

Antonio machado's vision of spain as shown in campos de castilla



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Composed between 1912 and 1917 Antonio Machado's *Campos de Castilla* describes the beautiful landscape of the Castile lands and through them Spain's political and social state during these years. Tunon de Lara aptly puts ' la obra de un autor pertenece... al periodo en que fue escrito'; there is no exception in Machado's poetry which is set firmly in his reality. As one of the primary poets of the generation of '98, Machado writes examining aspects of Spain. He describes a Spain ' ayer dominadora' yet now in depression, looking at the effects of this depression on the people.

Machado also discusses the future, trying to find an identity for Spain, her lands and subjects. From the beginning of *Campos de Castilla* Machado's intention is to describe his vision of Spain. He achieves this by using three protagonists in his poetry and showing how they react against and with each other. These are the landscape or setting of his poem, the people he writes of, and time, which is shown by the seasons. Machado's primary subject is the landscape of his country.

Whether this landscape is ' agrios campos' or ' tierra fria', it is shown in relation to the people that live on it and how it changes through the year and over the years. Each poem represents a moment in the time of the people and the landscape itself. Richard Havard comments ' Machado treats landscape as a medium by which to analyse the condition of Spain and the psyche of its central region'. With each glance the reader receives more information about not only the visual Spain but also the mental attitudes and feelings present in that visual Spain.

In 'El hospicio', Machado uses a hospice as the setting for his poem. He presents the 'caseron ruinoso' as a place of despair, raising questions of social concern about the treatment of the poor, the old, and the sick. The 'dos torrones de antigua fortaleza' that the hospice has, give the image of lost strength and present ruin. With the loss of Cuba in 1898 still fresh in the minds of that generation, Predmore interprets this 'viejo hospicio' as Spain herself, and the people, who have 'rostros palidos, atonitos y enfermos' the people of her countryside who are suffering at the hands of the state.

The 'hospicio' is in 'eterna sombra' and seems a place of the living dead, where time does not move on. The last two lines of the poem with the reversed repetition of 'fria tierra' and 'tierra fria' emphasise the harshness of the land and the snow, and how it oppresses the humans. In this way Machado uses his protagonists to effectively give a picture of despair.

Despair is depicted in many of Machado's poems. It is of many different types however and is not only found amongst the poor and under trodden.

In 'un loco' Machado shows the man running from the city to the countryside, not knowing where to go 'huye de la ciudad'. The ground the man runs on is 'esteril y raída', 'esqueletica y sequiza', providing no answers or help for the man, just as 'otono' too is 'sin frutas' and without energy. Machado introduces 'la sombra de un centauro' into this man's life. Throughout Machado's poetry there are many shadows to be found, the most common being that of Cain and the Centaur. Cain represents the murderous jealousy of a brother, the Centaur showing libidinousness and violence.

In ' Por tierras de Espana' both images appear; ' la sombra de Cain' is ' errante' and stays in the reader's mind as the last line of the poem, whilst the centaur appears ' al declinar la tarde', ' la forma de un inmenso centauro flechador'. These shadows stay lurking in the corners exploring the worse sides of human nature by feeding off despair. By using them Machado shows the decline and degeneration in Spain and how it is affecting the people - in producing deviance and despair. In ' Por tierras de Espana' Machado introduces ' el hombre malo del campo... capaz de insanos vicios y crímenes bestiales'.

This man is not a man who bears up to suffering nobly, but a human who reacts against suffering with violence and in ' vicios'. By representing his characters in this way Machado shows himself as a realist poet who writes about human nature, in which there is, embedded deeply both good and bad. ' El criminal', examines the case of a man who kills both his parents for land. This topic relates directly to events in Spain at the end of the 19th century, where a series of horrific murders in the countryside, in one case of a father by his sons, shocked the Spanish media and society.

Machado may seem extreme in his judgement of peasant avarice yet these poems are a statement of human life. Robin Warner discusses this theme of deviance and vice, talking of the ' degenerate national obsession with deviance'. Whilst Machado's aim may be to highlight the fact that deviance is naturally part of society, he also shows how in times of political and social extremes, this deviance takes on a different and more important role, a substitute for order.

Machado gives examples of tolerated deviance in his poems such as gambling, directly linking his work to events in Spain and the unsuccessful proposal in 1912 to introduce the controlled legalisation of gambling. 'El mañana efimero' continues the theme of deviance with a series of negative images relating to the present moral decline; a Spain 'inferior que ora y bosteza'; 'un borracho ahito de vino malo'; 'Esa Espana... vieja y tahir'. The pessimism expressed referring to the present state of Spain and the lands of Castile presents not only the social and economic factors as problems, but also the human attitude.

In the description of his characters Machado presents a people in despair, living without faith. He does this by not only showing their deviance and 'vicios' but also by contrasting them to their environment and setting. The landscape the people live on is permanent and trustworthy even in its changes throughout the year. Machado puts his own faith in this landscape and permanent cycle of change, his poems containing time and place; 'Es una tarde... de otono... en la tierra esteril'. This constancy in time and place is a key thread throughout 'campos de castilla' and provides hope in the face of human despair and faithlessness.

Nature is used as chief provider of hope in Machado's poetry. Just as the river Duero flows to the sea, 'todo se mueve, fluye, discurre, corre o gira' in life. This gives an escape from the stagnation and despair that dominates Machado's vision of Spain at the beginning of the 20th Century. Here Machado takes on the role of philosopher as well as of poet, looking from above at the overall picture of humanity; 'la vida sigue, los muertos mueren

y las sombras pasan'. The word 'sombra' is repeated in many of Machado's poems, representing physical and metaphorical darkness of evil.

Linked to 'Cain' and the black elements in the human psyche, this statement suggests that just as the present climate in Spain brought out jealousy and violence in men, this climate would pass, as would the 'sombras'. This passing of the shadows is alluded to in 'El mañana efímero'. Machado presents the current squalor as leading to a future glory, whilst in 'A Orillas del Duero' he merely concentrates on a glory that has been lost in present depression. The 'manana vacío' that will come from the futile present will be only 'pasajero', and there will be change.

The last line of the poem 'España de la rabia y de la idea' is emphatic, the assonance of 'a' combined with the pattern of monosyllabic and trisyllabic words providing an attractive energy and rhythm. Machado talks of 'Una España implacable y redentora' that will come, with 'mano vengadora' and 'idea'. Ending his poem with 'idea' Machado shows his hopes for change and improvement after the present futility and lack of 'idea'. One of the key differences between the Soledades and the Campos de Castilla is the tone with which Machado writes.

Writing introvertedly and inwardly in the Soledades, in Campos de Castilla Machado loses himself and his identity and writes as 'nosotros'. Tunon de Lara states 'Los elementos del mundo exterior ocupan el primer plano en Campos de Castilla; this 'mundo exterior' is explored constantly by Machado in his description of life events and people that do not relate to himself but to his audience. His simplistic language and phraseology take the focus away

from his poetry and himself and puts it onto his subject – the people, the places, the lands of Castile, Spain.

Whilst some might say that his poetry was unsophisticated, it is precisely this unsophistication that renders it so effective – writing as ‘nosotros’ Machado brings his audience into one group, tying too his subjects – el criminel, el loco, los rostros atonitos. By doing this Machado presents Spain as a whole, trying to get herself out of depression and reach as high or higher than her previous strength. By taking himself as a poet out of his poetry he shows that there is no individual, only a people and a common cause.

Machado said ‘mis romances miran a lo elemental humano, al campo de castilla y al libro primero de moises, llamado genesis’. Using as his protagonists the most basic elements on the earth; people, our setting, and the passage of time, Machado indeed looks at ‘lo elemental humano’. As a philosopher as well as poet, Machado also presents the fight between good and evil, this primary fight played out in the prelapsarian garden of Eden. With the repeated images of Cain and the shadows that follow humans Machado examines the essence of human nature and the effects of suffering and trauma on humans.

However, although Machado does all this and his poetry could be seen as a philosophical statement, the Spanish poet writes primarily about his country and his people. He describes suffering, faithlessness, and vice but also hope for a different future. His portrayal of the landscapes and countryside of Spain show a love and knowledge of that country, yet too he criticises her

loss of glory, her haughtiness and decadence. Machado presents these contrasting images of a country in a time of social and political change in Campos de Castilla, involving the reader in his vision of humans, and of Spain.