# Introduction

Interpretation of the word 'Romantic' continues to provide students of literature not only with a fertile source of ideas but also, more disconcertingly, with a bewildering array of contradictory statements. The modern academic meaning is not as exact as we might wish, as the welter of conflicting definitions collected by Lilian Furst in her useful introduction to the European movement amply demonstrates.[1] Unfortunately, understanding of the character and meaning of Romanticism in Spain has been more than usually hampered by problems of definition. Those literary histories published in the nineteenth century offered little analysis of the broader influences which affected the development of Spanish Romanticism, and the first serious assessment of the movement's theoretical bases was provided by the dedicated labours of Edgar Allison Peers. He detected two specific trends: the recovery of national literary tradition and the trenchant opposition to neo-Classical formalism. For Peers, the gestation period of the Spanish movement was long, but the triumph of Romanticism short-lived. A high point was reached between 1834 and 1837, but Romanticism was subsequently rejected in favour of a 'middle way' which he denominated Eclecticism. In retrospect, a major shortcoming of Peers's theory was its failure to take into account the extra-literary considerations essential to a full understanding of Romanticism. Subsequent criticism has in fact dealt principally with the relationship between the literary movement and contemporary ideological and philosophical concerns. Angel del Río, Vicente Llorens, D. L. Shaw, Ricardo Navas-Ruiz, Iris Zavala and José Luis Abellán have at different times linked Spanish Romanticism with liberalism, with spiritual malaise, and with so-called cosmic rebellion. All have sought to minimise the rôle played by Böhl von Faber, Agustín Durán and other critics of the period prior to 1834. This stems from

their common premise that 'true' Romanticism finally came to Spain in that year, conditioned by the return of the political exiles. In his recent survey of modern critical responses to the movement, however, Juan Luis Alborg wisely noted that it was the critics of the 1820s, and not the returning political exiles, who were largely responsible for the future orientation of Spanish Romanticism.[2] Alborg also felt that the adoption, by so many modern critics, of what was essentially an a priori definition of Romanticism was ill advised.

In my own view, Alborg's reservations are justified. To begin the analysis of a literary period of immense complexity from a partial first principle is not helpful. Navas-Ruiz's dogged insistence that a person's Romanticism is directly proportionate to that person's liberalism – as he expresses it, 'se es romántico en la medida en que se es liberal'[3] – seems an acute example. Likewise Abellán's view that Romanticism and liberalism went hand in hand.[4] Abellán, in referring to the interpretation of Romanticism adopted by Peers, himself disparaged any wholesale application of a predetermined definition of the term and the exclusion from discussion of material not fitting that definition.[5] To his own readers, however, he betrays a transparent contradiction.

In this assumption that literary Romanticism and political liberalism were interdependent historical phenomena, the significance of Romanticism as a new literary and artistic sensibility becomes subordinate to events tangential to or wholly outside aesthetic formulae and creative endeavour. Susan Kirkpatrick, for example, in opening her recent consideration of Romanticism in Spain's cultural revolution, assures us that 'Romanticism played an important rôle in the evolution of a new way of representing and experiencing inner life that corresponded to the new world of market capitalism and the bourgeois state'.[6] She then predictably accounts for the historical development of Spanish Romanticism with programmatic reference to the social and political spheres: the rise and fall of the Spanish movement she felt to be directly affected by 'the erratic progress of Spain's liberal revolution'; the uncertainty of its hold reflected the equally uncertain progress of the 'bourgeois revolution'; its precisely fixed heyday corresponded to 'the years of greatest liberal activity in pushing forward the first phase of Spain's prolonged revolution'; finally, its attenuation after 1843 is attributed to the political commitment of writers whose

primary task was to oppose Narváez's curtailment of liberal advances.[7] This calculated attempt to force a multi-faceted literary movement into inflexible social and political moulds is surely unwise, while the reiterated association of Romanticism with 'liberal revolution' becomes dogmatic. Like Alborg, I feel that any exclusive association of Spanish Romanticism with liberalism and spiritual disquiet is untenable. I have accordingly refrained from adopting any prior definition of Romanticism either as a literary movement or as a wider cultural phenomenon. Nevertheless, I have paid attention to René Wellek's consideration of the term 'Romanticism' in literary theory during the early part of the nineteenth century. Wellek showed that 'Romantic' as a literary designation in the terms formulated by August Wilhelm Schlegel and Madame de Staël was understood and acknowledged all over Europe.[8] By employing Wellek's observation as a point of departure (but not as a rigid or predetermined definition), I believe it possible to chart in a more sympathetic and more fruitful manner the way in which the theoretical bases of Spanish Romanticism developed and expanded. I shall be concerned primarily with an assessment both of the impact, upon Spanish writers, of a framework of ideas deriving from European Romantic theorists and of their response to those ideas. My major contention is that it was the principles of Romantic historicism, stemming from the work of Herder and more fully expounded with reference to literary history by the Schlegel brothers, which dominated Spanish literary theory and criticism during the whole of the period under discussion. Meanwhile, in this rigorous study of Romantic literary criticism the applicability of Morse Peckham's formulations regarding 'positive' and 'negative' Romanticism becomes increasingly perceptible.[9] Peckham considered the view of Romanticism as something indicating spiritual malaise, a view reiterated by recent critics of the Spanish movement. Yet he stressed that this idea of 'negative' Romanticism represented no more than a partial picture. Peckham pointed also to a 'positive' Romanticism, exemplified by the change from a mechanistic, static view of the universe to an organic and dynamic one, accompanied by an emphasis upon the working of the imagination and the creative process. This idea of 'positive' Romanticism, linked to the organic theory of literary history adumbrated by the Schlegel brothers, may profitably be borne in mind during an analysis of the development of Romantic historicism in Spain. One further

comment made by Peckham might appropriately be recalled here: 'so much of our difficulty in considering the nature of historical Romanticism has come from assuming its identity with all of the other more or less contemporary revolutions'.[10] Such pitfalls are particularly to be avoided if we are to arrive at a true and impartial estimate of the character and significance of Spanish Romanticism. By approaching the original texts on their own terms, I have instead come to conclude with Northrop Frye that 'The fact of revolution was linked in many poetic minds with the imminence of apocalypse.'[11]

In examining developments in literary theory and criticism in Spain during an extensive and complex period, I have endeavoured to take into account not just the promotion of Schlegelian Romanticism and its further elaboration by Spanish writers, but also the existence of other trends divergent from or hostile to Romantic historicism. However, the reception of Schlegelian ideas and the response to them within this period forms the essential framework of my study, which has been structured accordingly. The continuing presence of certain identifiable trends in literary criticism has attracted the greatest share of my attention, and conflicting sets of ideas have been examined primarily in relation to them. While not wishing unduly to neglect the political background to literary events, I have deliberately refrained from allowing any assessment of political circumstances to become obtrusive. Finally, the chapter on Fernán Caballero may at first sight appear an unjustifiable departure from an essay dealing with literary theory and criticism. I would argue that the unashamedly didactic intention and authorial presence which mark Fernán Caballero's novels and short stories, coupled with the affinities which may profitably be established between her texts and the outlook of contemporary Spanish critics, make the inclusion and examination of material from her creative work appropriate and indeed indispensable to the present study.

# I

# Böhl von Faber and the establishment of a traditionalist Romanticism

The first systematic exposition of Romantic ideas in Spain was that undertaken by the German bibliophile and scholar Johann Nikolaus Böhl von Faber (1770–1836), a naturalised Spaniard who had settled in Cadiz. Böhl's espousal of Romantic theory was to involve him in a fierce literary polemic with José Joaquín de Mora (1783–1864), a family friend of long standing. Arising as it did in the years immediately following the Peninsular War and therefore in the wake of the constitutional parliament of Cadiz, it was perhaps inevitable that the dispute acquired political implications, an element of the controversy which has just as inevitably coloured later assessments of its nature and significance.

In his presentation of Romantic ideas, Böhl relied upon the principles of historicism. By historicism, I mean the 'historical sense' adumbrated in Germany by Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), who opposed the belief in universal laws and ideals which had formed an essential part of philosophy in the Classical tradition, and instead sought to promote an individualising attitude that placed greater value upon the local and temporal conditions of human existence. The immediate outcome of such a trend was nationalism: a new appreciation of the concept of the nation-state, the idea of the creative forces inherent in the people, of the intimate relationship between individual and national community, and of the organic connection between the present and the past. The ideas of Herder, who was, in René Wellek's words, 'the fountainhead of universal literary history',[1] would provide a rich quarry for all of the German Romantics but more specifically for the brothers Schlegel. Their vision of literary history found definitive expression in August Wilhelm's Vienna lectures of 1808–9 and in those delivered by Friedrich in the same city in 1812.[2] A. W. Schlegel (1767–1845) had already proposed a tentative theory of Romanticism in lectures delivered in

Berlin between 1801 and 1804. These remained unpublished until 1884, and their impact was accordingly less emphatic than that of the later Vienna lectures, editions of which appeared in French (1813), English (1815), and Italian (1817). He differentiated between on the one hand, pagan, sensual and civic Classicism, and, on the other, Christian, spiritual and individualistic Romanticism, each suited to its own historical period and civilisation and possessing its independent values. According to Schlegel, the Christian and chivalresque spirit had been common to all European literature since the Middle Ages, yet the peculiar characteristics of individual nations had also been expressed in their respective literatures. He therefore conceived the idea of a *Kunstgeist*, a spirit of art shaped by the particular milieu of a given nation at a given historical period. Emphasising the dominant role played by Christianity, Schlegel felt that literature had come to depend, to a greater extent than previously, upon imagination and symbol as expressions of its spiritual aspirations. Another concomitant change was that affecting poetic form: while the Classical literatures had been bound by strictly defined 'rules', Romantic literature had reflected the differing characteristics of various nations and peoples, and in each country had acquired a distinctive form. The appearance of French neo-Classicism, pagan in spirit and therefore a modern manifestation of the Classical tradition, had once more threatened European literature with the tyranny of literary precepts: as Classicism was essentially rational and universal in character, it strove towards an unrealistic unity which did not allow for the concept of national differences and, consequently, the right of each people to cultural expression. Crucially, Schlegel's ideas involved the rehabilitation of old Spanish literature, and of Golden-Age dramatists like Lope de Vega and Calderón, condemned by neo-Classicists for their failure to observe the precepts of Aristotle and Horace. It was this section of the lectures which was to be translated and presented by Böhl, whose declared intention was to promote the ideas of A. W. Schlegel in the Spanish literary world. Böhl is widely believed to have been the author of an article dealing with poetics published in Quintana's *Variedades de Ciencias, Literatura y Artes* in 1805.[3] The piece, signed 'A. P. P.', distinguished between man's material and spiritual inclinations and assigned particular characteristics to the literatures of different countries, concluding with a reference to 'German Romanticists'. However, the article which effectively began Böhl's cam-

paign to popularise the ideas of A. W. Schlegel and which gave rise to the polemic with Mora, a direct translation of extracts from the Vienna lectures, appeared in a Cadiz newspaper in 1814.[4]

Böhl was not the first defender of Calderón in a dispute about literary theory. He would himself praise Francisco Mariano Nipho's earlier defence of the Spanish *comedia* in the face of neo-Classicist condemnation. In the 1760s, moreover, Juan Cristóbal Romea y Tapia had responded to attacks upon native Spanish drama made by the neo-Classicist critic José Clavijo Fajardo.[5] Some comments made by Romea y Tapia prefigure the later arguments adopted by Böhl. The former insisted that nations differed in temperament and outlook, in characteristic moral virtues and failings as well as in language, customs and dress; accordingly they must inevitably differ in their dramatic preferences, since the object of the theatre was to depict aspects of human behaviour deserving of an audience's sympathy or disapproval.[6] In Ignacio de Luzán's neo-Classicist *Poética* of 1737 this same basic idea had been given what seemed no more than an accidental passing reference, and subordinated to the overriding premise that there existed a universal Poetics equally applicable in any country and in any historical period; for Luzán, it would be an unacceptable extravagance to seek to attribute to each nation a distinctive literary genius.[7] Romea y Tapia, on the other hand, like Böhl half a century later, employed the idea of cultural pluralism as the starting point for his defence of Spain's dramatic tradition. Yet while the national drama had been vigorously championed by several eighteenth-century writers,[8] Böhl's defence was made under circumstances that were uniquely different. In the later eighteenth century, neo-Classicism had enjoyed official support at the very highest level – from the Conde de Aranda and from Charles III himself – dominating 'approved' literary circles and constituting the only corpus of systematic literary doctrine available to writers. Apologists of Lope and Calderón were continually on the defensive, and more or less forced to recognise the superiority of Corneille and Racine, whatever their assessment of their own country's literary history. By 1814 this was no longer the case. Böhl was able proudly to reiterate a new theory of literary evolution which was rapidly conquering the whole of western Europe. Consistently echoing the principles of A. W. Schlegel, Böhl employed the term 'romancesco' to describe the new movement. He confidently prophesied a return to Spanish traditions, with the creation of a literature which would

reflect popular ideals and which would be heroic, monarchical and Christian in character, thus in the tradition of the literature of the *Siglo de Oro*.

This last concept was itself to undergo a radical change. It had existed during the eighteenth century, primarily as a means of asserting a national literary tradition, independent of that of France, which might counter the threat of French cultural dominance. As such, it was elaborated in Antonio Capmany's *Teatro histórico-crítico de la elocuencia española* (1786–94). For Capmany, the sixteenth century in Spain was justifiably regarded as a Golden Age, uniquely rich both in the number and quality of its writers and in the glories of its military conquests.[9] Capmany, who had represented Catalonia in the Cadiz parliament of 1810, would have been an attractive figure for Böhl. An energetic and implacable opponent of the invading French forces despite his advanced years, he would attack Napoleon in works including *Centinela contra franceses* (Madrid, 1808); *Gritos de Madrid cautivo a los pueblos de España* (Seville, 1808); and *Centinela de la patria* (Cadiz, 1810). Capmany's use of the term *Siglo de Oro* thus directly related Spanish literature and empire, but did so with reference to an earlier age than that of Calderón, and so accorded with the more tentative usage of the term by Luis José Velázquez in his *Orígenes de la poesía castellana* of 1754 and by the Jesuit exiles Lampillas and Andrés. For all these writers, a Golden Age in Spanish letters was a concept associated primarily with lyric poetry, beginning with Garcilaso de la Vega (1501–36) and giving way to a period of decadence with the artificial distortions of Gongorine style. Böhl, however, followed A. W. Schlegel in regarding Calderón's drama as the apogee of Spain's literary efflorescence, as the expression both of a distinctive literary genius and of a distinctive set of values.

Religious and ideological preoccupations swiftly complicated the Böhl–Mora polemic. A number of critics have observed that the protagonists themselves appeared to wish a veil to be drawn over its history, probably in view of the fiercely personal tone of some of its documents and the possibility of unwelcome repercussions. Böhl's daughter Cecilia (known to the Spanish literary public by her pseudonym of Fernán Caballero), writing in 1861, confessed that the polemic had led to the trading of personal insults; moreover, since Mora had once more become a close friend of the Böhl family, and since both he and his supporter Antonio Alcalá Galiano had in

later years come to admit the Romantic ideas defended by Böhl, it was considered desirable to paper over unpleasant aspects of the polemic. Cecilia was adamant, however, that the dispute had served its purpose in establishing in Spain the reputation of A. W. Schlegel as one of the foremost literary theorists and critics of his age.[10]

Students of the polemic remain indebted to the exhaustive research of Camille Pitollet, who clarified the history of the dispute in his *La Querelle caldéronienne de Johan Nikolas Böhl von Faber et José Joaquín de Mora, reconstituée d'après les documents originaux* (Paris, 1909). Pitollet impressively documents the contributions to Böhl's cause made by his wife Francisca Larrea and by his other collaborators José Vargas Ponce, Juan Bautista Cavaleri and Cristóbal Zulueta. He likewise illustrates the articles written by Alcalá Galiano in defence of Mora. Pitollet's study accorded the dispute its first serious critical consideration, since previous commentators had relied upon Francisco María Tubino's two short articles of 1877.[11] Tubino appears not to have gained access to many of the original documents; moreover, he wrongly states the name of Böhl's adversary to have been Juan José de Mora, and makes obviously inaccurate references to German Romanticism which Pitollet designates 'grossières erreurs'.[12] While Pitollet's study broke important new ground, it made no attempt to link the endeavours of Böhl with later Romantic criticism in Spain. Guillermo Carnero's much more recent research has clarified a previously neglected aspect of Böhl's work by placing it within a historical contextual framework of reactionary thought.[13] Drawing upon important documents from the Böhl family archive now in the possession of the Osborne family at Puerto de Santa María, Carnero has also been able further to illustrate the history of the polemic using material not accessible to Pitollet. However, it is disappointing that this rigorous study does not attempt to link the work of Böhl with the ideas that emerged in later Spanish criticism, especially since Carnero acknowledges at an early stage that the ideological content of Böhl's articles was far from untypical of Spanish Romanticism. He indeed introduces the polemic as a crucial episode in the development of Romantic ideas in Spain, without which it would not be possible fully to comprehend the principal ideological thrust of Romanticism in that country.[14] Juan Luis Alborg has regarded Carnero's preoccupation with Böhl's reactionary stance as an obsessive one, observing that Carnero's energies would have been more profitably employed in an

assessment of Böhl's contribution to the future development of Spanish Romanticism.[15] Similarly Hans Juretschke, in a cogent essay, pointed to Carnero's zealous pursuance of the political, rather than literary, aspects of the polemic.[16] Juretschke would later stress that Carnero's approach was deficient precisely because it revealed itself to be rooted in politics.[17] The present study will seek to establish precisely the links between Böhl and later Romantic criticism in Spain while, at the same time, attempting to avoid the kind of partiality detected by Alborg and Juretschke in the work of Carnero.

When Böhl published his Cadiz article above the signature 'un apasionado de la nación española' ('a devotee of the Spanish nation'), his principal concern was the defence of Calderón against the attacks of Classicists. To make this defence he turned to the twelfth and fourteenth lectures of A. W. Schlegel's *Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Literatur*. Although Böhl used only fragments from them, we already perceive the basic premises of Schlegel's brand of Romanticism. Böhl naturally introduced Schlegel's distinction between 'Classical' and 'Romantic' literature, declaring that, as they expressed different values, they ought not to be judged by identical criteria. He went on to state that England and Spain had chosen not to imitate Classical tragedy and comedy; instead they had developed an independent genre which he designated *romancesco*.[18] Unlike that of the ancients, Romantic literature was primarily Christian and spiritual, its themes being those of chivalry. Böhl was, in this respect, swift to echo Schlegel's view of Spain as the Romantic country *par excellence*; if modern, i.e. Romantic, poetry was founded upon religious sentiment, love, honour and knightly valour, then naturally it was in Spain that it attained its highest degree of perfection.[19] It is hardly surprising that we are provided with an idealistic vision of mediaeval Spain as a Christian bastion against the infidel. For Böhl, the 700-year history of the Spanish Reconquest exemplified the chivalric ideal. After the decline of chivalry, he affirmed, its spirit endured in Spain and in Spain alone.[20] Calderón, then, appears as the epitome of Spanish civilisation, embodying in his dramatic production all of the values earlier praised by Böhl. In the same article, Böhl attacked the influence upon Spaniards of eighteenth-century French literature and of Enlightenment thought. Translating from Schlegel, he forecasted that Spanish writers would soon awaken to a realisation of the respective values of