

**TITLE:**

**The poet and the thinker: the dialogue between Antonio Machado and Ortega y Gasset**

**ABSTRACT:**

While the impact of philosophical ideas in Machado's poetry has received critical attention, his dialogue with Ortega y Gasset has not received extensive critical scrutiny. Even less consideration has been given to Ortega's engagement with Machado's work. Ortega's review of Machado's collection *Campos de Castilla* (*El Imparcial*, 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1912) was the starting point of a life-long relationship, mostly conducted in writing. Although their correspondence shows mutual appreciation and cordiality they also engaged with each other's work from increasingly antagonistic positions. In his 1925 essay 'Reflexiones sobre la lírica' Machado takes issue with Ortega's disdain for 19th realism and with the new Ortega-influenced poetic tendencies which stressed a rift between life and poetry. Some discrepancies were already manifest in 1915 with Machado's critique of Ortega's first book *Meditaciones del Quijote* (1914), but it is only in the unfinished draft of his inaugural lecture to the RAE where Machado's criticism of Ortega's ideas extends from aesthetics to social and ultimately political concerns. This essay explores aspects of their relationship conducted through mutual references and allusions to their respective work.

**KEYWORDS:** Antonio Machado, Ortega y Gasset, Poetry, Phenomenology, perspectivism, Giner de los Ríos.

*Y estarán frente a frente poeta y filósofo — nunca hostiles — y  
trabajando cada uno en lo que el otro deja.*

Juan de Mairena XXXIV

The correspondence between Antonio Machado and Ortega y Gasset, the reviews they wrote of each other's work, the mutual references elsewhere in their writings, and their shared admiration for Giner de los Ríos, all attest to a long and fruitful dialogue between these two major figures of twentieth-century Spanish letters. Whereas mutual respect and appreciation had been the prevailing note in the relationship between them, it has been argued that the last preserved letter written by the poet to the philosopher in 1927 reveals an estrangement between the two (Moreno Hernández 2008, 5). At first sight, however, the tone of the letter is friendly to the point of obsequiousness, and even if Machado refers to Ortega's 'aristocratismo' he qualifies it stating that philosophy is above charges of elitism, thus anticipating the claim attributed to one of his

apocryphals that it is the philosopher's prerogative to attend to the truth regardless of the teller's social standing.<sup>1</sup> In the same letter Machado calls Ortega a poet, not for the first time. He had also used the title in an earlier letter (21<sup>st</sup> July, 1912) where he had written: 'pero V es poeta, es artista y cuanto escribe tiene alma' (Macrì, 1517). Although the caveat that preceded these words, 'la fuerza poética es de visión y de sentimiento, no de dialéctica', may suggest the ancient quarrel between poetry and philosophy, this view was in fact close to Ortega's. Moreover, elsewhere in Machado's work there is an interpenetration of metaphysics and poetry akin to Romantic Idealism, and his early interest in Bergson's philosophy has been well documented. In a letter of 1913 to Juan Ramón Jiménez, Machado declares 'ahora me dedico a leer obras de metafísica. Esta ha sido siempre mi pasión y mi vocación aunque por desdicha mía no he logrado salir del limbo de la sensualidad' (Macrì, 1522), and to Ortega: 'He vuelto a mis lecturas filosóficas – únicas en verdad que me apasionan' (Macrì, 1531). Machado went on to study for a university degree in philosophy and the dialogue with the philosophical discourses of his time, and with Ortega in particular, increasingly permeates not only his prose but also his poetry, as in the series of 103 short aphoristic compositions, dedicated to Ortega and included in his collection *Nuevas canciones* (1926) under the heading 'Proverbios y cantares'. That same year Machado published a 'Cancionero apócrifo' in two instalments in *Revista de Occidente* under Ortega's aegis. Even after the publication of *La deshumanización del arte* (1925), Machado had made a point of distancing Ortega's ideas from his critique of the new tendencies, as in the note the poet added to his 'Apuntes sobre la lírica' where he writes: 'La deshumanización del arte – señalada con profundo tino por Ortega y Gasset – es hoy un hecho indudable, aunque, a mi juicio, no podamos sacar de ella una norma estética. *Tampoco creo que fuera esta la intención del filósofo*' (Macrì, 1653, my italics). By then Ortega had become the champion of modern art which he saw as the repository of the values of youth over those of old age, while for Machado it represented the opposite: 'lo viejo y lo caduco' (Macrì, 1654).<sup>2</sup>

The differences between their respective aesthetic positions became undeniable after Ortega extolled the poetics of *gongorismo* in a text published in April of 1927 on occasion of the tricentenary of Góngora. There, in a series of interconnected notes, Ortega praised the antinaturalism and metaphorical prowess of Góngora's

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<sup>1</sup> 'Nunca un gran filósofo renegaría de la verdad, si, por azar, la oyese de labios de su barbero. Por esto eso un privilegio de los grandes filósofos. La mayoría de los hombres preferirá siempre [...] la mentira ingeniosa o la tontería sutil' (Macrì, 1973).

<sup>2</sup> Following Jordi Doménech's suggestion (2009, 409), if we take the date of the letter as sometime in the Summer of 1927, we may be justified in detecting some reticence in Machado's words. No longer 'querido amigo' or 'querido Ortega' as had been the case earlier, here Ortega is addressed as 'querido maestro' a formula the recipient had objected to in the past on the grounds that it made him feel old.<sup>2</sup>Machado was not averse to using this form of address but perhaps in this particular case it might convey a covert slight; see Machado's apologetic reply to Ortega in a subsequent letter (Macrì, 1514-15).

*Soledades* arguing that ‘la poesía es eufemismo – eludir el nombre cotidiano de las cosas [...] Poesía no es naturalidad, sino voluntad de amaneramiento [...] eternamente la poesía ha consistido en dar gato por liebre’ (Ortega OC I, 577). By contrast, Machado’s view is made clear in *Los complementarios*: ‘Silenciar los nombres directos de las cosas, cuando las cosas tienen nombres directos ¡Qué estupidez!’ (Macri, 1209). In any case, this would be the last article written by Ortega on literary matters and it also coincided with the end of Machado’s correspondence with the philosopher. However, their relationship at least up to that point, had been mutually enriching and it is well worth examining as it sheds light on their individual ideological trajectories.

We know that Machado was an avid reader of Ortega’s articles from early on in his career. He had sent him a copy of his 1907 collection *Soledades. Galerías. Otros poemas*, perhaps in response to Ortega’s review of an anthology of modernist poetry published some months earlier in *El Imparcial*. Here, Ortega’s dismissal of poetic aestheticism in favour of a humanized lyric was diametrically opposed to the view he came to uphold in the 1920s. In the former, his aesthetics and even his diction are closer to Unamuno’s.<sup>3</sup>

Yet the existing correspondence between the poet and the philosopher only dates from around the time of the publication of *Campos de Castilla* which Ortega reviewed in June 1912. Despite the title: ‘Al margen de un libro: Los versos de AM’, Ortega’s approach is not that of a literary scholar but a classical humanist. His advocacy is for a reconciliation of art and life which he sees illustrated in one of the lines of Machado’s poetic self-portrait, where, according to Ortega: ‘el verso es como una espada en uso, es decir, puesta al extremo de un brazo que lleva al otro extremo las congojas de un corazón.’ For the philosopher, Rubén Darío’s renovation of the poetic language had opened the door for the humanized lyric he celebrates in Machado’s poetry where the engagement with social and national realities, together with formal sobriety — ‘sin ninguna referencia erudita que nada puede decir a nuestros sentidos’— represent a break with the prosaic realism of nineteenth-century poets. In the review, Unamuno is invoked to highlight the primacy of Machado’s poetics: ‘Yo encuentro en Machado un comienzo de esta novísima poesía, cuyo mas fuerte representante sería Unamuno si no despreciara los sentidos tanto’ (OC I, 277), even though, according to Ortega, Machado still needed to shed some of the descriptive tendency that characterized the old style. He coincides with Unamuno and Juan Ramón Jiménez in his appreciation of Machado’s popular vein, but Ortega’s formalism is already manifest in the passages he

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<sup>3</sup> ‘Corrientes hondas y poderosas, oriundas de extremas necesidades humanas – sentimiento, tradición, ideas –, han de saltar con gracia y airosamente en la fontana de la poesía. No basta, no, para ser poeta, peinar en ritmo y rima el chorrullo de una fuente que suena; hay que ser fuente, manantial, profunda veta de humanidad que resume santa energía estética, renovadora, impulsora, consoladora.’ (Ortega OC I, 50).

selects from *Campos de Castilla* — alexandrines and hendecasyllabics with consonantal rhyme and stanzaic form, taken from ‘Por tierras de España’ and ‘A orillas del Duero’, as well as the already mentioned ‘Retrato’.

Two years later Machado would have the opportunity to reciprocate the attention of the young philosopher with his own review of Ortega’s first book, *Meditaciones del Quijote* (1914), published in January 1915 in *La Lectura*. Perhaps intentionally the article ends with the same image of a poetic ‘fuente originaria’ used by Ortega in his review of *Campos de Castilla*. For Ortega, Cervantes’s masterpiece represents what he calls a Spanish ‘circumstance’, a perspective on reality full of latent possibilities, which, like an ideal forest, needs to be brought to light. But Machado seems to be as perplexed as many readers regarding the central theme of Ortega’s meditations, that is: Cervantes’s approach to the world.<sup>4</sup> This Cervantine ‘manera de ver las cosas’ is not properly explained in the unfinished and circuitous set of essays that comprise Ortega’s published book.<sup>5</sup> It will become clearer subsequently, in his lecture on ‘Temas del Escorial’ delivered at the Ateneo on April 9, 1915 and this may account for the remark made by Philip W. Silver that ‘en esta ocasión, estando Antonio Machado, entre otros, en la sala, [Ortega] fue muy explícito sobre la perspectiva cervantina’ (1978, 131). Silver does not elaborate on this remark but it is interesting to note that in this instance Ortega has replaced the term ‘circumstance’ with ‘landscape’: ‘Esta es señores, la manera cervantina de acercarse a las cosas: tomar a cada individuo con su paisaje, con lo que él ve, no con lo que nosotros vemos; tomar a cada paisaje con su individuo, con el que es capaz de sentirlo plenamente.’<sup>6</sup> The difference lies in the dynamism implicit in the idea of landscape, as Ciriaco Morón Arroyo points out, ‘paisaje [...] no es algo que nos rodea, sino algo en absoluta continuidad con nosotros, como la presión atmosférica, que nos mantiene en cohesión’ (1968, 155). On this occasion, after acknowledging the presence of Machado in the audience, Ortega quoted a passage from the

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<sup>4</sup> Illustrative is Demetrios Baskides’s remark that ‘Even the most patient of readers may be tempted to conclude that he has been left directionless.’ (1986, 15).

<sup>5</sup> See E. Inman Fox’s prologue to his reconstruction of Ortega’s original project in his 1987 edition of *Meditaciones sobre la literatura y el arte (la manera española de ver las cosas)*, of which only the prologues to the reader, a preliminary meditation and a meditation subtitled ‘teoría de la novela’ were published with the title of *Meditaciones del Quijote* in 1914. Here all references in the text are to the edition by Julian Marias (Madrid, 2014).

<sup>6</sup> In ‘Temas del Escorial’ Ortega states that ‘No existe, pues, otra manera de comprender integramente al prójimo que esforzarse en reconstruir y adivinar su paisaje, el mundo hacia el cual se dirige y con quien está en diálogo vital. Y viceversa, sólo veremos bien un paisaje que no sea el nuestro buscando con lealtad la pupila que le corresponde, la atalaya única con él orgánicamente enlazada [...] Significa, pues, el paisaje de cada uno la esfera de sus capacidades, todo lo que puede aspirar a ser, y, al propio tiempo, el coto cerrado del cual no puede salir jamás. El paisaje es nuestra limitación, nuestro destino’ (1988, 51-2). Ortega’s concept of ‘landscape’ should be understood as a perspective on reality informed by individual historical and existential circumstances and for Ortega, Cervantes’s novel offers a perfect opportunity to elucidate the Spanish circumstance.

poem 'Por tierras de España' and concluded with the image of a thread linking El Escorial and the landscape re-created in *Campos de Castilla*: 'Situados en este regazo de tierra podemos desde nuestro pecho lanzar un hilo de meditación tan largo que quede su otra punta prendida en el Moncayo' (1988, 64). This gesture of kinship would resonate deeply with Machado who more than twenty years later would be using Ortega's terminology to encourage critical reflection in his readers: 'Yo os enseño, o pretendo enseñaros, a meditar sobre todas las cosas contempladas, y sobre vuestras mismas meditaciones.' (Macri, 2347).<sup>7</sup>

Ortega himself in *Meditaciones del Quijote* had argued that the role of the critic is akin to the philosopher's in their common approach to phenomena, guided by the 'amor intellectualis' involved in meditation, and aimed to expand on, re-create and complement, rather than merely correct the work. In Ortega's words:

veo en la crítica un fervoroso esfuerzo para potenciar la obra elegida [...] La crítica no es biografía ni se justifica como labor independiente, si no se propone completar la obra [...] Procede orientar la crítica en un sentido afirmativo y dirigirla, más que a corregir al autor, a dotar al lector de un órgano visual más perfecto. La obra se completa completando su lectura (2014, 84)

Taking issue with those critics who see in Machado's review the beginning of a life-long antagonism towards Ortega's philosophy, I contend here that his reading of *Meditaciones del Quijote* would have a crucial influence on the development of Machado's thought, and that the approach described by Ortega here sets the pattern for the constructive dialectical position he'll adopt towards Ortega from then onwards.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps even the title of his notebooks *Los complementarios* can be interpreted as a tribute to the philosopher.

In the review, after dwelling on Ortega's disquisition about the notion of *amor intellectualis* — 'comprensión amorosa' in Machado's phrase — which is identified with Ortega's approach, and by implication

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<sup>7</sup> Machado's declaration that 'Ortega y Gasset representa a mi entender, en primer término o en primer plano, un gesto nuevo: el gesto meditativo; es el hombre que hace ademán de meditar. Este es un estilo, y el estilo es el ademán del hombre.' (Macri, 1586). Style was for Ortega an approach to reality 'la manera de acercarse a las cosas' that 'lleva consigo una filosofía y una moral, una ciencia y una política' (2014, 173).

<sup>8</sup> According to Ángel González the relation between Machado and Ortega was dominated at all times by a spirit of contradiction, arguing that Machado's review of *Meditaciones del Quijote* shows his disapproval of Ortega's premises centred on Cervantes's worldview, and a vindication of Unamuno's *Vida de don Quijote y Sancho* where the focus was on the character of Don Quixote. According to González 'la reacción de Machado es inequívoca. No se trata de alusiones más o menos veladas. Machado cita literalmente párrafos del libro de Ortega para refutarlos sin apelación' (1997, 32). While González's essay, delivered in his inaugural lecture to the Spanish Academy, is illuminating in many ways, I consider an antagonism on Machado's part inconsistent with the tone of his correspondence as it is with the poetic 'eulogy' to the philosopher, inspired by his reading of *Meditaciones del Quijote*.

with philosophy itself, Machado highlights some of the points made by Ortega adding his own thoughts here and there. Machado's vindication of Unamuno is potentially a point of contention and a submerged criticism may be implied in the lines he quotes which emphasize Unamuno's subjective approach.<sup>9</sup> Unamuno's appraisal of don Quijote's uncompromising idealism had served to showcase his own agonistic struggle to reconcile reason and faith. Machado had dedicated an article to Unamuno's *Vida de don Quijote y Sancho* on its publication in 1905 praising his author's passionate engagement, well attuned to the figure of don Quijote — an identification underlined in his poetic portrait of Unamuno included in *Campos de Castilla* (1912).<sup>10</sup> Then Machado had written that 'sólo el sentimiento es creador. Las ideas se destruyen y pasan. En realidad, ni las ideas de los pensadores, ni las imágenes de los poetas, son nada fuera del sentimiento del que nacen.' (Macrì, 1482) Ortega doesn't mention Unamuno but he dismisses those whose interest is limited to the protagonist of the book, arguing that moving the focus to Cervantes's style, from the vantage point of the whole novel, allows for a resolution of the binary idealism/realism those studies lock themselves into.<sup>11</sup>

Elsewhere Machado appreciatively surveys Ortega's ideas adopting the detached perspective the philosopher recommends towards *Don Quijote*. The points he makes are conciliatory rather than polemical. For instance while agreeing with Ortega that *Don Quijote* is more than the sum of its parts, he nevertheless draws attention to the heteroglossia of the novel's discursive richness, particularly the 'abundante caudal de castizos lugares comunes'.<sup>12</sup> His emphasis on the value of Cervantes's novel as a repository of popular folklore, where he sees 'el alma española objetivada ya en la lengua de su siglo' (Macrì, 1566),<sup>13</sup> contrasts with Ortega's view of

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<sup>9</sup> Unamuno's lines quoted by Machado are '¿Qué me importa lo que Cervantes quiso o no quiso poner allí y lo que realmente puso? Lo vivo es lo que yo allí descubro, pusiéralo o no Cervantes, lo que yo allí pongo y sobrepongo y sotopongo y lo que allí ponemos todos. Quise allí rastrear nuestra filosofía.' (Macrì, 1570).

<sup>10</sup> 'Divagaciones (en torno al último libro de Unamuno)' (Macrì, 1479-82).

<sup>11</sup> Ortega's notion of style involves the interaction between the author's approach and the cultural horizon of the period, rather than any formal features of the language.

<sup>12</sup> 'el refrán, el proverbio, la frase hecha, el donaire, la anécdota, el modismo, el lugar corriente, la lengua popular, en suma, incluyendo en ella la cultura media de universidades y seminarios [...] la materia cervantina es el alma española, objetivada ya en la lengua de su siglo' (Macrì, 1565-66). Machado anticipates Michael Bakhtin's view of Don Quixote as the embodiment of the poetics of the novelistic genre 'the novel must represent all the social and ideological voices of its era, that is, all the era's languages that have any claim to being significant' (1981, 411).

<sup>13</sup> In Mairena's words: 'es muy posible que Cervantes no hubiera escrito su Quijote [...] sin la asimilación y el dominio de una lengua madura de ciencia y conciencia popular, ni la obra inmortal ni nada equivalente pudo escribirse' (Macrì, 1996).

folklore as a lower cultural manifestation in the hierarchy of the real.<sup>14</sup> Likewise, while upholding Ortega's view of erudition and philosophy as antithetical, Machado highlights the contribution of philological studies to the culture, instead directing his criticism to the overvaluation of erudition at the expense of other modes of cognition. To Ortega's disquisition about the mutual exclusion of utilitarianism and morality, Machado points out the reconciliation of utilitarianism and ethics in the English philosophical tradition as an exception to the principle. At several points Machado juxtaposes conflicting propositions calling into question any totalizing claim about the past:

*Es muy posible que los hombres del siglo XVII encontrasen a Don Quijote mucho más absurdo que lo juzgamos nosotros. Es muy posible lo contrario [...] Cabe preguntarse si la España de Cervantes o si el mismo Cervantes estaba más lejos del ideal caballeresco que lo estamos nosotros [...] Cabe pensar lo contrario* (Macri, 1568 my italics).

Further on in the review, Machado deflects Ortega's comment about Don Quixote having become a sort of floating or empty signifier in debates around national decline, offering instead an imaginative response:

Si; Don Quijote surge entre nosotros, españoles, del fondo de nuestras almas, siempre que interrogamos nuestro destino, es nuestro fantasma familiar. Pero Don Quijote y Sancho, en nuestra mente, cabalgan y conversan sobre el plano manchego como en los buenos días en que Cervantes los lanzó a la aventura. Y nosotros quisiéramos que interrumpiesen su diálogo y que nos hablasen, que nos dejaran algo de lo que piensan mientras conversan y cabalgan. Quisiéramos sorprender sus monólogos (Macri, 1570).

Prompting the reader into further thought Machado injects a sense of temporality into the propositions contained in Ortega's quotes. Overall, however, Machado doesn't undermine the validity of Ortega's premises even if, as these examples illustrate, his comments render them somewhat partial and problematic. His approach is more dialogical than dialectical and his fondness for contradiction and paradox clashes with what has been described as Ortega's 'voluntad de sistema' (Morón Arroyo 1968, 236)<sup>15</sup> However on this occasion even Ortega concedes that Cervantes's work escapes from any conceptual reductionism, acknowledging that 'el secreto de una genial obra de arte no se entrega de este modo a la invasión intelectual' (88). Ortega's approach consists of meditative detours in concentric circles gradually closing around the object, a hermeneutics that

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<sup>14</sup> cf this passage in Ortega's prologue: 'Al lado de gloriosos asuntos se habla muy frecuentemente en estas *Meditaciones* de cosas más mínimas. Se atiende a detalles del paisaje español, del modo de conversar de los labriegos, del giro de las danzas y cantos populares [...] de las peculiaridades del idioma, y en general de las manifestaciones menudas donde se revela la intimidad de una raza. Poniendo mucho cuidado en no confundir lo grande y lo pequeño; afirmando en todo momento la necesidad de la jerarquía'. (2014, 62). Machado will draw Ortega's attention to this aspect on different occasions, in his correspondence and in his poetry, and it became a point of contention to which he will return at several points in his writings.

<sup>15</sup> The central role of paradox in Machado's thought and poetics is explored by Philip Johnston (2002), who quotes from an early letter in which Machado declares his 'prevención contra toda forma rígida de pensamiento aunque ésta sea más original o la que haya conducido a mayor número de verdades' (2002, ii).

could find an articulation in Machado's enigmatic aphorism 'quien piensa atajar, rodea' from his *romance* 'La tierra de Alvargonzález'.

In 'Meditación preliminar' Ortega uses the image of a forest to illustrate the polarity between perceptual impression and abstract concept. Machado had admitted in the letter to Juan Ramón Jiménez quoted above, that he was irremediably attached to the sensible world of immediate phenomena. This is the tendency Ortega associates with Mediterranean culture, keen on visual appearance and actuality, in contrast to the analytical and conceptualising Germanic tradition. Instead of one approach superceding the other, Ortega proposes an integration of the two which would allow for an epistemology based on sensory perception, generating a new sensibility — a proposal that marks the emergence of *raciovitalismo* in his thought.<sup>16</sup> Machado doesn't comment on the cultural dichotomy Ortega lays over the cultural map of Europe, but instead he recommends a Platonic approach to *Don Quijote* mediated by recollection, an idealist tendency that, according to Ortega, had filtered from Greek culture into the German philosophical tradition.<sup>17</sup> This realism of things remembered, in which 'la reminiscencia al alejar los objetos los purifica e idealiza' (2014, 139) would in turn characterize much of the poetry Machado wrote during his time in Baeza and beyond.

It is in his poetic portrait 'Al joven meditador José Ortega y Gasset' that Machado aligns Ortega firmly with German thought. The poem was first published in 1917 but it was probably written sometime after the Spring of 1915. It is built around the notion of landscape, in the sense of 'circumstance', which Ortega conceived as essential for the constitution of the subject, because, as he reiterates in his lecture 'Temas del Escorial': 'no existe otra manera de comprender integralmente al prójimo que esforzarse en reconstruir y adivinar su paisaje, el mundo hacia el cual se dirige y con quien esta en diálogo vital.' (1988, 51). In Ortega's case this symbolic landscape was identified with the region near Madrid of the Guadarrama mountains and the monastery of El Escorial situated on its foothill, which are the two place-names in Machado's poem:<sup>18</sup>

A ti laurel y yedra  
corónente, dilecto

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<sup>16</sup> 'La nueva sensibilidad suscita nuevos usos e instituciones, nueva arquitectura y nueva poesía, nuevas ciencias y nuevas aspiraciones, nuevos sentimientos y nueva religión' (2014, 171); cf Mairena's critique of this idea proposing the alternative 'nueva sentimentalidad' (Macri, 710).

<sup>17</sup> 'El Quijote triunfa de nuestro ánimo [...] más por el recuerdo y por la evocación de su lectura que por la lectura misma. Necesitamos crearle una lejanía interna, representárnosla, rememorarla más bien, como a las grandes montañas, una lejanía espacial para percibirlas en su totalidad' (Macri, 1568).

<sup>18</sup> In Ortega's words 'Mi salida natural hacia en universo se abre por los puertos de Guadarrama', in 'Prólogo para alemanes', OC VIII, 15-58 (p.44).

de Sofía, arquitecto.  
 Cincel, martillo y piedra  
 y masones te sirvan; las montañas  
 de Guadarrama frío  
 te brinden el azul de sus entrañas,  
 meditador de otro Escorial sombrío,  
 y que Felipe austero,  
 al borde de su regia sepultura,  
 asome a ver la nueva arquitectura  
 y bendiga la prole de Lutero.

The poem opens with a re-writing of King Basilio's final speech to Segismundo in Calderón's drama *La vida es sueño*: 'A ti el laurel y la palma / se te deben. Tú venciste;/ coronente tus hazañas', at the point when Segismundo, much like Don Quixote, after having regained his sanity, is held as a paragon of wisdom. This theatrical opening accounts for the strangely contorted Latinate prosody of the initial lines, with a strong caesura that bisects the two central lines of the quatrain, flanked by the four-syllable words in a rather ponderous balancing act. At the same time, the words 'yedra' and 'piedra' forcefully linked by rhyme, suggest the interpenetration between two temporalities, associated with life and culture respectively, which are the two discursive axes of Ortega's *Meditaciones*. On a different level, the theatrical reference can be related to Ortega's public persona, a dimension the philosopher consciously embraced. As he put it: 'un autor es un actor que se adjudica un papel y es el protagonista verdadero de toda su obra' (1992, 51). In 1914 Ortega had written a prologue for the young poet, José Moreno Villa, where he remarked that 'tanto para leer como para crear una poesía deberíamos exigir cierta solemnidad', which may account for Machado's uncharacteristic Calderonian opening of his 'elogio'.<sup>19</sup> However, there is nothing around the date of this poem that suggests that the pastiche was anything more than affectionate banter.

The image of the philosopher as an architect, already present in Machado's review ('Una preocupación arquitectónica es a mi entender la característica de Ortega y Gasset'), implies a post-Kantian conception of architecture, less as utilitarian than as an expression of abstract ideas. Here, together with the concluding

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<sup>19</sup> 'Ensayo de estética a la manera de prólogo', Ortega's prologue to Moreno Villa's *El Pasajero* (1914), in *La deshumanización del arte y otros ensayos de estética*, ed. Valeriano Bozal (Madrid: Austral, 1987), 139-162 (p. 140). From his earliest correspondence Machado had directed Ortega's attention to the popular tradition or folklore, and even if in one of his essays the opening sentence may indicate an interest on the philosopher's part: 'debo decir que la primera orientación hacia las ideas de este ensayo formula vino a mí reflexionando sobre el contenido y el régimen de las conversaciones castizas', the title of the essay in question *España invertebrada* (1921) suggests that his appreciation was very different from Machado's. Later, through Mairena, the poet would declare that 'todo lo que no es folklore es pedantería', and this view may explain the remark in one of his letters to Guiomar in 1929 that 'Ortega tiene mucho talento pero es decididamente un pedante y un cursi' (in Doménech 2009, 260).

phrase ‘prole de Lutero’, it becomes an allusion to Ortega’s formative years in the University of Marburg, the centre of neo-Kantian constructivism, where he was also introduced to Husserl’s phenomenology (Orringer 1979, chapter 4). This affiliation was also suggested in Machado’s review where he refers to Ortega’s philosophy as ‘erotismo gnóstico-constructivo’ — *eros* standing for the binding force of *amor intellectualis*.<sup>20</sup> Ortega himself had mentioned Marburg in his lecture at the Ateneo as the reverse of El Escorial, both locations being equally relevant for his inner landscape, signifying respectively the European philosopher and the Spanish reformer. From this vantage point, the phrase ‘Guadarrama frío’ at the heart of the poem encapsulates the interaction between these two sides of Ortega’s self-projection.<sup>21</sup> In retrospect we may see in the relative weight of the words a tilt in the direction of Ortega’s outlook at this time when his preoccupation with the realities of Spain prevailed over philosophical doctrine. After all, *Meditaciones del Quijote* was dedicated to the political theorist and journalist Ramiro de Maeztu.

In Machado’s poem, *Don Quijote* is alluded to with the expression ‘otro Escorial sombrío’, as monumental as its architectonic counterpart, which Ortega had described as ‘nuestra gran piedra lírica’, and equally melancholic. For Ortega don Quixote is a symbol of a ‘voluntad pura’, an image of human effort expended for its own sake without any apparent social purpose or direction, and he sees the same impulse behind the erection of the monastery of El Escorial. Both, in his view, are foremost examples of Spain’s foundational ethos.

The reference to the new architecture suggests a symbolic edifice that holds the promise of a new beginning, a cultural resurrection spearheaded by Ortega, who is described, adopting his circuitous style, as a prominent philosopher (‘dilecto de Sofía’) of Germanic intellectual filiation (‘prole de Lutero’). It is worth noting the elision of the personal ‘a’ in the last line, probably a manoeuvre on the part of the poet to avoid a Germanophile interpretation in the context of the First World War, particularly after mentioning Phillip II whose policies were also driven, in the phrase coined by Geoffrey Parker (1988), by ‘messianic imperialism’. In fact, both Ortega and Machado had been among the signatories of the Manifesto of Solidarity with the Allied Nations (Manifiesto de Adhesión a las Naciones Aliadas) published in July 1915 in *España*, a weekly magazine founded

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<sup>20</sup> ‘La filosofía que busca el sentido de las cosas va inducida por el eros. La meditación es ejercicio erótico’ (Ortega 2014, 144).

<sup>21</sup> Tatjana Gajic explores the tensions of what she describes as Ortega’s ‘twofold demand which stood at the basis of his intellectual commitment’ (2000, 193).

and edited by Ortega whose discrimination between Germany's intellectual tradition and its militarist policies was clear from the vocal attacks of Spain's neutrality in his opinion pieces.<sup>22</sup>

But the building was yet to be built – as indicated by the subjunctive mood that sets the poem in the invisible realm of hypothesis. This subterranean reality, or 'trasmundo', in Ortega's lexicon, is figured in the motifs of the 'entrañas' and 'sepulcro', and perhaps also in the amphibiology of the word 'masones' — denoting both stonemasons and freemasons in Spanish. The eye acts as a gateway between sensory perception and the inner world of intellectual cognition, and here the periphrasis 'asome a ver' brings with it the idea of resurrection.<sup>23</sup>

One of the words that stands out in the poem is 'azul' with its strong Symbolist connotations. But by this time, both Machado and Ortega had rejected the subjectivism of the Idealist poetics associated with the French school and by extension with Hispanic *modernismo*. Instead, the word 'azul' in connection with the Guadarrama mountains invokes the figure of Giner de los Rios, who had died earlier that same year and to whom Machado would dedicate a poem in which he uses a similar image: 'llevad, amigos, su cuerpo a la montaña,/ a los azules montes del ancho *Guadarrama*'. Giner had introduced a new sensibility with regard to the Castilian landscape as a reflection of the nation's character to which both Machado and Ortega were tributaries. He had been, in Alfonso Reyes's phrase: 'el inventor del Guadarrama' (1956, 393), and from the influential *Institución Libre de Enseñanza* had promoted an appreciation of landscape that involved empirical observation and a scientific approach. In his essay on the landscape of Guadarrama he paid special attention to what he called the geological aesthetics of the region, noting 'el magnífico tono frío amoratado [...] que produce la hidratación del óxido de hierro contenido en las micas de sus gneises' (1965, 37) and he saw this core reflected in the qualities of inner strength, resilience and determination of its inhabitants. In his lecture, Ortega paid homage to the figure of Giner recalling a conversation between the two that had taken place in the grounds of El Escorial in which Giner came up with the remark that 'El paisaje es lo que cada cual trae' (1988, 48). Machado's poetic tribute to Giner was placed immediately before the one dedicated to Ortega in the series of 'elogios' thus underlining the connection between the two.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Ortega gave up the editorship a year later.

<sup>23</sup> Subsequently Ortega repeats this idea in one of his articles for *El espectador*, 'Muerte y Resurrección' (1917), *OC II*, 145-150. 'El Monasterio [del Escorial] es un sepulcro inmenso, sobre el cual este cielo de abril parece el escenario dispuesto a una resurrección' (1917) *OC II*, 146.

<sup>24</sup> Also in 1914 Ortega founded the Liga de educación política, a platform for the promotion of civic conscience influenced by Giner's Europeanizing spirit. Machado was among the associated members.

At the same time, Giner's words could serve as a caption to one of Machado's poems which was published shortly after Ortega's *Meditaciones*. The Guadarrama setting together with the word 'entrañas' link the two poems together and it may well be this poem that he had originally planned to dedicate to the philosopher.<sup>25</sup>

¿Eres tú, Guadarrama, viejo amigo,  
la sierra gris y blanca,  
la sierra de mis tardes madrileñas  
que yo veía en el azul pintada?  
Por tus barrancos hondos,  
bajo el asombro de tus cumbres agrias,  
mil Guadarramas y mil soles llegan  
caminando, conmigo, a tus entrañas.<sup>26</sup>

Consisting of two quatrains conveying a different approach to the object each, the first related to painting with a strong chromaticism, followed by a quatrain dominated by poetic imagery with a temporal emphasis ('mil soles') and a lexical field associated with emotions ('hondos', 'agrias', 'entrañas'). The conspicuous sound effects, particularly of the rolling r's of Guadarrama, resonating throughout ('sierra', 'barranco', 'asombro', 'cumbre', 'agrias'), leave no doubt as to which of the two gets the upper-hand. At the same time, the poem invites an interpretation in connection with Ortega's doctrine of perspectivism first intimated in *Meditaciones del Quijote*. Here, the poet's own subjective perspective is integrated within a plurality of other perceptions afforded by his journey. The sum of all these individual perspectives is intended to capture the essence of the landscape with all the symbolic connotations it carries.

Two years later Ortega would elaborate on his theory of perspectivism in his article 'Verdad y perspectiva' (1916) where he writes: 'La realidad, precisamente por serlo y hallarse fuera de nuestras mentes individuales, sólo puede llegar a estas multiplicándose en mil caras o haces [...] La verdad, lo real, el universo, la

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<sup>25</sup> In a letter dated 14 September 1914 Machado writes: 'Quería haberle acusado recibo desde los *Lunes del Imparcial* con unos versos que le dedico, pero la Guerra ha copado la prensa' (Macri, 1556).

<sup>26</sup> The poem was first published in *Mundo Nuevo* in August 29<sup>th</sup>, 1914 with the title 'Camino de Balsain', and was included in the second edition of *Campos de Castilla (Poesías Completas, 1917)* under a different title 'Caminos' and the date 1914, with changes in the last three lines ('y por tus cumbres agrias/ mil Guadarramas y mil soles vienen,/ cabalgando conmigo, a tus entrañas'; the title doesn't figure in subsequent editions but a caption 'Camino de Balsain, 1911' has been added at the end.

vida [...] se quiebra en facetas innumerables, en vertientes sin cuento, cada una de las cuales da hacia un individuo' (OC II, 18-9).<sup>27</sup>

As in this instance, Machado's poetry often addresses philosophical ideas and can be used to express and exemplify philosophical concepts, and even if Ortega had declared that he was not a keen reader of poetry, it is tempting to consider that he might have found a stimulus for and an expression of his own thoughts in Machado's work<sup>28</sup>. Morón Arroyo (1968) in his comprehensive study of Ortega's philosophy, uses a number of poems written by Machado to illustrate different aspects of his thought. But we also find echoes of Machado in passages written by Ortega. Ángel González remarks on the striking similarities, despite their different outlook, between Ortega's phraseology in *La deshumanización de arte* of 1925, and Machado's views on modern art published five years earlier. Some of the images used by Ortega have the Symbolist tone of Machado's early poetry, as in this description of a sunset 'cuando el cielo se incendia con la sangre del sol moribundo' (OC II, 77), or 'fuera, el sol amarillea a lo largo, calizo, polvoriento' (OC II, 77). We can also recognize some echoes of *Campos de Castilla* when Ortega refers to the Castilian perspective as 'asceta y guerrera, hostil e indiferente a las cosas' (OC II, 89), or claims that 'no hay en toda Europa un paisaje que como Castilla exija tan imperativamente un guerrero' (OC II, 89). These may just belong to the period's stock images but distinctive to both Machado and Ortega is the emphasis placed on the perceptual process, a phenomenological stance conveyed in the image of a window-pane that stands between the landscape and the observer (OC VI, 154).<sup>29</sup> In any case, Ortega's Darwinian attribution in the sentence 'En Castilla, la mirada crea y fija el horizonte como, según Darwin, en la Pampa llanísima el pie elige y a la par crea camino' (OC II, 84),<sup>30</sup> sounds disingenuous when the Machadian precedent would be far more apparent. Elsewhere critics have noted the numerous instances in Mairena's disquisitions which resonate with Ortega's concepts (see Fernández Ferrer, 37-39).

For all their mutual rapport, it can be argued that the dialectical relation established between the poet and the philosopher reflect different epistemological paradigms. Whereas Ortega's philosophical and socio-historical analysis is driven towards system and totality, Machado, mostly through the writings of his

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<sup>27</sup> Later in *El tema de nuestro tiempo* (1923) Ortega expands on the correspondence between circumstance and perspective 'la realidad, como un paisaje, tiene infinitas perspectivas, todas ellas igualmente verídicas y auténticas. La sola perspectiva falsa es la que pretende ser la única' (OC III, 200-201).

<sup>28</sup> In the prologue to Moreno Villa's *El Pasajero*, Ortega repeats twice 'Leer versos no es una de mis ocupaciones habituales', *La deshumanización del arte y otros ensayos de estética* (Madrid: Austral, 1987), pp. 140, 142.

<sup>29</sup> cf with Machado's poem 'En abril, aguas mil' in *Campos de Castilla* (1917).

<sup>30</sup> Originally published in *España* in 1915-16 with the title 'Vaga opinión sobre Asturias', 75-96 (p. 84)

apocryphals, Martín, Meneses, and particularly Mairena, whom he called his philosophical alter-ego, problematizes the possibility of synthesis and conceptualization (Macri, 1965). The miscellaneous prose passages collected under Mairena's name underscore the aporias and limitations of rational thought with an unrelenting questioning of philosophical tenets and received ideas, favouring a paradoxical mode of discourse. This tendency towards indeterminacy also dominates in the series of short poems dedicated to Ortega under the general heading of 'Proverbios y cantares'. These form a constellation of fragments arranged around thematic clusters without a discursive progression, but instead offering complementary facets of thought and promoting a form of thinking that is playfully random, uncertain and creative, but ultimately inconclusive. This open-ended quality of Machado's propositions is, however, not entirely opposed to Ortega's. While the prevailing critical approach to his work shows a consistent attempt to systematize a philosophical corpus that otherwise appears asystematic or to use one of his terms 'invertebrate', there are also commentators who consider this inconclusiveness a central feature of Ortega's thought.<sup>31</sup> *Meditaciones del Quijote* illustrates this sense of dispersion, because the original project of ten meditations was never finished, and even the posthumous reconstruction is still missing the two meditations on *Don Quijote* that were advertised on the cover of the book. Perhaps we can read a gesture of prescient solidarity in Machado's letter to Ortega where, after apologizing about the typos in his review, he announced the forthcoming publication of the second part of his review, which as in Ortega's case, never materialized. In one of his lessons, Mairena expounds on the mutual illumination of poetry and philosophy:

El escepticismo de los poetas puede servir de estímulo a los filósofos. Los poetas en cambio pueden aprender de los filósofos el arte de las grandes metáforas, de esas imágenes útiles por su valor didáctico e inmortales por su valor poético [...] También de los filósofos pueden aprender los poetas a conocer los callejones sin salida del pensamiento, para salir – por los tejados – de esos mismos callejones; a ver con relativa claridad, la natural *aporética* de nuestra razón, su profunda irracionalidad. (Macri, 1995).<sup>32</sup>

For Ortega the escape from the paradoxical irrationality of pure reason was the reconciliation of reason with the living reality of *racio-vitalismo*: 'El irracionalismo a que se ve condenada precisamente la orgullosa 'razón pura' se convierte en claro e irónico racionalismo de la razón vital' (OC VI, 196). It is from this attitude that Machado's address to Ortega as a poet can be understood. They may have had divergent theories of metaphor but they both chose a

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<sup>31</sup> 'La obra de Ortega es una constante interrupción, la exposición de un pensamiento es un constante no llegar hasta donde se había propuesto. Y este no llegar, estas interrupciones nada tienen de casuales [...] son más bien el modo de ser del pensamiento orteguiano' (Martín 1999, 38).

<sup>32</sup> In a passage attributed by Mairena to Abel Martín, another of Machado's apocryphals: 'La razón humana milita toda ella contra la riqueza y variedad del mundo [...] busca ansiosamente un principio unitario, un algo que lo explique todo, para quedarse con este algo y aligerarse del peso y confusión de todo lo demás' (Macri, 2031)

maritime image to describe their task. For Machado ‘el poeta es un pescador, no de peces, sino de pescados vivos; [...] de peces que puedan vivir después de pescados’ (Macrì, 1946). A statement that recalls his view of Cervantes as ‘ante todo un gran pescador de lenguaje, de lenguaje vivo, hablado y escrito’ (Macrì, 1565). If the poet’s task gives primacy to the language, the philosopher, according to Ortega, is mostly concerned with abstractions. He compares his meditative activity to a shipwreck, recalling T.S. Eliot’s famous line at the end of *The Waste Land*, ‘These fragments I have shored against my ruin’, to describe his endeavour as that of

colocar las materias de todo orden, que la vida, en su resaca perenne, arroja a nuestros pies como restos inhábiles de un naufragio, en postura tal que dé en ellos el sol innumerables reverberaciones’ (Ortega 2014, 46)

The difference seems to correspond with Paul Valéry’s dictum that the poet’s ‘inner labor consists less of seeking words for his ideas than of seeking ideas for his words and rhythms’ (1985, 301). But even a brief consideration of their respective styles suggests that this distinction, at least in the case of Ortega and Machado, is inaccurate. The relation between the poet and the thinker is not antithetical but – using a term shared by both – complementary.

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