

**1873-1874, End of a Century? Time and Space in Valera's *Pepita Jiménez*, Ros de Olano's *Jornadas de retorno*, and Alarcón's *El sombrero de tres picos* and *La Alpujarra***

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**English Abstract**

**In the wake of 1808, writers struggled to imagine an extensive, meaningful narrative of Spanish history that would explain the continual crises the nation experienced, and point a way beyond them. But as such recurrent problems indicated, this very narrative was always already at the point of collapse. The problem intensified with the brief establishment of a republic (1873-74). This essay explores a 'literature of the First Republic', constituted by interrelated writings by three friends, Ros de Olano, Alarcón, and Valera, and including the latter's novel *Pepita Jiménez*. It argues that at the heart of these texts was a complex dialogue, centering on and responding to Ros de Olano's challenges to narrative form of History. Such a perspective helps us interpret a re-evaluated Alarcón and *Pepita Jiménez* as part of sophisticated efforts to re-conceive national genealogy when profound strains appear between 'lo grande' and 'lo pequeño', the overarching and the local, the grand narrative and the anecdotal.**

**The momentary dilates and grand narrative contracts in these literary experiments. The three friends' alternative conception of space and time was intended to effect both a renewal of literature and a way out of the ideological impasse that confronted liberalism in the early 1870s.**

The years 1873 and 1874 were a time of unprecedented political upheaval. On 11 February 1873, the short-lived but tumultuous reign of Amadeo I, the only non-Bourbon monarch of modern Spain, finally collapsed with his abdication. Subsequently, Spain experienced its first-ever period of republican government, which lasted only until December 1874, and included a period of military-led government in 1874. What I aim to show here is that there was also a distinctive 'literature of the First Republic', one that built on already existing trends from the 1860s. Valera's *Pepita Jiménez* belongs to and makes sense within a group of works by two other established writers: Ros de Olano and Alarcón. In this respect, the account of *Pepita Jiménez* offered here departs from more usual contextualizations, which situate the novel principally in relation or comparison to younger authors such as Galdós and Alas. The latter approach has always proved somewhat problematic, not least because *Pepita Jiménez* is far closer to a rural idyll, a modern pastoral romance, than to the preoccupations of the 'Realist' novel.

I will argue that this 'literature of the First Republic' was a key expression of a centre-right belief that the political crisis of 1873-74 was bringing an entire intellectual period, a *siglo* or century, to an end. From the perspective of these intellectuals, the span of history that began in 1808, and that had defined Spain's passage to modern liberal nationhood, was reaching a traumatic close.

Correspondingly, they looked to fundamental transformations of the visions of time and space, the very efforts at describing the age and its characteristics that had dominated intellectual and cultural life earlier in the century. The epic development of grand narrative is presented in contracted form, whereas the momentary, the anecdotal, and non-events simultaneously dilate. Oft-favoured conventions in depicting time are thus twisted or distorted, and there is a pointedly problematic tension between contraction and dilation. The consequence is a wave of significant formal innovation in literature whose full significance critics have tended to overlook because they have not usually interpreted Valera, Alarcón, and Ros together as a group responding to the crisis of 1873-74. Some critics have noted the formal innovations of some at least of these works and their reinvention of nineteenth-century visions of time (for example on *Jornadas*, Ginger 2000: 91-123). Some scholars too have sought to relate important texts from these years, such as Valera's *Pepita Jiménez*, to contemporary events (for example, Labanyi 2000: 265-67; Fernández 1994: 238). But this article aims to build on existing findings in order to propose an overarching interpretation of these three authors' 'literature of the First Republic'.

Beyond its aesthetic importance, the 'literature of the First Republic' matters because it is a significant attempt to address the recurrent tendency of coherent liberal narrative accounts of space and time to be undermined and destabilized by crises of governability. Many nineteenth-century intellectuals had believed that only an unfurling, extensive narrative account of time, rooted in the historical self-understanding of human existence, could rein in the repeated crises of the age (see Ginger 1999: 11-93). As befits an age continually engaged with debates about political liberalism, there was a parallel concern with relating the development of each

individual being to the unfurling of these grand historical narratives. This is echoed in the extensive use of first-person narrative in three of the four narratives discussed here (*Jornadas*, *Pepita Jiménez*, *La Alpujarra*). But belief in any given grand narrative explanation was necessarily predicated on its ability to resolve the problems of the age. As governments came and went, most dramatically with the dynastic crisis and troubled Republic of 1873 to 1874, existing narratives could appear to lack credibility. Valera, Alarcón, and Ros take as their principal subject the tension lying within liberal grand narratives. By addressing that problem head on, they seek to respond to the supreme crisis of 1873-74 when liberal constitutional monarchism itself faced collapse.

By the standards of previous decades at least, the years 1873 to 1874 were remarkable, not particularly because of the number of works produced and published, but because of their significance within the trajectory of the writers and artists involved. Valera published *Pepita Jiménez* (1874), his first complete novel. Alarcón produced *El sombrero de tres picos* (1874), his first novel since *El final de Norma* (1855), as well as his important travelogue *La Alpujarra* (1873), again the first he had published since the early 1860s. Ros de Olano authored his major pseudo-autobiographical work, *Jornadas de retorno* (1873), his first long publication since 1863. (The latter work has recently been made available to twenty-first century readers in a new Editorial Crítica edition of texts by Ros.) At the same time, of course, Galdós published his earliest *Episodios nacionales*. The pattern extends to the visual arts, though these lie beyond the scope of the present article: for example, Fortuny painted his 1874 work, *Los hijos del pintor en el salón japonés*, which, art historians now agree, he considered the decisive work in creating a new, distinctively personal and modern manner of painting (Mendoza 2004: 58-59).

It is important to maintain a balance between emphasizing the importance of the years 1873 and 1874 and not exaggerating their significance. The individuals discussed in this article were well established, and the works they produced in these two years did not entirely depart from lines of creativity that they had explored during the previous decade. These preceding years had themselves been characterized by a decisive realignment of Spanish political life (Burdial 2008: 152-55). As one would expect, there is no clear sharp line either between some significant works produced during the crisis of Amadeo I's reign immediately prior to the Republic and the developments of 1873-74. Alarcón's *Alpujarra* (published March 1873) relates a journey that took place in March 1872, and is based on notes from that trip (Lara Ramos 2001: 129-32). Similarly, one may reasonably presume that Ros de Olano's *Jornadas*, which was published in January and February 1873 in the *Revista de España*, was conceived prior to that year. But allowing for such qualifications, it is hard not to be struck by the near simultaneous publication of landmark works in the trajectory of so many established individuals. As regards literary history specifically, that impression is reinforced by the fact that these three key writers were closely linked over many years. Ros and Valera were both personal friends of Alarcón, and Valera and Ros had first met as long ago as 1839. Despite the efforts of Montesinos to draw a dividing line between Valera and Alarcón, we will see how a literary dialogue develops between them and Ros de Olano (Montesinos 1977: 25; Lara Ramos 2001: 64; 'Juan Valera: el autor' accessed 2008).

Ros de Olano, by now an experienced politician, soldier, and writer, was the elder of the three writers, aged 65 in 1873, and the most established of the three. This article will argue that his approach to literature was the key reference point in the 'literature of the First Republic'. This is not simply because his two somewhat younger friends

(Valera was 49, Alarcón 40) may be responding specifically during 1873 and 1874 to his *Jornadas*, the first of the four works studied here to be published. Rather, I will argue more broadly that they share and debate very similar literary concerns to those at the heart of Ros's work.

*Jornadas*, written from the perspective of an ageing Ros in his Madrid home in 1873, recalls an event at his family estate in Catalonia following one of the many political uprisings that followed in the wake of 1808, the liberal revolution of 1820. A donkey bites off a man's face prior to decapitating him. As I have argued elsewhere, the narrative is peppered with allusions to the vast struggles of liberalism and absolutism both on a more broadly historical and on a personal level. The donkey's victim is a cruel fighter for absolutism, and Ros himself, because of his liberal beliefs can no longer return to his family home. But the text is at odds with established modes of autobiography and historical memoir writing. This is because its focus, despite the text's relative length, is almost entirely on a single event that is tangential to the narrator's own life, of which he is only a witness, whose significance to him is never rendered entirely clear, and which event in fact occupies relatively little of the text itself. Although it is clearly implied that the donkey's brutal act is significant both for our understanding of the spirit of the age and for Ros's place in it, it is never entirely clear how or why. As is characteristic of previous works by Ros such as *El doctor Lañuela*, what we have here is a twin compression and expansion of established narrative structures: the extensive account of a life or at least a childhood has been replaced by a single tangential incident, but then, rather than providing us with a miniature or small fragment, Ros subjects the tangential incident to extensive treatment. The depiction of time simultaneously contracts and dilates (see Ginger 2000: 21-51, 91-123).

In turn and in their own distinct ways, Alarcón's *El sombrero de tres picos* and *La Alpujarra* respond to these established concerns in Ros de Olano's work. *El sombrero* is structured around a fundamental tension between suggestions of a grand narrative of the nineteenth century, and a contrasting focus on the anecdotal. The opening of the text is resonant with suggestions that it is somehow symbolic of the origins of an era that is now coming to an end (Fernández 1994: 236, 240): 'Comenzaba este largo siglo, que ya va de vencido' (Alarcón 1954: 444). Alarcón tantalizes the reader with references to the grand re-shaping of Europe with which the century began. At the end, Alarcón returns very briefly again to that initial focus, recounting how the Napoleonic invasion of 1808, habitually considered the foundational moment of nineteenth-century Spain, transformed the lives of the protagonists. However, in between these brief hints of a grand narrative, the majority of the story focuses, overtly at least, on a famous anecdote about attempted adultery in Andalusia: at the end of the first, short chapter Alarcón states: 'Y aquí termina todo lo que la presente historia tiene que ver con la militar y política de aquella época' (445). This is not to say that the story is not symbolic of early signs of a changing society - critics like Fernández have found it relatively easy to spot such signs. Rather, it is to say that Alarcón makes a considerable show of indicating that his explicit focus lies elsewhere, in something that seems apparently minor. By comparing the miller, Lucas, to Othello, Alarcón underlines this tension between the explicitly anecdotal, and the hints of a much more widely applicable symbolic resonance. Lucas is 'un hombre como el de Shakespeare' (449). For many nineteenth-century Spanish intellectuals, Shakespeare was considered a writer of prodigious profundity (see Ginger 1999: 217-18). As Valera notes with some irony, Shakespeare was widely considered 'inconcebiblemente sabio'. Despite some scepticism, even he accepts that

Shakespeare's works are redolent with ideas that shaped the future through to the nineteenth century (Valera 1949: 371, 374). The vast source of intellectual insight has now, in *El sombrero*, become a southern Spanish labourer.

In turn, Alarcón indicates how problematic is the literary form of his novel by referring to developments in painting, asking '¿A qué estas actitudes melodramáticas en un cuadro de género?' (449). A genre picture, a *cuadro de género*, was habitually distinguished from more supposedly elevated kinds of art not just because of its small size, but because it dealt with relatively anecdotal subject matter. In contrast, the 'philosophical' significance of often larger works - concerned with major events in history and tradition - was usually emphasized by markedly emotive poses, gestures, and actions. There was nothing novel about trying to transcend the divide between these two sorts of painting, between genre and history. Under the reign of Louis-Phillipe in France, in the 1830s and 1840s, a new kind of painting, *genre historique*, had developed in which major events were portrayed in a supposedly more democratic way, with less focus on a few, melodramatic protagonists, and much more on a greater number of smaller-scale figures, thus depicting a more liberal view of history (see Marrinan 1988). Other artists, such as Fortuny, recreated in smaller scale the melodrama of the epic event as in his *Matanza de los abencerrajes* (1871). Others still, like Valeriano Domínguez Bécquer sought to lend a statuesque and purportedly monumental significance to the rough-edged depiction of people who are more humble and poor than picturesquely folkloric. But all of these were attempts to fuse the epic and the anecdotal, to find the one in the other. What matters in *El sombrero de tres picos* is how pointedly uncomfortable is the relationship, how exaggerated and extreme the tension between a *cuadro de género* and melodrama, between anecdote and the symbolic sweep of grand historical or intellectual significance. The

connection to wider History is as abruptly curtailed then as suddenly resumed at the end. Similarly, elsewhere Alarcón underlines the uneasy co-existence of two quite different tones: ‘¿a qué estas notas lúgubres en una tonadilla alegre?’ (449).

In both *Jornadas* and *El sombrero*, the point is precisely not that we are able to find ‘lo grande en lo pequeño’. Rather, it seems as if we ought to be able to, but the relationship between the two is obscured, difficult to discern. *La Alpujarra*, in turn, reads like a vast attempt on Alarcón’s part to re-state the problem arising from his engagement with the view of time of his close friend Ros. The travelogue interrelates three concurrent timescales - Alarcón’s visit to the Alpujarra mountains amid contemporary political unrest, the uprising by Aben Humeya and the repression of the *moriscos* in the sixteenth century, and, towards the end, the passion narrative from Palestine. In portraying the present as invaded by echoes and, more still, the haunting presence of other time periods, Alarcón’s first-person narrative brings to mind Chateaubriand’s similar autobiographical technique in *Mémoires d’Outre-tombe*. But Alarcón is strikingly different because of the relatively extreme disproportion between the time scales treated in his travelogue, and, not unlike Ros’s earlier *Doctor Lañuela*, between the brevity of the time scale of the main narrative and the extension of the narration. In a work that extends to some 563 pages in the 1874 edition, just 12 days of Alarcón’s life are covered, whereas Chateaubriand represents an entire life. Multiple, expansive time levels co-exist within a very brief timescale in the present day. Once more we see Alarcón echoing Ros’s concern with simultaneous contraction and expansion of time. However, as I have indicated elsewhere and unlike in Ros and perhaps even in his own *Sombrero*, Alarcón is explicit in seeing the dilation of contracted time as opening up potential new vistas to a clear and unequivocal historical self-understanding, which might provide a narrative account of what it

means or ought to mean to be Spanish in the 1870s (Ginger 2008: 61-63). As Martín-Márquez has recently observed (2008: 145-46), through his explicit discursive and allegorical treatment of the Passion, of Aben Humeya's rebellion and fall, and his own experience of the present, Alarcón imagines an alternative historical path in which Christian compassion towards rather than persecution of the *moriscos* might have saved Spain from the evils of a repressive Church. This would have enabled the coexistence of Catholicism and religious and intellectual tolerance, rather than violent opposition between forces purportedly representing those concerns.

Some critics, such as Irvin (1986: 68, 92-93, 156), have observed how curious is Valera's treatment of narrative time in his early prose fiction. But critics have not habitually linked *Pepita Jiménez* with similar tendencies in Ros and Alarcón's writings of 1873-74, perhaps because of Ros's lengthy exile from the literary canon and Alarcón's fall from favour in recent decades. None the less, the parallels are striking. In the prologue, the text is described as being 'a modo de novela, si bien con poco o ningún enredo' (Valera 1874: 146). In line with this statement, from the first letter on the 22 March to the last on 18 June - that is for almost three months - remarkably little happens, at least in terms of actual events. The protagonist Luis speaks with his father of the latter's plans to marry Pepita, meets her and other locals, and, in a major development, learns to ride a horse. After some occasional hand-holding and much fretting, and after over two months have gone by, Luis and Pepita exchange a single kiss. In contrast, later, in a space of mere hours, there is a seduction scene, after which Pepita and Luis make love, then there is a gambling scene with Luis playing cards against a nobleman who has spoken dishonourably of Pepita, and finally Luis duels victoriously with this same aristocrat, the Conde de Genazahar. Given the number of literary allusions and intertextual ironies that critics have noted

in Valera's novel, it is tempting to conclude that the treatment of time is part of Valera's playful treatment of literary precedents. The night-time seduction in a lady's home, encouraged by her maid, is an old literary commonplace, and the combination of such an event with a gambling scene and a duel calls to mind both *capa y espada* plays and more recent Romantic narratives (*Don Álvaro*, *Don Juan Tenorio*, *El estudiante de Salamanca*) (see also Chamberlin & Hardin 1990). But just as importantly, the melodramatic narrative is confined to a compressed time scale while the treatment of much less eventful episodes dilates expansively. The result is a pointedly unbalanced and uneven treatment of narrative development. Just as in *Jornadas*, much of the work is lingering and reflective, before the violently abrupt appearance of an event.

It is not just that there are parallels in the structure of works written by Valera and Ros. There is also textual evidence linking them. Most obviously, in *Pepita Jiménez*, the prologuist's interest in literature with 'poco o ningún enredo' itself calls to mind Ros's accounts of his own works, for example his exclamation in *Jornadas*, '¡Oh, cuántas veces algunos de mis lectores habrán desdeñado mis escritos, porque no encontraron argumento!' (Ros 1873: 320-21). Back in 1860, in his essay on 'La naturaleza y carácter de la novela', Valera himself remarked on 'novelas, en las cuales, examinadas superficialmente, nada sucede *que de contar sea*. En ellas apenas hay aventuras ni argumento', describing such works as '*psicológicas*' (Valera 1949: 195, author's italics). This remark is significant, not simply for its similarity to comments by Ros, but because Valera uttered it in the context of a literary debate with Cándido Nocedal: Valera was responding to an address by the latter to the Royal Academy. Nocedal reappears three years later as an explicit literary interlocutor in Ros's *El doctor Lañuela*, a work that presents very close parallels to Valera's

remarks. This may well indicate that Ros's and Valera's ideas about narrative form were developing in response to discussions with another shared acquaintance, Necedal. *El doctor Lañuela* includes interpellations to a 'Cándido', clearly based on Necedal. In parallel to Valera's response to Necedal, the narrator of *El doctor Lañuela* gives the following instruction in the text's epigraph: 'Léeme pensando que escribí sintiendo'. Going beyond Valera's remarks, the narrator goes on to make an explicit connection between modern psychology and the contraction, compression, and dilation of space, time, and literary structure: 'Nosotros, pensadores inquietos, psicólogos impacientes, escribimos volando'; 'Vivimos menos; sentimos y pensamos más en menos espacio' (Ros 1863: 23, 25). Modern writing is, in Ros de Olano's view, brief but also dense: 'hombre de mundo, escribo un libro comprimido, como los dolores del mundo' (118). What plot it has is, at all events, compressed: there is not much to be found in 'estas páginas que van caminando a su término sin apelaciones al ingenio, sin acumular recursos dramáticos, ni agolpar grandes peripecias' (272). Thus, we may reasonably suppose that the key vision of contracted and dilated time was forged in the course of the literary exchanges with Necedal which Ros and Valera shared.

So, what had these altered narrative depictions of time to do with the circumstances of the First Republic? Arguably, the answer lies in a common feature of these works which, while not in itself sufficient to distinguish a singular literary group, is significant in relation to the depiction of time. There is a pervasive concern with a relatively remote location, outside Castile, usually steeped in tradition, while at the same time alluding to the turbulent circumstances of the age, the *saeculum*, the *siècle*. Jo Labanyi has shown in considerable detail how *Pepita Jiménez* relates to the political, social, and economic debate around *caciquismo* in rural Spain, and there is

little to be gained by repeating her findings at length here (Labanyi 2000: 267-75, 282-86). As we have seen *Jornadas*, set in rural Catalonia at Ros's ancestral home, is filled with digressive reflections on the modern age. In turn, Alarcón journeys to the Alpujarra, which he describes rather exaggeratedly as an unexplored region of Europe, in search of a response to political and religious chaos, and *El sombrero*, set in the rural south, alludes to the vast changes that initiate the *saeculum*. In the light of the Federal Republic and the Cantonalist rebellion in 1873, not to mention the Carlist rising in the north at the same time and its prelude in raids in Catalonia and Aragon during 1872 (Carr 1982: 330, 339), it is easy to see why there should be such interest in the relationship between provincial life and the grand narrative of Spain's historical transformation, as Resina (1995) suggests. Similarly, all these texts except *El sombrero* contain explicit reflection on the problem of establishing links between the centre of Spain and the supposed periphery, if only in the form of *Pepita Jiménez's* concern with *caciquismo*.

The peculiar treatment of time in these four narratives implies an exacerbated difficulty in providing a coherent account of how the 'periphery' relates to any attempt at creating a Spanish grand narrative. Just as intellectual and cultural figures of all political persuasions attempted to address the ongoing crisis of the *siglo* through the self-understanding offered by philosophical history, so those explicating the relationship between the provinces and the centre generally deployed historical narratives that closely interrelated the unfurling story of the diverse nationalities and provinces of Iberia (see Ginger 1999: 98-99). Such an approach evidently needed a narrative structure, an extensive *argumento* that guaranteed coherence. The highly disrupted, dilated and contracted narrative structure of these four works can be taken as symbolic of a serious problem in establishing the relationship between regional life

and any such grand narrative. This key implication of the narrative structure needs to be taken seriously in any interpretation of other aspects of these works: it suggests Spain is facing the collapse of the great sweep of previous efforts to construct a narrative that will resolve the divisions and diversity of both its history and geography, of its space and its time. This is perhaps the meaning of Alarcón's opening remark in *El sombrero* that the *siglo*, the age, the century is coming to an end.

If this is the way in which these four narratives address the turbulent developments of the early 1870s, what does their approach to narrative structure, their depiction of time, signal about their attitudes towards the future of Spain? Valera's *Pepita Jiménez* is indicative here. As one sees in his 1863 essay 'Cartas trascendentales acerca del fundamento filosófico de los partidos políticos en España', and his responses to the Democrat thinker Castelar in 1857-59, Valera had for many years expressed serious doubts about whether political philosophical thought really had furnished any certainty about underlying laws of history, and whether there was any connection between the world of politics and such philosophical investigations. He was, in short, a sceptic about grand explanatory narratives about politics, just as he rejected sweeping overarching narrative forms in his fiction. It is significant that his views on the contemporary novel in his famous 1860 essay are entirely consonant with this scepticism about the effectiveness of efforts to provide contemporary reality with a philosophical foundation. He comments, 'no hay que decir que ese otro Universo [the world of mysteries] está lejos, más allá de las estrellas remotas, porque vivimos en él y respiramos el ambiente que en él se respira [...] en el fondo, en lo íntimo de las cosas, aun de las más vulgares, hay un abismo misterioso y arcano' (Valera 1949: 192). Not coincidentally, Valera praised Alarcón's poetry in 1870 because of his

ironic oscillation between rival philosophical positions (see Amorós 2005: 54). Such remarks are significant given Valera's concern with what he calls 'psychological' literature, its association with the dilated treatment of time, and his continual allusions to various kinds of psychological discourse in *Pepita Jiménez*. *Psychology* and *epistemology* were often indistinguishable terms as Goldstein observes (2005: 160-71, 324-25). As Hoff suggests (2001: 236), if there was no clarity about what lay behind psychology, there was by implication no certainty about knowledge itself. So, the experimental treatment of space and time in *Pepita Jiménez* is imbued with Valera's scepticism about some dominant strains in contemporary (political) philosophy.

Valera's philosophical views gain further resonance in the specific context of 1873-74 because, in the course of those two years he responded directly to the intellectual concerns of major political factions struggling violently over the destiny of Spain. Most obviously, Valera published new articles in response to the Republicans Castelar and Pi i Margall, and to the Progressive Liberal Krausists. But additionally, the preoccupation in *Pepita Jiménez* with Spanish mysticism and contemporary German philosophy parallel a lecture series given in 1873 by another major political leader, Cánovas, the main advocate of Bourbon restoration. Cánovas started his lecture series on 25 November 1873; *Pepita Jiménez* began to be published in March 1874. Just prior to Cánovas's lectures, Valera had published his own incomplete philosophical dialogue on 'El racionalismo armónico' (published in *Revista de España* on 28 August and 13 October 1873), again dealing with Spanish mysticism and German philosophy. Whether or not Valera and Cánovas are responding directly to each other, the comparison between their views in 1873-74 is instructive because both are defining their positions in response to one and the same ongoing debate.

Indeed, Cánovas explicitly links this debate to the implications of Teutonic

dominance for the Latin nations, following the Franco-Prussian war (1870), and the subsequent unification of Germany (1871). These events had in part arisen from and had seriously worsened the crisis of Spain's 1868 Revolution.

As far as the Republicans are concerned, Valera rejects Castelar and Pi's views and satirizes their prophetic attitudes, so typical of nineteenth-century philosophical historians, seeing Pi as responsible for contemporary bloodletting (Valera 1949: 444, 1518-19). Equally significant, though, is the key question of how Valera's engagement with Krausism and mysticism compares to Cánovas's 1873 lecture, because of what this tells us about their relative intellectual and political positions at the time. Ultimately the two were to become opponents during the Restoration: after briefly supporting Cánovas, Valera voiced admiration for Sagasta, and joined the Centralist Party, later fused with Sagasta's party (Juan Lovera 1975: 44). The comparison between Cánovas and Valera in turn helps illuminate the literary and political dialogue between Alarcón and Valera, and thus further clarifies the intellectual discussions that shaped the 'literature of the First Republic'.

Cánovas's 1873 essay is a sweeping attack on efforts to seek an underlying law of history that people should obey, a compelling narrative, that he sees shared by Darwinism, and post-Kantian, especially Hegelian philosophy, including Krausism. He blames such efforts for the chaos of the early 1870s (Cánovas 1873: 37-61). Instead, Cánovas looks to Spanish mysticism for a connection between Spanish thought and a purely Kantian outlook. In mysticism as in Kant, he argues, individuals struggle through acts of will to address their historical circumstances (66-72), rather than seeking answers in supposed historical laws. The simultaneous questioning of grand narratives based inexorably on laws of history, and an insistence on the need for positive renewal through a new narrative of historical understanding and action is not

unlike Alarcón's stance respectively in *El sombrero* and *La Alpujarra*. This is consistent with that writer's support for Cánovas during the Restoration (see Lara Ramos 2001: 128).

Valera shares with Cánovas a hostility to political systems based on metaphysical and cosmological law. At the same time, however, he is undoubtedly more sympathetic than Cánovas to the Krausist version of post-Hegelian thought, and believes it does have parallels to Spanish mystical thought. Above all, he is quite different from Cánovas, as from the Alarcón of *La Alpujarra*, because he refuses to advocate any clear resolution to philosophical debate. The incomplete 1873 dialogue on 'El racionalismo armónico' does not present a single point of view, but features three interlocutors with distinct viewpoints, including a female protagonist whose critical remarks should not be overlooked. Moreover, as the interlocutors explore the interrelationships and parallels between distinct philosophical discourses, especially Krausism and Spanish mysticism, the reader might draw the conclusion, less that the discourses can be synthesized, than that they can be merged or confounded with troubling ease, that their words can be interpreted and re-deployed in many different ways, that they offer no firm grip on reality. In a culminating irony Filaletes refuses to explain systematically his claim that he can reconcile rival philosophical systems, 'porque [...] en el punto en que yo expusiera y convirtiera en sistema mi filosofía perenne, dejararía ya de ser perenne filosofía, y sería un nuevo sistema filosófico' (Valera 1949: 1548). If we interpret *Pepita Jiménez* in this light, we may view Luis's shifting between mystic, pantheist, orthodox Catholic, and Krausist discourse, and the parallel ironic treatment of narrative authority, as an inability to establish a convincing single discourse in which to express a grand narrative for Spain. Such observations reinforce the political implications that critics like Bianchini (1990) have

seen in Valera's championing of the open text, not least in *Pepita Jiménez*. Valera is thus reviving a long-standing preoccupation among many Spanish liberals since the mid-century with disabling and discrediting radical social, political, and economic philosophies of left and right based on foundationalist claims about underlying laws of history (Ginger 2004). His purpose is not to defeat reformist concerns. Rather, he requires considerable moderation in their implementation because of his scepticism about the absolute validity of their claims. Ros de Olano's *Jornadas* are consonant with a similar political scepticism, and like Valera, Ros came to oppose Cánovas, and, initially at least to support Sagasta (Ros subsequently transferred his loyalty to the Dynastic Left) (González Alcantud, Lorente Rivas & Correa Ramón 2004: 93-94). The 1873-74 disruption of conventional narratives of time and space, or the grand narratives of historical, personal, and national being, thus has a double significance. It expresses a feeling that the ultimate consequence of the modern post-revolutionary age, the *saeculum*, the *siglo* is the collapse of that very century's efforts to make historical sense of the ongoing crisis as a developing, meaningful philosophical story leading to some clear conclusion. The defeat of historic monarchic liberalism by federal republicans in 1873 and the related turmoil complete the impending collapse of such narratives. Equally, whether at the start of the age in *El sombrero*, in the *Trienio* in *Jornadas*, or in the presumably mid-century regime of *Pepita Jiménez*, that ever-impending collapse, always already present in the history of nineteenth-century Spain, precisely serves to reinforce the claim, made by many liberal intellectuals since the mid-century, that radical laws of history and grand narratives are not viable ways forward, and that they should be substituted by a new moderation. The Republic prepares the way, not for the ultimate triumph of democratic, federal republicanism, but for the reinvigoration of tempered mid-century liberalism: Alarcón famously

asked in August 1872, '¿Debe ser alfonsista la Unión Liberal?' (Lara Ramos 2001: 125). The precise conclusions varied from figure to figure, and Alarcón, Ros, and Valera did not ultimately agree. Even so, they had this in common, that the literary structure of mainstream liberal narratives of the spirit of the age had to be reinvented in order to salvage the mainstream liberal vision of the nineteenth century.

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## Spanish Abstract

A raíz de 1808, los escritores se esforzaban por imaginar una narrativa extensa, significativa de la historia que explicara las continuas crisis que experimentaba España, y que apuntara a una solución. Pero, como los problemas recurrentes indicaban, esta misma narrativa estaba desde siempre a punto de colapsarse. La dificultad se intensificó durante la breve república (1873-74). Este artículo investiga una ‘literatura de la Primera República’, constituida por los escritos interrelacionados de Ros de Olano, Alarcón, y Valera, y que incluye *Pepita Jiménez*. Estos textos participan en un complejo diálogo que se centra en y responde al cuestionamiento de la forma narrativa de la Historia emprendido por Ros. Tal perspectiva nos insta a interpretar un Alarcón re-evaluado y *Pepita Jiménez* como parte de unos esfuerzos sofisticados por reconcebir la genealogía nacional ya que unas tensiones profundas habían aparecido entre ‘lo grande’ y ‘lo pequeño’, el conjunto y lo local, la gran narrativa y la anécdota. Lo momentáneo se dilata y la gran narrativa se contrae. Este concepto alternativo del espacio y del tiempo era a la vez un intento de renovar la literatura y de escaparse del callejón sin salida al que se enfrentaba el liberalismo a principios de los 70.