

IDENTITY RIFTS IN THE SPANISH SPEAKING WORLD: A LITERARY  
COMPARISON OF MARTÍ, DARÍO, UNAMUNO AND MACHADO

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IDENTITY RIFTS IN THE SPANISH SPEAKING WORLD: A LITERARY  
COMPARISON OF MARTÍ, DARÍO, UNAMUNO AND MACHADO

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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This thesis serves to explain how the transition that occurred in Spain and Spanish America during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries affected the issue of identity. Because of Spain's historically powerful background, preceding the ascension of Felipe VI in 1700, a loss of morale occurred as the Spanish nation began to lose its colonial empire throughout the nineteenth century. For the Spanish people this loss manifested itself on many levels including: a patriotic sense towards their homeland, a personal sense towards themselves and their communities, as well as in a spiritual sense in their relationship to their God. Many writers wrote of this loss of identity including Miguel de Unamuno and Antonio Machado whom I have used as references for Spain's state during this time period.

Spanish America, however, although struggling with its new independence, found freedom in the ability to create a new identity separate from its past Spanish colonial ties. Because of this new freedom, a loss of identity was not the main impetus behind literary successes but the idea of forging a new one. José Martí and Rubén Darío are examples of authors who wrote of this new desired stability.

Within these pages I have compared the two groups of people showing how the time period affected both of them; the loss of colonies of Spain or the gaining of independence in Spanish America. Through the literary works of these four authors, I have represented both Spain and Spanish America presenting the negative affects that occurred in Spain while contrasting such changes to the progressive state of Spanish America.

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## INTRODUCTION

Throughout time, the search for identity manifests itself in a variety of ways. It can be seen reflected solely by an individual's position within a household setting: for example, as a father or mother whose main concern is the welfare of his or her family; by a national identity that is based on the importance between citizens and their nation where their concern is based on the welfare of their homeland; or even by a religious identity where the belief in a structured or non-structured set of standards is placed upon them by God or some other worshipped spiritual entity. This theme of identity is a major impetus behind many of the decisions made throughout history. It is because of this identity, or even aspiration for a greater or more stable identity, that as gods died and new ones were born and borders between nations moved or were removed, that men and women have fought, died, and even killed in order to create the sense of security that their own identity assured them. The cultural evolutions cause rifts in societies, which are formed by abandoning old ways and entering into a new way of life: for example, a change in government, the creation of new religions, natural disasters, or any other significant event which forces change within a community, nation, or the world. Although these rifts cannot be measured easily, common themes within communities or nations can be pinpointed, revealing the rift within specific time periods. One of these rifts occurs in



Spain and Spanish America during the second half of the nineteenth century well into the twentieth.

Modernity of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, not to be confused with the Modernist movement of the same time, was filled with new technologies, new political and economic ties between countries, as well as new freedoms within the majority of South and Central American countries that during the Spanish America independence movement, 1810-1824, had received their independence. Because of these new innovations and desired freedoms, the populations and industrial progress within many of these countries boomed, creating a need for more education and more economic ties. These factors alongside the capitalist movement, which was rapidly spreading throughout the world, created within America a sense of independence, strength and progress.

Susana Rotker, in *The American Chronicles of José Martí: Journalism and Modernity in Spanish America*, speaks of modernity as “the perception of the beginning of industrialization and the consolidation of stronger bureaucratic states” attributing the change to what she calls a “new atmosphere” that was brought about by “railroads, steam engines, telegraphs, daily newspapers, telephones, scientific discoveries, and urban centers that changed the shape of society and the distribution of traditional social classes”(1). These changes adversely influenced those within the artistic world as well, as their main goal was not for economic gain but, instead, the expression of beauty through their literary works.

This opposition was a key force in the creation of the literary movement called Modernism. The introduction to *Cantos de vida y esperanza*, presented by editors Will

Derusha and Alberto Acereda, defines the impetus behind the Modernist movement: “Modernism embodied the crisis of poets driven to create something new in a society where poetry was little esteemed and less valued . . .” (9). This Modernism arrived through authors who, although little esteemed by the advancing world, were adamant about keeping poetry alive, and especially about trying to create a perfect harmony between the beauties of nature and art. Although many wrote within the new literary style, it is important to recognize some of the important names that correspond to it: for example, both José Martí and Rubén Darío who although wrote in distinct ways created, exemplified, and instilled the Modernist style into the mainstream. A desire to acquire freedom within this new technologically and economically advancing way of life was difficult as they “devoted themselves to freedom, passion, and renovation in pursuit of beauty” through their literary works (*Cantos* 6). The Modernist approach to life was twofold: one, to find a foothold within a society where progress in science, politics, and economy deemed artistic creations as frivolous, and two, to express through literature the beauties of nature as they attempted to harmonize man’s ability to think, speak, and write with the perfection they found in God’s creations. Although a struggle, these authors found their impetus in who they were. While knowing who they were and what they wanted they strove to create an atmosphere conducive to their longings; a community full of freedom, passion, and renovation in pursuit of beauty.

As the transition from old to new--or modernity--occurred in Spanish speaking America, the sense of identity by which they were inspired wasn’t as readily available to those within the Iberian Peninsula. Some contemporary writers, such as those from the Spanish Generation of 98, thought themselves separate from the Modernist movement.

They wrote of less universal themes and more about their own specific problems within their individual communities and nations. This literary movement, not actually named until 1913, described the specific national problems that were occurring during the time period and also included descriptions of landscapes specific to the authors' homelands or places of residence. As its name entails, the writers were feeling the repercussions of the quickly changing world, including many years of internal Spanish political insurgencies as well as the loss of its final American colonies in 1898, which together created a downward spiraling morale throughout the once powerful nation. Because Spain, once a world power in the 1600s, was on this decline of prestige as well as morale, writers within the nation's communities found themselves without a strong identity, as one can see through their literary pieces published during--or years after--this era of transition. Unlike the Modernists of Spanish America, writers in Spain who wrote during the same time period lacked identity and purpose. Their goals were unclear, leaving them constantly dissatisfied with the modern day situation, both with the collective whole of their nation as well as within themselves.

Whether attributed to the quickly modernizing Spanish America or Spain's national conflicts, the time period caused a rift in identity. In Spain, a theme of identity is found in many literary works and is often times labeled as a *camino*, or road, in which the authors searched and expressed themselves through their writings. Stability was taken from those whose nation was changing around them. Spain had officially lost all its previous prestige by the end of the nineteenth century and continued to find itself in political distress from within. Spanish America, now free from colonial rule had obtained a new identity as it was no longer inhabited by Spanish Americans but by

Americans, and although this title was long in being defined it did create goals and ambitions for those within the rapidly changing countries. Many authors chose to express this evolving identity as either a glorious chance for new beginnings and reform or a melancholy sense of an unknown, foreboding future. In either case, a desire to find a foothold amongst their communities and households, and maintain this new American identity was a large influence and inspiration to their writings. This literary phenomenon can be found in the literary works of authors from both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. Although separate in their struggles for identity, both groups simultaneously found themselves in a rapidly changing environment. Identity itself, in many cases, isn't solely constituted by which part of the world the search or need occurred but also by the person directly.

Miguel de Unamuno, in his philosophical essays entitled *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida*, wrote of Man's personality and his identity:

La memoria es la base de la personalidad individual, así como la tradición lo es de la personalidad colectiva de un pueblo. Se vive en el recuerdo y por el recuerdo, y nuestra vida espiritual no es, en el fondo, sino el esfuerzo de nuestro recuerdo por perseverar, por hacerse esperanza, el esfuerzo de nuestro pasado por hacerse porvenir (13).

As Unamuno explains, it is our lives and our experiences, both past and present that create our personality. Because of the close-knit ties between Spanish America and Spain, both groups' identity are partial creations by or because of their specific historical ties to each other. As Spanish America was embracing its new identity those in Spain were losing theirs. I have found that the theme of identity, from the late nineteenth to the

early twentieth century Spain, is primarily based upon three main viewpoints: national identity, which is created by an individual's standpoint within his community and as a citizen of a nation; personal identity which can be based on an individual's direct surroundings through his community or; and lastly, spiritual identity that can be created by an individual's understandings--or need for understanding--and acceptance of his existence under a watchful spiritual entity, oftentimes called God. These three types of identities can be found within many of the literary works of Spanish authors who, at the time, struggled with their nation, themselves, and their God.

This thesis serves to identify the theme of identity found during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries within Spain as it went through this transition. However, in order to better understand the tragic state in which the nation found itself, it is important to view the changes also occurring on the other side of the Atlantic, in the new independent Spanish America. This theme of identity, whether represented as a search of--or acceptance of--a new identity can be presented by the use of four literary figures of the time: José Martí (1853-1895) and Rubén Darío (1867-1916), from Spanish America and Miguel de Unamuno (1864-1936) and Antonio Machado (1875-1939), from Spain. These four authors, presented in said order, are the primary focus of these pages and are important examples in the representation of the time period for both Spain as well as Spanish America. Through Martí and Darío, we see how modernity affected them as they anxiously fought for their new national as well as poetic identities. Their reactions to modernity yield a better understanding of the different and contrasting theme of identity found in Unamuno and Machado. Through such contrasts it is easier to understand the uniqueness of the anguish, sadness, and melancholic tones presented

within the Spanish literary works of the time. Divided into three chapters and a conclusion, the following pages will serve to enter each of the individual author's struggles and recognize their new identity--or search for a more stable identity--expressed through their literary works, in order to better understand the inevitable sense of loss that existed in Spain because of their lacking identities.

## JOSE MARTI AND RUBEN DARIO: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN AMERICAN IDENTITY

José Martí was an integral part in the search for independence and in the creation of a Cuban identity within Cuba. Although his parents were both Spanish by blood, his father being from Valencia and his mother from the Canary Isles, Martí at a young age began to take notice of the injustices placed upon Cuba. At the age of fifteen, as Rene Armando Leyva writes in *Trayectoria de Martí*, “Inconscientemente, sin comprender todavía, pero llamado ya por su destino, organiza y funda un grupo de condiscípulos del Instituto de Segunda Enseñaza de La Habana, que en forma casi inocente se da a la conspiración patriótica” (12). Whether consciously or not, as the quote indicates, Martí was a man who was drawn towards a fight for his identity: the Cuban identity. Although he died young at the age of forty two, Martí’s contribution to the world was no small amount, as Leyva explains: “Nadie hizo más en tan poco tiempo” (Leyva 7). From the age of sixteen until his death at forty two, Martí’s publications had fervency towards freedom, honor, pride, and equality. Through both his prose and poetry, these virtues, along with the search to maintain his identity, can be found.

It is easy to see the importance that national identity held for Martí. Not only did he die for what he believed, in battle in Dos Ríos, Cuba (1895), fighting against Spanish forces led by Colonel Jose Ximénez de Sandoval, but also from his early adulthood he

began--both figuratively through his writings and physically in battle--fighting against Spain's colonial rule and for an independent Cuba. It is important to see that this passion for freedom contributed to his strong sense of national identity. He fought his whole life so that others could be able to secure a new American identity.

However, a stable national identity isn't the only aspect of his identity by which Martí was driven. In his personality, Martí strove for a free America not to procure prestige, money, or even power, but because he was unable to sit by and watch the injustices that surrounded his homeland. Fryda Schultz de Mantonvani in her book *Genio y figura de José Martí* writes of Martí's attitude towards the difficult road that led to an independent Cuba comparing it to "un cáliz difícil de beber"; however, a bitter cup that Martí stated was well worth partaking, "ante el cual no vaciló" (Scultz 24). An important factor that contributed to Martí's personal identity can be found not only in the thematic content of his literary pieces but also in the impetus that drove him to write. In the literature of others as well as in his own, Martí found solace as it allowed for the expression of human emotion, the depiction of beauty, and the procurement of knowledge. He believed adamantly that "pensar es vivir" (*Ensayos y crónicas* 167). Martí used his strengths as a writer to his advantage as he strove to be not a Spanish American but a Cuban American.

Literature for Martí served a higher purpose. In "Oscar Wilde," an essay published in 1882, he talks about the importance of writing and how it can be utilized by any and all to better themselves and their community. He writes: "Conocer diversas literaturas es el medio mayor de libertarse de la tiranía de algunas de ellas" (*Ensayos y crónicas* 79). Martí urges knowledge upon those who seek liberty so as to better prepare



them for what lies ahead. He continues: “. . . no hay manera de salvarse del riesgo de obedecer ciegamente a un sistema filosófico, sino nutrirse de todos y ver cómo en todos palpita un mismo espíritu” (*Ensayos y crónicas* 79). Knowledge, according to Martí, unifies a community creating stronger bonds and the ability to propagate change.

Martí wrote *Ismaelillo* (1882), a collection of poems, in memory of his son who was separated from him while his wife Carmen Zayas, who after asking for help from the Spanish consul, moved from their then current home in New York back to Havana. The separation from his son, however, did not stop his desire for change. In fact it allotted him the opportunity to express his feelings, through this poetic work, emphasizing his hope, passion, and love through his son. In the dedicatory message written in honor of his son, Martí writes: “Tengo fe en el mejoramiento humano, en la vida futura, en la utilidad de la virtud, y en ti.” (*Ismaelillo* 65) In this dedication we see one of the defining terms of Martí’s personal identity: virtue. Through love for his son he continued inspiring the world to change and progress; not through an industrial or economic progress, but that of unification and stabilization of a person’s, as well as a nation’s identity. We see an attribute of this virtue in his poem “Reyecillo,” which proclaims that to live with impurities is worse than not living at all: “¿Vivir impuro? / ¡No vivas, hijo!” (*Ismaelillo* 77). Ivan A. Schulmann touches upon Martí’s virtues proclaiming: “En él latía la pasión humanitaria junto con una capacidad por sufrir y por aceptar los dolores de todos” (27). Martí wanted, and was willing, to fight for a just cause, which he found in his people.

*La edad de oro*, a series of journals written monthly to the younger generation in 1889, is an example of a selection of writings that portray the importance that virtue had on Martí. Martí believed that the new upcoming and younger generation was the key to a

brighter America, "...los niños son la esperanza del mundo" (*La edad de oro* 16). He proclaims in one issue that: "Libertad es el derecho que todo hombre tiene a ser honrado, y a pensar y a hablar sin hipocresía" (20). However, he not only preached freedom to the youth of America but talked of their responsibilities to act upon any injustices that threatened them. In the same paragraph Martí says: "Un hombre que obedece a un mal gobierno, sin trabajar para que el gobierno sea bueno, no es un hombre honrado" (20). He sought honor within himself and within his nation. He fought because his personality would not let him do otherwise.

In another journal entry entitled "Tres heroes," Martí expresses his opinion about his heroes: Bolívar, San Martín, and Hidalgo. What connected Martí with these three wasn't only that they all played an important role in the liberation of a country or culture, but more importantly the sentiment and reasoning behind their actions. He speaks admirably of Bolívar and his desire to see the liberation of Venezuela: "Era su país, su país oprimido, que le pesaba en el corazón, y, no le dejaba vivir en paz" (*La edad de oro* 21). While speaking of Hidalgo he writes: "Vio a los negros esclavos, y se llenó de horror. Vio maltratar a los indios, que son tan mansos y generosos, y se sentó entre ellos como un hermano viejo, a enseñarle las artes finas..." (*La edad de oro* 22). Hidalgo, as well as Bolívar, wasn't interested primarily in the prestige and power that his actions caused, but instead cared only about people, without stipulations of race or color. Martí also fell into this category; he was unable to wait passively and accept things for how they were, but insisted on positive change. This sentiment attributed to his personal identity, an identity comprised of honor, integrity, and a hope for freedom. For him, freedom meant the ability to think openly and speak without hypocrisy. In order to be

true to his personal identity, it was important for Martí to be true to himself and to those around him.

In his political essays, Martí directly approaches his opinions for change instead of his feelings on the importance and significance of the role that literature held. Following his own guidelines, Martí was able to think and speak honorably without hypocrisy and he did so because he felt that his nation needed change. In his essay entitled “Nuestra America,” he writes of how the American nations, or colonies, could procure an individual national identity as well as progress into a powerful independent nation. Included within the message are his ideas towards the existence of racism. Martí felt strongly against any type of racial discrimination and denounces anyone who would act against a race or people. He writes: “No hay odio de razas por que no hay razas” (*Ensayos y crónicas* 167), and in his essay “Mi raza” he continues by saying: “El hombre no tiene ningún derecho especial porque pertenezca a una raza u otra” (*Ensayos y crónicas* 172). Martí believed very strongly in the unification of his people. While he desired a separation of Cuba from Spain, he urged those that represented the people of his country to unify and thus create a new, stronger, and independent nation. For those who believed in the segregation of races, Martí proclaimed that he who does so “peca contra la humanidad el que fomente y propague la oposición y el odio de las razas” (*Ensayos y crónicas* 167). He believed that only through the unification of those who lived, breathed, and sweated upon the land could there be an individual identity within it. The idea of unification wasn’t limited to racism within the communities but also within the government. In order to have a unified country the government, according to Martí, must understand the natural elements with respect to its corresponding nation: “El gobierno no

es más que el equilibrio de los elementos naturales del país” (*Ensayos y crónicas* 160). He continues by saying that “El buen gobernante en América no es el que sabe cómo se gobierna el alemán o francés, sino el que sabe con qué elementos está hecho su país y cómo puede ir guiándolos en junto . . . El gobierno ha de nacer del país. El espíritu del gobierno ha de ser del país” (*Ensayos y crónicas* 160). This unification must, as Martí proclaimed, be unified in spirit not by races or bloodlines. Whether within the government or the communities, Martí was concerned with the fact that an inhabitant of the island must belong in order to strengthen their American identities.

As previously quoted, Martí believed in the improvement of man: “tengo fe en el mejoramiento humano” (*Ismaelillo* 65). It was this faith that characterized his personality and served as impetus behind his fight for a national identity in Cuba. Although rarely does Martí speak directly about religion or his personal religious experiences, the idea of religion is not far from his writings’ thematic. As previously stated, Martí’s works were filled with virtues: honor, love, valor, and integrity. These virtues along with his passion for literature in a rapidly changing environment served him as a religion. In his essay “El poeta Walt Whitman” he depicts what for him is the definitive religion or, as he says: “la religion definitiva” (*Ensayos y crónicas* 131). For Martí, religion was based upon the same liberty for which he fought throughout his life. Although not a pure Modernist poet, only one of its precursors, his poetry was his own, a compilation of metaphors, emotions, and expressions that reflected his identity. Through poetry, the Modernist poets became the creators as their poetic works were their personal, as well as perfect, creations. These creations were inspired by the liberty to create freely, an ideal and attribute of social freedom which Modernist poets cherished. This liberty to

write and to express one's opinions, virtues, or ideals was, according to Martí, religion. In "El poeta Walt Whitman" he calls out to poets, saying: "Creáis la religión perdida, porque estaba mudando de forma sobre vuestras cabezas. Levantaos, porque vosotros sois los sacerdotes. La libertad es la religión definitiva. Y la poesía de la libertad el culto nuevo" (*Ensayos y crónicas* 131). In the same paragraph he writes, "[La poesía] explica el propósito inefable y seductora bondad del Universo" (*Ensayos y crónicas* 131).

These character attributes comprise, in my opinion, the spirituality of man within the universe with which Martí felt was the "religion definitiva." In *Versos sencillos*, Martí strives to convey the importance of virtue to the world:

Yo soy un hombre sincero  
De donde crece la palma,  
Y antes de morirme quiero  
Echar mis versos del alma. (*Versos sencillos* I, 179)

Before his death Martí wanted to express these messages of a unified nation, a new America, as well as universal virtues and values through his "versos del alma." And the messages he brings to the reader are messages of friendship, love, hope, brotherhood, honor, as well as a number of virtues by which he held much importance. These virtues were important to the author as they were at the base of his desire to be free.

Being one of the forefathers of Modernism, if not the most important amongst them, Rubén Darío also desired freedom, but in his case a literary freedom. Because of the impeding demands of an unappreciative society, this thematic of literary freedom is deeply instilled into his literary works. The theme of a search for identity, as a poet as well as a person, existed not necessarily through themes within his literary works, but

through his desired freedom to create such works. Whereas he wrote to express the beauties of nature, his impetus for writing lay behind the freedom to do so. This freedom was a key part in his search for himself within a rapidly changing environment.

Darío's first three literary successes are: *Azul* (1888), *Prosas Profanas* (1896), and *Cantos de vida y esperanza* (1905). Amongst these poetic compendiums it is possible to understand how Darío, an artist of his time, expressed his needs and his opinions of the life he was living in his time, while knowing who he was and what he wanted within a community who was unaccepting of his ambitions.

One of the main impetuses behind Ruben Darío's literary works is that of poetic freedom, or a desire to be deemed more valuable in a time when poets were not. This theme directly corresponds to Darío's personal identity, an identity as a writer. In his first published work, *Azul*, this representation is clear as Darío portrays through short stories the degradation and mistreatment of poets. In the first short story entitled "El rey burgués" we are introduced to a king who, although portrayed as someone sincerely interested in the arts and surrounded by all forms of it, is truly only interested in the prestige the arts allot him. We know this through the poet, a protagonist of sorts who, showing up at the king's doorstep starving and seeking to inspire, explains to the king his viewpoint of what art is. He asks to be able to share his talents with the king. The poet proclaims:

He acariciado a la gran Naturaleza, y he buscado el color ideal, el verso que está en el astro, en el fondo del cielo, y el que está en la perla, en lo profundo del océano. ¡He querido ser pujante! Porque viene el tiempo de las grandes revoluciones, con un Mecías todo luz, todo agitación y

potencia, y es preciso recibir su espíritu con el poema que sea arco triunfal, de estrofas de acero, de estrofas de oro, de estrofas de amor.

¡Señor, el arte no está en los fríos envoltorios de mármol, ni en los cuadros lamidos, ni en el excelente señor Ohnet! ¡Señor! El arte no viste pantalones, ni habla burgués, ni pone todos los puntos en toas las íes. El es augusto, tiene mantos de oro, o de llamas, o anda desnudo, y amasa la greda con fiebre, y pinta con luz y es opulento, y da golpes de ala como las águilas o zapazos como los leones. (*Azul* 10)

Through these paragraphs we see Darío's poetic viewpoint and literary identity. Poetry was a desire to find beauty in nature and in art, but above all, to transcribe these physical entities into verse; *estrofas* that express human emotion. However, society in Darío's time was just like that of the king's in that it didn't understand the importance or share the poet's opinion of what poetry was or should be. The king in the story, although while giving the starving poet a home in which to live, takes away his ability to create poetry by putting him outside to crank a music box in silence. The poet is taken care of: he is fed, clothed, and to some degree sheltered, but although alive, he is stripped of his artistic outlet when his passions and future creations are taken from him. At the end of the story, as winter approaches, the poet is found frozen, hand still attached to the crank, outside in the cold. Through this short story Darío was able to express his viewpoint on the world's progress, such as the industrial and capitalistic tendencies that were emerging. Although the advances did have their benefits the new societal influences were extinguishing the fire that many poets had within them while simultaneously ignoring the viewpoints that the artists wished to share.

In another short story entitled “El pájaro azul” we see similar expressions of poetic freedoms. The story is about a man, Garcín, who within his community--although accepted by many--is considered insane because he claims to have a blue bird locked within his head. The bird, constantly singing and trying to escape its cranial prison, was a constant companion to the man as well as a constant annoyance. The man was a poet. He lived his life writing in his journals and sharing his poetic exploits to his friends at the local pub. The man’s father, however, was not accepting of his son’s poetic exploits and insisted that he either burn his writings or lose his inheritance. Unperturbed by his father’s threats, Garcín announced his plan to create the perfect poem. Doing so, he shared his progress daily with his local cronies. One day, however, stricken by the death of a local woman whom he loved, he couldn’t continue. With his father’s lack of acceptance, the loss of his love, and the constant desire for freedom that the blue bird within his head desired, Garcín decided that the bird’s freedom was more important than his, as he had none. So he freed the bird by killing himself. Staring at the corpse of his friend, head split open with his locally famous poems in his arms, the narrator speaks with emotion: “¡Ay, Garcín, cuántos llevan en el cerebro tu misma enfermedad!” (*Azul* 60). The young man had his strengths extinguished. Although some from the community accepted his eccentric if not insane ways his father, as well as those from the higher classes, looked down on him. Being a poet didn’t afford Garcín the prestige that his father deemed necessary to live a life worth priding.

Because the Modernists thought of poetry as a vehicle to express the beauty found in nature and the world, philosophical ideas or opinions were often left out of their verses. In the majority of his poetry, Darío stays within these parameters as we find them



filled with swans, fragrances, and the essence of nature. "Sonatina," a poem found in *Prosas profanas*, is a poem about which much criticism has been written. Some critics, such as Ricardo Gullón, consider it to depict attributes of nature by way of rhythmic beauty. Alberto Aceredo in his article entitled "La expresión del alma en el Modernismo" explains the opinions of Gullón: "Ricardo Gullón. . . ha visto en 'Sonatina' un poema intrascendente, cuyo valor radica única y exclusivamente en su belleza rítmica y formal" (Aceredo 30). However, there are others who say that "Sonatina" "es mucho más incluso que un simple manifiesto modernista. . . y se convierte en verdadera expresión del alma en el Modernismo" (Aceredo 31). "Sonatina" fits categorically into the second of these two critical opinions as Darío himself claimed in his book *Historia de mis libros*: "contiene el sueño de toda adolescente, de toda mujer que aguarda el instante amoroso. Es el deseo íntimo, la melancolía ansiosa, y es, por fin, la esperanza" (*Historia de mis libros* 143). As we have seen through the short stories and will see through his poetry depicting national identity, the poem "Sonatina" like the blue bird in "Pájaro azul," expresses feelings of imprisonment:

La princesa está triste... qué tendrá la princesa?

Los suspiros se escapan de su boca de fresa  
que ha perdido la risa, que ha perdido el color.

La princesa está pálida en su silla de oro,  
está mudo el teclado de su clave sonoro;

Y en un vaso olvidado se desmaya una flor.

.....

Ay! La pobre princesa de la boca de rosa

quiere ser golondrina, quiere ser mariposa,  
tener alas ligeras, bajo el cielo volar,  
ir al sol por la escala luminosa de un rayo,  
saludar a los lirios con los versos de mayo,  
o perderse en el viento sobre el trueno mar.  
que no duerme y un dragón colosal.

.....

--Calla, calla, princesa--dice el hada madrina--,  
en caballo con alas, hacia acá se encamina,  
en el cinto la espada y en la mano el azor,  
el feliz caballero que te adora sin verte,  
y que llega de lejos, vencedor de la Muerte,

a encenderte los labios con su beso de amor! (*Prosas profanas* 26)

Whether the poem expresses the desires of a girl unhappy with her personal life or life in her homeland, the girl wants something more. She aspires to be “golondrina” or “mariposa” with “alas ligeras.” She wants the knight in shining armor, the far off lands, the unreachable ivory tower. She holds on to what the poet describes as "una vaga ilusión" but is not left without hope as Darío gives her hope with "Calla, calla, princesa . . . hacia acá se encamina." The poem describes the sadness and anguish within the princess for being unable to have what her heart tells her she wants. This poem can be directly correlated with the Modernist movement as it depicts the scenario of the modernist writers and their expressed desire for literary acceptance and freedom.

Darío, as Martí, wanted freedom, a freedom not dissimilar from that of the princess's. Although throughout his life he tried to deal with the death of loved ones and marriages that weren't satisfactory Darío's struggle for personal identity was primarily comprised of a desire to maintain his already existing identity: an identity as a writer and more specifically as a poet. These two short stories and poem show the negative aspects or feelings that Darío had as he strived to identify himself as a poet. Not all his short stories and poems consist of the expression of repressed poets; however, these literary pieces give meaning to all his works as he felt that his poetry wouldn't be received by a world who, from his perspective, had turned its back on what poetry should be.

Whereas many writers of the time looked to the heavens to find stability in who they were Darío looked primarily within himself. Instead of constantly questioning a higher power in order to secure an existential search Darío only questioned himself and his ability to be. The portrayal of this search was expressed by Darío through his passion as a writer. He declared in the preface to his book *Prosas profanas* that "mi literatura es mía en mí; quien siga servilmente mis huellas perderá su tesoro personal" (*Prosas profanas* 10). For Darío his ability to write was his ability to find his "tesoro personal," or his spiritual identity. The spirituality found in his works isn't necessarily correlated with the heavens but rather with one's soul or desire to exist. Therefore, in order to look into the religious attributes of Darío's life, we cannot look to which church he attended or whether he believed in God; however, we must, as Judith A. Payne states in her article entitled "Yo persigo una forma...: La búsqueda existencial de Darío en el concepto poético de *Azul*, *Prosas profanas*, y *Cantos de vida y esperanza*," look into his poetry. She states: "Por eso, un modo de comprender la poética de Darío es examinar la

búsqueda existencial e ideológica de su poesía, en la que él quería encontrar su salvación” (Payne 247). It was through his life as a poet that he searched for his salvation: his ability to commune with nature, understand, as well as write about the beauties of the world.

Not unlike the belief in a God whose children are planted upon the earth, Darío felt that his creations of poetry, even a new idealistic and perfect poetry, was his way of reaching an enlightened and more perfect state of being, his “tesoro personal.” Because his poetry lacked existential or philosophical messages, because their purpose was not that of teaching but the expression of beauty through writing, Darío’s religion or spirituality left only subtle exchanges to express himself. However, there are some examples where Darío stepped aside from his pure expression of beauty and wrote not only of the beauties of the world but of the soul in search of solace. The symbol of the swan, for example, in *Prosas profanas* is a symbol of purity to which man and the heavens are interconnected. The introduction to *Cantos de vida y esperanza*, while speaking of *Prosas profanas*, characterizes the swan as “the originality and spirit of the poet, frequently in an inward search for himself, but also the eternal question mark of life” (*Cantos* 18) . We can see these attributes in “El cisne”:

Fue una hora divina para el género humano  
El Cisne antes cantaba sólo para morir.  
Cuando se oyó el acento del Cisne wagneriano  
fue en medio de una aurora, fue para revivir.

Sobre las tempestades del humano océano  
se oye el canto del Cisne; no se cesa de oír,  
dominando el martillo del viejo Thor germano  
o las trompas que cantan la espada de Argantir.

¡Oh Cisne! ¡Oh sacro pájaro! Si antes la blanca Helena  
del huevo azul de Leda brotó de gracia llena,  
siendo de la Hermosura la princesa inmortal,

bajo tus alas la nueva Poesía

concibe en una gloria de luz y de armonía

la Helena eterna y pura que encarna el ideal. (*Prosas profanas* 33)

With the representation of swans in his works, Darío is able to interconnect the beauties of nature with an existential ideal. “¡Oh sacro pájaro!” he calls out, praising that swan’s beauty as well as its ability to enlighten and exalt the human soul. Through the inspiration and purity of the swan, Darío saw the incarnation of his ideals; ideals that along with light and harmony were conceived as the end of the poem explains: “concibe en una Gloria de luz y de armonía / la Helena eternal y pura que ecarna el ideal.”

In *Cantos de vida y esperanza*, we see the repetition of the Swan as a symbol of a consoler to which hope can be aspired. In the first poem found within the section titled “Los cisnes” we can follow Darío’s aspiration to the white birds:

¿Qué signo haces, oh Cisne, con tu encorvado cuello  
al paso de los tristes y errantes soñadores?

¿Por qué tan silencioso de ser blanco y ser bello,  
tiránico a las aguas e impasible a las flores?

Yo te saludo ahora como en versos latinos  
te saludara antaño Publio Ovidio Nasón.  
Los mismos ruiseñores cantan los mismos trinos,  
y en diferentes lenguas es la misma canción.

A vosotros mi lengua no debe ser extraña.  
A Garcilaso visteis, acaso, alguna vez...  
Soy un hijo de América, soy un nieto de España...  
Quevedo pudo hablaros en verso en Aranjuez...

.....  
La América española como la España entera  
fija está en el Oriente de su fatal destino;  
yo interrogo a la Esfinge que el porvenir espera  
con la interrogación de tu cuello divino.

.....  
He lanzado mi grito, Cisnes, entre vosotros  
que habéis sido los fieles en la desilusión,  
mientras siento una fuga de americanos potros  
y el estertor postrero de un caduco león...

...Y un cisne negro dijo: «La noche anuncia el día».

Y uno blanco: «¡La aurora es inmortal! ¡La aurora  
es inmortal!» ¡Oh tierras de sol y de armonía,  
aún guarda la Esperanza la caja de Pandora!

(*Cantos* 108)

Instead of calling to the heavens to conquer sadness, Darío calls upon the beauty and purity of the swans and finds solace by seeking them out. As a poet he expresses his identity with all three elements: national, personal, and religious. Darío as a poet within the poem tells the birds that his language should not be foreign, whereas his impetus and desire was to sing the songs of nature and harmony which was representative of the swans. Comparing his voice to that of Garcilaso, he speaks with confidence: “A vosotros mi lengua no debe ser extraña.” Darío was foremost a poet, and it is within that identity that he searched for answers. He figuratively looked to the swans to produce in him a sense of security of the world around him, and when asked questions he did not know, he does not speak of turning to God, but instead he turns to the swan’s lakes, “Faltos de los alientos que dan las grandes cosas, qué haremos los poetas sino buscar tus lagos?”

(*Cantos* 108). He even characterizes the swans themselves as question marks, because of their curved necks. Lastly, the poem represents Darío’s insecurity about his national identity as he proclaims to the swans his fear of an American stampede and the senility of his Spanish ties, “siento una fuga de americanos potros y el estertor postero de un caduco león” (*Cantos* 110). His identity existed foremost as a poet; however, as a poet his national, personal, and religious beliefs were a constant influence as he wrote and strove for freedom.

Darío's preoccupation for a brighter future can be tied in with his national identity. Within his searching for spiritual answers and his search for being a creator it was the new America's progress and culture that was causing the lack of poetic freedom. Although Darío didn't write--within his poetry-- any preoccupations he had with Nicaragua or any of the other major Latin American cities in which he resided, nor how it corresponded to his national identity, he strove continually to inspire others to create in themselves a love and pride for their homeland. Politics or political opinions are often found in his works, but once again they are not personal to his native land, but approached in a more universal understanding. In the preface to *Cantos de vida y esperanza*, Darío talks about his political stance that he portrays through his poetic works: "Si en estos cantos hay política, es porque aparece universal. Y si encontráis versos a un presidente, es porque son un clamor continental" (*Cantos* 49). His concerns weren't centered on his immediate surroundings but that of a continent, a race, or communities connected by similar cultures and language. Darío wrote with a tendency to focus on a larger scale, an ivory tower approach to systematically express his personal, political, and religious beliefs on a universal level. Instead of writing about Nicaragua he wrote about America, Cuba, France, Spain, and even the United States. When speaking of his homeland he tended to speak as a Spanish American or a descendant of Spain instead of from a Nicaraguan perspective. Darío did, however, feel it a responsibility to write of universal issues because as an author his duty was primarily as a creator. His creations existed in order to inspire and create a harmony with the world around him. Although separated from Spain as a modern day Nicaraguan, Darío constantly refers to the lineage that ties them all to their founder and onetime protectorate.



While speaking of a desired national independence or by writing of his bloodties to Spain, Darío often wrote of national pride and cultural identities. We see this pride in the second poem found in *Cantos de vida y esperanza* entitled “Salutación del optimista”:

Un continente y otro renovando las viejas prosapias,  
en espíritu unidos, en espíritu y ansias y lengua,  
ven llegar el momento en que habrán de cantar nuevos himnos.  
La latina estirpe verá la gran alba futura,  
en un trueno de música gloriosa, millones de labios  
saludarán la espléndida luz que vendrá del Oriente,  
Oriente augusto en donde todo lo cambia y renueva  
la eternidad de Dios, la actividad infinita.  
Y así sea Esperanza la visión permanente en nosotros,  
íncitas raza ubérrimas, sangre de Hispania fecunda!

(*Cantos* 64)

Although aware and proud of the Spanish ties and blood, Darío, like many of his time, desired an independent Spanish America, free from both European and North American economic influences that inhibited their ability to create new cultural traditions. They wanted the ability to create new independent national identities separate from their past historical ties. Although content with a new ideal that, hope be the enduring vision, “sea Esperanza la vision permanente,” Darío spent a great portion of his life in many countries outside of his homeland. By the time he had published *Cantos de vida y esperanza* the freedom movement to which he devoted his life had become infectious. In the preface of the book he says “El movimiento de la libertad que me tocó

iniciar en América, se propagó hasta España y tanto aquí como allá el triunfo está logrado” (*Cantos* 49). His beliefs were not his alone as many joined his cause for a more free society within not just one but many countries worldwide, as he maintained his desire to write primarily of universal themes that affected many.

Within Darío’s works these three themes are present: his identity as a writer, as a creator, and as a Spanish American. As he strove to find harmony within his literature he portrayed himself as a man who found importance in his identity as a man as well as an entity within a mysterious universe--as an American--but above all as a poet. He, like Martí, struggled with many aspects of identity but, in general, knew what he wanted and strove throughout his life to express his identity, as well as ideals, through his literature. Both authors, Martí and Darío, although searching for a place within society whether through their national ideals or literary ideals, knew who they were and what their ideals were. Spain, however, didn’t maintain this base that was so prominent within the new Spanish American world as they lacked the new opportunities of solidarity and were left only with loss, political instability, and a dissipating faith.

MIGUEL DE UNAMUNO: A SEARCH FOR  
AN UNOBTAINABLE TRUTH

Although authors like Martí and Darío were pushing for a restructured society that corresponded more aptly to their desires and personalities, Spain responded to the transitional rift without the drive and focus that was affecting the Americans. Whereas those from Central and South America maintained identities that were new and progressive, those within the Iberian Peninsula, having received much loss as a nation, were on a steady decline as the national identity dissipated. Miguel de Unamuno was a man who exemplified this search for identity, a theme that was interlaced throughout his literary works, as he struggled to find his footing within his struggling nation. These literary works expressed his feelings and beliefs about everyday life, his community, as well as his homeland; however, they were consistently based upon a theme of spirituality and a desire for knowledge. In this segment I would like to examine his beliefs and how they attributed to a life of searching.

Unamuno's poem "Credo Poético" was one of his first literary expressions to the public community. Although this poem represents Unamuno's approach to literature, it also penetrates into the author's way of being. The poem, found in *Poesías* (1906), was one of the first poems Unamuno published and served to express his literary desires. At the age of forty-three, in a letter addressed to Federico de Onís in 1906 the year *Poesías*

was published he proclaimed: “Cuando ahora repaso mis poesías que en este año he hecho doble que en el resto de mi vida; pienso que cuando otros jóvenes riman ternezas a la novia, yo me engolfaba en Kant y Hegel y me llenaba de ideas eternas; y de aquí sale todo” (Onís 54). Literature, as we can see from this quote, was something that left an impression on Unamuno’s life as it allotted him resources to search for life’s great questions and answers. Unamuno is one who cannot fit into an orthodox way of thinking. We see this attribute as we read his works and discover that a large majority of his ideas agitate orthodox thought as well as bring to light his grievances.

His “Credo Poético” examines literature from a stylistic perspective, stating that the “Idea,” behind a poem is more important than the style or rhetoric in which that idea is portrayed:

Sujetemos en verdades del espíritu  
Las entrañas de las formas pasajeras,  
Que la Idea reine en toda soberana;  
Esculpamos, pues, la niebla. (VI: 169)

This “Idea” was Unamuno’s way of separating himself from the Modernist style of writing where art for art’s sake was the emphasis; Unamuno wrote to express himself and to awaken in others a desire to be free and to be alive, as these were struggles of his own. His purpose wasn’t behind the style or the pictures depicted through metaphors or symbolism; his purpose existed with the words and through the messages they conceived. We can see an example of this within the following stanza of the same poem:

No te cuides en exceso del ropaje,  
De escultor y no de sastre es tu tarea,  
No te olvides de que nunca más Hermosa  
Que desnuda está la idea. (VI: 169)

Flowery language or stylistic approaches weren't what inspired him, but it was the philosophies that, since his childhood, taught him to seek out understanding, to seek out truth.

This idea of seeking out truth is key in understanding Unamuno's search for identity. He wanted to know truth and explained his perceptions of truth in his essay, "¿Qué es verdad?" (1906):

Y bien, en resumen: ¿Qué es verdad? Verdad es lo que se cree de todo corazón y con toda el alma. Obrar conforme a ello.

Para obtener la verdad, lo primero es creer en ella, en la verdad, con todo el corazón y con toda el alma; y creer en la verdad con todo corazón y toda el alma, es decir, lo que se cree ser verdad siempre y en todo caso, pero muy en especial cuando más inoportuno parezca decirlo.

Y la palabra es obra, la obra más íntima, la más creadora, la más divina de las obras. Cuando la palabra es palabra de verdad. (III: 864).

Truth, for Unamuno, was that which whether personally or publicly was undeniable. He believed strongly in the existence of truth, however, struggled desperately in his search to find it. His faith in the existence of truth, as stated in this essay in 1906, isn't as concrete a belief as Unamuno would have liked. In his book

*Poesías* (1906) he writes a psalm expressing his insecurities about “truth”: “¿Dónde estás, mi Señor; acaso existes? / ¿Eres Tú creación de mi congoja, o lo soy tuya?” (VI: 217). Whereas in his essay he speaks of belief and the power of literature that represents such belief systems, it is clear in his other works, primarily through his “Salmos,” and in this case “Salmo I,” that the ability to believe fully without doubt or guile is not necessarily a conquerable feat. In this poem the author asks the heavens whether truth exists because he has literarily created it or whether God and the heavens existed prior to Unamuno’s literary creations about such themes. Within these literary examples--his essay as well as poems--it is possible to understand the struggle that faced Unamuno: Doubt. Although he believed strongly in Truth, he didn’t know where to find it or whether it would ever be allotted to him. It was this doubt and subsequent searching that created his lack of identity.

In another poem, from *Poesías*, Unamuno speaks of his literary impetus. His ideas, struggles and desires were not solely for himself or his personal satisfaction but were a tool used to influence others. He writes in his poem “Id con Dios” about his literary pieces:

Estos que os doy logré sacar a vida,  
Y a luchar por la eterna aquí os los dejo;  
quieren vivir, cantar en vuestras mentes,  
y les confío el logro de su intento. (VI: 167)

Because of his innate desire to search out understanding, and thus to try to find himself, Unamuno’s impetus was to pose controversial questions. He left these questions unanswered in order to stimulate the same questions within the reader. Through this last

stanza from “Id con Dios” he states to the world, or at least to his audiences, his desire to inspire others: “Y a luchar por la eterna aquí os los dejo.” Just as Kant and Hegel were questioners and inspired him, Unamuno wanted to present to the world his questions. He said in one letter to a friend, referring to his literature:

Mi empeño ha sido, es y será que los que me lean, piensen y mediten en las cosas fundamentales, y no ha sido nunca el de darles pensamientos hechos. Yo he buscado siempre agitar, y, a lo sumo, sugerir, más que instruir. Si yo vendo pan, no es pan, sino levadura o fermento. (III: 263)

The importance does not lie behind whether he agrees or disagrees with traditional thought, as he did not want to be labeled with any orthodox dogma; but rather in his attempts to bring to the surface a humanistic perspective on everyday life. The impetus that influenced Unamuno to question was his search for truth. This truth caused him to question his surroundings that portrayed to him a world lacking in morality, a world that portrayed a paradox between what he saw and the faith upon which his homeland was based. It was with this impetus that he strove to find his individual footing within the rapidly changing world around him.

When tracing Unamuno’s search, from the beginning of his first published works to the last, it is quite obvious that whichever perspective of identity we look at--personal, religious, or national--the roots of Unamuno’s search were always spiritual. I do not propose to assign or develop Unamuno’s spiritual beliefs to a specific religion, nor do I wish to express my opinion on his religious standpoints. Unamuno’s religious writings are in themselves not only an expression of his beliefs but searches for truth. We can see these spiritual ideas or searches in his poetry, for example in his “Salmos” found in

*Poesías* (1907), in his compilation of essays *Mi religión y otros ensayos* (1910), and *Rosario de sonetos líricos* (1911), or his larger prose like *San Manuel Bueno, Mártir* (1933). Although in “Mi religión” Unamuno states, “Tengo, sí, con el afecto, con el corazón, con el sentimiento, una fuerte tendencia al cristianismo sin atenerme a dogmas especiales de esta o de aquella confesión cristiana” (III: 260), his impetus in his religious works was to create amongst his readers a stirring, an agitation, a cause that would bring about an effect, therefore creating poetry. In the same essay, he explains that his religious beliefs existed outside a traditional based dogma:

Y bien, se me dirá, ‘¿Cuál es tu religión?’ Y yo responderé: mi religión es buscar la verdad en la vida y la vida en la verdad, aun a sabiendas de que no he de encontrarlas mientras viva; mi religión es luchar incesante e incansablemente con el misterio; mi religión es luchar con Dios desde el romper del alba hasta el caer de la noche . . . . (III: 260)

He knew the answers that he sought were possibly unreachable, however, he asked the questions and continued searching, because his religion consisted of that battle between the mysterious unknown and his life.

In the religious works of Miguel de Unamuno we can see this search for truth, a truth that as previously quoted would never be reached. Through themes of life, death, and the mysterious, he presents to the world a range of questions he has concerning God, faith, and the unknown. The unknown by which Unamuno was troubled was not only the fact that he could not know with assurance the existence of God, but he also saw an immense contrast between the actions of his communities and the teachings of Christianity. In his essay “El Cristo Español” (1909) Unamuno presents the contrasting



figures that Christ has in Spain. Although he recognizes the biblical figure of Christ, describing him as, “un Cristo triunfante, celestial, glorioso; el de la Transfiguración, el de la Ascensión, el que está a la diestra del Padre” (III: 276), he points out that there exists in his culture a far distinct figure, a figure that he compares to the bullfight: “Cuando usted vea una corrida de toros comprenderá usted estos Cristos. El pobre toro es también una especie de cristo irracional, una víctima propiciatoria cuya sangre nos lava de no poco pecados de barbarie” (III: 274). Unamuno felt the decline of his nation and felt that instead of “loving your neighbor as yourself” he was inclined to label his neighbor as one who didn’t even love himself: “Tal vez empezamos a aborrecernos a nosotros mismos. Hay aquí muchísima gente que no se quiere a sí misma. Seguimos el precepto de ‘ama a tu prójimo como a ti mismo’, y como, a pesar del inevitable egoísmo, no nos amamos a nosotros propios, tampoco amamos a los demás” (III: 273). It is within these lines that the interior conflict that pushed Unamuno to question is clear. As Spain began to decline from what could be labeled as morality, Unamuno’s belief systems became--or were always--obscure.

Because of his internal struggle, his poetry is expressed with melancholic tones and those of fear. One of these fears is that of aging and dying without expressing, through his poetry, all he wanted to share. We see this element in his poem “Cuando yo sea viejo”:

Cuando yo sea Viejo,  
-desde ahora os lo digo-  
no sentiré mis cantos, estos cantos,  
ni serán a mi oído

más que voces de un muerto

aun siendo de los muertos el más mío. (VI: 170)

Unamuno was uncertain what would happen to his ideas and the questions he posed after his death, and therefore urged his audiences to thought and meditation about his subject matter. In “Para después de mi muerte” this element of fear and urging is important as he expresses to the reader his fears of being forgotten.

Vientos abismales,

tormentas de lo eterno han sacudido

de mi alma el poso,

y su haz se enturbió con la tristeza

del sedimento.

Turbias van mis ideas,

mi conciencia enlojada,

empañado el cristal en que desfilan

de la vida las formas,

y todo triste,

porque esas heces lo entristecen todo.

Oye tú que lees esto

después de estar yo en tierra,

cuando yo que lo he escrito

no puedo ya al espejo contemplarme;

¡Oye y medita!

Medita, es decir: ¡Soñar! (VI: 172)

Though at times his message is angry, disbelieving, or even blasphemous, he clearly states his purpose: to inspire others to think and to dream, “Soñar!”

Unamuno’s writings don’t equivocate his beliefs, only his misunderstanding or lack of knowledge to the unknown. He didn’t believe in God as much as he had a desire to believe in God, which he explains, “. . . quiero que Dios existe . . . y después es cosa de corazón” (III: 261). This need to believe in a higher force was his inspiration for writing. Sánchez Barbudo, in his book *Estudios sobre Unamuno y Machado*, hits upon this point as he says, “En su libro *Poesías* se pueden leer versos que sin duda son un eco . . . de su deseo de creer” (89). Because of the state of the world during his life, as well as within the history books of the past, the belief in God contradicted what he saw. This contradiction created in him what many readers would call bitterness, but what he called a desire to question. Unamuno’s “Salmos” were designed around biblical quotes asking the reader specific questions about religious beliefs, questions that were necessary in order to understand the purpose of Unamuno’s existence as well as his personal identity.

“Señor, Señor, ¿por qué consientes  
que te nieguen ateos?  
¿Por qué, Señor, no te nos muestras  
sin velos, sin engaños?  
¿Por qué, Señor, nos dejas en la duda,  
Duda de muerte?  
¿Por qué te escondes?  
¿Por qué encendiste en nuestro pecho el ansia  
de conocerte,

el ansia de que existas,  
para velarte así a nuestras miradas?” (VI: 218)

The verses, as we see here in “Salmo I,” are filled with questions. These questions were a major influence in Unamuno’s internal struggles as well as his belief systems. He was unable to prove or disprove the existence of such higher forces, but he did feel something from above. In the question “¿Por qué encendiste en nuestro pecho el ansia de / conocerte, el ansia de que existas” Unamuno believed firmly in the hope, or a desire to believe in a higher existence, but was unable to understand the conflicts that arose from what such hope represented.

In the poem “¡Libértate, Señor!,” another of his psalms, we see clearly this conflict. In the verses are examples where the author is looking for solace and answers in God and the unknown:

Dime tú lo que quiero,  
que no lo sé...  
Despoja a mis ansiones de su velo...  
Descríbeme mi mar,  
mar de lo eterno...  
Dime quien soy... dime quién soy... que vivo...  
Revélame el misterio...  
Descúbreme mi mar...  
Ábreme mi tesoro,  
¡mi tesoro, Señor!  
¡Ciérrame los oídos

ciérramelos con tu palabra inmensa,  
que no oiga los quejidos  
de los pobres esclavos de la Tierra!...  
¡Que al llegar sus murmullos a mi pecho,  
al entrar en mi selva  
me rompen la quietud! (VI: 224)

However, the author is unable to reach such conclusions because of all the disappointments, sadness, and disillusionments that exist in the world. These disappointments “rompen la quietud.” We can also see this internal conflict in his poem “Las siete palabras y dos más”; however, in this poem there does not exist the tone of yearning as in the last, but instead bitterness and anger towards God:

“Mi paz os dejo”, dijo aquel que dijo  
“no paz he traído al mundo, sino Guerra”;  
Sobre la cruz en paz muriese el Hijo  
e envuelta en guerras nos dejó la Tierra.

“Mi paz os dejo” y es la paz de dentro,  
Bajo la tempestad calma en el fondo;  
Y esa paz, buen Jesús, ¿dónde la encuentro?  
¿Dónde el tesoro de mi amor escondo?

.....  
Dura, Jesús, la guerra que trajiste,  
y se perdió la paz que nos dejaste;

.....  
“Tengo sed” y a la fuente de ventura  
subiste, buen Jesús y acá en el suelo  
muertos de sed quedamos, y en la horrura  
se enfanga el agua que no manda el cielo.

.....  
“¿Por qué, Señor, me has abandonado?”  
¿Y por qué Tú, Jesús, así nos dejas?

.....  
“Está acabado” fue, al morir, tu grito;  
así tu obra acabó, Maestro Sublime;  
hoy nuestra voz se pierde en lo infinito;  
y ahora, buen Jesús, ¿quién nos redime? (VI: 283-84)

It is clear within these stanzas that although Unamuno had an innate desire to believe in God, he struggled with those beliefs. The struggle, as portrayed in this poem, although religiously based, also touches upon the state of Unamuno’s homeland and the inability to have the peace God so promised to the world: “Dura, Jesús, la Guerra que trajiste, / y se perdió la paz que nos dejaste” (VI: 283). To believe in a God, he had to wonder where that God was. He had to question God’s motives. “¿por qué Tú, Jesús, así nos dejas?” (VI: 283). He had to compare the traditional beliefs to his own life, to his own motives, and to his own understandings. Created from amidst this lack of understanding came a lack of guidance. Unamuno searched to the heavens for answers, understanding, as well

as help, and in this poem the disappointment he feels towards the heavens is evident as he proclaims, “y ahora, buen Jesús, ¿quién nos redime?” (VI: 284).

Throughout *Poesías* there is desperation in Unamuno’s message. The need to portray his views to the world can be correlated with his need to find meaning in life. This meaning, in which Unamuno instilled great importance, was intensified as he was plagued with many stumbling blocks: a personal crisis in 1897 and the deaths from meningitis tuberculosis of his children contributed to the painful expression of doubt that Unamuno felt towards himself and God. Unamuno’s understanding, or knowledge, was never enough as he placed most of his energies in those ideas that he could not and would never understand. In his poem entitled “Por dentro,” also found in *Poesías*, Unamuno writes: “!O, no poder dar luz a las tinieblas, / voz al silencio, / que mi dolor cantara / el salmo de misterio!” (VI: 240). And that was exactly how Unamuno lived, using his poetry to sing of the mysteries that plagued him. However, these mysteries created in the poet a hunger and thirst for answers that he would never receive. In the previously quoted poem, “Siete palabras y dos más,” Unamuno speaks of this thirst--“muertos de sed quedamos”--that he felt God had left unsatiated. Not understanding why he lacked the answers he sought was an impetus behind Unamuno’s writings. He states this emotion clearly in his poem “No busques luz, mi corazón, sino agua.” Unamuno wanted to escape from “los abismos” of the mysteries that surrounded him and he looked to the heavens for clarity. But he didn’t find clarity, only a desire to know the unknowable. Not only did he feel that he couldn’t know all the many answers he desired, he also felt isolated from all those who seemed to believe in the many traditional answers. In another poem titled “En una ciudad extranjera” he writes of such alienation:

Las gentes pasan;  
ni las conozco,  
ni me conocen.

.....

Ve aquí me hallo solo  
dentro del mar humano,  
mar de misterio. (VI: 266)

His beliefs and struggles for answers left him isolated from those who pretended knowledge. The “mar,” or the ocean, is a perfect metaphor for Unamuno’s state of mind as it depicts an entity well recognized by the world. However, although recognizable by all, it is depicted as vast, unknowable, constantly changing, and unconquerable. The sea holds as much mystery for the author as do the transcendental questions asked by him and responds just as little it seems God does.

“El mar” represents another chasm by which Unamuno was unable to master or comprehend. In his poem “Muere en el mar el ave que voló del buque,” he points out and recognizes his two nemeses, the heavens and the sea: “Arriba está el cielo y abajo está el mar” (VI: 273). Years earlier in a poem entitled, “El mar de encinas,” Unamuno talks about his feelings of Spain and describes the country as a sea of oaks. In this poem however, “Muere en el mar el ave que voló de buque,” “el mar,” or the earth, relinquish no more help than do the heavens. This poem encompasses all of Unamuno’s problems with life and how he, or his identity fit within it:



Ni en el aire ni en agua posible es posarme;  
las alas me duelen; el mar va a tragarme  
¡y muero de sed!

.....  
Aire sólo arribe, sólo aquí debajo,  
yo sólo mis alas, ¡qué recio trabajo  
éste de volar!

¿Por qué, oh dulce buque, dejé tu cubierta,  
volando a la patria, que encuentra desierta,  
de la inmensidad?

Sobre mi cabeza ruedan ya las olas,  
ved que yo me muero, que me muero a solas,  
¡sin consolación!

.....  
¿Dónde está el abajo? ¿Dónde está el arriba?  
¿es que estoy ya muerta? ¿es que estoy aún viva?  
¿es esto vivir? (VI: 273-75)

Once again we see “sed,” or thirst, by which Unamuno is always searching for the way to be satiated. Although encompassed by water and air, the two vital natural resources allot him no safety or solace. In this poem, however, we see other attributes that portray his grievances, such as his feelings toward his homeland: “que encuentra desierta, de la

inmensidad” (VI: 274) and death, "me muero a solas, ¡sin consolación!" (VI: 275). These symbols, the ocean, thirst, his homeland, and death created a medium between Unamuno and his ideas towards the world. Through them, Unamuno was able to take a foothold on the unconquerable mysteries that plagued him.

Although Unamuno’s impetus stayed constant, his continual striving for the unreachable slowly took its toll. In his poetic book called *Rosario de sonetos líricos* (1911), Unamuno began to show doubt in his ability to find answers. For example, in the poem “Días de siervo albedrío” Unamuno incorporates slavery into the idea of “libre albedrío” or free will. With the monotonous every day spiritual thirst and hunger by which he had maintained his entire life, his faith began to sway: “No hay un Dios que nos socorra” and “nada arrastra más al alma que el vacío” (VI: 373). Instead of speaking to or about God this poem simply takes out the possibility of his existence and maintains the bitterness towards the unknown by which he is still blinded.

The scientific progress that existed in the world also contributed to Unamuno’s search. Whereas he sought for truth in order to understand and live accordingly he felt that the world was too preoccupied with finding answers scientifically and giving up on the silent heavens. In his poem “El mal de pensar,” from the same collection, he writes of the importance of thought, and while unsure of God’s existence he does attribute man’s ability to think to God while simultaneously calling those who lust after science gluttonous sinners: “Lo que trajo la muerte fué la gula / de la ciencia, que es muy mala costumbre” (VI: 376). While struggling with the existence of God, *Rosario de sonetos líricos* includes both sides of Unamuno’s search: that of a man wanting to find God and that of a man looking to replace him. Although he denies God’s existence in “Días de

siervo albedrío” here he comes back to the inability to excuse God entirely from his beliefs.

Unamuno’s need for answers was what caused him to keep going. However, his daily spiritual hunger and thirst left him anguished and at a loss. Another important factor found in *Rosario de sonetos líricos* is this repeated theme of hopelessness. Through poems of night, insomnia, darkness, etcetera, Unamuno began to depict his restlessness through melancholic scenes that depicted his anguish. For example, in his poem titled “Noches de insomnio” he struggles through sleepless nights filled with “locas aprensiones y de vil congoja a ver las esperanzas hechas ya imposibles” (VI: 386). We see this hopelessness again in the poem “Dama de ensueño” where instead of the repetition of the loss of knowledge Unamuno writes of the lack of love. Throughout the poem love and companionship are portrayed equally to the other poems of knowledge and loss. Darkness still represents the same barrier, “Así que tú que tu rescate buscas en las tinieblas” and in the darkness the same fears and sadness resides, “encuentrase en la cama sin amor y solo” (VI: 406). Although it is important to look at Unamuno’s poems to see his frustration it is also important to see his vigor. In the same book as these poems that prove distress in the authors searching, there are still examples of his fervor and need for answers. In the poem “Irresignación” we can see this fervor as he writes: “No me resignaré, no, que mi lote bregar es sin espera de Victoria. . . defenderé aún la absurda, la ilusoria creencia que da vida” (VI: 394). Although frustrated and without hope of finding the answers he sought, he still wanted to know the truth. He wanted answers that would give him purpose. He wanted answers that could guide him to a better, happier life.

This fervor however, did not necessarily stay with him as the years passed. Those who followed Unamuno's works could be startled by reading about the local priest San Manuel Bueno who, although was held in high regard by his community, did not believe in the teachings he gave to the community. Unamuno's description of the fictitious character portrays him as a man whose life touched all those around him: "Su vida era arreglar matrimonios desavenidos, reducir a sus padres hijos indómitos o reducir los padres a sus hijos, y sobre todo consolar a los amargados y atediados, y ayudar a todos a bien morir" (*San Manuel Bueno, Martir* 64). The priest was practically hailed a saint who in the end was found to be faithless. San Manuel Bueno deceived his community into living what they thought were better lives, while all along he believed his own teachings false. He did it, however, to better their lives and explains his reasoning, "Piensan los hombres y obren los hombres como pensaren y como obraren, que se consuelen de haber nacido, que vivan lo más contentos que puedan en la ilusión de que todo esto tiene una finalidad" (*San Manuel Bueno, Martir* 89). San Manuel Bueno as a protagonist can be compared to his creator in such a way. After fighting for many years against orthodox thought, Unamuno may not have succumbed to such belief systems; however, the fight had begun to diminish. Whereas some three decades earlier, we see within his poetry rage, bitterness, and a desire for answers, in this novel there is a tone of resignation or escape. The book portrays the protagonist as a man who believes that the truth would not console him, that the truth really held no answers, and that by living a lie, a false hope filled the abysmal void. This message is important when looking at Unamuno's chronology. His search for identity through truth followed certain paths. Whereas at the

beginning of his literary career his messages are strong, unorthodox and demanding, *San Manuel Bueno, Martir* begins to show a change of impetus and tone of resignation.

Unamuno's search for identity was a proactive as well as a conscious search. He knew that he lacked an eternal truth and he spent his life trying to find answers. A need for spiritual truths drove him to search and through his literary works we can see his passion and distaste for the modern day opinions and expectations of a God that he could not prove existed. Although his desires and needs stayed the same throughout his life, his fervor changed as the unreachable answers and unconquerable feats were never allotted to him.

## ANTONIO MACHADO: A SEARCH FOR IDENTITY

### BOTH PAST AND PRESENT

Whereas Martí's personal struggle can be isolated to a life pursuing a Cuban-American culture, Darío's to his place within a society as a writer, and Unamuno with his religious beliefs, Antonio Machado maintained characteristics specific, or similar, to each of them. His search for a personal identity can not be limited by a specific impetus or category as his life was affected by many of the different problems of his day.

Within his personal life, before he found success as a writer and in a profession as a French professor, Machado's search for an identity was difficult. His family instilled in him a strong pull towards the arts. Among other influences, his grandfather founded and edited a journal of philosophy and science, his father's primary interest was in Spanish folklore, especially the Andalusian flamenco song and poetry (Cobb 19), his brother Manuel was a writer, and his brother José a painter. Unfortunately, by the 1890's he was labeled and even satirized as one of the many would-be artists of the Madrid area while he pursued his desire to be an actor. Carl W. Cobb explains this phenomenon as "the types satirized are the would-be artists . . . striving without the necessary talent to crash the artistic world in Madrid-as Antonio himself was dreaming of doing" (23). After failing as an actor Machado was disheartened at the thought of finding himself a profession as he still had not secured himself a future. These attributes, all leading up to

his publication of *Soledades* and his acceptance into the academic world, were what created in Machado the melancholy, loneliness, and concession to a world full of deception and hopelessness. This melancholic concession can be found in his poetry through his use of time, nostalgia and search for a happiness that he thought of as unobtainable. Through *Soledades, galerías y otros poemas* (1899-1907), *Campos de Castilla* (1912), and various elegies we can see how Machado portrayed to the world his thoughts, his beliefs, and his searches for an identity that could define him as not only an artist or Spaniard, but as a human being connected to the human race. Using Martí, Darío, and Unamuno as examples, the personal, religious, and national characteristics that defined them can also help in showing the influences that affected Machado in his own search.

The idea of identity within the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is obscure. While Spanish America was gaining prestige and independence, Spain was finding itself less and less a world power. We have seen in Martí a Creole who was a patriot to the Cuban cause of independence and a moral icon to his community, in Darío a Nicaraguan who was adamant about a culturally as well as economically free Spanish America and literary icon of the time, and Unamuno, who strongly felt the repercussions of his declining nation and didn't fear expressing his turmoil. Because of booming industry and the influences of scientific discovery, as seen reflected in the Positivist ideology, faith in a religion was being replaced by logic and science. In 1876, the Institución Libre de Enseñanza was founded by Francisco Giner de los Ríos in order to pursue academic studies free from Church and State. Michael Predmore, in his introduction to *Solitudes, Galleries, and other poems* speaks of Giner's purpose as a

desire to “create an intellectual and moral elite . . . as a means of preparing a better climate out of which a better politics was to emerge” (Predmore 6). Literature was being affected by the rapid changes and spawned many literary ideas that can be found in Modernism and those from the Generation of 98. As citizens of nations, patriots, poets, journalists, teachers, and students, Martí, Darío, Unamuno, and Machado found themselves in-between causes and belief systems. Since I have already mentioned a few of the influences that affected the prior three, it is necessary now to review how the time period and its changes affected Antonio Machado, the youngest of the four.

Machado searched for his identity within the artistic world. However, meeting Rubén Darío, traveling to France, and living a bohemian lifestyle did not fulfill his aspirations as he had a love of thought and Spain. Antonio Machado’s search can be found within three specific themes: infancy, nature, and Spain. These three themes spawn from his life influences starting from his childhood, his struggle of finding his place in society, his encounters with the land as he taught French in multiple towns throughout Spain, as well as other forces such as his marriage and the subsequent death of his wife. As he grew older and continued his life experiences, although he strove for different stylistic approaches, these themes did not change. His ideals, hopes, and desires were a constant as we can see within his three poetic books: *Soledades* (1899-1907), *Campos de Castilla* (1907-1917), and *Nuevas canciones* (1917-1930).

In Machado’s first poetic book *Soledades* the theme of infancy is rooted into the verses. In retrospect, Machado’s youth is filled with both happiness and sadness as it brings the reader to a time now past with feelings and memories now unobtainable. With a sense of melancholy of the present, the past found in multiple poems within the work



represents a time once happy without the current problems of adult life. The past is represented as a dream, “un sueño infantil,” as we see within the first stanza of the first poem of the work:

Está en la sala familiar, sombría,  
y entre nosotros, el querido hermano  
que en el sueño infantil de un claro día  
vimos partir hacia un país lejano. (*Obras completas* 660)

However, the past-- now a childhood dream--has been taken and replaced with the present that only brings sadness, loss, and death. This negative aspect can be seen in the second stanza:

Hoy tiene ya las sienes plateadas,  
un mechón sobre la angosta frente;  
y la fría inquietud de sus miradas  
revela un alma casi toda ausente. (*Obras completas* 660)

This “cold restlessness” and “almost absent soul” is a prominent idea that can be found within his poetry. Whereas the joys of youth may bring thoughts of happiness and hope, the reality of the present only causes pain and one day death. In his second poem we can see this hopelessness as the poet writes of having traveled the world, and wherever his travels brought him, he found sadness and hopelessness:

He andado muchos caminos,  
he abierto muchas veredas,

he navegado en cien mares  
y atracado en cien riberas.

En todas partes he visto  
caravanas de tristeza,  
soberbias y melancólicos  
borrachos de sombra negra,

y pedantones al paño  
que miran, callan y piensan  
que saben, porque no beben.

Mala gente que camina  
y va apestando la tierra... (*Obras completas* 662)

Within the first four stanzas of this poem, the idea of the present as dead, lost, without cause, is an important factor; however, the poem also talks of those who are happy and who enjoy life, leaving a tone not of complete hopelessness, but of sadness with an opportunity of hope:

Y en todas partes he visto  
gentes que danzan o juegan  
cuando pueden, y laboran  
sus cuatro palmos de tierra.

Nunca, si llegan a un sitio,  
preguntan adónde llegan.  
cuando caminan, cabalgan  
a lomos de mula vieja,  
  
y conocen la prisa  
ni aun en los días de fiesta.  
Donde hay vino, beben vino;  
donde no hay vino, agua fresca  
  
Son buenas gentes que viven,  
laboran, pasan y sueñan,  
y en un día como tantos  
descansan bajo la tierra. (*Obras completas* 662)

Though hope and happiness are woven into the last stanzas, in the end hope is removed with the presence of death. The poem expresses a tone of hopelessness, relating a lack of importance on whether those characterized within the poem “danzan o juegan” or whether: “son buenas gentes que viven, / laboran, pasan y sueñan” as well as a lack of importance to whether they lived to the fullest or without purpose, because in the end, as the poem explains, they all rest beneath the earth: “descansan bajo la tierra.”

Within the ideas of infancy, life, and death, Machado interweaves a strong theme of nature into his poetry. Nature in the form of seasons, plants, and the land present themselves in both *Soledades* as well as *Campos de Castilla*; however, in *Soledades* the

poetic voice is more subjective, corresponding to the author's specific childhood memories or emotions. Nature, in many of the poems in *Soledades*, is used as a starting point for memories. For example, poem "VII" presents to the reader a childhood memory where, according to Sánchez Barbudo, Machado seeks to bring the reader into his memories. Sánchez Barbudo explains: "Comienza el poeta, situándonos donde él estuvo, haciéndonos ver lo que él vio; y nos vas transmitiendo su emoción paso a paso, tal como ésta se fue produciendo" (26).

El limonero lánguido suspende  
una pálida rama polvorienta  
sobre el encanto de la fuente limpia,  
y allá en el fondo sueñan  
los frutos de oro...

Es una tarde clara,  
casi de primavera,  
tibia tarde de marzo  
que el hálito de abril cercano lleva;  
y estoy solo, en el patio silencioso,  
buscando una ilusión cándida y vieja:  
alguna sombra sobre el blanco muro,  
algún recuerdo, en el pretil de piedra  
de la fuente dormido, o, en el aire,  
algún vagar de túnica ligera.

En el ambiente de la tarde flota  
ese aroma de ausencia,  
que dice al alma luminosa: nunca,  
y al corazón: espera.

Ese aroma que evoca los fantasmas  
de las fragancias vírgenes y muertas.

Sí, te recuerdo, tarde alegre y clara,  
casi de primavera,  
tarde sin flores, cuando me traías  
el buen perfume de la hierbabuena,  
y de la buena albahaca,  
que tenía mi madre en sus macetas.

Que tú me viste hundir mis manos puras  
en el agua serena,  
para alcanzar los frutos encantados  
que hoy en el fondo de la fuente sueñan...

Sí, te conozco, tarde alegre y clara,  
casi de primavera. (*Obras completas* 667)

The beginning of Machado's search is well defined within this poem. Machado, recalling a memory, depicts perfectly the scenery while simultaneously tying the scenery into his emotions. The search for "una ilusión cándida y vieja" while smelling the aroma of

“ausencia.” The virgin and dead fragrances that evoke “fantasmas” are the pure infantile memories of a time now dead. These memories are surrounded by nature: “una pálida rama,” “los frutos de oro,” and “una tarde clara, casi de primavera.” Nature is the primary tool used by Machado to bring us into his memories and as he talks of clarity from the skies suggesting the coming of Spring we can feel the possibility of hope but not its arrival. The reader is also torn between the beauty of the golden fruits which bring positive images of life, and the pale branches that contradict such happiness, leaving a negative tone to the verse. These contradictions between a time now past, life, death, hope, and lack of hope, are how Machado is able to express his inability to secure a foothold on his life, leaving him desiring an identity by which to label himself, but being constantly left with only fragments of a once happy life now gone. Bernard Sesé describes these attributes when he describes Machado’s purpose in writing poetry: “*Soledades, Galerías y otros poemas* es, sin embargo, esencialmente, el libro de las emociones íntimas, del dolor de los recuerdos, de la melancolía y de la exploración de los caminos interiores” (69). It is within these “caminos interiores” that Machado found himself looking for his identity.

Another example of the theme of infancy can be found in poem “V” where another childhood memory is recalled.

Una tarde parda y fría  
de invierno. Los colegiales  
estudian. Monotonía  
de lluvia tras los cristales.

Es la clase. En un cartel  
se representa a Caín  
fugitivo, y muerto Abel,  
junto a una mancha carmín.

Con timbre sonoro y hueco  
trueno el maestro, un anciano  
mal vestido, enjuto y seco,  
que lleva un libro en la mano.

Y todo un coro infantil  
va cantando la lección:  
«mil veces ciento, cien mil;  
mil veces mil, un millón».

Una tarde parda y fría  
de invierno. Los colegiales  
estudian. Monotonía  
de la lluvia en los cristales. (*Obras Completas* 664)

This memory, full of melancholic and monotonous verses, presents to the reader a longing similar to his present day feelings. Instead of hope and descriptions of clarity and Spring, Machado expresses the feelings of longing and the insecurities given by an unknown future. The poem speaks of children listening to monotonic repetitions from both their aged professor as well as from nature, which is presented by the tapping of the

rain on the window panes. While these negative tones are constant, expressed through their anaphoric verses, a poster which depicts the biblical story of Cain and Abel, the first account of murder in literature, is facing the students. In this poem we see Machado's interest in Time. As the children are memories from a time now gone, we see a professor: untidy, old, and uninspiring, while all along an even older age is presented through the poster. All three eras presented in the poem leave negative tones of an unimproved and hopeless future based on a negative and also monotonous past.

Alongside the theme of infancy lies that of a road full of pain and anguish: a road that the author wishes could be like the happy days of old, as when he was a child without a care, but instead finds to be painful and without hope. Throughout the ninety-six poems found in *Soledades, Galerías y otros poemas*, this painful road is repeated. As before, the theme is found contrasted with the happiness of youth, for example in poem "III," where we see happy youths amongst dead cities: "*!Alegría infantil en los rincones / de las ciudades muertas!...*" (*Obras completas* 663). The memories bring to the poet a form of hope, yet this hope is being constantly cancelled out by what the future will bring. Dreams of hope quickly become darkened and hopeless. The road, or path, by which the author expresses his search forks, weakens, and disappears as in the following poem "XI":

Yo voy soñando caminos  
de la tarde.  
.....  
La tarde más se oscurece;  
y el camino que serpea



y débilmente blanquea  
se enturbia y desaparece. (*Obras completas* 671)

The unknown road, a road that has no hope, is a common theme in his poems and is often repeated. As it is again presented in poem III of “Del camino”:

Sobre la tierra amarga,  
caminos tiene el sueño  
laberínticos, sendas tortuosas,  
parques en flor y en sombra y en silencio;

criptas hondas, escalas sobre estrellas;  
retablos de esperanzas y recuerdos.

Figurillas que pasan y sonríen  
-juguetes melancólicos de viejo-;

imágenes amigas,  
a la vuelta florida del sendero,  
y quimeras rosadas  
que hacen camino... lejos... (*Obras completas* 681)

Antonio Machado’s works didn’t follow the road of Modernism as did many of his time, including his brother Manuel. Instead, Machado took a different approach. In the preface of *Soledades, Galerías y otros poemas*, he lays down his poetic philosophy and how he desired to present himself through his works:

Yo también admiraba al autor de *Prosas profanas*, el maestro incomparable de la forma y de la sensación, que más tarde nos reveló la hondura de su alma en *Cantos de vida y esperanza*. Pero yo aprendí. . . aseguir camino bien distinto. Pensaba yo que el elemento poético no era la palabra por su valor fónico, ni el color, ni la línea, ni un complejo de sensaciones, sino una honda palpitación del espíritu; lo que pone el alma. . . en respuesta animada al contacto del mundo. (*Obras completas* 659)

This “honda palpitación” is why Machado’s poems are written from a subjective perspective. It was through his life, his past experiences and his present day preoccupations that caused in him a desire to write. In *Soledades* we see this subjectivity as he fills his poetry with memories with his past while including his present discomfort with the world. It was this that allowed him, through his poetry, to identify himself with his life and his day. This subjectivity changes, however, in *Campos de Castilla*, as the author’s impetus behind writing changes. He says in the preface to his book that he had reached a far different ideology than he had in *Soledades*: “ya era, además muy otra mi ideología” (*Obras completas* 741). His new impetus lay behind his nation, Spain, and he filled his poetry not of himself and his life, but from the perspective of a Spaniard within Spain. In *Campos de Castilla* there is a tone of unity, where the writer speaks for his nation as a whole. Memories found in these poems are not necessarily from his childhood but historic references of his nation. The search for identity within these verses is not that of a personal identity for Machado, but of a national identity to which he corresponded. A perfect example of this new impetus is the second poem of the book *Campos de Castilla*, entitled “A orillas del Duero”:

Mediaba el mes de julio. Era un hermoso día.  
Yo, solo, por las quebras del pedregal subía,  
buscando los recodos de sombra, lentamente.  
A trechos me paraba para enjugar mi frente  
y dar algún respiro al pecho jadeante;  
o bien, ahincando el paso, el cuerpo hacia adelante  
y hacia la mano diestra vencido y apoyado  
en un bastón, a guisa de pastoril cayado,  
trepaba por los cerros que habitan las rapaces  
aves de altura, hollando las hierbas montaraces  
de fuerte olor -romero, tomillo, salvia, espliego- .

Sobre los agrios campos caía un sol de fuego. (*Obras completas* 744)

In this first set of verses, the author presents to the reader the poetic voice. Whereas in *Soledades* this voice was representative of Machado himself in a time now past, filled with memories and deceptions, in this poem the poetic voice is that of an older man, communing with the land. The land is expressed however in dichotomist tones: of beauty and life using terms such as “hermoso día” and terms that negate this beauty such as the lack of “sombra,” “pecho jadeante,” “rapaces aves,” “hierbas montaraces de fuerte olor” and “un sol de fuego.” The first stanza starts with soft, melodious, positive images, but, immediately turns to descriptions of the “agrios campos” and the forces that the land has on the old man’s health.

In this first stanza the reader is also brought into the purpose of the poem as the old man is confronted with a search for shade, “buscando los recodos de sombra.”

Climbing the rocky mountainside the old man is found without comfort as he stops periodically to wipe the sweat from his brow as he can't escape the fiery sun:

Un buitre de anchas alas con majestuoso vuelo  
cruzaba solitario el puro azul del cielo.  
Yo divisaba, lejos, un monte alto y agudo,  
y una redonda loma cual recamado escudo,  
y cárdenos alcores sobre la parda tierra  
-harapos esparcidos de un viejo arnés de guerra-,  
las serrezuelas calvas por donde tuerce el Duero  
para formar la corva ballesta de un arquero  
en torno a Soria. -Soria es una barbacana,  
hacia Aragón, que tiene la torre castellana-.  
Veía el horizonte cerrado por colinas  
oscuras, coronadas de robles y de encinas;  
desnudos peñascales, algún humilde prado  
donde el merino pace y el toro, arrodillado  
sobre la hierba, rumia; las márgenes de río  
lucir sus verdes álamos al claro sol de estío,  
y, silenciosamente, lejanos pasajeros,  
¡tan diminutos! -carros, jinetes y arrieros-,  
cruzar el largo puente, y bajo las arcadas  
de piedra ensombrecerse las aguas plateadas  
del Duero. (*Obras Completas* 744-45)

This second stanza contains a description of the Castilian landscape, a theme common with those of the Generation of 98. Amongst the descriptions of Soria, Aragón and the Duero, the author adds images of war such as “la corva ballesta de un arquero” and “Soria es una barbacana hacia Aragón.” Carl W. Cobb explains the importance of these images and the purpose they serve: “presentation of the imagery of war introduces one facet of a favorite theme of the Generation of 98, Castile as ‘warlike and mystic’ . . . Machado is recalling the Soria that was a bastion of defense . . . in Roman times . . . and also in the Middle Ages” (Cobb 80).

El Duero cruza el corazón de roble  
de Iberia y de Castilla.

¡Oh, tierra triste y noble,  
la de los altos llanos y yermos y roquedas,  
de campos sin arados, regatos ni arboledas;  
decrépitadas ciudades, caminos sin mesones,  
y atónitos palurdos sin danzas ni canciones  
que aún van, abandonando el mortecino hogar,  
como tus largos ríos, Castilla, hacia la mar!

Castilla miserable, ayer dominadora,  
envuelta en sus andrajos desprecia cuanto ignora.  
¿Espera, duerme o sueña? ¿La sangre derramada  
recuerda, cuando tuvo la fiebre de la espada?  
Todo se mueve, fluye, discurre, corre o gira;

cambian la mar y el monte y el ojo que los mira.

¿Pasó? Sobre sus campos aún el fantasma yerta

de un pueblo que ponía a Dios sobre la guerra. (*Obras Completas* 745-76)

Within the previous three stanzas Machado begins the painful description of his sentiment towards his declining nation of Spain, once a bastion of defense. As the poem continues, filled with adventure, conquest, and fortune, the landscape is now abandoned not only without ploughs, streams, or trees, but also without life, dances, or songs. Also within these stanzas lies the repeating phrase “Castilla miserable, ayer dominadora,” which only intensifies the loss and current decay that the landscape presents to the poetic voice in the poem.

La madre en otro tiempo fecunda en capitanes,  
madrastra es hoy apenas de humildes ganapanes.

Castilla no es aquella tan generosa un día,  
cuando Mío Cid Rodrigo el de Vivar volvía,  
ufano de su nueva fortuna, y su opulencia,  
a regalar a Alfonso los huertos de Valencia;  
o que, tras la aventura que acreditó sus bríos,  
pedía la conquista de los inmensos ríos  
indianos a la corte, la madre de soldados,  
guerreros y adalides que han de tornar, cargados  
de plata y oro, a España, en regios galeones,  
para la presa cuervos, para la lid leones.  
Filósofos nutridos de sopa de convento

contemplan impasibles el amplio firmamento;  
y si les llega en sueños, como un rumor distante,  
clamor de mercaderes de muelles de Levante,  
no acudirán siquiera a preguntar ¿qué pasa?  
Y ya la guerra ha abierto las puertas de su casa.

Castilla miserable, ayer dominadora,  
envuelta en sus harapos desprecia cuanto ignora. (*Obras Completas* 746)

To emphasize the loss that the prior stanzas present, these verses bring to the reader the historical gallantries and victorious battles that over the centuries have created the powerful regime of Spain, which is now no longer.

El sol va declinando. De la ciudad lejana  
me llega un armonioso tañido de campana  
-ya irán a su rosario las enlutadas viejas-.  
De entre las peñas salen dos lindas comadrejas;  
me miran y se alejan, huyendo, y aparecen  
de nuevo, ¡tan curiosas!... Los campos se obscurecen.  
Hacia el camino blanco está el mesón abierto  
al campo ensombrecido y al pedregal desierto. (*Obras completas* 746)

In finishing, the author brings us back to the old man, whose poetic voice brings us the scene of decay and death. However, through the distances comes the sound of harmonious bells, a representation of life, and through the rock face and crevices come two beautiful weasels that confront the old man before returning to their rocky homes.

Although deserted and rocky, decrepit and without the prior prestige and power, the landscape does give a small amount of hope with the possible ability to overcome.

This poem is representative of both the sentiment and theme of the majority of the poems found in *Campos de Castilla*. The death of Spain as imminent, with its proud history of conquest, is a theme that for many Spaniards was a great cause behind their loss of identity and a desire to regain a part of themselves that was once theirs. Sesé explains the patriotic theme: “Castilla, sin duda, un tema muy del gusto de la generación de 98. Para todos, es también un tema personal. Para Antonio Machado, sobre todo, es un tema estrechamente libado a su destino individual” (Sesé 219). For Machado his homeland and its ability to overcome its modern day decline coincided with his ability to do the same. In his poem “Orillas del Duero” we see again this theme:

¡Castilla varonil, adusta tierra;  
Castilla del desdén contra la suerte,  
Castilla del dolor y de la guerra,  
tierra inmortal, Castilla de la muerte! (*Obras completas* 751)

Although the land was immortal, the nation was dead. And many authors, especially those of the Generation of 98 were adamant about expressing their pain at such a loss. Azorín explains that “Los hombres del 98 amaron el paisaje, describieron paisajes” (Azorín 64). Machado, however, didn’t solely write with bitterness and with a complete sense of loss as he found hope in Spain’s future. He was among the many at the time who wrote of Spain’s soul, as Bernard Sesé explains: “Valle-Inclán, Azorín, Unamuno, Pío Baroja, Antonio Machado. . . no intentan cantar más que a los principales, no intentan sólo revelar aspectos desconocidos o emociones estéticas nuevas, sino también y sobre



todo el alma de su España” (216). It was within these descriptions of Spain’s soul that Machado saw pain and loss but refused to withdraw completely from hope. Whereas in *Soledades* hope was found in memories of the past, and more specifically the past of his youth: “¡Alegría infantil en los rincones / de las ciudades muertas!...” (Obras Completas 663), in *Campos de Castilla* there resided hope in youth again; however, this time it was hope in the youth to come. In his poem “El mañana efímero” he continues to talk of Spanish decay, but then implies hope within the youth of his tomorrow:

La España de charanga y pandereta,  
cerrado y sacristía,  
devota de Frascuelo y de María,  
de espíritu burlón y alma inquieta,  
ha de tener su marmol y su día,  
su infalible mañana y su poeta.  
En vano ayer engendrará un mañana  
vacío y por ventura pasajero.  
Será un joven lechuzo y tarambana,  
un sayón con hechuras de bolero,  
a la moda de Francia realista  
un poco al uso de París pagano  
y al estilo de España especialista  
en el vicio al alcance de la mano.  
Esa España inferior que ora y bosteza,  
vieja y tahúr, zaragatera y triste;

esa España inferior que ora y embiste,  
cuando se digna usar la cabeza,  
aún tendrá luengo parto de varones  
amantes de sagradas tradiciones  
y de sagradas formas y maneras;  
florecerán las barbas apostólicas,  
y otras calvas en otras calaveras  
brillarán, venerables y católicas.  
El vano ayer engendrará un mañana  
vacío y ¡por ventura! pasajero,  
la sombra de un lechuzo tarambana,  
de un sayón con hechuras de bolero;  
el vacuo ayer dará un mañana huero.  
Como la náusea de un borracho ahíto  
de vino malo, un rojo sol corona  
de heces turbias las cumbres de granito;  
hay un mañana estomagante escrito  
en la tarde pragmática y dulzona. (*Obras completas* 828)

In these first lines of the poem, the author speaks negatively of Spain and its present status. Cobb references this poem when he speaks of Machado's sense of hope in the future. He says: "Spain is a place of brass band and tambourine . . . devoted to Frascuelo and to María all meaningless sound and fury, and the juxtapositioning of a popular bullfighter and to María" (Cobb 83). Machado mentions the decay of "sagradas

tradiciones” now filled with emptiness and without meaning. The “España inferior” is how he expresses his present day Spain with all the continuing traditions of the older generation. It is within this older generation that he obviously finds utter disdain and hopelessness:

Más otra España nace,  
la España del cincel y de la maza,  
con esa eterna juventud que se hace  
del pasado macizo de la raza.  
Una España implacable y redentora,  
España que alborea  
con un hacha en la mano vengadora,  
España de la rabia y de la idea. (*Obras completas* 828)

As we see in the poem’s continuation, Machado introduces hope: not in the reformation of old traditions or a change of heart in what he calls the “inferior Spain” but in the rising of the “eternal youth” that will cause the “rebirth of another Spain.” It is within this new Spain that Machado hopes his nation will find redemption for its actions and will overcome with vengeance its current downfalls, which in turn give him hope in his own future.

Machado’s search for identity existed within this hope for stability. In his younger years his search existed within his need to find his foothold within the artistic community. Searching within the footprints of the current day bohemian communities, Machado finally found his niche in *Soledades*; however, with this expression of poetic sentiment the author was returned to a new search for identity, not one of a literary or

artistic search, but of a more personal search for happiness. His happiness is found and again lost within his childhood memories. The “almost” grasp of happiness is an important theme in Machado’s works as we see again in *Campos de Castilla*. The greatness that once was Spain has been replaced by decay and death, and although there is a tinge of hope in the youth of the upcoming generation, change is unsure and lies at the end of an unforeseen “camino” or path.

## CONCLUSION

This time period, the late nineteenth early twentieth century, in both Spain and America, was a time of transition. In Spain this transition was represented by instability reflected in the overthrow of Isabel II in 1868, the assassination of General Serrano y Prim in 1870, the change of government to a Republic after the abdication of Amadeo I to the Cortes in 1873, the restoration of the monarchy, the death of Alfonso XII, and the loss of Spain's final two American colonies--Cuba and Puerto Rico--which received their independence in 1898.

At the end of the century Spain was internally unstable as the Spanish people tried to maintain a rapidly dissipating Spanish identity. While Spain passed through this transitional period Spanish America was also being affected. Although we can see tendencies of negative tones in some authors' works such as Ruben Darío's *Azul* or José Martí's poetry when touching upon the theme of materialism, in general it was a time of progress and hope in a grander future. Including their independence from colonial rule as well as strong influences that came from North America the changes among these Spanish American countries created new opportunities and were the impetus behind a wave of strong, progressive change. As Spanish-speaking America began to settle upon new identities, now freer from colonial influence, the transition from old to new was followed by the introduction to capitalism and booming industry. Although these

advances tied the struggling countries to new foreign policies and thereby preventing many to create their own small communal identities, the advances did allow for a boom in literary access including daily journals and newspapers which allowed writers such as Martí to press upon the public his ideals and desires. The changes or consequences to change allowed for rapid Spanish American growth and the need for educational facilities that would prepare many for the many new employment opportunities. Unfortunately, within the artistic world a desire for a capitalistic society did not coincide with the desire many authors had to express the beauties of the world. They desired to create poetic objects with unique, autonomous values, over against the loss of value presented by a serially manufacturing society. It was from within this contradiction that literary movements such as Modernism occurred. Modernism's purpose was to step aside from the New World conquests and political ties and harmonize the beauties that existed outside of the man-made realm.

Unsatisfied with the universality of too Spanish Modernist themes, those within Spain whose concern was for their nation's welfare, were becoming restless. As Modernism began to entrench itself into Spanish culture those who were feeling the repercussions of Spanish political events deemed it necessary to write specifically about Spain's state of decline. It was because of this unrest within the peninsula and the literary and economic growths that were forming outside of Spain that intensified the loss and lack of identity that was affecting Spain. Owing to this connection it is important to compare and contrast the issues that affected authors on both continents. Whereas Spanish America was growing and finding a new identity among its new independent countries, Spain was losing morale, control over its political leaders and for many

citizens their religious faith. Because of this contrast it is possible to see the separate tones that exist within the literary works of both continents.

From both Spanish colonial rule as well as the materialism that was spreading through his nation and Spanish America, José Martí wrote to express his desire to procure a new American identity. Martí, a writer and patriot, desired freedom and through poetic and prose works expressed strong national opinions. Through these works he preached morality, values, and unification in order to create among his fellow citizens a desire to break free from Spanish rule and create for themselves not only a Caribbean and Cuban identity but also a brotherhood that would cross races. Although this desired independence didn't occur until a couple years after his death, the independence that occurred throughout many Spanish American countries was a strong inspiration that allowed Martí to hold strong to his beliefs. He had hope in future generations not only because he had a strong desire to see change but also because he witnessed first hand the independence and progress that had occurred in his neighboring countries.

Rubén Darío was primarily a writer. As a writer he searched for meaning in his talents and found importance in the ability to express beauty through literature. His identity was based upon his writings and therefore he wrote with a feeling of responsibility because, to him, an author's duty was to create. Constructing a harmony among nature, beauty, and man, Darío wrote of the struggles that existed around him. Through universal themes he expressed the writer's strife as well as his existence within a modernizing world. He wrote to describe the beauties that existed and, instead of basing his poetry on ideas or opinions, it served to bring the readers into communion with nature and the world. As a Modernist poet he did not feel it necessary to put any emphasis on

his own specific homeland, but instead chose to speak out to the world. As Spanish America was progressing, Darío was also a part of change. He wished to create a perfect form of poetry and inspired the world with the integration of Modernism into the mainstream literary world. It was through this ability to write, inspire, and create that Darío found his identity, recognized it, and was able to build upon it.

Many from within the Iberian peninsula of the time, however, did not allow themselves such liberties. Instead of inspiring progress and creativity, like that found in America, the country's downward spiral left little inspiration but instead stole away from its citizens the strong and stable Spanish identity that they had maintained up to Felipe V's ascendancy to the throne approximately two centuries before. It was this negative tone, created by much loss, that the theme of identity wasn't as important in Spain as the theme of a search for identity, as many found themselves void of such securities. Miguel de Unamuno's search was found primarily through a life of religious searching. His internal struggles, caused by the struggling state of his homeland and faith, caused him a life of searching for truth. However unobtainable the search was found to be, Unamuno found spirituality at the base of his identity and searched for its mysteries. Through poetic and prose works he stressed anguish at the inability to find spiritual guidance. Although steadfast in his convictions, always wanting truth to be at the base of his existence, the inability to procure a stable spiritual identity caused him frustration, sadness, and a tone of hopelessness that can be found throughout his works. Unlike Martí, whose goals were his impetus, Unamuno's goals were unseen and at times unfeasible. Just as his country was losing prestige and stability, Unamuno's search for truth was unreachable and unstable.



Antonio Machado felt, in my opinion, the most instability during this time of transition. Being raised by the teachings of Giner de los Ríos he was influenced by those who were trying to break free from Church and State, including Unamuno--a prominent figure among the school. With his experimental lifestyle within the Bohemian communities in France and Spain he came across the writings of Rubén Darío, the prominent figure of Modernism. Being the youngest of the three, and therefore having been influenced academically by their published works, Machado fought for a foothold within his society. He, not unlike Martí, struggled with national identity as he saw through his life and travels the decay of a once beautiful nation. Although his writings do not preach religious angst or desire as did Unamano's, Machado struggled for a sense of spirituality as his writings searched for meaning in the past, present, as well as within a hopeful future. Through poetry that paints his homeland as dead or dying, Machado's message was that of a time now gone. Memories of better times for both himself and his nation are portrayed through melancholic messages as he tries to maintain a hope in an unseen future. However even the themes of hope are void of assurance as Spain's steady decline leaves little room for hope.

Spanish writers, such as Unamuno and Machado, were affected by the daily events that surrounded them. A deep desire for security in their homeland, as well as their religious beliefs, were hindered by the steady decline of their nation. Whereas America struggled but managed to create new and progressive identities, Spain wasn't allotted the resources, inspiration, or stability to maintain a feeling of hope and fortitude amongst their communities. Although in America hope was an enduring vision, Spain's desire for hope was empty without the faith to allow for it. It is this inability to hope in

the present, and reliance in an unsecured future, that creates tones of anger, sadness, loss, pain, and many other melancholic tones that describe not only the state of their country but also their own individual states of mind.

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