

Notes on Rhetoric and Aesthetic in Giménez Caballero's *Visitas literarias* (1925-1928)

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Ernesto Giménez Caballero (1899-1988) is a polemic figure in the contemporary criticism of Spanish literature. His enthusiastic Fascism—so extreme that even the Falange asked him to leave—as well as his inveterate elitism in later life combine to form a personage rather unappetizing to the critic of today. This monolithic view of GC's¹ life, however, is rather incomplete. The young man who went to Strasbourg in 1921, who was called to military service in Morocco the same year, and who returned to his job in France in 1923—this man was not a Fascist, and was only so elitist as his (admittedly considerable) early enthusiasm for Ortega y Gasset could make him (Dennis, "Prólogo" 17). Most of our current efforts on Giménez Caballero are devoted to his fiction writing, generally starting with *Yo, inspector de alcantarillas* (1928). Unfortunately, this tendency leaves a hole in our understanding of GC's aesthetic evolution, as it ignores both his first novel (*Notas marruecas de un soldado* 1923) and the appreciable quantity of literary journalism produced in the 1920s under the auspices principally of *El Sol* and then of *La Gaceta Literaria*. It might be argued that the best way to approach Octavio Paz, Juan Ramón Jiménez or Martín Amis is probably not through their book reviews, and there is undeniable logic there. Nevertheless, many readers do make their first acquaintance with novelists and poets through these sorts of literary investigations, only afterwards proceeding to the actual artistic works.

In a similar fashion, then, did Giménez Caballero make himself known in the mid-1920s to the Spanish reading public. Hernando and Dennis both note that the first issue of *La Gaceta Literaria* was sold out the day it went on sale; it is not unreasonable to ask why that might have been, given the gloomy predictions some elder critics were offering as regards the fate of a purely literary newspaper. In hindsight, one may identify the 1920s as a decade particularly hospitable to the diffusion of poetic and aesthetic values by means of literary journalism (Bou 556). It is my contention that the literary journalism GC wrote for *El Sol* and *El Heraldo de Madrid* paved the way for the publication of the magazine he directed from #10 Recoletos, both by providing him a public forum in which to experiment and develop an aesthetic ideal and by bringing him to the attention of the literary figures of the day, who (with a few exceptions like Azorín) liked Giménez Caballero and were willing to spend time and money on him. He was granted sponsorship by Ortega y Gasset, friendship with Pío Baroja, and interviews with a rarefied stratum of the Spanish intelligentsia: Menéndez Pidal, Ramón y Cajal, and the Bishop of Madrid. The *Gaceta Literaria* was as successful as an avant-garde journal could hope to be, publishing 123 issues before the general preference for surrealism crowded it out (Bou 559) and its editorial swing to the right made its pages less hospitable to experimental prose (Graham and Labanyi 427). As well, during the 1920s GC was active in the critical company of avant-garde writers like Gómez de la Serna and Benjamín Jarnés, also scions of bourgeois families, with whom he shared a conviction of

belonging to an aesthetically privileged minority (Mainer 244-5). The core of this aesthetic privilege was described by the Catalan architect Josep Pijoan in 1928 as a belief that develops from the ever-accelerating increases in material and scientific knowledge: “Más que nada coincide con el concepto del mundo moderno de que las cosas pueden ser de mil maneras” (Pijoan, qtd. in Mainer 171). This contemporary notion of the arbitrariness of reality would later be described critically as a growing Heracleitean awareness of the inevitability of change: “The increasingly acute awareness that change is the condition we live by, that society and social relations exist in a constant state of flux, provoked all kinds of anxieties and insecurities, which fed into numerous forms of social, cultural, and political expression in the period between the 1890s and the 1930s” (Graham and Labanyi 12). Giménez Caballero is a particularly conflicted figure in such a context, contrasting his early openness to aesthetic experimentation with his later acceptance of highly univocal discourses of religious and statist veneration. GC was able to participate in and enjoy a literary scene that emphasized overt experimentation with the conventions of the linguistic combinatorial system, especially as the awareness grew of how arbitrary such conventions are; he was apparently not able to make the leap to accepting the equal arbitrariness of certain social conventions. [As Calinescu notes, this tension was not uncommon among avant-garde writers, who sometimes struggled to simultaneously accept such intense artistic freedoms and the discipline that their programmatic political goals required (111)].

The roots of GC’s fascist aesthetic and political philosophy were present in the period dealt with in this essay. There can be no doubt that Giménez Caballero the Europeanizer perished around 1923. It was at this time that he met his Italian-born wife and began to visit Italy, where he was cordially received by the Fascist establishment and even admitted to the Duce’s presence. Mussolini’s supporters were primarily found among the petit bourgeois veterans of World War I; as Mainer notes, though Spain sat out the wider European conflict, the Moroccan war in which the sons of Spain’s bourgeoisie (including GC) fought would serve the same ideological purpose (173). As well, the experiences recorded in *Notas marruecas de un soldado* evince dissatisfaction with the way Anglo-Saxon Europe tended to deal with their southern, Latin neighbors. Foard refers to the novel as an “angry protest against the nations of western Europe” (7). GC was particularly incensed by the British occupation of Gibraltar, a foreign presence which, he felt, made him “a foreigner in one’s own country” (GC, quoted in Foard 7). This abandonment of Ortega y Gasset’s program to Europeanize Spain does not entail, however, a total rejection of all outside influences. It is Northern Europe that irks GC; in the constant discourse on “el problema de España” that occupied so many writers (Fox 13), GC asserted that “Spain’s salvation could not be found by importing the culture of its northern neighbors” (Foard 15). Even German fascism was slightly suspect; in 1933 Giménez Caballero will write that German fascism is pagan and Italian fascism Christian; as Diffie notes, it is undoubted that “Spain is identified with Christian fascism” (470), and therefore with the political currents of Southern rather than Northern Europe.

The habit of years of scholarship on Giménez Caballero affects the essay that proposes to discuss his early writing, as any essay about his work prior to about 1928 requires that quite a bit of space be spent on what he is not, rather than on more positively

descriptive or analytical concepts. GC's essays from 1925 and 1926 do betray a preference for Spanish themes, but this is probably unsurprising; after years away (his first year in Strasbourg, military service in Morocco after the disaster of Annual, and a second stay in Strasbourg) GC was rediscovering his native city of Madrid, a city that in the dynamic period of the early 1920's must have changed a good deal. I think it would be academically difficult to say that GC's penchant for autochthonous topics is evidence of a fascist cancer growing in his intellect. His adherence to the literary vanguard was closer and more lucid (to use Mainer's word) than the allegiance of some of his contemporaries. Mainer writes that perhaps alone among the Madrid-centered avant-garde, Giménez Caballero was fully aware "con respecto a la significación política y moral de la posición vanguardista [...] en primer lugar, por lo que su obra tiene de tentativa de politizar la rabiosa contemporaneidad del movimiento" (245). It was GC's fascination with the idea of new values, perversely, that would lead to his admiration of fascism, not the other way around (Foard 10). Like most young writers of most historical periods, GC was looking for a way to get past the legacy of his elders, even before his fascism became a wedge between him and former mentors like Ortega; Dennis writes of his efforts to "ponerse a tono con el combativo espíritu juvenil que se afirma en Europa a comienzos del siglo XX" ("Palabra a la imagen" 363). The pieces collected in the book I examine here are not programmatic plans for the Fascist future of Spain. (Giménez Caballero does indeed write such books, such as *La nueva catolicidad* and *El genio de España*, but not until years later).

Having briefly described what the essays collected in *Visitas literarias* are not, it seems cogent to say a word or two about what they are. Upon his return from France the second time, the prior success and notoriety of *Notas marruecas de un soldado*² quickly caused the Madrid literary establishment to make him room. Ortega y Gasset, a former professor, commissioned some articles from GC for the *Revista de Occidente*, and the editor of *El Sol*, Urgoiti, put him on the staff to write literary reviews and essays. The literary reviews were collected into a book very early: *Carteles*, from 1927. GC enjoyed drawing, and many of his reviews were accompanied by "carteles" that somehow explicated his meaning; the most famous, of course, charts the literary firmament as he saw it at the time, with Menéndez Pidal and Ortega y Gasset as gas giants surrounded by smaller dependent bodies, Valle-Inclán and Pío Baroja as masterless comets, and Giménez Caballero and his *Gaceta literaria* partner Guillermo de Torre as a pair of small but independent stars. Because GC is a vanguardist before anything, however, some of his literary reviews were drawings and nothing else, as well as crossing genres into the prose poem (see particularly his reviews of Baroja's novels, cited in Dennis' "Prólogo," 23-4). This strong departure from conventions of genre marks the fundamental freedom that characterizes the avant-garde; indeed, Graham and Labanyi describe GC's later *Gaceta literaria* as the home of an "elite critical discourse" whose elitism consisted of a "curious blend" not just of elite thematics, but of essays with an elitist or experimental construction (64).

Giménez Caballero's reviews (*reseñas*) were published in 1927, but the other essays, so difficult to pigeonhole as to genre or even motivation, remained unedited until 1995, when Nigel Dennis produced the Pre-Textos edition. It is hard to say for sure why

this should be so, but we do know that, from the outset, GC planned to continue the “visitas literarias” in the *Gaceta literaria*, but never managed to get around to it. By 1928-9, Giménez had passed more or less completely from the *européizante* camp to the influence of Ramiro de Maeztu and other fascist thinkers; perhaps the literary essays were insufficiently programmatic, incompletely *engagés*, unsatisfyingly bourgeois. It is certainly the case that critics of the period like Mainer have identified general differences of attitude in the twenties and in the thirties, differences emblemized by GC’s move from a more left-leaning to a more right-leaning form of political vanguardism (172).

Regardless, the years from 1925 to 1928 were prolific ones, and several dozen *visitas* were published in *El Sol*. They generally range in length from three to seven pages and are almost invariably directed to a specific person. This person need not be a writer, though the early *visitas* are all literary ones; all of the subjects are men, excepting only the essay on the actress La Argentinita, which barely addresses her at all. This looseness with topicality is another salient characteristic of the essays; they might purport to treat one thing or another, but often GC’s impatient imagination takes over and the essay whirls away. There is a feeling in these essays that they were written very quickly and without revision. This furious style can occasionally be daunting (or “histrionic,” as Dennis puts it in his prologue) but as expository writing it is probably helpful. In the study of the essay or of any expository prose, it is necessary to rethink some of the background assumptions inherited *cum lacte* from the New Criticism of the 1950’s. Scholars like Wellek and Northrop Frye call the critical search for intentionality fallacious (Frye 86-7), believing it a mistake to look for some nebulous authorial intention in a poetic or literary text. In terms of fictional or lyric writing, I think this is probably the case, but with the essay, the intentional fallacy is no longer a danger. Expository writing is fundamentally performative—it does something, it has an overt intentionality.

To complicate matters further, the essays in *Visitas literarias* have an overt intentionality that is often subverted by the writer himself. Other books of literary “visits,” such as Amis’s *Visiting Mrs. Nabokov*, intend to permit the reader to witness a privileged interaction between literary personages, thus satisfying that reader’s need to feel a personal connection with their favorite cultural producers as persons, rather than as texts. The successes and failures of these literary interviews have to do more with the openness of the interviewee than with the prose of the interviewer. To use Ortega y Gasset’s famous analogy, the essay of literary interview is supposed to be a perfectly transparent window into content, undistracting in its form. However, as the reader of *Yo, inspector de alcantarillas* is fully aware, Giménez Caballero is not at all interested in transparency. The texts play back and forth across the dividing line between expository and lyric writing; they are, to put it simply, what one expects from literary criticism written by a dedicated member of the avant-garde. All the essays have some of the characteristics of the standard literary essay—they purport to be about something, which is not always true of other forms of avant-garde literary expression. But the essay as genre, in Derrida’s terms among the most centered of texts precisely because it can appeal to an intentionality closed to poetic or novelistic forms, breaks down, springs

leaks, in the hands of GC. The pieces decenter themselves, demonstrating the growing appreciation of the combinatorial tangle of language “per se.”

This self-conscious decentering is, of course, a standard strategy of avant-garde prose, which experiments more and more overtly with the conventions of the arbitrary linguistic combinatorial system. As Mainer notes, Giménez Caballero is (in the early and middle 1920s) a writer in the critical company of vanguardists like Gómez de la Serna and Benjamín Jarnés, among others (244-5). These writers, mostly (like Ortega y Gasset himself) from a well-to-do bourgeois background, saw themselves as forming an aesthetically privileged minority. Their awareness of particular aesthetic sensitivity engendered, in turn, what Matei Calinescu calls a “consciousness of the privileges and responsibilities of leadership” (104). This consciousness, characteristic of all avant-garde movements whatever their political leaning, places Giménez Caballero among the intellectual descendants of the regenerationists of the 1890s, including Costa and Ganivet, writers of whom GC was deeply aware. The connection with the earlier writers is reinforced by the fact that of Spain’s avant-garde writers, GC was perhaps the most aware of the avant-garde position’s inevitable political consequences, as opposed to treating it as an exclusively aesthetic renovation—Mainer maintains that Giménez Caballero’s ultimate artistic goal was to “nacionalizar y popularizar la obra nueva” (246). I claim, then, that *Visitas literarias* fits into this project precisely by combining an avant-garde prose structure with a deeply national thematics—by interviewing a series of interesting and attractive persons, and then constructing the textual artifact of that interview in accordance with the new aesthetic, readers are in a sense encouraged to engage materially with that aesthetic rather than to dismiss it. Indeed, the vanguardists of the beginning of the twentieth century sometimes resemble the postmodernists of the 1990s in their wrestling with language as a problematized artistic medium rather than as a transparent vehicle for content of one kind or another, e.g. Galdós or Zola’s social realism (Mainer 181). The difference between vanguardism and postmodernism that is important in Giménez Caballero’s case, though, is that postmodernism tends to deal with the language/reality divide by creating purely linguistic art, whereas the politically motivated European vanguardists tend to see the divide as a challenge and an invitation to search for a deeper, more elemental kernel of reality. (One might think of Juan Ramón Jiménez’s well-known 1917 verses “¡Intelijencia, dame/ el nombre exacto de las cosas!/. . .Que mi palabra sea/ la cosa misma/ creada por mi alma nuevamente” (245), with its clear notion that the inspired use of language is capable of privileging the poetic with transcendent insight).

At this point, a close reading of an example from *Visitas* is indicated. Moving through the text, it will become evident that while Giménez Caballero does indeed prefer Spanish (and particularly Madrid-centered) topics, there is a total lack of programmatic political reference. Mainer’s evaluation of Giménez Caballero as the most politically aware of the generation of 27 is extremely relevant here, as we ask ourselves if the author of these essays is recognizably fascist or authoritarian. Put another way, we will see unequivocally that GC’s aesthetic is avant-garde; the reader must ask if the essays are transparent enough to perceive a political consciousness behind that aesthetic. I have chosen here to present a *visita* that seems exemplary of Giménez Caballero’s traits as an

essayist: the very first essay, on Pío Baroja, a personal friend of GC, dating from February 1925. It was originally presented in two parts, but I will treat it here as one essay. The selection I have made here is not unproblematic, as I am forced for reasons of space and cogency to leave behind some favorites among the essays. The essay on Azorín, for example, is couched in the form of a soliloquy after GC is refused entrance to the writer's home; the essay on Juan Ramón Jiménez, a story of walking behind the famous poet without gathering the nerve to speak to him. [Eventually, in an early issue of *Gaceta literaria*, Giménez and Jiménez would meet for a real interview (Hernando, *Biografía y valoración* 74)].

I will begin the reading of the essay dedicated to Baroja with a look at the narrative technique. While expository writing is not often examined from a narratological perspective, these essays are not quite purely expository, as I mentioned above. There is invariably an intradiegetic narrator that pops up in the essays, a technique that prefigures New Journalism a la Wolfe or Talese as well as opening the essays to Genette's third definition of narrative: "an event that consists of someone recounting something: the act of recounting taken in itself" (26). The question of the visitas' "literariness" is one that must be examined on a case-by-case basis, as it is not constant throughout the collection.³ Thus it is unsurprising to find even in GC's expository prose a technique of narration and focalization that could be borrowed from any film script. GC uses the technique in a variety of ways; generally characteristic is the opening "shot" of the Baroja family's Madrid house, with its attention to detail and emphasis on distinguishing this particular house from the others that surround it, beginning from the first paragraph to impart features to the house that will later be attributed to its owner. Equally characteristic is the manner in which GC makes the entire first half of the essay into a musing on the urbanized way of life typical of Madrid, having to visibly drag himself back to the matter at hand. Often the essays start with an inkling of the topic at hand, but some detail of what is written will pull the narrator away; in this case, it is GC's distaste for the collective living forced on the majority of *madrileños* by their urban context. Thus, the narrator begins by distinguishing the Baroja house from other Madrid houses, those both more and less humble than itself. The essay opens,

Hay en el número 34 de la calle de Mendizábal, aquí, en Madrid, una casa cuya vida individual y autónoma merece el haber sido seguida con una atención de novelista. Cosa que no puede ofrecerse a la mayoría de las casas madrileñas, por su espíritu de falansterio, comunista, de paquetes de nichos, de ladrillos entrepisados y nuevos, tan vacías de historia y de pátina interesante. (85)

It is this observation that starts GC on the first of many tangents that will characterize the entire collection of *Visitas literarias*. Purporting to write about Pío Baroja, GC permits himself a flight of vitriol that encompasses both the abovementioned "paquetes de nichos" characteristic of the lower class housing available at the time as well as the gigantic townhouses of the Paseo de la Castellana, palaces that "tienen algo de tenderetes en lugar sin mar." While the workers' housing saps any chance of individualism, the palaces destroy whatever aristocracy was left in the scions of Castile's

great noble families—no matter how rarefied one’s social position, “nunca dejará de parecer, ahí, en ese paseo, un salchichero enriquecido por la guerra” (GC 86).

Baroja’s street, however, appears to benefit from his presence. It is full of “una alegría delicada y finamente madrileña,” permitted this quietude by the absence of passers-by and a general sense of isolation. The discourse here is entirely metonymic; the characteristics GC attributes to the house are evidently those he will later emphasize in Baroja the writer. As the narrative “camera” moves over the façade of the house, it rises gradually to settle on a sort of belvedere that crowns it: “...en todo lo alto un receptáculo, un verdadero nidal de pájaro para un miembro familiar que debía andar disperso y sin afinamiento [...] Este miembro era Pío Baroja” (87). In this manner, the reader is situated for the discussion with Baroja that is to come—that is, the reader is now figuratively located at the base of the large house, craning the neck to better peer up at the Parnassian height of the master’s work-space.

The house, “la casa,” is now transformed into a symbol of Baroja’s House, his “Casa,” the better to facilitate Giménez Caballero’s idea of genius as proceeding at least partially from good family inheritance. “La familia Baroja-Nessi, unida a la de Caro-Raggio, en esa casa media señorial, medio comerciante, es un caso de pureza de tradiciones y de emigraciones raciales” (88). If one possible motive for the examination of these essays is the location of potential seeds of GC’s later fascism, we have found one here. Foard, in his discussion of the conflicts between Giménez Caballero and the “mainstream” thought of the Falange as exemplified by José Antonio Primo de Ribera and Ledesma, emphasizes the distinction nationalist/internationalist (14). The Falange as a whole was primarily a Spanish nationalist movement, more interested in the restoration of *valores castizos* and the destruction of syndicalism than in the establishment of a Fascist state. Giménez Caballero, on the other hand, believed in the need for a world fascist state, probably headed by Mussolini, based on Latin values—in effect, a reinvention of the Roman Empire for the twentieth century. It is logical, then, that GC would find such merit in the blending of Spanish and Italian, especially a mixture that produces such aristocratic fruit—even the youngest member of the household, the reader is told, “tiene preguntas y ademanes que denuncian comprometedoramente al genio racial de la casa” (88). (This youngest son of Pío will grow up to be the writer Pío Caro Baroja.)

This “genio racial” is what GC is looking for in his interview with Baroja; the typical avant-garde sensibility looks constantly for the regeneration and rejuvenation of linguistic media, and Giménez Caballero is convinced that the Basque writer has what the moribund literary press is lacking; he comes to Baroja to acquire “algunos comentarios inéditos del escritor de la casa [...] que viniesen a animar algo la inmovilidad, sosa y aburrida, a que la Prensa está condenada” (89). To complete the cinematographic introduction to the built environment, the “camera” focuses on the figure of GC himself approaching the house, proceeding from general description of the house to a focalized point-of-view, moving from the street into the atmosphere of Baroja’s house, “acogedor y aristocrático.”

Having concentrated in the first half of the essay on the built environment that surrounds and characterized Pío Baroja, the second half focuses on his person and *manera de ser*. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the essay opens focalized on Baroja's head, specifically in the Basque-style beret he enjoys wearing around the house. Following the cinematographic style that flavored the first half of the essay, in a sort of montage the image of the writer's head crowned with *boina* is followed immediately by the image of the belvedere atop the house, this time from inside, where Baroja eats, sleeps, and writes. The combination of the two images in quick succession leads the reader to feel that GC is actually taking us into the writer's head, showing us some privileged view of Don Pío. This establishment of privilege is a constant in Giménez Caballero's literary essays, as well as in the entire genre. While one might take offense at a perceived play-up of the writer's special powers of access, narratologically it is an evidently necessary assertion of narratorial authority—in an expository essay, no matter how literary, it is to be expected that the writer clarify what contexts permit them to make certain statements authoritatively. GC, especially in an essay written in 1925 when he was still largely an unknown element, is obliged to explain himself. I am sure it did his ego no harm either.

Inside the belvedere of the house that is also in a certain sense the inside of Baroja's head, we find an image of the artist seated with his mother. GC uses this image to remind the reader of Baroja's attachment to the Basque Country in general and to the family in particular; as we have seen, this attachment to the autochthonous and the familial is very important for Giménez Caballero. But because GC's text is not an academic essay on Baroja, but a "literary visit," the narration subsequently leaves the writer's eyrie behind to descend, focalized on Baroja himself, to examine how the family life of such a "*gens*" or noble clan differs from that of the urban mob outside. The purpose of many of the *Visitas literarias* is to humanize their subjects, whether motivated by mischief, e.g. the essay on Azorín, clearly intended to bring him down a bit, or by affection, especially the essays on Juan Ramón Jiménez and the one on Baroja I examine here. The narrator here is a reader like any other, differentiated only by the nature of his access to the writer at hand.⁴

This access, then, is what permits GC to explain Baroja's intimate daily routine. In cinematographic language, this point in the essay is a question of focus and zoom: "Cuando no come ni duerme, ni trabaja, desciende al piso principal a reunirse en torno a la mesa del salón comedor, y charlar, charlar con toda su gente y con el amigo que llega" (91). Not only does GC know what Baroja does, but as the "camera" zooms in on him and the members of his family, the reader begins to pick out distinctions between the writer and the others, some of whom are also well known in the artistic establishment: "Baroja, al contrario que su hermano Ricardo, que siempre anda dándose los paseos de un tigre que tuviese bolsillos en los pantalones, le gusta charlar sentado, bien arrellanado, bien cómodo, si es posible, algo tumbado" (91). As is often the case in film, the zoom terminates in the beginning of some kind of sound. The narration, previously focalized on the physical characteristics and movement of the people and the setting, now transfers its attention to the dialogue. One advantage the writer has over the cinematographer, though, is control of pace. Writers can stop and examine one point for some time without the reader becoming too incommoded; the filmmaker is obliged to continue moving. This

probably has more to do with the linear nature of narrative language than anything else—a description of an object continues to move even if the point of view and the object itself are at rest, as otherwise the description would end. A camera’s POV shot could hypothetically be infinite, as the image does not require the sustenance of continuous narration.

The essay moves, as do all essays, from the general to the particular. In propositional terms, it opens with the statement “There is a house.” Then “There is a man in the house.” Third, “Sometimes the man in the house likes to talk.” What the reader is permitted is access to the more privileged idea of *how* this man likes to talk. For Giménez Caballero, one of the most attractive things about Baroja is his polymathism: “Su táctica dialogadora es sencilla, sagaz y peligrosa, de filósofo a la antigua, es decir, de verdadero filósofo, amigo de chismes y cuentos, a lo Sócrates, a lo Pirrón, a lo Luciano, a lo Lucrecio, a lo Séneca, a lo Erasmo” (92). Baroja’s ability to talk to anyone about anything is essential to his roots in Spanishness. Another film technique, the sudden cut to a different context, permits GC to instantly show what he means. The essay’s narration moves to Vera, the town in Navarre that produced the Baroja family; Baroja enjoys walking around the town, greeting and being greeted as a normal person, “un hombre que desprecia la ínfula y el blasón de la familia...de ahí su anarquía, de tinte tan profundamente aristocrático” (92). It seems that Baroja is compared here to other Spanish thinkers and writers of the day, though Ortega y Gasset is not mentioned specifically.

It is of signal importance that Baroja “habla lo mismo que todo el mundo,” especially in the context of the literary visit, for the purpose of humanizing him in a positive light. In fact, when Giménez Caballero tries to talk to Baroja on literary topics, he is forced to take the artist out of his accustomed social setting, because Baroja simply refuses to bore others with subjects not interesting to them:

Hace falta retirarse con él un poco, lejos de su núcleo habitual, para que aborde temas puramente del oficio y se entregue a su género favorito de la divagación, ya libre del pudor de no causar molestias a otras gentes con cosas que no les importen apasionadamente. (93)

After all of these setting-up exercises, the essay finally reaches its avowed goal: Giménez Caballero asks Baroja some questions of literary bent. It is worthwhile to remember the date of this essay’s publication (13 February 1925) for the first question, “¿Qué le ha parecido a usted el arte de hacer novelas que recomienda Ortega?” Baroja’s response, a cryptic “Ahora le voy a contestar” (93), is evocative. They refer, of course, to Ortega y Gasset’s recently published essay “Ideas sobre la novela,” the introduction of which directly addressed a public debate that Ortega and Baroja had carried on through respective publications—Ortega in the hospitable pages of *El Sol*, Baroja in a theoretical introduction to his novel *La nave de los locos* (Ortega 151). One of the great readerly pleasures of the literary interview or essay is hearing one well-loved writer talk about another behind his or her back, and this essay is no exception. Asked about Ortega’s now-famous strictures for the “arte joven,” Baroja dryly comments, “Ortega, en sus

folletones, viene a decir, en último término, que para hacer novelas hay que ser novelista, cosa que se tenía ya por sabida” (93). While this is certainly a simplistic account of Ortega y Gasset’s phenomenology and typology of avant-garde art, it is the one Baroja uses to justify his disdain for the current literary trends. GC goes along, provoking some questions from the scholarly reader. While GC was never a disciple of Ortega in the manner of Jarnés or even Rosa Chacel, there can be no doubt that his novel *Yo, inspector de alcantarillas* is an avant-garde novel. What, then, to make of his enthusiasm for Baroja’s dismissal of the avant-garde aesthetic?

Narratologically, one might refer to the text protecting itself, the narrator making certain sacrifices that the narration might continue. As the interview continues, Baroja’s attitude—both intellectual and personal—toward Ortega y Gasset is the main focus. While Giménez Caballero is known to have been rather suspicious toward his elders, I suspect that he manipulated the interview in this way because he thought it would make interesting reading. I don’t wish to sound simplistic, but the questions called up by GC’s highly individual use of the essay genre can be answered if we take the essays to be primarily works of art rather than reportage. For example, why does it take GC so much space to arrive at the supposedly crucial part of the article, the interview? It must be that the essay has some purpose outside that of presenting the interview, that there is some other force at work. That force is the one common thread that binds all of the *Visitas literarias* together. It is the expression of the literary avant-garde in that most unlikely of genres, literary criticism. While Renato Poggioli does admit the possibility of an avant-garde criticism, the examples he describes do not resemble what GC writes. These essays are the product of a mind that appropriates everything as means, not feeling a responsibility to mimesis or anything else.

Notes

(1) Using Giménez Caballero’s initials in this fashion (pronounced Gecé) is quite common in essays about him. It was not unusual for GC to refer to himself in this way; Miguel Angel Hernando’s 1975 book includes it in the title. Rather like calling Gómez de la Serna simply “Ramón,” it is a convention. It is sometimes misunderstood by English-speaking historians like Douglas Foard, who asserts in his “Forgotten Falangist” that the nickname “Gecé” is derived from Giménez Caballero’s close identification with the *Gaceta literaria*. This is doubtful, as GC’s book *Carteles* was published in 1927 under his nickname, before the *Gaceta* had reached anything like an apogee of success.

(2) The first printing of *Notas marruecas* sold out in two weeks and landed him in a military prison for eight months (Dennis, “Prólogo” 16-7). Raymond Carr mentions one of the stranger laws in Spanish history, passed in 1906: the Law of Jurisdictions. This rule, adopted at a time when the army seemed to threaten mutiny against the First Republic, permitted the Spanish military legal sway over civilians held to have touched upon the army’s sacred honor. It is certainly the piece of legislation that allowed the army to prosecute Giménez Caballero (Carr 65).

(3) See particularly Sandie Holguin’s excellent study of fascist film, “Taming the Seventh Art,” which is replete with references to Giménez Caballero’s ideas and ideals for Spanish film as a national phenomenon.

(4) And sometimes not even characterized by access, as in the case of the visit to Juan Ramón Jiménez, who does not realize that he is being profiled; the essay is written from the point of view of a passer-by in the street who notices a famous person stroll by.

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