

LARRA VS. *EL JOROBADO*: SPANISH SOCIETY AND THE DEBATE OVER *ANTONY* (1836)

Alvin F. SHERMAN, Jr
Idaho State University

Through the years many critics have caught glimpses of early nineteenth-century Spanish society through the comments and opinions expressed by contemporary observers such as Mesonero Romanos, Larra, Estébanez Calderón and others. These authors have contributed substantially to our understanding of the concerns and fears of the Spanish *intelligentsia* who confronted an ever-evolving system; especially significant was their view of the post-Fernandine period when Spanish politics and society were reassessing their values. While some conservative, nineteenth-century writers generally limited their comments to “costumbrist” depictions of the world, others, like Larra, took advantage of events, both social and political, to expound a radically different point of view. For Larra the theater provided frequent opportunities to discuss his feelings concerning the development or desintegration of Spanish society. Robert Scari observes, “El propósito idealista y muy romántico de todo ello es instruir al público, hacer del teatro lo que no era en su época, según el ensayista: un manantial de valores morales convertidos en verdades accesibles, concretas y convincentes, mediante el arte del dramaturgo y la inagotable fuerza persuasiva de la representación” (160). Not always were the works lauded by Larra for their moral message. On occasion Fígaro condemned works for blatantly encouraging immoral behavior. An excellent case in point is the representation of *Antony* and the two articles written by Larra on June 23 and 25, 1836 in response to the plays debut. However, more interesting than Larra’s articles are two pieces published in the *Jorobado*, a short-lived satirical newspaper¹, that provide an alternative view of *Antony* and an enlightening perspective of Larra and his work.

1. *El Jorobado* was founded on March 1, 1836 and ran until August 16 of the same year. Its main editorial thrust was political satire. Among those who wrote for the newspaper were Ramón de Castañeyra, Juan López Peñalver, Antonio María Segovia and Manuel Valdés (Hartzenbusch, pág. 49).

Let us begin by briefly considering the content of *Antony*. The Spanish translation of Dumas' play, by Eugenio de Ochoa, first appeared in Madrid at the Principe Theater on June 19, 1836. The plot focuses on Anthony, the star-crossed lover of Adela de Hervey, who feels that the world has dealt wrongly with him despite all of his efforts. After an absence of three years, Anthony returns to find Adela married and the mother of a small child. Both his sudden departure and return cause Adela to comment to her sister Clara:

Antony no es indiferente ni ligero; me amaba con toda la energía de un corazón ardiente y apasionado. Si se fue, es, no lo dudes, porque se oponían a que se quedara obstáculos que no podía vencer una voluntad humana (*Antony* 3).

Upon his return he does everything within his power to stir her latent feelings of love for him. The result is an illicit affair, malicious rumors and finally her death at her lover's hands.

An important element of the play, an a difficult view for Larra to accept, is Anthony's claim that the world has prejudiced him from his birth. This situation, which is similar to that faced by Rivas's Don Alvaro, contributed to Anthony's lack of name or lineage. Anthony explains:

Sin embargo, Adela, la casualidad, aún antes de mi nacimiento, aún antes de que yo pudiese hacer nada, en pro o en contra de mí, había destruido ya la posibilidad de que yo pudiese ser algo en este mundo; y desde el día en que empecé a conocerme, cuanto para los otros era real y positivo, no era para mí más que ilusión y desventura. Estrangero en este mundo, he tenido que crearme un mundo aparte para mí solo... y en él necesito emociones diferentes de las que agitan a los otros hombres, necesito otros placeres, otros dolores... y tal vez otros crímenes (*Antony*, pág. 17).

Anthony's desperate situation is summed up in a comment he makes when asked if he will continue his travels.

Ni yo mismo lo sé; guárdame el cielo de determinar un plan de antemano; prefiero, cuando es posible, dejar a la casualidad el cuidado de pensar por mí... ando como los demás, y como ellos es probable que al cabo de un cierto número de años llegue yo también al término de mi viaje, ignorando si la vida es una creación sublime o un sueño fantástico (*Antony*, pág. 19).

In this we see that Anthony's perception of life is carefully placed at the borders of the sublime and the fantastic. The allusion to the quest in the form of travel gains greater significance when the reader is aware that the prize he seeks is Adela. In this journey he breaks all the rules. John A. Thompson observes:

It might be noted that Juan López Peñalver and Larra had been at odds with one another since 1828 when the former first praised an ode written by latter and then later condemned it. Larra's contempt for Peñalver appeared in an article published in *El Duende Satírico del Día*, "Donde las dan las toman" (31 December 1828). The article is patterned after a series satirical dialogues written by Iriarte against Juan López de Sedano.

Antony is even more a romantic hero than D. Alvaro, for the latter is merely the chattel of *la fatalidad* which pursues him relentlessly, while Antony is an active agent who defies the laws of God and man, an egocentric maniac of illegitimate birth, handsome, proud, melancholy, sensitive, who rails bitterly against society because he has not been given the woman he desires (pág. 8).

It appears that it was precisely this negative vision of human existence, and the lack of individual initiative, that inspired Larra to commit his feelings to paper. Susan Kirkpatrick confirms this belief stating: “De la reseña de *Anthony* se deduce con claridad la aguda inquietud de Larra con respecto a la desintegración de la cohesión en una sociedad donde la autonomía individual ilimitada se estaba convirtiendo en el modelo para las relaciones entre los seres humanos, y su incapacidad para criticar ese modelo plenamente. Aspiraba al mismo tiempo a la libertad individual y a la armonía social” (pág. 184). With these fundamental ideas in mind, let us consider the social complaints that arose from Larra’s review of *Antony*.

Larra opens his first critique of *Antony* by announcing that “España no es una nación compacta, impulsada de un mismo movimiento; hay en ella tres pueblos distintos” (1960, pág. 246).

This view suggests that in his opinion Spain had lost its national character, or ethnic homogeneity. This lack of cohesion he conceptualizes in the creation of three radically different social classes. Larra proceeds to enumerate the composition of these groups. First, the commoners who are “embrutecida y muerta por mucho tiempo para la patria” who have suffered from necessity and the influence of the powerful. Next, the middle class that “se ilustra lentamente” and which slowly “comienza a conocer que ha estado y que está mal, y que quiere reformas”. Finally, the privileged class, which according to Larra, is “poco numerosa, criada o deslumbrada en el extranjero, víctima o hija de las emigraciones” (1960, pág. 246). In all three cases the description lacks in compassion toward any particular group. It is in the mesh of ignorance and amoral foreign influences that Fígaro begins his first critique of *Antony*. Larra’s characterization of the privileged class criticizes its dependence on foreign models (i.e., French society). This is particularly important when we consider that Larra himself was the son of an *afrancesado* and was greatly influenced by men like Boileau, Jouy, and LaRocheffoucauld, as well as an admirer of Dumas, Balzac and other contemporaries². This fact makes his critique of *Antony* even more significant because it presents an important turning point in his own perception of nationalism. He begins to view the outside world as a threat to his nascent country and to its social development. Azorín observes:

Para Larra, España es un país, que *sin haber vivido*, se encuentra en la *necesidad de vivir*. No acaba; comienza. De pronto, sin pasado, se encuentra en

2. Randolph observes: “En el primero de estos artículos anatematiza el drama y dice que merece ser combatido con todas las armas: defiende la reciente liberalización de las letras españolas, pero teme que los nacionales sigan los peligrosos pasos de la moderna escuela francesa. En el segundo artículo Larra estudia la desorganización social personificadas en *Antony*” (pág. 50).

el mundo con instituciones nuevas, modernas. ¿Qué hacemos con ellas? ¿Cómo aplicamos estas cosas novísimas, de países novísimos, a un pueblo que ahora comienza a despertar? “Y, sin embargo —dice Larra—, es fuerza andar”. Y aquí, con Larra, todos los hombres pensadores, reflexivos, se detienen y meditan sobre la realidad (pág. 84).

Larra's view of social progress, which was in direct opposition to what he saw portrayed in *Antony*, contains one serious flaw; there is no final goal for which society could strive; existence is merely a series of disconnected experiences with no cumulative value, no final prize. This stark and pessimistic perspective reveals itself when he compares society's development to life's adventures.

La vida es un viaje: el que lo hace no sabe adónde va, pero cree ir a la felicidad. Otro que ha llegado antes y viene de vuelta, se aboca con el que está todavía caminando, y dícele: “¿Adónde vas? ¿Por qué andas? Yo he llegado adonde se puede llegar; nos han engañado; nos han dicho que este viaje tenía un término de descanso. ¿Sabes lo que hay al fin? Nada” (1960, pág. 247).

Larra clearly states that the traveler does not know where he is going, only that he relies on a belief that it will lead him to happiness. Clearly, he depicts a meandering soul who without vision moves along life's path, content only to experience life as it comes. For Larra, the means not the ends were of greater importance. To the returning traveler who has found “nothing” at the end of the trip the other asks, “Pues si no hay nada, no vale la pena de seguir andando”. However, Larra interjects, “Y sin embargo es fuerza andar, porque si la felicidad no está en ninguna parte, si al fin no hay nada, también es indudable que el mayor bienestar que para la humanidad se da está todo lo más allá posible” (Ibíd). This bleak, inert world depicted in his writings show a growing pessimism in Larra. Despite his attempts to exalt the importance of experience, while simultaneously chastising those who would introduce “la literatura caduca de la Francia, la última literatura posible, la horrible realidad”, there constantly looms in the foreground the “nothingness” at the end of the journey. He expresses disgust that Spanish society is not allowed to follow its course without being disheartened by the knowledge of a fruitless journey —“Rara lógica: ¡Enseñarle a un hombre un cadáver para animarle a vivir” (Ibíd)—. He also chastises those who would cheat him of the happiness, hope and diversion associated with the trip itself.

...porque ellos al menos, para llegar allá, disfrutaron del camino y gozaron de la esperanza; déjennos al menos la diversión del viaje y no nos desengañen antes: si al fin no hay nada, hay que buscarlo todo en el tránsito. (BAE 2:247)³.

Larra's pessimism regarding the intentions of the French is summed up in his definition of *Antony* as “el grito que lanza la humanidad que nos lleva delantera, grito de desesperación, al encontrar el caos y la nada al fin del viaje”

3. It must be noted that the emptiness (or nothingness) that he perceives at the end of the journey comes dangerously close to resembling the twentieth-century concept of existentialism and the “angst” associated with Baroja, Azorín and Unamuno, all admirers of Fígaro's work.

(Ibíd). One of the contributing factors to this chaos is Anthony's antisocial and individualistic attitude. Larra saw the success of social progress in the collective efforts of all persons —"si hay algún obstáculo en el tránsito, unidos lo venceremos, al paso que en fracciones el obstáculo irá concluyendo con los que fueren llegando desbandados" (Ibíd). Susan Kirkpatrick recapitulates Larra's point of view stating:

En su reseña de *Anthony* se puede observar claramente otro de los puntos esenciales de la ambivalencia de Larra con respecto a la formación de una sociedad moderna: la cuestión del individualismo. El eje de su condena a la pieza de Dumas consiste en señalar su posición extremadamente antisocial e individualista. En realidad, la considera como la personificación de la desorganización social, cuyo efecto sería destructivo para el público español (pág 183).

This firm opposition to individualism becomes the framework of his two articles. He vehemently opposes self-centered, antisocial behavior and condemns any implication that Spain would fall victim in the same way that France had⁴. However, the questions might be asked: Was what Larra portrayed in his articles the general consensus? Did the presentation of *Anthony* really pose a threat to society? or, was he overreacting to an imaginary menace?

Donald Allen Randolph indicates that there were several reviews written about *Anthony* around the same time that Larra published his in *El Español*. The most prominent of these critiques appeared in *El Mundo* (22 June), *El Eco de Comercio* (24 June) and *Revista Española* (24 June). Randolph comments that *El Mundo* "no economiza su desdén" for the work; *El Eco de Comercio* "elogia a *Anthony*, aunque todavía siente una comezón de duda: no quiere que el público entienda mal el romanticismo a través de las exageraciones de algunos de sus sectarios"; and, finally, the *Revista Española* admits that "*Anthony* tiene el efecto de ser inmoral, pero si el cuadro es a veces asqueroso, y si repugna, culpa es del modelo y no del pintor. Es decir, que *Anthony* simboliza la sociedad en masa" (pág. 51). In general these comments tend to concur with the uneasiness Larra felt regarding the influence the work could have on the populace. However, these were not the only opinions expressed at the time. Missing from this collection of critiques are two articles published in *El Jorobado* on June 23 and 24, 1836. It is precisely in these articles that an opposing point of view regarding the work and the sharp, personal criticism of Larra and his perceptions of society are expressed.

In the first article dated June 23, the unknown commentator presents a summary of the work with occasional political or stylistic observations. The critique presents only a few comments on technique. The following is an example of the critic's remarks regarding structure and style:

4. John Thompson suggests that the original French version served as a satiric comment against the evils of society. He states: "Instead of one man he has personified all of society-society in the mass. Instead of putting it to shame and ridiculing it, he has branded it on the brow; he has undressed it before the people, disclosed its loathsome body underneath its purple and brocade, and presented it to society itself, which has ridiculed its image and become ashamed of this picture" (pág. 62).

Aquí tenemos ya al amante atropellado por el coche de la dama, herido y conducido a casa de ella para su cura: resorte dramático, trivial, ya gastado o usado, como decimos hablando a la francesa, y que por la frecuencia con que le emplearon algunos de nuestros antiguos, es, de los que proverbialmente llamamos en España *lances de Calderón* (*Jorobado*, 23 June 1836).

On the rare occasions that the *Jorobado* comments on society it is in the context of Spain's promise as a developing democracy. The Spaniard is viewed in light of others who have risen above the circumstances of their birth to achieve great things. It is noteworthy that the focus of the *Jorobado* article is on Spain's innate potential, rather than its weakness in the face of negative external forces.

Antony da a entender que él es espósito o de padres desconocidos, y blasfema contra la sociedad como antes lo había hecho contra la naturaleza. ¿Quién ha dicho que a un hombre sin familia le están cerradas todas las carreras y los medios de subsistencia? ¿Qué halla arbitrio para formarse una reputación, para adquirir un nombre, para granjearse el aprecio de sus semejantes? ¡Y ni por las letras, ni por las artes, ni por las ciencias...! ¡Desatino! —Newton, Galileo, Cervantes, Shakespeare, Murillo, Miguel Angel, Moratín, Molière, Haydn, Mayerbeer ¿sois acaso deudores de vuestra gloria a vuestra alcurnia, a vuestro abolengo noble o plebeyo, alto o bajo? ¿No es independiente la fama adquirida por vuestras obras, de los grados de diferencia que ha habido entre vuestras condiciones... (*Jorobado*, 23 June 1836)

While Larra views society as submissive and weak, and easily influenced by outside forces, the *Jorobado* expounds the independence and sovereignty of the individual and society to choose correctly the path they will take. There is imbedded in the *Jorobado*'s commentary a warning not to judge the period by the depictions of the world found in its art, literature, or politics. Instead, it promotes the belief that society is a composite, a rich blending of many perspectives and elements. Consider his statement regarding literature, and in particular contemporary drama.

Si las generaciones futuras no juzgan de la presente sino por los escritos de la escuela dramática moderna, sentirán ciertamente no descender, más bien que de nosotros, de los tigres, de las hienas y aun de reptiles más venenosos e inmundos (*Jorobado*, 23 June 1836).

On the other hand Larra considered modern drama to be a reflection of society and of what the future held for the country if current trends persisted —“...hemos probado que no siendo la literatura sino la expresión de la sociedad, no puede ser toda literatura igualmente admisible en todo país indistintamente” (1960, pág. 249). More concisely, Larra attacks French literature that “no es intérprete de nuestras creencias ni de nuestras costumbres, sólo nos puede ser perjudicial, dado caso que con violencia incomprensible no haya de ser impuesta por una fracción poco nacional y menos pensadora” (Ibíd). Again we see that the “threat” Larra perceives is prejudicial to the national character and capable of destroying the homogeneity that he considered essential to Spain's well-being.

Clearly Larra and *El Jorobado* differ regarding the possible repercussions resulting from the viewing of *Antony*. For the *Jorobado* the work is a collection of overused clichés. Though it depicts some isolated circumstances that resemble reality, they pose little or no threat to the nation's self-perception or psyche. On the other hand, Larra is more defensive. Instead of taking the work at face value, Fíguro feels menaced by its content and uses his position as a journalist to advocate his belief that society is doomed if French influences are allowed to continue unchecked.

The next article about *Antony* appeared in the *Jorobado* on June 24. This review differs substantially from the first in that the focus shifts from a critique of the play to a critique of Fíguro and his perception of the work. In an important way this second article provides an interesting perspective as to the function of early nineteenth-century newspapers; a forum for evaluating ideas and opinions, and a foundation for reinterpreting society's reactions to trends. The piece begins with a direct attack on the editors of the *Liberal* who accused the critics of the *Jorobado* of rewriting Larra's ideas published the day before in the *Español* as their own.

Escrito estaba nuestro artículo sobre *Antony* antes que apareciese el del Español de ayer, puesto que por causas ajenas de este lugar se dilató su publicación: clara es, sin embargo, la diferencia que hay entre los principios que por la mañana emitió el *Español* y los que por la tarde se atrevió a sentar el *Jorobado*. Y tan aferrados estábamos en nuestro modo de ver el drama, que todavía en este segundo artículo, hemos de decir dos palabras con licencia del señor Fíguro y sin que sea visto que presumimos de más entendidos que su merced (*Jorobado*, 24 June 1836).

The final line is indicative of the article's general tone; one of contempt towards those who would exalt Larra's evaluation of the work and refuse to question his opinion or authority. It is essential to remember that Larra was one of the most popular and highest paid journalist of the period and the first to earn his living in this field; his authority was nearly absolute⁵. More importantly, this phrase provides an engaging insight into the manner in which Larra may have viewed himself; as one endowed with special powers of observation and discernment. This final appraisal is even more striking if the sentence is intended to be a direct assault on Larra. Evidence indicates that Larra and Juan López Peñalver, one of the contributing editors to the *Jorobado*, had been at odds with one another over several years⁶. These factors may account for the vehemency of the *Jorobado*'s reprimand of Fíguro.

5. Leonard Perry notes, "Fíguro es el primer español, que vive de su pluma, sus ensayos son aceptados por el pueblo a pesar de lo que pinta como retrógado, y ejerce su profesión cuando la censura reina suprema, realidad que dificulta la expresión de su actitud crítica. El hecho de gozar de tanta popularidad dentro de un ambiente hostil justifica una investigación en esta área tan conocida y tan bien documentada a lo largo de sus ensayos" (pág. 43).

6. Sánchez Estevan refers to an incident which occurred in 1828 concerning *El Duende Satírico del Día* in which Peñalver (using the initials J.P. and X.P.) criticized Larra for a previous attack on the *Correo literario y mercantil* (pág. 32). Subsequent encounters involved an evaluation of Larra's Oda (pág. 36) and a commentary on *De la sátira y los satíricos* (pág. 174), the latter was published in the *Jorobado*.

This "editorial" confrontation is followed by the *Jorobado's* view regarding *libertad* and *desenfreno*.

Protesta inútil sería asegurar aquí ahora que somos amantes de la libertad en todo mayormente en las obras de las imaginación y del ingenio: pero ni daremos jamás a esa palabra *libertad* la acepción de *desenfreno*, ni dejaremos de reconocer siempre la obligación de sujetarse a un código, a un poder, a una autoridad suprema; no de Aristóteles, no de Horacio, no de Boileau, no de Blair, sino de la recta razón, de las inmutables leyes de la naturaleza (*Jorobado*, 24 June 1836).

It is apparent that this brief rebuke came in response to Larra's judgment of human freedom. In his first *Antony* article he states:

...¿y nosotros hemos tenido pasado? ¿Tenemos presente? ¿Qué nos importa mañana, si tratamos de existir hoy? Libertad en política, sí, libertad en literatura, libertad por todas partes; si el destino de la humanidad es llegar a la nada por entre ríos de sangre, si está escrito que ha de caminar con la antorcha en la mano quemándolo todo para verlo todo, no seamos nosotros los únicos privados del triste privilegio de la humanidad; libertad para recorrer ese camino que no conduce a ninguna parte; pero consista esa libertad en tener los pies destrabados y en poder andar cuanto nuestras fuerzas nos permitan (1960, pág. 248).

The *Jorobado* draws a fine line between freedom and licentiousness. The *Jorobado* suggests that humanity's laws (i.e., those designed by men like Boileau, Aristóteles, etc.) allow the individual unbridled satisfaction of personal wants and promotes selfishness, while the laws of nature, or true freedom, encourage human interaction and the fulfillment of basic needs. Again, the commentary, which appears to be another personal affront, questions Larra's values and his ability to distinguish between wantonness and genuine human needs. This point becomes even more appatant as the article develops.

The *Jorobado* suggests that Larra's definition of personal freedom lacks the direction needed to make life meaningful. In Larra's opinion, man is destined to encounter the inevitable emptiness held for him at the end of life, yet at the same time that same man is oblivious of this fact because he is distracted along the way by the pleasures associated with the journey. Larra's pessimistic perspective of human progress—"al fin no hay nada"—provides important evidence as to his perception of basic human relationships. The *Jorobado* points out that his claim is "¡Vergonzoso error!" and proceeds to explain.

... Hay en la vida algo más que la nada, algo más que el amor de una muger. Hay la amistad, por más que *Antony* lo niegue, hay el racional amor de sí mismo, hay el amor a sus semejantes, hay el amor a la patria, de quien somos y a quien nos debemos, hay la práctica de la virtud, el ejercicio de la beneficencia, los goces que el entendimiento halla en las ciencias, los encantos que la imaginación halla en las artes, el placer de ensanchar la esfera de nuestros conocimientos, el deleite de difundirlos entre los demás hombres para su felicidad. Todo esto hay

en la vida, señor Fíguro, y no es Vd. el que puede ignorarlo; todo estos es algo más que NADA, algo más que los placeres ilícitos que pueden hallarse a tres legua de Strasburgo en la alcoba de una posada, algo más que andar engañando coroneles y asesinando adúlteras (*Jorobado*, 24 June 1836)⁷.

With this point in mind, the *Jorobado* expresses the crucial point of disagreement between the two factions:

Hecha esta salva, tal vez sobrado inoportuna, preguntamos ¿qué es lo que contra el fin moral de *Antony* se deduce del artículo de Fíguro todo entero? En nuestro concepto es esto en resumen: "*Antony* contiene verdades, pero verdades amargas; desengaños, pero terribles por anticipados, y perjudiciales por prematuros: verdades en fin que sólo pueden conducir al hombre al estoicismo o a la desesperación".

Nosotros concedemos que tal es la consecuencia de los principios de *Antony*, pero negando que esos principios sean ciertos (*Jorobado*, 24 June 1836).

In direct opposition to Larra's negativism, the *Jorobado* conceives of a more optimistic world where daily human interaction provides the sustenance necessary for happiness; love, friendship, etc. However, the modern reader must be sensitive to the circumstances surrounding Larra's life at this time in order to comprehend the source of his pessimism; he has suffered a failed marriage, the loss of his political position, and rejection from his lover, Dolores Armijo. His world cannot be perceived as anything less than a deception; this fact being poignantly manifest in *Antony*. Even Larra confesses, "... la disposición de nuestro ánimo, que no sabemos dominar, nos ha sugerido estas tristes reflexiones". (1960, pág. 248)

One necessary detail that links the Larra's critique and that found in the *Jorobado* is whether literature is a reflection of reality or not. Despite what Larra would have his readers believe, the *Jorobado* reasserts its belief that events in literature may bear some resemblance to society at large, but is by no means an accurate portrayal. More precisely, the *Jorobado* questions "¿Quién no conoce que la pintura que allí se hace del hombre moral, del hombre social es infiel, es imaginaria?" By discrediting the verosimilitude that Larra saw reflected in *Antony*, the *Jorobado* reduces Fíguro's serious treatise on social disintegration to rubble. Like a two-edged sword it cuts both ways. It challenges the readers to reevaluate their perception of society reflected in the newspapers, as well as their attitude toward those who portray it. It must have seemed apparent to the critic that Larra was losing confidence in Spanish society and its ability to change for the better. Certainly the concrete observations of Larra the journalist did not correspond to what Larra the man conceived in his mind. It is here, in Larra's critique of *Antony*, that early signs of his self-destructive behavior

7. The *Jorobado*'s reference to love and friendship is a direct reference to a scene from *Antony*. After Adela asks Anthony if he believes in friendship, he responds:

En el amor, sí; en la amistad, no. Este es un sentimiento bastardo, de que no tiene necesidad alguna la naturaleza; una convención social que ha adoptado el alma por egoísmo, sujeta al entendimiento, y no al corazón, y que destruye y disipa en un momento la mirada de una muger, o la sonrisa de un príncipe (*Antony*, pág. 21).

begin to surface. It is from this point until the end of 1836 and the beginning of the following year that his existential *angst* will manifest itself in some of his most negative and contemplative articles⁸.

The *Jorobado* concludes that man is free to choose for himself, to make his own decisions. It expresses the belief that man is self-reliant and capable of overcoming difficulties through self-mastery. However, it also recognizes that negativism and self-defeating behavior can only lead to unhappiness and misery:

Demasiado evidente es que no hay desgracias que la filosofía no pueda soportar; que no hay pasiones a que no pueda la razón poner un freno. Enseñar al hombre a ser débil, atenuar el vigor de su alma racional, persuadirle que debe doblegar el cuello bajo el peso de infortunio y bajo el yugo de las pasiones, es hacerle infeliz y degradarle. (*Jorobado*, 24 June 1836)

The *Jorobado* article concludes with a resounding affirmation:

Por fortuna la cordura y sensatez inherente al carácter español hace que no se necesite una gran dosis de antídoto contra el veneno que semejantes traducciones nos acarrearán; y es de esperar que nunca se verá en nuestra patria lo que la *Gaceta de los Tribunales* de París ha publicado varias veces: declaraciones de infelices criminales que han confesado haber sido arrastrados a la carrera del delito por la lectura o el espectáculo de semejantes monstruosas producciones. (*Jorobado*, 24 June 1836)

Though Larra's observations of society represent an important resource regarding general trends, as well as valuable information regarding influential persons, actors, writers, etc., he was not the only voice speaking to the masses. In proper measure his writings must be laid against the background of society as a whole, which includes other newspapers and opinions. The two articles in the *Jorobado* form part of that background. They show that there existed a moderate, optimistic voice that did not always see Spain in the throws of depression and demoralization, but rather possessing innate capabilities that would save it from itself. These articles also shed important light on Larra. We learn that not everybody agreed with him and his perspective, in fact, newspapers like the *Jorobado* used their position to oppose what were destructive attitudes.

In conclusion, this study provides three important pieces of information pertinent to understanding Larra and the period in which he lived. First, visual media (i.e., the theater and newspapers) played a key role in the development of attitudes and perceptions about society. As we have seen, Larra's reaction to *Antony* and the resulting articles reflect in *Fígaro* a deep-seated fear regarding Spain's ability to resist negative, external influences. His pessimism appears to

8. These articles include "El día de difuntos de 1836. *Fígaro* en el cementerio" (November 2, 1836); "Horas de invierno" (December 25, 1836); "La Nochebuena de 1836. Yo y mi criado. Delirio filosófico" (December 26, 1836); "Necrología. Exequias del conde de Campo Alange. Domingo 15 de enero" (January 16, 1837); "Los amantes de Teruel. Drama en cinco actos, en prosa y verso, por don Juan Eugenio Hartzenbusch" (January 22, 1837).

have been a contributing factor in what later in his writings will manifest itself in self-destructive behavior. This emotional abyss obviously affected his ability to distinguish between the reality of experience and the fiction of the stage, resulting in a confusion of the two. Second, we have seen from the articles which appeared in the *Jorobado* that Larra's perspective was not necessarily accepted, but rather, opposed vehemently, albeit by a minority. The direct attack in the second *Jorobado* article against Larra and his negative view of society provides a unique perspective of what others thought of Larra and his opinion. This is a fact often ignored in modern criticism. Finally, the Larra critique and the *Jorobado* critique paint the picture of a society attempting to define itself. This is most clearly seen in the diverse opinions and viewpoints expressed in both sets of articles. In all it is apparent that both authors had in mind the same idea; warn the masses and provide them a model or base upon which to form an opinion. They both encourage autonomy and self-rule, though approaching these ideas from different angles; one being the optimist, the other the pessimist. However, the end result was a consciousness of Spain's potential and the pitfalls it must avoid.

BIBLIOGRAFÍA

- AZORÍN. 1973. *Rivas y Larra*, Madrid, Espasa-Calpe.
- DUMAS. Alejandro. 1836. *Antony. Drama en cinco actos, en prosa*, trad. Eugenio de OCHOA, Madrid, Repullés.
- EL JOROBADO. Num. 96 (23 Junio 1836), pp. 2-4.
— Num. 97 (24 Junio 1836), pág. 2.
- HARTZENBUSCH, Eugenio. 1894. *Apuntes para un catálogo de periódicos madrileños desde el año 1661 al 1870*, Madrid, Sucesores de Rivadeneyra.
- KIRKPATRICK, Susan. 1977. *Larra: El laberinto inextricable de un romántico liberal*, Madrid, Gredos.
- LARRA, Mariano José de. 1960. *Obras, Biblioteca de Autores Españoles*, Vol. 127, ed. Carlos SECO SERRANO, Madrid, Atlas.
- PERRY, Leonard T. 1985. "Larra y su visión del periodismo en España", *Estudios Ibero-Americanos*, 11, pp. 43-53.
- RANDOLPH, Donald Allen. 1966. *Eugenio de Ochoa y el Romanticismo español*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- SCARI, Robert M. 1971. "El teatro y la moral en el pensamiento de Larra", *Cuadernos Americanos* 178, pp. 160-165.
- SÁNCHEZ ESTEVAN, Ismael. 1934. *Mariano José de Larra (Fíguro). Ensayo biográfico redactado en presencia de numerosos antecedentes desconocidos y acompañado de un catálogo completo de sus obras*, Madrid, Hernando.
- THOMPSON, John A. 1938. *Alexandre Dumas père and Spanish Romantic Drama*, Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press.