

verter en él toda la ironía que en el esteta despertaba la mediocridad. Don Perfecto es académico, crítico pedante, hombre de una sola ventana que ha encauzado su vida y su alma en un lema definitivo: "el diccionario, por el diccionario." Sigue un ensayo sobre la idea de la ciencia donde presenta sus puntos de vista sobre la crítica científica tal como la practica Max Nordau en *Degeneración*. "Max Nordau," dice, "con su libro, ha consumado el descrédito de la crítica científica. Exentos de mácula sólo quedan Ohnet y Don Perfecto." En "Ensayo sobre el modernismo" analiza las tendencias dominantes de este movimiento: individualismo, vuelta a la naturaleza, misticismo.

Termina el libro con una refutación de las cualidades con que Taine describe al hombre español, especialmente cuando afirma que la tradición española se distingue por la ausencia de la sonrisa y de la gracia. Díaz Rodríguez encuentra la sonrisa de Trotaconventos "atravesando el nublado de humo de los autos de fe" y sorprende la gracia en los diálogos de León Hebreo, en algunos pasajes de Lope y Tirso, en el verso gongorino "de ágil flama purpúrea" y en la fresca agua ideal "cuyo canto se escucha en los jardines maravillosos de la Mística."

Es en este ensayo donde, anticipándose a Keyserling y Waldo Frank, afirma que España en vez de pueblo degenerado, es más bien un pueblo primitivo: Estas páginas han sido glosadas por Rodó en su artículo "España niña"—(*Páginas escogidas*, 2ª edición, Madrid, Biblioteca Nueva., págs. 11-13).

Al final del ensayo hace el elogio más bello que conozco de los místicos españoles. Ellos, según dice la maga descripción, "persiguiendo una luz extraterrena, encontraron la luz del estilo que dispensa eterna juventud a las obras maestras de arte. A la despacible música del hierro sucedieron más deleitosas músicas. En las rudas corazas florecieron imprevistas florestas de oro."

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VICTORIA OCAMPO. *La Laguna de los Nenúfares. Fábula escénica en doce cuadros.* Madrid, Revista de Occidente, 1926, 90 págs.

This post-symbolistic play belongs to a well-defined European literary current which transposes the drama of the human soul into a fairy tale. Such plays aim at expounding moral precepts that may, at times, hamper the artist, and send him off on the tangent of the "moral lesson." The danger is, that this "moral lesson" may become entirely too obtrusive and drain the vitality out of those pallid symbols, who try feebly to stage a deeply

human drama. In them, animals occasionally appear endowed with human characteristics, and serve as mouthpieces to the author either for satire or philosophic observation. Several of these plays go but one step beyond Maeterlinck's *Blue Bird* in which children, fairies, and animals, all endowed with second-sight, solve the riddle of happiness or even of existence. Although the *Laguna de los Nenúfares* is not so unbearably allegoric as the *Chanticleer* of Rostand—in which this noble rooster represents *L'Esprit Français!*—it also hides abstractions behind thin veils of poetic personification. It stands quite close to the *Life of the Insects* by the Czech author, K. Čapek, although it is not so satirical, and although its incidents are not so loosely massed together. But it is most directly reminiscent of the Dutch work by F. Van Eeden: *De Kleine Johannes*, translated into English as the *Quest*, in which also a modern *Pilgrim's Progress* of the human soul towards Life and Goodness is unrolled in a similarly unreal dreamland.

The *Laguna de los Nenúfares*, in its twelve scenes, depicts the journey through life of a youth, Copo de Nieve, so-called to symbolize the white soul of man, sheltered from all bitterness and contact with reality, who feels an unsuppressible urge to go out into the world. There he finds only unhappiness and misery, and returns in despair. Nothing can reconcile him to the baseness of life. After conquering the malicious Snakes—the incarnation of the Spirit of Evil—he finds that the goodness of mankind for which he had been searching far and wide, lies close at hand. Just as Tolstoy found God everywhere, and love in every man, so Copo de Nieve, the white soul of man, ends his pilgrimage with the discovery of the divine in man—in the form of the fairies of Love, Goodness, Dreams, Invincible Hope, etc., which dwell in everybody, however lowly or abject.

The symbolism of this drama stiffens too readily into a thin allegory. Although the play constantly speaks of Life, *la Vida* in every aspect, nothing is so far removed from life as this perhaps over-conscious allegorizing. Only too often the characters dwindle off into pale abstractions masquerading as animals or fairies. Man's two guides are the dog, Optimio, who represents the heart or feelings, and the cat, Atrabilis, the cynical philosopher who stands for the scientific intellect. They represent the dualism of human nature in immemorial conflict. These are his companions through the world of sorrow, old age, infirmity, and death. He has to go through the supreme crisis,—finally to learn from the fairies the deepest secret of the Higher Life. When the irradiant water-lily opens—a Buddhist symbol of the Revelation to the Elect—he comprehends the eternal peace

and beauty that lies behind the dolorous aspects of human suffering. With the help of a magic mirror through which he can read men's hearts, he rediscovers these fairies in the invisible heaven which everyone carries within him. At this point the voices of the critical intellect are stilled, and Man in the higher sense has found himself.

Notwithstanding its pseudo-modernity, this drama remains at bottom traditional. It renarrates the four encounters of Buddha, with old age, disease, death, and wisdom. And just as Channa, Buddha's guide, explained to his deeply moved master the meaning of each sight, so Copo de Nieve's two super-intelligent animal companions make illuminating comments about the deeper significance of his encounters. The outstanding character of this kind of play is its moralizing tendency. In fact, future historians will look upon them as upon the morality plays of our age. One could almost transform the *Laguna de los Nenúfares* into one of them by calling Copo de Nieve the Human Soul, Optimio, the Human Heart, Atrabilis, the Human Intellect, the several fairies God's Angels and Ambassadors, and the realm of truth and beauty which Copo de Nieve discovers, that "Kingdom of God which lies within us."

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FRANCISCO AGUSTÍN. *Ramón Pérez de Ayala, Su vida y obras.* Madrid, Crítica, 1927.

This book on Ramón Pérez de Ayala is symptomatic of the new spirit in the young literary world of Spain. Here is a writer who begins his career with love and admiration for a man of a generation one removed from his own. His book treats of the triune personality of Pérez de Ayala, the poet, the novelist, and the essayist. As it is a book of a lover in love with the beloved object, it tells us of the emotions of the lover instead of defining the traits of the object with precision and comprehension.

Sr. Agustín is handicapped as a critic because he lacks a set of concepts independent of those found in the writings of the author whose work he summarizes. The created world of Ayala can be known through reading Ayala, but the critic's job of giving the underlying philosophy of the author's work is outside the book,—in the critic. Ayala's output is hard to pigeonhole; it is difficult to translate his intuitive stuffs into concepts. For he is an intellectual. The reader enjoys his work without effort; but he needs the critic's guidance to enable him to see the system