

CHAPTER VI: Divine Madness

Very little has been written about the theme of madness in the work of Antonio Machado although it appears in some of his poems and is an important aspect of his metaphysical thought. In spite of its importance for Cervantes and those writers who have been inspired by *Don Quijote*, madness is not a frequent topic in Spanish poetry, and looking at Machado's work from the point of view of this unusual perspective will permit us to clarify some important aspects of his religious and philosophical thought.

Most people would regard a "madman" as a lunatic who has lost his mind and they would say that "madness" is state of insanity resulting from the loss of reason. Normally, the loss of reason or irrational conduct is a mental state that should be avoided. But that is not the case in Machado's work as we see in these words of his apocryphal philosopher, Juan de Mairena: "Among us the weakness is our reason, perhaps because the most robust and virile condition is, as Cervantes recognized, a state of madness."¹ This may be the reason why Mairena himself had "the reputation for being a madman" (OPP, p. 499), and it has also been said of Machado's other apocryphal philosopher, Abel Martín, that "he must be crazier than a loon" (OPP, p. 503).

In Machado's poetry and in the *Apocryphal Songbook* madness symbolizes the attitude of the person who rebels against the limits of reason and allows himself to be governed by his non-rational consciousness: intuition, idealism, poetic thought, etc. We will see, moreover, that in some of Machado's poems madness is equivalent to the fundamental energy of the universe and that during moments of intuitive awareness he has felt the *divine madness* which is the essence of all that is. According to Machado's pantheistic metaphysics, "God is defined as absolute being" (OPP, p. 336); the world is part of God and the divine spirit which Machado symbolizes as "madness" is the essence or the foundation of all existence. In order to examine the importance of this topic in the work of our poet, we will begin with a study of several poems from the first edition of his earliest book, *Solitude*.

1. MADNESS AND DIVINE CREATION

A FORGOTTEN TRIUMPHAL MADNESS

The poem "Twilight" does not appear in Machado's published works after the first edition of *Solitude* in 1903, but it contains some of the same ideas that we will see in poems from *Solitude*, *Galleries and Other Poems* and in his later poems. In the beginning lines of this poem Machado describes a state of intuitive consciousness when he recalls the origin of the universe in the mind of God:

¹Antonio Machado, *Obras: Poesía y Prosa*, 2nd Edition (Buenos Aires: Losada, 1973), p. 537.

I traveled toward a summer afternoon
to burn, beyond the blue of the mountain,
the poignant myrrh of a distant love
in the wide, flaming horizon.
Red nostalgia filled my heart with
vermillion dreams that in my soul
burst out of the immense unconscious,
as from a chaotic and somber region
where burning stars floated
like formless clouds in a milky sky.
I traveled toward the glorious sunset,
the agony of summer, reminiscent
of the infinite, mysterious rhythm
of a forgotten triumphal madness.
Of a dormant madness, the first
that comes to the soul and then leaves it,
and the only one that ever reappears
if the bitter wave of yesterday flows back.
Solitude, the muse that reveals to my soul,
in beautiful syllables, the mystery,
like the notes from a hidden psalter,
brought back to me the first phantoms
of my mind, when it could,
above the sprightly meadow
or the dry wild thicket,
transform the arid landscape into smoke,
an ember of the radiant sunset.
And the immense theory
of victorious gestures
of the afternoon broke open
the reddened anguish of the clouds.
And traveling silently over the plain,
enveloped in sun and dust
in a confused jumble, the summer burned
its purple incense (OPP, pp. 38-39).

One can see why Machado did not wish to keep this poem in the later editions of his poetry, but it contains some ideas we have discussed in the previous chapters and it offers the first reference to the concept of "divine madness." It begins with the description of a journey toward the "afternoon," the end of the day and, by extension, the end of life. And this approach to the conclusion reminds him of the beginning of his journey, when his heart was filled with the "red nostalgia" which Michael P. Predmore has called "the nostalgia of paradise."² He feels "the poignant myrrh of a distant love," which his soul felt during the moment of its origin and which it longs to recover at the end of this life. In poem LXXVIII, Machado also remembers this primordial love when he feels "the white shadow of his first love" (OPP, p. 123), and then in poem LXXX he anticipates the love which awaits him in the final moment:

² Michael P. Predmore, "The Nostalgia for Paradise and the Dilemma of Solipsism in the Early Poetry of Antonio Machado," *Revista hispánica moderna*, XXXVIII, 1-2 (1974-1975), pp. 30-52.

Why do you weep?... Among the golden poplars,
far away, the shadow of love waits for you (OPP, p. 124).

As we saw in the poem "Twilight," the presence of God is sometimes felt like the sensation of fire, and this same sensation appears again in poem CLIII where he refers to "the divine flames" (OPP, p. 215), and then in a poem from "Proverbs and Songs," the poet tells us: "I dreamt of God like a flaming / forge..." (CXXXVI, xxxiii, OPP, p. 219). This image of fire has the double virtue of being both the divine substance that is the foundation of the universe, and the energy which purifies the soul by destroying the imperfections it has acquired during its existence in the world of matter.³

When the poet recovers this memory of the *cosmogenesis*, he dreams, or intuits, what happened when the universe emanated from "the immense unconscious," a concept which reminds us of the un-manifested God of pantheistic metaphysics. This is the first manifestation when the divine substance leaves the state in which it has always existed and begins to become active.⁴ Although the *idea* of all things has always existed in the divine consciousness, this is the Beginning, before the divine fire has begun to congeal into specific forms; it is the galaxy before order is imposed, when the incipient stars spin like burning clouds in a sky of coagulated milk.⁵

When he contemplates this scene in his inner vision, the poet feels the "infinite mysterious rhythm" of madness, the pure impulse of divine energy which "triumphs" in the moment of its origin. Nevertheless, from the point of view of the mind which perceives the world through the veil of the five senses, this primordial madness has been "forgotten" since the moment of the soul's incarnation in the world of matter, and it only returns as the memory of a paradise which has been lost. But not everything is lost, because Machado's "muse,"—his anima, or his intuitive consciousness—whose voice he

³ Edouard Schuré describes a similar concept of fire taken from Oriental philosophy: "Agni, the Fire hidden in all things, the original and invisible Fire, whose smoke, flame and light are but external manifestations—Agni, the creative Fire is truly the universal agent and substance"; *From Sphinx to Christ, an Occult History* (Blauvelt, New York: Rudolf Steiner Publications, 1970). Madame Blavatsky also says that fire is the divine energy: "The Deity is an arcane, living FIRE... which includes and is the cause of all the phenomena in Nature"; *The Secret Doctrine: Synthesis of Science, Religion and Philosophy*, Vol. I (Point Loma, California: The Aryan Theosophical Press, 1917), pp. 2-3.

⁴ In this part of the poem, Machado expresses the same concept that, years later, he put into the mouth of his apocryphal philosopher when he describes the pure substance of absolute being: "Abel Martín thinks of substance as energy, a force which can engender movement and is always its cause; but which also exists without it... This force can be immobile—it is in its pure state—but that does not mean it is inactive. The activity of this force or substance is called consciousness" (OPP, p. 315).

⁵ Machado's "creation" has very little to do with the description in the first verses of Genesis; Moses describes the creation of a world, while the creation of Machado is an entire cosmos. In the Bible there are light and darkness, earth and water; but Machado speaks of fire and stars like burning clouds that spin in an immense space. In fact, one notices a curious parallel between the description of Machado and the *Cosmogenesis* of Madame Blavatsky in *The Secret Doctrine*. She also speaks of a sleeping Deity who, when He awakes, forms an immense "luminous egg," where the living fire begins to congeal like "milk-white curds"; she goes on to say the "Light is cold flame, and flame is fire, and fire produces heat which yields water: the water of life in the great mother"; *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, Op. cit., pp. 29-30.

hears in moments of solitude, now brings back to him "the first phantoms of the mind" so that he is able to recover the memory of his lost origin.⁶

Thus, thanks to the poet's "muse" and her memory of the origin, the poem ends with a suggestion of optimism. Seeing "an ember of the radiant sunset" reminds him that the "arid landscape" is only "smoke," and that this smoke is produced by a real fire.⁷ All of this—the idea of the reality which is hidden behind appearances—is summed up in "the immense theory/ of victorious gestures" that is reflected in the magnificent sunset. This optimistic view recurs in poem XVII, "Horizon," where the poet uses almost identical terms to describe what he feels when he sees the setting sun:

The phantoms of my profound dream reproduced
a thousand shadows in theory, raised above the plain...

This poem also ends with an expression of hope when the poet's "profound dream" makes him feel the promise of a spiritual resurrection:

And I felt the sonorous spur of my footstep
reverberate far off in the bloody sunset,
and, beyond, the happy song of a pure dawn (OPP. 76).

Conceiving life as "an immense theory of victorious gestures," or as "a thousand shadows in theory," does not mean that the poet rejects the belief in a reality which transcends the world of the senses.⁸ It is true that the "theory" that is mentioned in both poems is something that is essentially unreal; this is always what happens when man tries to comprehend the absolute being within the limits of his finite understanding. But in the same way that smoke is the product of a real fire, this "theory" emanates from the divine consciousness. This is also what, years later, Machado meant to say when he wrote that the world is "an aspect of the divinity," and that for this reason "the world [is] real, and reality [is] unique and divine" (OPP, p. 350).⁹ And now that we have examined this early

⁶ When he speaks of the "phantoms of the mind," Machado seems to recall the words of Krause who refers to existence in the physical world as "the life of fantasy."

⁷ In "Proverbs and Songs" from *New Songs*, Machado expresses this same idea: "There is always an ember of truth / in its theater of flames" (CLXI, lxxxix, OPP, p. 287). The world is a theater, that is, an imitation or a reflection of reality, but this imitation or this reflection always has a genuine foundation.

⁸ In the document published by Francisco Vega Díaz, Machado states: "I am a believer in the existence of a spiritual reality that is opposed to the world of the senses"; "A propósito de unos documentos autobiográficos inéditos de Antonio Machado," *Papeles de Son Armadáns*, LIV (1969), p. 70.

⁹ It is obvious that Machado's religious thought differs in several essential ways from that of orthodox Catholicism. For that reason, many critics have considered him either an atheist or an agnostic. However, Machado is neither, as we see in the statement by the widow of his brother, José Machado: "His religion was personal, not the official one"; quoted by Arturo del Villar, in "Mi cuñado Antonio Machado: charla con doña Matea Monedero, viuda de José Machado," *Estafeta literaria*, pp. 569-570 (1975), p. 25. José Bergamín expresses a similar point of view when he comments on the religious thought of Machado and Unamuno: "What Unamuno and Antonio Machado certainly were, by their very liberal sentiment... was Christian: deeply and truly Christian. And this has been the cause of frequent misunderstanding among Spaniards who refuse to believe that one can be Christian without being Catholic"; "Antonio Machado, el bueno," *La torre*, XII, 44-45 (1964), p. 258.

poetical expression of Machado's metaphysics, I will look briefly at some other poems from this period where the theme of madness reappears.

THE MYSTERY OF THE FOUNTAIN

On two occasions Machado uses the word "mad"—or a synonym—to describe the water flowing from a fountain. In "The Fountain," a poem from the first edition of *Solitude*, Machado thinks about the mystery of the Beginning—in this poem he calls it "the mystery of the fountain"—and then he expresses his love for "the bright and mad, laughing gurgle" of the water (OPP, p. 36). Here the water is a symbol of the same "divine madness"—the origin of life—that was described in the poem "Twilight." Then, in poem VI, the image of a fountain is mentioned once again:

I know that your beautiful singing mirrors
reflect the ancient delirium of love,
but tell me, fountain of enchanted tongue,
tell me of my happy, forgotten legend (OPP, p. 66).

In the poem "Twilight" the poet wrote about the "distant love" of the "forgotten triumphal madness"; in poem VI the same concept is described as "the ancient delirium of love." Here the poet also expresses the longing to re-experience the beauty of the Beginning, when he asks the fountain: "tell me of my happy, forgotten legend."

A MAD STAR

In the poem "Galleries" which appeared in *Alma española* in 1904 and is now included in the first section of "Selected Poems" in Machado's *Works* published by Losada, we find another reference to the ancient "madness" of the first manifestation:

I have seen my soul in dreams...
In the ethereal space
where the worlds spin,
a mad star, a rapid
comet with its red
hair in flames... (OPP, p. 32).

In this poem the poet tells of things he has seen in the "illuminated foundation" of the galleries of his soul, and several elements from the poem "Twilight" are repeated: madness, fire, the color red, the creation of the universe. The poet associates the origin of his soul—"a mad star"—with the origin of the universe—"the ethereal space / where the worlds spin"—because his pantheistic metaphysics is based on the idea that all things are interconnected within the great monad of the absolute being.¹⁰

¹⁰ An identical concept is found in Oriental philosophy: "Verily, he who has seen, heard, understood, and known the true self, by this one the entire universe is known" (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, ii, 4,5); quoted by William Kingsland in *The Gnosis or Ancient Wisdom in Christian Scriptures* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1954), p. 93.

2. MADNESS AND MATERIALISTIC SOCIETY

THE "SAD FIGURE" OF DON QUIJOTE

In *Fields of Castile* the theme of madness is essentially the same as we have seen in the early poetry, but now it is viewed from a different perspective. It still represents a form of intuitive thought that reveals the divine energy, but instead of being related primarily to religious topics, here it is seen more often in a social context. And in order to relate this theme to a recognized historical persona, Machado has used the "sad figure" of Don Quijote, the best-known and most widely-admired madman of all. A good example is poem CVI, "A Madman," in which the poet offers a harsh description of the Spain of his time:

It is a dreary and bleak afternoon
of an autumn without fruit,
in the sterile and barren land
where the shadow of a centaur roams.

Down the road in the arid landscape,
through the withered poplars,
alone with his shadow and his madness,
goes the madman shouting loudly.

In the distance is a dark wasteland,
hills with thickets and brambles,
the bare branches of an old oak grove
crown the barren summits.

The madman vociferates,
alone with his shadow and his chimera.

His figure is horrible and grotesque,
gaunt, dirty, battered and unshaven,
feverish eyes
illuminate his wasted face.

He flees from the city... paltry vices,
niggardly virtues, and affairs
of bored swindlers, the greediness
of idle merchants.

The madman walks through the fields of God.
Beyond the dry, skeletal land
—red with rust and dark with ash—
is the distant dream of a lily.

He flees from the city. Urban tedium!
—sad flesh and craven spirits!—

This errant soul was not torn and broken
by a tragic bitterness;
he atones for another's sin; the sanity,
the terrible sanity of the idiot (OPP, pp. 150-151).

The poem begins with the description of a dreary afternoon in an environment of sterility and decadence. This is the arid and barren landscape of a lost paradise¹¹ where the centaur—symbol of the race of Cain—wages his wars in a poor and desolate land.¹² In the wasteland of modern Spain a solitary, quixotic madman represents the idealist who is frustrated by a materialistic society. But in spite of the decadence that surrounds him, the madman advances through the ruined fields of God, his face illuminated by the "fever" of an inner flame, always searching for his ideal of purity, "the distant dream of a lily."

The madman is not a victim of the city nor, as some have said, has he been driven mad by urban society.¹³ City life is not the cause of his condition, but the *result* of what has happened here. The true cause of this situation is "the terrible sanity of the idiot." The madman does not suffer because he is unable to control his emotions: "This errant soul was not broken / by a tragic bitterness"; he acts in this way to correct the imbalance of those who over-emphasize the importance of reason: "he atones for another's sin." His madness is a voluntary act, a penitence which he accepts in order to cure an excess of "sanity" which leads to idiocy.¹⁴ He is purging the sins of modern man whose exaggerated emphasis on rational concepts has extinguished the divine fire and created this urban hell.

¹¹ Michael P. Predmore has commented on what he calls "the fallen state of the world," which he has perceived in the descriptions of Machado's landscapes: "In fact, it is almost as if this land had been devastated by a plague"; and in another passage he says: "The pilgrim continues his search for a land that is more fertile and more fulfilled, against the background of a landscape that increasingly seems to negate the conditions of life that it longs to achieve"; Op. cit., p. 32 and p. 33.

¹² Perhaps remembering a well-known painting of Francisco de Goya, Machado uses the centaur as a symbol of war in the following lines from "Throughout the Lands of Spain" (XCIX):

The spirit of these lands is bloody and fierce;
as the afternoon descends over the distant hill
you will see the gigantic form of an archer,
the form of an immense centaur archer.
You will see bellicose plains and ascetic plateaus
—the biblical garden was not in these fields—;
they are lands of the eagle, a piece of the planet
where the shadow of Cain passes through... (OPP, p. 139).

¹³ In his comment on this poem, Sánchez Barbudo feels that the rejection of the city is "somewhat capricious," and he adds: "What is said of the 'city' is not false, but it is to suppose that city life has provoked the madman's flight, and the madness itself"; *Los poemas de Antonio Machado* (Barcelona: Lumen, 1969), p. 198. Arthur Terry also interprets the poem in a similar way: "In his attempt to portray the madman as the victim of urban corruption, Machado surely exaggerates a situation which the context scarcely permits and in doing so gets dangerously close to the cliché"; *Antonio Machado: Campos de Castilla* (London: Grant & Cutler, 1973), p. 31.

¹⁴ Aurora de Albornoz has commented on the idiocy of those who are excessively sane: "Do not forget that in all places and in all times the idiots have tried to exercise a monopoly of sanity"; *Presencia de Miguel de Unamuno en Antonio Machado* (Madrid: Gredos, 1968), p. 90

AN EXEMPLARY MADMAN

In his poem "The Madman" Machado offers a forceful criticism of contemporary society which he repeats in his poem, "The Ephemeral Past." But in poems like these he also looks to the future with optimism and hope represented by the presence of the mad idealist who waits for the birth of another Spain—"The Spain of rage and ideas"—that will replace a conservative Spain which has been too conservative and rationalist. When he wrote an essay of Juan de Mairena, Machado spoke prophetically about the time of a future crisis: "Because someday we will have to tame the lions with weapons that are totally inadequate to deal with them. And then we will need a madman who is willing to attempt the adventure. An exemplary madman" (OPP, p. 627).

One "exemplary madman" who has the capacity to tame the "lions" that threaten Spain is "the gigantic Iberian Miguel de Unamuno." Poem CLI has some of the same ideas that we have seen in "A Madman," and in the initial lines Machado compares Unamuno to Don Quijote:

This donquijotesque
Don Miguel de Unamuno, a strong Basque,
wears the grotesque armor
and the absurd helmet
of the good man from La Mancha. Don Miguel
rides on a chimerical mount,
pressing the golden spur of his madness,
without the fear of backbiting tongues... (OPP, p. 243).

Like the madman of poem CVI, Unamuno has the "grotesque" figure and the "absurd" demeanor of Don Quijote, and he pursues the chimerical ideal of his madness without fearing the nihilistic voice of his rational critics.¹⁵

In the context of these poems "sanity" represents what Juan de Mairena has called "the nihilistic faith in reason"; while madness, with its "golden spur" stands for faith in the non-rational concepts of religion. This is the faith which Unamuno proclaims in the concluding lines of this poem when he "points to the triumph after death," and exclaims: "I believe; / onward with God and the soul of Spain..." (OPP, p. 244).

EACH MADMAN HAS HIS THEME

In what was perhaps a moment of pessimism when his logical thought threatened the hope produced by his intuition, Machado wrote the following lines from "The Poem of One Day" (CXXVIII):

¹⁵ Aurora de Albornoz has also emphasized the positive aspect of Don Quijote in this poem: "On this occasion, Machado accepts Don Quijote, the symbolic Don Quijote, as the mythical figure of Spain of the future... Or better yet, Don Quijote and Don Miguel become one; they are the ideal man, the ideal Spaniard"; "Miguel de Unamuno y Antonio Machado" in *Antonio Machado: El escritor y la crítica* (Madrid: Taurus, 1973), p. 127.

...reason and madness
and the bitterness of
wanting, and not being able
to believe, believe, believe...

But then he continues:

Each wise man has his problem,
each madman, his theme... (OPP, 198-199).

With these words the poet characterizes the conflict between skepticism and faith as a struggle between reason and madness. While the wise man tries to solve the "problem" created by his rational concepts, the madman pursues the "theme" of his ideal produced by his non-rational consciousness.

"The Olive Trees" (CXXXII) is another poem, from *Fields of Castile*, where the poet refers to the decadence of modern Spain. In this case, Machado criticizes the lack of a true religious spirit in contemporary society. And next to the ruins of a church in this poem there is another man who pursues the theme of his madness:

...Walled in
piety, enclosed in this dung heap!...
This house of God, tell me, brothers,
this house of God, what is there inside?
And this pale young man,
astonished and attentive,
who seems to look with his mouth
must be the village madman
whose name is Lucas,
Blas or Ginés, that fool that we have...

In view of the positive connotation that madness has in the work of our poet, the presence of this "astonished and attentive" young madman next to the church suggests the possibility of a solution that people have not been willing to recognize. We do not know what theme this madman is pursuing, but perhaps he wishes to remind us of the glory of our divine origin, as suggested by these lines which follow:

We have muddied
the fountain of life, the first sun,
with our sad eyes,
with our bitter prayers,
with our idle hand,
with our thoughts... (OPP, p. 206).

With these words which refer to God as "the fountain of life, the first sun," Machado establishes a link between the social criticism of *Fields of Castile* and the religious aspect of his earlier poems from *Solitude*. And now we will see what occurs when the madman, like Don Quijote at the conclusion of Cervantes' novel, enters into a state of sanity.

3. THE BALANCED LIFE OF ALONSO QUIJANO, THE WISE

As we continue to examine the figure of Don Quijote who is Machado's symbol for the idealistic spirit of Spain, I want to emphasize that the poet does not wish to recommend an extreme form of madness or a conduct which is truly irrational. Aurora de Albornoz has observed that Machado sees Don Quijote as the representation of all that is positive in Spain. But what is needed for this to be true is a working balance between a necessary madness and an exaggerated rationality, and Machado finds this balanced equilibrium in Alonso Quijano, the Wise, the *alter ego* of Don Quijote. As Aurora de Albornoz has stated: "Perhaps avoiding the radical separation between Alonso Quijano, the Wise and the necessary madman that we should all have inside us, the ideal to which Machado aspires is a Quijano that has an inner Don Quijote... The living Don Quijote must always live within Quijano, the Wise. The former provides the madness, which at times is necessary, and the latter, the sanity, the reason to continue living and co-existing with other human beings in the every-day-world."¹⁶

As she writes these words Aurora de Albornoz is referring to poem CXLV, entitled "Spain, at Peace," where Machado salutes the neutrality of Spain during the period of World War I and then compares it to the person of Alonso Quijano, the Wise:

The good man from La Mancha speaks words of sanity;
it seems that the weary and parched nobleman
came to his senses and keeps his sword at his side...

However, the sanity of Alonso Quijano is not that of the "rational idiot," because he has not forgotten, like some others, the ancient triumphal madness of his divine origin and only awaits the moment of another, necessary battle:

...Praise to you, if you bravely
polish your rusty sword in this moment of peace
to keep it pure, without flaw, when you again raise up
the weapon from your old, neglected panoply... (OPP, p. 238).

All this is related to what Machado says in poem CVII, "Fantastic Iconography." If in poem CVI, "The Madman," Machado describes the "sad figure" of Don Quijote, what he describes in poem CVII is the *alter ego*, Alonso Quijano, the Wise:

¹⁶ Aurora de Albornoz, *Presencia de Miguel de Unamuno en Antonio Machado*, Op. cit., pp. 224-225.

The premature baldness
shines above the wide austere forehead;
beneath the skin of pallid smoothness
a delicate skull shows through.

A sharp chin and cheekbones marked
by the vestiges of a diamantine will;
and the extraordinary purple of the lips
that a Florentine might envy.

While the mouth seems to smile,
the perspicacious eyes,
which a thoughtful frown diminishes,
look and see deeply and tenaciously.

On the table he has an old book
where he absently rests his hand.
In a mirror in the rear of the room
a golden afternoon is sleeping.

Violet colored mountains
and grayish brush-covered hills,
a land loved by the saint and the poet,
and by the vultures and the soaring eagles.

From the open balcony to the white wall
stretches an orange-colored beam of sunlight
that inflames the air of the dark environment
which surrounds the neglected armor (OPP, pp. 151-152).

Here the theme of madness is not mentioned directly, but it is implied by the presence of Alonso Quijano, the Wise. How can we say that this is the character from the conclusion of Cervantes' famous novel?¹⁷ It is confirmed, among other things, by the presence of the armor: the "old neglected panoply" of Alonso Quijano in "Spain at Peace" is the same as the "neglected armor" of this calm gentleman in "Fantastic Iconography." The poet does not give a name to the person described in this poem, nor in his poem "The Madman." But if you take away the grotesque aspect of the madman in poem CVI, this is the same person—the counterpart or the complementary self—as the gentleman from poem CVII. While the madman in the first poem has a "gaunt" figure with "feverish eyes," the second has a slender figure with "perspicacious eyes" that see "deeply and tenaciously" after they have examined an old book, not an account of chivalry, but of sacred scriptures or, perhaps, of alchemy or philosophy. Rather than the "wasted face" of the frustrated idealist, the gentleman in the second poem has a "thoughtful frown" which is crowned by the "wide austere forehead" of a contemplative man.

So this is not the "terrible sanity of the idiot"—the exaggerated emphasis on reason—that was criticized in poem CVI, but rather the balanced character of a man in whom the embers of madness are still glowing. As Aurora de Albornoz has observed, this is an Alonso Quijano who still has the latent spirit of Don Quijote inside him.

¹⁷ Sánchez Barbudo does not recognize the mysterious figure described in poem CVII; he says that the gentleman from "Fantastic Iconography" has "the appearance of an Italian philosopher of the Renaissance," or perhaps, "of an imaginary Spanish gentleman, painted by Azorín"; Op. cit., p. 176.

We know this because, while the good gentleman meditates on what he has been reading, his chimerical ideal—the "golden afternoon"—still remains in the background.

In the final stanza the armor—a reminder Don Quijote's madness—is neglected and perhaps forgotten; nevertheless, it is still there, waiting, until it is needed in a future adventure. The balcony is open to the purity of the "white wall"¹⁸ and between them stretches "an orange-colored beam of sunlight." As we saw in earlier poems, the beam of reddish light that "inflames" the dark environment represents the divine fire—the universal energy—that connects all things within the divine consciousness.¹⁹

And what was it that converted the fever of madness into the serenity of a balanced idealism? Machado seems to say that this is what happens when man no longer has to atone for the sin of an exaggerated rationalism, because his intuitive consciousness is in harmony with the *divine madness*. When this occurs, man will experience the peace of a productive life, without being afraid to recognize the purifying energy of the divine fire. By describing Alonso Quijano in this way, Machado unites the two dimensions of human consciousness represented here by "sanity" and "madness," and in doing so he offers us a way of life that all human beings can follow.

4. MADNESS IN LOVE

IN LOVE MADNESS MAKES GOOD SENSE

In Machado's book, *New Songs*, the theme of madness reappears in the sonnet "Avoid love that is sad or tranquil..." (CLXV, v) and as we found in the earlier poems from *Solitude*, it is still related to the idea of divine love. José María Valverde feels that this poem describes Machado's feelings for a real woman.²⁰ That is possible, but it could not be Pilar de Valderrama; Machado did not meet her until 1928 and this poem appeared for the first time in 1925. And it does not matter if, behind these words, there is a woman of flesh and blood. We already know that Machado sometimes used human love as the basis for a superior form of love, as the following poem indicates:

¹⁹ In several poems of Machado the image of fire is associated with the mystical impulse that connects man with God. As examples we can cite the "blazing sun" which illuminates the poet in poem LIX, "Last night when I was dreaming"; poem CXXXVI, xx from *Fields of Castile*, "Teresa soul of fire, / Juan de la Cruz, spirit of flame, / here there are many cold fathers, our / little hearts of Jesus no longer burn" (OPP, p. 216); and this poem from "Notes and Songs"; "The white butterfly / burned up in the flame / of a little wax candle. / *** / Nights of Saint Teresa! ..." (OPP, p. 825).

²⁰ José María Valverde belongs to the group of critics who feel that the love poems of Machado describe his relations with a real woman. For this reason, he believes that the beloved who is described in *New Songs* must be a woman he met in Baeza after the death of his wife. Because of the fact that in some of these poems the poet says his heart is "closed to love," Valverde thinks that Machado tried to hold off the advances of an aggressive woman; then when he reads the sonnet "Avoid love that is sad or tranquil..." he feels that the poet has finally capitulated: "we see that the poet 'wraps the mantle around his head,' and jumps into love..." And basing his opinion on the line "because in love, madness makes good sense," Valverde feel that this poem is the description of the poet's "acceptance of a senseless love, before his life turns to ashes"; *Antonio Machado* (Madrid: Siglo Veintiuno, 1975). If one reads the poem carefully, however, it is clear that the poet does not desire a "senseless love," but rather the opposite.

Dante and I—pardon me gentlemen—,
have converted—pardon me Lucía—,
love into Theology (CXXXVI, xxv, p. 217).

In the same way that "the distant love," or "the first love" mentioned in his early poems is the emotion Machado feels when he recalls the memory of his divine origin, the "beloved" of his mature years is also associated with his love for the Divinity, as shown by these words from the sonnet, "Love in the Mountains":

And did he see the face of God? He saw his beloved (OPP, p. 293).

It is in this context which we must understand the sonnet where the poet describes the person who denies the divine fire when he tries to rationalize the experience of love:

Avoid love that is sad or tranquil,
without danger, without a bond or an adventure,
that only hopes to find security in love,
because in love madness makes good sense.

The one who hides his heart from the blind child
and blasphemes against the fire of life
—a coal that is thought but not ignited—
asks for ashes to protect his fire.

And he will have ashes, not flames,
when he discovers the foolish mistake
of asking for fruit on the branch without a blossom.

The frigid room of his time will be opened
with a black key. A deserted bed,
a cloudy mirror, and an empty heart! (OPP, p. 310).

In the first stanza of this poem the poet tells us to avoid a love which is based only on the need for personal gratification. In one of the "letters" published by Concha Espina, Machado expressed the wish to keep the love of his beloved for himself: "My goddess, for me alone. I understand my egotism, but that's how love is, both mad and egotistic."²¹ According to this way of thinking, love is a mixture of madness, which is real love, and egotistic desires which must be eliminated if the soul hopes to participate in the harmony that connects us with the divine consciousness. The person who tries to love without madness—the pure ardor which surrounds all divine manifestations—only locks himself within the limits of his ego.²² A clear indication that in this poem Machado is referring to something more than human love is his mention of blasphemy. The one who "blasphemes against the fire of life" does not sin against a physical beloved; he denies the presence of the divine fire, which is the basis of all loving relationships.

²¹ Concha Espina, *Antonio Machado, a su grande y secreto amor* (Madrid: Lifesa, 1950), p. 121.

²² Erich Fromm has also recognized the necessity to love all things equally: "If a person loves only one other person and is indifferent to the rest of his fellow men, his love is not love but a symbiotic attachment, or an enlarged egotism... If I truly love one person, I love all persons, I love the world, I love life. If I can say to someone else, 'I love you,' I must be able to say, 'I love in you everyone, I love through you the world, I love in you also myself"'; *The Art of Loving* (New York: Harper, 1962), p. 46.

When he declares that "in love madness makes good sense," Machado contradicts the principles of rational thought and introduces a new logic which uses the vital concepts of intuition. And in saying this, he anticipates the words of Abel Martín who speaks of a "divine logic" which is the result of the intuitive thought which the poet uses when he aspires to reach a state of "integral consciousness."²³ The logic of ordinary men, on the other hand, leads to homogeneous thought which is "cold and without substance" and which produces only separated concepts that are rigid and static. "Everything that is thought is converted into atoms: substantial change, into the movement of immutable particles in space. Being has been left behind... He who thinks pure being—being as it is *not*—thinks in fact pure nothingness" writes Machado in the *Apocryphal Songbook* (OPP, p. 333.) Therefore, the one who "thinks" love and tries to retain the vital energy of the divine substance only converts the living fire into ashes, into something which is cold and inert. This is the "foolish mistake" of those who deny the experience of their divine origin and look for "fruit on the branch without a blossom"; by trying to rationalize love they are left with the "cloudy mirror" that is only an empty reflection of real love.

And this is tragic because it is unnecessary. In several poems Machado describes the vitality of the things that are perceived through the use of intuition. In the poem "This was my dream," for example, the poet states that time flows in vain, because it is "just a dream of the race of Adam"; i.e., it is only an illusion created by the rational mind. Therefore, as he concludes in the final stanza, the man who is able to penetrate the veil created by his rational concepts knows with certainty that true being never ends:

And I saw a man who in his naked hand
held up, for all to see, the glowing coals of life,
without the ashes of Heraclitean fire (OPP, p. 292).

The intuitive "man" from "This was my dream," as well as the youthful lovers from the *Apocryphal Songbook* who journey toward the afternoon with "the rose of fire" in their hands (OPP, p. 321) represent the exact opposite of the blasphemous thinker who tries to love without madness.

After *New Songs* the theme of madness is mentioned in the philosophical passages which I have already cited. Now it only remains to be seen what is said about madness in the poems and in the letters to Guiomar.

MADNESS AND GUIOMAR

In "Other Songs to Guiomar," we find another reference to madness in the first part of this poem when the poet speaks of human love:

²³ The idea of a new type of reason was also discussed by Ortega y Gasset: "The theme of our time consists in submitting reason to vitality... Pure reason must cede its control to *vital reason*"; *El tema de nuestro tiempo*, in *Obras Completas*, Vol. III (Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1962), p. 178.

And on the smooth sand
near the sea,
your rosy, dark flesh,
suddenly, Guiomar!

.
On the cold mother-of-pearl
of your earring in my mouth,
Guiomar, and on the cold shiver
of a mad dawn... (OPP, p. 372).

Here the poet seems to describe the experience of love with an ordinary woman, but then when his lips touch the cold mother-of-pearl of her earring, the sensation of white coldness produces a moment of spiritual awakening—"the cold shiver / of a mad dawn"—when his soul is purified by his contact with divine love. This experience anticipates what we have already seen in the penultimate part of the poem, when the feeling of human love—"when the embers of love barely smolder"—is converted into the living fire of divine love—"transformed into light, into a bright jewel."

There has been a great deal of discussion regarding the letters of Machado that were published by Concha Espina: are they the result of a mundane love affair which one writer has called "an erotic revival of youth"²⁴ or do the letters express the same serious, metaphysical themes as the poems to Guiomar? I am inclined to accept the second possibility since, if one takes into consideration what Machado says in the poem where he speaks of converting love into theology, it is evident that the letters contain many things which support and even clarify the ideas of the poems and the philosophical discussions of the *Apocryphal Songbook*. One example of this is offered by what is said in the letters about the theme of madness.

In one of the letters where he talks to his mysterious beloved Machado describes himself as a madman: "The heart of your madman, more mad than ever, would like to fly to you..." (Concha Espina, p. 108). And in another letter he writes: "What happiness, Guiomar, when I see you... My heart jumps in my breast in a way that is truly mad, and I don't know how to control it" (p. 42). It is obvious from what is said in this and other letters that this is not an indication of sexual desire, or what in Spanish is described as "mad love"—"*loco amor*"—but rather a pure and refined love that can be compared to what is said in his poems and in his philosophical work. In the second letter cited above Machado also expresses an opinion about the importance of "immodesty" which, as we will see, is very similar to his concept of madness. Immediately after describing the madness he feels after seeing his beloved he declares: "Today people insist too much on the modesty which should accompany feelings, that is, that a man—it is thought—is more manly if he hides his feelings. But I proclaim, with Miguel de Unamuno, the sanctity of immodesty... That which is felt should be expressed, shouted, proclaimed. The important thing is that feeling must be genuine" (p. 42). In this letter, *modesty* is equivalent to *sanity*, and *immodesty* is equivalent to the madness to which Machado referred in the previous passage. When he speaks of the "sanctity of immodesty" and

²⁴ Pablo de A. Cobos, *Antonio Machado in Segovia, vida y obra* (Madrid: Ínsula, 1973), p. 94.

attributes this concept to Unamuno, he wants to say that the love he feels for his beloved is not just an ordinary sentiment, but a genuine feeling which ought to be openly expressed. In this way Machado follows the advice expressed in his poem from *New Songs* which states that "in love madness makes good sense" for the person who wishes to be united—or reunited—with his true beloved.

In the first six chapters of this book we have studied some important aspects of the religious and philosophical thought of Antonio Machado. In the final chapter we will see the effect that all this has produced on the personal life of our poet as we examine various ways of living which are the result of these metaphysical concepts.

149

Posted at: <http://armandfbaker.com/publications.html>