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# Modernism and the Works of Gutierrez Najera

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MODERNISM AND THE WORKS OF  
GUTIÉRREZ NÁJERA

by

Patricia Hagey Olson

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of  
Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of  
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## LIFE

Patricia Hagey Olson was born in South Bend, Indiana, March 16, 1926.

Her first year of High School work was taken in a boarding school in Mexico City, Mexico, the Miguel Angel Secundaria. She was graduated from Carl Schurz High School, Chicago, Illinois, January, 1944, and from Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana, February, 1947 with the degree of Bachelor of Science, for which a major and Practice Teaching in Spanish were taken.

From 1948 to 1950 the author taught Spanish and General Science as a substitute in the Chicago Public High Schools. She renewed her association as a substitute teacher with the Chicago Board of Education February, 1953. She began her graduate studies at Loyola University in June, 1948.

## PREFACE

At the end and beginning of every literary movement, there are writers whose works show tendencies of both the fading and growing movements. In Spanish literature, such writers who signal the coming of the new trends, are called precursors. These writers naturally begin with the trends of the movement prevalent at the time they start their literary careers, but gradually begin to show evidences of the growing trends of the future. Such a writer was Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera of Mexico. Most books cite Najera as Mexico's greatest precursor of the modernistic movement. The author has tried to show the tendencies, method, and general characteristics which connect Najera with the modernistic movement.

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## CHAPTER I

### MODERNISM IN SPANISH AMERICA

As the nineteenth century began to come to a close, approximately 1870, many of the Spanish American countries had just completed a period of troubled revolutionary change and were in the beginning of a rather stabilized period in which peace and prosperity could be found. It is generally felt that the French and North American revolutions had greatly influenced Spanish America in the obtaining of political freedom.

It was during this period of peace and prosperity that a movement of European culture reached its high point. This movement had passed through the countries as an expression of liberation from Spain, and was predominantly French. It affected almost every phase of Spanish American culture; prosperous families filled their homes, in fact, cluttered them with French furniture, statues, and other articles imported from France; families who could afford to, sent their children to study in Paris; others made regular journeys to France; and some even stayed there indefinitely. This situation was considered by some, as very tragic and alarming. One of these was the novel-

ist Blest Gana, who made a close study of it in his book The Transplanted.<sup>1</sup> By 1890, all the countries felt the effects of prosperity; in Argentina and Uruguay, it was felt by many levels of society; in countries like Brazil, Chile and Mexico, only the dominant classes felt it; and elsewhere, in loosely organized states, where latent trouble still burst into civil wars, the economic advancement was not very marked, but still evident.

This new cultural movement was considered exotic because it drew elements from distant sources, and also artificial in that it was, a way of life based on the imitation of foreign ways, ignoring realistic problems like poverty, illiteracy, and the oppression of the Indian masses. It was called Afrenchesado (Frenchified).<sup>2</sup> Many Spanish American writers were greatly influenced by French law, philosophy, and literature. Some of the intellectuals made long pilgrimages to France, and French literature was the prominent example all through the romantic period.

The prosperity brought by peace and economic freedom, had its effect on intellectual life. A division of labor began in which more men of the intellectual professions now tried to restrict themselves to their chosen tasks and many gave up poli-

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1 Auturo Torres-Ríoceco, The Epic of Latin American Literature, New York, 1942, 88

2 Ibid.

tics. Although there were some men of letters who studied law at the universities, there were few of them who actually put it in practice. Some obtained diplomatic or consular posts, but most of them became journalists or teachers or both. A new literature resulted from this new cultural life of Spanish America. As the Symbolists represented only Parisian decadence and poetic refinement, the writers of this new movement, some of them just as decadent in their lives as they were refined in their writings, reflected the culture of the New World. Like the culture of the period, this new literature was exotic, artificial, and under French influences. Speaking of these new young intellectuals and attempting to explain why they turned to the artificial and exotic worlds for their inspirations, Dundas Craig said that each was an idealist, and that each felt himself in

and environment to which he did not belong. He had a soul above the sordid aims of his fellow men, and his art and his ideals were things beyond their comprehension . . . Finding little sympathy in the world of men, and having none of the missionary zeal that would have so converted them to his way of thinking, he naturally turned away and found solace in the world of imagination.<sup>3</sup>

This new blood was reacting against what they considered, the stilted, and outworn practices of the romantic and

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3 G. Dundas Craig, The Modernist Trend in Spanish American Poetry, University of California, 1934, 3



realistic writers who preceded them in the earlier years of the nineteenth century. These new poets, to distinguish themselves from the earlier period, used the word modern, and thus it was that the movement became known as modernistic. The word modernism was first used by the critics as a term of disparagement, but it was not long before it became a label of triumph.<sup>4</sup>

Between 1880 and 1902, the new poets were to be found in every country of Spanish America, and they all had the following in common: (a) a new spirit of adventure; (b) a new and broader understanding of literature; (c) a desire to discover new worlds of imagination and beauty; (d) a desire to be original and to make poetry an art in itself without any set purpose; and (e) an inclination towards the art for art's sake theories of France.<sup>5</sup> All possessed that creative spirit and artistic temperament characteristic of the Spanish Americans. Some critics trace their inspiration to two of the greatest moulders of American youth: Justo Sierra of Mexico, and José Martí of Cuba.<sup>6</sup>

Justo Sierra was one of the first to study French poetry, and to urge his followers to do the same. Luis G. Urbina said, speaking of Sierra:

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4 E. Herman Hespelt ed., An Outline History of Spanish American Literature, New York, 1941, 79

5 Torres-Ríoceco, Epic Lat. Am. Lit., 91

6 Ibid.

Knowing our literary idiosyncrasy, his advice was always to avoid verbal excess and to cultivate exactness and intellectual balance. He knew very well that the national literature was in a state of formation, that with each step we took, we were creating an individual design, that our French orientation was serving to separate us definitely from Spanish limitations and that we were cleansing our dusty images, our state prejudices, our old world castilian molds in the bath of a new art--the splendid art of French poetry and prose. To purify the style, to make it better and clearer each time, to preserve the essentials of our new-Hispanic character, in order to open our curiosity to the four winds of the spirit and give new life to ideas and forms in harmony with our cultural and social development; this was the horizon shown us by the master.<sup>7</sup>

In creating this new literary movement, a new world was expressing its artistic originality. This was the first evidence that Spanish American culture was maturing, and with this process, the Spanish American countries of the New World entered the currents of Universal literature for the first time.<sup>8</sup> The modernistic movement was their first contribution to world literature. Although there are a few who seem to feel that this modernistic movement was born in Spain, Rubén Darío said that the movement started in America before it was found in Spain for several very good reasons;

Partly, it was because of our close material and spiritual commerce with different nations of the world; but chiefly, because there exists in the new generation of American writers an immense thirst

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<sup>7</sup> Carlos González Peña, History of Mexican Literature, trans. Gusta B. Nance & Florence Dunstan, University of Dallas, 1945, 256

<sup>8</sup> Torres-Rieseco Epic Lat. Am. Lit. 86

for progress and a lively enthusiasm, which constitutes their greatest potentiality, and through which, bit by bit, they triumph over the obstacles of tradition, the walls of indifference, the oceans of mediocrity.<sup>9</sup>

José Martí's Ignelille (1882) was published more than sixteen years before the beginning of modernism in Spain.<sup>10</sup> Spanish America, was not only showing the world that it was independent of Spanish literature, but many feel that it was her greatest modernist, Ruben Darío who carried the message of the new movement to the continent in 1899.

Although some critics feel that modernism started about the same time in Spain as it did in Spanish America, they explain that it was under different influences, and it was not recognized until Spain's modernism felt the strength of Rubén Darío's genius sometime later.<sup>11</sup>

The new Spanish American writers were beginning to feel a keener joy in living, and as they attempted to express the emotions that were stirred by the beauties of nature, they found that the old traditional Spanish verse forms were too rigid for their wants. Therefore they began to look to other sources for the satisfactory means with which to express themselves.

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9 Ibid., 90

10 Pedro Henríquez-Ureña, Literary Currents in Hispanic America, Cambridge, Mass., 1945, 165

11 R. Blanco-Fombona, El modernismo y los poetas modernistas, Madrid, 1929, 17

These writers of the new movement obtained an original blending of tone and color by matching sense with sound. In their attempts to break away from Castilian verse forms, they revived ancient Spanish and French metrical combinations and they used some types of verse that were not common but were recognized, such as verses of nine, ten, twelve, or fourteen syllables. The rhythms that they obtained by changing the distribution of accents, was very definitely their own characteristic. In the use of vocabulary, they were also quite original; they gave new shadings to the meanings of words, and this new use of words helped them to express a greater feeling in their poetry. This new use of words was at times very difficult for the reader to understand, but the rhythm of the writing stirred the emotions and in that way, the thought was conveyed to the reader.

The modernists began the use of a very extensive vocabulary which had been enlarged by many Indian words. They also used what could be called a vocabulary of luxury; the names of gems, metals, cloths, furs, birds, and flowers. Then as a contrast to this elaborate vocabulary, they simplified their syntax. They tried to perfect their grammar as a reaction against romantic carelessness, and although some felt that they violated grammar rules in the application of their new ideas, others felt that their grammar was flawless. They were justly

accused of using Gallicisms, but when ever this was done, it was with careful deliberation.

The modernists used a great variety of verse forms. The writers of Spain's golden centuries never used as many, in fact there were only a few forms used at any one time. Some of these were the endecasílabo, which originally came from Italy, and the Spanish octosílabo. If there were any others used, it was very seldom. Later the romantics who preceeded the modernists, used five or six different verse forms. Now as the modernists began, they used every verse form ever used, made new ones, and brought out old ones which they renovated by new accentuation. The forms of the stanza were also great in variety, and a few poets even tried free verse. Some went back to the short fluctuating lines found in the writers of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; others used a three syllable foot, while still others liked the four syllable foot which could be used from two to six times in order to break any monotony which might result. Later some writers employed the two syllable foot occasionally.

The style produced by the new writers was free flowing and musical, and their approach was subjective and full of melancholy. There seems to have been two evident aspects of the new movement, which were: (1) the outer, or what might be considered the purely formal aspect; and (2) the inner, the ideas

and the feelings which conditioned the outer form.<sup>12</sup>

This new literary movement most naturally spread to prose giving it beauty, delicacy, fineness of shading, and an entirely new type of expression. Again some critics felt that the modernists were guilty, at the beginning, of violations of grammar, but if so, the condition was corrected as the writers who came later, gradually purified their style.

In prose, the modernists abandoned the slow and involved seriousness, and the old fashioned humor of the story tellers. They adopted a simple, brief type of paragraph. They acquired a new elegance, a freedom of movement, and a definite rhythm.

Most of the prose took the form of essays, chronicles, articles, books of travel, and literary criticism. Literary criticism was very important to the movement, as it was used by the modernists as a defense and explanation against the attacks of their enemies, and the inertia of the public. Rubén Darío's book Los raros (1896) was first published in the shape of separate articles in La Nación of Buenos Aires.<sup>13</sup> In this book, he attempted to introduce the unwilling reader to the names of a few European masters and he also included the name of José Martí.

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12 González Peña, Hist. of Mex. Lit., 256-257

13 Henríquez-Ureña, Lit. Cur. in His. Am., 178

José Enrique Rodé wrote a very persuasive and beautifully written essay about Darío which most probably won many readers to the side of modernism.

It is evident, then, that as this new movement in literature was a reflection of the cultural movement, the French influence was very strong. Many of the new writers found in the French language, models which, adapted to Spanish, gave them greater freedom of expression or a novelty of form that seemed to satisfy their artistic impulses. Therefore, the transition from romanticism and realism to modernism is marked by the infiltration of the French influences.

The influence of the French writers which was far reaching, and very important, can be divided into three groups : (1) the romantics--Hugo, Alfred de Musset, Lamartine, and others; (2) the parnassians--seekers after the cold, technical perfection of art for art's sake which were prominent in France during the 1860's--Gautier, Catulle, Mendes, Baudelaire, Coppée, Sully Prudhomme, José María de Heredia, and Leconte de Lisle; and (3) the symbolists--to whom shades, rhythm, music, and image were ideals, and whose school began to hold sway around 1880--Verlaine, Mallarme, and Maeterlick.<sup>14</sup> All these influencing groups were so completely amalgamated with Spanish American thought, that it

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14 Hespelt, Out. His. Span. Am. Lit., 80

was almost impossible to separate them from one another. Of these influences of France which helped to shape modernism, romanticism was the decisive element in many of the poets; Parnassianism was comparatively limited in influence; but symbolism was of more effect.

This modernistic use of French sources was not a mere imitation. The modernists were quite independently undergoing a reaction against romanticism and realism which caused them to be naturally attracted by the techniques that had appeared in French poetry after the romantic movement, but their first thought was a search for suitable new material and styles rather than merely to imitate the French. These influences were absorbed and blended by the Spanish American poets in accordance with their individual styles and so it was that the movement went far beyond its origin and finally became typically Spanish American in character.

The Spanish Americans are, fundamentally, romanticists, with slight touches of the modernistic qualities. In fact, there seems to be some dispute as to whether some of the so called precursors were in any way actually modernistic. Therefore it can be said that the romantic poets were, in many cases, the strongest and most important influence upon the new movement because they were an influence that had been acting upon Spanish American literature for a couple of centuries.



Parnassianism was a search after impersonal perfection in form, of which Leconte de Lisle was the leading and most outstanding writer, and who influenced most of the modernists to varying degrees.

Many of the principles of symbolism were adopted, such as those principles that were practiced by the followers of Verlaine: mainly, the musicality and vagueness that he called for in his famous poem, Art of Poetry:

Music first and foremost of all!  
 Choose your measure of odd not even,  
 Let it melt in the air of heaven,  
 Pose not, poise not, but rise and fall...  
 Let every shape of its shade be born;  
 Color away! come to me shade!  
 Only of shade can the marriage be made  
 Of dream with dream and of flute with horn.<sup>15</sup>

Because of their intense search for an outlet for their feelings, many of the modernists were well prepared to receive the Music before all else rule of Verlaine's. The Mexican modernist, Gutiérrez Nájera, himself was a pianist of ability, and Rubén Darío had a very definite musical ear. These two men adopted the rule so effectively, that they made Spanish verse musical. Many other modernists through the strict practice of the use of new forms, imagery, and new styles, acquired the technique for the playing of music with word.

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<sup>15</sup> Torres-RíoSeco, *Epic. Lat. Am. Lit.*, trans. Arthur Symonds, 88-89

Symbolism, according to Fuga y Acal, led some of the poets, in their content;

to suggest, rather than express, ideas and feelings. . . which as a result, acquired a mysterious exquisiteness--and to increase greatly the range of subject matter, multiplying the phases of life and nature treated in poetry. So far as diction and form were concerned, it caused writers to expand the dictionary, revive word and expressions that had fallen into disuse, coin new ones, and employ old metrical combinations, ballades, and rondels, which had been in vogue in France before the seventeenth century.<sup>16</sup>

The influence of the United States was very small except for occasional moments when Edgar Allan Poe, and Walt Whitman, and a few others seem to have been the main influences, though in a slight degree. The new young poets perhaps learned the element of literary freedom from Walt Whitman and that of music also from Edgar Allan Poe. It is not known definitely that they were acquainted with Poe's Poetic Principles, but many lines of his work can be applied to their poems.<sup>17</sup>

Then too, the reaction against the United States' usage of the Monroe Doctrine was vigorously reflected in the works of many such writers as Rubén Darío, José Enrique Rodó, José Santos Chocano, and Manuel Ugarte.<sup>18</sup>

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16 González Peña, Hist. of Mex. Lit., 257

17 Torres-Río seco, Epic. Lat. Am. Lit., 91

18 Hespelt, Out. Hist. Span. Am. Lit., 78

This strong reaction against the great united states of the north, caused the Spanish Americans to develop a great sympathy for their mother country. Although the outstanding characteristics were French, many of the modernists turned to Spanish writers for further inspiration. The primitives, the classic writers of the Golden age, the romantic poets such as Gorrilla and Espronceda, and above all the postromanticist like Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer--all followed deeply in modernist inspiration.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, although the French influence was always present in the writings of the modernists, their Spanish background was deeper, older, and of more enduring root.

In spite of all this outside influence, the Spanish American modernists did not forget all about their own countries, for what many called a wave of Neo-Worldism passed through the countries. The writers began to center their attentions on Spanish America's own history, landscape, and people.<sup>20</sup>

In spite of the strength of this movement, modernistic literature held together against complete nationalism, and was made international mainly by a common Spanish heritage, and the strong influences of France.<sup>21</sup>

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19 Ibid., 81

20 Ibid., 82

21 Ibid., 80

For closer study and better understanding, the modernistic writers can be divided into three different groups: (1) the precursors--the men who were on the boarder between romanticism and modernism by the appearance of traces of the new movement and therefore they could be said to have started modernism on its road; (2) the modernists proper--the men who wrote at the time when modernism was in full sway; and (3) the post modernists--the writers who began to turn from modernism to the next literary movement of naturalism or realism. Dividing the modernists into these three groups, in many cases, is a very difficult task as there were many men who produced works which could very well belong to all three divisions. Some of these men were, Gutiérrez Nájera of Mexico, José Asunción Silva of Columbia, and Julián del Casal of Cuba. Although these men were generally classified as among the precursors of the modernistic movement, many of their works showed them to be full fledged modernists in many respects.<sup>22</sup> Rubén Darío, Spanish America's greatest modernist, was one who saw modernism light up and fade away.

Many of these early modernists, or precursors, tried to turn their eyes and thought from reality by creating a world of fancy and imagination. In this desire to escape the world

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

around them, they turned to many far away places and to other foreign writers for inspiration. Specifically, Casal studied and was fascinated by the Japanese; Nájera admired the Spanish Bécquer, and the French Verlaine; Silva studied the English pre--Raphaelites and he even to a certain degree, imitated the American Poe; Jaimes Freyre investigated Scandinavian mythology; and Nervo interested himself with Buddhist philosophy.<sup>23</sup> Therefore as a result of these varied foreign investigations, they wrote about oriental splendors, Greek goddesses, and many other foreign subjects. They used swans, centaurs, peacocks and nymphs to populate their poems. This exoticism and escape into other world was merely a means with which they could protest against hard, bitter realities.

These young modernists who found themselves misunderstood by their fellowmen and at odds with the world, were soon labeled Escapistes. This turn towards escapism was a sort of movement within the modernistic movement itself, and was explained as the influence of symbolism. The symbolists were considered to represent Parisian decadence and poetic refinement. Many of the Spanish American modernists were equally decadent in their own lives, such as Silva, who committed suicide at the age of thirty-one; Nájera, who was hideously ugly and drank too

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23 Torres-Ríoceco, Epic. Lat. Am. Lit., 93

much; Darío, who was very pessimistic and who also drank heavily; and Casal who because he suffered with a painful form of Tuberculosis and was therefore isolated from his fellowmen, had but one ambition: "to behold another sky, another mountain, another shore, another horizon, another sea . . . other people, other races, with different habits of thought."<sup>24</sup> This escapist attitude was considered as typical of the sensitive temperament of the early modernistic poets.

The modernistic movement might also be divided into two periods of influences; the first, the period in which French romanticism and Parnassianism were the strongest and to which period the precursors belonged; and the second period, the final period of the influence of French symbolism.

Although some critics feel that modernism did not develop into a definite school, in the strict sense of the word a few traits, or characteristics found in all the modernistic writers were; (1) a sensitive receptiveness to the beauties of nature; (2) a feeling of being misunderstood by their fellowmen; (3) an aloofness from the real world, which caused them to shut themselves in ivory towers; (4) an obsession for the new and original in revolt against habit; and (5) an attempt to express their emotions in new and unusual language, which could be understood by their fellow poets only. All these characteristics

could be called a family resemblance, but to make a definite classification of modernism would be very difficult because of (a) the vast variety of tendencies that can be found within its borders, and (b) the many different ways in which they were employed. Each modernist had his own distinct style and method which contained in most cases, only a similarity to his fellow writers.

As stated earlier, the word modernism was first used as a label of disparagement. The resistance to this new movement was fairly strong and considered serious. Many contemporary poets positively refused to accept the new trends in writing.

Some of the critics said that modernism was guilty of excess, artificiality, exoticism and novel effects which were often childish. They considered the tendency towards parissianism ridiculous and only cultivated neuroticism. In 1907, Díaz Rodríguez was still writing his Road to Perfection, which was a work of a very quarrelsome tone, and Gomez Carrillo curio, a literary review which he edited in Paris.<sup>25</sup> Sanín Cano, in Bogotá was among the first critics to help the modernistic cause.

Many of the critics finally admitted that modernism did reform, enrich and give an original character to poetry and a new lightness to prose. Many foreign critics felt that this new movement was causing Spanish American literature to grow up.

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<sup>25</sup> Henríquez-Ureña, Lit. Cur. in His. Am., 179

Issac Goldberg said that the modernistic movement: "signaled the definite entrance of Spanish American into European literary currents."<sup>26</sup>

Therefore, in spite of the strong adverse criticism, modernism held its own, and spread into other countries.

together with the Spaniards who appeared about the fateful year 1898 or shortly afterwards, the Spanish Americans have given the language its best poetry since the 'Golden Centuries'. Literary Spanish, both in verse and prose, acquired a new youth, and this miracle, which began in 'Out America', was prolonged and completed in Spain by Unamuno, Valle Inclan, Azorín, Juan Ramón Jiménez, Antonio Machado, and finally José Ortega y Gasset.<sup>27</sup>

Modernism not only spread to other countries, but is till reflected in the works of many present day writers.<sup>28</sup>

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26 González Peña, Hist. Mex. Lit., 258

27 Henríquez-Ureña, Lit. Our. in His. Am., 168-169

28 Torres-RíoSeco, Epic. Lat. Am. Lit., 90



## CHAPTER II

### REPRESENTATIVES OF MODERNISM

The modernistic movement might be divided into two periods of time; the first, from approximately 1888 to 1896, and the second from 1895 to 1920 when it gradually merged into a new period of newer tendencies.

The first period was of course, the gradual change from romanticism to modernism which began in the writings of men like José Martí and Julián del Casal of Cuba, Gutiérrez Nájera of Mexico, José Asunción Silva of Columbia, and Rubén Darío of Nicaragua. In general, these men are recognized as the precursors of the modernistic movement. Although the works of men like Othón, Díaz Mirón and Icaza in Mexico, Almafuerte in Argentina, and Deligne in Santo Domingo showed slight traces of the new literary trends.

José Martí (1853 - 1895) was the only one of these men who devoted his life to politics. He was a great Cuban patriot and gave his entire life to the cause of Cuban independence.<sup>1</sup> His writings were spontaneous and exuberant which con-

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<sup>1</sup> E. Herman Hespelt ed., An Anthology of Spanish American Literature, New York, 1947, 445

trusted with the quiet aloofness that was characteristic of his fellow modernists. In his thoughts his patriotism came first, his writing only second. He was a man of action and the only time he allowed himself for writing, was the few spare minutes between speeches and revolutionary meetings. He expressed his entire philosophy on life when he wrote; "El único autógrafo digno de un hombre es el que deja escrito con sus obras."<sup>2</sup> This was written in response to a request for his autograph.

When Martí was fifteen years old, with the help of his teacher, the poet Medive, he launched his career by the publishing of a political journal which bore the title La Patria Libre (1869).<sup>3</sup> He was sentenced to hard labor and later deported to Spain because of some opinions he expressed in a private letter. Instead of being stopped, he was only spurred on to greater efforts and so he took his fight for Cuban independence to Spain, the United States, and Central America.

Martí wrote very little that was not intended to promote the liberation of Cuba. The little that he did resign himself to write was either written in his youth, or that which he wrote to earn a living. His work was mainly journalism, but a journalism of a very high level. When he first began to write,

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2 Ibid.

3 Henríquez-Ureña, Lit. Our. in His. Am., 165

as a boy, he already had a style which was entirely new, influenced perhaps by Saint Theresa, Quevedo, Mello, and Gracián. He did not follow any one pattern of rhythm, and his vocabulary which he varied, as full of word and combinations which, often, his listeners and readers did not understand. The rhythm of his writings, and his ability as a speaker, to stir the emotions of his listeners carried his thoughts. There was one old Cuban fighter who remarked after hearing one of Martí's speeches; "No; yo no le entendía mucho lo que dijo; ¡pero tenía ganas de llorar!"<sup>4</sup>

As a result of this varied and unfamiliar uses of vocabulary and many new constructions, Martí's writings were full of different tones and colors. His syntax was full of unexpected combinations. He was a genius in the field of invention.

Martí's death was mourned by all modernists. Rubén Darío, the greatest of all, was strongly impressed by Martí's speeches, and felt it a great loss that such a man should sacrifice his life for his country's freedom.<sup>5</sup>

The first four verses of Martí's Versos Sencillos will illustrate his writing. They have a brief introduction which he begins;

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4 Hespelt, An Anth. Span. Am. Lit., 445

5 Henríquez-Ureña, Lit. Our. in His. Am., 166

Mis amigos saben como se me salieron estos versos del corazón. Fue aquel invierno de angustia, en que por ignorancia, or por fe fanática, o por miedo, o por cortesía, se reunieron en Washington, bajo el águila temible, los pueblos hispanoamericanos.<sup>6</sup>

Martí goes on to criticize those who suggested that Cuba be seperated from the other Spanish American countries and come under the control of the United States. Then he continues to explain that he suffered very bad health during the winter, and by doctor's orders, had gone to the mountains for a rest where he wrote these verses.

#### VERSOS SENCILLOS

Yo soy un hombre sincero  
de donde crece la palma;  
y antes de morirme, quiero  
echar mis versos del alma.

Yo vengo de todas partes,  
y hacia todas partes voy:  
arte soy entre las artes;  
en los montes, monte soy.

Yo sé los nombres extraños  
de las yerbas y las flores,  
y de mortales engaños,  
y de sublimes dolores.

Yo he visto en la noche oscura  
llover sobre mi cabeza  
los rayos de lumbre pura  
de la divina belleza.<sup>7</sup>

Another of the early modernists was José Asunción Silva

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6 Hespelt, An Anth. Span. Am. Lit., 445

7 Ibid.

(1865 - 1896) of Columbia, who also entered the diplomatic service, but only for a short period of time. He was originally a romantic but slowly developed into a modernist. Not only was he pessimistic, but he had a slight touch of sarcastic cynicism also. In spite of this, he wrote with the charm of strong feelings which were sincerely expressed in musical language. Although he could not completely hide the pessimistic tone, now and then a joy of living can be found within his lines. Perhaps he had a right to be a pessimist and cynic, at least these attitudes are more understandable after a short study of his life. Although he was born of aristocratic lineage, handsome and wealthy, when he was very young, his family inheritance was lost in a revolution in Columbia. A short time after that, his father died leaving Silva to carry the responsibilities of supporting the family and attempting to regain some of the lost property. His attempt to recover the inheritance was a complete failure. Hopefully he sent to France a manuscript for publication, but it was lost at sea. Finally, perhaps the last straw, came when a sister, whom he cherished, died.<sup>8</sup> There seems to be some dispute as to whether his suicide was due to this, or to overwhelming financial troubles. In any case, evidently not being able to find any other relief for his overwhelming depression, he took

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<sup>8</sup> Alfred Coester, The Lit. His. of Span. Am.  
New York, 1941, 456

his own life.<sup>9</sup>

Silva's verses, like those of many other writers, were not printed in collected form until after his death. They were the only way in which he could console himself in the midst of his troubles. His obsession of death, pessimism and in contrast, his almost childlike joy of living, are the main characteristics of his temperament. In his poem Grepúsculo, he renews childhood memories by retelling the fairy tales which made him happy when a child.

Like Gutiérrez Nájera and other modernists, Silva was interested by the works of Edgar Allen Poe. He was fascinated by the sound of bells which Poe produced, and tried to do the same in Spanish by writing El Día de Difuntos.<sup>10</sup> One of the most widely known of Silva's poems is his Los Nocturnos. This work contains four tragic love scenes and in it, Silva shows a certain amount of originality in the way he handles long and short lines in an attempt to produce a rhythm of the verse similar to that of the thought. He tried to bring out the shadows of lovers in the moonlight by repeating words. He also uses this same method to emphasize a feeling or an idea. In this work there can be found a four syllable foot which reoccurs from

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9 Hespelt, An Anth. Span. Am. Lit., 465

10 Ibid., 476



Contemporary with Martí and Silva, but unlike them in many ways, was Julián del Casal (1863 - 1893), of Cuba. He created his own Japanese world to live in. His living-room was furnished in a manner very similar to that of a Japanese home. He even installed an image of Buddha in front of which he burned joss sticks. The effect of Oriental splendor is apparent in some of his works. In Kakemano he takes keen delight in describing the toilet of a geisha, the way in which she makes up her face, the manner in which she arranges her hair, and the beauty of the silk robes with which she adorns herself. He was the first writer in Spanish America to use Japanese sources.<sup>13</sup>

Casal was just as fascinated by Parisian life and as he had never been to Paris, that world too was imaginary. He suffered from a very serious form of Tuberculosis which held him shut off from his fellowmen as completely as if it were prison bars.<sup>14</sup> Therefore it is easily understandable that his poetry was always colored by the shadow of death. Although he could now experience the joys of living, he had a great dread of dying. He did not find complete satisfaction in his make-believe worlds, but he did receive enough consolation in the high coloring to

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13 Coester, The Lit. His. of Span. Am., 453-454

14 Ibid.



write beautiful poetry which in turn, did help a little, to relieve his sorrows.

Casal was greatly influenced by Moreas' Les Cantilenes. The pessimism of Baudelaire and Banville also drew his attention, and he almost did as well as they, in expressing his emotions. He became fascinated by the sonnet which he found in the writings of Leconte de l'Isle and J. M. de Heredia, and it soon became his favorite form of verse.<sup>15</sup> He left strong impressions upon his readers by the pictures he drew with this form. He enjoyed describing the people in the world about him, and therefore he became skilled in the painting of these pictures with words. At one time he described a maja who wore a beautifully embroidered Manila shawl and a skirt of green satin trimmed in black lace out from which her tiny feet darte "back and forth... like tiny dove foliage."<sup>16</sup>

These portraits of individual were beautifully done, and the sonnet of Helen of Troy, which follows is a good example of this type of poem. It is written in two quatrains and two tercets, and the choice of vocabulary is very interesting.

#### ELENA

Luz fosfórica entreabre claras brechas  
en la celeste inmensidad, y alumbrá

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 454

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

del foso en la fatidica penumbra  
cuerpos hendidos por doradas flechas.

Cual humo frío de homicidas mechas,  
en la atmósfera densa se vislumbra  
vapor disuelto que la brisa encumbra  
a las torres de Ilíon, escombros hechas.

Envuelta en veste de opalina gasa,  
recamada de oro, desde el monte  
de ruinas hacinadas en el llano,

Indiferente a lo que en torno pasa,  
miro Elena hacia el lívido horizonte  
irguiendo un lirio en la rosada mano.<sup>17</sup>

The modernistic movement was, perhaps, definitely established in its first phase by the publication of the first famous modernistic book. It was Azul (also referred to as Azure, and Azure Review) and appeared in 1888. This book contained verse and short stories which were written by Rubén Darío, at that time a poor unknown Nicaraguan poet. It inspired other periodicals, namely; La revista moderna (1898-1903) in Mexico by Amado Nervo and Jesus E. Valenzuela; La revista azul (1894-1896) also in Mexico by Gutiérrez Nájera; and La Revista de America (1896) in Buenos Aires by Rubén Darío himself, and Ricardo Jaimes Freyre.<sup>18</sup>

Being a universal type of movement, it was not unusual of the modernistic movement that Darío, a Nicaraguan, should

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17 Hespelt, Anth. Span. Am. Lit., 460

18 Hespelt, Out. Hist. Span. Am. Lit., 82

write and publish the French-influenced Azul in Chile, to have it analyzed and made famous by a critic in Spain and finally to see it become a sort of modernist revival throughout South and Central America and Mexico.<sup>19</sup>

Martí, Casal, Nájera, and Silva died between 1893 and 1896, therefore Darío remained alone to carry on as modernism's leader for twenty years. In the meantime, other modernistic writers were appearing all over Central and South America; in Argentina, where Darío resided between 1893 and 1898, Enriqueta Larret (b.1875) and Leopold Lugones (1874 - 1938); in Uruguay, José Enrique Rodó (1871 - 1937) and Julio Herrera y Reissig (1875 - 1910); in Bolivia, Ricardo Jaimes Freyre (1868 - 1933); in Chile, Manuel Magallanes Moure (1878 - 1924) and Carlos Pezoa Velis (1879 - 1908); in Peru, José Santos Chocano (1875 - 1934); in Columbia, Baldomero Sanín Cano (b.1860) and Guillermo Valencia (1873 - 1943); in Venezuela, Manuel Díaz Rodríguez (1868 - 1927) and Rufino Blanco-Fombona (1874 - 1944); and in Mexico, Luis Gonzaga Urbina (1868 - 1934), Jose Juan Tablada (b.1871), Enrique González Martínez (b.1871), and Amado Nervo (1870 1919).<sup>20</sup>

Most of these men took no part in politics. Valencia was the only one who might be considered to have been rather

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19 Ibid.

20 Henríquez-Ureña, Lit. Cur. in His. Am., 168

successful in the political field, but as the presidential candidate of the Conservative party he was defeated twice.<sup>21</sup> Blanco-Fombona knew little, if any success only prison and exile; Sanin Cano and Rode were found in public life for only a short period of time, and Lugones and Chocano were failures in that life.<sup>22</sup>

Among this group of modernists, some were from Mexico and came after, in time, Gutiérrez Nájera. Among these Mexicans was Luis Gonzaga Urbina (1868-1934), who was considered by many to be Nájera's successor. He was born in Mexico City and from his early childhood he might have been said to have been his own master. He had a very full and varied literary career.

Being very precocious, as were many of his fellow modernists, he was in his teens when he had already made his mark in the field of literary journalism, which, in later years he was to dominate. First of all, he took the Chronicle over, following Gutiérrez Nájera. Although it was already light, fine, contemporary, overflowing with wit and humor, he perfected it to its highest degree. He later became a master in the reviewing of theatrical works, and was also a fine poet. He wrote as a poet, chronicler, journalist, critic, and historian of literature

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21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

without lowering the quality of his writings.<sup>23</sup>

Urbina worked beside Justo Sierra in the Secretariat of Public Instruction and Fine Arts, and at the same time he taught literature in the National Preparatory School for many years. In 1910, he published the Centennial Anthology for which he conducted the research into literary history with the help of Nicolas Rangel, and for which he wrote a fine introduction. He directed the National Library and carried out a cultural mission to Argentina, delivering a series of lectures on Mexican literature. These lectures were published in 1917 under the title The Literary Life of Mexico.<sup>24</sup>

Urbina had a music, humor, and sadness of his poetry which was also to be found in the works of Gutierrez Najera. He differed from Najera in that he wrote without foreign influences, and his sadness was perhaps a little deeper. Where Najera's verse was smooth and pliable in comparison, Urbina's was plastic and rigid.

Urbina used only the old, rich emotional tradition of love, pain, life, and death, and according to Gonzalez Martinez: he constructed a work of esthetic unity that can serve for example and edification to those who

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23 Henríquez-Peña, Hist. Mex. Lit., 285

24 Ibid., 285-286

25 Ibid., 286

wander along barren roads without finding the desired path.<sup>25</sup>

He did a beautiful job in the painting of landscapes with words. Manuel Toussaint defines Urbina's Vespertinas as the "little twilight scenes". He goes on further to say; "in which the landscape, a grave and silent collaborator, winds itself about an emotion and inspires poetry by its very presence".<sup>26</sup>

The following poem has been chosen as an example of Urbina's poetry mainly for the description of the mountains and the colors of the sunset.

#### ULTIMA PUESTA DE SOL

TOPACIOS y amatistas, zafiros y esmeraldas  
se funden en la hoguera de un ocaso imperial;  
y, en negro, se dibuja sobre las vivas gualdas  
al filo de la cumbre, una palma real.

Al lado opuesto sube, del monte a las espaldas  
--semiborrada esfera de mármol sideral--  
la luna. Y de los cerros las caprichosas faldas  
extienden su lujosa verdura tropical.

Rico tisú bordado de perlas y diamantes,  
el mar copia del cielo los vívidos cambiantes,  
y entrega al viento libre su manto de turquí.

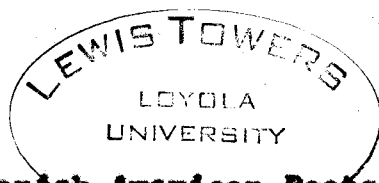
Y arriba, en las profundas soledades de arriba,  
la estrella de la tarde, doliente y pensativa,  
se clava en un ardiente celja de rubí.<sup>27</sup>

Another of the Mexicans, Amado Nervo (1870-1919), was

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 286

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Alice Stone Blackwell, Some Spanish-American Poets, with introduction and notes by Isaac Goldberg, Philadelphia 1937,



born in the capital of the present state of Nayarit in México. His true surname was Ruiz de Nervo, but his father was called Amado and gave the name to his son thus, Amado Nervo. Many thought that this was merely a pseudonym, and because it was an unusual name, some feel that it might have helped the poet's literary career.<sup>28</sup>

Nervo began to write when just a child, and his mother who found some of the verses discovered her son's talent which she was to foster later. When Nervo was still very young, his father died, but his mother, knowing of her son's talents, sent him away to study in a then famous Mexican school.

Two years later, he entered the Seminary of Zamora, to take a Law course. The Seminary discontinued the Law Department about the end of his first year, and Nervo left to produce his first literary works. He again entered the Seminary the next year only to have to leave again and for good to help his family financially by earning a living.

He went to Mexico City to enter the literary field, and it was there that he met Gutiérrez Nájera. He even helped in the writing of the Revista Azul with some of his own contributions. His popularity came when he recited a poem on the first anniversary of Nájera's death. Nervo worked with Jesus E.

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<sup>28</sup> González-Peña, Hist. Mex. Lit., 287

Valenzuela in the founding of the Modern Review which was destined to become a sort of banner and meeting place for all those writers interested in modernism.<sup>29</sup>

Later he took a vagabond type trip through Europe and when he returned to Mexico to continue his literary work, he became a professor for a short time. Finally, he started a diplomatic career and made himself known in Madrid where he was sent.

While he was in Paris, he became a good friend of his fellow poet Rubén Darío. Some of his friends in Paris called him the monk of poetry and he was perhaps, after Darío, one of modernism's greatest poets. He died at the height of his career, shortly after he had been named minister plenipotentiary of Argentina and Uruguay.<sup>30</sup>

Beside his regular works, there were some scribblings made by Nervo which were published in volume form by Don Alfonso Mendez Plancarte in 1938. The volume was called Poets Morning, and contained a few autobiographical notes, some stories and poems which, certainly, Nervo would not have allowed to be printed had he lived.<sup>31</sup>

Nervo was very bold and he was proud of the violations he made of the rules of verse; he enjoyed working with words,

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29 Ibid., 289

30 Ibid., 289

31 Ibid.



emotions and uncommon rhythm. He was extremely independent and said of himself: "I acknowledge only one school, that of my own deep and eternal sincerity."<sup>32</sup>

As his poetic career grew, it seemed to break itself into three separate periods.<sup>33</sup> In the first period, French symbolism seemed to be the strongest influence. Being very young during this period, he loved life, and had the characteristic desire of youth to know all about it.

The second period perhaps started when he fell in love. As a result he was filled with a tranquillity that caused him to turn to naturalness and simplicity in trying to understand his emotions. Rubén Darío said that during this period the poet had reached

one of the most difficult points in poetic mountain climbing; the level ground of simplicity, which is found between the very high peaks and the very deep abysses.<sup>34</sup>

Nerve himself felt that he had, at least, learned how to say what he wanted to and in the way he wished to say it. No longer did he feel a slave to words, but on the contrary, he now felt himself their master.<sup>35</sup>

The third and final period was perhaps brought about

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 290

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.



Greatest of all modernists, however, was Rubén Darío (1867-1916). He was born in Nicaragua and like so many of his fellow modernists, had a life of constant strife within himself. He lived in many countries and was famous in all of them. He made his living mainly as a journalist, and at times he tried diplomatic work.

His works were influenced by many sources. His themes and thinking were universal, reflecting the currents of literary thought from all nations at all times. Among the French poets, he was particularly influenced by Hugo, Leconte de Lisle, and Verlaine, with whom he became close friends while in Paris. Once he was very interested in Shakespeare; at another time he started a study of Portuguese poetry; he learned to use pentameters from Carducci and Longfellow, as well as the use of hexameters; he was fascinated by the works of D'Annunzio; and because of Virgil, he even tried to write bucolic poetry.<sup>38</sup>

Not all the influences on his work were from outside of his own Spanish America. Although, the foundation date for the modernistic movement is associated with the publication of his own Azul, and therefore, he could be called one of the precursors as well as the movement's greatest writings, Darío was influenced by some of the men who were more generally recognized

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<sup>38</sup> Torres-Rioseco, Epic. of Lat. Am. Lit., 89

as precursors. Many feel that the writings of the Mexican Gutiérrez Nájera, inspired the modernists' demand that poetry and prose as well, should be musical; another precursor who may have had some influence upon the works of Darío was the Cuban Julián del Casal. They had several loves in common, both Darío and Casal loved elegance, color and all things exotic. The Colombian, José Asunción Silva is believed to have influenced Darío with his varied meters. Darío was also very fond of the works of José Martí, the Cuban. Salvador Díaz Mirón, of Mexico, although not one of the precursors, was greatly admired by Darío, and was probably another influence.

Mirón took the hendecasyllabic quatrain meter which was the common meter in Spanish America for religious and love poetry, and used it for his heroic themes, an experiment that became widely imitated, and associated with his name.<sup>39</sup> Rubén Darío in his Azul wrote a sonnet which gave a fair characterization of Mirón's verses. Darío wrote:

Your quatrain is a four yoked chariot drawn by wild eagles who love the tempests and the oceans. Heavy brands and stone clubs are the proper weapons for your hands. Your mind has craters and ejects lavas. Your rude stophes, never slaves, travel over the mountains and plains of art like a herd of American buffaloes. What sounds from your lyre sounds far, as when Boreas speaks or the thunder. Son of the new world, let humanity hear the pomp of your lyric

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39 Coester, The Lit. His. of Span. Am., 452

hymns which triumphantly salute liberty.<sup>40</sup>

Rubén Darío was not only Spanish America's greatest modernist, but was modernism's greatest writer in all its periods. He gave modernism its first great publication in 1888, he carried it through its highest peaks, and also was with it when it began to give way to newer literary tendencies. There are three of Darío's works which represent the three periods of modernism. The first of course, was Azul already mentioned as having started modernism officially on its way. This publication was a volume of verse and short stories. It showed the influences of Parnasian romanticism, and French exoticism.<sup>41</sup> It not only started modernism, but it brought fame to Darío. Juan Valera, the Spanish critic, praised it which helped Darío's fame and brought him to the attention of some of the leading Spanish writers such as; Valle-Inclán, Unamuno, Castelar, Campoamor, Benavente, Baroja, and Jiménez.<sup>42</sup> On October 22, 1889, Juan Valera wrote the following in a letter to Rubén Darío concerning El libro Azul:

El libro Azul...no es en realidad un libro; es un folleto de 132 paginas; pero tan llene de cosas y escrito por estilo tan conciso, que da no poco en que pensar y tiene bastante que leer. Desde luego,

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40 Ibid., 453

41 Hespelt, Out. Hist. of Span. Am. Lit., 81

42 Ibid.

se conoce que el suito es muy joven; que no puede tener más de veinticinco años, pero que no puede vechado maravillosamente. Ha aprendido muchísimo, y en todo lo que sabe y expresa muestra singular talento artístico o poético<sup>43</sup>.....De todos modos, con la superior riqueza y con la mayor variedad de elementos, saldría de su cerebro de usted algo menos exclusivo y con mas altos, puros y serenos ideales; algo más Azul que el azul de su libro de usted; algo que tirase menos a lo "verde" y a lo "negro". Y por cima de todo, se mostrarían mas claras y mas marcadas la originalidad de usted y su individualidad de escritor.<sup>44</sup>

Darío's second and greatest work was his Prosas Profanas published in 1896, at the high point of modernism. In this work could again be found the Parnassian influence as in pieces like Frieze; the influence of symbolism as in poems like The Kingdom Within; and a musical poem sung to the ivory tower refuge of the escapists. The title Prosas Profanas may have come from a combination of three sources: first, certain old Spanish rather than in Latin; second, in the Roman Catholic liturgy, sometime in the early part of the tenth century Latin hymns were made by the setting of words to the music of the Alleluias and were called prosas; and third, the word profanas was to distinguish Darío's poems from the religious.<sup>45</sup>

In his preface to these poems, Darío made the following personal reflections;

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43 Juan Valera, Obras Completas, "Cartas Americanas", Tomo XLI, 269

44 Ibid., 294

45 Hespelt, Anth. Span. Am. Lit., 488

¿Hay en mi sangre alguna gota de sangre de África, o de indio chorotega o nagrandano? Pudiera ser, a despecho de mis monos de marqués; mas he aquí que vereis en mis versos princesas, reyes, cosas imperiales, visiones de países lejanos o imposibles; que queréis!, yo detesto la vida y el tiempo en que me tocó nacer; y a un presidente de República no podré saludarle en el idioma en que cantaré a ti, ¡oh Halagavall, de cuya corte--oro, seda, mármol --me acuerdo en sueños...

(Si hay poesía en nuestra América, ella está en las viejas cosas: en Palenque y Utatlán, en el indio legendario, y en el inca, sensual y fino, y en el gran Moctezuma de la silla de oro. Lo demás es tuyo, democrata Walt Whitman.)

Buenos Aires; Cosmópolis,  
¡Y mañana!

¿Y la cuestión métrica? ¿Y el ritmo?

Como cada palabra tiene una alma, hay en cada verso, además de la armonía verbal, una melodía ideal. La música es sólo de la idea, muchas veces.<sup>46</sup>

Prosas profanas was riding high in the favor of Spanish America, Spain and to some extent, France, when war broke out between Spain and the United States. Although the victory of the United States did not fundamentally influence the modernists, it did cause them to come down to earth. It also caused a great feeling of sympathy for the mother country to sweep through the Spanish American countries, and of course this feeling was reflected in the writings of the modernists.

Darío became absorbed in the poetry of the Cancioneros, the Spanish primitives, he increased his reading of foreign poets,

and came to the conclusion that simplicity and feeling were more important than adornment.<sup>47</sup> So it was that Darío's Cantos de vida y esperanza was published during this third period of modernism's development. In this work modernistic formalism ended, and the Galatean statue of Azul and Prosas profanas (of which Darío himself wrote: "se juzgó marmol, y era carne viva"<sup>48</sup>) came to life and was a strong influence on Spanish American literature of the twentieth century. This last period which many called mundonovismo (New-Worldism), marked the end of the modernistic movement.

The following are the first four verses of Sonatina from Darío's Prosas profanas, which are a good example of the use of the names of gems, birds and flowers in the vocabulary. It is written in the Alexandrian verse of fourteen syllables, and is definitely musical.

#### SONATINA

La princesa esta triste...que 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 sonor?  
 y en un vaso olvidada se desmaya una flor.

El jardín puebla el triunfo de los pavos reales.  
 Parlanchina, la dueña dice cosas banales,  
 y vestido de rojo piruetea el bufon.

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47 Hespelt, Out. Span. Am. Lit., 82

48 Ibid.



La princesa no ríe, la princesa no siente;  
 la princesa persigue por el cielo de Oriente  
 la libélula vaga de una vaga ilusión.

¿Piensa acaso en el príncipe de Golconda o de China,  
 o en el que ha detenido su carroza argentina  
 para ver de sus ojos la dulzura de luz,  
 o en el rey de las islas de las rosas fragantes,  
 o en el que es soberano de los claros diamantes,  
 o en el dueño orgulloso de las perlas de Ormuz?

¡Ay! la pobre princesa de la boca de rosa  
 quiere ser golondrina, quiere ser mariposa,  
 tener alas ligeras, bajo el cielo volar;  
 ir al sol por la escala luminosa de un rayo,  
 saludar a los lirios con los versos de Mayo,  
 o perderse en el viento sobre el trueno del mar.<sup>49</sup>

Between 1896 and 1900, the center of the modernistic movement was in Buenos Aires and Montevideo.<sup>50</sup> In the two literary groups before and after 1896, the poets were greater in number, but as shown earlier, the movement affected prose as well as poetry. Many of the modernists made their livings through their prose. Some of these men who were excellent prose writers were Martí, Gutiérrez Najera, Darío, Lugones, Blanco-Fombona, Urbina, Sanín Cano, and Díaz Rodríguez.

The influence of modernism was felt in many different countries. It left Spanish American literature more mature and with language and ideas which were more youthful in their freshness, eagerness, and vitality; an influence which has found its

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49 Hespelt, Anth. Span. Am. Lit., 490

50 Henríquez-Ureña, Lit. Gur. in His. Am. Lit., 169

way into the literature of today.<sup>51</sup>

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51 Hespelt, Out. Span. Am. Lit., 80

## CHAPTER III

### GUTIÉRREZ NÁJERA, THE MAN

In Mexico during the late 1800's appeared a young man who was to become one of Mexico's greatest writers, and the greatest precursor of the modernistic movement in its literature. This young man who was to play such an important role in Mexican literature, was Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera, better known to his readers as El Duque Job. Born in Mexico City on December 22, 1859, to a modest middle-class family, Nájera inherited a sensibility and tenderness from his mother, and from his father, an inclination towards literature. His parents first had the boy start out in the commercial world when very young, but they soon saw that he had a great interest in literature, and a talent for writing. In his early teens, according to Alberto Leduc, he worked as a clerk in a clothing store called Al Puerta de Veracruz of which the proprietor at the time was a Mr. Candás, who was very patient with his rather reluctant clerk. Gutiérrez Nájera was a thin and palefaced young boy and he always carried a maroon colored velvet bag with him wherever he went. Quite frequently, the young clerk would disappear from behind the counter and Mr. Candás, searching for him, would finally find

him hiding in the wine cellar, reading and smoking among the bales.

The proprietor, curious to know what book could so consistently distract the boy from his duties, one day asked him what it was.

"It is a book by Teófilo Gautier" answered the future Duque Job, adding, "an author very well versed on the questions of bookkeeping."<sup>1</sup>

So it was apparent early in his life, that Nájera always possessed the sense of humor that was to bring him fame as El Duque Job. This sense of humor was to help him face the unkind criticisms and cartoons that were to come later.

His parents had furnished books for the boy to read and later saw that he studied Latin and French in order that he might broaden his field of literature. As were many of his fellow precursors, Gutiérrez Nájera was very precocious and began early to write fine verse. His first works were The Cross, Mary, God, and The Faith of my Childhood. He published his first poem when he was nineteen in La Iberia which was a periodical of the times, and he continued to publish verse and prose there for some time. He eventually passed through the editorial rooms of the principal periodicals of the day. One by one he passed

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<sup>1</sup> Francisco Monterde, "Prólogo" to Cuentos Color de Humo by Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera, Mexico, 1942, xvii-xviii Hereafter to be cited as "Prólogo".

through, leaving his impression upon The Federalist, The National Review, and The Liberal Party. He wrote sometimes under his own name and at other times he used the pseudonyms Recamier or El Duque Job; the later of which became extremely famous.

Nájera soon became a galley slave to journalism and Blanco-Fombona, the Venezuelan critic, expressed his feelings about this fact when he said, "... fue periodista desde los diez y nueve, toda su vida literaria. ¡Qué destino para un poeta!"<sup>2</sup> Nájera lived by letters and for letters, and in the words of Carlos Peña: "... his mission in life was to write and write in the dizzy whirl of the daily press."<sup>3</sup> He flooded the pages of the dailies and reviews with a production most varied, most abundant, most original, and unlike the work of most day laborers of letters, most exquisite in its own right. He wrote everything; poetry on all subjects, travel sketches, short stories and critical articles about literature and the theater.

Gutiérrez Nájera was hideously ugly and was as a result suffering many cartoons and satirical articles. This ugliness of his was not exactly repulsive, but it was mainly a source of irritation to him at the hands of his cruel enemies. His elegance of speech, careful dress and carriage did not hide the ugliness

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2 Blanco-Fombona, El mod. y los poetas mod., 69

3 González Peña, Hist. of Mex. Lit., 281

of his face and body; on the contrary, it only accentuated it and pointed to it. His eyes were very noticeably small, his nose much too large and bulky, his mouth extremely big, and the general outline of his face, much too irregular. To top it all off, his body itself drew attention by its ridiculous smallness.<sup>4</sup>

He was very elegant and careful in his dress wearing a tall silk hat and dark frockcoat. He continually smoked large, black cigars, and so it was that the odor of cigar smoke soon became a mark of identity. Nor was he ever without his cane and gloves. He wore his hair short and smooth. His mustache was long and straight dividing his face with two dark lines which seemed to underline each cheek.<sup>5</sup> Nájera felt that all this careful elegance on the outside would in part be reflected on the inside and that in order to write well, it was necessary to live equally well or even better. Perhaps this feeling was influenced by the fate of so many of the romantic writers who came just before him. According to Francisco Monterde:

El romanticismo literario se prolonga entre nosotros, en una bohemia desgarrada y negligente--como hemos observado. Los escritores viven con pobreza y mueren en el hospital, cuando no en la calle. Las corbatas marchitas, las cabelleras descuidadas y los trajes raídos, forman lamentable conjunto. En lo que se

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4 Monterde, "Prólogo", xi

5 Ibid.

se escribe, hay la misma despreocupacion que da el traje. Las ideas, pobres, débiles, se visten de cualquier modo.

En ese ambiente emprobecido, aparece de pronto 'El Duque Job'.<sup>6</sup>

In the face of all the jokes and criticisms, Gutiérrez Nájera was quiet. He did not return offense for offense, or joke for joke, but just kept on writing in his own peaceful way. He faced all the charges of silly extravagance with a calm and patient kindness letting others speak derogatively of him, but he did not lower himself to return the insults.<sup>7</sup>

Finally his patience triumphed and his great kindness made loyal friends of his one time enemies. These same writers who had once used their pens in disparagement against El Duque Job, soon came to overlook the very things that they had once considered extravagant and silly.<sup>8</sup> All doors were opened to him, and all hands applauded his work. In the words of Francisco Monterde:

Su misma fealdad se disimula bajo la simpatía, se hace imperceptible, llega a borrar-se, y solo queda un brillo--dos puntos claros--en sus pupilas verdes: agudo brillo del ingenio que escapa por entre sus labios.<sup>9</sup>

Being an early riser, Nájera would arrive at the edit-

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6 Ibid., x-xi

7 Ibid., xii

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid., xii-xiii

orial room very early in the morning, very happy and singing as he scanned through various articles, works and programs in which he would eventually find a theme for his daily article. Ignoring the drone of the various discussions going on about him, he filled page after page. He always seemed to be deep in his own thoughts, but from time to time, always at an opportune moment, there came from his mouth amidst the smoke from his inseparable cigar, some wise comment or short statement after which he would continue writing just as though he had not uttered a sound. Then when the first examples of the periodical were off the presses, and even before the ink was dry, Nájera's companions would hurry to read the article written just that morning by El Duque Job. They always marvelled at the elegance of the phrases and the mannered in which he played with the words much in the same way as he would with a handful of precious stones.<sup>10</sup>

The peace and calmness that always seemed to be constantly in the air about El Duque Job, followed him through the streets at night as he would be heard talking of ordinary things in the same elegant and friendly way in which he would write about them.

It is readily evident, indeed, that the pseudonym which some say was given to Gutiérrez Nájera by his friends be-

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., xiii



cause of his modest reserve, fits him very well indeed, -- Duque for the refinement he always showed in his dress, life, and writings, and Job for the kindness and patience which he showed in everything he did, and for the suffering within that was always evident in his works. He was, in other words, Duque the aristocrat, and Job the patient sufferer.<sup>11</sup>

In 1894 Nájera in company with his friend Carlos Diaz Dufco, founded a periodical that was to become the standard and gathering place for all Mexican modernistic writers. It was called La Revista Azul.

Gutiérrez Nájera was definitely the fashionable writer. He married, had children and led what should have been a full life, had alcohol and eventually death not cut it short. On February 3, 1895 at the age of thirty-five, he died just at the peak of his career. At the time of his death, his works were all scattered. A pledge was made at his tomb to save them from complete destruction and so it was that in 1896 his poems were collected in two volumes with a preface by Justo Sierra. In 1898 and 1903, his prose works were published in one volume. The later comprised impressions of the theater, literary and social criticism, travel notes, bits of humor, chronicles, fantasies, and brief stories.

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<sup>11</sup> Hespelt, Out. Hist. Span. Am. Lit., 90

The best way to understand the man Gutiérrez Nájera, is to study his writings. In the words of Alfred Coester: "In the grace and elegance of the poet spoke the individuality of the man."<sup>12</sup> Nájera's outward appearance and actions told little of the man himself in comparison to the underlying thoughts and feelings which were ever present in his writings. In his writings he reveals his spiritual attitudes. Blanco-Fombona wrote the following about the biography of Nájera:

Ignoro a derechas la biografía de Gutiérrez Nájera. Lo juzgo por sus versos y por alguna que otra vaga vaga información. No parece, repito, que tuviese una pasión única a quien consagrar todo su corazón y su arte, como Proporcio o como el Becquer de las Rimas; pero hombre tan sensitivo (y tan feo, según asegúrase que fué), mal pudo no sufrir penas de amor, y penas de amor se transparentan en varios de sus poemas,....<sup>13</sup>

Perhaps one of the best examples in which this suffering caused by the emotions of love shows itself, is Nájera's Con Julieta written in 1886. In this poem Nájera speaks to a Nightingale who sings his sweet song to the night. Nájera shows his extreme loneliness caused by loves, emotions when he asks the Nightingale:

Tu, como yo, debes tener tristezas:  
 ¿Por qué, a la hora del amor, el nido  
 Abandonas ligero?  
 ¿Nadie te aguarda en él? ¿Nadie te quiere?  
 ¡Estás enfermo como yo, y herido

<sup>12</sup> Coester, Lit. Hist. of Span. Am., 364

<sup>13</sup> Blanco-Fombona, Mod. X poetas mod., 74

Del imposible amor de que se muere!

\* \* \* \* \*  
 ¡Quiénes oyen tus cantos? Los que sufren,  
 Los que no buscan el desierto leche  
 Porque en él les aguarda la tristeza...  
 ¡O los que cantan himnos de ternura  
 Oprimiéndose pecho contra pecho!<sup>14</sup>

Further signs of suffering caused by love, are found in the following lines:

¡Sigue cantando, ruiseñor! Si cesa  
 Tu serenata, que al amor evoca,  
 La boca enamorada que me besa  
 Se apartará convulsa de mi boca.

¡Oh, mi Julieta, la Julieta mía,  
 Bien sabe mi dolor que viene el día!

\* \* \* \* \*  
 ¡Oh, mi Julieta, la Julieta mía!  
 ¡Por qué del grato sueño se despierta?  
 ¡Por qué te he de mirar, pálida y fría,  
 Sobre la tumba de mis sueños muerta?

\* \* \* \* \*  
 ¡Déjame en sus cabellos esconderme....  
 Déjame ver su rostro idolatrado...  
 Sigue en las ramas del gentil granado,  
 ¡Oh, canta, ruiseñor! ¡Alondra, duerme!<sup>15</sup>

On the other hand, in the poem La Duquesa Job which was written in 1884, Nájera's attitude was very frivolous and enchanted as he sang the praises of his wife. He seems to be constantly teasing his wife with his choice of vocabulary.

En dulce charla de sobremesa,  
 Mientras devoró fresa tras fresa  
 Y abajérocá tu perro Bob,

<sup>14</sup> Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera, "Con Julieta", Poesías, Mexico, 1896, 13-18; 31-35

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 41-46; 58-63; 66-69

Te haré el retrato de la duquesa  
Que adora a veces el duque Job

.....  
Pero ni el sueño de algun poeta,  
Ni los querubés que vió Jacob,  
Fueron tan bellos cual la coqueta  
De ojitos verdes, rubia griseta  
Que adora a veces el duque Job.

.....  
No tiene alhajas mi duquesita,  
Pero es tan guapa, y es tan bonita,  
Y tiene un cuerpo tan 'v'lan' tan 'pschutt',  
De tal manera trasciende a Francia  
Que no la igualan en elegancia  
Ni las clientes de Hélene Kossut.

.....  
¡Cómo resuena su tacaneco  
En las baldosas! ¡Con que meneo  
Luce su talle de tentación!  
¡Con qué airecito de aristocracia  
Mira a los hombres, y con qué gracia  
Frunce los labios--¡Mimi Pinson!

.....  
Sus ojos verdes bailan el tango;  
¡Nada hay más bello que el arremango  
Provocativo de su nariz!  
Por ser tan joven y tan bonita,  
Cual mi sedosa, blanca gatita,  
Diera sus pajes la emperatriz.

¡Ah! tú no has visto cuando se peina,  
Sobre sus hombros de rosa reina  
Caer los rizados en profusión!  
Tú no has oído que alegre canta,  
Mientras sus brazos y su garganta,  
De fresca espuma cubre el jabón!<sup>16</sup>

It should not go without notice, that in the foregoing poem as he playfully told of his wife's physical perfections, Gutiérrez Nájera's innate good taste never permitted him to

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., "La Duquesa Job", 1-5; 18-22; 29-34; 40-45; 64-75

carry the sensual tendency of his verse to the point of vulgarity. This was the same grace and good taste that was prominent in his journalism and prose work.

In contrast to the almost boyish playfulness of Najera in the above work, a certain amount of cynicism can be discovered in his poem Para Un Menú, written in 1888.

Para Un Menú

Las novias pasadas son copas vacias;  
En ellas pusimos un poco de amor;  
El néctar tomamos...huyeron los días...  
/Traed otras copas con huevo licor!

Champagne son las rubias de cutis de azalia;  
Bergoña los labios de vivo carmín;  
/Los ojos oscuros son vino de Italia,  
Los verdes y claros son vino del Rhin!

Las bocas de grana son húmedas fresas;  
Las negras pupilas escancian café,  
Son ojos azules las llamas traviesas  
Que trémulas corren como almas del tel!

La copa se apura, la dicha se agota;  
De un sorbo tomamos mujer y licor...  
Dejemos las copas.../Si queda una gota,  
Que beba el lacayo las heces de amor!

Gutiérrez Najera was one of the first poets to announce that he would have nothing to do with politics and again his attitude was expressed in verse. He was asked to sing the praises of Hidalgo, the priest liberator of Mexico and so he wrote a reverent ode in which he declared himself incapable of brandishing

the high sword of song:

.....Pequeños somos para empresa tanta:  
 ¡A la intacta cerviz de los volcanes  
 Solo sube el condor, y al viejo Olimpo,  
 Por escala de montes, los titanes!  
 Nuestra Musa, pueril y desmedrada,  
 La débil Musa del placer y el llanto,  
 Blandir no puede la terrible espada,  
La alta espada del canto.<sup>18</sup>

Many years later, when he was asked to honor the heroine popularly called la Corregidora, he complied by describing the flowers that paid their tribute to her statue and thus he did not break his rule of abstention.

As other new poets bewailed their sorrows with a heartier sincerity than they showed in their loves; so an underlying deep sadness, a mournful loneliness, rym through many of the poems of Gutiérrez Najera. Although his sadness was equally tragic as was that of his fellow precursors such as Casal and Silva, Najera was less vehement in expression; usually he spoke of his sorrows in a soft murmur as seen in one of his earlier poems written in 1883, La Abuelita. In this poem, which follows, he spoke in a quiet and mournful voice of the lamentable trait of the living in soon forgetting the dead loved ones.

#### La Abuelita

Tres años hace murió Abuelita;  
 Cuando la fueron á sepultar,  
 Deudos y amigos en honda cuita  
 Se congregaron para llorar.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., "A Hidalgo", 58-65

Cuando la negra caja cerraron,  
Curioso y grave me aprozine,  
Y al verme cerca, me reganaron  
Porque sin llanto la contemplé.

Dolor vehemente rapido pasa:  
Tres años hace que muerta está,  
Llovieron penas, y nadie, en casa,  
De mi Abuelita se acuerda ya.

Yo solo tengo luto y tristeza,  
Y en su recuerdo fuerza cobro,  
Como del arbol en la corteza  
Se ahonda el nombre que se escribió.<sup>19</sup>

Much later in 1887, Nájera expressed his feelings about death in his famous Para Entonces. Of this poem and the desires which were expressed in it, Blanco-Fombona said:

De tan varios componetes y otros que iremos descubriendo la psicología del poeta y su obra, ha salido un elegista, que esperaba morir como murió; sin no pleno mes de abril, en pleno vigor de cuerpo y de espíritu, en lo mayor de la juventud, que es su madurez.<sup>20</sup>

#### Para Entonces

Quiero morir cuando decline el día,  
en alta mar y con la cara al cielo;  
donde parezca un sueño la agonía,  
y el alma, un ave que remonta el vuelo.

No escuchar en lo últimos instantes,  
ya con el cielo y con la mar a solas,  
más voces ni plegarias sollozantes  
que el majestuoso tumbo de las olas.

Morir cuando la luz triste retira  
sus aureas redes de la onda verde,  
y ser como ese sol que lento expira:  
algo muy luminoso que se pierde.

19 Ibid., "La Abuelita", 8

20 Blanco-Fombona, Mod. y los poetas mod., 72

Morir, y joven: antes que destruya  
 el tiempo aleve la gentil corona;  
 cuando la vida dice aún: "soy tuya",  
 aunque sepamos bien que nos traiciona,<sup>21</sup>

A chronological study of Nájera's reveals that he learned early in life that sorrow is the lord of life, a fact verified in the works of many men, from Salamon to Kempis, from Omar Kayan to Leopardi,<sup>22</sup> "This discovery, at first sight, did not seem original" said Blanco-Fombona, and he went on to say:

Ese descubrimiento--que es la más profunda lección de la vida--la realiza cada alma, casi siempre, a costa del propia infortunio; y casi siempre, para cada alma es novedad, cosa inédita.<sup>23</sup>

It seems that the subject of death was always present in the thoughts of Gutiérrez Nájera, and in 1889 he wrote one of the few poems in which his self expression became noticeably vehement. This poem Despues was written upon the death of his father.

Despues...

¡Sombra, la sombra sin orillas, esa  
 Que no ve, que no acaba....  
 La sombra en que se ahogan los luceros...  
 Esa es la que busco para mi alma!  
 Esa sombra es mi madre, buena madre,  
 ¡Pobre madre enlutada!  
 Esa me deja que en su seno me rechaza,...  
 ¡Dejadme ir con ella, amigos míos,  
 Es mi madre, es mi patria!

21 Hespelt, Anth. of Span. Am. Lit., 428-429

22 Blanco-Fombona, Mod. y los poetas mod., 76

23 Ibid., 76-77



¡Qué mar me arroja? ¡De qué abismo vengo?  
 ¡Qué tremenda borrasca  
 Con mi vida jugo? ¡Qué ola clemente  
 Me ha dejado en la playa?  
 ¿En qué desierto suena mi alarido?  
 ¿En qué noche infinita ya mi alma?  
 ¿Por qué, profugo, huyo mi pensamiento?  
 ¿Quién se fué? ¿Quién me llana?  
 ¡Todo sombra! ¡Mejor! ¡Que nadie mire!  
 ¡Estoy desnudo! ¡Ya no tengo nada!<sup>24</sup>

There were very few who could write epigrams for their friends as did Gutiérrez Najera. In 1887, he wrote En la muerte de Manuel Alvarez del Castillo in which he wrote the following lines:

Con la voz suplicante del deseo,  
 La vida enamorada te decía,  
 Como Julieta á su gentil Romeo:  
 --/No te vayas... no es tiempo todavía.<sup>25</sup>

Blanco-Fombona insisted: "...aunque no hubiese cantado, como un ruiseñor, en el sauce de las tumbas, aunque no hubiese llorado heridas de Eros...."<sup>26</sup> Then in 1894, he wrote Para la corona fúnebre de la Sra. Juana Díez Gutiérrez de Díez Gutiérrez. He began,

Venid, cantores, y de rosas frescas  
 Cubrid el ara sepulcral: suspire  
 La brisa tremulante su elegía;  
 Huya la luz...y silencioso expire,  
 ¡Sin expeanza, sin consuelo el día!

24 Najera, Poesías, 152

25 Blanco-Fombona, El. mod. y los poetas mod., 75

26 Ibid.

and he ended,

Llega, tú, la que guardas el secreto  
De la perenne, inextinguible vida;  
¡Llega y despierta con tu beso casto  
A la hermosa dormida!<sup>27</sup>

In 1890, all of Nájera's sorrow and despair finally gave way to a resigned philosophy of life which he expressed in his Pax animae.

¡Ni una palabra de dolor blasfemo!  
Sé altivo, se gallardo, en la caída,  
¡y ve, poeta, condesén supremo  
todas las injusticias de la vida!

No busques la constancia en los amores,  
no pidas nada eterno a los mortales,  
y haz, artista, con todos tus dolores,  
excelsos monumentos sepulcrales.

\* \* \* \* \*  
¡El nombre!... ¡Débil vibración sonora  
que dura apenas un instante! ¡El nombre!....  
¡Ídolo torpe que el iluso adora!  
¡Última y triste vanidad del hombre!

¡A qué pedir justicia ni clemencia  
--si las niegan los propios compañeros--  
a la glacial y muda indiferencia  
de los desconocidos venideros?

¡A qué pedir la compasión tardía  
de los extraños que la sombra exconde?  
¡Duermen los ecos en la selva unbría  
y nadie, nadie a nuestra voz responde!

En esta vida el único consuelo  
es acordarse de las horas bellas,  
y alzar los ojos para ver el cielo...  
cuando el cielo está azul o tiene estrellas.

Huir del mar y en el dormido lago  
disfrutar de las ondas el repose...

Dormir...soñar...el Sueño, nuestro mago,  
¡es un sublime santo mentiroso!

\* \* \* \* \*  
¡Lástimas y perdón para los vivos!  
Y así de amor y mansedumbre llenos,  
seremos cariñosos, compasivos...  
¡y alguna vez, acaso, acaso buenos!

\* \* \* \* \*  
Recordar...perdonar...haber amado...  
ser dichoso un instante, haber creído...  
y luego...reclinarse fatigado  
en el hombro de nieve del olvido.

\* \* \* \* \*  
Corta las flores, mientras haya flores,  
perdona las espinas a las rosas...  
¡También se van y vuelan los dolores  
como turbas de vebras mariposas!

Ama y perdona. Con valor resiste  
lo injusto, lo villano, lo cobarde...  
/Hermosamente pensativa y triste  
está al caer la silenciosa tarde!

Quando el dolor mi espíritu sombrea  
busco en las cimas claridad y calma,  
¡y una infinita compasión alba  
en las heladas cumbres de mi alma!<sup>28</sup>

During the same year, 1890, Nájera calmly took leave  
of life in his Non Omnis Moriar.

#### Non Omnis Moriar

¡No moriré del todo, amiga mía!  
de mi ondulante espíritu disperso  
algo, en la urna diáfana del verso,  
piadosa guardará la Poesía.

¡No moriré del todo! Cuando herido  
caiga a los golpes del dolor humano,  
ligera tú, del campo entenebrido  
levantarás al moribundo hermano

Tal vez entonces por la boca inerte

que muda aspira la infinita calma,  
oigas la voz de todo lo que duerme  
con los ojos abiertos en mi alma.

Al ver entonces lo que yo soñaba,  
dirás de mi errabunda poesía;  
--Era triste, vulgar lo que cantaba...  
mas, ¡que canción tan bella la que oía!

Y porque alzo en tu recuerdo notas  
del coro universal, vívido y almo;  
y porque brillan lágrimas ignotas  
en el amargo cáliz de mi salmo;

Porque existe la Santa Poesía  
y en ella irradas tu, mientras disperso  
átomo de mi ser esconda el verso,  
¡no moriré del todo, amiga mía!<sup>29</sup>

With these words Gutiérrez Najera at about thirty years of age took leave of life and four short years later, death overtook him.

His work and his thought was summed up in the words of Blanco-Fombona:

La preocupación de ultratumba, la inquietud filoaófica, la emoción religiosa ante la Naturaleza, la ternura, han contribuido a formar el carácter de esta poesía. En alas de sus elegías, de un pesimismo epidérmico y casi mundano a menudo, toca otras veces el poeta, ante el espectáculo del universo, a más altas cimas.<sup>30</sup>

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29 Ibid., 213

30 Blanco-Fombona, El. mod. y los poetas mod., 76

## CHAPTER IV

### NÁJERA'S WRITING AND THE INFLUENCES THEREON

Because his first teacher was his mother, the many different influences which developed Gutiérrez Nájera's writing started long before he was aware of their importance. His pious mother wishing her son to devote himself to an ecclesiastical career, moulded the child's spirit through the reading of writers like Santa Teresa de Jesús, San Juan de la Cruz, Fray Luis de León and Fray Luis de Granada.<sup>1</sup> This strong religious influence upon the primary writings of Gutiérrez Nájera was never entirely lost. Since, to have a better understanding as to the influence they exerted, it is necessary to know that each of these writers had a distinctive influence.

Santa Teresa de Jesús was born in 1515, and died in 1582. She was, perhaps, the leading exponent in the prose interpretation of mysticism during the sixteenth century. She wrote in the language and style of the people of her times,<sup>2</sup> and there was very little doubt that the young boy Nájera read her leading

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1 González Peña, Hist. Mex. Lit., 280

2 M. Romero-Navaro, Antología de la Literatura Española, Boston, 1933, 171

work, Libro de las Misericordias de Dios.

The leading mystic poet of the same era was San Juan de la Cruz who lived from 1542 to 1591. It has been said about his religious writing that: "es más ardient de pasión que ninguna poesía profano, y tan elegante y exquisita en la forma, y tan plástica y figurativa como los mas sabrosos frutos del Renacimiento."<sup>3</sup> Undoubtedly, too, Nájera's mother introduced her son to de la Cruz's Noche oscura del alma.

Fray Luis de Granada, 1504-1588, was another religious writer of the same period. The scale of his styles were notable from the simple to the magnificent, and the purity and propriety of his language was another of his strong points.<sup>4</sup> His best known work was Introducción al Símbolo de la Fe.

Perhaps the greatest of all the mystics of the sixteenth century and the most influential in Nájera's development was Fray Luis de León who lived from 1528 to 1591. Simplicity, melody and rapid lyrics were characteristics of his style, and he was considered the greatest poet before Rubén Darío, the Nicaraguan modernist. Nájera's education would have included Luis's Vida retirada, Oda a Salinas, Noche serena and En la Ascensión.

So it was that the seeds of many of the traits found

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3 Ibid., 132

4 Ibid., 167

in the works of Gutiérrez Nájera were to become stronger under additional and other influences, and which eventually were to make him famous as a modernist, were sown, perhaps unconsciously by his own mother. His first works, The Cross, Mary, God and The Faith of my Childhood, were all purely religious.<sup>5</sup> Being a little distrustful of his own power to fight the struggles of life, Nájera's religious spirit called on Divine help. This was seen in the following lines:

o ven más más apresa ¡oh, muerte!  
 o surge en mi sombra, ¡oh Dios!  
 \* \* \* \* \*  
 Surge, surge, Jesús, proque la vida  
 ágil se escapa de mis brazos flojos,  
 y el alma, sin calor, desfallecida,  
 muy lentamente cierra ya los ojos.<sup>6</sup>

The melody of all his works may very well have started in these first works which were full of the initial influences of the religious writers like Fray Luis de León. The elegance and plasticity of Nájera's verse may have stemmed from the influence exerted by San Juan de la Cruz; and his range in style most probably was started by that of Fray Luis de Granada; from the simple to the magnificent.

Since in these first works, Nájera followed the Catholic tradition of Pesado and Carpio, there were many who felt that he

5 González Peña, Hist. Mex. Lit., 281

6 Blanco-Fombona, Mod. y los poetas mod., 77

might prove to be their successor. The Catholic element of the Mexican society which was suffering severe defeat at the hands of the triumphant liberalism of such writers as Ignacio Ramírez and Altamirano backed by the Juarez administration, had hoped to find a champion in Gutiérrez Nájera, but they were eventually disappointed.<sup>7</sup> Their hopes were founded not only upon the deep religious feelings of his works, but also on the fact that his poetry was fundamentally romantic in its emotion, the mystical longings of the spirit and the sad elegy of love. Justo Sierra, Nájera's best critic said that there could be noticed in the poet "the desire to conform to the venerated models of sacred poetry that contained touches of eroticism and romanticism, a desire that enchanted the generation belonging to the second third of his century."<sup>8</sup>

As a result of the influence of the early religious writers, as Justo Sierra noted, many of Nájera's works, and especially his first, were extremely romantic in style as well as in subject. The native subjects, which both classicists and the romantics thought essential to literary independence for Spanish America, had begun to die out by Nájera's time, but he, perhaps the most Mexican of poets, as was Casal the most Cuban in his

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7 Coester, Lit. Hist. of Span. Am., 363

8 González Peña, Hist. Mex. Lit., 281



love of vivid color, conveyed the Mexican landscape in the high lands and its nuance of light, color, and temperature without actually naming Mexico. In reading his works it is not too difficult to picture the scenery and climate of Mexico City from which he very seldom ventured forth.

In his poem Tristísima Nox, which was purely romanticism, Nájera evoked a weird atmosphere of tragedy and mystery, in which the cries of unhappy women, the trotting of invisible horses, and the screams of cats mingle with the eerie wails of lost souls. Blanco-Fombona said that Nájera could be called the autumnal flower of Mexican romanticism. About the poetry itself, he said:

Poesía tan en lo íntimo el don divino, era tan poeta y tan de versas romántico, que todo asume el aspecto de su elegante melancolía y se colora del mismo gris de plata con vivos de carmín. Fue un romántico de nuevo cuño.--Mal podía ser un romántico de 1830. No cayó en el anacronismo de echar sobre su cuerpo juvenil los desteñidas chalescos de 'Hernani'. Su romanticismo no olvida a menudo--es el caso de los últimos románticos americanos--cierto concepto post-realista de arte. Y cuando lo olvida es para avanzar, no para retroceder. Es decu, para superar lo realista y lo romántico.<sup>9</sup>

Gutiérrez Nájera was a great follower of Gustav Adolfo Bécquer who, like Nájera stood between two schools of literary development and was considered Spain's greatest poet of the nineteenth century. Although his works contained the melancholy, the

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<sup>9</sup> Blanco-Fombona, El Mod. y los poetas mod., 70-71

yearnings, and the passion of the romantic poet, a new and equally important element was discovered in the deliberate vagueness which permeated his poems. He believed that poetry pervaded everything else, it was everywhere about him, and that the poet should merely suggest it to his readers.<sup>10</sup> To further this same idea, he used assonance instead of consonantal rhyme which did not mark out so sharply the verse structure, and gave the poem a hazy outline.<sup>11</sup>

These characteristics of Bécquer were very prominent in the works of Gutiérrez Nájera. The suggestion of ideas and subjects, and the use of assonance rhyme can both be found in his works as well as characteristics of romanticism itself.

Gutiérrez Nájera, aparece como el mayor elegista del romanticismo en América. Puede ilustrarse esta opinión, recordando o citando casi toda su obra, y principalmente 'Mariposas', 'Ondas muertas', y 'Pax animae'. Posee aquella melancolía, aquel misticismo aquella predisposición a sufrir penas de amor u otras penas, y aquella aptitud para cantarlas, que es en último análisis, como y se insinúa, lo que caracteriza en nuestros días al élego o elegíaco.<sup>12</sup>

As Blanco-Fombona has said, Ondas Muertas, which is one of Nájera works written in 1887, will help illustrate the romantic tendencies and the influences of Gustavo Bécquer in the writings of the

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<sup>10</sup> Walter T. Patison, Representative Spanish Authors, II, New York, 1942, 328

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Blanco-Fombona, El mod. y los poetas mod., 73

poet. In it can be found the method of using the assonance rhyme which gives the poem a vagueness. Nájera has suggested the sounds of the murmuring waters beneath the earth's surface very well. In this poem also, he has made use of Bécquer's idea that poetry is everywhere, and should only be suggested. The first stanza will serve as an example of most of these qualities.

En la sombra debajo de tierra  
 donde nunca lle<sup>g</sup>o la mirada,  
 se deslizan en curso infinito  
 silenciosas corrientes de agua.  
 Las primeras, al fin, sorprendidas,  
 por el hierro que rocas taladra,  
 en inmenso penacho de espumas  
 hervorosas y límpidas saltan.  
 Mas las otras, en densa tiniebla,  
 retorciéndose siempre resbalan,  
 sin hallar la salida que buscan,  
 á perpetuo correr condenadas.<sup>13</sup>

Besides the influence of Bécquer, Gutiérrez Nájera felt perhaps more strongly that of the French romantics. The greatest of these was Alphonse de Lamartine, (1790-1869), whose poetry was deeply emotional, sensitive, melancholy, religious and idealistic. He wrote spontaneously and with little thought for art.<sup>14</sup>

Victor Hugo, (1802-1885), most certainly was known to Nájera. His vocabulary was extraordinary, and he had a fine sense of musical value of syllables and words. His style was rich

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13 Nájera, "Ondas Muertas", Poesias, 97

14 H. Stanley Schwarz, An Outline History of French Literature, New York, 1937, 103

in metaphors and beautiful in color.<sup>15</sup>

Alfred de Musset, (1810-1857) was, perhaps, one of the strongest influences upon the works of Nájera. Although he was not a definite pessimist, he took keen delight in reflecting upon the melancholy of the past. His works were noted for their emotion, delicacy, charms, soft shading, simplicity, and ease.<sup>16</sup> He wrote frequently of the pains of love, and as Nájera's being classified among the writers, such as Musset, who wrote on this subject, Blanco-Fombona said:

Aunque no hubiese lamentado la inmisericordia de una cruel amado, como la mujer sin nombre de 'Las Noches', de Musset, . . ., pertenece al linaje de dolidos y sensibles amorosos.<sup>17</sup>

Many writers of literary histories feel that Bécquer and Musset were the main influences upon Nájera's works. One of these is Leguizamon who said:

De todas las influencias españolas y francesas experimentadas por el autor, dos fijaron de un modo estilizador: Bécquer y Musset. De ahí su línea de intimidad melancólica, suavemente musical, siempre delicadas.<sup>18</sup>

Although, the Frenchman Musset may have been a strong influence, strongest of all was Théophile Gautier, (1811-1872),

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15 Ibid., 100

16 Ibid., 104

17 Blanco-Fombona, El. mod. y los poetas mod., 74

18 Julio A. Leguizamon, Historia de la Literatura Mexicana, II, Buenos Aires 1945, 261

who like the Spanish poet Bécquer, was another poet whose works bordered on the line between two different literary currents. He has been called the pivot about which romanticism and realism turns.<sup>19</sup> His works were rich in color and symbols, with a paucity of ideas. He was a great stylist, a great advocate of art for art's sake. His poem Art was perhaps, the main influence felt by Nájera. Therefore it is cited here in its entirety.

#### ART

The fairest things are wrought  
 With most expense of time  
                   And thought,  
 Gem, painting, marble, rhyme.

No false rules countenance,  
 But like a stately god  
                   Advance  
 In tight cothurnus shed.

Fie on cheap artistries,  
 like to a shoe outworn,  
                   Whose ease  
 A shapely foot will scorn.

Shun, sculptor, the soft clay  
 Shaped while the spirit floats  
                   Away  
 On tide of alien thoughts.

Carve with unflagging care  
 Carrara, Parian pure  
                   And rare,  
 That hold the sharp contour.

Borrow from Syracuse  
 Its bronze and in it trace

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19 Schwarz, Out. Hist. of Fr. Lit., 103

The Muse  
In her immortal grace.

With wonder-working hand  
In agate stone imbed  
The grand  
Apollo's golden head.

Shun watery tints that faint  
And swiftly fade again,  
And paint  
On the hard porcelain

Blue sirens lily-pale,  
Twisting circumbluent  
Their tail,  
Heraldic blazonment.

In nimbus triple-lobed  
Show Virgin and Christ-child  
Englobed  
In radiance undefiled.

Time turns all else to dust,  
Art only keeps its crown;  
The bust  
Outlives the ruined town.

The graven medal found  
Where the plowshares displace  
The ground  
Reveals a Caesar's face.

Jove and Jehovah fade;  
The sovran verse alone  
Is made  
To outlast brass and stone.

Carve, polish, mold your dream,  
And the bright forms unlock  
That gleam  
In the resistant block.<sup>20</sup>

Gutiérrez Nájera continued to study the French writers.

He was familiar with them all from the beginnings of romanticism through the currents during his own times. Blanco-Fombona said that the poet was familiar with: "...las estéticas que pugnaban por el campo sucesivamente--romanticismo, realismo, parnasianismo y por último, simbolismo---."21

The next influences, in point of time, were those of the writers of Parnassian poetry. Parnassian poetry derived its name from a collection of poems of different authors published in 1866 by Lemerre under the title of Le Parnasse Contemporain. The work of these poets showed the imprint of realism through the objective treatment of subject matter and attention to detail and form.<sup>22</sup> Gutiérrez Nájera's verses with their clarity and perfection of form, their incomparable polish and subjectivity, exhibited a mastery of this French Parnassianism and also of symbolism which is to follow. His prose was plastic as was Gautier's poet, Verlaine.

Of these Parnassians, three seemed to have influenced Nájera's works. The first was Leconte De Lisle, 1820-1824, who like the Mexican poet, was very pessimistic. He seemed to have a distaste for modern life, and so it was that he reverted

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21 Blanco-Fombona, El mod. y los poetas mod., 71

22 Schwarz, Out. Hist. Fr. Lit., 116-117

to myths and legends of the ancients.<sup>23</sup> His sculptural, highly colored style showed great precision in his descriptions. The later characteristic of this French poet could also be stated about some of Nájera's works.

Another of this group, perhaps, not as prominent an influence upon Nájera's as upon some of the other modernists, was José-Maria de Heredia, (1842-1905). Read by Gutiérrez Nájera, apparently, for the musical beauty in his sonnets. This musical quality found in so many of the writers followed by Nájera was the main characteristic that made him a precursor of the modernistic movement in Mexico.

The third writer of parnassian poetry was Francois Coppée, (1842-1908) whose works were characterized by their lyricism, grace, and delicacy. His poems and short-stories usually depicted the rather sentimental and humbler side of life. Coppée may have caused a change in the romanticism of Gutiérrez Nájera. "De su romanticismo lo que iba cambiando era el aspecto, no la esencia."<sup>24</sup> His Lápida, written about the 1800s, was perhaps the works in which the change first became noticeable.<sup>25</sup> For better understanding of this change in Najera's romanticism,

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23 Ibid., 117

24 Blanco-Fombona, Mod. y los poetas mod., 80

25 Ibid., 8



an excerpt from this poem follows.

Mucho silencio bajo los pinos  
la luz apenas se atreve a entrar  
en esa calle de verdes tuyas  
donde se enreda lo obscuridad.

¡Cuántos amigos en los sepulcros  
de blanco mármol o piedra gris!  
¡Cuántas alfombras de 'no me olvides'  
miro olvidadas en el jardín!<sup>26</sup>

Speaking of this work, and the change it exemplified in

Nájera, Blanco-Fombona said:

No parece--no es cierto?--el Gutiérrez Nájera, ebrio de lirismo, que conocemos. Si a este cuadro no se le considerase de carácter realista, ¿cómo clasificarlo? Realismo de romántico. Es nuestro Gutiérrez Nájera, pero nos lo han cambiado un poco. La culpa la tiene Coppée, o algún poeta por el estilo. El cincelador de la 'Lápida' no contaba sino veinte años. El viento soplaba de Medán.<sup>27</sup>

A later influence than that of the Parnassians, was Symbolism, poetry based on the belief that there was something beyond the mere external appearance of things.

The writers of this trend sought to evoke emotions through word symbols and the harmony of sound combinations. They had little regard for exact grammatical construction and were entirely subjective.<sup>28</sup>

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26 Ibid., 80-81

27 Ibid., 80

28 Schwarz, Out. Hist. Fr. Lit., 119

The first influence from this group of writers was Stéphanos Mallarmé, (1849-1898) who believed that poetry should express emotions evoked by objects. His poetry was rather vague and exotic.<sup>29</sup>

Of much greater importance in influence was Charles Baudelaire, (1821-1867). In his poems, which were suggestive rather than descriptive, the sense of smell and touch were highly developed. He was a great admirer of Edgar Allan Poe and made many translations of that writer's works.<sup>30</sup> This part of his works was perhaps the big contribution to those of Gutiérrez Nájera. Through Baudelaire, Nájera became acquainted with Poe's style, which many feel was evident in his own works. This fact seems to back the statement of Carlo Peña that Gutiérrez Nájera: "...went direct to the French sources and through them be acquainted with Foreign literatures."<sup>31</sup>

As several of the French writers who influenced Nájera wrote of ancient myths and delved into Greek and Latin literature for their inspirations, so Nájera's Odas breves is full of Greek and Latin reminiscences, which he probably found in the French writings he so enjoyed.

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29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.

31 González Peña, Hist. Mex. Lit., 281

Last and perhaps greatest of the symbolistic influences was Paul Verlaine, (1844-1896). He was very independent and advocated the use of verses containing an odd number of syllables. These works of Verlaine were pervaded by a definite penetrating melancholy and he insisted that a poet must have music above all else.<sup>32</sup> His Art of Poetry was without a doubt, the greatest influence exerted upon Gutiérrez Nájera's writings. For this reason, this poem must be cited in full.

#### THE ART OF POETRY

You must have music first of all,  
and for that a rhythm uneven is best,  
vague in the air and soluble,  
with nothing heavy and nothing at rest.

You must not scorn to do some wrong  
in choosing the words to fill your lines:  
nothing more dear than the tipsy song  
where the Undefined and Exact combine.

It is the veiled and lovely eye,  
the full noon quivering with light;  
it is, in the cool of an autumn sky,  
the blue confusion of stars at night!

Never the Color, always the Shade,  
always the nuance is supreme!  
Only by shade is the trothal made  
between flute and horn, of dream with dream!

Epigram's an assassin! Keep  
away from him, fierce Wit, and vicious  
laughter that makes the Azure weep,  
and from all that garlic of vulgar dishes!

Take Eloquence and wring his neck!

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32 Schwarz, Out. Hist. Fr. Lit., 120

You would do well, by force and care,  
wisely to hold Rhyme in check,  
or she's off-if you don't watch--God knows where!

Oh, who will tell the wrongs of Rhyme?  
What crazy negro or deaf child  
made this trinket for a dime,  
sounding hollow and false when filed?

Let there be music, again and forever!  
Let your verse be a quick-wing'd thing and light--  
such as one feels when a new love's fervor  
to other skies wings the soul in flight.

Happy-go-lucky, let your lines  
disheveled run where the dawn winds lure,  
smelling of wild mint, smelling of thyme...  
and all the rest is literature.<sup>33</sup>

In the defense of Gutiérrez Nájera's turning to the  
French writers for inspiration, Francisco Monterde said:

Gutiérrez Nájera--que en su mocedad rompió lanzas por la literatura española--reconoció la deuda que tenía con la literatura de Francia. Además, debemos recordar que su padre, don Manuel Gutiérrez, desempeñó un puesto público, en Querétaro, en los días de la Intervención francesa y que la esposa del escritor, Cecilia Maillefert, descendía de franceses. ¿Qué podía hacer, qué podían hacer otros escritores de América alejados espiritualmente de España, después de la Independencia? Mas bien que censurarlo, debemos agradecer que haya vuelto el rostro hacia donde las influencias eran, al menos, estimulantes, para no imitar a aquellos contra quienes reaccionarían los escritores de la llamada 'generación de 98'.<sup>34</sup>

Gutiérrez Nájera was noted for his adaptation of the French spirit to the Spanish American need of literary renovation.

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<sup>33</sup> Paul Verlaine, Selected Poems, trans. C.F. McIntyre, Berkeley, 1948, 181-183

<sup>34</sup> Francisco Monterde, "Prólogo", xviii

There was one more influence which must be noted individually and that was the Spanish realist Ramón de Campoamor (1817-1901). All of his verse was written in simple, everyday language, and dealt with subjects which could occur in everyday life. So it was that in language and subject matter it fell within the scope of realism. Pattison said:

Camposamor is constantly showing that everything depends upon the point of view and that in the case of most established truths more than one a conservative in life and in politics, Camposamor in his writing is constantly undermining the most fundamental conservative beliefs, especially any sly attacks on idealism tend to bring his readers back from an unreal world to the hard facts of the real world around us. Thus his philosophy is realistic, too.<sup>35</sup>

Although Gutiérrez Nájera did not conform to Camposamor's philosophy, his works, especially his prose, were full of short and spontaneous observations of life.

These were not the only men read and followed by Nájera, on the contrary, they are only a few, but they are the important ones who influenced the final style and subject matter which made Nájera known in the field of literature. Blanco-Fombona said that Nájera:

Es un poeta espontáneo, de maravillosa fineza tempermental y verbal. Va adquiriendo la cultura día a día; en medio de la propia producción. Por tanto, y por ser un espíritu en exceso flexible, se dobleza al influjo de

contrarios vientos. En su obra se advierte el soplo de huracán y el de la brisa..... ¡Ojalá hubiera sido siempre el mismo! Pero no. A menudo en sus poemas no hay suyo sino la envoltura verbal. El instinto volvía pronto a servirla de estrella orientadora y volvía a aparecer el magnífico poeta. Esa oscilación de péndulo es la historia de su vida literaria.<sup>36</sup>

Gutiérrez Najera, was not the product of any one school, but he was not ignorant of the trends of his times. He was acquainted with Ibsen, Tolstoy, Nietzsche, Carlyle, Renan, Rollinat and Richepin.<sup>37</sup> His prose more than once suggested a spiritual kinship with that of Washington Irving although Najera himself denied having read the works of the norteamericano. Accused at times of imitating Irving's Rip Van Winkle in his Rip-Rip, Najera said: "....Pero no he leído el cuento del novelador e historiador norteamericano....."<sup>38</sup>

These foreign influences tended to make Najera more refined, more subtle in his ideas, giving new shadings to his expressions. He assimilated all others in such a manner as to convert them into something personal and exclusively his own. "Con todo, ¡qué poeta! ¡Qué poeta y qué prosista! Pocas veces vino al mundo un artista con temperamento tan fino y tan

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36 Blanco-Fombona, Mod. y los poetas mod., 71

37 Ibid.

38 Manuel Gutiérrez Najera, "Rip-Rip", Cuentos Color de Humo, Mexico, 1942, 5

decidida vocación, "39

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39 Blanco-Fombona, Mod. y los poetas mod., 70

## CHAPTER V

### MODERNISM IN GUTIÉRREZ NÁJERA'S WORKS

Modernism in the literature of Nájera's era embraced many varied tendencies: a musical quality to verse and prose, a varied and renovated use of verse forms, the use of words in situations where they had never been used before, an interest in French sources, a desire to discover new worlds of imagination and a rare and original blending of tone and color by the matching of sense with sound.

Most of these characteristics of the modernistic movement can be found in the works of Gutiérrez Nájera. Justo Sierra said that there could be found in Nájera's work:

a sort of smile of the soul, which gives to all his poems a light and winged rhythm that, penetrating in impalpable waves, like light through all the nerves of style, lends them a unique magic that produces on the spirit an impression similar to a difficulty conquered without effort--a difficulty that turns into delight and enchantment.<sup>1</sup>

The manifestations of this gift, which helped to prepare the way for the cultivation Nájera's taste were mainly, (1) his distinction and dexterity of style, (2) his great organization,

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<sup>1</sup> González Peña, Hist. of Mex. Lit., 281



(3) his inner delicacy and tenderness of feeling, and (4) his graceful and skeptical humor that often tempered the exaltation of his feelings by light humorous parenthesis.<sup>2</sup>

In his most famous poems, written between 1880 and his death, the reader can follow Gutiérrez Nájera's flight along the road closer and closer toward perfect expression. Among these works are Mológo del incredulo (1887), La Duquesa Job (1884), Mariposas (1887), La serenata de Schubert (1888), Pax animae (1890), Non omnis moriar (1890), De Blanco (1888), Mis Enlutadas (1890), and A la Corregidora (1895).<sup>3</sup>

Gutiérrez Nájera's style ranges from excellent ornamental frescoes to pictorial poems with neat precisely-drawn, miniatures. This precision, said Henríques-Ureña, was "an art in which he preceeded Azorin by many years."<sup>4</sup> These neat miniatures form the background for Gutiérrez Nájera's meditations in his Pax animae already quoted. These miniatures constantly change as if the poet were taking his readers for an afternoon walk in a varied landscape. First, perhaps, he paints a picture of a sculptor surrounded by his white statues:

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2 Ibid. 282

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid., 177

En mármol blanco tus estatuas labra,  
Castas en la actitud, aunque desnudas,<sup>5</sup>

Then his readers find themselves outdoors roaming through lonely forests and dark woods where echoes are asleep, and the clear sky lie above:

¡Duermen los ecos en la selva umbría...  
Y nadie, nadie a nuestra voz responde!  
\* \* \* \* \*  
Y alzar los ojos para ver el cielo.....  
Cuando el cielo esta azul ó tiene estrellas.<sup>6</sup>

Again he invites his readers to roam the shore of the sea or a lake surrounded by flowers:

Huir del mar y en el dormido lago  
Disfrutar de las ondas el reposo. . .  
\* \* \* \* \*  
Los mismos que de flores se coronan  
Para el dolor, para la muerte nacen. . .<sup>7</sup>

These same background miniatures appear also in his earlier poem De Blanco (1888). His background miniatures in this work are painted with the same paint and brush with which Najera writes his meditations. The reader is first painted a beautiful lake surrounded by snow-capped mountains upon whose waters swans are plentiful. Everything is suggestive of the color white.

¿No ves en el monte la nieve que albea?  
La torre muy blanca domina la aldea,

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5 Gutiérrez Najera, "Pax Animae" Poesias, 9-10

6 Ibid., 23-24; 27-28

7 Ibid., 29-30; 37-38

Las tiernas ovejas triscando se van,  
 De cisnes intactos el lago se llena;  
 Columpia su copa la enhiesta azucena  
 Y su ánfora inmensa levanta el volcán.<sup>8</sup>

In the verse following, the readers are taken into the quiet peacefulness of a church where a Mass is in progress and where once again everything is white.

Entremos al templo: la hostia fulzura;  
 De nieve parecen las canas del cura,  
 Vestido con alba de lino sutil;  
 Cien niñas hermosas ocupan las bancas  
 Y todas vestidas con túnicas blancas  
 En ramos ofrecen las Flores de Abril.  
 Subamos al coro: la virgen propicia  
 Escucha los rezos de novicia  
 Y el cristo de mármol expira en la cruz;  
 Sin mancha se yerguen las velas de cera;  
 De encaje es la tenue cortina ligera,  
 Que ya transparente del alba la luz.<sup>9</sup>

These unique miniatures can be found in most of Najera's works.

Also in this poem, the modernists extensive use of the suggestive power of words can be found in Najera's use of words which suggest the color white. Some of these words are, lirio, nieve, azahar, neblina which are always associated with the color white; virgen, santa and pura all suggest purity symbolized by white; cisnes and mármol, first pictured as white unless otherwise described; and even místico in that it is usually suggestive of spirits which bring to mind a vague airy

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 13-18

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 19-30

whiteness. The first, eighth, and last verses are very good examples of this use of vocabulary.

¿Qué cosa más blanco que candido lirio?  
 ¿Qué cosa más pura que místico cirio?  
 ¿Qué cosa más casta que tierno azahar?  
 ¿Qué cosa más virgen que leve neblina?  
 ¿Qué cosa más santa que el ara divina?  
 De gótico altar?

\* \* \* \* \*  
 ¡Oh mármol! ¡Oh nieves! ¡Oh inmensa blancura!  
 Que esparces doquiera tu casta hermosura!  
 ¡Oh tímida virgen! Oh casta vestal!  
 Tú estas en la estatua de eterna belleza;  
 De tu hábito blando nació la pureza,  
 ¡Al ángel das alas, sudario al mortal!  
 \* \* \* \* \*  
 En sueños ufanos de amores contemplo  
 Alzarse muy blancas las torres de un templo  
 Y oculto entre lirios abrirse un hogar;  
 Y el velo de novia prenderse a tu frente,  
 Cual nube de gasa que cae lentamente  
 Y viene en tus hombros su encaje á posar.<sup>10</sup>

Nájera has made use of the twelve syllable line which, although recognized, was uncommon until the advent of the modernists. His rhyme scheme is a a b c c b and consonance, the usual type of rhyme. It is not until later, that he makes use of assonance rhyme. Therefore it is safe to say that in this poem, Najera still holds to the accepted fundamentals of versification with the less offensive modernistic changes being manifested.

Gutiérrez Nájera was modernistic too, in the emotions he expressed, sadness, and mysticism. According to Arturo

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 1-6; 43-48; 55-60

## Torres-Rioseco:

Donde Gutiérrez Nájera alcanza su plenitud en en el modo elegíaco de "La serenata de Schubert" y en la actitud transcendental de "Mis Enlutadas", "Las almas huérfanas", y "Después". . . .<sup>11</sup>

A good example of these emotions and the attitude transcendental is his poem Mis Enlutadas which was written in 1890. In this poem Nájera personifies the sorrows which descend to the depths of his soul. The shadow of death seems to hang above many of the verses. In the first three he describes his sorrows as being entombed in his soul, as having blood colored pupils, and Tears of snow. He explains them as his constant companions and the only ones to which he can turn in time of need, therefore he must love them. Nájera's melancholy transcendental attitude could be attributed largely to the new modernistic movement. Verses one, two, three, and four express this transcendentality and melancholy tinged with a sort of hopelessness.

Descienden taciturnas las tristezas  
 Al fondo de mi alma,  
 Y entumecidas, haraposas brujas,  
 Con uñas negras  
 Mi vida escarban,

De sangre es el color de sus pupilas,  
 De nieve son sus lagrimas:  
 Hondo pavor infunden...yo las amo  
 Por ser las solas  
 Que me acompañan,

Aguárdolas ansioso, si el trabajo  
 De ellas me separa,  
 Y buscolas en medio del bullicio,  
 Y son constantes,  
 Y nunca tardan.

En las fiestas, á ratos se me pierden  
 Ó se ponen la mascara,  
 Pero luego las hallo, y así dicen:  
 -- ¡Ven con nosotras!  
 ¡Vamos á casa!<sup>12</sup>

Nájera uses a combination of a long and short line giving the poem a certain feeling of desperation as of someone attempting to explain, amidst tears, why he is so forlorn. The brevity of the last two lines in each verse adds a touch of breathlessness as seen in verses five and six.

Suelen dejarme cuando sonriendo  
 Mis pobres esperanzas  
 Como enfermitas, ya convalecientes,  
 Salen alegres  
 Á la ventana.

Corridas huyen, pero vuelven luego  
 Y por la puerta falsa  
 Entran trayendo como nuevo huéspedes  
 Alguna triste,  
 Lívida hermana.<sup>13</sup>

Also notable is the fact that Nájera has employed a variety of rhymes; he follows no one scheme, nor does he seem to have any one set method. In verse seven his scheme seems to be a a b b c:

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12 Gutiérrez Nájera, "Mis Enlutadas", Poesias, 1-20

13 Ibid., 21-30

Entre esas luces, rívido, tendido,  
 Mi espíritu descaña;  
 Y las tristezas, revolando en torno,  
 Lentas salmodias  
 Rezan y cantan.<sup>15</sup>

This constant variation was a definite characteristic of the modernists. They were in search for new ways and means with which to express themselves, and so it was that many writers, as did Nájera, had no set rhyme scheme in some of their works.

Another method Nájera employed to produce a sense of melancholy, was by his use of heavy vowel sounds as in the last verse as well as all through the poem.

Venid y habladme de las cosas idas  
 De las tumbas que callan,  
 De muertos buenos y de ingratos vivos...  
 Voy con vosotras,  
 Vamos a casa.<sup>16</sup>

In 1887 Gutiérrez Nájera wrote his Monólogo del incredu-  
le which is written in six line verses of eight syllable lines with a rhyme scheme of abaab. Nájera conforms to this pattern throughout the poem. This work, although more romantic than modernistic, expresses the emotions such as an intolerance for life in this world, deep sorrows of the soul, and a transcendental attitude which were all considered characteristics of the precursors of the modernistic movement. Nájera expresses the

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 36-40

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 81-85

the tone of the entire poem in the first few lines as he questions the reasons for life.

La existencia no pedida  
 Que nos dan y conservamos,  
 ¿Es sentencia merecida?  
 Decídme: vale la vida  
 La pena de que vivamos?  
 \* \* \* \* \*  
 Díome el acaso la vida,  
 Y la muerte apercebida  
 Desde que nací me espera  
 De modo que cuando quiera,  
 Tengo franca la salida.<sup>17</sup>

His repetition of words which concern the negative side of things might be considered to show the beginnings of the modernistic tendencies in that they carry the feeling throughout the entire poem. Some of these words are, dolor, aborrecida, pena, desesperadas, obscura, tristeza, castigo, matar, morir, malo, tormento and fementida. The following lines will help to show this use of vocabulary.

¡Qué vida tan fementida!  
 ¡Cuánta es su astucia! El placer  
 Nos obliga á dar la vida,  
 Y á la vida aborrecida  
 Nos encandena el deber!<sup>18</sup>

In this work again Najera expresses a transcendental attitude as he ponders over the Dios who put him on this earth he dislikes so much. Why should he live? Is his existence a

17 Ibid., "El Monólogo del incrédulo", 1-5; 1620

18 IBID., 141-145



form of punishment or a prize?

Si es castigo, ¿cual pecaso,  
Sin saberlo cometimos?  
Si premio, ¿por qué ganado?  
Sin haberlo demandado,  
Responded: ¿por qué vivimos?<sup>19</sup>

He goes on later to say that if he were suddenly face to face with the "Dios cruel que me dió Lo que no solicité."<sup>19a</sup> He would gladly tell him "No me gusto la existencia."<sup>19b</sup> Nájera says that life is a constant struggle which is an uneven match, and that when death does come, he will finally know the true name of the Dios cruel.

El combate es desigual:  
Venga la muerte, mejor,  
Y sabremos al final  
Si ese Dios se llama el Mal  
O si se llama el Amor.<sup>20</sup>

He asks why he doesn't kill himself since he is awaiting death so impatiently, and he explains that he could not because with the stroke that would take his life, he would be causing his mother's death. He is at a loss to find a means of exit from this life and states that he must wait until his mother goes; then he may follow. Here again can be found the negative

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19 Ibid., 6-10

19a Ibid., 22-33

19b Ibid., 39

20 Ibid., 51-55

vocabulary.

¡Cómo encontrar la salida?  
 ¡Matarla al matarme?... ¡No!  
 Verdad que me dió la vida  
 Por mí tan aborrecida,  
 Mas ¡no supo que era yo!...  
 \* \* \* \* \*  
 ¡Oh, qué dolor tan artero!  
 Mas, por desgracia, bien sé  
 Que todo aquí es pasajero.  
 Mi madre se irá primero,<sup>21</sup>  
 Y entonces... ¡la seguiré!<sup>21</sup>

The early modernists' sorrows were deep and strongly expressed. In general Nájera differed from the rest in that he usually spoke of his sorrows in a soft murmur, but in this poem his expression becomes vehement. His sorrows, his hates, his pains, and his desperation build up until at the end he exclaims:

En vano buscan salida  
 Las almas desesperadas,  
 Estás en mi alma, vida,  
 Como el puñal en la herida!  
 ¡Yo, con las manos atadas!

Y tu poder es tan fuerte  
 Y tal luchamos los dos,  
 Que he llegado á aborrecerte:  
 Ó ven mas aprisa ¡oh muerte!  
 Ó surge en mi sombra ¡Oh Dios!<sup>22</sup>

In 1887, Gutiérrez Nájera wrote his Mariposas which perhaps, shows the first traces of modernism in his works. In this poem, Nájera used the matching of sense and sound to obtain

21 Ibid., 116-120

22 Ibid., 236-245

a blending of tone and color. It is almost possible to feel the flight of the butterflies and see the pictures rather than read the words telling of these things. The method of accentuation used within the lines tends to express the rise and fall in the flight path of a butterfly along with the variation of light and heavy vowel sounds. Both are readily seen in the first verse.

Ora blancas cual depos de nieve,  
Ora negras, azules o rojas,  
En miriadas esmaltan al aire  
Y en los petalos trescos refozan.  
Leves saltan del caliz abierto,  
Como prófugas almas de Fosas,  
Y con gracia gentil se columpian  
En sus verdes hamacas de hojas.  
Una chispa de luz les da vida  
Y una gota al caer las ahoga;  
Aparecen al claro del día,  
Y ya müertas las halla la sombra.<sup>23</sup>

Although Nájera is consistent in his use of ten syllable lines, it is another of those usages renewed by the modernists, and the variations of the number of lines to a verse along with the indefinite scheme for rhyme are modernistic characteristics here again in evidence. These things are visible throughout the poem. The first verse contains twelve lines, while the other three contain sixteen lines. Verse two exemplifies the variation in rhyme scheme, and once again the rhythm which is produced by accentuation, light and heavy vowel sounds both of which tend to lengthen and shorten the sounds of the vowels.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., "Mariposas", 1-12

¿Quién conoce sus nidos ocultos?  
 ¿En qué sitio de noche reposan?  
 ¿Las coquetas no tienen morada!  
 ¿Las volubles no tienen alcoba!  
 Nacen, aman, y brillan y mueren,  
 En el aire, al morir se transforman,  
 Y se van, sin dejarnos su huella,  
 Cual de tenue llovizna las gotas.  
 Tal vez unas en flores se truecan,  
 Y llamadas al cielo las otras,  
 Con millones de alitas compactas  
 El arco-iris espléndido forman.  
 Vagabundas, ¿en donde esta el nido?  
 Sultanita, ¿qué harem te aprisiona?  
 ¿A qué amante prefieres, coqueta?  
 ¿En qué tumba dormís, mariposas?<sup>24</sup>

All through the poem Nájera remembers that the butterflies live but one day. His constant references to the fact adds his characteristic tinge of soft melancholy such as lines like:

Aparecen al claro del día,  
 Y ya muertas las halla la sombra.  
 \* \* \* \* \*  
 Nacen, aman, y brillan y mueren,  
 \* \* \* \* \*  
 ¡Así vuelan y pasan y expiran  
 \* \* \* \* \*  
 ¡Es de noche...ya no hay mariposas!<sup>25</sup>

In 1888, Gutiérrez Nájera wrote his very famous La serenata de Schubert. In this poem he shows his keen receptiveness to music. It was another of the first poems to show the beginnings of the poetry with the tones of music, which was to make him famous. "Nada la ha hecho tan popular en hispanoamérica

24 Ibid., 13-28

25 Ibid., 11-12; 17; 29; 52

como 'La serenata de Schubert' de un notable paralelismo melédico con la 'Serenata' del músico vienés."<sup>26</sup>

In regards to the romanticism found in this work, Torres-Ríosoco wrote that this "which would be the summit of the prosaic and awkward in a poet of 1845, is redeemed in Gutiérrez Nájera by the technical skill manifest in his vocabulary and images."<sup>27</sup> La serenata de Schubert is also an example of the fact that, unlike the earlier romanticists who imagined the luxuries etc. about which they wrote using feeble nouns and vague, generic objectives, Gutiérrez Nájera and other modernistic writers wrote mainly of things which they had experienced. Nájera had experienced wealth and luxury, and was, himself a fair pianist. Therefore, once in a while listening to Schubert's serenade, he was moved to writing this sequel to it in verse.

Again in this poem can be found a variation in the number of syllables to a line, and the number of lines to a verse. These constant inconsistencies on Nájera's part in conforming to any set schemes, lines, and syllables is a characteristic found in the modernistic writers, and one for which they were severely criticized.

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26 Leguizamón, Hist. de la lit. mex., 262

27 Arturo Torres-Ríosoco, New World Literature, University of California, 1949, 85

Nájera has attempted to endow the words of his poem with the quality of music, and in so doing, he has made use of long and short vowel sounds, heavy and light vowel sounds, and accentuation. In the lines of the poem we find the choice of vocabulary itself musical such as words like: canción, armonías, esparciendo, alma, and mañana. This same musical quality found within individual words can also be found in word combinations besides the words which form the rhyme, such as: Limpida brota, blandas armonías, cada nota, ternuras mías, dentro del seno, and no la oís. The rhythm of the words is produced by their vowel content such as: i and e, i and a forming a diphthong; a, o and i forming a triphthong; and the vowels singly according to their positions within the word. All these qualities put together, produce a very definite music quality in the entire poem and can be seen in the following lines of the first verse.

¡Oh, qué dulce canción! Limpida brota  
Esparciendo sus blandas armonías,  
 Y parece que lleva en cada nota  
 ¡Muchas tristezas y ternuras mías!  
 ¡Así hablara mi alma... si pudiera!  
Así dentro del seno,  
 Se quejan, nunca oídos, mis dolores!  
 Así, en mis luchas, de congoja lleno,  
 Digo a la vida: -- ¡Dejame ser bueno!  
 -- ¡Así sollozan todos mis amores!  
 ¡De quien esa voz? Parece alzarse  
Junto del lago azul, en noche quieta,  
Subir por el espacio, y desgranarse  
Al tocar el cristal de la ventana  
Que entreabre la novia del poeta...

¿No la oís como dice: "hasta mañana?"<sup>28</sup>

In this poem again, can be found Nájera's soft melancholy running throughout the work. His sensitive nature shows itself in the deep emotions felt as he listens to the music. This melancholy is brought to attention when Nájera speaking of the hopeful hasta mañana of the departing lover, adds a slight tinge of sorrowful doubt.

¡Hasta mañana, amor! El bosque espeso  
Cruza, cantando, el venturoso amante,  
Y el eco vago de su voz distante  
Decir parece: "¡hasta mañana, beso!"  
¿Por qué es preciso que la dicha acabe?  
¿Por qué la novia queda en la ventana,  
Y a la nota que dice: "¡hasta mañana!"  
El corazón responde: "¿quién lo sabe?"<sup>29</sup>

The entire work is filled with melancholy, with the same soft melancholy as the music for which it was written. The shadow of death hangs over many lines such as:

¡Y todo ya muy lejos! ¡todo ido!  
¿En dónde está la rubia sonadora?  
.... ¡Hay muchas aves muertas en el nido,  
Y vierte muchas lágrimas la aurora!  
.... Todo lo vuelvo a ver... ¡pero no existe!  
Todo ha pasado ahora... ¡y no lo creo!  
Todo está silencioso, todo triste...  
¡Y todo alegre, como entonces, ve!

.....  
¡Y nada existe ya! Calló el piano...  
Gerraste, virgencita, la ventana...  
.....

28 Nájera, "La serenata de Schubert", Resias, 1-16

29 Ibid., 17-24

¡Hasta mañana!... ¡Y el amor risueño  
 No pudo en tu camino detenerte!...  
 Y lo que tú pensaste que era el sueño,  
 Fue sueño, ¡pero inmenso! ¡el de la muerte!<sup>30</sup>

In this poem Nájera makes reference to Musset as if comparing his Lucía with the melancholy produced by Schubert's serenade.

En torno al velador, niños jugando...  
 La anciana, que en silencio nos veía...  
Schubert en tu piano sollozando,  
 Y en mi libro, Musset con su "Lucía."  
 \* \* \* \* \*  
 ¡Ya nunca volveréis, noches de plata!  
 Ni unirán en mi alma su armonía,  
Schubert, con su doliente serenata,  
 Y el pálido Musset con su "Lucía."<sup>31</sup>

Speaking of the romanticism tendencies in Nájera's later works which were considered to be modernistic, Blanco-Fombona said:

Mal podía ser un romántico de 1830. No cayó en el anacronismo de echar sobre su cuerpo juvenil los desteñidas chafecos del estreno de "Hernani".  
 ...Su romanticismo fundamental se empapará en la corriente de la nueva poesía, que indirectamente ha contribuido el a estimular. Se empapará como las gradas de mármol de los palacios venecianos en las aguas del Gran Canal sin perder su resistente y blanca virtualidad de piedra.<sup>32</sup>

Nájera may have been essentially a romantic and elegiac poet, but he was full of the restlessness of his times. Mexican poetry needed a new and more subtle means of expression

30 Ibid., 65-72; 89-90; 93-96

31 Ibid., 57-60; 97-100

32 Blanco-Fombona, El mod. y los poetas mod., 71



and he was the one who found it. All the foreign influences and the romantic background of his works was softened and moulded by his native Mexican candor in contrast with French intellectualism.<sup>33</sup>

The modernistic tendencies, always present in his works did not become fully developed and ready for recognition until the later years of his life. His romanticism always shown with a different light than that of the romantic writers proper. As shown previously, his La serenata de Schubert, which was an earlier work in comparison, showed his attempt at endowing words with the power of music, but earlier still, in 1884, he wrote Nada es mío which, although extremely romantic, was none the less modernistic in the novelties and the musical qualities that it contained than those of his later works. Finally in 1893, he wrote El Salmo de Vida. According to Blanco-Fombona, this work was, in the works of Gutiérrez Nájera, what Nocturno was in the works of Silva, one of Nájera's fellow precursors.<sup>34</sup> This poem is another link in his struggle closer and closer to perfection of expression. In this poem, although not as marked as in his La serenata de Schubert, Nájera has also given a musical quality to the words.

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33 González Peña, Hist. of Mex. Lit., 282

34 Blanco-Fombona, El mod. y los poetas mod., 81

In his, El Salmo de Vida, Nájera seems to have conformed to a more uniform number of syllables in a line, and his rhyme scheme has more of a pattern than in some of his other works. In his first verse, transcribed below, his scheme seems to be a b a b c d c d e f e f g h g h. He uses the eleven and seven syllable lines, but they do not conform to any particular pattern. In the first verse, all lines are of eleven syllables except for lines six, eight, and twelve which contain seven syllables. In the second verse the first line is the only seven syllable line. Here again we find the variation of verse lengths; verse one contains sixteen lines, verse two, eight, verse three, sixteen, verse four ten and the other verses are longer or shorter in length.

Also, in this poem Nájera hails the coming of Spring and with it, new hopes that arise. The first and second verses are rather light and happy as he sings:

Ya volvéis, mis amantes golondrinas;  
 Ya regresáis de vuestro largo viaje  
 Y en el atrio del templo, peregrinas,  
 Se estremece de júbilo el follaje.

\* \* \* \* \*

Ya vuelves, Primavera,  
 Ya vuelves con tu séquito de amores,  
 Y se oculta en los fresnos vocinglera  
 La turba de los pájaros cantores.<sup>55</sup>

This joyfulness, however, turns to melancholy as he begins to

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55 Nájera, "El Salmo de Vida", Poesias, 1-4; 17-20

meditate upon the reasons for his inability to react to the beauties brought by Spring.

Hoy esas buenas hadas no me quieren,  
Y mis enfermas, pálidas estofas,  
Abren los ojos, lloran ¡y se mueren!  
\* \* \* \* \*  
Sólo yo, Primavera azul y hermosa,  
Para el festín no tengo ni una rosa.  
Volviste; los botones se entreabrieron,  
¡Pero mis pobres versos no volvieron!<sup>36</sup>

The melancholy becomes very strong as Nájera begins to remember the deep sorrows and long lonely nights of the now ending winter.

¡Oh, qué invierno tan triste! ¡Cuan oscuras  
Sus noches y cuan largas! De la muerte  
Muy quedo nos hablaban;  
La nieve, del sudario; y las estrellas  
Como con muchas lágrimas brillaban.<sup>37</sup>

He speaks of the silent piano, the wide silent halls, the timid hope, the smile always absent from the lips, the sleep always far from the eyes, and the fearful heart when a doctor must be called for an ill loved-one. Therefore it is not unusual to find again the shadow of death upon many of the lines as some of those already quoted. Nájera ends his sorrowful memories with the following.

¡Y cómo adivinaba el pensamiento,  
En la atmósfera muda de la alcoba,  
El vuelo cauto y el glacial aliento  
De la que vidas y cariños roba!

36 Ibid., 38-40; 101-104

37 Ibid., 51-55

Los amorosos padres, sin hablarse,  
 Con sólo una mirada se entendían,  
 Y sus tristes miradas, al cruzarse,  
 -- ¡No puede ser! ¡No puede ser! decían.<sup>38</sup>

He then strikes a more cheerful note as he hails the virtues of  
 once again.

¡Qué gozo! ¡Ya está sana! ¡Ya está buena!  
 ¡Ya estas, oh Primavera, en nuestras almas!<sup>39</sup>

In 1895, Gutiérrez Nájera wrote his last poem which  
 turned out to be his masterpiece in imparting to words, the sug-  
 gestive quality of music. Justo Sierra said that Nájera's dream  
 came true, and that he was so successful that "the singers of all  
 Spanish America awoke in his nest and flew from it."<sup>40</sup> This last  
 poem, A la Corregidora was written just before Gutiérrez Nájera's  
 death. It was written for recitation at the corner stone laying  
 ceremony for a monument to the heroine of the Mexican Revolution.  
 In it, Nájera bids the attentive ear to listen to the opening of  
 the buds in the spring, the murmuring waters, and the singing of  
 the birds; to the whole earth which was hymning the psalm of life  
 to the lady, and was offering incense at her altar.

¿Oís un murmullo que, débil, remeda  
El frote fríolento de cauda de seda  
En marmoles tersos o limpio mármil?  
 ¿Oís?... ¡Es la savía fecunda que asciende,

38 Ibid., 72-79

39 Ibid., 115-116

40 Coester, Lit. Hist. of Span. Am. Lit., 364

Que hincha los tallos y rompe y enciende  
Los rojos capullos del príncipe Abril!

¡Oh nobel señora! La tierra te canta  
El salmo de vida, y á ti se levanta  
El germen despierto y el núbil boton;  
El lirio gallardo de cáliz erecto;  
Y fulgido, leve, vibrando, el insecto  
Que rasga impaciente su blanda prisión!

La casta azucena, cual tímida monja,  
Inciensa tus aras; la dalia se esponja  
Como ave impaciente que quiere volar,  
Y astuta, prendiendo su encaje á la piedra,  
En corvos festones circunda la yedra,  
Celosa y constante, señora, ¡tu altar!<sup>41</sup>

The modernistic novelty was not in the ideas, but in the method by which Nájera conveyed them, as much by the flow of verbal sound as by the meaning of his words. This was a trait characteristic of many of the other precursors of modernism. Nájera attained this musical flow of words by the extensive use of sinalefa and sinéresis in combination with final consonants of soft flowing sounds such as; s, m, n, l, and r. He seems to have avoided any harsh or short sounding consonants whenever possible. All the letters of his words flow smoothly from one to another therefore, he depends upon the heavy and light sounds of the vowels along with accentuations for inflection within the lines.

Al viejo primate, las nubes de incienso;  
Al heroe, los himnos; a Dios, el inmenso  
De bosques y mares solemne rumor;

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41 Nájera "A la Corregidora", Poesias, 19-36

Al púgil que vence, la copa murrina;  
Al mártir, las palmas; y a tí--la heroína--  
Las hojas de acanto y el trebol en flor.

Hay versos de oro y hay notas de plata;  
Mas, busco, señora, la estrofa escarlata  
Que sea toda sangre, la estrofa oriental:  
Y húmedas, vivas, calientes y rojas,  
A mí se me tienden las trémulas hojas  
Que en gráciles redes columpia el rosal.<sup>42</sup>

A la Cirregidora was the peak of Nájera's career, and was the final step in his struggle towards perfection of expression. This work contained all the traces of the new trend in full bloom. Finally, Gutiérrez Nájera had attained his long sought after goal in his writings. Justo Sierra said:

In the last six or eight years of his life, having attained complete mastery of himself--writing not in the style of his masters, but in the style they would not have repudiated and that was unique in our literature--the poet, "El Duque Job", realized in his writings what he had dreamed of: the amalgamation of the French spirit and the Spanish form. In full march towards the ideal, with the control already acquired over his genius and expression, he was stopped by death's impious unforeseen stroke.<sup>43</sup>

In this poem Nájera has conformed to a rhyme of consonance and he uses a six line verse throughout. Nájera might be considered by some as modernistic in his concrete language, and indirect approach to his subject. In his last verse only, can anything be found that might be connected directly with the

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 1-12

<sup>43</sup> González Peña, Hist. of Mex. Lit., 282

heroine's deeds.

Venid á la ironía que os brinda hospedaje  
 ¡Oh pájaros raudos de rico plumaje;  
 Los nidos aguardan; venid y cantad!  
 Cantad á la alondra que dijo al guerrero  
 El alba anunciando: ¡Desnuda tu acero,  
Despierta á los tuyos... Es hora... Marchad!<sup>44</sup>

Gutiérrez Najera was as great a prose writer as he was a poet, and the modernistic tendencies were just as strong in his stories as they were in his poems. According to Alfred Coester:

In the grace and good taste that marked his works, he was a forerunner of the modernistic prose for he abandoned the heavy Spanish period for the lighter French style. And his clear logic and vehemence as a prose writer stand in sharp contrast with the vague sentimentality of the poet.<sup>45</sup>

Gutiérrez Najera gave a new form to the story, a kind of lyric caprice in which the humorist now frivolous, now bitter, and the poet, inwardly mournful, roam through the fields of reality and fantasy, sometimes rising to planes of transcendental meditation. This is best seen in the first paragraph of his Rip-Rip, as he considers what can be seen when eyes are closed.

Este cuento yo no lo vi, pero creo que lo soñé.  
 ¡Qué cosas ven los ojos cuando están cerrados!  
 Parece imposible que tengamos tanta gente y tantas cosas dentro... porque cuando los párpados caen, la mirada, como una señora que cierra su balcón, entra a ver lo que hay en su casa. Pues bien: esta casa mía, esta casa de la señora mirada que yo tengo, o que me

44 Najera, "A la Corregidora", Poesias, 43-48

45 Coester, Lit. Hist. of Span. Am., 364

tiene, es un palacio, es una quinta, es una ciudad, es un mundo, es el universo....; pero un universo en el que siempre están presentes el presente, el pasado y el futuro. A juzgar por lo que miro cuando duermo, pienso para mí, y hasta para ustedes, mis lectores: ¡Jesús, qué de cosas han de ver los ciegos! Esos que siempre están dormidos, ¿qué verán? El amor es ciego según cuentan. Y el amor es el único que ve a Dios.<sup>46</sup>

There was an intimate warmth and friendliness to Nájera's prose. It at times suggested chattiness, but he never allowed it to degenerate to small talk. After Nájera has completed his meditations upon the things seen by closed eyes, he goes on to mention other stories written about the same subject.

Entiendo que la recogió Washington Irving para darle forma literaria en alguno de sus libros. Sé que hay una ópera cómica con el propio título y con el mismo argumento.<sup>47</sup>

The entire story is told as if Nájera were chatting with a friend while enjoying an after dinner cigar. His chattiness shows itself when he explains the circumstances of Rip-Rip's aging.

Rip-Rip, el que yo vi, se durmió, no se por que, en alguna caverna en la que entró...quién sabe para qué.

Pero no durmió tanto como el Rip-Rip de la leyenda. Creo que durmió diez años...tal vez cinco... acaso uno...; en fin, su sueño fué bastante corto: durmió mal. Pero el caso es que envejeció dormido, porque eso pasa a los que sueñan mucho.<sup>48</sup>

It is easy to understand the words of Isaac Glodberg when, re-

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46 Nájera, Cuen. Co. de Hmo., 5

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid., 6



ferring to Gutiérrez Nájera's prose, he said that it was, "in reality a kind of poetry, a strange commingling of substance and airiness."<sup>49</sup>

Neither is it a difficult thing to see how different is the prose of Nájera from the tiring prose of his predecessors. His colorful whimsical sketches were called cronicas, and were something entirely new to Spanish American literature.

Nájera's varied writings included travel sketches such as his Puebla, Jalapa, and Morelia which he visited during his honeymoon.<sup>50</sup> He starts his sketch about Jalapa in his characteristic friendly manner, much in the same way a traveler might discuss with a friend his ideas about travel.

Me gusta llegar de noche a una ciudad desconocida para mí; tomar, luego que llego al paradero del ferrocarril, el tranvía o el coche que han de llevarme hasta mi alojamiento; encerrarme en el cuarto; tenderme en la cama a buena hora, y descansar allí del viaje, libre de importunos, con la botella de viejo O'Porto en el buró, un buen libro junto a la botella y abierta la aromosa caja de tabacos.<sup>51</sup>

Through Gutiérrez Nájera, then Mexican prose and all Spanish American prose acquired a pliability which it did not have before. The Mexican writer Julio Jiménez Rueda said:

La gracia, la agilidad, la delicadeza matizan la obra de los escritores que pertenecen al grupo

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49 González Peña, Hist. of Mex. Lit., 283

50 Monterde, "Prólogo", x

51 Nájera, Cuen. Co. de Mmo., 295

que colaboró en "Revista azul" y "Revista moderna", y son cualidades eminentes en la prosa de Gutiérrez Nájera.<sup>52</sup>

Therefore, Nájera not only introduced music into poetry, but also into prose. Isaac Goldberg said that due to the efforts of Gutiérrez Nájera, the language, in general became melodious and

after him, the verse of the poets flows more smoothly, more musically; the prose is more agile, more luminous, and gleams with a thousand pregnant suggestions, novel images, and evidences of a varied culture.<sup>53</sup>

Nájera's La Revista Azul was the modernist's standard and gathering place in Mexico. Although Gutiérrez Nájera had but one short year in which to make it an important and enduring influence of the times, his humor, distinction and elegance in writing left their mark. The founder of La Revista Azul, was immediately criticized for his title which was so like that of Rubén Darío's Azul, published in 1888 only six years before. Nájera therefore wrote a defense of his title without once mentioning Darío's work. His defense itself, most probably exerted an influence upon the writers of his times.

He wrote:

¿Y por qué azul?...Porque en lo azul hay sol, porque

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52 Hespelt, Anth. of Span. Am. Lit., 456

53 González Peña, Hist. of Mex. Lit., 280

en lo azul las esperanzas en banderas. El azul no es sólo un color: es un misterio...una virginidad intacta. Y bajo el azul impasible, como la belleza antigua, brinca del tallo flor, abriendo ávida los labios; brota el verso, como de cuerno de oro el toque de diana; y corre la prosa, a modo de ancho río, llevando cisnes y barcas de enamorados, que solo para alejarse de la orilla se acordaron un breve instante de los remos.-- Azul es la toldilla de nuestra gondola, amigos nuestros.<sup>54</sup>

It was on this same gondola according to Francisco Monterde that

navegaron con libertad los amigos de Gutiérrez Nájera, que quisieron ser discípulos y compañeros suyos: primero Tablada, Urueta, Gamboa, Micros, el doctor Flores; después todas las que tendían la mano, de cerca o de lejos.<sup>55</sup>

All those who were interested and following the modernistic trend gathered around La Revista Azul, and from it grew some of Mexico's greatest modernists. The Revista Azul came to have an influence on the literature of the period similar to that exercised by The Renaissance of Altamirano and was as important to Mexican literature and that of other countries as was Rubén Darío's Azul.<sup>56</sup>

The review concerned itself only with works of literary art in prose and poetry. News items were always excluded; even the death of Gutiérrez Nájera himself received little notice. So it was that the name of nearly every writer interested in the modernistic movement appeared in its pages. Frequent contribu-

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54 Monterde, "Prólogo", xvi-xvii

55 Ibid., xvii

56 González Peña, Hist. of Mex. Lit., 281

tors were as stated before, Luis G. Urbina, José Juan Tablada, Rafael de Zayas Enríquez and even the name of the Andalusian poet Salvador Rueda appeared. It was perhaps in part through Rueda that the spirit of the new poetry passed into Spain.

Blanco-Fombona said that the influence

del claro soñador mejicano sobrevivió en Luis G. Urbina y Amado Nervo, para no mencionar otros metificadores menos del Anahuac.

En otros Republicas, se le imitó mucho. . . A España también se extendió su fama y su influjo, aunque parcialmente por los campos de Villaespesa Suelen cruzar de tiempo en tiempo las grandes alas blancas de Gutiérrez Nájera.<sup>57</sup>

As for the influence he probably exerted upon some of his fellow precursors of modernism, Blanco-Fombona said that he was

un novedor instintivo que desbrozó el campo a los novadores sistematicos.

Ademas, si su poesia influyó vagamente en todos, influyó mas indirectamente en otros de los que iban a ser ases del modernismo. Silva lo leyó; Casal lo leyó; Darío lo leyó.<sup>58</sup>

Rubén Darío's Sonatina may very easily have been influenced by Nájera's Mariposas which was written in 1887, the year before Darío's work appeared. The two works are very similar in tone, and both contain that musical quality characteristic of the modernistic writings and which was Nájera's contribution to the

57 Blanco-Fombona, El mod. y los poetas mod., 83

58 Ibid.

modernistic movement. Although one is written in ten syllable lines, while the other is in fourteen syllable lines, the rhythm is very much the same in the two works.

Nájera influenced Victor M. Racamonde's writing in Venezuela. Racamonde's intense love of the natural, combined with his melancholy made him a ready follower of the Mexican writer.

Nájera's creation in the field of literary journalism, exercised a powerful influence on two generations of writers; those of his own generation, and those of the generation that followed. A. Francisco Monterde said in his prologue to Nájera's Cuentos Color de Humo: "De 'El Duque Job' irradiaba un optimismo contagioso que corría por las venas de todos: aun después de su partida, parecía flotar polvo de oro en el ambiente."<sup>59</sup>

The admiration of Gutiérrez Nájera is so great among the younger Mexicans, that they say that he was one of the greatest poets born in Mexico since Sor Juans Inez de la Cruz.<sup>60</sup> The reason for their feelings is perhaps that he voiced, to a certain extent, the mental qualities derived by the educated Mexicans from their race and environment. Probably also, because his verses, often suggested more ideas than they expressed verbally, and pos-

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59 Monterde, "Prólogo", xvii

60 Coester, Lit. Hist. of Span. Am., 363

essed that rare musical quality.

So it is not difficult to see that for his use of French sources, his melancholy, his fine verses, and his marriage of words to music that Gutiérrez Nájera was a precursor of the modernistic movement in Spanish American literature. In regards to Nájera's influence and position in the field of Spanish American literature, Blanco-Fombona said:

Entonces él, a su turno, y sin proponérselo, ejercía influencia en su medio, porque había vertido un alma de selección en rimas y prosas selectas, y no se había limitada a ser eco . . . Aunque el modernismo de América tomó por caminos distintos a los que siguió Gutiérrez Nájera, los últimos poemas de éste tuvieron algo de común con los primeros del modernismo en América. Tuvieron de común el que la influencia de Gutiérrez Nájera era vago pero latente y se transparente en algunos contemporáneos. . . Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera representaba en la historia del modernismo literario de América, lo que representa Miranda en la historia política de continente: fue un precursor.<sup>61</sup>

The name of Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera is never omitted from those of the precursors of the modernistic movement. His special contribution to the modernists, as brought out before, was his amalgamation of the French spirit with the Spanish form thus forming a truly universal music. In prose he contributed the light, whimsical, and friendly crónica. Thus it is surely true that he was a typical precursor of the modernistic movement, and a member of that restless, sensitive, inwardly tortured

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<sup>61</sup> Blanco-Fombona, El mod. y los poetas mod., 82-84

group which pretended to accept their destiny with tragic calm:  
as Nájera himself said:

To remember to forgive, to have loved, to have been  
for a moment happy, to have believed...and then, to  
recline wearily upon the snowy shoulder of oblivion.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Torres-RíoSeco, Epic of Lat. Am. Lit., trans.  
Isaac Goldberg, 95

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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Patricia Hagey Olson has been read and approved by the members of the Department of Modern Languages.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

Aug. 10-53  
Date

C. Salvador  
Signature of Adviser