

AMADO NERVO: POET OF LIFE AND DEATH

843

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DEDICATION

The author dedicates this thesis to his uncle,
the late Dr. C. R. McFarland.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Amado Nervo was one of the greatest and best loved poets of Mexico. He was loved not only by the intelligentsia of his country, but also by the common people. Both the Spanish-speaking and the non-Spanish-speaking world held him in high esteem. Deeply aware of the world around him and the life in it, he was the voice of the people in his search for true love, the theme and the quest of his life. His purpose was to find a solution to the mysteries of life, love, and God. He pursued these with a simplicity, devotion, and honesty that was unique and superior to that of most men. An important and interesting aspect was that death always overshadowed Nervo's studies of the philosophies of skepticism, mysticism, and love.

Nervo's style is a composite of the many styles of many of the contemporary masters of Spanish and Spanish-American literature. He could and did change with the influence of the moment.¹ He read, observed, and followed various ideas and movements and changed his philosophies with each.

The ultimate proof of Amado Nervo's popularity and success in reaching the people was in his death. When he died, Mexico and most of the Spanish-speaking world went into mourning. Mexico regarded

¹B. Ortiz de Montellano, Figura, amor y muerte de Amado Nervo (México: Ediciones Xochitl, 1943), p.13.

Nervo as an idol, perhaps more for his spirit than for his talent. He had always remained, despite his high attainments, humble and humane.

This thesis will attempt to illustrate the total philosophy of Amado Nervo. The conclusion will be founded in terms of three broad philosophies: Skepticism, Mysticism, and Love through the influence of death which was the power that ruled his life and made him search for love and God. It is to be noted that Nervo was a collector of philosophies, various schools of thought, ideas, and religious theologies in search of his ultimate goal: the understanding of love and the development of an affinity with its author, God.

Amado Nervo's poetry has been selected as the form of literature to illustrate this thesis because it is believed that Nervo best expressed himself and his ideals through this genre.

The following works of Nervo have furnished the basis for this study: Perlas negras (1898), Místicas (1898), Jardines interiores (1905), El éxodo y las flores del camino (1902), En voz baja (1909), La amada inmóvil (1914), El arquero divino (1922), Poesías varias (1919), La última luna (1919), Crónicas (1917), Serenidad (1914), Elevación (1917), El estanque de los lotos (1919).

CHAPTER II

BIOGRAPHY

Amado Neruo's biography is an interior one. He was a man torn between Skepticism, Mysticism and the Love of Religion. That he considered himself a common man not worthy of special comment is clearly illustrated in Serenidad, his autobiographical poem:

¿Versos autobiográficos? Ahí están mis canciones,
Allí están mis poemas: yo, como las naciones
venturosas, y a ejemplo de la mujer honorada,
no tengo historia: nunca me ha sucedido nada, . . .¹

He describes himself akin to a new nation and to the honorable woman because they, as he, have no history and have not succeeded in anything.

Amado Neruo was born in Tepic, Mexico, the 27th of August, 1870. He was the eldest of seven children in a family of pure Spanish lineage. His mother was proud of the fact that her family had the blood of the Spanish conquerors. There is not much history to be found about Neruo's father; he died when Amado was an adolescent.

Neruo's physical description fits strangely into the mystical facet of his life. One can see, when studying his portrait, his intense eyes and the deep, yet so distant expression in them:

Junto con su nombre su figura física de místico
perfil nazareno y su vida misma, en fin, para quienes
no eran él, fué el gran atractivo de su fama y el
pedestal de su poesía.²

¹Alfonso Reyes, Obras completas de Amado Neruo (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1928), Vol. XI, p. 21.

²B. Ortiz de Montellano, Figura, amor y muerte de Amado Neruo (México: Ediciones Xochitl, 1943), p. 31.

He was a man whose name, physical features, and life were the great attraction of his fame and formed the basis of his poetry.

It seems apparent that Nervo took much of his sense of wonder for nature, love, and God from his mother. She was a sensitive woman who wrote poetry and was deeply religious. He was strongly influenced by his mother's desire that he become a priest. She, doña Juana de Ordaz, decided to send him to the small town of Jacona, near Zamora, to enroll in the colegio that was at that time famous for its studies. Nervo entered this colegio at thirteen years of age. There he passed the first few years of his adolescence studying formal Spanish and translating Horace, Virgil, Shakespeare, and Corneille. The next year he transferred to the seminary at Zamora, where from 1886 to 1888, he studied science, philosophy, and law and became infatuated with the mystic lure of religion.

Because of family financial problems, it was necessary for Nervo to leave the seminary and to go to Mexico City to find work to help support his mother, brothers, and sisters. Working as a reporter, he suffered many hardships and disappointments because he was ignored and turned down by the leaders of the Modernist movement which he so admired. His work went unappreciated and, as his family expenses were large and his wages small, he was constantly impoverished. When one important Mexican critic, Rosendo Pineda, first saw Nervo, he asked who this strange man was:

- ¿Quién es ese hombre raro?, preguntó Rosendo Pineda.
- Amado Nervo, un poeta tepiqueño, recién venido a México.
- ¡Diablo de nombre!³

³B. Ortiz de Montellano, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

He was told that it was Amado Nervo, a poet from Tepic, who had recently arrived in Mexico City. Pineda replied, "Devil of a name."

Many people thought that the name, Amado Nervo, was a pseudonym used to signify the personality of the writer. Translated, the name would mean, "Sensitive Lover."

Cierto. Como que por mucho tiempo pensaron algunos que era un pseudónimo tras el que se ocultaba otra personalidad distinta, y luego al conocerlo, preguntábanse, al ver a aquel muchacho desgarrado, encogido, de movimientos torpes, color petrino y cara de aguilucho: ¿Pero es éste Nervo?⁴

Under the influence of the Symbolists and Decadents, Nervo wrote his Perlas negras.⁵ He used sorrow and sincerity as devices to justify the defects of these early works. The subjects he wrote about were more through vicarious experiences rather than from actual personal ones. "Cantaba inconscientemente cosas de amores y de tristezas, más de memoria que de verdad."⁶ Nervo himself realized that his earlier poems should not be taken too seriously when he said that he sang unconsciously of loves and sadnesses more from memory than from truth.

Místicas, another book of his earlier poems, was added to Perlas negras in 1904. The subject of these two groups of poems is Catholicism tending toward mysticism.

⁴B. Ortiz de Montellano, op. cit., p. 31.

⁵Amado Nervo, Poesías completas (Buenos Aires: Espasa-Calpe Argentina, S.A.), Vol. I, p. 103.

⁶Reyes, op. cit., Vol. XXV, p. 148.

Nervo went to Paris to broaden his education and to develop his talents. While there, he was influenced by the bright, carefree, colorful optimism of the French Parnassian movement. Under this influence he wrote Poemas and El éxodo y las flores del camino. He had begun to write with a new sincerity.

In Paris, Nervo met and was tremendously impressed with the famous Nicaraguan poet, Rubén Darío. They lived together, worshipped together, and wrote about each other. Darío was the opposite of Nervo. He was a heavy drinker, outgoing and searching for the earthy excitement that life offered; Nervo was an observer, introverted in comparison and searching for the esthetic side of life. The opposing forces of the brilliance of both men seemed to challenge and improve the work of the other.

Rubén Darío was the center of influence in Amado Nervo's life until in Paris, on the evening of August 31, 1901, he met Ana Cecilia Luisa Dailliez, the only woman he ever loved and the greatest of the influences on his life and writings. Nervo tells the story of their first meeting in his diary a few days after her death:

Nuestra simpatía fué inmediata; mas a pesar de ella, la almita ingénua y temerosa se resistía a entregarse. La vida había sido hosca con ella y tenía miedo.

-Yo no soy una mujer para un día- me dijo enérgica, pero sonriente.

-¿Pues para cuánto tiempo?- le pregunté entre ligero y ansioso.

-Para toda la vida.

-¡Está bien!

Y cuando al fin (después de días deliciosos en que la persistencia del amor, aunque no lograba la posesión, ya se la prometía serena) ella se entregó sin reservas al hombre a quien empezaba a conocer y estimar, nos repetimos; '¡Para toda la vida!' Y para toda la vida fué.⁷

Nervo and his Ana lived together in a common-law relationship for a period of ten years. In 1903, Nervo and Ana left Paris and returned to Mexico City where he served as a professor of literature in the Escuela Preparatoria and as an inspector in the Ministry of Public Instruction. In 1905, he took the examination for entrance into the Diplomatic Corps and was named the Second Secretary of the Legation of Mexico to Spain. He became First Secretary in 1909.

When Ana died in Madrid in the winter of 1912, Nervo was overwhelmed by thoughts of death. These thoughts were so powerful that he longed for death as an emotional release. It is believed that the only reason Nervo did not commit suicide in order to join Ana was due to the Catholic precept that suicide is a mortal sin and thus would condemn him to Hell. Nervo, of course, believed Ana to be in Heaven and, therefore, were he to commit suicide and be damned, he would be parted from her forever. Nervo wrote his immortal La amada inmóvil in memory of Ana in 1912.

In 1914, he left the diplomatic life and worked as a critic and as a journalist in Madrid. Then, in 1916, he again took his old job as First Secretary to the Mexican Legation.

⁷B. Ortiz de Montellano, op. cit., p. 55-56.

Nervo returned to Mexico a hero in 1918. He was indeed one of the foremost men of letters in the world at that time. His works were being read in all parts of the Spanish-speaking world and in many other countries. He was quite popular in the United States. On August 13, 1918, the Constitutional Government of Mexico named him *Enviado Extraordinario y Ministro Plenipotenciario en Argentina, Uruguay, and Paraguay.*

While on a trip to Uruguay, as a representative of Mexico, he died in Montevideo on the 24th of May, 1919. He said, "siempre temí la muerte, me decía; mas ahora que se acerca ya no lo temo. . . No es tan malo morir. . . Casi diría que es bueno."⁸ At last he did not fear death but thought it was good.

In conclusion, perhaps the sonnet written by Amado Nervo's closest friend, Rubén Darío, best describes him:

Amado Nervo es la palabra en que amor se concreta,
Nervo es la vibración de los nervos de mal:
Bendita sea y pura la canción del poeta
que lanzo' sin pensar su frase de cristal.

Fraille de los suspiros, celeste anacoreta
que tienes en blancura l'azúcar y la sal:
muéstrame el lirio puro que sigues en la veta,
y hazme escuchar el eco de tu alma sideral.

Generoso y sutil como una mariposa,
encuentra en mí la miel de lo que estoy capaz,
y goza en mí la dulce fragancia de la rosa.

No busques en mis gestos el alma de mi faz:
quiere lo que se aquieta, busca lo que reposa,
y ten como una joya la perla de la Paz.⁹

⁸B. Ortiz de Montellano, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

⁹Nervo, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 1.

The name Amado is a word which expresses love and Nervo is a word that expresses the vibration of the nerves. He had the sweetness of sugar and the bite of salt; he was generous and as subtle as a butterfly which could find in him his honey. Nervo is compared to a pearl of peace that searches for repose.

CHAPTER III

SKEPTICISM

Amado Nervo's skepticism is both philosophical and religious in nature. He believed that somewhere, in some form, there was a God, and he believed that the purpose of mankind's existence was to be found in God. However, he could no longer accept the precept of blind faith taught by the Catholic Church. In this state of confusion and doubt, he became skeptical of the roles of God and man in life. He investigated as many theories, theologies, and philosophies as he could but constantly with the attitude of skepticism and wariness.

Nervo entered a Franciscan monastery at Zamora near Tepic, to study for the priesthood. He had a strong desire to lead a good, moralistic life after the example of Jesus Christ and Saint Francis of Assisi. He also followed the example of Ignatius Loyola in his book, Spiritual Exercises and deprived himself of food and all material necessities.

From his experiences at the monastery, he wrote his short novel, El bachiller, in 1895, about a young seminary student. It is believed that Nervo put himself into the role of the adolescent student and recalled his own experiences, observations, and feelings about life in the seminary. There, Nervo found it increasingly difficult to accept without question the religious attitude of his superiors. In this novel, one finds that Nervo developed an inherent basic tendency

which remained with him throughout his life: a passion for discovering the ultimate reality, which is the most basic, most comprehensive fathoming of God's reasons for life and death.

During his stay in the seminary, Nervo realized that he would have to make a decision between the abject reality of the secular outside world and the idealistic, mystical world of religious life. He left the seminary and went to Mexico City. Death and near loss of faith in God crept into his life.

He soon took up the Modernist school of thought called "Científicos." This change moved Nervo from optimism to pessimism; almost from happiness to sadness. In the poem Al Cristo, he tells God:

Señor, entre la sombra voy sin tino;
la fe de mis mayores ya no vierte
su apacible fulgor en mi camino:
mi espíritu está triste hasta la muerte!¹

Nervo puts into verse his refusal to accept the Middle Age philosophy of his religious teachers. In the poem Parábola, he tells his reader:

¡Señor, a qué buscar si nadie encuentro?
¡Mi fe se me murió cuando partiste,
y llevo su cadaver aquí dentro!²

Faith is nothing more than a cadaver within him.

During this era of his life he wrote Perlas negras, a negative, pessimistic collection of poems expressing his confusion and loneliness without faith. He expresses his feeling toward this book and toward

¹Alfonse Reyes, Obras completas de Amado Nervo (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1928), Vol. I, p. 199.

²Ibid., p. 198.

himself when he tells us, "Este libro es el libro de mi adolescencia. Tiene muchos defectos, pero también muchas sinceridades."³ It has many defects, but it also has many sincere sentiments.

Nervo could never divorce himself from his belief in God. Nevertheless, he did maintain a strict independence from dogmatic and organized Christianity. He illustrated this when he said, "Un Dios que contenta mi razón: eso quiero; eso voy buscando. . ."⁴ He is looking for a God who can satisfy his reason. Then, in somewhat of a contradiction, he says that in science one will find God:

--Alma que vas anhelante
de ciencia infinita en pos,
detente: la ciencia es Dios, . . .⁵

At one point in his search for God, Nervo realized that God is with man at all times, that it is not at all necessary to go in search of Him. He discusses this search in his poem, El estanque de los lotos:

. . . yo creo en la ciencia, yo adoro la ciencia, yo
estoy seguro de que la futura religión del mundo será
una religión científica y que a Dios mismo le
hallarán algún día por medio de la ciencia los que
no hayan encontrado muchísimo antes por medio del
amor.⁶

He tells the reader that he looked for God in books, churches, in the stars, and then one day his heart told him that God was there, within himself.

³Amado Nervo, Poesías completas (Buenos Aires: Espasa-Calpe Argentina, S.A., 1943), Vol. I, p. 102.

⁴B. Ortiz de Montellano, op. cit., p. 67

⁵Reyes, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 57-58.

⁶Ibid., Vol. XXVI, p. 192.

Amado Nervo came to the conclusion, therefore, that prayer must simply mean looking within oneself. He illustrates this when he writes:

Le buscarte en los libros,
le buscarte en los templos,
le buscarte en los astros.

Y un día el corazón te dijo, tremulo:
"¡aquí está!". . .⁷

He knows that there are many ways to pray, that there are many manners in which to search out God; but, that in the end, He is to be found at the bottom of one's conscience.

Nervo adds to his Skepticism the premise that pain, sorrow, and evil are necessary forces in the shaping of a man of genius. He feels that these tribulations are the reason for human existence and that life is not meant to be a happy thing. This idea changes in Nervo's later writings, and one must consider him in view of each individual philosophy that he undertakes to study and not as a whole, single philosophy. He says:

Trabajar para vivir,
vivir para perfeccionarse,
perfeccionarse para divinizarse:
ésta es la ley.

. . . el Dolor es la razón escencial de la vida.
El objeto de la vida es el conocimiento sólo que se
adquiere por medio del Dolor.⁸

Life is a continuation of the circle of working in order to live,
living to perfect, perfecting to become divine; and through the

⁷Ibid., Vol. XVIII, p. 127-128.

⁸Reyes, op. cit., Vol. XXVII, p. 213.

suffering and pain that these cause, one will gain wisdom.

He further believes that no genius has the right to be happy because artistic creativity is indeed the product of suffering:

Sin la enfermedad, sin la inquietud, sin el dolor, tendríamos que suprimir a Pascal, no escucharíamos el Requiem de Mozart, ni el cristal angustioso de los Nocturnos de Chopin nos resonaría en el alma.⁹

Without sickness, unhappiness, pain, the famous "Requiem" of Mozart, or the beautiful artistry of Chopin's "Nocturns" could not have been created.

If this premise is true, then Nervo's La amada inmóvil is certainly true to form, as it was written while he was suffering the loss of Ana. On the other hand, one wonders if tragedy, pain, sickness, and death are necessary in the life of an artist in order for him to write brilliantly. One feels that perhaps Nervo was under the influence of his life long attraction for the pain and tragedy of death when he said this.

Nervo often said that his beloved Ana's death was the greatest sorrow of his life. He wrote La amada inmóvil, which he calls his book of sadness. He told us that it was formed tear by tear.

It is interesting to note that when he was faced with the reality of death Nervo turned wholeheartedly to God for comfort and did not question His existence. In his preface to La amada inmóvil he says

⁹Ibid., Vol. XXVIII, p. 226

to God:

Dios mío, yo te ofrezco mi dolor:
¡Es todo lo que puedo ya ofrecerte!
Tú me diste un amor, un solo amor,
¡un gran amor!

Me lo robó la muerte
. . . y no me queda más que mi dolor.
Acéptalo, Señor:
¡Es todo que puedo ofrecerte! . . .¹⁰

God had given him but one love in his life and now has chosen to take her away from him leaving him nothing but pain and sadness.

Nervo was deeply concerned with the state of world affairs and World War I. He believed that the world was going to suffer a great change at the end of this war, and he was not certain that this change would be for the better. In his writings, he used the first World War as a contrast to ensuing peace to point out that it served to renew mankind's belief and faith in God. He viewed the world, the war, mankind, and society in a pessimistic light. He painted humanity as a vast group without the guidance it needed to pick itself up again after the degradation of so widespread a war as this:

Compraos un alma en alguna parte, pues parece que
Habrá demanda de almas. Guardad para mejor ocasión
vuestro siletantismo escéptico. Yo lo veis, el mundo
va a tener hambre y sed de certidumbre.

. . . después de la guerra habrá una total "revisión
de valores." . . . Dicha revisión de valores modificará
la sociedad con un radicalismo evangélico. . . soy un
optimista incurable. . .¹¹

One must go out and buy a soul somewhere, since after the war there will

¹⁰Reyes, op. cit., Vol. XII, p. 57.

¹¹Reyes, op. cit., Vol. XXIX, p. 41.

be a great demand for them. The world hungers and thirsts after some certainty, and a complete revision of values is coming. He felt that the world's society would be changed by a movement of Christian radicalism. But, he adds that he was an incurable optimist. One supposes that this is Neruo's faith creeping into his pessimistic skepticism as the result of the mystic force of God. Therefore, one can see that his mysticism overpowers his skepticism.

By 1915, four years before his death, Neruo had come to terms sufficiently with himself, the various movements of thought that had influenced him, and with his faith in God to write Serenidad, in which is embodied the personal attitude that simple serenity is the most valuable feeling to be attained by man.

Faced with Ana's death and the realization that there were questions that he could never answer, Neruo regained his faith in God and parts of religion. He illustrated this renewal when he wrote the poem, No es culpa mía, from Serenidad:

Si alternan la fe y la duda
como la noche y el día
en mi alma yerma y desnuda,
¡no es culpa mía!

Culpa es del siglo, que forja
sistemas a discreción.
y que no trae en su alforja
ni una afirmación.

Culpa es de la obscuridad,
de la esquiva lobreguez,
del no dar con la verdad
ni una vez;

Del silencio que responde
a nuestro ansioso ¡por qué?;
del vano preguntar: ¿dónde!
para que digan: ¡no sé!

Es como un sí que confirma
mi raro sí de creyente
y que, cuando niego, afirma
tímidamente.

Es...yo no sé que simpática
insinuación oportuna
y discreta; es, como una
voz enigmática...

Como vago cuchicheo
que surge apenas de los
abismos de mi deseo
y que murmura: "¡Yo creo
en Dios!..."¹²

If his faith and doubt alternated like the night and day in his soul it was not his fault. He lays blame on the century, the obscurity of the dark destiny that does not give truth, the silence of God and religion that does not answer the eternal question of "why?" and "where?" He says that he does not know what caused this belief, but from somewhere deep within himself there is a voice telling him that he believes in God.

The result of Nervo's skepticism is that it taught him to open doors; never to shut any. He was a collector of thoughts, ideas, and ideals. Although he was not able to solve a problem because he believed that no decision should be made without all the facts being known, he taught himself to transcend the problem, which proved to be one of his most predominant characteristics. He was constantly open to suggestion and new experiences. In his poem Bien haya la vida, from Serenidad, he says:

Bein haya la vida,
que si tanto el mar se lleva,
nos da en cambio una fe nueva
por cada fe perdida.¹³

¹²Nervo, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 169.

¹³Reves, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 169.

Life would be wonderful if there would be a new faith born for every one that is lost.

Nervo was a man who was extremely flexible and broad minded. He intensely disliked the closed narrow-minded man. This dislike was illustrated when he wrote:

...sólo los hombres inteligentes cambian de opinión
(los tontos ya sabemos que siempre opinan del mismo
modo: son seres de convicciones inquebrantables.)¹⁴

The stupid will always think the same way because their opinions are cemented into their minds.

Nervo's skepticism was reflective of his age. He was the by-product of the Parnassian, Scientific, and Monastic movements of the literary world at the turn of the century. He was man of the present; he was not interested in the schools of thought of the past. His contribution to the skeptical age was an element of softness and beauty in the midst of hard cold, scientific fact and research. His intentions were to develop an understanding of man's existence in direct relationship to God. He added the quality of love to the impersonal, scientific, skeptical quests of the age and accepted uncertainty, for the first time, with faith. Love and his great hunger for an understanding of God are the basis of his skepticism.

Ultimately, Nervo decided that the question, "Who knows?" is the wise man's philosophy when he says, "Quién sabe! Esta es la única palabra posible para el sabio: ¡Quién sabe!"¹⁵ According to him, we all go through life between a "Who knows?" and a "Why not?"

¹⁴Ibid., Vol. XXV, p. 232.

¹⁵Reyes, op. cit., Vol. XXI, p. 113.

CHAPTER IV

MYSTICISM

Through the Parnassians, Amado Nervo learned the power of simplicity in nature; he learned the colder, more realistic attitudes toward life from the Modernists. From the Roman Catholic theologies and his experience in the seminary, he took love for God and his compassion for mankind. The essence of love between man and woman was learned from his ten years with his mistress, Ana. The combination of these, coupled with his tremendous powers of perception and compassion, gave him a philosophy for life that he shared with the world through his poetry.

However, Nervo was left without a philosophy of death, which intrigued him far more than life. Mysticism to Amado Nervo was merely the mystery of death, although at one time he did attempt to commune with his dead Ana in a manner similar to that of the mystics of previous generations. He seemed compelled to comprehend all the mysteries of life and death. His great friend, Miguel de Unamuno, a leading writer of the Modernistic Generation of 1898, said of Nervo:

Era la meditación o mejor, era la "ensoñación" casi casi continúa de Amado. . . Porque Nervo soñaba en la muerte. Pasó la vida soñando en la muerte, no en la vida misma. Si el hombre libre, según nos dejó dicho Spinoza-uno de los profetas de Israel-en nada piensa menos que en la muerte, Amado Nervo no era hombre libre. Y no, no lo era. Nervo sentíase prisionero; el mundo era cárcel para él.¹

¹B. Ortiz de Montellano, Figura, amor y muerte de Amado Nervo (México: Ediciones Kochitl, 1943), p. 87.

Nervo dreamed of death, not of life. Since he was preoccupied with death, he could not be a free man, and a free man he was not. He felt like a prisoner; the world was a cell for him.

The materialization of mystery to Amado Nervo was death. Death held a charm that he could not ignore; it was a constant source of curiosity for him. He could not fathom the greatness, yet the utter simplicity of death; it amazed him that death could come so quickly and so completely wipe away life and the need to understand it. In

Predestinación from Místicas he said:

¡Ves cómo tiendo en rededor los ojos?
¡Ay, busco abrigo con esfuerzos vanos. . . !
¡En medio de mi ruta, sólo arcanos!

¡Qué hacer cuando la vida me repela
si la pálida muerte me acorbarda?
Digo a la vida: ¡sé piadosa, vuela. . . !
Digo a la muerte: ¡sé piadosa, tarda. . . !²

In vain he searched for protection against doubt. In the middle of the way were thorns and at the end, only mysteries. He then asked what he could do when life repels him but death waits instead. He begged life to come and death to wait. One feels at this point that Nervo was at the brink of believing that only in death could he be truly happy, that only in death could the question that overpowered his life be solved. Nervo begs God for death in Serenidad:

Oh Dios en quien creo y a quien amo sobre todas las cosas: dame esta suprema dicha de morir ahora. ¡Hay en la otra ribera una mano amorosa, que está extendida esperando la mía para el divino viaje! ¡No retardes la unión de las dos! Da a mis versos el prestigio de una profecía hecha por los ángeles.

²B. Ortiz de Montellano, op. cit., p. 125.

Y vayamos por la muerte de la mano,
como fuimos por la vida: ¡sin temer!³

He loves God above all things and therefore begs Him for the supreme gift of death. He says that he is ready now for the divine trip and asks that he be given the power to write a prophesy inspired by the angels, that one may go through death as one went through life: without fear!

Amado Nervo enjoyed flirting with the unknown, the mysterious, and with death because it offered him a challenge; yet he never strayed too far away from the security he found in his faith in God. One assumes perhaps that his mysticism was a cover-up to hide the strong religious faith which was a natural part of his character. It is indeed possible that Nervo even believed that death and God were one and the same. Both held a great deal of mystery for him; both confused, intrigued, terrified, and drew him to them throughout his entire life. If he did not consider them the same, he credited them with equal power over man. One feels when reading poems from the Místicas collection, that he is closer to understanding the mysteries of death and the identity of God, from a man who almost knows, than ever before. Certainly, this proves the sincerity and artistry that Amado Nervo possessed: a power to create doubt, but yet to give the reader a certain strange security that through his doubting and searching, he shall be rewarded with answers.

³Ibid., p. 120.

It is to be understood that Amado Nervo was a man who lived a life that, even as it was steeped in Mysticism, was an active, full one. All his writings were inspired by one or another of his many philosophies, and he acknowledged death as the mother of philosophy. "¡Oh muerte, tú eres madre de la filosofía!"⁴ It is clear then that he never discounted his old mysterious friend, Death.

Nervo had not been engrossed enough in death, Ana's death only served to intensify his fixation. He tried to break through the impossible barrier between life and death to find some means of communication between himself and Ana. In so doing, Nervo almost lost his sanity.

Muerte, ¡cómo te he deseado!
 ¡con qué fervores te he invocado!
 ¡con qué anhelares he pedido
 a tu boca su helado!
 ¡Pero tú, ingrata, no has oído!

Vendrás, quizá, cuando la vida
 me muestre una veta escondida
 y encienda para mí una estrella. . .
 ¡Qué importa! Llega, ¡oh Prometida!
 ¡siempre has de ser la bienvenida,
 pues que me juntarás con ELLA!⁵

He searches through the philosophies of the Mystics to find the Heaven that his religious faith taught him was there. He decided that he wanted to die and begs death to claim him. He invokes Death to come to him and give him her icy kiss. He tells Death that she will always be

⁴E. Herman Hespelt (ed.), An Anthology of Spanish American Literature, (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Incl. 1946), p. 521.

⁵Amado Nervo, Poesías completas (Buenos Aires: Espasa-Calpe Argentina, S.A., 1943), Vol. II, p. 237.

welcome because when she comes he will be joined with Ana. One believes that it was Ana's death that crystallized Nervo's various philosophies on death and forced him to live realistically; Nervo reached the height of his power and artistry through the real, non-vicarious, emotion of the personal loss, through the well-studied death. His faith was indeed restored, and his poetry was now the product of true, personal experience. It is, however, difficult to separate his faith from his emotion as both are tremendously strong characteristics in the total character and works of Amado Nervo.

One finds it curious that the Nervo who once believed so strongly in the power of science, now almost completely disregards its worth. This seems to be the only one of his philosophies that he took so deeply to heart and then discarded. It can be most simply explained that science demands cold facts in order to substantiate any supposition and that religion and death require only faith which in turn requires only human emotion. Nervo once said, "Vale más errar creyendo que errar dudando."⁶ It is more valuable to err believing in God than to err doubting Him. This illustrates the fact that he found satisfaction simply believing in God without the handicap of constant doubting and questioning. Life for Nervo was no longer a life based upon the philosophy that the only certainty is uncertainty, but that certainty does not need uncertainty in order to be a liveable premise. Indeed, his faith becomes an emotion.

⁶Alfonso Reyes, Obras completas de Amado Nervo (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1928), Vol. XVII, p. 113.

Nervo had become so certain that mankind needed God that he went so far as to say, "Si Dios no existiese, el hombre, a través de los siglos, lo habría ya creado a fuerza de pensar en Él."⁷ Had God not existed the human will would have created Him.

Nervo decided to resign himself to all the forces of life, death, and God. His friend Unamuno said of him:

Me marcharé, Señor, alegre o triste;
más resignado, cuando al fin me hieras.
Si vine al mundo porque tu quisiste,
¿no he de partir sumiso cuando quieras?

Un torcedor tan sólo me acongoja,
y es haber preguntado el pensamiento
sus porqués a la Vida. . . ¡Mas la hoja
quiere saber dónde la lleva el viento!⁸

He has become resigned to either happiness or sadness. He is as interested in answering his "Why's?" about life as much as the leaves on a tree are curious to know from where the wind comes.

Finally, one finds Amado Nervo's mysticism to be personal, confidential, contemplative, and, as one critic once said:

Porque su correspondencia no era "literaria," con escritores, sino con almas perdidas en el tumulto del mundo porque siempre fué Nervo un confidente. Confidencial es su obra, de allí su tono "en voz baja"; confidencial su trato en la vida y su correspondencia. El secreto, el tono de la confesión ("Te lo diré al oído"), es, para sus lectores, la razón del encanto más popular que humano divulgado por sus versos. ¿Y este tono secreto, confidencial, subterráneo, no es el nuestro?⁹

⁷Ibid., Vol. XXVII, p. 150.

⁸Ibid., Vol. XV, p. 133.

⁹B. Ortiz de Montellano, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

This very work is confidential, and his treatment of life and every correspondence with others is also confidential. The reason for the popular enchantment that readers have for his works is the secret, the tone of confession he incorporates. And most importantly, this secret tone, the confidential tone, the subterranean tone is our own. Indeed, the tone, the devout faith with which Neruo combined emotion to form his Mysticism led to his final and strongest philosophy: Love.

CHAPTER V

LOVE

Amado Nervo found the philosophy for life for which he had been searching in the concept of universal love. This philosophy was the culmination of all that he had studied, pondered, observed, and accepted from the broad areas of Skepticism and Mysticism. In love, Nervo truly found himself and his artistry in its most beautiful form. Love sparkles with the full spectrum of emotion in Serenidad; it moves one to tears in La amada inmóvil, and it is full of optimism and hope for eternal peace in Elevación.

Nervo had lived with love as the core of his being all of his life, but had not been able to accept it as a total philosophy. It had been necessary to investigate science, the various theologies of the world's religions, and the reasons behind Skepticism and Mysticism. Above all, it was necessary that he have a deeply emotional personal experience to develop a real philosophy. As it has been stated, Nervo was a man who formed his opinions and philosophies through the experience and knowledge of others.

Great emotionalism was constantly interwoven into everything he thought and wrote. Therefore, one can appreciate the effect the life and death of his mistress, Ana Cecilia Luisa Dailliez, had on the development of his final, and all inclusive philosophy of love.

Ana and Nervo met in August of 1901, and lived together until her death in January of 1912, a little more than ten years.¹ Nervo was more than ready to share his life with someone. As he confided to a friend:

Mi soledad es casi absoluta. Paso largas horas en mi obscuro cuartucho, sin fuego, porque no he podido encenderlo en todo el invierno, devorando libros y libros, o bien, solo casi siempre, me echo a recorrer París; exploro sus rincones, oigo conferencias, veo museos, y por la noche a trabajar. Yo continuo como siempre: buscando algo que no llega, trabajando, esperando que nuestro señora la suerte tenga a bien decirme algo definitivo, y ampliando mis conocimientos. . . Me asiré hasta de la inasible, no debo irme. . .²

His loneliness is almost absolute; he spends long hours in his room reading book after book, going to lectures, museums, and writing at night. He is searching for something that does not come; luck has not yet brought it to him. Then, one evening, by luck, he meets his Ana, the force for which he had so badly longed and needed. With her he came out of his shell and became a greater writer. His poetry now expressed emotion from a new point of view, that of personal rather than of vicarious experiences.

The ten years were spent in Paris, London, Madrid, Venice, New York, and México City. They were active, productive years for Nervo. He became a cafe society intellectual leader. He spent most of these ten years in his diplomatic capacity as First Secretary of the Mexican

¹B. Ortiz de Montellano, Figura, amor y muerte de Amado Nervo (México: Ediciones Xochitl, 1943), p. 123.

²Ibid., p. 51.

Legation in Madrid where he and Ana kept an apartment. At court he was a favorite where he often read his poems privately to the King of Spain. A strange fact, however, is that he insisted that Ana not be exposed often to some of his activities and friends. It is obvious that he considered it necessary to shelter her from the hardness of the world. It might be considered, also, that since they were never married it would prove politically embarrassing to include her in his functions as a diplomat. Nervo illustrates the contrast between the simple, honest beauty and love of Ana with the frivolity of his diplomatic life:

Fuera, sonrisas y saludos
 vals, esnobismo de los clubs,
 mundidad o ropelesca.
 Pero al volver a casa, tú.³

The snobbishness and riches of the outside world could not compare to his feelings when he returns home to her.

One of the marvelous aspects of Amado Nervo's character and genius was that throughout his ten years of love with Ana, he seemed to be fully conscious that this was the most valuable period of his life, artistically and personally. Therefore, Nervo made the best of each day. He still doubted everything and continued searching for answers to the old questions of his Skepticism and Mysticism; but he never doubted Ana or their love and therefore was able to utilize and write about what he had learned from it.

³B. Ortiz de Montellano, op. cit., p. 133.

Then, on January 7, 1912, Ana died in his arms after twenty-one days of illness.⁴ Nervo remained at her side almost the entire time and watched all that he loved and that symbolized love die, little by little. This experience brought him face to face with his old friend and protagonist, Death. He watched Death work, taking away slowly but surely her life. After Ana's death, Nervo began a strange love affair with Death. One critic explains it in this way:

Se advierte en su obra la evolución de su espíritu a partir de la muerte de Ana. Son los años de Elevación y de La amada inmóvil y por amor a su muerta llegó a amar, casi materialmente, a la Muerte que había sido siempre la novia de su vida. La cortejó desde su adolescencia en Jacona y en el Seminario de Zamora; la buscaba en el misterio de las estrellas desde las ventanas de su casa en Madrid; le escribió muchos versos en todos sus libros.⁵

There was in his work an evolution of his spirit at the death of Ana. These are the years in which he wrote Elevación and La amada inmóvil, and through love for his dead Ana, he came to love, almost materialistically, Death, which had always been the true love of his life. He had courted her since his adolescence in Jacona and in the seminary of Zamora; he had looked for her in the mystery of the stars and had written her verses in all of his books.

Finally, when he is once again in control of his emotions, Nervo

⁴Ibid., p. 101.

⁵B. Ortiz de Montellano, op. cit., p. 132-133

simply thanks Ana, "Gracias, idolatrada mía, del fondo de mis entrañas, por los diez años de amor que me diste. ¡Qué Dios te bendiga!"⁶

As a tribute to Ana, and indeed to all lost love, Nervo wrote La amada inmóvil. His dedication is especially touching in its simplicity:

En memoria de Ana

Encontrada en el camino de
la vida el 31 de agosto de 1901.
Perdida--¿para siempre?--
el 7 de enero de 1912.⁷

He met her on the road of life the 31st of August, 1901, and lost her, forever, on the 7th of January, 1912.

For a period of time Nervo was inconsolable. He was intrigued with her death. It was almost as though he were more infatuated with the fact that she had tasted Death than that she was gone from his life. He was intrigued that after so many years of loving Death, it was now personified in Ana, his personification of love. She was now a part of Death. He disclosed:

¡Mi secreto? ¡Es tan triste! Estoy perido
de amores por un ser desaparecido,
por un alma liberto,
que diez años fué mía, y que se ha ido. . .
¡Mi secreto? Te lo diré al oído:
¡Estoy enamorado de una muerta!⁸

His secret is very sad; it is that he is in love with a dead woman.

⁶B. Ortiz de Montellano, op. cit., p. 126.

⁷Ibid., p. 177.

⁸Ibid., p. 187.

This love lasted the remainder of his life. Ana and Death, who had become one in the other, were his constant companions. Through them, and with Neruo's philosophy of love, he developed love into a law of life. He reasoned that if love could do so much good for him, it could do no less for the world; thus his concept of universal love. He made this the basis for all his moralistic teaching through his poetry.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this thesis, Skepticism, discussed in Chapter Three, proved to be the force that caused Neruo to doubt his naive faith in God and the love of mankind and to make his break with the Catholic Church. However, it has been found satisfactorily during the preparation of this thesis that the final power of death over man made empty many of the theories of skepticism and thus frightened him into the next major area of his philosophical quest: Mysticism.

Mysticism, discussed in Chapter Four, was perhaps the most influential philosophy in leading Neruo to his final conclusion on his personal philosophies for life and death. He was ripe for the dark, mystic theories concerning the interrelationship of man with God, other men, life and, of course, the ultimate, death.

Ana's death put Neruo in awe. He took the optimistic viewpoint, however, and decided that in Love, discussed in Chapter Four, he had been most happy and through love and his combined knowledge of skepticism, mysticism, and his own genius he would devote himself to the development and propagation of an inclusive philosophy of universal love.

It is the opinion of this thesis that Amado Neruo, Mexican poet and diplomat, achieved, rather than acquired, a personal, as well as universal philosophy of and for life through his studies and experiences. The final beauty of Neruo's importance is his genius for sharing his

great philosophy with humanity through his poetry. A poem that speaks for Amado Nervo is a part of his Llévalo de amor: "Ama como puedas, ama a quien puedas, ama todos lo que puedas . . . , pero ama siempre."¹ Love how you can, love who you can, love all you can, but always love.

It is the final opinion of this thesis that without the constant influence of death, Nervo would not have searched through the ideologies of skepticism and mysticism to reach his final goal and philosophy, universal love. Death played the role of a specter, a friend, an enemy, and the part of a secret lover. It was, indeed, the one thing that Nervo could not fathom and therefore held in such esteem that he believed that in death were the answers to all the important questions of life that he had not been able to understand nor answer through diligent study.

Nervo makes compassion the basic, master theme in his works. He, at times, seems to disregard beauty and complete, factual truth for the sake of goodness. He drew upon the compassion of Christ for his example. He seemed to feel that Christ was the most humanistic part of modern religion; and, as Nervo definitely needed some sort of religion upon which to base his love, and as he wanted to humanize religion, he clung to the simplicity, richness, and creativeness of Christ. He makes religion the embodiment of love.

In this philosophy of universal love, he found a binder for his philosophies of Skepticism and Mysticism. One is impressed with the

¹E. Herman Hespelt, An Anthology of Spanish American Literature, (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1946), p. 532.

thought that Neruo was indeed well prepared, philosophically and emotionally, through the power of understanding that he had attained through the study of Skepticism and Mysticism. It seems that love was the factor which saved him from being wasted as only a skeptic or a mystic, a fate that would have certainly underestimated his genius.

Through the concept of universal love, Amado Neruo took the role of a humanist. He sincerely was the soul of humanity in that he was a friend of the poor. This is in accord with the teachings and life of Christ. Neruo believed that forgiving love was the height of humanity. One will find this in accord with his tendency toward transcendentalism.

The proof of talent is the ability of the author to transcend the ugly and distasteful and to bring beauty to the commonplace, the average, the daily aspects of life. This indeed is Amado Neruo's talent. He spent his whole life in search of beauty. It was in and through love that Neruo found beauty. What is especially important is that he used love as a tool to search for and to create beauty. He gave love to beauty as beauty gave to love, just as he had learned to give love to Ana, as Ana gave it to him.

Strangely, at the basis of beauty, of love, of his affair with Ana, is Death. Death is the constant protagonist in all of Neruo's studies. The fear, the attraction, the mystery of Death is the equalizer that guides him in his thoughts. It was always present and unforgettable as it was unavoidable. And, as Neruo was a realist, he gave it the importance that such an absolute power deserved. However, love

became so powerful to him that he was able to accept Death finally and to encompass it in his philosophy of compassionate, forgiving love. It seems that without Death, Nervo felt that he would not have had the opportunity of searching out universal love. He compensated himself for his loss of Ana with the thought that Death would join them together again soon. Therefore he decided to devote himself to beauty, goodness, and universal love of mankind.

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