it is a sign that I hit the mark." (x-xi)[170]

With the intention of accurately representing contemporary society, Aguilera embraces characters who correspond, not only in the cultural sense to his Spanish readers, but in spatial and temporal proportions as well. Were Aguilera not to acknowledge the average Spanish

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[169] "No ha aparecido aún en España la gran novela de costumbres, la obra vasta y compleja que ha de venir necesariamente como expresión artística de aquella vida"

[170] "Si en estos *Proverbios*, cuadros de la sociedad española contemporánea, se refleja algo del espíritu que la vivifica; si al exhibir yo mis personajes, el Manuel y el Román de *El beso de Judas*; la Angelita y la Dolores de *Al que escupe al cielo*... el Antonio y la Carmen de *Quien con lobos anda…;* el Lozano, la Isabel y el D. Julián de *Al freír será el reír;* el herrero de *Amor de padre*; etc., etc., si al exhibirlos, repito, exclama para sí el lector: "Yo conozco a esa gente, o por lo menos la he visto; esa gente vive y bebe y anda, y tropieza uno con ella a todas horas y en todas partes;" si el uno le arranca siquiera una sonrisa, y el otro una lágrima siquiera; si éste le es antipático, y simpatiza con aquel, señal es de que he acertado."

individual in his stories, he risks forfeiting the objective of familiarity that he knows other novels lack, especially since they are based on foreign models.

The question of French influences in Spanish literature and culture took on many forms and aspects during the 19th century. One issue that Spanish authors contested during this time period was the perceived immorality of French novels and their effect on the Spanish nation. It is precisely this fact that some critics praised Aguilera's *Proverbios*, namely Francisco Giner de los Ríos, who acknowledged and welcomed the collection in the midst of an overwhelming deluge of French works. He emphasizes Aguilera's work as a manifestation of Spanish values "while the public devours with inextinguishable thirst the most detestable novels which the immoderate desire of profit causes to be translated from French to an unintelligible jargon, thus corrupting altogether their moral sense and literary palate" (271).[171] In this sense, French novels were not only viewed as a source of depravity that monetary gains fueled but also a revelation of literary incompetence of the unskilled writers who translated them. Aguilera's *Proverbios ejemplares* contributes in the literary discussion on the direction of the Spanish novel, taking a clear stance against foreign models and influences, particularly against those originating in France.

The translation and reading of immoral novels was not the only misgiving that some Spaniards had against the French. Neither was Aguilera the only Spanish author to caution against French traits. In 1855, almost a decade before the publication of *Proverbios*, Juan Eugenio Hartzenbusch (1806-1880) lamented the use of Gallicisms in Spanish and understood writers' continued reliance on them to be a contributory factor in the potential transformation and demise of the Spanish language:

[171] "mientras el público devora con sed inextinguible las más detestables novelas, que el deseo inmoderado de lucro hace traducir del francés a una jerga ininteligible, corrompiendo así de una vez su sentido moral y su gusto literario. . ."

> If they continue like up until now, and Gallicisms like these and other kinds go on spreading; if we continue to take good or bad sounding words from French, and we forget those of everyday use; if we apply meanings to well-preserved Spanish words that they never had; . . . the fortunate outcome of many and such grave innovations shall be the formation of a new language, a French dialect with Spanish pronunciation. (x)[172]

There were authors who saw French, not simply as a language, but that which embodied the spirit of the times, of modernity, having imposed its authority as both the cultural and collective language of contemporary Europe. This is especially true for some authors who, belonging to a later generation that Aguilera's, did not share Aguilera's and Hartzenbusch's views. For example, Clarín (1852-1901) defended this style of writing and imitation of the French in 1892, declaring that it was through French that Spanish authors could best interpret the life-force of modernity whose foundation rested with France.

> Now we young Spanish men are like Hispaniola during the time of Iriarte: half French, half Spanish; we are educated half in French, half in Spanish, and we are informed completely in French. The modern culture, which is the one we want to obtain with very good understanding, is still not translated to Spanish; and while the purists continue writing archaic ideas in classic style, the youth will continue to be Frenchified in literature. Translate 19th century ideas to the language of the 16th century, and let us be

[172] Si continúan como hasta hoy y se van extendiendo estas y otras varias especies de galicismos; si seguimos tomando del francés palabras de buen o mal sonido, y olvidamos por ellas las de uso corriente; si a las voces castellanas que conservamos se aplica significación que nunca tuvieron; . . . el feliz resultado de tantas y tan graves innovaciones habrá de ser la formación de un idioma nuevo, dialecto francés con pronunciación castellana."

purists. While one must choose between the spirt and words, we will settle on the spirit. (*Solos de Clarín* 13)[173]

Indeed, it is this sense of modern culture, the notion of the Europeanization of Spanish traditions and thought that drive *Proverbios* as it endeavours to remind the nation of its all too endangered customs, values, and morals. But while Aguilera and Clarín's viewpoint regarding Frenchified Spanish language differ, Aguilera concurred that the use of archaic, outdated Spanish was a detriment to Spanish literature:

> Those others in whose writings the national language appears immobile, dead, mummified, nearly petrified, like those fossilized bodies found in certain parts of the globe . . . The writings to which I refer unintentionally remind me, due to the ridiculous intemperance in the use of archaisms, of an archeologist's office. Languages live, move and progress, experimenting like all things, the natural influence of time and events; and they live, move, and progress, without submissively yoking to the rigorous oppression of purism. (*Proverbios* vi-vii)[174]

In Aguilera's view, language, as a domestic product, naturally evolves according to the conditions and circumstances that inform it, whether these be social, temporal, or cultural, tethering the essence of language to the nation and its people. Spain's process of modernity, its evolution as it were, is inextricably rooted in the nation's social and historical context.

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[173] "Ahora los muchachos españoles somos como la isla de Santo Domingo en tiempo de Iriarte: mitad franceses, mitad españoles; nos educamos mitad en francés, mitad en español, y nos instruimos completamente en francés. La cultura moderna, que es el que con muy buen acuerdo procuramos adquirir, aún no está traducida al castellano; y mientras los señores puristas siguen escribiendo en estilo clásico ideas arcaicas, la juventud seguirá siendo afrancesada en literatura. Traducid al lenguaje del siglo XVI las ideas del siglo XIX, y seremos puristas. En tanto, pues hay que escoger entre el espíritu y la letra, nos quedamos con el espíritu."

[174] "Caen aquellos otros en cuyos escritos aparece inmóvil, muerto, momificado, casi petrificado, como esos cuerpos fósiles que se encuentran en ciertos puntos del globo . . . . Los escritos a que me refiero, me recuerdan sin querer, por la ridícula intemperancia en el uso de los arcaísmos, los gabinetes arqueológicos. Los idiomas viven y se mueven y progresan, experimentando, como todas las cosas, la natural influencia del tiempo y de los sucesos; y viven y se mueven y progresan, sin ir servilmente uncidos al yugo rigorosos del purismo."

For the author of *Proverbios*, crossing from the idea of an inherently social and cultural national language to the thought of a language infused with French characters and ideals was to be avoided at all costs, especially since prose had already, according to Aguilera, given way to French influences. The distaste surrounding the intrusion of French models undoubtedly provokes Aguilera to rethink the spirit of the times within the national consciousness of Spain and without foreign structures.

> The task was not, however, as easy as one would have imagined, and much less today, since some of the traits of our nationality are becoming weaker. Poetry, now as always, has tenaciously resisted, embraced to her flag, foreign invasions with better results than prose, and even in the midst of her decadence, one can hear her shout: *Poetry is dying, but she is not selling her native language*, like Cambronne shouted at Waterloo: *The guard is dying, but it isn't giving up*. To the contrary prose; prose has sold her body and soul to the language of our neighbors from beyond the Pyrenees, receiving it [the language] with open arms. (*Proverbios* iv)[175]

Aguilera's conservative views towards France is not baseless. The notion of France's cultural dominance and influence over Spain and its literature and the unease this presented to Spanish writers is not novel, of course. Eamonn Rogers affirms that the anxiety around "the international prestige of Spain can be seen through the entire 19th century" (121). Juan Ignacio Ferreras, referring to the years 1800 and 1830, speaks of a "Spanish literary decadence of these years that engendered, as in the 18th century, an undeniably excessive admiration toward that

[175] La empresa no era, sin embargo, tan fácil como alguien pudiera imaginarse, y mucho menos hoy, que van debilitándose algunos de los caracteres de nuestra nacionalidad. La poesía, ahora como siempre, ha resistido tenazmente, abrazada a su bandera, con mejor resultado que la prosa, a las invasiones extrañas, y aún en medio de su decadencia, todavía se la oye gritar: La poesía muere, pero no vende el idioma patrio, como gritaba Cambronne en Waterloo: La guardia muere, pero no se rinde. Al contrario, la prosa; la prosa ha vendido su cuerpo y su alma al idioma de nuestros vecinos de Allende el Pirineo, recibiéndole con los brazos abiertos . . . "

which was foreign; and which is nothing other than an inferiority complex of intellectuality very justified, that is to say, very little complex" (*Los orígenes de la novela* 85).[176] This concern bears a direct relationship to the contemporary readership of foreign works. Rogers goes on to assert that "France's cultural preponderance was enormous. The majority of readers read translations, adaptations, and imitations of French novels, and the translations of English works were made, for the most part, by way of French versions" (123).[177] Jesús Torrecilla, however, in his *La imitación colectiva: modernidad vs. autenticidad en la literatura española* (*The Collective Imitation: Modernity vs. Authenticity in Spanish Literature*) confirms that although France has a virtually unrelenting authority in Spanish literature throughout the 19th century, some authors rebelled against this creeping in of modernity. However, with this rebellion also came imitation.

> The idea of modernity, even if it depends on the capacity of a given society to impose it rather than on a purportedly objective criterion of quality, does not fail to provoke in practice a conclusive positive answer: France dictates European literary styles for centuries, and the Spaniards evidently accept that judgment in a certain way by imitating the writers on the other side of the Pyrenees, even if they simultaneously rebel against them." (21)[178]

This admiration for and imitation of foreign writers filtered down, in the case of Spain, in the form of Gallicisms and writings with French syntax, much like those Hartzenbusch depicted

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[176] "la decadencia literaria española de estos años que engendró, como en el XVIII, un papanatismo ante lo extranjero, innegable; y que no es otra cosa que un complejo intelectual de inferioridad muy justificado, es decir, muy poco complejo."

[177] La preponderancia cultural de Francia era enorme. La mayor parte de los lectores leían traducciones, adaptaciones e imitaciones de novelas francesas, y las traducciones de obras inglesas se hicieron, en su mayor parte, a través de versiones francesas."

[178] "La idea de modernidad, aunque se haga depender de la capacidad de una determinada sociedad para imponerla más que de un criterio pretendidamente objetivo de calidad, no por eso deja de provocar en la práctica una concluyente respuesta positiva: Francia dicta las modas literarias europeas durante siglos y los españoles evidencian aceptar en cierto modo ese juicio mediante la imitación de los escritores del otro lado de los Pirineos, aunque simultáneamente se reblen contra ellos."

earlier. Yet, Spain already had some history with French modes of writing. According to Emma Martinell Gifre, many of the Gallicisms introduced in Spain during the 18th century have both political and historical implications, namely due the Bourbon monarch in Spain and its Frenchified court, the appeal of excursions to France, and more importantly the inundation of French works and models particularly their influence on Spanish theater (104-5).

In regard to the influence of theater in Spain, Aguilera would criticize a deluge of theatrical works in the short story "Hacer de tripas corazón" which takes place in the 1850s and where the theater *El Circo* is the focus.[179] Although Aguilera makes no direct mention of the fact, *El Circo* entered bankruptcy during the years the story takes place. At the same time, the beginning of the story alludes to the causes that perhaps led up to the theater's closing.

> The year of grace of 185... had begun under unflattering auspices for the theaters of verse in Madrid, which, due to a portion of irrelevant circumstances, did not succeed in attracting the public, at that time too recalcitrant for these kinds of shows. And, in that year, according to the exact statistic that many newspapers of the capital inserted afterwards, there was a terrible flood of productions, some *original*, perhaps because they had no known origin, and the others *translated*, which is usually how one refers here to the sinful occupation of ruining strange languages, causing tantrums and even great anxiety.[180] (*Proverbios* 117)

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[179] David Thatcher Gies includes a citation in his *The Theatre in Nineteenth-Century Spain* in which an estimate of 60 percent of theatrical works were foreign. David Thatcher Gies, *The Theatre in Nineteenth-Century Spain* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2005) 92.

[180] "El año de gracia de 18... había principiado bajo auspicios nada lisonjeros para los teatros de verso de Madrid, los cuales, por efecto de una porción de circunstancias que no es del caso referir, no lograban atraer el público, a la sazón recalcitrante en demasía para esta clase de espectáculos. Y eso que, en el referido año, según la estadística exacta que posteriormente insertaron muchos periódicos de la capital, hubo un espantoso diluvio de producciones, originales las unas, tal vez porque no tendrían origen conocido, y traducidas las otras, que así suele llamarse por acá la ocupación pecadora de estropear extraños idiomas, causando rabietas y aun desazones mayúsculas al propio."

The rest of the short story deals with the salvation necessary to free the theater company from its demise, an idea to be covered in the following section on *costumbrismo*. For now, the citation suffices to represent to what degree such representations of translations and foreign productions influence the idea of modernity in *Proverbios*. It is here where I see in a new light Jesús Torrecilla's belief that modernity depends a society's capacity to "impose it." In the case of Aguilera and *Proverbios*, the very idea of modernity encompasses the rejection of foreign models towards whose goal he turns to the proverb, reforming it for modern use.

This makes the context surrounding the French literary presence in Spain essential in understanding one of the factors that drive the nationalistic ideology behind *Proverbios*. Elisa Martí-López in her book *Borrowed Words: Translation, Imitation, and the Making of the Nineteenth-century Novel in Spain* has pointed out the fact that countries like France had forged an image of Spain through their literatures which impelled some Spanish authors to react with their own national portrayals of the homeland:

> [the literatos were deeply disturbed by the acknowledgement that the French had successfully replaced them in two important initiatives: first in adapting and re-creating the Spanish literature tradition for contemporary audiences and within modern parameters (that of Romantic poetics); and, second, in creating for European and other foreign audiences the image—character and value—of Spain. Spain had not produced a modern literature—and, more important, had no novel but a foreign one—and this fact was allowing others (especially, although not exclusively, the French) to create a fictional and highly successful discourse on Spain. The literatos wanted to create an autochthonous modern novel close to Spain's own historical conditions that could reclaim Spain's literary imaginary. (49-50)

This discourse, according to Martí-López, depicted Spain either as a romantic backdrop for passionate and heroic stories or as the backward and conservative country still tied to feudal tradition and thought, which relegated Spain to a place denied inclusion in the discourse of Europeanness (47).

Aguilera, however, does not look to forge a place for Spain in the European discourse of modernity. As suggested earlier, it is in response to the idea of modernity that Aguilera problematizes, and in the modern image in which he seeks to see Spain and Spanish literature represented, he is more concerned with the individual: "the physiological and the psychological phenomena of the human being, his intimate personality in relation with the social environment in which he lives" (*Proverbios* viii). Of course, the idea and presence of Europe (specifically, France) in this society—the society that makes up Proverbios—cannot be denied; however, the presence of this idea is almost entirely seen as a force in constant friction with the traditional customs of Spain. *Proverbios* is an endeavor to reveal what Aguilera believed to be the true essence of Spain and its people against Frenchified, inaccurate imitations and imposed norms of modernity. This is not to say that Aguilera is against modernity. Indeed he embraces modernity in the form of national progress from the innovation of the traditional and Spanish proverb to the renovation of social conduct.

These imitations comes into play in one of Aguilera's stories titled "De fuera vendrá quién nos echa de casa" (From Outside Will Come the One Who Kicks Us Out) published in *Proverbios cómicos* in 1870. This collection of new *Proverbios ejemplares*, although not my primary focus, is based on the same social premise of the original collection. No other story in the collection depicts the conflict between Spanish and French issues discussed throughout this chapter. The story tells centers on Don Lucas, a Spanish man from Extremadura, who has a keen

aversion toward the French for having lost his father at the hands of them during the Peninsular War. Events unfold in Madrid at the home of don Lucas's sister, whose daughter Lucía is set to marry a Frenchman named Adolfo. The contempt that don Lucas holds for France or Blas as it is personified in his notes are consistent with Aguilera's, loathing France as a prototypical model and self-perceived monopoly in both the intellectual and cultural arena of Europe:

> France is for the corner of Europe that we Spanish people inhabit, the proverbial Blas; for this reason, when France pronounces whatever word, there are thousands of Spanish people that exclaim to themselves, and even to others, lowering their heads with profound compliance: Blas said it?... case closed. And because Blas or France never ceases to repeat at the sound of a trumpet, as something beyond doubt, that he is in everything and for everything the first and the most perfect and most complete ever seen and imagined since the beginning of time, it would be an unforgivable lack of education, and even an ingratitude, to contradict good Blas. I love my country, but on God and on my life I swear that my patriotism will never reach the point of denying what Spain owes him." (*Proverbios cómicos* 8)[181]

The representation of Spain here as the servile follower of French whims and activity speaks to the cultural power the latter exercised over Spain, hence Aguilera's use of the term "oppression" in reference to their neighbor's supremacy over Spain's social, intellectual and even ideological matters, outlining the basis for a national literature. Ultimately what we will see is that this

[181] "Francia viene a ser para el rincón de Europa que los españoles habitamos, el Blas proverbial; por eso, cuando Francia pronuncia una palabra cualquiera, hay millares de españoles que exclaman para sí, y aun para otros, bajando la cabeza con profundo acatamiento: "Lo dijo Blas?... punto redondo." Y como Blas, o Francia, no cesa de repetir a son de trompeta, como punto averiguado y corriente, que é les, en todo y por todo, lo primero y lo más perfecto y acabado que ha podido verse ni imaginarse desde que el mundo es mundo, sería una falta imperdonable de educación, y hasta una ingratitud, el desmentir al bueno de Blas. Amante soy de mi patria; pero en Dios y en mi ánima juro, que no llegará mi patriotismo a negarle todo lo que España le debe.

notion of Francophobia gives cause to *costumbrismo*, and the idea of a Frenchified Spanish language and culture propels his defense of a renovated literary form, the *proverbio ejemplar* as authentic to Spain. For Jesús Torrecilla, "Spanish authors, perceives themselves as belonging to a backward society, experience an irresoluble tension between their desire of being originals in a temporal sense (to write something new or modern) and their necessity of being originals in the spatial sense (to write something authentically Spanish)" (226).[182] Aguilera, on the other hand, never held this negative image of Spain, and his desire to write something new does not stem from an aspiration to be original but rather from Spain's contemporary social and cultural context. Aguilera's *Proverbios* are modern insofar as they respond to and are informed by modern issues.

Interestingly these traditions are not purely Spanish, as manifested in don Lucas's notes in his inventory of cultural debts to Blas, or France.

> Our fathers owed him, among a thousand other benefits of greater magnitude, the waistcoat, the knee-breeches, the powdered wig, the pointed hat and the abbés; We owe him the cylinder that covers our heads, the frock coat, the prodigy of taste, and the sheaths in which we cover our legs. Our present language (let's call it that). Our laws, our customs, our literature, apart from such and such exception, all gifts from Blas; Our charity, is a French style charity: witnesses are the public awards to virtue; because for Blas, or France, like a good trumpeter, is at odds with all that is not public; So it is

[182] "Los autores españoles conscientes de pertenecer a una sociedad atrasada experimentan una tensión irresoluble entre su deseo de ser originales en un sentido temporal (escribir algo nuevo o moderno) y su necesidad de ser originales en un sentido espacial (escribir algo auténticamente español)."

understood that there hardly an amateur who does not write his *Memorias*, referring to his life and miracles with meticulousness . . . (8)[183]

Although Aguilera's perspective is somewhat satirically exaggerated, Spain did receive models of charity from France of which José Luís Aranguren cites exemplary establishments such as "Las Conferencias de San Vicente de Paúl, introduced in 1850, las hermanas de la Caridad de San Vicente Paul in 1858, las Hermanitas de los Pobres en 1860" (115). Nevertheless, in Spain, France, and other European countries, the bourgeoisie were new models of moralism which, according to Aranguren, Spanish people imitated: "In short, the disassociation of personality, individualism, the "false living," mimetically adopting foreign costumes that do not respond to authentic Spanish reality, and as we have seen, the commercialization of life, compensated by pharisaism, constitute the principal traits of moderate moralism" (119).[184] The representation surrounding the intrusion of middle-class values on Spanish society and what Aguilera perceives to be overall hypocrisy, egocentricity, servile imitation are paramount concerns in *Proverbios*, and Aguilera treats them as unmistakably foreign. Certainly, any assumptions pointing to France as the beginning of Spanish vices would prove unreasonable, nevertheless, Aguilera and other writers of the time period perceive the idea of France's negative influence on Spain's society and culture as a reality. It is the illustration of this contemporary and social phenomenon that allows Aguilera to participate in the growth of the 19th century modern novel.

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[183] "Debiéronle nuestros padres, entre otros mil beneficios de mayor cuantía, la chupa, el calzón corto, la peluca empolvada, el sombrero apuntado y los abates; nosotros le debemos el cilindro que cubre nuestras cabezas, el frac, prodigio de gusto, y las fundas en que envainamos las piernas. Nuestro actual idioma (llamémoslo así), nuestras leyes, nuestras costumbres, nuestra literatura, fuera de tal cual excepción, regalos son de Blas; nuestra caridad, es una caridad a la francesa: testigos los premios públicos a la virtud; porque Blas, o Francia, como buen trompetero, está reñido con todo lo que no es público; así se comprende, que allí apenas haya zarramplín que no escriba sus *Memorias*, refiriendo con minuciosa prolijidad su vida y milagros . . . ."

[184] "En suma, la disociación de la personalidad, el individualismo, el "vivir en falso", adoptando miméticamente usos extranjeros que no corresponden a la auténtica realidad española, y, como acabamos de ver, la mercantilización de la vida, compensada por el fariseísmo, constituyen los rasgos principales de la moral moderada. . . "

4.3 *Costumbrismo* and *cuento* in *Proverbios*[185]

Although the fiction that make up *Proverbios* have yet to be closely analyzed, several terms have been used to define their character: *cuadro social*, *cuento*, *pequeña novela, novelitas* and even *novela*. The *pequeña novela* and *novelita* are considered to be the intermediary genres between the *cuento* (short story) and the *novela* (novel), what is known as *nouvelle* in France and novella in English. This section aims to explore the relationship between these genres as well as the confusion that such imprecise terminology has caused in the classification of *Proverbios*, an issue that is rooted in the ambiguity with which many 19th century authors viewed their works and the work of others.

The terms *costumbrismo* and *cuento* have long been associated with *Proverbios* since its beginning. When Galdós writes his favorable review of the collection in 1870 in the widely-known and cited article "Observaciones sobre la novela contemporánea en España: *Proverbios ejemplares* y *Proverbios cómicos,*" he does so under the belief that the *cuento* was evolving from the *cuadro de costumbres*: "Out of these *cuadros de costumbres* that barely have action, the short story is born, which is that same *cuadro* with a bit of movement, forming a small dramatic organism, but complete in its brevity"(168).[186] Galdós believed that the *cuento* was more versatile than the *cuadro* which he refers to as "light sketches of a figure" (168).[187] He seems to prefer this term due to the *cuadro*'s lack of action and complexity for which the *cuento* was more effective.

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[185] There is no adequate English translation for the 19th literary movement *costumbrismo* which dealt with the portrayal of Spanish local and social types alongside their mannerisms and traditions in various literary forms of art and literature, and more specifically, in *cuadros* or scenes, which were works that depicted these same types in a picturesque style. Here I have retained the Spanish term where authors and critics use *costumbrismo* and its forms, such as *cuadro* (sketch or painting), *cuadro social* (social sketch), *cuadro de la sociedad* (sketch of society), etc.

[186] "De estos cuadros de costumbres que apenas tienen acción, siendo únicamente ligeros bosquejos de una figura nace paulatinamente el cuento, que es aquel mismo cuadro con un poco de movimiento, formando un organismo dramático pequeño, pero complete en su brevedad."

[187] "ligeros bosquejos de una figura"

Galdós does not stop there because, although it was his contention that the modern novel had not yet emerged in Spain, he implies its embryonic development in referring to Aguilera's *Proverbios a*s *pequeñas novelas* or "short novels" (168). Further complicating the matter, Galdós goes on to call them *cuentos*, because it was his belief that, like the *cuento* emerged from the *cuadro*, the *cuento* would inevitably yield the novel. This point of view was based on his notion that the *cuento* embodied a heterogeneous quality which was ideal for the novel: "The short and compendious *cuentos*, frequently comical and sometimes pathetic, represent the dawn of the great novel which is shaped by them, appropriating their elements and uniting all of them to create a multiform, yet complete, and diverse structure, organized and one, like society itself" (168).[188] Galdós's indistinct denomination of Aguilera's *Proverbios* as both *novelita* and *cuento* imply a transitionary period towards the modern novel.

In the same vein as Galdós, Francisco Giner de los Ríos (1839-1915) in his review of *Proverbios* never refers to it as a collection of *cuentos* but rather *novelas* inspired by populism: "they are precious novels dedicated to glossing, so to speak, sayings and locutions that function as epigraphs, guaranteeing that they form a truly new genre for their originality and unique conditions (272).[189] In one contemporary journal entitled *La Iberia Proverbios* is mentioned as "a collection of *novelitas* full of good moral intention and literary beauty" ("Album literario: Proverbios ejemplares").[190] For his part, Aguilera prefers the term *cuadro de la sociedad* (sketch or portrait of society), which is practically synonymous with the *cuadro social*. Like the name implies, it is a portrait of society in a *costumbrismo* manner.

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[188] "Los cuentos breves y compendiosos, frecuentemente cómicos, patéticos alguna vez, representan el primer albor de la gran novela, que se forma de aquellos, apropiándose sus elementos y fundiéndolos todos para formar un cuerpo multiforme y vario, pero complete, organizado y uno, como la misma sociedad."
[189] "Son preciosas novelas dedicadas a glosar, por decirlo así, los refranes y locuciones que les sirven de epígrafe, pudiendo asegurarse que constituyen un género verdaderamente nuevo por su originalidad y singulares condiciones."
[190] "una colección de novelistas llenas de buena intención moral y de belleza literaria."

Unlike Galdós's and Giner de los Ríos's tethering of *Proverbios* to the novel and *cuento*, contemporary critics like Baquero Goyanes and Esteban Gutiérrez Díaz-Bernardo have rather inconclusively referred to *Proverbio*s as a mixture of the *artículo de costumbres* and the *cuento*, adding the former term to an already confusing collection of subgenres and literary modes.[191] Although surprisingly he makes no mention of Aguilera in his *Historia del cuento español* — perhaps due to the specific years that his study encompasses[192]—the critic Rodríguez Gutiérrez ventures out to use the term *cuento* or *relato costumbrista* as a possible solution, merging both terms *cuento* and *costumbrismo*:

> We consider *relato costumbrista* as that which unfolds in an environment that is described with certain extent in the story and that molds narration with the painting of characters from the Spanish reality of the moment. As a general rule, *los relatos costumbristas* of these years point in two different directions: a negative painting of popular customs with abundant sarcasm and of a deeply anti-popular depth, and some stories of a "soft" costumbrismo that does without criticism and looks to present popular customs in a favorable way. (212)[193]

Baquero Goyanes, along similar lines, concludes that "*el costumbrismo* follows the story like the shadow does the body, perhaps because it contributed to its appearance and nourished it constantly and generously" (*El cuento español* 102).[194] The confusion and contradiction

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[191] See Baquero Goyanes, *El cuento español* 71, 448 and Gutiérrez Díaz-Bernado, 149.
[192] Rodríguez Gutiérrez's investigation of the *cuento* focuses on the years 1764-1850. Aguilera did not publish *Proverbios* until 1864.
[193] "Consideramos relato costumbrista a aquél que se desarrolla en un ambiente que es descrito con cierta extensión en el relato y que funde la narración con la pintura de personajes de la realidad española del momento. Por regla general los relatos costumbristas de estos años apuntan en dos direcciones diferentes: una pintura negativa de las costumbres populares con abundantes sarcasmos y de fondo antipopular, y unos relatos de un costumbrismo "suave" que prescinde de la crítica y pretende presentar de forma favorable una costumbre popular."
[194] "El costumbrismo persigue al cuento como la sombra al cuerpo, tal vez porque contribuyó a su aparición y lo nutrió constante y generosamente."

surrounding the designation of these terms to *Proverbios* is undoubtedly due to the mutual influence that *costumbrismo* and the *cuento* have shared. Contemporary critics, like Enrique Rubio Cremades, confirm Baquero Goyanes' assertion, stating that

> The trajectory of the *artículo de costumbres* complicates, even more if possible, the distinction between these two literary forms, because from the last third of the 19th century el *cuadro de costumbres* appears much more novelized. Frequently the reader has the impression of finding himself in a type of hodgepodge in which short stories, short novels and *cuadros de costumbres* seem mixed. The only common denominator is the generic book title that usually carries the words, types, scenes or landscapes. (Rubio Cremades "Afinidades entre el género cuento y el cuadro de costumbres: Carlos Frontaura" 90)[195]

This is more or less the trajectory that *Proverbios* follows, especially if one takes into account the affirmations of both Baquero Goyanes and of Diaz-Bernardo regarding the mixture of the *artículo de costumbres* and the *cuento* in Aguilera's collection.

4.3.1 Defining *cuento* and *novela corta*

Regarding the specific use of short story or *cuento* to describe *Proverbios*, Baquero Goyanes confirms that Spanish terminology concerning the short prose fiction has varied depending on both author and epoch as the term *cuento*, specifically during the 19th century, stands alongside others of similar meaning, all of which are used in different contexts. According to him, some 19th century writers, especially transitional writers "avoid the term *cuento*, using in its place *relación, cuadro de costumbres, cuadro social, novela, etc. Cuento* is only used for

[195] La trayectoria del artículo de costumbre complica, aún más si cabe, la distinción entre estas dos formas literarias, pues a partir del último tercio del siglo XIX el cuadro de costumbres aparece mucho más novelado. Con frecuencia el lector tiene la impresión de encontrase en una especie de cajón de sastre en el que aparecen entremezclados cuentos, novelas cortas y cuadros de costumbres. El único denominador común es el título genérico del libro que suele llevar los enunciados t*ipos*, *escenas* o *paisajes* . . . ."

traditional, fantastic or infantile narrations" (*El cuento español* 73).[196] Fernán Caballero used the terms *relaciones* to refer to the *cuento literario* and, like Antonio de Trueba, she used *cuento* for her popular or folkloric prose (Baquero Goyanes *El cuento español* 18). Bécquer makes a clear distinction between *cuento* as invention and *historia* as truth. Aguilera, like Bécquer, uses a similar approach to distinguish between true and false stories in *Proverbios* in the story "Al que escupe al cielo, en la cara le cae" or "He who Spits at the Sky, on His Face It Lands": "the heroin of this one, although it appears to be a *cuento*, more than a *cuento*, it is a true *historia*" (220).[197] Here Aguilera reserves *cuento* for those stories not based on fact, and *historia* for seemingly veritable events based on contextualized and verisimilar conditions such as plot, location and time. For example, almost all stories take place in Aguilera's contemporary Madrid, revolving around recognizable and familiar social contexts. Indeed Aguilera's clear distinction between *cuento* and *historia* implies a transition from the more subjective and imaginative perceptions of Romanticism to the objective observation of Realism

Given these pionts, any definition of the *cuento* as a genre is subject to an infinity of interpretations and analyses that are bound to vary contingently upon any given moment in history, not to mention differentiating aspects concerning brevity, space, and action which further complicate the delineation of the genre. However, this has not proved an impediment in both authors' and critics' attempts at defining the short story. Edgar Allen Poe's well-known description of "short prose fiction" depends upon an economization of words towards a

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[196] For a detailed discussion on the history of the terminology concerning the *cuento* in Spain and its literary history in relation to other forms of prose, see Mariano Baquero Goyanes, *El cuento español en el siglo XIX* (Madrid: CSIC, 1949) 21-74. "Los escritores de transición que componen relatos breves—*nouvelles*—evitan el término *cuento*, empleando en lugar suyo *relación*, *cuadro de costumbres*, *cuadro social*, *novela*, etc. *Cuento* solo es utilizado para las narraciones tradicionales, fantásticas o infantiles."

[197] I have retained the use of the original terms here due to the confusion that the words *cuento* and *historia* (both translate as story) can cause in English. "la heroina de ésta, que aunque pareciere cuento, más que cuento, es verdadera historia."

predetermined "unique or single *effect*" (qtd. in Quinn and Rosenheim 335). Based on this thinking, many of the collections that make up *Proverbios* could easily be classified as short stories as the general plots of most narrations, certainly not all, are brief and adhere to proverbs with predetermined functions.

Baquero Goyanes also clarifies nuances that separate the *cuento* (short story) from other forms of prose writing such as the *novela corta* (short novel). Concerning this, Baquero Goyanes affirms that "removing extension, one can barely appreciate a technical or aesthetical difference between the *cuento* and *novela corta*" (*El cuento español* 109).[198] His findings are in tune with those of Anderson Imbert who also later characterized the *cuento* for its brevity and swift denouement, claiming that the storyteller "tightens his narrative material until giving it an intense total unity: we see few characters –one is enough—involved in a situation whose rapid ending we await with impatience. The novelist follows the slow change in the relationships between a group of characters; the story teller, abruptly, puts an end to a decisive moment" (Anderson Imbert 8).[199]

As it stands, denominations surrounding short stories depend more or less upon the spatial and temporal depth within the narration: the *cuento* and *novela corta* for its brevity and limitation of characters compared to the *novela* for its complexity in both action, plot and character development. Nevertheless, Baquero Goyanes also warns that brevity is not the sole key in distinguishing the *cuento* and *novela corta* from the *novela*: "and nevertheless the radical difference between one and the other genre resides in something more than a greater or lesser

[198] "Quitada la extensión, no puede apreciarse diferencia de técnica o de intención estética entre cuento y novela corta."
[199] "aprieta su materia narrativa hasta darle una intensa unidad total: vemos a unos pocos personajes –uno basta—comprometidos en una situación cuyo desenlace rápido aguardamos con impaciencia. El novelista sigue el paulatino cambio en las relaciones entre un grupo de personajes; el cuentista, abruptamente, pone fin a un momento decisivo".

number of pages. Perhaps it is the nature of the themes, rather than their dimensions, that which could serve as key with which to differentiate the *novela* from the *cuento* and from the *novela corta*" (Baquero Goyanes *¿Qué es la novela?* 59).[200] He reiterates that the novel "a combination of emotional notes" offers a superior variety and precision of experiences that it makes up (60-62).[201] By virtue of his definition, the *novela corta* would, to a lesser degree, be made up of similar emotional notes. This is key in demarcating the line between *cuento* and *novela corta* in *Proverbios*, especially when one considers the additional detail given to certain themes in the collection.

This non-exhaustive overview of the terminology concerning the *cuento* and *novela* and their connection to *Proverbios* certainly help address why Aguilera's contemporaries generally preferred the genre *novela* (*pequeña novela*, *novelita*, *novela*) when referring to *Proverbios* which would contrast with contemporary critics' preference for *artículo de costumbres* and *cuento* as the favored terms. We know that many authors like Antonio Trueba and Fernán Caballero reserved *cuento* for folkloric and traditional narrations which was not entirely appropriate for the literary scope of *Proverbios*. Perhaps, for this reason, Galdós and Giner de los Ríos were more inclined to refer to them as *novelitas* and *novelas*. Both authors understood the *novelty* of Aguilera's *Proverbios*, hence their predilection for labeling them *novelas*. In short, *Proverbios*' ability to presents middle-class values and concerns which were not entirely in tune with those short stories which centered chiefly on customs and folklore disqualify them, in

[200] "[y] sin embargo la diferencia radical entre uno y otro género reside en algo más que un mayor menor número de páginas. Posiblemente es la índole de los temas, más que las dimensiones, lo que podría server de clave con que diferenciar la *novela* del *cuento* y de la *novela corta*."
[201] "The novel is a collection of emotional notes that we could compare with a musical symphony whose complete feeling we don't perceive until the last note is heard (60)"

Galdós's and Giner de los Ríos's view, as being traditional *cuentos*.[202] Nonetheless, this middle-class constitutes the innovation that Galdós hoped for when he favorably reviewed Aguilera's collection.

When it comes to a more theoretical approach, context and length are major determinants of the *cuento* and *novela corta* as we have seen in the view of Baquero Goyanes and Anderson Imbert. However, not all fourteen stories that make up the two volumes of *Proverbios* effortlessly adhere to one genre or another. Three of the works can be considered *novelas cortas* consistent with the term used by both Galdós and his contemporaries, in part because of their length in comparison with other short stories in the collection as well as for the nature and detail of the themes that constitute them. These are "Al freír será el reír" ("He Who Laughs First Laughs Last"), "Al que escupe al cielo en la cara le cae" ("He Who Spits at Heaven on His Face It Lands") and "El beso de Judas" ("The Kiss of Judas"), encompassing all of these both dynamically complex plots and themes along with a moderate pulse regarding execution of events, whereas, the remaining short stories all deal with linear and unitary plots with little action and character development. They do not share the deliberate execution of plot and character development as the *novelas cortas* above. For example, principal characters in the *novelas cortas* undergo a process of development in which one sees their change, growth, inner thoughts at a more complex level than is seen in the *cuento*. As an example, let us consider *El beso de Judas*, specifically the scene following Manuel Flores's union with Aurora where the narrator progressively moves inwardly toward the emotional profoundness of Manuel's state:

[202] Galdós believed that Aguilera was ahead of those authors (particularly Fernán Caballero and José María de Pereda) whose novels were not centered on the middle class. According to him Fernán, although she tried, was not successful at representing society outside of the bucolic and rural atmosphere of Andalucía. Pereda, on the other hand, is viewed as a distinguished writer whose artistic style was too entrenched in the local. In Galdós view, neither of these artists succeeded in integrating "el hombre del siglo XIX" (the man of the 19th century) into their literary representations (166).

> Come closer, and you shall see him on a stone bench, at the entrance of Casa-Azul, beneath a green trained vine, that can hardly sustain the transparent racemes that hang from its vine shoots. He lifts his eyes toward the sky in a pensive attitude, as if he wanted to penetrate the mysteries that the magnificent veil of stars hide, and he gives an ear, as if the solemn silence of the night had for him words unknown to others. . . . But upon vibrating unexpectedly in the interior of the Casa-Azul the chords of a splendid piano, . . . Flores's eyes filled with tears, because in that same moment he saw the entire drama of his life pass in front of them, in a phantasmagorical representation: the games of infancy; the caresses of his saintly mother; the old priest, conversing with the poor and with the children, and teaching them; his dying father, kissing the crucifix; the agony of his past existence in Madrid; his friend Román, giving him the kiss of Judas, and later abandoning and selling him. (199-200)[203]

All of these silhouettes form part of Manuel Flores' development and realization as a character. It is an example of what Baquero Goyanes calls "the combination of musical notes" that makes this selection a short novel or *novela corta*. In this one description, one sees the coming together of those notes in one ensemble, a case not to be expected in the *cuentos* due to the limited space in which events unfold.

[203] "Acercaos, y le veréis en un banco de piedra, a la puerta de la Casa-Azul, bajo un verde emparrado, que apenas puede con los transparentes racimos que de sus sarmientos cuelgan. Levanta los ojos al cielo en actitud pensativa, como si quisiera penetrar los misterios que oculta el magnífico velo de estrellas, y aplica el oído como si el silencio solemne de la noche tuviese para él palabras desconocidas a los demás. . . . Pero al vibrar de improvise en lo interior de la Casa-Azul los acordes de un soberbio piano, . . . los ojos de Flores se llenaron de lágrimas, porque en el momento mismo vio pasar por delante de ellos el drama entero de su vida, en representación fantasmagórica: los juegos de la infancia; las caricias de su santa madre; el anciano cura, conversando con los pobres y con los niños, y doctrinándolos; su padre moribundo, besando el crucifijo, la agonía de su pasada existencia en Madrid; su amigo Román, dándole el beso de Judas, y luego abandonándole y vendiéndole."

4.3.2 Defining *costumbrismo*

The notion of *costumbrismo* in Aguilera's oeuvre plays a crucial role in his representation of society. From *Ecos* to *Proverbios* one sees a commitment to the portrayal of Spanish customs within the context of modernity. Critics such as Baquero Goyanes and Gutiérrez Díaz-Bernardo have alluded, not only to *Proverbios* as a collection of short stories (of which three I have reclassified as *novelas cortas*), but also to its connection with *costumbrismo*, particularly the *articulo de costumbres* (essay on manners or customs). *Costumbrismo* is considered one of the most important literary modes that Romanticism cultivated in Spain. Known for its domestic and autochthonous elements, these works, in the form of paintings, stories, and journalistic articles, adhered to the principles of a literary method that generally, although not consistently, embraced a love for all that savored of the authentic and mostly rural Spain. For some critics, namely Ramón Espejo-Saavedra, it is precisely with c*ostumbrismo* where the history of 19th century realism begins:"in the years immediately following the death of Fernando VII, principle *costumbrismo* authors took advantage of the popularity of the news article to call their readers' attention to those aspects of daily life that best reflected the great social changes of the epoch" (11).[204]

Some of these changes might be said to encompass certain outlooks of social classes, which artists tailored depending on their readers as Susan Kirkpatrick concludes in her "The Ideology of Costumbrismo:" "costumbrismo was necessarily an ideological manifestation of the transition to modern, bourgeois society, expressing, among other things, the perspective and will of the class whose interest it served" (31). Given this point, it comes to no surprise that Aguilera,

[204] "En los años inmediatamente posteriores a la muerte de Fernando VII, los principales autores costumbristas se aprovecharon de la popularidad del artículo periodístico para llamar la atención de sus lectores sobre aquellos aspectos de la vida diaria que mejor reflejaban los grandes cambios sociales de la época."

having incorporated a representation of this class in his *Proverbios*, would use costumbrismo as a means to play out ideologies. For this reason, it is essential that the ideology of *costumbrismo* be taking into account in *Proverbios* in order to analyze why and in what ways it is informed by certain values, attitudes and concerns embodied in the representation of particular social classes.

In *costumbrismo*, sometimes these ideologies were aligned with folkloric and national characters and occasionally under the critical or judgmental eye of the author. For instance, a canonical writer of *costumbrismo* Mariano José de Larra (1809-1837) in "Vuelva usted mañana" ("Come Back Tomorrow") narrates the story of a Frenchmen of Spanish descent who visits Spain in hopes of carrying out a certain task within fifteen days, but he finds it impossible because of the Spanish procrastinators who repeatedly and indifferently insists that he return the following day. In Larra's "El Castellano Viejo" ("The Old-Fashioned Castilian"), Fígaro reluctantly accepts to attend the birthday celebration of his friend Braulio, a self-acclaimed old-fashioned Castilian, beside whom Braulio must endure awkward moments brought on by the latter's pretentiously unrefined and uncouth behavior.[205] He insists that Fígaro change his coat to prevent staining it and proceeds to exchange it for a jacket whose sleeves are too big for Fígaro. The rest of the celebration constitutes calamities and culinary flaws which Braulio and his wife, well-informed in refinement, blame on the servants. Finally, Fígaro and his guests inopportunely insist that Braulio recite a poem. With clenched teeth, he accepts anxious to leave and return to more a more civilized environment unlike that of the "old-fashioned" Castilian.

Beneath the portrayal of these common types, what writers of *costumbrismo* have in common during the early 19th century, as predecessors of Realism, is a commitment to the interpretation of realist types, which was in part motivated by observations that moved

[205] Larra used the pseudonym Fígaro in his works. In some texts, he even appears as a character under this nickname.

increasingly towards a purportedly objective portrayal of Spanish society. One of the leading voices on *costumbrismo* José Escobar points to what he terms *mímesis costumbrista* that entails "a new ideological representation of reality that implicates a modern conception of literature, understood as a mimetic form of the local and the circumstantial through a meticulous observation of distinguishing characteristics and details of environment and of the collective behavior of a particularized social physiognomy and in analogy with historical truth" (XX).[206] In the case of Aguilera, specifically *Proverbios*, *costumbrismo* moves away, although not entirely, from ruralized and regional types and near groups of class, bestowing considerable interest on the middle class and their values and lifestyles. No longer is *costumbrismo* employed solely to paint, in a rather semicaricatural manner, the external aspects of life. Going beyond customs, *costumbrismo* responds to Aguilera's commitment to portray the psychological and physical duality of the individual, taking on internal elements that include the fallible and human aspect of his characters.

But a growing ambition and awareness of more objective techniques in prose is not the sole end of *costumbrismo*. For example, José Montesinos in *Costumbrismo y novela* traces another root of this literary mode to an apparent antipathy toward the current situation of Spain, asserting that "all Spanish *costumbrismo* seems to be born out of a crisis of national identity and, sentimentally, the sympathy of the authors returns to the past, but the present crushes them" (32).[207] Similarly Espejo-Saavedra agrees that *costumbrismo* "was used to preserve or recuperate cultural traditions and ways of life whose existence was seen threatened by a process of rapid

[206] ". . . a una nueva representación ideológica de la realidad que implica una concepción moderna de la literatura, entendida como forma mimética de lo local y circunstancial mediante la observación minuciosa de rasgos y detalles de ambiente y de comportamiento colectivo diferenciadores de una fisonomía social particularizada y en analogía con la verdad histórica."

[207] "todo el costumbrismo español parece nacido de una crisis de nacionalidad y, sentimentalmente, la simpatía de los autores se vuelve hacia el pasado, pero el presente los arrolla".

modernization, above all in the urban centers" (11).[208] It should come as no surprise then that many of the plots included in *Proverbios* take place in Madrid within the upper class whose quest for refined pleasures and aversion to the coarseness of rustic life knows few limits. However, José Luis Varela claims that the ever-impending loss of the present and singular, which manifests through an expression of nostalgia, is a determining factor of *costumbrismo* (8).

These assertions certainly help to shed light on Aguilera's own nationalistic attitudes discussed earlier in this chapter. Among nostalgic writers of *costumbrismo*, Varela identifies Ramón de Mesonero Romanos (1803-1882) for his concern with the extinction of national products. However, one can certainly appreciate the less conservative outlook of some *costumbrismo* writers like Larra, as José María Clever Esteban notes, who "aspired to change, transform and Europeanize it" (66).[209] Indeed, *costumbrismo* is an ideological response in support of and sometimes against fleeting national customs and traditions. In other words, the literary representation of society for these writers is propelled by the ideas and perspectives that each one holds concerning tradition and progress of the nation.

4.4 *Proverbios* and *costumbrismo*

Earlier, I discussed the question of modernity and its relationship to Aguilera's aversion to foreign customs in Spain, an aversion that during the 1850s reverberated in other writers like Hartzenbusch. I showed that a later generation of Spanish writers around the 1890s, particularly Clarín, categorically held that the imitation of foreign models was necessary in order to modernize Spain and interpret the spirit of modernity, fully accepting francization. Aguilera's anxiety surrounding alien influence and its effect (mostly in the form of vices) on Spanish

[208] "servía para preservar o recuperar tradiciones culturales y formas de vida cuya existencia se veía amenazada por un proceso de modernización rápida, sobre todo en los centros urbanos."
[209] "Un costumbrista progresista como Larra hizo a través de sus agudos análisis un diagnóstico de su sociedad; aspiraba a cambiarla, a transformarla a europeizarla;"

traditions further informs a *costumbrismo* that aspires to deflect the superimposition of modern, foreign principles over traditionally Spanish ones. Because Aguilera understands such vices and flaws to be rooted in an un-Spanish spirit of modernity, he modernizes traditional Castilian proverbs in an attempt to give the process of modernization in Spain a Spanish face based on Spanish values. Aguilera problematizes how modernity is defined in Spain, bringing his collection closer to the modern novel.

The idea of *costumbrismo* based on bourgeois culture will be analyzed in three works of *Proverbios*: "Hacer de tripas corazón" ("Bite the Bullet"), "Al freír será el reír" ("He Who Laughs Last, Laughs Best") and "El beso de Judas" ("The Kiss of Judas"). I have specifically decided to focus on these three works because of their representation of the bourgeois values in the Spanish people. It should be kept in mind that at the time of the publication of *Proverbios* Spain's middle class was very small and still in formation.

> The most distinctive trait of the history of the nineteenth-century Spanish bourgeoisie or middle class was its small size. The available data about social structure are partial, but all historians agree that the urban middle classes, even counting the rural middle classes, comprised a reduced portion of the social body. Up until the first third of the twentieth century, Spain was still mainly a rural country, with an urban network that was growing, but at a much slower pace than its counterparts in norther and central Europe. (Cruz *The Rise of Middle-class Culture in Nineteenth-century Spain* 31).

In spite of this fact, bourgeois principals and ideas were seen as desirable even in those individuals who did not technically belong to this class. Indeed, Aguilera focuses on this group not so much as a class, at least not in the strict sense, but as a way of life whose values and actions he thought were influenced by an invasion of foreign ideas.

For his part, Jesús Cruz further informs us, and this is essential for my analysis, that the ideology and values were already well-rooted in Spanish society:

> As important as the numbers was the influence of bourgeois attitudes: the feeling of being middle class, the desire to perceive oneself as modern despite sufficient modernization. Regardless of their small numbers and structural weakness, the bourgeoisie began to assemble a modus vivendi that appealed to the mases. This way of life, this culture that at the beginning of the nineteenth century was in a process of gestation, became the hegemonic culture by the end of the century (33).

It is no surprise to us that one can find in Cruz's comment the same line of thinking that equates middle class values and ideology to modernity. These are values that, in Aguilera's perspective, were instilled in modernity and provoked vices.

Aguilera was not alone in believing vices and modernity to be parallel to one another. Galdós, in the same review concerning Aguilera's *Proverbios* and that I have insisted deserves more attention, also saw the two as counterparts:

> Vices, we were saying, are those which are running loose around this land, finding themselves generally in good standing and having control between us. Vanity, for example, has such an important point in *Proverbios* as in life: here it is found everywhere, we all possess it to a greater or lesser degree, and we can almost assure ourselves that this vice is one of those that participates most in the modern movement. (170)[210]

[210] "Los vicios, decíamos, son de los que andan sueltos por estas tierras, hallándose por lo general en gran predicamento y teniendo mucho dominio entre nosotros. La vanidad, por ejemplo, tiene en los *Proverbios* un punto

The vices that Aguilera retraces in *Proverbios* and the illustration of its effects on Spanish society are specific to modernity, and they inevitable affect the middle-class, the "us" to which Galdós refers as representative of the modern novel.[211] It is for this representation of the process of modernity and the portrayal of its effects on the Spanish middle-class that *Proverbios* should be regarded as a collection that assists in giving birth to the realist novel. Even if some critics are not willing to concede this impression to Aguilera, one must admit that he engages in the realist project that according to Jo Labanyi acts as "a forum for critical debate, airing issues of contemporary concern" (4). The cautionary nature of the proverbs that Aguilera uses as titles meets her criteria for the Realist novel which also "deals with what happens when things go wrong" (Labanyi 5). But not only does Aguilera deal with what happens but how it happens all with the technique of *costumbrismo*.

One form of *Costumbrismo*, which is confined to the exterior dimensions of Spanish life, persist in *Proverbios* in the depiction of Spanish scenery, customs and types, belonging to both the middle and lower class. I consider this an example of traditional *costumbrismo* that one can find in the works of Larra. For example, in neither "El castellano viejo" nor "Vuelva usted mañana" does one see an interest to explore the interior reality of characters, what Aguilera refers to as the "the physiological and psychological phenomena" of the individual (*Proverbios* viii).[212]

In regard to the influences of *costumbrismo* in *Proverbios*, apart from the proverbial aspect that each title glosses, one sees an application of its traditional techniques in the

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tan importante como en la vida: aquí se halla en todas partes, todos la tenemos en mayor o menor grado, y casi puede asegurarse que este vico[sic] es uno de los que más participación tienen en el movimiento moderno"

[211] "There we all are with our flaws and virtues painted with fidelity." "Allí estamos todos nosotros con nuestras flaquezas y nuestras virtudes retratados con fidelidad. (Galdós, *Observaciones*, 168)

[212] "los fenómenos fisiológicos y psicológicos del ser humano. . ."

exploration of the exterior element. That is, this external manifestation of *costumbrismo* was already an artistic strategy which writers of costumbrismo before Aguilera employed. It plays out across rural and urban environments with detail to outward character description based on local color and tradition as well as bourgeois sensibilities that were growing stronger in Spanish society. Common examples can be seen in the description of a character's dress, their language, and physical appearance. However, as I will show, *costumbrismo* in *Proverbios* goes beyond the exterior, taking this traditional tactic of *costumbrismo* and fusing it with novel techniques that turn inward. This allows Aguilera to focus on the inner psychology of individuals together with the ideas and social interests that they value.

An exemplary illustration of traditional *costumbrismo* takes place in "Hacer de tripas corazón" ("Bite the Bullet"). This short story unfolds in 1850s Madrid and centers on the theaters, namely *El Circo*, which is incapable of attracting the public. In the midst of this misfortune, the narrator references the inundation of appalling foreign works, short-lived plays, the low number of theatergoers, and the theater workers who suffer as a result of the pitiful state of Madrid's theaters . Estrella, an Andalusian bolero dancer described as graceful and dashing, inspires hope in the theater for her success in the national dance.[213]She is described as a "beam of hope" a "rainbow" a "dove," and her essence lies in her "feminine legs, incomparable legs, legs eminently classic, the best of the best, the quintessence, the *non plus ultra* of legs, Spanish to boot, and finally, to top it all off, the most select that had walked the streets and orchards of

[213] See Rocío Espada 124-26. The bolero dance, invented by Sebastián Cerezo from Cádiz, was considered a national dance during the 19th century. Initially, it was a dance performed by the nobility but later became popular with the common classes and theater ballerinas. It could be performed with or with a partner. Rocio Espada notes that "the movements of the woman are much more expressive, more passionate, and while her arms twisted with severity , her agile feet do not rest not even for a moment" (124). "Los movimientos de la mujer son mucho más expresivos, más apasionados, y mientras sus brazos se tuercen con severidad, su ágiles pies no están en reposo ni un momento."

Malaga, Cadiz and Seville" (*Proverbios* 119-20).[214] But when Estrella finds out that her mother Pepa is dying, she refuses to perform, putting the wellbeing of all employees in jeopardy. With clenched teeth, she chooses to dance, and prior to her performance her conventional dress is described at length against the adoption of foreign influenced garments:

> Estrella did not want to subject herself to foreign oppression, adopting the short and vaporous lawn skirt, pompously plain and without decorations, that from then on has been denaturalizing the character of the graceful national costume. Slave of Spanish tradition, she wore a satiny sky-blue *maja* skirt, embroidered with silver, with abundant colored trimmings and several garrisons of black lace, which reached a little below the knees; crimson bodice of the same cloth, comb to one side and roses on her head. She proceeded to the proscenium with gentle ease, greeted with a graceful smile and an elegant flexion of her waist, and to the beat of the orchestra, mixed with the clatter of the castanets, started the *Jaleo de Jerez*. (131)[215]

This passage encompasses the ideological position of Aguilera which prioritizes Spanish culture over foreign influences. But for the most part, the depiction of Estrella's leg and her dress is an example of traditional *costumbrismo* in that it speaks to the external aspects of Andalusian feminine flair and dress.

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[214] "unas piernas femeninas, piernas incomparables, piernas eminentemente clásicas, la flor y nata, la quinta esencia, el non plus ultra de las piernas, españolas por añadidura, y por fin y remate, lo mas selecto que había paseado las caslles y verges de Málaga, de Cádiz y de Sevilla"

[215] The *maja* is a typical Spanish character. Enrique Rodríguez Solis described her origin in the following manner: "In the confusing Madrid population of 1760 the *maja* stands out, whose most distinguishing traits, like the true daughter of the capital, are the Arabic fatalism, the Andalusian flair, and the Castilian integrity. "En la confusa población madrileña de 1760 se destaca la maja, cuyos rasgos más salientes, como verdadera hija de la capital son el fatalismo árabe, l agracia andaluza y la entereza castellana."See Enrique Rodríguez-Solís, *Majas, manolas y chulas: historia, tipos y costumbres de antaño y ogaño* (F. Cao y D. de Val, 1886) 33. "Estrella no había querido someterse al yugo extranjero, adoptando la cortísima y vaporosa falda de linón, pomposamente hueca y sin adornos, que de entonces acá viene desnaturalizando el carácter del airoso traje nacional. Esclava de la tradición española, lucía una falda de maja."

Within traditional costumbrismo, the southern region of Andalucía and its types are depicted throughout the 19th century as the receptacle of conventional Spanish values and authenticity compared to other regions of Spain. Enrique Rubio Cremades comments on this notion of the Andalusian element in *costumbrismo*:

> "it is obvious that the Andalusian *costumbrismo* is reflected in the diverse literary modalities of the 19th century. Works of *costumbrismo* are not oblivious to this interest for the Andalusian element, hence their collecting, from diverse perspectives, traditions, types, and customs that belong to Andalucía. Again, the Andalusian element will occupy a privileged place vis-à-vis other geographical contexts which will merely have a pale presence in this mosaic of *costumbrismo*." ("Lo andaluz" 172)[216]

For her part, Concha de Marco in her study *La mujer española del romanticismo* explores the depiction of female Andalusian ballerinas in 19th century Spanish society and their encounter with foreign ballerinas in the 1850s, the period in which Estrella's story unfolds. Her insight highlights the cultural and social importance of the *bolero* dancer and other ballerinas during this decade.

> The golden age of the ballerinas starts in the year 1849, and it continues during the entire following decade. The passion arrives to such an extreme that supporters of each one of the ballerinas maintain intense rivalries . . . Each one had her unwavering audience and,

[216] "es obvio que el costumbrismo andaluz se proyecta en las diversas modalidades literarias del siglo XIX. Las colecciones costumbristas no son ajenas a este interés por lo andaluz, de ahí que recojan desde diversas ópticas los uso, tipos y costumbres pertenecientes a Andalucía. Una vez más lo andaluz ocupará un lugar privilegiado frente a otros contextos geográficos que sólo tendrán una pálida presencia en este mosaico costumbrista.

to complicate things even more, new foreign ballerinas, Fuoco and Guy, begin to perform in the new theater, *la Ópera*. (242)[217]

The concern of the provincial Andalusian dance amid risks of foreign influences, particularly French ones, would not end with Aguilera's literary representation, echoing in later texts, such as Eugenio Antonio Flores's "El bailarín" (1872) ("The Male Dancer"). Rubio Cremades highlights Flores's interpretation of the Spanish dancer as a preserver of Spanish customs in the face of French ones which were considered examples of good taste and refinement ("Lo andaluz" 173). However, Antonio Flores's portrayal of the French issue, ranging some five pages, does not venture out of the exterior surface in regard to his characters and the foreign theme. Unlike Aguilera's, his *costumbrismo* does not turn inward to narrate the humanity of his characters who are full of contrasts and who are more complex than what traditional *costumbrismo* generally offers. The characters in these works are merely types of a one-dimensional representation.

With the weight of not only her mother's impending death on her shoulders but also the possible demise of the theater company along with its employees as well, Estrella is visited by the theater owner Juan. He talks about similar cases in which actors who, for personal reasons, refused and were forced to execute their performance for the good of the company after threats of lawsuits. It is in the following scene and conversation with Juan where Estrella's body and mind demand to come to the foreground and out from the shadow casted by her role as *bolero* dancer:

[217] La época de oro de las bailarinas empieza en el año 49 y continua durante toda la década siguiente. La afición llega al extremo de que los partidarios de cada una de ellas sostienen enconadas rivalidades. . . . Cada una tiene su pública incondicional y, para complicar aún más las cosas, comienzan a actuar en el nuevo teatro de la Ópera dos bailarinas extranjeras, la Fuoco y la Guy."

> "What's happening to me is intense!", Estrella exclaimed, launching a kick to the floor; "these people believe that we don't have insides, that we are made of stone, and not flesh and bone, like them!"
>
> "If I believed such a thing, I certainly wouldn't have turned to your kindness; but rather, on the contrary, making use of my rights…". (128)[218]

At a crossroad two ideologies meet here. Behind the professional Andalusian bolero dancer is the obstinate Estrella whose individual values and love for her mother Pepa directly confront her work ethic and the good of the collective, establishing a contradiction between the two. Estrella is not described as an idealized, simple village girl who upholds the virtues of the lower class. On the contrary, there is an intent to explore the interior of her character along which will be consummated in her performance. Juan, on the other hand, represents the worldview of the calculating and impersonal businessman whose primary concern rests rather ambiguously with his own self-interests and with those of the collective group for whom Estrella must make a sacrifice. He is the epitome of the capitalist values of the bourgeois class, and although their presence of this group was not solid at the time, their culture and way of life was starting to influence Spain.

It is clear both in the proverb "Hacer de tripas corazón" and in Estrella's decision to dance that the collective will wins out, converting the idea of work ethics here in a moral virtue consistent with the social and economic needs of the epoch. Indeed, it is the only path that can ensure the salvation of theater company *El Circo* where Estrella works as its productions are

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[218] "—Es grande lo que a mí me sucede! –exclamó Estrella, dando una patada en el suelo; —esta gente cree que una no tiene entrañas, que somos de piedra pajarilla, y no de carne y hueso, como ellos!"
"—Si yo creyese tal cosa, ciertamente no hubiera apelado a su bondad; sino que, al contrario, haciendo uso de mi derecho…"

ignored by society until her appearance; consequently, this wealth extends itself, by virtue of Estrella's newfound ethics, to the good and success of the nation and its contemporary culture.

The virtue of characters in Aguilera's *costumbrismo* is to be found in their contribution to society and the nation, particularly as it relates to modernity, an idea on which *Proverbios* revolve. This is certainly an element of the internal *costumbrismo* that Aguilera captures to show that, like Estrella confirms, these types are not made of stone which is epitomized in Estrella's dance scene. Here typical *costumbrismo* descriptions of the Andalusian woman and type are presently outwardly, and as the performance advances, the description turns inwardly to explore Estrella's individuality:

> Jaleo is one of the dances that most eloquently speaks to the senses, inciting all carnal instincts with the stimulus, irresistible for some organizations, of a fascinating mimicry; But not without leaving also in the soul, like music, because of the vagueness and indeterminacy of its language, certain melancholic feelings and confused aspirations.
>
> See how that captivating creature dances. Alone in the scene, lit up like an Alexandria rose, the object of all eyes, of all thoughts, of all words and of all applause, showing in her eccentric behaviors and movements the flexibility of the reed and the agile composure of the panther; Now she bows with sweet ease, and seems to faint, requesting with her gipsy eyes, which have the attraction of the abysses, and with her mouth of carnations, smiles and kisses of all eyes and of all lips; now her small and rapid pace recalls the partridge's race on the plains; now, in the end, she seems angry, looking at the

sky with a haughty, glaring look, and hovering with sovereignty firmly on the platform, which trembles and groans beneath her sole. (131-132)[219]

Estrella is presented as an artist, emoting and provoking sundry feelings. The illustration of Estrella's dance does not settle for the traditional primacy of stagnant description over action, exhibiting a sensible character who suffers, feels and who is impelled by the circumstances of her mother's impending death. An untraditional, dynamic character of contrasts, Estrella's performance incites ambiguous attitudes in her audience.

> Well, who would not have pondered over the beautiful native of Cadiz in the height of fortune and glory during the Jaleo? Who would have suspected that that smile, that that happiness, which was communicated like a sweet contagion, was the deceitful veil of great pain, of the greatest and most genuine that the ballerina could suffer? There was no one in the theater who had not taken notice of her tears: the indifferent and benevolent ones attributed them to happiness for the achieved success or to whatever sudden discomfort; but having assured on *their honor*, one of those amusing ones that are so abundant in society, that that weeping came from having had a furious argument with her lover, that he was abandoning her for another rival . . ." (134)[220]

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[219] "*El Jaleo* es uno de los bailes que más elocuentemente hablan a los sentidos, insurreccionando todos los instintos carnales con el estímulo, para algunas organizaciones irresistible, de una mímica fascinadora; pero no sin dejar también en el alma, como la música, por lo vago e indeterminado de su lenguaje, ciertos sentimientos melancólicos y aspiraciones confusas. Ved como lo baila esa hechicera criatura. Solo en la escena, encendida como una rosa de Alejandría, objeto de todas las miradas, de todos los pensamientos, de todas las palabras y de todos los aplausos, ostenta en sus pintorescas actitudes y movimientos la flexibilidad del junco y la ágil soltura de la pantera; ya se dobla con dulce abandono, y parece desmayarse, pidiendo con sus ojos de gitana, que poseen la atracción de los abismos, y con su boca de claveles, sonrisas y besos a todos los ojos y a todos los labios; ya su paso menudo y veloz recuerda la carrera de la perdiz por las llanuras; ya, en fin parece que se enoja, dirigiendo al cielo una mirada soberbia, fulminante, y hollando con soberana firmeza el tablado, que tiempla y gime bajo su planta."

[220] "¿Quién no hubiera, pues, considerado a la bella gaditana en el colmo de la dicha y de la gloria durante el *Jaleo*? ¿Quién hubiera sospechado que aquella sonrisa, que la alegría aquella, que se comunicaba como un dulce contagio, era el velo engañoso de un gran dolor, del más grande y más verdadero que pudiera sufrir la bailarina?" No hubo nadie en el teatro que no reparase en sus lágrimas: los indiferentes y los benévolos atribuyéronlas al contento por el

The indifference and comical attitudes with which the onlookers judge Estrella's condition validates her protest about how the ballerina is viewed as inanimate, a prop to be admired by the audience or society: "these people believe that we don't have insides" and that we "are not flesh and bone like them" (128).[221] The audience is incapable of perceiving Estrella outside of the typical and popular parameters with which the Andalusian gypsy-like figure was defined by their generally lively character and propensity to brawls (Claver Esteban 90-1). Nevertheless, in *Proverbios* the *bolera* defies to be more than just a popular character, developing multidimensional qualities of compassion and love for the collective for which she participates in the nation's progress and sense of modernity.

In other works, like "El Beso de Judas" and "Al freír será el reír" *costumbrismo* manifests through binaries tied to rural, urban, and foreign ideologies. In the rural scenes, the ambience and characters are captured on a rustic canvas and they often contrast with urban or foreign influenced values. Nevertheless, as realistic as the rustic customs aim to be, there is still an underlying sense of idealism relatively divorced from reality which is predictable in a transitionary author like Aguilera. He is caught between two literary allegiances, that of Romanticism, which portray the rural elements as ideal and virtuous, and the emergent realist approach, which aims to break away from representations influenced by idealism.

The short novel, "El beso de Judas" was dedicated to Carolina Coronado, one of the most important Romantic women writers in Spanish literature. It narrates the life of two twin-like and inseparable friends who, although born in a village near Burgos on the same day, are only distinguishable due to two traits. Manuel Flores, son of a day laborer is modest, while Román

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triunfo conseguido o a una indisposición cualquiera repentina; pero habiendo asegurado, *bajo palabra de honor*, uno de esos graciosos en que tanto abunda la sociedad, que el llanto aquel procedía de haber tenido la bailarina una furiosa reyerta con su amante, que la abandonaba por otra rival . . ."

[221] "esta gente cree que una no tiene entrañas . . . y no de carne y hueso, como ellos!"

Peña, a surgeon's son, is vane. The novel follows Roman's departure to Madrid and his obscure rise to fortune described by the narrator as being despicable but justifiable only in the eyes of the aristocrats who profit from it. At the request of Román, Manuel leaves the rural village to live in the more modern Madrid, but once there Manuel becomes penniless and ill due to his love for Aurora. Román turns his back on him, treating him as a servant in order to work off his living expenses, culminating in Roman's betrayal of Manuel with his new lifestyle.

Patent dualities manifest through the two characters in dichotomies of city/village, poverty/wealth/, vanity/humbleness. These same oppositions have further implications in the description of the town church, revolving the women and children along with their habits.

> The church was located in the center of the small plaza, surrounded by leafy poplars, between which, crude seats of rock invited rest, sometimes for the old priest, that would walk about in the late afternoon, sometimes for the local elderly women, that in the mornings would leave their homes with the spinning wheel or the needle for knitting, looking for the sun, if it was winter, or the shade of the trees, if summer; sometimes, in short, for the rosy children, cheerful and robust, as accustomed in the small village, who in that spacious place frolicked, shouted, ran and rolled about freely, without the sour voice of a grumbling tutor to interrupt their innocent games." (65-66)[222]

The pastoral and visual scene here resembles more so the *cuadro* (painting) rather than the *articulo de costumbres* because of the presence of rustic tools that the women abandon for a

[222] "Hallábase la iglesia en el centro de una plazoleta, rodeada de frondosos álamos, entre los cuales, algunos toscos asientos de piedra convidaban a tomar descanso, ya al anciano cura, que por allí solía pasearse a la caída de la tarde, ya a las viejas lugareñas, que por la mañana salían de sus casas con la rueca o la aguja de hacer calceta, buscando el sol, si era invierno, o la sombra de los árboles, si verano; ya, en fin, a los niños colorados, risueños y robustos, como se usan en las aldeas, que en aquel espacioso paraje retozaban, chillaban, corrían y se revolcaban a sus anchuras, sin que la avinagrada voz de un ayo regañón interrumpiera sus inocentes juegos."

respite followed by the romanticized sketch of the children. The preference of the natural elements are discernable in the natural style of education, free of the ill-tempered instructor. It is nevertheless representative of a lifestyle that Román abandons for the luxuries of Madrid. Notice the opposition between the pastoral scene and that of the aristocratic ambience in Román's new social environment:

> With said motive, a large concurrence, for the most part aristocratic, livened up the brilliant drawing rooms of the Earl's palace, in which no facial expressions stood out that did not reveal their soul's intimate joy, or what is the same, who did not pretend it, because if one could read in the mysterious book of the human heart, how much grief, pain, tears would he not find in its pages! That happy and lucid reunion, agitating itself to the harmonious whims of Strauss; those elegant women, crowned of flowers and of diamonds, perfumed with fragrant and soft essences; those young and those old men, flaunting on their chest the awards and badges of merit, of favor or of fortune, would have seemed to us criminals condemned to the horrible torture of laughing and dancing, drowning the sorrow in their chest, in the middle of a cemetery adorned with superb moons of Venice, splendid draperies of silk and damask of colors with gold finishing, and exquisite silver candelabrums. (128-9)[223]

[223] "Con el motive expresado, una gran concurrencia, en su mayor parte aristocrática, animaba los brillantes salones del palacio del Conde, en los cuales no se distinguía un solo semblante que no revelase el íntimo contento del alma, o lo que es más cierto, que no lo fingiese, porque si puediera llerse en el misterioso libro del corazón humano, ¡cuántas amarguras, cuántos dolores, cuátnas lágrimas no se encontrarían en sus páginas! Aquella alegre y lucida reunión, agitándose a las caprichosas armonías de Strauss; aquellas elegantes damas, coronadas de flores y de diamantes, perfumadas con olorosas y suaves esencias; aquellos jóvenes y aquellos ancianos, ostentando en su pecho las condecoraciones y distintivos del mérito, del favor o de la fortuna, nos hubieran parecido otros tantos reos condenados al horrible suplicio de reír y danzar, ahogando el llanto en su pecho, en medio de un cementerio adornado de soberbias lunas de Venecia, espléndidos cortinajes de seda y damasco de colores con remates de oro, y primorosos candelabros de plata."

These passages signal an apparent binary *costumbrismo* in which the rural and urban, the humble and arrogant, the natural and artificial customs are juxtaposed in a way that conveniently render one of the two reproachable. In Aguilera's outlook, *costumbrismo* cultivates, the rural scenes of Spanish villages and countryside as authentic and natural while both denaturalizing and delegitimizing the lavish lifestyles of the aristocrats and the bourgeoisie.

A similar approach of these juxtaposed images is seen in the *novela corta* "Al freír, será el reír" ("He who laughs last, laughs best"). One of Aguilera's more urban tales, this short novel is set in Madrid and narrates the fate of the middle-class family of bank teller Lozano, his frivolous wife Isabel and their daughter Teresa. Both women rule over the indulgent Lozano. Isabel, having belonged to a lesser class before marrying Lozano, believes that one must constantly spend in order to sustain and further climb the social ladder. When Isabel announces to society that she will wear a yet to be purchased pearl set of jewelry to an upcoming concert, unable to afford it, she pawns her own jewels before accepting a deal from the opportunist don Julián who acquires the necklace for her.

But, when Lozano, originally unaware of their deal, is unable to repay don Julián, Isabel accepts don Julián's plan to abandon her family to live with him. When Isabel pawns her jewelry at the pawnshop, "showing off her pretty hand, full of diamonds," her riches are contrasted with those of two impoverished women who also have to exchange their possessions for money.[224] However these are not dispensable diamonds like those of Isabel but rather "a silver reliquary of the Lady of Sorrows; a crucifix of the same metal, with a string of blue beads of crystal and a small glass, also of silver. The two saintly images had heard the intimate and affectionate words of sincere devotion, placed for many years on the chest of the two elderly women to which they

[224] "luciendo su bonita mano, llena de brillantes. . . "

belonged" (38).[225] The scene brings together traditional religious artifacts that paint a portrait of the familiar, devout habits and customs of "authentic" Spain. At the same time, the image is capable of striking a chord in the sentimentality of the Spanish people by evoking jolts of tragedy and sorrow from the poor women's misfortune. Between the two juxtaposing images, Aguilera considers the elderly women (even their belongings) distinctively and contextually more recognizable and native than Isabel.

"Al freír, será el reír" already fills the void of the Spanish modern novel for its detail to the "forgotten middle class," that class which, like Lozano and Isabel, could begin in the margins of hardship but who could also, sometimes pretentiously, climb the social ladder based on their ability to advance financially in society or at least feign this success. Isabel herself was able to personally take advantage of this notion: "no one could tell to what extent Isabel's love had to do with this union; but neither could one deny that, for her, it was financially convenient, being that it took her from the artisan class, to which she belonged, and placed her a step higher in the social ladder, carrying out, in this way, the golden dreams of her youthful years" (*Proverbios* 15).[226]

In the same story, a remarkable blending of *costumbrismo* with its inherent detail to character types and of social commentary on the stock market help to paint a fairly accurate picture of the upper-class environment in which the narrator describes the physical, social and cultural aspects of the stock market with much detail:

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[225] "un relicario de plata con una mal grabada imagen de la Virgen de los Dolores; un Cristo del mismo metal, con un hilo de granos de vidrio azul,. . . ."

[226] "Nadie podría decir hasta qué punto el amor de Isabel tuvo parte en este enlace; pero tampoco negará nadie que para ella fue negocio de conveniencia, puesto que la sacaba de la clase de artesanos, a que pertenecía, para colocarla un peldaño más arriba en la escala social, realizándose de este modo los dorados sueños de sus años juveniles."

> the Stock Market, miserly temple, where the golden calf is worshipped, beneath the dull light that penetrates through the roof, as if fearful that they will be seen, and amongst the smoke that three or four hundred cigars or three or four hundred mouths release. The establishment is very limited and poor. Rough wooden benches, placed around the gallery that encircle it, with a kind of platform (*the podium*), closed by an iron railing, from whose platform the *announcer* reads the policies or prices of the different values that have been officially transferred, make up the only decoration and furniture of the Madrid Stock Market. (51-52)[227]

The use of *costumbrismo* techniques illustrates the perceived bare and nefarious space of the Stock Market of Madrid under a veil of cynicism that mocks the idolatrous nature surrounding commercial dealings and transactions. This theme will be echoed in later Realist authors such as Galdós and particularly the Catalan author Narcís Oller (1846-1930) in his novel *La fiebre del oro* published between 1890 and 1893.

The ritualistic and mysterious process in which these transactions are carried out and the gravity of their role in the success or demise particularly of its participants is not so much a *costumbrismo* description as a social observation of bourgeois attitudes and practices in a step towards Realism.

> So the hour sounds, upon a stroke, the announcer enters the podium, and with a loud and clear voice, in the middle of a silence sometimes sepulchral, he screams: "Transaction" stating immediately the nominal importance of this, and the *reales* and cents for which

[227] "la Bolsa, mezquino templo, donde se adora el becerro de oro, a la parda luz que penetra por el techo, como con miedo de que la vean, y entre el humo que despide trescientos o cuatrocientos cigarros y trescientas o cuatrocientas bocas. El local es reducidísimo y pobre. Toscos bancos de madera, colocados alrededor de la galería que lo circunda, con una especia de tribuna (*el estrado*), cerrada por una barandilla de hierro, desde cuya tribuna *el anunciador* lee las pólizas o precios de los diferentes valores que se han trasferido oficialmente, constituyen la única decoración y movilario (sic) de la Bolsa de Madrid."

stocks are going. After the announcement, the murmur is heard again, murmur similar to that which the confusing buzzing of an enormous hive would make. For the inexperienced ones, the rise of a *real* or two percent of one market to another hardly has significance; for the priests and initiated members in the mysteries of the Stock Market, that *insignificant* increase can simply and easily, on given occasions, produce bankruptcies, ruin of families, suicides, and another one hundred catastrophes, of which the newspapers usually seize and that serve as bait for the insatiable voracity of their readers.[228] (52-53)

Aguilera introduces and retraces practices that take place in the public sphere, which in the 19th century took on new meanings in regard to the social and economic activity that were carried out within it. This has a connection with the late 18th and 19th century ideology of separate spheres that divided men and women according to their respective public and private spaces. "While public life was increasingly seen as an exclusively male domain characterized by the manly virtues of action, determination and resolution, the domestic setting was where women's moral virtues of gentleness, tenderness, piety and faith could and should most fully be developed" (Williams 175).

The public sphere of modern capitalism (represented in Aguilera's passage as the religious and "mysterious" yet unfamiliar Stock Exchange) is a source of corruption that ultimately infiltrates and ruins the private sphere of the family and, more specifically, the wife

[228] "Así que suena la hora, previa una campanada, entra en el estrado el anunciador, y con voz alta y clara, en medio de un silencio algunas veces sepulcral, grita: "Operaciones" diciendo en seguida la importancia nominal de ésta, y los reales y céntimos a que se van contratando los efectos públicos. Después del anuncio, vuelve a oírse el rumor que anteriormente, rumor semejante al que produciría el zumbido confuso de una enorme colmena. Para los profanos, la alza de un real o dos por ciento de un mercado a otro apenas tiene significación; para los sacerdotes e iniciados en los misterios de la Bolsa, ese *insignificante* aumento puede simple y sencillamente, en ocasiones dadas, producir bancarrotas, ruina de familias, suicidios y otras cien catástrofes, de que suelen apoderarse los periódicos, y que sirve de cebo a la voracidad insaciable de sus lectores."

and daughter of Lozano. This process is illustrated as a sequence of steps that takes part in a discourse based on capitalistic and economic gain whose repercussions reverberate in Spanish family and society. That is, this form of vice in which the "calf worshipper" engages, moves from the public sphere where abstract figures can upset family life. These problems are subsequently capitalized upon in the public sphere of the journalists and editors who dispatch them once again to the private sphere of the family through their subscribers who read about them. Aguilera's ultimate aim here is not only to show the reciprocal nature that lies in the conversion of public vices into private ones, but how the whole of society participates in this reciprocity.

Lozano, who frequents the Stock Exchange, is a victim of such misfortunes. It is with the outcome of these sudden and life altering mishaps that Aguilera illustrates the capitalistic discourse regarding insatiability, aspiration, and faith in the "miserly temple" which surfaces in the psychology of the bank teller. Lozano purchases stock in public works and mines at an exorbitant price, expecting the market to favor him; however, his luck takes a turn and is forced to sell them at a lesser price: "I had hope in the news from Italy, and the news from Italy couldn't have been worse; the drop that my stock has suffered will cause more than a toothache. I had bulled the market; imagine it" (57).[229] In bulling the market, Lozano has left both his monetary assets and confidence to chance, or more specifically, to anticipated "news" and events that were inexistent. Indeed, his alluding to these expectations reaffirm the mysterious nature of the Stock Market.

The confidence that the stock broker displays in the public space of the Stock Exchange (due to Lozano women) is not yielded with equal force in the public sphere of his home. Lozano,

[229] "Yo confiaba en las noticias de Italia, y las noticias de Italia no han podido ser peores; el bajón que ha sufrido mi papel va a producir más de un dolor de muelas. Yo había jugado a la alza; con que considere usted."

for example, is described as excessively indulgent, "the last person of the family in everything" in whose home "there was no other law than that of his wife and daughter's whims" and "if he had any loyalty to work, if he spent hours and hours over work, it was for and because of them" (16).[230]

This is precisely where the notion of the familiar element, which is traditionally linked to the home and all that is domestic, comes into question. First and foremost, the proverb is in its nature a cautionary reminder. Aguilera ultimately wants to caution against the career driven father that the bourgeois ideology and values perpetuate and cause to become negligent. The productive demands that this ideology requires of the paternal figure is fundamental for capitalism and middle class society. Existing mainly in the public sphere, the father is now distant and mostly concerned with necessities that before were considered extravagances, which ultimately drive the family near ruin. The change in the idea of necessity is brought into question when the narrator asks "Who would deny that the acquisition of the jewelry set, for example, was a necessity for Isabel? Because it has been agreed upon to call necessities to all that one desires, even though reason condemns it" (54).[231]

Peter Gay comments on this idea in the case of the bourgeois class of the 19th century: "Once their earnings covered necessities, expenditures on luxuries became a practicable option. Late in the century, substantial numbers of bourgeois regarded as necessities what had been luxuries for their parents' generation" (201). As a result of this shift in thinking, Lozano incessantly works to meet the "needs" of his family, investing in risky causes but as he is

[230] "la última persona de la familia . . ." "no regía más ley que el capricho de las dos mujeres . . ." "Si él tenía algún apego al dinero, si se pasaba horas y horas sobre el trabajo, era por ellas y para ellas."
[231] "¿Quién negaría que la adquisición del aderezo, por ejemplo, fuese una necesidad en Isabel porque se ha convenido en llamar necesidades a todo lo que se apetece, aunque la razón lo repruebe."

incapable of performing in the public and private sphere at the same time, the latter space deteriorates.

Also of a *costumbrista* nature are the descriptions of other regional participants who frequent the Stock Market. They are the well-to-do Basque who are portrayed based on physical and cultural aspects: "The Northern provinces, and especially the Basques, make up a formidable representation in the Stock Market; one does not need to hear the natives of these speak in their particular language or dialect, in order to know them; the characteristic traits of their faces are not confused with those of other provinces (52).[232] While this passage serves as an example of *costumbrismo*, the specific attention given to the dialect and facial appearance of the Basque people show a shift towards a more psychological and linguistic focus rather than picturesque. There is hardly a noteworthy degree of satire nor an accompanying sketch of the referenced Basque dialect that would be typical of *costumbrismo*, precisely because it is not Aguilera's objective to paint customs associated with the Basque people but rather allude to their factual role and presence in the economy, which brings Aguilera's prose further away from costumbrismo and more towards the modern novel. In effect, the turn from the picturesque element to the representation of people's psychology, in which *Proverbios* participates, will be an aspect developed more clearly toward the end of the 19th century.

Costumbrismo blends with more cultural and social, albeit universal, types in "Al que escupe al cielo en la cara le cae" ("Spit Against Heaven and It Will Fall on Your Face"), a *novela corta* that begins with the introduction of Angelita, the town busybody and gossiper. Angelita spreads rumors about an unfaithful lover only to find out that her victim is the daughter that she

[232] "Las provincias del Norte, y especialmente las Vascongadas, cuentan en la Bolsa con una representación formidable; no se necesita oír hablar a los naturales de estas últimas en su idioma o dialecto particular, para conocerlas: los rasgos característicos de sus semblantes no se confunden con los de otras provincias."

gave up years ago. Aguilera presents Angelita as a social and conventional type in a familiar way that implies that she belongs to the same contemporary society as his reader within the text.

> If someone who is reading the present story plans to pass by the street where Angelita lives, and you know her, and you do not want her to see you, put it off until night; and if it were necessary to pass by during the day, cover yourself up to your eyes . . . and cross like a bolt of lightning the area that Angelita's eyes reaches. For those who do not know her, I will tell you that she lives in the house on the corner, and she has a room with views of three streets, from whose balconies she inspects much of the vicinities. Behind the glass window all day long, if some urgent situation or visits, which she is very fond of, don't oblige her to move, she observes who comes and goes, who enters and leaves the homes of her visual territory: if the female neighbor in front gets up early or if she gets up at twelve; if the one that lives next to her argues with her husband; if there are burials or baptisms in the neighborhood and how many;" (217-18)[233]

Angelita, an apparently wealthy widow, is further described as "the archive of countless stories in Madrid" (219). She is informed about everything that goes on in Madrid. What is more, she often distorts the stories that she has at her disposal: "you can be sure that far from incurring sensitive omissions, she will increase and improve them with those incidents and comments

[233] "Si alguno de los que la presente historia leyere, piensa pasar por la calle donde vive Angelita, y conoce a ésta, y quiere que no le vea, déjelo para la noche; y si le fuerte forzoso pasar de día, embócese hasta los ojos . . . y atraviese como un rayo el espacio que Angelita alcanza con los ojos. A los que no la conozcan, les diré que vive en casa de esquina, y ocupa un cuarto con vistas a tres calles, desde cuyos balcones inspecciona gran parte de las inmediatas. Detrás de las vidrieras todo el santo día, si alguna cosa urgente, o las visitas, a que es muy aficionada, no la obligan a moverse, observa quién va y quién viene, quién entra y quién sale en las casas de su dominio visual: si la vecina de enfrente madruga o se levanta a las doce; si la de al lado riñe con su marido; si hay entierros o bautizos en el barrio, y cuántos;"

which her fecund imagination and docile language propose and provide" (219).[234] Angelita is a character whose vices manifest in the circulation of rumors that she disseminates throughout society.

Aguilera examines another side of the bourgeois values and ideology and their influence on Spanish society. In his observations, Aguilera approaches the realist novel in his attempt to present an all-encompassing view of society that specifically plays out in the way doña Mariana and Dolores act both in the public and private sphere to feign wealth.

> Without possessing a sufficient fortune to follow the whims of fashion and the demands of the unbridled luxury that today reigns in all classes, it was her daughter among those who always appeared first in the Prado and in the Retiro dressed according to the latest fashion, offering perhaps fodder to the murmuring and to the envy of those who were eclipsed by her beauty; But the world was unaware of the depravation to which Mariana and Dolores were subjected in the intimate life to handle such expenses.[235] (239).

These objectives of the bourgeois class place emphasis on lofty appearance in the public sphere, even if these sacrifices infringe on the reality of the private sphere of the home. Perhaps this is best explained with Noël Valis's description of *lo cursi* or kitsch in those "who pretends to refinement and elegance without possessing them" (31). According to her,

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[234] "Ella es el archivo de un sin número de historias de Madrid" "podéis estar seguros de que lejos de incurrir en sensibles omisiones, las aumentará y amenizará con aquellos incidentes y comentarios que su fecunda imaginación y dócil lengua le sugieren y facilitan."

[235] "Sin poseer un caudal suficiente para seguir los caprichos de la moda y las exigencias del lujo desenfrenado que hoy reina en todas las clases, era su hija de las que primero se presentaban siempre en el Prado y en el Retiro vestida con arreglo a los últimos figurines, ofreciendo quizás pasto a la murmuración y a la envidia de las que se veían eclipsadas por su belleza; pero el mundo ignoraba las privaciones que en la vida íntima se sujetaban doña Mariana y Dolores para atender a tales gastos."

> The pervasiveness of *lo cursi* provides a significant key to an understanding of modern Spanish culture and literature. From mid-nineteenth century on, the Spanish middle classes were nervously obsessed with their appearance, their representation publicly and privately as the newest (and most unstable symbol of success and power. These same middle classes, with interests and values tied to a burgeoning national identity, had also to contend with the realities of cultural, social, and economic dyssynchronicity, a sharply felt sense of inferiority (in relation to powers like France and England), and insufficiency (32).

It is the this "burgeoning" of national identity that Aguilera wishes to illustrate as it is played out in different levels of society in *Proverbios*, particularly when this "burgeoning" infringes on the traditional and familiar private sphere. And while Dolores is initially open to public viewing and envy, when she is promised to be married her beauty must be preserved in the same way any commercial good (based on modes of capitalization and the commodification of personal appearance) would be safeguarded: "Once the marriage to Robles was agreed upon, Dona Mariana was transformed as if by enchantment, and her house, formerly open to the entire world, now seemed like a convent of nuns" (239).[236]

What characterizes *costumbrismo* in *Proverbios* is not so much the values and ideologies that the middle class encompasses, but rather the unseating of Spanish and traditional values for modern ones that did not represent what Aguilera perceived as Spain's modern reality. At least, Aguilera depicts them in this sense. The "demands of the unbridled luxury", "whims of fashions" and "the latest designs" enter Spain by way of Europe, causing characters like doña Mariana and

[236] "Acordado ya el casamiento con Robles, doña Mariana se trasformó como por encanto, y su casa, abierta antes para todo el mundo, parecía ahora un convento de monjas".

Teresa in *Al freír será el reír* physical depravation in order to live up to those values that are imposed on them, instead of living within their own means. This is only a portion of society that Aguilera seeks to capture in *Proverbios*, because as I have stated, the middle class is not the sole focus. *Proverbios* is a novel enterprise in that it looks to show how Spanish society is affected by its readiness to comply with modern and foreign values upon ignoring their own. The traditional proverbs warn against such vices and imprudence that do not align with Spanish traditions. But they also suggest that the best way to face the rapid change of the modern world is to rely on Spanish virtues. In sum, a modern Spain should be built from within.

Conclusions & Research Agenda

Ventura Ruiz Aguilera's oeuvre has not been adequately studied. However, I see my own investigation of it as a process which has just begun. Even after researching his most known works, there is still much to be examined. These works have constituted a vacuum in literary scholarship which exists due to the fact that the period in which Aguilera's most exemplary publications are produced is scarcely studied. In fact, not enough has been said about Aguilera's *Ecos nacionales* (1849) as a poetic representation of the revolutionary atmosphere in Spain in terms of literature, politics, and society. Aguilera's *Proverbios ejemplares* (1864) shares a similar fate in that, until now, scholarship has not succeeded in adequately acknowledging its influence on the development of the modern novel.

Although the implications of the Revolutions of 1848 did not have a sweeping effect on Spain, Aguilera's *Ecos* displays some features tied to the so-called Spring of Nations for its democratic spirit as well as its support for the rights of the individual, its critical stance on education reform and other national and social issues. These matters are not predominantly represented in the collections of most widely known poets of the time, such as Ramón de Campoamor, Vicente Barrantes José Selgas y Carrasco, and others. These key points and elements are often overlooked because, since Aguilera's death, *Ecos* has been widely disregarded and criticized negatively not only for its patriotic themes but due to its "unpatriotic" style. Spain had an alleged national form—the *romance*—and, for some contemporary critics, the ballad was not representative as a viable outlet for the depiction of Spanish issues. As a result, more noteworthy elements of the work were collectively swept aside. However, critics have failed to take into account that Aguilera's *Ecos* are a direct result of his exile to Castellón de la Plana by General Narváez's government active from 1844 to 1851. Consequently, *Ecos* is in constant

dialogue with and responds to the backdrop of this time period in such a way that is not found during this time period.

In addition to *Ecos*'s inclusion of social themes, its innovative nature has also made it necessary that I classify its poems into two separate categories inspired by Aguilera's own reflection on his poetry: popular and national *ecos*. The popular *eco* centers on the unprivileged classes of 19th century Spain and is best read as an effort to inspire social change and reform. On the other hand, the national *eco* sings the glories of Spain's past and nostalgically revives the grandeur of this history. It further serves to comment on other countries where Aguilera believes liberties are lacking and injustice prevails.

More specifically, the popular *eco* represents Aguilera's idea of the *vulgo* or the masses for which he believed the poet had to lower himself from his place of privilege in order to properly portray their voice. It is through this voice that one perceives the most salient issues of 19th century concern, such as the problem with education in villages, the abandonment of veterans, despotism of tyrants, pauperism and charity, and prostitution. These themes come together to combat marginalization or as Aguilera himself states, so that "from the collection of so many and such varied objects and issues, there emerges a clear and precise whole" which aims to "be an exact copy of the physiognomy of the people" (*Ecos* xi).[237] In bringing together these "varied objects and issues" together with the voices that represent them, Aguilera takes them out of their social marginalization.

Aguilera also focused on the middle class. This investigation further recognizes and proves that the idea behind the all-embracing face of the people evolves in Aguilera's *Proverbios*

[237] "de la unión de estos y otros elementos esparcidos y diversos, del conjunto de tantos y tan variados objetos y asuntos, resulte un todo claro y preciso" "que sea un traslado exacto de la fisonomía del pueblo."

ejemplares as it represents this group. This same class would be the fundamental and pivotal driving force for the Realist modern novel that *Proverbios* precedes and influences. This is especially true in the case of Galdós who eventually ushered in the aforementioned novel and who saw Aguilera's incorporation and representation of the middle class as a sign that the advent of the Spanish Realist novel was occurring. I based these findings on Galdós's famous article "Observaciones sobre la novela contemporánea en España. *Proverbios ejemplares* y *Proverbios cómicos* por Ventura Ruiz Aguilera" ("Observations on the Contemporary Novel in Spain") which is often cited although not in the context of Ruiz Aguilera's contribution. I add these findings to those already postulated by Stephen Miller who was one of the first to draw attention to this article and the influence Aguilera had on Galdós. In addition to this fact, Galdós, as scholars like Mercedes Patiño have point out, frequented the Ateneo to obtain sketches of Salamanca from Aguilera that would serve him in *Episodios nacionales*.

With the aforementioned relation of Galdós and Aguilera in mind, themes established in *Proverbios* concerning the vices and virtues of Spain's middle class are carried over and developed in later realist authors. A few characters in *Proverbios* bring together aspects that match those in Galdosian novels. For example, the altruistic and humble Pepa in the *novela corta* "Al freír será el reír" can be described as a miniature version *Misericordia*'s Benigna. These findings are added to those of Reginald Brown who saw analogous elements between Aguilera's *novela corta* and Galdós's *La de Bringas*. In addition to these outcomes, I showed how the visual representation of the Stock Market is perpetuated in the work of Narcis Oller, specifically his novel, *La fiebre del oro* (*Gold Fever*).

While Aguilera's literary tenets may be seen to continue in Galdós—a fact that still deserve more attention—other concerns that characterize *Proverbios* do not continue to be a

central focus in most authors of his generation. I am referring specifically to the manifestation of *costumbrismo* and the pronounced aversion towards foreign influences. The concern for Spain's forfeiting of national tradition due to foreign influences begins with Romanticism and *costumbrismo*. It continues with Aguilera's *Proverbios* where Aguilera gives modernity a Spanish façade based on *costumbrismo*. The collection's prologue begins with the rejection of both Frenchified and foreign imports in the Spanish novel, a phenomenon that other Spanish novelists, like Clarín, welcomed as the inevitable spirit of the times. Against this and similar foreign influences, the proverb is the guiding component to the representation of Spanish life which incorporates the presence of modernity and its effects on the middle class. To this effect, *Proverbios*, rather than denying modernity, is a direct result of it.

Future Investigation

Many aspects of Aguilera's literary oeuvre deserve further intention. Much of his poetry and prose continues to be overlooked. A more comprehensive investigation is needed to discern Aguilera's contribution to popular poetry, specifically his poetry collection *Cantares*, which Palacio Valdés claimed to be Aguilera's greatest work (275). Studies carried out by critics like Diez Taboada and Castro García already highlight Aguilera's production within this mode of poetry, but their findings do not center on the *cantares* themselves but rather archival impressions on their relativity in the trajectory of Spanish popular poetry. In addition to this book of poems, *Elegías* also deserves a more thoughtful analysis than what I and others have been able to give it here. It is perhaps one of the most eminent books of poems in which a mournful father's intimate pain offers, according to Donald Shaw, "a refreshing novelty of subject and manner" (61).

In terms of Aguilera's prose, I believe that two collections, apart from *Proverbios*, offer a viable route for further investigation. These are a collection of short stories *Cuentos del día* published in 1868 and a novel *El mundo al revés, novela de costumbres* published in 1865. The first work comprises a collection of fantastic stories in which Aguilera stays true to the representation of social concerns. The second, a lengthy sentimental novel, tells the fate of the Figueroa family after losing their position in society and bears a resemblance to the novela corta, "Al freír será el reír".

My own contribution highlights newfound details concerning Aguilera's life and works, such as his activism in revolutionary protests like 'La noche de San Daniel' as well as his poetic engagement in abolitionist movements as expressed in his unknown poem "A la hija de un negrero" ("To the Daughter of a Slave Trader"). I plan to conduct future investigation on these events to explore how they are represented in Aguilera's other works.

We now know that unpublished letters reveal Aguilera's literary correspondence with well-known writers, like Juan Eugenio Hartzenbusch that could possibly suggest the latter's influence on Aguilera. However, several manuscripts still go un-transcribed in Biblioteca Nacional de España. These mainly have to do with Aguilera's correspondence with Francisco Ansejo Barbieri (1823-1894), a famous composer of zarzuelas. I believe that these letters might show the influence Barbieri might have had on Aguilera's popular poetry, perhaps his *cantares*. The full extent of this letters is still unknown, and my future project will shed light on this relationship.

In summary, the cultural, literary and societal relevance and influence of Ventura Ruiz Aguilera's works have a far-reaching effect on 19th century literature. However, much of his works still go unstudied. This investigation has helped to identify a persistent need for further

investigation not only in terms of his literary work but also other minor authors writing roughly around the same time period (1850-1870). Like Aguilera, they have not received much attention. In spite of this, my investigation has proceeded in fulfilling this need in the hope that others will follow.

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Appendices

Appendix A

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D. Juan Eugenio Hartzembusch.

Muy Sr mio y amigo: Dejo en poder de mi amigo Bettiparano una comedia titulada "Pagar en igual moneda" para que la ponga en manos de V. y tenga la bondad de revisarla, por si la juzgase digna de la escena presentarla en la Cruz. Me valgo de la amistad de V. porque creo que nadie mejor pueda aconsejarme é influir p.ª la representacion de mi pobre obra, si mereciese su aprobacion.

He sentido muchisimo no pasar á despedirme de V. p.º no me ha sido posible, porque, segun el dueño de la mensageria salimos hoy á las nueve y no á las once como me dijo ayer. De todos modos, en todo aquello que V. le considere util, tiene en Salam.ca pronto á complacerle á su mejor amigo

SS. G. B. S. M.

Ventura Aguilera

Madrid Oct.e 16 de 1841.

Appendix B

D. Ju Eugenio Hartzenbusch.

Salam.ca

Diciembre 6 de 1842.

Mi estimado amigo y Señor: Faltaría á la buena correspondencia, si en la primera ocasion que se me presenta, no le manifestase mi agradecimiento, por las pruebas de amistad que ha tenido el honor de deberle.

Se vá á poner en escena, en el teatro de esta Capital, una comedia en verso, escrita por D. Juan de Alba y por mí; y esperamos que, si el écsito fuese favorable nos dé V. su permiso para dedicársela al tiempo de imprimirla.

Bien pobre es nuestro obsequio, pero no dudamos que V. le aceptará como protector de sus apasionados admiradores.

Con este motivo me ofrezco de V. nuevamente su mejor amigo S.S.Q.

V.

Ventura Ruiz Aguilera

Appendix C

Sr. Eugenio Hartzenbusch

Enero, 12 de 18

Muy Sr. mio y respetable amigo: El Museo Universal necesita, ahora mas que nunca, para cumplir sus compromisos con el público, que las personas que han de favorecerlo y honrarlo con su colaboracion en el presente año, segun anunció en el Prospecto, le proporcionen escritos, en prosa ó verso. En esta confianza de que no ha de ser V. el último que contribuya al mayor lucimiento de aquel semanario, me dirijo á V. y le ruego que me envie algun trabajo, el cual, me dice el Sr. Gaspar, será remunerado como ha sido costumbre en otras ocasiones.

Este motivo, se repite á las

y b. m. s. affmo. s. s. y amigo

Ventura Ruiz

Aguilera

S. C.

Calle de S. Pedro Mártir, 12 - 2º. Dcha

Vita

Bruce Milton Cole was born in Humboldt, Tennessee. He earned both his B.A. and M.A. in Middle Tennessee State University.