

CERTAIN LITERARY INFLUENCES REFLECTED IN THE  
WORKS OF RUBÉN DARÍO

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I hereby recommend that the thesis prepared  
under my supervision by RUTH BRADSHAW  
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be accepted as fulfilling this part of the requirements  
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## PREFACE

Rubén Darío's artistry in creating a desired atmosphere through the enumeration of details conveying such an impression first interested me. On reading some selections from his works, I noticed a variety of trends, and a similarity of reflections in both French and Spanish writers. I decided to follow these currents more closely through Rubén Darío's collections. The purpose of this study is to indicate certain literary influences reflected in the prose and poetry of the Nicaraguan.

I wish to express my appreciation to Dr. Rebecca Switzer and Dr. Jerome Moore for their inspiration, their helpful suggestions, and criticism.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE. . . . .	iii
CHAPTER . . . . .	PAGE
I. THE LIFE OF RUBÉN DARÍO. . . . .	1
His childhood . . . . .	1
His journalistic and diplomatic career. . . . .	2
<u>La Época</u> . . . . .	3
Publication of <u>Abrojos</u> and <u>Azul</u> . . . . .	3
<u>La Nación</u> . . . . .	3
<u>La Unión</u> . . . . .	4
Nicaragua's delegate to Spain in 1892. . . . .	4
Colombia's consul to Buenos Aires. . . . .	5
Publication of <u>Los raros</u> and <u>Prosas profanas</u> . . . . .	5
<u>El Tiempo</u> and <u>La Tribuna</u> . . . . .	6
Representative of <u>La Nación</u> in Spain . . . . .	6
Pan American Conference in Río . . . . .	6
Director of <u>El Mundial</u> in Paris. . . . .	7
Conclusion. . . . .	7
II. ROMANTIC TENDENCIES FOUND IN THE POETRY OF RUBÉN DARÍO. . . . .	9
History of the movement . . . . .	9
Characteristics of romanticism. . . . .	11
Emotional element. . . . .	11
Freedom of metrical forms. . . . .	13

CHAPTER. . . . .	PAGE
Love of nature. . . . .	15
Love of solitude. . . . .	17
Religious sentiment . . . . .	18
Conclusion. . . . .	19
III. THE FRENCH INFLUENCE SEEN IN <u>AZUL</u> . . . . .	21
History of French literature. . . . .	21
Rubén Darío's interest in France. . . . .	24
Significance of title . . . . .	25
Parnassian characteristics. . . . .	25
Use of long and short sentences. . . . .	26
Artistic, musical prose . . . . .	27
Assonance . . . . .	27
Onomatopoeitic words . . . . .	27
Use of contrasts. . . . .	28
Use of color . . . . .	28
Use of alexandrine in poetry. . . . .	29
Naturalism. . . . .	29
Symbolism . . . . .	30
Conclusion. . . . .	31
IV. THE MODERNIST INFLUENCE SEEN IN <u>PROSAS PROFANAS</u> . . . . .	33
Definition of modernism . . . . .	34
Meaning of the title. . . . .	36
Modernist trends. . . . .	36
Variety of forms . . . . .	37
Musical and pictorial language . . . . .	38

CHAPTER. . . . .	PAGE
Obsession for death. . . . .	40
Individualism. . . . .	40
Conclusion . . . . .	41
V. THE INFLUENCE OF SPANISH LETTERS SEEN IN	
RUBÉN DARÍO. . . . .	42
Early acquaintance with Spanish masters. . . . .	42
Praise of Spain's greatness. . . . .	43
His loyalty to Spain . . . . .	44
Praise of Spain's writers and artists. . . . .	44
Reflections of Spain's masters . . . . .	45
Use of sonnet. . . . .	45
Use of monorhymed tercet. . . . .	47
Use of quatrain. . . . .	47
Use of <u>romance</u> . . . . .	48
Campoamor and Rubén Darío. . . . .	48
Bécquer and Rubén Darío. . . . .	48
Núñez de Arce and Rubén Darío. . . . .	49
Conclusion . . . . .	51
VI. AMERICANISM SEEN IN RUBÉN DARÍO'S WORK . . . . .	53
Introduction . . . . .	53
Expression of Americanism. . . . .	54
Description of landscapes. . . . .	54
Interest in current affairs. . . . .	56
"Canto a la Argentina". . . . .	56
"A Roosevelt" . . . . .	57

CHAPTER. . . . .	PAGE
"La gran cosmópolis". . . . .	58
"Salutación al Águila". . . . .	59
Veneration for native heroes . . . . .	59
Caupolicán. . . . .	59
José Santos Chocano . . . . .	59
Attitude toward United States writers. .	60
Conclusion. . . . .	62

## CHAPTER I

### THE LIFE OF RUBÉN DARÍO

Felix Rubén García Sarmiento, known to the world as Rubén Darío, was born in Metapa, Nicaragua, in January, 1867. As the marriage of his father and mother was unsuccessful, Rubén Darío lived with a great aunt, Bernarda Sarmiento de Ramírez, whom he believed until later years to be his own mother. Later Rubén Darío lived with his father's sister, doña Rita de Alvarado, wife of the consul of Costa Rica.

As a child he was imaginative and precocious. The stories told by the servants and his aunts made a vivid impression on the mind of the child. The old house was filled with mysterious sounds at night; frightful visions troubled him; he felt unseen hands pushing him into the unknown. Darkness and death filled him with vague fears. Since he lived in this atmosphere, surrounded as he was by older people, who, for the greater part, were women, Rubén Darío grew up lacking the normal experiences of boyhood.

Although Rubén Darío was sent to public and private schools, the education he received was of a rather desultory nature. His early reading gave him the background for his later literary production. While he was employed in the National Library of Managua, he read the work of classic authors of Spanish literature.

The art of writing poetry seems to have been innate in



the boy. He was known throughout Central America as "el poeta niño." His talent was recognized, and plans for sending him to Europe to study were being considered. At a banquet that was given by those interested in this project, Rubén Darío read some poems of an anti-religious nature. The president, Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, thought it unwise to send a young boy with such tendencies to where he would learn worse things.

In 1881 the young poet was in Managua, where Antonio Aragón, an old poet and director of the library, became interested in him. This friendship and that of Francisco Gavidia with whom he studied French, meant much to the Nicaraguan. It is here, also, as a boy of fourteen, that Rubén Darío decided to marry.

His friends, understanding the folly of his intentions, gave him money and persuaded him to go to El Salvador. In 1884 Rubén Darío returned to Nicaragua, where he began his journalistic experiences. He was given a position in the governmental offices, but was permitted to spend much of his time writing poetry, wandering through the forests, lying on the shore of the lake, listening to the splashing water, thinking and dreaming. The following quotation shows the nature of this inner reflection:

Revelaciones súbitas de algo que está en el misterio de los corazones y en la reconditez de nuestras mentes: conversación con las cosas en un lenguaje sin fórmula, vibraciones inesperadas de nuestras íntimas fibras, . . . <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Rubén Darío, Autobiografía (Madrid: Editorial "Mundo Latino," 1920), pp. 45-46.

After another disappointment in love in 1886, Rubén Darío resolved to leave Nicaragua. His choice was to go to the United States. However, through the influence of General Juan Cañas, a poet, soldier, adventurer, and diplomat, he went to Chile. In Santiago de Chile he was able to secure a position on the staff of La Época. His literary reputation and letters of introduction from influential friends made this possible.

Some of the disappointments and bitterness experienced in Santiago, where the awkward, shabbily dressed youth of Nicaragua mingled with the social and intellectual élite, are reflected in Abrojos. His stay in Santiago had a broadening influence from a cultural standpoint. The Nicaraguan associated with people of broad cosmopolitan interest and culture. The luxury in which they lived was a new experience. His interest in French literature, the study of which he had begun in San Salvador, was heightened in the Chilean capital, where many of his friends were zealous admirers of contemporary French literature. Azul, which reflects the greatest French influence, was written at this time.

Before returning to Nicaragua in 1889, Rubén Darío secured, through his friendship with Eduardo la Barra and his father-in-law, José Victorino Lastarria, a position as correspondent on the staff of La Nación of Buenos Aires. As this position was retained the rest of his life, the contributions to this paper form the bulk of his writings.

Although he was a correspondent on the staff of La Nación, the next four years were spent in Nicaragua and other Central American countries, where he engaged in journalistic work. The young journalist was a friend of General Francisco Menéndez, president of El Salvador, who then advocated union of all Central American countries. Rubén Darío was the director of La Unión, a newspaper founded by Menéndez. Some of the best contemporary writers of the country were collaborators on this paper. After the assassination of Menéndez by General Ezeta, Rubén Darío left El Salvador for Guatemala. A semi-official newspaper, of which the poet was the director, was founded. This later became a literary magazine. Here the religious ceremony of his marriage to Rafaela Contreras took place in 1891. The civil ceremony had taken place in El Salvador some six months before. From Guatemala Rubén Darío and his wife went to San José de Costa Rica where they lived for a short time. In 1892 Rubén Darío was named Nicaragua's delegate to the celebration of the four hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America.

His stay in Spain was a round of welcome by well-known writers. Some of those whom Rubén Darío mentions are Juan Valera, José Zorrilla, Gaspar Núñez de Arce, Ramón de Campoamor, and Emilia Pardo Bazán.

Upon returning to León from Spain Rubén Darío received news of his wife's death. Although he had been none too devoted to her, her death was one of his greatest sorrows.

The following quotation shows the depth of his sorrow:

Y allí me encerré en mi habitación a llorar  
la pérdida de quien era para mí consolación y apoyo  
moral. . . . .<sup>2</sup>

In Managua while waiting to be appointed Colombia's consul to Buenos Aires, a second marriage took place, one which he regretted the rest of his life, "el caso más novelasco y fatal de mi vida."<sup>3</sup>

The expected appointment was made in 1893. Rubén Darío set out for Buenos Aires by way of New York and Paris, the city of which he had dreamed, "the city of Art, Beauty, Glory, and Love."<sup>4</sup> His stay in Paris was short, but he formed the friendship of such men as Alexander Sawa, Charles Maurice, Jean Moréas, Verlaine, and others.

In the newspapers, La Nación and La Época, as well as in the literary circles in Buenos Aires, Rubén Darío was welcomed. His travels in Spain and France, his recognition by the literati gave him added prestige among the people who were already familiar with his writings. In this favorable atmosphere when Buenos Aires was rapidly becoming a cosmopolitan city, his genius and personality were able to expand. Some of his best known poetry and prose were published during his first stay in Buenos Aires from 1893 to 1898. Los raros, critical essays of contemporary writers, appeared in the

<sup>2</sup>Rubén Darío, Autobiografía, p. 106.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 113.

columns of La Nación. Prosas profanas was published in 1896 and confirmed his right to be considered the leader of the modernista poets.

After the death of Rafael Núñez, statesman and writer of Colombia, Rubén Darío had to live exclusively from his pen. He wrote for La Tribuna and El Tiempo, as well as for La Nación. After the defeat of Spain by the United States in 1898, Rubén Darío was sent to Madrid as correspondent. His articles concerning Spain, published in La Nación, were later collected and published in 1901 under the title of España contemporánea.

From Spain La Nación sent its correspondent to Paris to cover the Exposition of 1900. Rubén Darío was able to satisfy a life-long desire to live in Paris. He held various diplomatic posts while there, but was also able to travel through Italy, Germany, Belgium, Austria-Hungary, and England.

Nicaragua appointed Rubén Darío as secretary of its delegation to the Pan-American Conference which took place in Río de Janeiro in 1906. The following year he again represented his native country in Spain, where Alfonso was to act as arbiter in a dispute between Honduras and Nicaragua. His political activities did not take all his time, however, for various collections of poems appeared from time to time: Cantos de vida y esperanza in 1905, Oda a Mitre in 1906, El canto errante and Poema del otoño y otros poemas in 1907, and Canto a la Argentina in 1910. Rubén Darío's career as a poet ends with the date of the publication of this last

poem. His Historia de mi vida and Historia de mis libros were published in 1912.

The remaining years of the Nicaraguan's life are filled with his journalistic and diplomatic duties and his travels. In 1911 he founded in Paris a literary review, El Mundial.

After the outbreak of the World War its publication was suspended. He came to the United States for a lecture tour, but because of illness, returned to his native land, where he died February 6, 1916.

Such is the life of Rubén Darío, a complex and rare personality, who retained much of his native Nicaragua, but whose influence brought about many literary innovations in Spain and South America. He is a nationalist as well as a true Hispanist, but a cosmopolite, too. He is a man whose vision was not bound by the past and its accomplishments, but one whose life was enriched by constantly enlarged horizons. The later poems of Rubén Darío reflect his interest in contemporary affairs of Spanish America, a note not perceptible in his earlier poems. Since he is a master and worshiper of beauty, French culture appealed to him. He commanded attention in literary circles wherever he went. He is a sensitive artist whose poems reflect all the colors, "desde la sangre de los labios que es pasión, la púrpura de la sangre que es fuerza, hasta el azul suave de la esperanza y del ensueño."<sup>5</sup> He is a poet of harmony and rhythm, a

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<sup>5</sup>Luis H. Debayle, "Héroes de paz en las Américas," Boletín de la Unión Panamericana, LXX (1936), 140.



writer of musical prose, who selects from his rich vocabulary words or phrases that give the desired lilt or nuance. In the technical perfection of his varied metrical forms, Rubén Darío shows the precision and skill of a sculptor. The portfolio, the lily, rhythm, and the blue sky symbolizing the poet, the sculptor, the musician, and the painter, all combined into one represent the muse of Rubén Darío.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Anónimo, "Rubén Darío," Revista de la Universidad de Buenos Aires, Mayo, 1931, p. 498.

## CHAPTER II

### ROMANTIC TENDENCIES FOUND IN THE POETRY OF RUBÉN DARÍO

Spanish poetry during the Golden Age reached great height of perfection under such poets as Garcilasso de la Vega (1503-1536), Fernando de Herrera (1534-1597), Fray Luis de León (1528-1591), and Lope de Vega Carpio (1562-1635). In the following decades under the influence of Francisco de Quevedo (1580-1645) and Luis de Góngora (1561-1627) poetry became formal and obscure to a marked degree. No definite date can be given for the birth of culteranismo and conceptism, for these are natural elements of poetry. It is only the abuse of these principles that is objectionable. The abuses of the Gongorists lead to a reaction, the neo-classic movement, with the result that Ignacio de Luzán (1702-1754) proposed, in his Poética, that Spanish prosody be subjected to the strict rules of the French classicists of the seventeenth century. While Spanish neo-classicism, with its adherence to rigidity and perfection of form with its insistence upon objectivity and its preference for classic antiquity, was dominating letters under the leadership of Manuel José Quintana (1772-1857), a new movement, romanticism, was sweeping through England, France, and Germany. Romanticism contradicted the neo-classic principles and advocated freedom in art and subjectivity instead of objectivity. It also showed a preference for the Middle Ages with its chivalric ideals

instead of classical antiquity.

To the establishment of romanticism in Spain two factors contributed much: (1) the influence of the literatures of France, England, and Germany, where the new movement was held in favor, and (2) the influence of the old romances or ballads. In these ballads could be seen the principles that formed the basis of romanticism: an unbridled fancy, medievalism with its chivalric ideals, and its stress upon the religious element.<sup>7</sup>

The influence of foreign literature was felt in Spain through the return of men of liberal political views who had left Spain during the reign of Ferdinand VII (1814-1833). Although they were classicists on leaving Spain, their views were changed after coming in contact with the men of letters already imbued with the spirit of romanticism in these various countries.

Thus it is that their return after 1833 gave an impetus to the new movement. The age of romanticism in Spain is approximately from 1830-1850. The Duque de Rivas (1791-1865), José de Espronceda (1808-1842), and José Zorrilla (1817-1893) are some of Spain's best romantic poets. Although Rubén Darío's life falls entirely outside the period of romanticism, the influence of some of these Spanish romanticists is seen in his poetry.

The beauty of the classic form and the depth of classic

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<sup>7</sup>J. M. D. Ford, Main Currents of Spanish Literature (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1919), pp. 190-192.

observation cannot be denied; nor can it be denied that the note of inner reflection or of individual emotion of the romanticist gives an added appeal to poetry. The test of the poet is his ability to feel beyond the realm of others, to feel when others are untouched. In the opinion of the romanticist, the poet is not bound by the material; he strives to express the fantastic, the mysterious, and the infinite.<sup>8</sup> For the romanticist, art is an outpouring of emotion, whether it is love, hatred, despair, or joy. Poetry to be artistic in the romantic sense must add that intangible element from the artist's brain. The appeal to reason of the classicists was replaced by the subjective or sentimental element. This expression of the emotions is one of the characteristics of romanticism most obvious in the poetry of Rubén Darío:

Recién casado con Lucila bella,  
 él la idolatra, y ella  
 también le quiere con amor profundo.  
 ¡Unión de dos amantes corazones  
 henchidos de ilusiones!  
 He aquí la única dicha de este mundo.

. . . . .  
 Y por eso una tarde el santo viejo  
 arrugó el entrecejo  
 cuando encontró la casa triste, y cuando  
 vio a la mujer en la tosca silla,  
 la mano en la mejilla,  
 ojerosa, abatida y sollozando.<sup>9</sup>

Rubén Darío cannot be called a poet of gloom and despair because joy and sorrow alike find expression in his

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<sup>8</sup>Annie E. Dodds, The Romantic Theory of Poetry (New York: Longman's, Green and Company, 1926), pp. 1-7.

<sup>9</sup>Rubén Darío, "La nube de verano," Epístolas y poemas (Madrid: Imp. G. Hernández y Galo Sáez, s. f.), pp. 117-121.

poetry:

¡Alegría! sus arpas pulsa el viento.  
Dice un ave en un árbol: «¡soy dichosa!>>  
y, rojos, dejan escapar su aliento  
los labios de la rosa.<sup>10</sup>

Here the poet seems to be expressing his own personal experiences in these musical verses:

Lo que habla en el silencio de mi vida  
de voz, canción, llamada, trino o queja,  
no lo oirá ya Desdémona dormida  
porque ya el ruiseñor no está en la reja;  
  
abarcando en mi afán el universo,  
todo eso lo he exprimido, y lo he brindado  
en sacrificio, inspiración y verso.<sup>11</sup>

Loving France and French culture as he did, Rubén Darío regretted deeply the death of Victor Hugo, whom he admired so much. In parts of this poem the poet expresses a resentment and bitterness for his loss:

¡Oh, Tumba! no te lleves nuestro cándido amor.  
Céfiro no murmura; las flores palidecen;  
los infantes no ríen; las aves se entristecen;  
no hay aroma, no hay eco, no hay brisa, no hay rumor.>>

>>Nosotros, que agitamos la arena del Sahara;  
nosotros, que vivimos de estruendo y de algazara;  
nosotros, que al abismo lanzamos nuestra voz,  
Austro, Aquilón y Bóreas, y todos los que vamos  
sobre los altos montes; nosotros protestamos  
ante la ley que impone la voluntad de Dios.<sup>12</sup>

The above quotations show a mingling of love and

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<sup>10</sup>Rubén Darío, "Loetitia," Baladas y canciones (Madrid: Imp. G. Hernández y Galo Sáez, s. f.), p. 51.

<sup>11</sup>Rubén Darío, "Soneto a Fabio Fiallo," Baladas, pp. 95-96.

<sup>12</sup>Rubén Darío, "Victor Hugo y la tumba," Epístolas, pp. 183, 175.

jealousy, of sadness and happiness, of pensiveness and exaltation. This combination or mixture of opposing emotions is often found in the works of romanticists. However, the poetry of Rubén Darío does not give expression to that deep sorrow and anxious longing for death found in the poetry of Spanish American poets immediately preceding him. In "Para entonces" Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera, one of the precursors of modernism in Spanish America, expresses the desire to die early, when life still says "soy tuya."<sup>13</sup>

The freedom of the romanticists in the use of metrical forms is repeated in Rubén Darío. In his Epístolas y poemas, published in 1889, he uses forms ranging from the tercet to the long epístola without any regular division.

The "Epístola a Emilio Ferrari" uses the sextina composed of four octosyllabic verses and two hendecasyllabic verses with no definite rhyme scheme.

La Fama sopla altiva  
la regia trompa de oro,  
y publica de Iberia  
los nombres gloriosos.  
América es muy justa, y a esos nombres <sup>14</sup>  
les quema incienso y les ofrece tronos.

The "Epístola a Ricardo Contreras" contains one hundred forty-three tercets of hendecasyllabic verses with the a b a rhyme scheme:

<sup>13</sup>Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera, "Para entonces," An Anthology of the Modernista Movement in Spanish America, ed. Alfred Coester (Boston: Ginn and Co., 1924), p. 16.

<sup>14</sup>Rubén Darío, "Epístola a Emilio Ferrari," Epístolas, p.43.



Hoy respondo a tu crítica, Ricardo:  
y al comenzar dire de esta manera,  
con la palabra de un antiguo bardo: . . . .15

The stanzas of the poemas of the collection are of irregular length, even within one poem, and are made up of heptasyllabic lines:

Irguió el ángel la faz encantadora,  
y respondió: «Señor, yo soy la aurora.

Cual cariatíde enorme que fulgura,  
soy, destacada en el inmenso espacio,  
con los brazos tendidos a la altura,  
la columna mejor de tu palacio.

Y luego Pan, con la armoniosa flauta,  
la dulce flauta de oro;  
y un universo en gigantesca pauta  
a su melífluo son formando coro.  
La nueva humanidad vese que aclama  
tu divino poder en toda parte;  
purifica su ser vívida llama;  
tiene por sola religión el Arte.16

Another example of the combination of heptasyllabic and hendecasyllabic verses in stanzas of varying length is seen in "Poema IX":

Y el Señor se veía,  
más radiante que el sol del medio día.

Dijo: ¡Bendita sea!  
Y ungió al género humano  
con el óleo divino de su idea.

En fiesta universal estremecida  
la creación de gozo adormecida,  
del Porvenir sentía el beso blando;

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<sup>15</sup>Rubén Darío, "Epístola a Ricardo Contreras," Epístolas, p. 49.

<sup>16</sup>Rubén Darío, "El porvenir VII," Epístolas, pp. 95-96.

y por la inmensa bóveda rodando  
 se oyó en eco profundo:  
 «¡América es el porvenir del mundo!»<sup>17</sup>

Octosyllabic décimas are found in "La cabeza de Rawi"  
 with this rhyme scheme, a b b a, a c c, d d c:

¿Cuentos quieres, niña bella?  
 Tengo muchos de contar:  
 de una sirena del mar,  
 de un rui señor y una estrella,  
 de una cándida doncella  
 que robó un encantador,  
 de un gallardo trovador  
 y de una odalisca mora,  
 con sus perlas de Bassora  
 y sus chales de Lahor.<sup>18</sup>

Throughout the poem, "El Arte," quatrains in octosyllabic verses occur rhymed as follows, a b b a:

Dios, que con su poderío,  
 lleno de infinito anhelo,  
 riega auroras en el cielo  
 y echa mundos al vacío: . . . .<sup>19</sup>

Combined with the a a b c c b rhyme scheme the sextina  
 in fourteen syllable lines occurs in "Victor Hugo y la tumba."

Iba a morir el Genio. «¡Paso!» dijo a la Tumba  
 con voz que en el espacio misteriosa retumba,  
 produciendo infinita suprema conmoción.  
 La tumba, inexorable siempre, ruda y severa,  
 contemplando al coloso gigante, dijo: «¡Espera!,  
 ignoro si tú puedes entrar en mi región.»<sup>20</sup>

Like a true romanticist Rubén Darío has a love for  
 nature in its more primitive and tempestuous form. The

<sup>17</sup>Rubén Darío, "El porvenir IX," Epístolas, p. 104.

<sup>18</sup>Rubén Darío, "La cabeza de Rawi," Epístolas, p. 105.

<sup>19</sup>Rubén Darío, "El Arte," Epístolas, p. 189.

<sup>20</sup>Rubén Darío, "Victor Hugo y la tumba," Epístolas,  
 p. 167.

romanticist prefers a virgin forest, a river with its rushing, plunging water and cataracts to landscape planned by man. The power and violence of nature appeal to him. The many descriptions of ruins found in works of romanticists convey the idea of the strength and fury of nature. One of the most violent and tempestuous phases of nature found in Rubén Darío's poetry occurs in "Victor Hugo y la tumba." It is an appalling, awe-inspiring nature filled with the fury and blast of volcanoes:

«¡Yo pido la palabra!» dijo Etna.—Chimborazo,  
estirado a la altura como fornido brazo,  
arguye que la América debe primero hablar.  
Vesubio alza la frente con altivo rimbombo,  
y en medio a dos Océanos se eleva Momotombo,  
diciendo es él quien debe su acento levantar.

Y luego Chimborazo «¡Que viva!», dijo; y luego,  
Cotopaxi, cubierto de un penacho de fuego,  
movió su enorme cresta como una ardiente crin;  
y el coro de volcanes del mundo americano  
levantó a una un grito potente, soberano,  
que atronó del planeta uno y otro confín. . . . . 21

Untamed nature, with its ferocious wild animals, dull and lethargic under the tropical sun is described in the poem, "El porvenir." Luxurious, vast Asia, "en donde todo es grande," where numberless armies have struggled and in whose forests the baobad trees interlace their branches,--forests through which roam the sacred elephant, the brutal hippopotamus, and the fierce rhinoceros--these are described. The horizon embraces sunbaked Africa also:

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<sup>21</sup>Rubén Darío, "Victor Hugo y la tumba," Epístolas, pp. 179-180.

el África tostada  
ya de antiguo sombría, aletargada,  
donde el fiero león sangriento ruge,  
bate el ala el simoun y vuela y muge; . . . .<sup>22</sup>

"Terremoto" pictures a large villa, lying in peaceful silence at dawn, suddenly awakened by an earthquake which moves the old houses and sends people half-dressed into the patios and streets, praying, calling upon God and the saints for protection. There is a note of melancholy, of the mysterious, of the ominous or foreboding:

. . . . La tierra tiembla a cada momento.  
Algo de apocalíptico mano invisible vierte . . . .

La atmósfera es pesada como plomo. No hay viento  
Y se diría que ha pasado la Muerte  
ante la impasibilidad del firmamento.<sup>23</sup>

A nature less ruthless and cruel, but of an imposing, impressive aspect is seen in "Al partir Mayorga Rivas":

¡ El gran, ronco, océano sonoro  
sonará por ti son triunfal;  
. . . . .  
. . . . .  
Con cenefas blancas de espuma  
ornado la onda de azul agua,  
te ofrecerá la visión suma  
del bicolor de Nicaragua.<sup>24</sup>

The romanticist makes frequent references to night, to the moon, and to solitude. The following poem describes first the night as calm and peaceful, the ocean stilled, the fury of the hurricane spent. Later it is aroused to anger:

<sup>22</sup>Rubén Darío, "El porvenir VII," Epístolas, p. 99.

<sup>23</sup>Rubén Darío, "Terremoto," Baladas, pp. 105-106.

<sup>24</sup>Rubén Darío, "Al partir Mayorga Rivas," Baladas, p. 142.

En tanto, en las alturas las mil constelaciones  
 bordaban los cambiantes de sus fulguraciones  
 en el velo impalpable del esplendente azur.  
 Callaba el Océano, y sobre los volcanes  
 altísimos, dormían los grandes huracanes  
 del Este, del Oeste, y del Norte y del Sur.

«¡Que no muera!» Orión dijo desde su limpia esfera.  
 El coro de los astros repitió: «¡Que no muera!»  
 y resonó ese grito por el inmenso azur;  
 sobre las altas cumbres de los altos volcanes  
 al eco, despertáronse los grandes huracanes  
 del Este, del Oeste, y del Norte y del Sur.<sup>25</sup>

Another characteristic of the romanticists is their deep religious sentiment, which is closely connected with their love for nature. This explains the power of nature, since throughout everything there is diffused the active spirit of God. That intimate feeling or consciousness of the existence of a Supreme Being, who rules over all, who is the Master of the universe, pervades the poetry of Rubén Darío:

De entre una claridad incomprensible  
 va a brotar la palabra del Eterno:  
 brota y conmueve todo lo sensible  
 y alumbra lo invisible y lo visible  
 como el rayo las nubes del invierno.<sup>26</sup>

His faith and belief in God, as the source of a broader, richer life, are expressed in the two selections that follow:

Y Dios que mi esplendor supremo absorbe  
 y que ha dado la ley de mi progreso, . . . .<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup>Rubén Darío, "Victor Hugo y la tumba," Epístolas, pp. 168.

<sup>26</sup>Rubén Darío, "El porvenir III," Epístolas, p. 78.

<sup>27</sup>Rubén Darío, "El porvenir VII," Epístolas, p. 102.

Ten muy presente que en este mundo  
sin Dios no hay vida, ni existe ser; . . . .<sup>28</sup>

God's omnipotent power in the creation of the universe is expressed in "El Arte." It is a God who governs the heavens, and hurls worlds into space and abysses beneath and above Him, a God who fills the newly-born earth with life and covers it with a blue mantle, and who crowns His creation with man:

Dios derramó en la conciencia  
la simiente del pensar  
y la simiente de amar  
del corazón en la esencia.<sup>29</sup>

Other similarities both in form and content exist in the poetry of the Spanish romanticists and Rubén Darío. In the poetry of the Nicaraguan is seen the exaltation of the individual in the expression of heartfelt emotions, in the expression of elementary passions and everyday affections in which love plays a dominant rôle. There is also discernible that sensitivity to environment, a mixture of deep religious feeling and medieval paganism. The sensitivity to natural phenomena was heightened in Rubén Darío by his youth spent in the tropical splendor of Nicaragua, and by the tales and stories saturated with superstitious fear that Rubén Darío heard as a child. The poet seems to experience a feeling of awe in the presence of an all-powerful nature. The Nicaraguan poet exercises that freedom of choice in the variety of metrical forms which

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<sup>28</sup>Rubén Darío, "Versos ocasionales a Salvadorita Debayle," Baladas, p. 127.

<sup>29</sup>Rubén Darío, "El Arte," Epístolas, p. 192.



characterizes the romanticist. The nature of the subject matter, whether it is to be light and lilted or heavy and prosaic, determines the poetic forms.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE FRENCH INFLUENCE SEEN IN AZUL

The history of French literature since the nineteenth century has been one of reaction and counter-reaction against some established school. During the first half of the century there existed the conflict between the classicists with their strict adherence to reason and the romanticists, who advocated free play of the imagination and personal feeling. Under the leadership of Alphonse de Lamartine (1790-1869), Victor Hugo (1802-1885), Alfred de Musset (1810-1857), and Alfred de Vigny (1797-1863) the romanticists succeeded in establishing their school which was, in turn, followed by a reaction against the loose manner of construction and the subjectivity of the romanticists.

Théophile Gautier (1811-1872), first an ardent romanticist, later advocated "l'art pour l'art" and wrote poems that reminded one of statues in their marmoreal perfection. He was the forerunner of the Parnassian School. In 1866 Le Parnasse Contemporain, containing the work of some forty young French poets, was published. This anthology was followed in 1871 and 1879 by two others. From this title came the name of the school. The bond uniting these poets was their hatred of poetic disorderliness and their obedience to the beauty of an unfailing precision.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Pierre D. de Bâcourt and J. W. Cunliffe, French Literature during the Last Half-Century (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1923), pp. 251-253.

The Parnassian movement did not break completely with the romantic movement. It was a reaction against the excesses and displeasing extravagances of the romanticists and a substitution of an objective poetry for the personal poetry of the romanticists. Two essential characteristics of the Parnassians were their objectivity and their worship of an artistic form. Thus the movement was both a reaction against romanticism and a return to classicism. Its adherents were more concerned with rhyme, rhythm, and skillful technique than they were with content. Since, in their opinion, beauty was the sole purpose for the existence of art in any form, their poetry became something of an approach to the plastic arts, rather than an approach to music.<sup>31</sup> The poetry of the Parnassians was pleasing to the eye; it had brilliance, although it may have failed to touch the reader because of lack of feeling and life.

The poets of this school insisted upon form and aimed above all at being precise and exact, at saying, rather than suggesting, what they had to say, so completely that they left nothing for the reader to divine. Parnassianism was similar to realism and naturalism in that the three had the same objectivity, careful observation, pessimistic outlook, and philosophy of life.

Among the Parnassians should be mentioned Leconte de Lisle (1818-1894), José María de Heredia (1803-1839), and

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<sup>31</sup>René Lalou, French Contemporary Literature (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1924), pp. 17, 28.

Catulle Mendès (1841-1909). Leconte de Lisle, the recognized leader of the movement, was opposed to the romanticists' interpretation of nature, their ignorance of sciences, their subjectivity, and carelessness of construction. He objected to poetry that was merely a public confession of anguish of heart. Since he considered personal feeling a changeable thing, he sought something more lasting.<sup>32</sup> His attitude toward nature was scientific; he followed the laws of science which were in harmony with his desire for order, exactness, and objectivity; he chose words carefully, and balanced his rhythms in order to present a forceful picture. His words were chosen with such precision that they often had a metallic sonority which savored of romantic suggestiveness.<sup>33</sup>

Catulle Mendès was able to assimilate all that with which he came in contact. He inherited from Théophile Gautier (1811-1872) and Théodore Faullain de Banville (1823-1891) a remarkable flexibility. Imitation was natural with him. As he was imaginative and a painter of superficial pictures, he wrote rhythmic poetry with the greatest ease.<sup>34</sup>

José María de Heredia (1803-1839) a Cuban by birth, aimed at lasting perfection. He was master of rhythm,

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<sup>32</sup>Charles Le Goffic, La Littérature française aux XIX<sup>e</sup> et XX<sup>e</sup> siècles (Paris: Bibliothèque Larousse, 1919), II, p. 9.

<sup>33</sup>Wm. A. Nitze and E. Preston Dargan, A History of French Literature (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1922), pp. 606-609.

<sup>34</sup>Lalou, op. cit., p. 21.

cadence and consonance. He veiled his idea with some external ornament. The Cuban did not possess the pessimism of Leconte de Lisle, but he did possess the latter's literary ideal. His literary ambition was to write a Légende des Siècles expressing each episode in a sonnet. Les Trophées presented vividly and artistically the pages of the history of Greece, Rome, and the Middle Ages. He was without a rival in portraying a heroic figure of an epoch in a sonnet. His learning gave him a broad perspective, and his superior ability in the use of rhythmic effects gave his poetry a vivid coloring.<sup>35</sup>

Such was the French poetry that Rubén Darío knew during those early years of his career as a writer, the poetry whose masters were guardians of rules and who followed Gautier in his cult of art for art's sake, who rescued poetry from the careless construction of the romanticists, and attained such perfection of form. This was the influence reflected in the Nicaraguan's first work of importance, Azul, which was published in 1888. This book came at a time when the cosmopolitan influence was needed in Spanish American letters to relieve the "eterno clisé español del Siglo de Oro y su indecisiva poesía moderna."<sup>36</sup>

Rubén Darío's interest in and appreciation of French

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<sup>35</sup>Marcel Braunschvig, La Littérature française contemporaine (Paris: Libraire Armand Colin, 1928), pp. 1-7.

<sup>36</sup>Rubén Darío, "Historia de mis libros," Selections from the Prose and Poetry of Rubén Darío, ed. George W. Umphrey and Carlos García Prada (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1928), p. 77.

literature began in San Salvador when he and Francisco Gavidia read Victor Hugo together. In his Historia de mis libros, Rubén Darío recognized this French influence, stating that the origin of Azul was his recent acquaintance with French authors and that Catulle Mendès was his real initiator.<sup>37</sup> After reading the works of Théophile Gautier, Gustave Flaubert, and Catulle Mendès, Rubén Darío decided to apply their verbal art to Spanish. Although the greater part of the book is in prose, it is an artistic prose so much in vogue among French authors of that period. The author gave the book the title of Azul because that to him represented the color of art, the color of happiness and of dreams, the color of the sky and of oceans.<sup>38</sup>

The book attracted the attention of the Spanish critic, Juan Valera, who was interested in Spanish American letters. His comment upon the collection, found in the preface of Azul, was both favorable and unfavorable. In Valera's opinion the book is saturated with the "más flamante literatura francesa," yet it shows the originality of the author who is neither romanticist, naturalist, symbolist, nor Parnassian.<sup>39</sup> The spirit of France is reflected in Azul more than in any other Spanish work. In regard to the style of Rubén Darío,

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<sup>37</sup>Rubén Darío, "Historia de mis libros," Selections, p. 75.

<sup>38</sup>Rubén Darío, "Historia de mis libros," Selections, pp. 77-78.

<sup>39</sup>Rubén Darío, Azul (Buenos Aires: Biblioteca "Las Grandes Obras," s. f.), p. x.

Valera states that the Nicaraguan expresses himself in a concise manner "a la moda de París, con tanto chic," and that he shows singular artistic talent.<sup>40</sup> Everything in the prose as well as in the poetry is written or even engraved with the painstaking effort seen in the flawless Flaubert or the most careful Parnassian.<sup>41</sup>

In Azul Rubén Darío is the aloof artist who incloses himself in a marble tower, who creates a desired atmosphere in colorful, musical prose, and not a narrator of events. He gives us fantastic, idealistic impressions, rather than stories. Hence his style is of greatest importance. Short sentences offset long sentences, which tend to fall into parts nearly equal in length. This device accentuates the rhythmic quality of the prose selection in Azul. The following examples show Rubén Darío's skill in the use of this artistic scheme:

Señor, ha tiempo que yo canto el verbo del porvenir. He tendido mis alas al huracán, he nacido en el tiempo de la aurora: busco la raza escogida que debe esperar, con el himno en la boca,<sup>42</sup> y la lira en la mano, la salida del gran sol. . . . .

In addition to his use of this device for heightening his artistry, Rubén Darío uses it to set forth his topic sentence in a concise form and then develops the idea.

<sup>40</sup>Rubén Darío, Azul, Prefacio, p. xi.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

Cantemos el oro, amarillo como la muerte.  
 Cantemos el oro, calificado de vil por los  
 hambrientos; hermano del carbón, oro negro que incubaba  
 el diamante; rey de la mina, donde el hombre lucha y  
 la rosa se desgarras; poderoso en el poniente, donde se  
 tiñe en sangre; carne de ídolo, tela de que Fídias  
 hace el traje de Minerva.<sup>43</sup>

Rubén Darío augments the musical quality of his prose  
 by the repetition of vowel sounds which replaces the effect  
 of consonantal rhythm or assonance, usually characteristic  
 of poetry. In the example given below there is noted the  
 repetition of í-a sounds:

Quando Orfeo tañía su lira, había sonrisa en el  
 rostro apolíneo. Demeter sentía gozo. . . . .<sup>44</sup>

Here the repetition of o-a, é-a, and a-o sounds is  
 observed:

. . . .Y las rosas, y las hojas verdes y frescas,  
 y los pájaros, en cuyos buches entra el grano y brota  
 el gorjeo, y el campo todo, saludaban al sol y a la  
 primavera fragante.<sup>45</sup>

Another musical device that the Nicaraguan employs is  
 the use of onomatopoetic words that suggest images. To  
 imitate the sound of the hand organ, Rubén Darío uses "tirir-  
 irín, tiririrín,"<sup>46</sup> and such combinations as "tiiiiririt,  
 rrrrrrtch, fiii" to give the effect of a bird singing.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>43</sup>Rubén Darío, "La canción del oro," Azul, p. 71.

<sup>44</sup>Rubén Darío, "El sátiro sordo," Azul, p. 41.

<sup>45</sup>Rubén Darío, "El rubí," Azul, p. 77.

<sup>46</sup>Rubén Darío, "El rey burgués," Azul, p. 36.

<sup>47</sup>Rubén Darío, "La muerte de la emperatriz de la  
 China," Azul, p. 126.



Striking contrasts which increase the effect of a desired atmosphere are introduced frequently. In "La canción del oro," a beggar, ragged and hungry, pauses underneath the poplars near a palatial home of onyx, marble, and jasper. As he stands there the vision of all the beggars, the drunkards, the afflicted, in all their misery and wretchedness, flashes through his mind, followed by the vision of a happy throng, dressed in satin and laces, bedecked with jewels, to whom gold coins are like grains of sand. The beggar, hungry and shivering from cold, chants the hymn of gold, as he takes from his pocket a piece of hard bread.<sup>48</sup>

In "La muerte de la emperatriz de la China" and "El rey burgués" the artist who loves beauty in art is seen in contrast to the masses who appreciate none of its treasures.<sup>49</sup>

Rubén Darío revels in the use of color, thus vivifying his scenes with a luxurious splendor. He refers to the blue "velo de los dulces sueños, que hacen ver la vida del color de rosa,"<sup>50</sup> to the "tapiz purpurado y lleno de oro,"<sup>51</sup> the "velo opaco de las nubes roto por el sol,"<sup>52</sup> and a "resplandor crepuscular."<sup>53</sup> Rubén Darío often uses a series of

<sup>48</sup>Rubén Darío, "La canción del oro," Azul, pp. 67-69.

<sup>49</sup>Rubén Darío, "La muerte de la emperatriz de la China," "El rey burgués," Azul, pp. 123-132, 31-37.

<sup>50</sup>Rubén Darío, "El velo de la reina Mab," Azul, p. 65.

<sup>51</sup>Rubén Darío, "La canción de oro," Azul, p. 67.

<sup>52</sup>Rubén Darío, "Paisaje III," Azul, p. 111.

<sup>53</sup>Rubén Darío, "Paisaje XI," Azul, p. 121.

phrases to accentuate the effect of a color.

Predominaba la nota amarilla. Toda la gama, oro, fuego, ocre de oriente, hoja de otoño, hasta el pálido que agoniza fundido en la blancura. En el centro, sobre un pedestal dorado y negro, se alzaba riendo la exótica imperial.<sup>54</sup>

There is seen more novelty and richness due to French influence in the prose than in the poetry of Azul. The form of the poetry is more influenced by Spanish masters than by the French. However, Rubén Darío does use the alexandrine in some of his sonnets, among which are "De invierno," "Leconte de Lisle," "J. J. Palma," and "Caupolicán." In these are found fourteen syllable verses with the caesural pause in the middle and the rhythmic stress on the third syllable of each hemistich. There is some variance in the rhyme scheme, but generally the a b a b, a b a b, c c d, e e d plan is seen. Rubén Darío, like Victor Hugo and Verlaine, shifted the caesural pause at will, thus making the alexandrine more flexible. The following sonnet exemplifies the alexandrine under the pen of the Nicaraguan:

Es algo formidable que vió la vieja raza:  
robusto tronco de árbol al hombro de un campeón  
salvaje y aguerrido, cuya fornida maza  
blandiera el brazo de Hércules o el brazo de Sansón.<sup>55</sup>

The naturalists, who were realists in extreme form, did for prose what the Parnassians did for poetry. They were accurate in the observation and recording of details. A

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<sup>54</sup>Rubén Darío, "La muerte de la emperatriz de la China," Azul, p. 129.

<sup>55</sup>Rubén Darío, "Caupolicán," Azul, p. 171.

pessimism, brought out by the enumeration of the morbid and disagreeable, characterizes their writings. Emile Zola (1840-1902) is the master of French naturalism. Rubén Darío had read some of Zola's works and was influenced by Zola in "El fardo":

. . . .Acababa de conocer algunas obras de Zola, y el reflejo fue inmediato; mas no correspondiendo tal modo a mi temperamento ni a mi fantasía, no volví a incurrir en tales desvíos.<sup>56</sup>

"El fardo" describes the toilsome life of the men on the waterfront, their life of privation in the tenement district, and finally the tragic death of the son of one of these workmen. Rubén Darío climaxes the enumeration of unpleasant and sad details with this picture:

Aquel día no hubo pan ni medicinas en casa del tío Lucas, sino el muchacho destrozado, al que se abrazaba llorando el reumático, entre la gritería de la mujer y de los chicos, cuando llevaban el cadáver al cementerio.<sup>57</sup>

As a reaction against the Parnassians and naturalists, there arose a new group, the symbolists. For them naturalism was too concrete and Parnassianism too clear-cut and concise to satisfy. The object of the symbolists was to suggest, not to name a thing.<sup>58</sup> Symbolism is based on a correspondence between two objects, one in the physical

<sup>56</sup>Rubén Darío, "Historia de mis libros," Selections, pp. 78-79.

<sup>57</sup>Rubén Darío, "El fardo," Azul, p. 59.

<sup>58</sup>"Symbolism," Encyclopaedia Britannica, 14th ed., XXI, 701.

world, the other in the spiritual world. The poetry of the symbolists may be likened to music, since it expresses feeling and emotions which cannot be analyzed.<sup>59</sup>

The use of symbolism occurs in Azul. In "El pájaro azul," the blue bird is symbolic of poetic inspiration. Suzette in "La muerte de la emperatriz de la China" represents woman's interference with man's creative or artistic nature. "El rubí" is symbolic of the reproductive power of the earth. In "El año lírico," each season represents the different periods of a man's life, youth, maturity, and old age.

In addition to the reflection of the Parnassian, naturalistic, and symbolistic movements in Azul, Rubén Darío shows the extent to which he was saturated with the spirit of France by many references to French artists and writers. The "Medallones" contain two sonnets to French poets, Leconte de Lisle and Catulle Mendès. He also uses French words occasionally, such as Suzette, chaise-longue, chartreuse, or unusual Spanish words, derived from French, such as plafón or parlanchín.

Azul, in which are seen French art, Parnassian love of color and precision, a trace of French naturalism and symbolism, was for Rubén Darío like an enchanted boat or the magic carpet of Oriental stories. It opened up the future for him. With its pages replete with marble, jasper, onyx,

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<sup>59</sup>"Symbolisme," Nouveau Larousse Illustré, 1st ed., VII, 877.

and alabaster, he erected an "observatory toward the horizons of art" to which the young writers of Spanish America hastened. With Azul Spanish poems in prose were realized for the first time. Rubén Darío's style, wrought with the delicacy and beauty characteristic of the French Parnassians, interested the Spanish speaking world, heretofore admirers of Calderón de la Barca, Quintana, Núñez de Arce, and Espronceda.<sup>60</sup> Azul also announced still greater changes that were to be found in the next collection, Prosas profanas.

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<sup>60</sup>Roberto Brenes-Mesén, "Rubén Darío," Foro, XIII (1917), 332-339.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE MODERNIST INFLUENCE SEEN IN PROSAS PROFANAS

As previously stated the Parnassian movement came into vogue in France about 1866, as a reaction against the careless writing and subjectivity of the romanticists. Its proponents advocated two essentials, perfection in form and objectivity. In prose literature there was a similar reaction which produced the realistic movement.

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century a reaction was initiated by a group of writers who rebelled against the impersonal attitude, the isolation, and realism of the Parnassians and realists. These exponents of complete personal freedom in choice of material, as well as in manner of expression, characteristics earlier seen in eighteenth century romanticism, were called decadents. Like the earlier romanticists, they cultivated the morbid, the morose, and the neurotic.

A new movement reviving the value of symbolism came into existence about 1885. The belief of Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1892) that naming an object took away the greater part of the delight in the poem,<sup>61</sup> or Joubert's statement that "Beautiful verses are those that exhale themselves like

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<sup>61</sup>Ludwig Lewisohn, The Poets of Modern France (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1919), p. 19.

sounds and perfumes" well illustrates what the symbolist advocated. Baudelaire (1821-1867) expressed his theory of poetry in the words of the following quotation:

Comme de longs échos qui de loin se confondent. . .<sup>62</sup>  
Les parfums, les couleurs, et les sons se répondent.

Musical verses, delicate tints and hues, freedom of form, independence in rhythm, even to the use of free verse that is scarcely distinguishable from prose, and freedom from pompous words were characteristics of the symbolists.

Modernism was derived from the joint influence of Parnassians and poets of the symbolist-decadent group. It resulted in the combination of these principles with certain well-established principles of an older Spanish literature. It was a slow and self-conscious change in literary practices. It was an artistic as well as an intellectual reaction which brought about Spanish America's participation in European literary trends. It was eclectic in character. From the Parnassians it sought beauty of form and visual appeal, from the decadent-symbolist group, a deeper consciousness of the musical possibility of words and metrical freedom, from the romanticists and mystics a consciousness of an indwelling spirit, and from the Gongorists, richness of language.<sup>63</sup> The poet's own sense of precision and beauty served him as a guide. Modernism was the expression of the unrest and dissatisfaction with the existing material success of the

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<sup>62</sup>Lalou, op. cit., p. 95.

<sup>63</sup>Isaac Goldberg, Studies in Spanish American Literature (New York: Brentano's, 1920), p. 11.

nineteenth century. The idealist felt himself thrown into an environment utterly distasteful to him. The masses understood neither him nor his ideals. It was the outgrowth of that feeling of unrest of sensitive beings in a materialistic world.<sup>64</sup>

The spirit of renovation, of freedom from old forms and traditions was felt by writers in many countries. Ibsen (1828-1906) in the Scandanavian peninsula, D' Annunzio (1863-\_\_\_\_) in Italy, Walt Whitman (1819-1892) in the United States, Kipling (1865-1936), Swinburne (1837-1909), Wilde (1856-1900), and others of England, Casal (1863-1893) and José Martí (1853-1895) of Cuba, Gutiérrez Nájera (1859-1895) of Mexico, as well as Spanish and French writers embraced the new tendencies. Literature was to be produced by men with a broad cosmopolitan outlook, those familiar with contemporary literatures, who were endowed with the ability to select from the world that which was best suited to their needs. They needed also the ability to give to the whole an individual touch.<sup>65</sup>

Rubén Darío was a Nicaraguan, yet the term "ciudadano hispanico" well suited him, for he felt equally at home in all Hispanic countries. Furthermore he considered France his "patria adoptiva." All races, Oriental, Occidental,

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<sup>64</sup>G. Dundas Craig, The Modernist Trends in Spanish American Literature (Berkley: University of California Press, 1934), p. 3.

<sup>65</sup>Goldberg, op. cit., pp. 6-12.



and African, had left their stamp on him.<sup>66</sup> It is not surprising that a man of such cosmopolitan interests became the leader of this new movement in Spain and Spanish America, and that he was able to impress his personality upon writers of two continents.

The title given the new collection, Prosas profanas, published in 1896 in Buenos Aires, attracted the attention of critics no less than that of Azul. To one who understands the innovations and the etymology of the term, the title seems fitting. George W. Umphrey and Carlos García Prada explain the etymology and meaning of the title in the introduction to Selections from the Prose and Poetry of Rubén Darío. Rubén Darío was familiar with the use of the word prosa in the sense of "poems in the vernacular," as well as proses which resulted from setting words to music following the Alleluia in the liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church. The word profanas, not sacred, indicated that these sacred proses suggested the title. Then just as the proses broke away from the meter of the Latin verses and depended upon accent for their rhythm, so did the profane proses break with conventional adherence to form and content.<sup>67</sup>

From the viewpoint of the modernist poet, the rhythm of each line and stanza and the rhythm of the poem as a whole

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<sup>66</sup>Rubén Darío, "Historia de mis libros," Selections, p. 143.

<sup>67</sup>Rubén Darío, Selections, Preface, p. xxiii.

are more important than uniformity in the length of the lines. In the innovations of the modernists the number of syllables in each verse may vary and lines of varying length and rhythmic arrangement may be used in one poem. The following selections serve to show the variety of Rubén Darío's metrical forms. "Era un aire suave" consists of cuartetos of twelve syllable lines:

Era un aire suave, de pausados giros;  
El hada Harmonía ritmaba sus vuelos;  
E iban frases vagas y tenues suspiros  
Entre los sollozos de los violoncelos.<sup>68</sup>

"El faisán" consists of monorhymed tercets of twelve syllable lines:

Dijo sus secretos el faisán de oro:--  
En el gabinete mi blanco tesoro,  
De sus claras rosas el divino coro. . . . .<sup>69</sup>

In "El país de sol" Rubén Darío uses a mixture of prose and poetry:

En el jardín del rey de la isla de Oro—(¡oh, mi ensueño que adoro!)--fuera mejor que tú, harmoniosa hermana, amañaras tus aladas flautas, tus sonoras arpas; tú que naciste donde más lindos nacen el clavel de sangre y la rosa de arrebol,  
en el país del sol!<sup>70</sup>

"Para una cubana" and "Mía" are written in sonnets of octosyllabic and hexasyllabic lines respectively. Both have different rhyme schemes in the last two stanzas:

<sup>68</sup>Rubén Darío, "Era un aire suave," Prosas profanas, (París: Librería de la Vda de Ch. Bouret, 1925), p. 51.

<sup>69</sup>Rubén Darío, "El faisán," Prosas profanas, p. 75.

<sup>70</sup>Rubén Darío, "El país de sol," Prosas profanas, p. 79.

Poesía dulce y mística,  
 Busca a la blanca cubana  
 Que se asomó a la ventana  
 Como una visión artística. . . . .71

Mía: así te llamas.  
 ¿Qué más armonía?  
 Mía: luz del día,  
 Mía: rosas, llamas. . . . .72

A combination of eight couplets and one tercet with verses ranging from two to fourteen syllables occur in "Héraldos":

Helena!  
 La anuncia el blancor de un cisne. . . . .73

In "Sonatina," the poet uses a sextina of six alexandrines with a definite caesura in the middle and regular stress on the third syllable of each hemistich:

La princesa está triste. . . . ¿qué tendrá la princesa?  
 Los suspiros se escapan de su boca de fresa,  
 Que ha perdido la risa, que ha perdido el color  
 La princesa está pálida en su silla de oro,  
 Está mudo el teclado de su clave sonoro;  
 Y en un vaso olvidada se desmaya una flor. . . . .74

The tendency toward the use of free meter is seen in "La página blanca":

Este lleva  
 una carga  
 De dolores y angustias antiguas,  
 Angustias de pueblos, dolores de razas;  
 Dolores y angustias que sufren los Cristos  
 Que vienen al mundo de víctimas trágicas!.. . . .75

Another characteristic of modernist writers is their

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71Rubén Darío, "Para una cubana," Prosas profanas, p. 72.

72Rubén Darío, "Mía," Prosas profanas, p. 82.

73Rubén Darío, "Héraldos," Prosas profanas, p. 84.

74Rubén Darío, "Sonatina," Prosas profanas, p. 61.

75Rubén Darío, "La página blanca," Prosas profanas,

wealth of musical and pictorial language. Rubén Darío's mastery in the choice of words is seen in "Bouquet," which was written in honor of Guatier, the author of "Symphonie en blanc majeur." He repeats words and also uses the adjective after and before the noun:

Cirios, cirios blancos, blancos, blancos lirios,  
Cuellos de los cisnes, margarita en flor,  
Galas de la espuma, ceras de los cirios  
Y estrellas celestes tienen tu color.<sup>76</sup>

The languor of the tropical regions is pictured in "Sinfonía en gris mayor." Weariness and monotony are expressed by the enumeration of colorless objects as well as by the regular recurrence of the amphibrachic rhythm, and by the repetition of o and a sounds, and also by the monotonous assonance in i:

La siesta trópica. La vieja cigarra  
Ensaya su ronca guitarra senil,  
Y el grillo preludia su solo monótono  
En la única cuerda que está en su violín. . . . .<sup>77</sup>

Rubén Darío has been called the "swan poet" because of his numerous references to that bird. He describes the classic beauty, the grace, and the purity of the swan in "Blasón." The adjectives are well chosen; those used in a figurative sense are placed before the noun:

El olímpico cisne de nieve  
Con el ágata rosa del pico  
Lustra el ala eucarística y breve  
Que abre al sol como un casto abanico. . . . .<sup>78</sup>

<sup>76</sup>Rubén Darío, "Bouquet," Prosas profanas, p. 74.

<sup>77</sup>Rubén Darío, "Sinfonía en gris mayor," Prosas profanas, p. 116.

<sup>78</sup>Rubén Darío, "Blasón," Prosas profanas, p. 63.

The obsession for death is another distinguishing trait of the modernists, obviously borrowed from eighteenth century romanticism. As a child the tolling of the cathedral bells, announcing the death of a parishioner, impressed him. The following quotations show the extent to which Rubén Darío's mind dwelt on death:

Y en una tarde triste de los más dulces días,  
La Muerte, la celosa, por ver si me querías  
Como a una margarita de amor, te deshojó! . . . .79

Rubén Darío personifies death, and describes her as "la Reina invencible," <sup>80</sup> a quite attractive being. He does not regard death as something to be feared, but as the "sister of life," "the victory of the human race":<sup>81</sup>

¡La Muerte! Yo la he visto. No es demacrada y mustia  
Ni ase corva guadaña, ni tiene faz de angustia.  
Es semejante a Diana, casta y virgen como ella;. . . .82

The other two characteristics of modernism, an intense individualism and the ability to create metrical forms are the natural sequence of the first two discussed, freedom of choice in poetic forms and a wealth of musical and pictorial language. Rubén Darío's statement "Mi musa es mía en mí" exemplifies his intense individualism. Juan Valera mentions this trait in his criticism of Rubén Darío, and

<sup>79</sup>Rubén Darío, "Margarita," Prosas profanas, p. 81.

<sup>80</sup>Rubén Darío, "La página blanca," Prosas profanas, p. 112.

<sup>81</sup>Rubén Darío, "Coloquio de los centauros," Prosas profanas, p. 96.

<sup>82</sup>Rubén Darío, "Coloquio de los centauros," Prosas profanas, p. 96.

foresees for the Nicaraguan a great future in letters:

En mi sentir, hay en usted una poderosa individualidad de escritor, ya bien marcada, y que, Dios de a usted la salud que le deseo y larga vida, ha de desenvolverse y señalarse más con el tiempo en obras que sean gloria de las letras hispanoamericanas.<sup>83</sup>

The modernists are characterized by the (1) variety of metrical innovations or renovations, ranging from the couplet to free verse, (2) a morbid obsession for death, and lack of human barriers, and the desire to live life to the utmost, (3) a wealth of musical and pictorial language, (4) fondness for richness and brilliancy of effect, (5) an intense individualism,<sup>84</sup> and (6) an ability to create their own forms.<sup>85</sup>

Prosas profanas contains many experiments for metrical freedom and new or revised poetic forms. Rubén Darío knows the secret of harmony and of contrast; he appeals to the eye through the use of color and splendor of effects. Through the use of alliteration and repetition, he gives his verse a refined and musical quality. Although the work contains nothing profound or transcendental, it is artistic. It was conceived in pleasure in order to give pleasure.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>83</sup>Rubén Darío, Azul, Prefacio, p. x.

<sup>84</sup>Arturo Torres-Río, Precursores del Modernismo (Madrid: Talleres Calpe, 1925), pp. 16-30.

<sup>85</sup>Federico de Onís y Sánchez, Antología de la poesía española e hispano-americana (Madrid: Imp. de la Lib. y Casa Editorial Hernando, 1934), p. 146.

<sup>86</sup>Anónimo, "Rubén Darío," Revista de la Universidad de Buenos Aires, pp. 503-504.

## CHAPTER V

### THE INFLUENCE OF SPANISH LETTERS SEEN IN RUBÉN DARÍO

Spain's cultural influence had long been established in Spanish America, for along with the explorers and conquerors Spain sent out priests, whose duty it was to instruct the natives. The aborigines had no literature, and as the Spaniards were faced with problems of a material nature, their thoughts were not turned toward letters. The culture of Spain exerted a strong influence over Spanish America for a number of years. Rubén Darío was one of the greatest exponents of the Spanish language and literature. Throughout his works his appreciation of and love for Spain, her people, her language, and culture, are reflected. From early childhood Rubén Darío knew some of the classic works of Spain, notably a volume of classical comedies, some of Moratín's plays, and the immortal don Quijote.<sup>87</sup> Later in Managua the poet spent months in the library reading works of the classic literature of Spain. It is to this reading that he owed his knowledge of the letras castizas. The Nicaraguan's Primeras notas, the first of his productions to be published, shows the influence of these Spanish masters.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup>Rubén Darío, Autobiografía, p. 11.

<sup>88</sup>Rubén Darío, Autobiografía, pp. 33-34, (Cf. Rubén Darío, Obras de juventud (Santiago, 1927), 350: "En cuanto al procedimiento técnico nacieron de las Humoradas de Campoamor, y, sobre todo, de las Saetas de Leopoldo Cano."

Many poems reflect Rubén Darío's pride in Spain and her accomplishments in the past. "Salutación del optimista" was written after the defeat of Spain in the Spanish American War, in which Spain lost the last of her possessions in the Western Hemisphere. In this poem Rubén Darío expresses his faith and belief in Spain's future. He urges her to return to her former spirit and enthusiasm that had made her mistress of a vast empire:

Latina estirpe verá la gran alba futura,  
 en un trueno de música gloriosa, millones de labios  
 saludarán la espléndida luz que vendrá del Oriente,  
 Oriente augusto en donde todo lo cambia y renueva  
 la eternidad de Dios, la actividad infinita.  
 Y así sea esperanza la visión permanente en nosotros.  
 ¡Inclitas razas ubérrimas, sangre de Hispania fecunda! 89

Spain's heroes are immortalized in "Canto a la Argentina." The mixture of races and blood has strengthened Spain, thus contributing to her success, although each race has its own individuality; it will do the same for Argentina:

Hombres de España poliforme,  
 finos andaluces sonoros,  
 amantes de zambros y toros,  
 astures que entre peñascos  
 aprendisteis a amar la augusta  
 Libertad, elásticos vascos  
 como hechos de antiguas raíces,  
 raza heroica, raza robusta,  
 rudos brazos y altas cervices;  
 hijos de Castilla la noble  
 rica de hazañas ancestrales;  
 firmes gallegos de roble;  
 catalanes y levantinos  
 que heredasteis los inmortales  
 fuegos de hogares latinos; . . . . 90

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89Rubén Darío, "Salutación del optimista," Antología poética (Madrid: Agencia General de Librería y Artes Gráficas, s. f.), p. 56.

90Rubén Darío, Canto a la Argentina (Madrid: Editorial Mundo Latino, s. f.), p. 23.



The sonnet "Español," which appeared in one of his first collections, shows an intense patriotism for Spain, and pride in his Spanish descent. He is first and last a Spaniard, which in itself is a stamp of nobility:

Yo siempre fui, por alma y por cabeza,  
español de conciencia, obra y deseo,  
y yo nada concibo y nada veo,  
sino español por mi naturaleza.

Y español soy por la lengua divina,  
por voluntad de mi sentir vibrante,  
alma de rosa en corazón de encina; . . . .91

Rubén Darío expresses his appreciation and love of Spain's writers and their literary creations in many poems dedicated to them, as well as by frequent references to them in other poems. Among those celebrated are Cervantes and his creation, don Quijote:

Horas de pesadumbre y de tristeza  
paso mi soledad. Pero Cervantes  
es buen amigo. Endulza mis instantes  
ásperos, y reposa mi cabeza. . . . .92

Noble peregrino de los peregrinos,  
que santificaste todos los caminos  
con el paso augusto de tu heroicidad,  
contra las certezas, contra las conciencias  
y contra las leyes y contra las ciencias,  
contra la mentira, contra la verdad. . . . .93

The Nicaraguan also expresses his appreciation for Spanish artists, among whom are Velázquez and Goya, a painter of many types. Of the latter he says:

<sup>91</sup>Rubén Darío, "Español," Baladas, pp. 75-76.

<sup>92</sup>Rubén Darío, "Soneto a Cervantes," Antología, p. 65.

<sup>93</sup>Rubén Darío, "Letanía de nuestro señor don Quijote," Antología, pp. 67-68.

Tu pincel asombra, hechiza,  
ya en sus claros electriza,  
ya en sus sombras sinfoniza: . . . .

Así es de ver y admirar  
tu misteriosa y sin par  
pintura crepuscular. . . . .<sup>94</sup>

Many references are made to writers of Spain in all his works. España contemporánea is a series of articles concerning Spain, written for La Nación of Buenos Aires when Rubén Darío was living in Madrid from 1898 to 1900. These articles show the extent to which he was filled with the spirit of Spain. He treats many of Spain's writers, Campoamor, Pardo Bazán, Pérez Galdós, and Núñez de Arce. He deals also with Spanish customs as observed in the city and village.

The work of every artist reflects what precedes him, just as each one is a product of his environment and heritage. The early works of Rubén Darío bear the unmistakable stamp of Spain's poets, such as Campoamor, Bécquer, Góngora, Quevedo, Zorrilla, Luis de León, Berceo, and others. In the later works, those written after Prosas profanas, it is more difficult to find these traces. The later poems bear the stamp of the Nicaraguan's own individuality.

The Spanish classic sonnet consists of fourteen hendecasyllabic lines, divided into two quatrains, each of which has the a b b a rhyme scheme, and two tercets of varying rhyme schemes. The sonnet has been a favorite form of Spanish poets since the Renaissance. The following is the

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<sup>94</sup>Rubén Darío, "Soneto a Goya," Antología, pp. 71-74.

first quatrain of one of Juan Boscán's sonnets:

O gran fuerza de amor, que así enflaqueces  
los que nacidos son para ser fuertes,  
y les truecas así todas sus suertes,  
que presto los mas ricos empobreces!<sup>95</sup>

One of the best known of all Spanish sonnets, the first quatrain of which is given below, is one by Garcilasso de la Vega (1501?-1536?):

O dulces prendas, por mi mal halladas,  
dulces y alegres quando Dios quería!,  
juntas estais en la memoria mía,  
y con ella en mi muerte conjuradas. . . . .<sup>96</sup>

The sonnet was a poetic form much in vogue among the Siglo de Oro dramatists and poets. The following quatrain shows the lyric excellence of the sonnet under the hand of Lope de Vega Carpio (1562-1635).

Pastor, que con tus silbos amorosos  
me despertaste del profundo sueño;  
tú, que hiciste cayado dese leño  
en que tiendes los brazos poderosos; . . . . .<sup>97</sup>

The classic sonnet is one of the forms revived by Rubén Darío. The quatrain selected is from one of his sonnets:

Ama tu ritmo y ritma tus acciones  
Bajo su ley, así como tus versos;  
Eres un universo de universos  
Y tu alma una fuente de canciones. . . . .<sup>98</sup>

<sup>95</sup>Juan Boscán, "Soneto," The Oxford Book of Spanish Verse, ed. James Fitzmaurice-Kelly (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1920), p. 83.

<sup>96</sup>Garcilasso de la Vega, "Soneto," The Oxford Book, p. 95.

<sup>97</sup>Lope de Vega Carpio, "El pastor divino," The Oxford Book, p. 207.

<sup>98</sup>Rubén Darío, "Ama tu ritmo," Prosas profanas, p. 152.

The use of the monorhymed tercet occurs in the religious poetry of the Middle Ages. Gil Vicente (1470?-1536?) also uses it in "Canción de Cassandra."

Mas quiero vivir segura  
nesta sierra a mi soltura,  
que no estar en ventura  
si casare bien o no.  
Dizen que me case yo;<sup>99</sup>  
no quiero marido, no.

In Rubén Darío's poetry the monorhymed tercet occurs in five, eight, nine, and eleven syllable lines. The illustration given consists of hendecasyllabic lines:

Sobre el diván deje la mandolina.  
Y fui a besar la boca purpurina,  
la boca de mi hermosa florentina. . . . . 100

The quatrain consisting of hendecasyllabic verses with assonance in alternating lines may be seen in the poetry of José Espronceda (1808-1842):

¿Por que murió para el placer mi alma  
Y vive aún para el dolor impío?  
¿Por qué si yazgo en indolente calma,  
Siento en lugar de paz, árido hastío? . . . . . 101

Rubén Darío uses the same form in one of his poems:

Yo soy aquel que ayer no más decía  
el verso azul y la canción profana,  
en cuya noche un ruiseñor había  
que era alondra de luz por la mañana. 102

<sup>99</sup>Gil Vicente, "Canción de Cassandra," The Oxford Book, p. 80.

<sup>100</sup>Rubén Darío, "Rosas profanas," Baladas, p. 33.

<sup>101</sup>José Espronceda, "A Jarifa en una orgía," The Oxford Book, p. 298.

<sup>102</sup>Rubén Darío, "Yo soy aquel," Antología, p. 279.

The Spanish romance or ballad which consists of octosyllabic verse, stressed on the seventh syllable, with assonance in alternating lines is found in "Primaveral":

Mes de rosas. Van mis rimas  
en ronda, a la vasta selva,  
a recoger miel y aromas  
en las flores entreabiertas. . . . . 103

Similarities in form and content occur between the poetry of Rubén Darío and that of Campoamor. One of the devices used by Campoamor in his poetry is dialogue. A good example of this is seen in the following poem:

---Escribidme una carta, señor Cura.  
---Ya sé para quién es.  
---¿Sabéis quién es, porque una noche oscura  
nos visteis juntos?---Pues. . . . . 104

Excepting the fact that Rubén Darío uses dialogue as exemplified in the following poem, there is, however, no similarity of form between it and that used by Campoamor:

---Allá está la cumbre.  
¿Qué miras?---Un astro.  
---¿Me amas?---¿Te adoro!  
---¿Subimos?---¿Subamos! 105

Many of the early poems of Rubén Darío suggest those of Bécquer. The poems of both are filled with melancholy and sadness. Frequent references are made to night, sighs, dreams and twilight. Love is a dominant note in the poetry of both men. Both have written "Rimas," which are similar in form.

<sup>103</sup>Rubén Darío, "Primaveral," Azul, p. 139.

<sup>104</sup>Ramón de Campoamor, "¿Quién supiera escribir!", The Oxford Book, p. 333.

<sup>105</sup>Rubén Darío, "Rimas XIII," Obras de juventud de Rubén Darío (Santiago: Editorial Nascimento, 1927), p. 191.

The following illustrates Bécquer:

Por una mirada, un mundo;  
 Por una sonrisa, un cielo;  
 Por un beso. . . ¡Yo no sé  
 Qué te diera por un beso!<sup>106</sup>

Rubén Darío's "Rimas" are reminiscent of Bécquer's as the following suggests:

En tus ojos, un misterio;  
 en tus labios, un enigma.  
 Y yo, fijo en tus miradas  
 y extasiado en tus sonrisas.<sup>107</sup>

The following "Rimas" of the two poets reflect the same note of despair and gloom and also use the same figure of speech:

Cayó sobre mi espíritu la noche;  
 En ira y en piedad se anegó el alma. . .  
 ¡Y entonces comprendí por qué se llora  
 Y entonces comprendí por qué se mata!<sup>108</sup>

Cae sobre mi espíritu  
 la noche negra y trágica;  
 busco el seno profundo de sus sombras  
 para verter mis lágrimas.<sup>109</sup>

The influence of Núñez de Arce is also seen in Rubén Darío's early poems. The inconstancy and faithlessness of a woman or disappointment in love are themes in some of Rubén Darío's Abrojos. These same notes are reflected in the "Idilio" of Núñez de Arce:

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<sup>106</sup>Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer, "Rimas XXIII," Legends, Tales, and Poems, ed. Everett Ward Olmsted (New York: Ginn and Co., 1907), p. 172.

<sup>107</sup>Rubén Darío, "Rimas X," Obras de juventud, p. 189.

<sup>108</sup>Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer, "Rimas XLII," Legends, p. 181.

<sup>109</sup>Rubén Darío, "Rimas XIV," Obras de juventud, p. 192.

- «¡Sufres!--me dijo con afán.--¿Qué tienes?  
 ¿Con tan fieros desdenes  
 paga tu afecto la mujer que adoras? . . . .
- «¡Goza, Gozate!--dije--fementida,  
 en enconar la herida  
 que con tu injusta indiferencia has hecho.  
 ¡Ojalá fuera fácil olvidarte!  
 que por dejar de amarte  
 me arrancaría el corazón del pecho.» . . . . 110

There is, however, less bitterness reflected in these "Abrojos" of Rubén Darío than in the above quotations from Núñez de Arce:

Dar posada al peregrino?  
 A uno di posada ayer;  
 y hoy, prosiguió su camino,  
 llevándose a mi mujer. 111

The same light, jesting tone in depicting woman's frailty and changeableness is seen in the following selection:

Se ha casado el buen Antonio,  
 y es feliz con su mujer,  
 pues no hay otra más hermosa,  
 ni más dulce, ni más fiel,  
 ni más llena de cariño,  
 ni más falta de doblez,  
 ni más suave de carácter,  
 ni más fácil de caer. . . . 112

Núñez de Arce and Rubén Darío use the same strophic form in some of their poems. They resemble each other in their description of peaceful rural life:

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110 Gaspar Núñez de Arce, "Idilio," The Oxford Book, pp. 370-371.

111 Rubén Darío, "Abrojos XXV," Obras de juventud, p. 144.

112 Rubén Darío, "Abrojos LI," Obras de juventud, p. 153.

Serpean y se enlazan por los prados,  
                   barbechos y sembrados,  
 los arroyos, las lindes y caminos,  
 y donde apenas la mirada alcanza.  
                   cierran la lontananza  
 espesos bosques de perennes pinos.

Lleno de majestad y de reposo  
                   el Duero caudaloso  
 al través de los campos se dilata: . . . . 113

Rubén Darío combines eleven and seven syllable verses  
 in an identical manner:

Entre naranjo y cedro y roble y sauce  
                   camina por su cauce  
 un riachuelo tan límpido y sonoro,  
 que retrata en sus linfas transparentes  
                   los cogollos nacientes,  
 la blanca flor y las naranjas de oro.

Junto a la vega do el arroyo pasa  
                   se ve una humilde casa  
 revestida de plantas trepadoras,  
 Y rodeada de tiestos con sembrados  
                   floridos y aromados,  
 labor de las abejas bullidoras. 114

Although Rubén Darío was able to assimilate all the literary currents of his time, he did not look with contempt upon the old forms of Spanish poets. The Nicaraguan's knowledge of letras castizas is shown by the extent to which he renovated the forms that excelled in the songs of Berceo, the dezires, layes y canciones. Rubén Darío also uses the Spanish ballad, found in the romanceros. The sonnet, a form preferred by many Spanish poets, occurs in Rubén Darío's collections.

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<sup>113</sup>Gaspar Núñez de Arce, "Idilio," The Oxford Book, p. 363.

<sup>114</sup>Rubén Darío, "La nube de verano," Epístolas, p. 116.



Not only the poets of the old Spanish literature, but also the poets of the nineteenth century serve as models. The Nicaraguan shows his appreciation, also, of Spain's men and heroes in many poems dedicated to them. Although many other influences are reflected in Rubén Darío's poetry, none is greater or stronger than the influence of Spain, his mother country.

## CHAPTER VI

### AMERICANISM AS SEEN IN RUBÉN DARÍO'S WORKS

In all literary movements reaction against an established school has led to abuses of principles advocated by the new movement. The romanticists in turning from the objectivity of the classicists went just as far in the opposite direction with their stress upon the subjective element. Again the Parnassians, like the classicists, stressed form to the extent that content was forgotten and poetry ceased to be expressive. Thus among the modernists great harm was done the movement by the tendency toward mere artistry on the part of some of its adherents. Rubén Darío was the leader of the movement in Spanish America, and had many imitators whose efforts seemed shallow. Like other young poets Rubén Darío realized as early as 1899 that harm was being done to the new movement. Instead of turning to France or Spain for their inspiration as they had done in the past, these young poets turned to the current and past history of their own countries for inspiration and themes.<sup>115</sup>

Rubén Darío may be likened to a sponge that absorbs all that it contacts. He was sensitive and responsive to all currents of thought about him. He absorbed these influences and yet retained his own personality and individuality in his

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<sup>115</sup>Rubén Darío, Selections, Preface, pp. xxiv-xxv.

works. Some of his most important and best poems were written in the later years of his literary activity.<sup>116</sup> In these poems Rubén Darío reflects a note, not heard in his early works. He turned to Central and South America and used racial and national themes, thus bringing about the Americanization of Spanish American letters. In the previous collections his inspiration had come from Spain and France, from whose literatures he had received his cultural background. Rubén Darío felt closer to those countries than he did his own. His interests and those of his fellow countrymen were totally unlike. They understood nothing of his artistic nature; he saw no inspiration or charm in them.

This tendency to make letters native or American is called mondonovismo or Americanism. The beauty of the tropical landscape, contemporary political events, and heroes, both past and present, furnish Rubén Darío's themes. Love is no longer the dominant note of his poetry. The poet leaves the ivory tower, and lives in a world of reality with which he concerns himself. He expresses a hopefulness, a faith, and an optimism not discernible in earlier works.<sup>117</sup>

Rubén Darío expresses his Americanism in poems which portray the beauty of the landscape. "Del campo" pictures the peaceful meadow far removed from the noisy city, the orchard with its peach blossoms, the bird singing its song,

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<sup>116</sup>Goldberg, op. cit., pp. 53-54.

<sup>117</sup>Rubén Darío, Selections, Preface, pp. xxvii-xxx.

and the Argentine pampa:

¡Pradera, feliz día! Del regio Buenos Aires  
quedaron allá lejos el fuego y el hervor;  
hoy en tu verde triunfo tendrán mis sueños vida,  
respiraré tu aliento, me bañaré en tu sol.

De pronto se oye el eco del grito de la pampa;  
brilla como una puesta del argentino sol;  
y un espectral jinete como una sombra cruza,  
sobre su espalda un poncho; sobre su faz dolor.<sup>118</sup>

"Allá lejos" and "Tarde del trópico" present an altogether different picture of the tropics:

Buey que vi en mi niñez echando vaho, un día,  
bajo el nicaragüense sol de encendidos oros,  
en la hacienda fecunda, plena de la armonía  
del trópico; paloma de los bosques sonoros  
del viento, de las hachas, de pájaros, y toros  
salvajes, yo os saludo, pues sois la vida mía.<sup>119</sup>

The monotony and languor of the tropical evening is described vividly in "Tarde del trópico." The repetition of i, a, and o sounds increase the dullness and lethargy of the scene:

Es la tarde gris y triste.  
Viste el mar de terciopelo  
y el cielo profundo viste  
de duelo.

Del abismo se levanta  
la queja amarga y sonora.  
La onda, cuando el viento canta,  
llora.<sup>120</sup>

A contrasting mood and landscape are portrayed in "Aleluia." The poem vibrates with happiness, life, and beauty

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<sup>118</sup>Rubén Darío, "Del campo," Antología, pp. 231-233.

<sup>119</sup>Rubén Darío, "Allá lejos," Cantos de vida y esperanza (Barcelona: Casa Editorial Maucci, s. f.), p. 185.

<sup>120</sup>Rubén Darío, "Tarde del trópico," Cantos, p. 95.

instead of sadness and drowsiness:

Rosas rosadas y blancas, ramas verdes,  
corolas frescas y frescos  
ramos, ¡Alegría!

Nidos en los tibios árboles,  
huevos en los tibios nidos,  
dulzura, ¡Alegría!<sup>121</sup>

Rubén Darío also expresses his Americanism in poems which show his interest in contemporary events. In his Autobiografía he mentions the many diplomatic missions on which he served Nicaragua and other Spanish American countries,<sup>122</sup> yet these events had given him no subjects for his early poems. Among the poems that show his participation and interest in current affairs are "Canto a la Argentina," "Salutación del optimista," "Salutación al Águila," "A Roosevelt," and "Marcha triunfal."

"Canto a la Argentina" is a vigorous poem commemorating the one hundredth anniversary of Argentina's independence on May 25, 1910. The poem expresses Rubén Darío's love for and faith in Argentina, the Promised Land, a land strengthened by people from many nations. Pessimism, expressed in so many of his poems, is not evident in the poem. It radiates pure optimism:

Te abriste como una granada,  
como una ubre te henchiste,  
como una espiga te erguiste,  
a toda raza congojada  
a toda humanidad triste,

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<sup>121</sup>Rubén Darío, "Aleluia," Cantos, pp. 151-152.

<sup>122</sup>Rubén Darío, Autobiografía, pp. 76, 86, 108, 166,  
200.

a los errabundos y parias  
 que bajo nubes contrarias  
 van en busca del buen trabajo,  
 del buen comer, del buen dormir,  
 del techo para descansar  
 y ver a los niños reír,  
 bajo el cual se sueña y bajo  
 el cual piensa morir.

¡Oh, Pampa! ¡Oh, entraña robusta,  
 mina del oro supremo! . . . .123

The longer Rubén Darío lived the closer he came to the masses that he, at first, despised so much. This poem, "Canto a la Argentina," with its human outlook offers a striking contrast to the stories of Azul, which portray the lack of understanding on the part of the masses.

"A Roosevelt" was written after the defeat of Spain in the Spanish American War in 1899, after Spain had lost Cuba, the last remnant of her once far-flung empire. Although the South and Central Americans had won their independence from Spain, just as Cuba was doing, these nations resented interference on the part of the United States in Cuba's war of independence. This poem expresses Rubén Darío's feeling toward the United States and also his love for Spanish America. He looks with distrust upon the United States as the invader of the "América que aun reza a Jesucristo y aun habla español." He recognizes the power and influence of the United States, accusing that, "Juntáis al culto de Hércules el culto de Mammon," designating her as a nation that counts on all, but lacks one thing, which is God.

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123 Rubén Darío, "Canto a la Argentina," Selections, pp. 167-169.

Spanish America is the antithesis of Anglo-America. The former has had her poets, her astrologers, and her philosophers from the days of Nezahualcoyotl (1403?-1470?), former king of the Aztecs:

. . . . .; esa América  
que tiembla de huracanes y que vive de amor;  
hombres de ojos sajones y alma barbara, vive.  
Y sueña. Y ama, y vibra; y es la hija del sol.  
Tened cuidado. ¡Vive la América española!  
Hay mil cachorros sueltos del León español.  
Se necesitaría, Roosevelt, ser, por Dios mismo,  
el Riflero terrible y el fuerte Cazador,  
para poder tenernos en vuestras ferreas garras.<sup>124</sup>

The same scorn and resentment of the United States and her frivolous, fun-loving people are reflected in "La gran cosmópolis."

Todos esos millonarios  
viven en mármoles parios  
con residuos de Calvarios,  
y es roja, roja su flor. . . . .

. . . . .  
Porque el yanqui ama sus hierros,  
sus caballos y sus perros,  
y su yacht y su foot-ball;  
pero adora la alegría,  
con la fuerza, la armonía:  
un muchacho que se ría  
y una niña como un sol.<sup>125</sup>

In 1906 Rubén Darío was a delegate to Río de Janeiro to the Third Pan-American Conference.<sup>126</sup> The tone of the poem, "Salutación al Águila," reflects none of the prejudice of the poems just quoted. They reflect Rubén Darío's reaction

<sup>124</sup>Rubén Darío, "A Roosevelt," Selections, pp. 153-155.

<sup>125</sup>Rubén Darío, "La gran cosmópolis," Antología, pp. 289-290.

<sup>126</sup>Rubén Darío, Autobiografía, p. 200.

to the times. The first, "A Roosevelt," gives vent to his hatred and antagonism aroused by the aid given to Cuba. The second, "Salutación al Águila," is quite characteristic of Rubén Darío, whose ideas and opinions were ever subject to revision, were ever affected by new currents and developments. He was not bound by previous beliefs. Perhaps the "Salutación al Águila" was the result of the feeling of brotherhood kindled by the Pan-American Conference in 1906. The tone of "La gran cosmópolis," published in 1919, after Rubén Darío's death, leads one to believe that his Spanish Americanism had not broadened to become a deeper Americanism, but was only a temporary feeling of good-will. In "Salutación al Águila" he welcomes the eagle, the harbinger of peace:

Bien vengas, mágica Águila de alas enormes y fuertes  
a extender sobre el Sur tu gran sombra continental,  
a traer en tus garras, anillas de rojos brillantes,  
una palma de gloria, del color de la inmensa esperanza,  
y en tu pico la oliva de una vasta y fecunda paz.<sup>127</sup>

The poet longs for the secret of the industry of the Yankee, from whom the South American may learn constancy, vigor, and character. He feels that the two Americas are united by a common bond:

Águila, existe el Cóndor. Es tu hermano en las grandes  
[alturas].  
Los Andes le conocen y saben que, cual tú, mira al Sol.  
May this grand union have no end! dice el poeta.  
Puedan ambos juntarse, en plenitud, concordia y esfuerzo.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>127</sup>Rubén Darío, "Salutación al Águila," Antología, p. 269.

<sup>128</sup>Ibid., pp. 271-272.



The Nicaraguan expresses love and veneration for native heroes in various sonnets and poems. In "A Roosevelt," Rubén Darío mentions Nezahualcoyotl, an Aztec king and poet; Moctezuma, the Aztec ruler at the time of the conquest of Mexico by Cortez in 1520; Guatemoc, Moctezuma's nephew, who was the last Aztec ruler, the one who refused, even while being tortured cruelly, to tell the Spaniards where Moctezuma's treasure was. The sonnet, "Caupolicán," honors another of these Indian heroes who was chosen chieftain because he could support the trunk of a tree longer than any other brave:

Es algo formidable que vio la vieja raza:  
robusto tronco de árbol al hombro de un campeón  
salvaje y aguerrido, cuya fornida maza  
blandiera el brazo de Hércules o el brazo de Sansón.

Anduvo, anduvo, anduvo. Le vio la luz del día,  
le vio la tarde pálida, le vio la noche fría,  
y siempre el tronco de árbol a cuestras del titán. . . .<sup>129</sup>

Rubén Darío's Americanism finds expression in many poems dedicated to contemporary Spanish Americans. Among these are "Oda a Mitre," a sonnet to "Amado Nervo," a Mexican poet, "Prefacio," written as a preface to a collection of poems by José Santos Chocano (1875-\_\_\_\_), and "Yo soy aquel," addressed to J. Enrique Rodó (1872-1917). José Santos Chocano, a Peruvian, was one of the leaders of the so-called New Poetry. Rubén Darío praises the ability of Chocano in "Preludio":

Pero hay en ese verso tan vigoroso y terso  
una sangre que apenas veréis en otro verso;

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<sup>129</sup>Rubén Darío, "Caupolicán," Azul, p. 171.

una sangre que, cuando la estrofa circula,  
 como la luz penetra y como la onda ondula. . . .  
 Pegaso está contento, Pegaso piafa y brinca,  
 porque Pegaso pace en los prados del Inca.<sup>130</sup>

The Americanism of Rubén Darío also includes his attitude toward the United States, her people and her culture. There are few Anglo-American writers whom Rubén Darío mentions. Two of these are Edgar Allan Poe and Walt Whitman. The poet's appreciation of Poe is shown in an essay contained in Los raros. The Nicaraguan felt in Poe a kindred spirit. There is much similarity in their temperaments and natures. Their theories of poetry, their appreciation of beauty, their aristocratic taste, and their lack of orientation with life about them offer interesting parallels.<sup>131</sup> To Rubén Darío Poe is "como un Ariel hecho hombre" living in a country that is the personification of materialism.<sup>132</sup>

The poet expresses his admiration of Whitman, who resembles a kind patriarch in the following sonnet:

Su alma del infinito parece espejo;  
 en sus cansados hombros, dignos del manto;  
 y con arpa labrada de un roble añejo,  
 como un profeta nuevo canta su canto.

Sacerdote, que alienta soplo divino,  
 anuncia en el futuro tiempo mejor. . . .<sup>133</sup>

<sup>130</sup>Rubén Darío, "Preludio," Selections, p. 161.

<sup>131</sup>Marjorie C. Johnston, "Rubén Darío's Acquaintance with Poe," Hispania, XVII, Oct., 1934, pp. 271-273.

<sup>132</sup>Rubén Darío, "Edgar Allan Poe," Los raros (Barcelona: Casa Editorial Maucci, 1905), p. 19.

<sup>133</sup>Rubén Darío, "Walt Whitman," Azul, p. 183.

Mark Twain is referred to in the Autobiografía. The editor of La Nación received news of Mark Twain's serious illness and asked Rubén Darío to write an article on the North American humorist. The next day instead of receiving news of his death, they received news of his improved condition. The article could not be published without revision. Mark Twain's recovery was for Rubén Darío and his friends "un golpe rudo y un rasgo del humor muy propio del Yanqui, y del peor género."<sup>134</sup>

According to Rubén Darío, Mark Twain is an essentially Yankee product, whose fame is universal and whose element is his humor. He is the gift of a people interested in play and business.<sup>135</sup>

The mondonovismo or Americanism of Rubén Darío is reflected in many ways. It gives a more serious note to the poetry of the Nicaraguan, one not visible in his first poetic ventures, in which French and Spanish masters were his idols. Because of the lack of American themes in the first collections of Rubén Darío, José Enrique Rodó says that he is not the poet of America,<sup>136</sup> yet Federico de Onís declares that the poet's valor and originality, which constitutes the very essence of the Nicaraguan's first poetic efforts, are genuinely

<sup>134</sup>Rubén Darío, Autobiografía, pp. 164-165.

<sup>135</sup>Rubén Darío, Escritos inéditos de Rubén Darío, ed. E. P. Mapes (New York: Instituto de las Españas, 1938), pp. 94-98.

<sup>136</sup>Rubén Darío, Azul, Prefacio, p. i.

American, although they proceed from Spain just as Nicaragua and other Spanish American countries do.<sup>137</sup>

Americanism, as reflected in his themes, finds more expression in the poetry of Rubén Darío after he had lived in France and Spain. His portrayal of the beauty of the Argentine pampa or the splendor of the tropics represents a phase of his Americanism. Although Rubén Darío had represented Nicaragua in various diplomatic missions, his poetry is relatively free from themes suggested by these events until the later period of his literary career. Instead of being the misunderstood artist who sought the seclusion of his ivory tower, Rubén Darío becomes more public-spirited and interests himself in contemporary affairs to the extent that these give him inspiration for some of his more lasting poems. Instead of being a poet of France and Spain only, he sings the praises of America. Affairs which concern Spanish America are of vital importance and interest to Rubén Darío. He was a Nicaraguan, but more than that, he was a Spanish American. The poet's faith in the future of Spanish America finds expression in many of his later poems.

The term American in the broadest sense cannot be applied to Rubén Darío. He felt little affinity to the materialistic, comfort-loving people of the United States. The poet's fear and affirmation of the racial differences between the United States and Spanish America, to which the

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<sup>137</sup>Federico de Onís, op. cit., p. 148.

greater part of his poems give expression, are not unmixed with an admiration for the United States found in other poems. Just before the Nicaraguan's death, he planned a series of lectures and travel through the United States. On account of preoccupation with the imminence of war, the North American public did not show enough interest in this project to assure its success.

The progress of Rubén Darío's literary labors and accomplishment exemplifies what may be called a creative eclecticism. His life, passed in Central America, South America, Spain, and France, also extends the range of his poetic efforts, which pass from the earliest romanticism through Parnassianism, naturalism, symbolism, modernism, and renovation of prose and poetic technique to include the so-called New Poetry or mondonovismo. A continuity of growth is evident. That no one was more aware than he of these changes and growth in his literary ideals is evident in the following poem, addressed to José Enrique Rodó:

Yo soy aquel que ayer no más decía  
el verso azul y la canción profana,  
en cuya noche un ruiseñor había  
que era alondra de luz por la mañana.

El dueño fui de mi jardín de sueño,  
lleno de rosas y de cisnes vagos;  
el dueño de las tórtolas, el dueño  
de góndolas y liras en los lagos;

y muy siglo diez y ocho y muy antiguo  
y muy moderno; audaz, cosmopolita;  
con Hugo fuerte y con Verlaine ambiguo  
y una sed de ilusiones infinita. . . . 138

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<sup>138</sup> Rubén Darío, "Yo soy aquel," Antología, pp. 279-280.

Rubén Darío infused new life into Spanish American and Spanish poetry. He broadened the horizons of poetry and prose. Through his skill in the manipulation of a choice vocabulary, he found a vital and intimate harmony between thought and its expression. He relieved that verbal and mental clisé, or stereotyped form of expression, characteristic of Spanish poetry of that period. The Nicaraguan was also able to free rhythm from traditional bonds.<sup>139</sup> He retained his own individuality even while absorbing all currents that appeared in his lifetime. His ability to embrace the past, the present, and the future entitles him to be called the greatest poet that Spanish America has produced. Through and above all his literary tendencies is seen his human nature, for he is human in his fears, his doubts, and his weaknesses. This human touch makes him a supreme poet.

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<sup>139</sup> Anónimo, "Monumento a Rubén Darío," Boletín de la Unión Pan-Americana, LXVIII, (1934), 359-360.

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