

# **JOSÉ ZORRILLA**

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## **CENTENNIAL READINGS**

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# Of *Ruidos y Quimeras*: Zorrilla and the new poetic generations\*

by  
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...como por la cascada van rodando /  
aguas y espumas en tropel sonoro.  
José Zorrilla

*Ruidos y quimeras* is one of the epigraphs of a delicate and compelling work by Gerardo Diego entitled "Notas sobre Zorrilla y música de Bécquer", published along with other author's works in a 1975 study entitled *Estudios románticos*. In his study, Diego singled out the value of the author of *Don Juan* as a forerunner with respect to the poetic generations that followed the romantics and realists. To support this assertion, he cited Zorrilla's musical facility and his metric originality, his sensibility towards the sublime, his felicitous way of capturing colour and his constant sensory descriptions of places and environments, be they exotic or local (or traditional). He further asserted: "en estos mundos materiales o quiméricos Zorrilla se anticipa a Bécquer, a Salvador Rueda, a Villaespesa, a Lorca, a los que Juan Ramón llamaría poetas alhambristas..."(39).<sup>1</sup> It is not only that Gerardo Diego was attempting to revindicate the oriental vein of Zorrilla's poetry — as one may be tempted to believe on basis of the citation —, but that, in line with the ideas that I paraphrased earlier, he went even further to affirm the decisive importance of his innovations, as much in the formal arena (or musical, the *noises*) as in the content; in the sense of his creation of a particular poetic world of magic and fantasy or illusion (two important concepts for modernism as is the one I will discuss next, the *chimeras*). A new language, together with a new musicality both in intimate communion, spring forth from Zorrilla's verses, and are the ingredients he needed to define this new imaginary or sensory world. His

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\* Translated from the Spanish by Mark Malin

<sup>1</sup> The commentary of Juan Ramón Jiménez can be found in "Recuerdos al primer Villaespesa (1899-1901)": "Como lo fueron Zorrilla y Rueda y lo es García Lorca, Villaespesa fue siempre un alhambrista," in *Prosas completas* (76).

contribution to the enrichment of poetic language could, at the very least, be an object of interest or study.

Going beyond these confines, I will also concentrate in this article on the innovative traits that Zorrilla's poetry embraces with reference to successive poetic groups. Thus, I will review these considerations in the light of the changeable fortunes of the poet's reputation from Romanticism to the Generation of 27. I do not wish to be exhaustive in this undertaking; I only pretend to elaborate on an indisputable connection: the link that he constitutes with the romantic legacy in contemporary poetry. This inheritance or legacy is recognized as decisive in the genesis and development of the poetry of the twentieth century by all writers and theoreticians.

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The coronation of José Zorrilla as a poet came late, in 1889. In this very decade, that of the 1880s, a new poetic generation of very distinct character flowered in both Spanish and American letters, a group to later be called *modernista*. Zorrilla thus survives his own period, that of romanticism, is present in the realist period — to his displeasure as he himself declared — and remains active into the so-called *fin de siglo* (he died in 1893). However, the evolution of Zorrilla is minimal. Almost all of his production subsequent to his return from Mexico, in 1866, is a response to his desire, and need, to live by the pen, and he continues to be anchored to his earlier motifs and cadences.<sup>2</sup> Ever since his early works, his efforts had been polemical. The negative criticism centered on his excessive rhetoric, in that his verses had a more redundant rather than expressive quality, and in his apparently meaningless grandiloquence. Taking this regard, Campoamor refers to his poetry as that of *extension* and Manuel de la Revilla simply and unequivocally denounced him. The concept of a Zorrilla as "easy," "rhetorical," and "empty" was to continue as a topical judgement until today.

In the writings of critics of the turn of the century his name almost always appears linked with those of Campoamor, Núñez de Arce and Espronceda and — in spite of what I indicated above — with positive affirmations. Singled out as one of the great poets of the century, he gradually began to lose prestige at the same time that the figure of Bécquer, previously considered less positively, was to gain in importance in Spain as well as in America, and who was to end up relegating all others to the shelf of oblivion. This is the case with poets such as Julián del Casal, José Santos Chocano or Enrique Gómez Carrillo, who even if they at first manifested an admiration for Zorrilla, soon tended to cast him aside (Fogelquist 143, 193). The same can be noted

<sup>2</sup> I have referred to this last stage of Zorrilla's poetry in my "Zorrilla y el tiempo nuevo (Lectura de la poesía de sus últimos años)."

in the work of Rubén Darío. However, his esteem for Zorrilla and the evident influence of his readings of Zorrilla seen in the early texts of the Nicaraguan poet, set him apart. For the *modernistas*, Bécquer is considered as the irrefutable precedent in their own poetry, although one may note in their work innovative aspects from the other figures mentioned. Zorrilla's influence gives way to the impetus of Bécquer's intimacy. In the words of Max Henríquez Ureña, referring to the Americans, "Bécquer había sobrepuesto la influencia que había alcanzado Zorrilla en la época precedente" (26).

The same author's commentaries on his style are equally negative; his comment on Zorrilla's *art of talking much without saying anything* is taken up by authoritative voices like that of Gustav Siebenmann who used this expression as an example of what he called the "conducta más gesticulante que eficazmente expresiva" of the romantic poets (27). Even so, in spite of the negative criticism, Zorrilla's impact is unquestionable and can be traced — distanced now from the confines of Romanticism and Realism — to the very borders of modernism. Though it was to be later substituted by French influences or by new and original perceptions, his *ruidos y quimeras* formed a part of that return towards the idealism that the modernists sought, an undoubtable link with the world of the romantics. In Spain this link is a natural one given, that no clear break ever really took place, for Romanticism itself in Spain lacked a truly revolutionary character.

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The first Spanish *modernistas* (Ricardo Gil, Manuel Reina and Salvador Rueda) manifest a logical kinship to the poets who preceded them, both Romantics as well as Realists. Still close to the Realists, in terms of outlook, they differ in their refusal to see art as representation and in their rejection of grandiloquent and oracular language. Consequent upon this rejection, they return to idealism and lyric intimacy. As the basis of its expression, they employ *symbol* and the concept of *suggestion* as a means of communication.<sup>3</sup> The sensorial value conceded to the image allows them to recuperate the chromatic and music qualities that had been lost or put aside from the emphatic rhetoric of poets like Zorrilla, among other Spanish and foreign writers. In this sense, the three founding *modernistas* coincide — at least with respect to Zorrilla — in their need to make their inheritance a lyrical one; that is, they abandon the essentially descriptive and epic poetry that the romantic bard represented to create a more intimate and *tono menor* poetry. The "mundo que hoy nos interesa" said "Zeda" (F. Fernández Villegas) in the appendix to *La caja de música* (1898) by Ricardo Gil,

<sup>3</sup> For the process of these changes and reactions see my *El poeta y el burgués (Poesía y público 1850-1900)*.

"es el mundo interior" (227). Or, in the words of Salvador Rueda — what is necessary for the new poetry is a Zorrilla "que agarrase la realidad" (17); that is, what gets to the essence (the harmony) of the natural magic and the personal intimacy which is always in communion with this same nature.

From among these first Spanish modernists, it is precisely Rueda who exhibits a strong indebtedness to Zorrilla and who gives genuine testimony to his admiration for him. In his work *El ritmo* he stresses a concept of poetry as a hymn to nature in which colours and notes accumulate, a concept which the symbolist wing of *modernismo* was to stress. In this sense, Romantics and Symbolists are linked in their analogical vision of the universe, a point to which I shall return.

For Rueda, Zorrilla is a "poeta natural" among so many imitative poets who are incapable of capturing the "himno de la naturaleza"; he speaks of Zorrilla's "armonías inefables," of his "oído enciclopédico" (*Ritmo* 13) (which was an "aparato de repercusión sublime donde resonaban y se convertían en colores y músicas todas las del mundo"[19]). He calls him "padre de la forma y maestro de la rima" (65). Compared with Leconte de Lisle and Théophile Gautier, representatives, respectively of poetry-sculpture and of poetry-painting, Zorrilla's work, in Rueda's opinion, was identified with poetry-music.<sup>4</sup>

Reina, as well as Rueda, dedicate compositions to the poet in which they underline similar traits which might serve as a summary of his work. Salvador Rueda does so in an extended series of alexandrine verses; Manuel Reina in a heroic *romance* included in *Astros*, a more extensive text in which he sings the praises of his favorite poets. That dedicated to Zorrilla begins:

Es su hermosa y brillante poesía  
del bardo la canción apasionada;  
el bélico rumor de los torneos;  
los gritos de las trompas de la caza;  
los murmullos de sílfides y ondinas  
en sus palacios de lucientes aguas;  
los héroes del amor; el negro claustro;  
oriente con sus perlas y sultanas;  
el rechinar del puente levadizo;  
las bellas partituras de la Italia,  
y el mundo de los dulces ruiseñores,

<sup>4</sup> In the same essay in *El Ritmo*, from which the above quotes were taken, he speaks further of Zorrilla. See especially 13-20, 28-29, 43, 53 and the letter that was directed to Zorrilla of which is to be found in the appendix, (85ff).

de la luz, de las rosas y las auras  
(*Cromos y acuarelas* 57).<sup>5</sup>

The references used by Reina in the text underscore the characteristics of Zorrilla's poetry. Adjectives like *hermosa*, *brillante* and *apasionada* frame Reina's precursor by their emotive and sensorial character. In the other verses, dominated by heroic accentuation, are the themes and traits of his own poetry using Zorrilla's vocabulary and his preference for asyndeton. For him, the music of a verse is not in its accentuation and metre, but rather in the redundant use of the chosen words. Even more, colour and music appear in almost tangible form and, in his poetic world, through personification, they become embodied. Together with the *bardos*, *caballeros de torneo* and *héroes de amor*, *sílfides*, *ondinas* and *sultanas orientales* (which represent the various aspects of the Zorrilla's poetic world: the medieval-traditional, that of the magical and the occult and the oriental), the individualized sound image, which distinguish each one of the parcels that they symbolize; the *gritos*, the *rumor*, the *murmillos* ... seem to take on their own life. They are like the very "dulces ruiseñores," an image so often used to allude to the fluency and naturalness of the poet's song. All together in orchestrated form, they offer that *bella partitura* which is a natural harmony; the partitura of *luz*, *rosas*, and *auras* form a final chromatic gradation which is equally as harmonious.

In short, Reina reflects upon Zorrilla as teacher in his use of the whole range of sounds and musics (the *ruidos*), a master of his *partitura*. On the other hand, light and colour figure in contrast, always offering transitions in a living poetic world, one that Reina knows how to recreate by his naming of the *lucientes aguas* and the *negros claustros*. It is a poetry, then, in which atmosphere and environment and where marvellous or real beings, always idealized, are born of an intuition of the visionary sense of the bard. He feels himself annointed, he creates a spiritual poetry, one transcendent and refined, even though Reina may, in the end, emphasize a decadent note in selecting what he takes from Zorrilla.

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The most notable novelties which are derived from Zorrilla's poetry are the creation of a particular world, a lexicography, and concrete forms and subjects which are worthy of further consideration. As far as metric and rhythmic innovations are concerned, all of the monographic essays and manuals on the period coincide in recognizing his quality as an innovative forerunner. If Romanticism, in its defence of

<sup>5</sup> The poem by Salvador Rueda can be found in *Canciones y poemas. Antología concordada de su obra poética* (23-25).

inspiration and of creative liberty, may be considered as constituting a break with inherited traditional metrical moulds (already narrow and rigidly accented by the imposition of the poetical norms Neoclassicists) and as having instigated liberty of form, the audacious innovations and combinations of Zorrilla contributed decisively in this process. His break with tradition constitutes an obvious milestone in the development of contemporary lyricism.

In pursuit of the equation of art with nature championed by the Romantics ("The poet must only take the advice of Nature, Truth and inspiration" wrote Victor Hugo [63]), Zorrilla — who was blessed with an keen ear and great artistic facility — knew how fully to accommodate metrics and content. Or put another way, he employed diverse techniques to enhance his poetic world, infusing it with musicality and colour. Romantic passion finds the ideal path to breathe sensorial value into poems by the use of intense accentuation in the mixing of a variety of rhythms and metre. Rueda astutely noted that "el ritmo es seguramente idea," and he once again alluded to Zorrilla:

No se fijan en que un ritmo cualquiera, si se sabe oír, es una idea; una idea que hay que destacar por medio de una palabra, como una idea musical se destaca por medio de notas... Así se explica que, a veces, una poesía con disparates e incoherencias, como algunas de Zorrilla, pero de ritmo bien nacido, poético de veras, nos transmita perfecta y hondamente su idea. (*El ritmo* 53)

Zorrilla saw this in the same way, since he refers to "música con formas" and, besides, he was also aware of the just how effective his formula was (*La noche y la inspiración* 19).<sup>6</sup> Novalis had already established the importance of the emotive and musical relations between words, above and beyond their meaning, and — later — Verlaine alludes to the "la musique des idées" "la musique du verbe". Closer to the Spanish model, the American modernists polished their verses and arrived at the same symbiosis, as in the case of Darío. Harmony and euphony became the priority, more important even than the meanings of the words that were used. The verse should *sound* good above all, and on the plane of aural and mental reception, suggestion takes on an important role.

More concretely, the polymetric stanzas of Zorrilla constituted a break with the conventional norm and left a deep imprint in the poetry that was to follow. They showed the possibility of making the poem a musical whole. The form that without a

<sup>6</sup> All quotes from Zorrilla's, unless otherwise indicated, come from Tomo I of his *Obras Completas* published by Manuel P. Delgado, the 1905. References are indicated in the text only by the poem's title and the corresponding page number.

doubt constitutes the best example of this phenomenon — though also the most often repeated in his work — is the "ordered" polymetric form of his metric scale. Such is the case with the fragment "La carrera," which is included in *La leyenda de Al-Hamar* (Introduction to *Granada*). Moved by the desire to find that perfect music, and doing away with all types of conventions, he, along with others, experiments with rejecting metre altogether in verses of the *Granada* and in *La flor de los recuerdos*. Cadence, or rhyme is treated likewise. In his proposal to accentuate the union between sound and meaning, for example, by the words that allude to sound or to its perception, rhyme, he thereby creates gradations or antithesis (canciones/ sonos, armonía/ gritería, sonoro/ coro, etc.). With respect to the inattention to rhyme, it is curious to observe how the heroic *romance*, used by Manuel Reina in the cited text above, and which is - - as Aguilar Pieñal has shown — the stepping-stone to the free hendecasyllable in which rhyme is completely rejected, was also used by Zorrilla in *Granada* (33).<sup>17</sup>

He also collaborated in the recuperation of metres that were later to be used in the new poetry; among these are the alexandrine, the trochaic heptasyllabic form as well as the dodecasyllabic, which, with the rhythm of the *seguidilla* (7 + 5), would be passed on to Salvador Rueda, Rubén Darío, and others. Having touched on the questions of metre I turn to the underlying conceptual organisation.

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All of these experiments and renovations respond to the primary proposal of Zorrilla's poetry: the search for and the breathing of life into *harmony* ("¡Bello es vivir; la vida es armonía!" he exclaims in *Indecisión*, [57]). This will, subsequently, be seen in the *modernistas* and later developments. All of this touches on a particularly romantic and consequently idealist creative concept of art in that the poet is seen as a special being, touched by the divine who sings at the insistence of inspiration:

*canta*, dijo una voz, tal es tu suerte....  
... y me echó a la tierra y a la vida,  
y al impulso de su hábito divino,  
con cántiga risueña o dolorida  
la soledad alivio del camino:  
y cumplo así la ley de mi destino. (19)

His song is, then, an obligation and a natural reaction that sets him apart and drives him to feel isolated, as is the case — later — of those who allude to the poet of the *ivory tower*. Like them he is a cursed being:

Un ángel que pecó en el firmamento,  
y el Señor en su cólera le envía  
para arrostrar sobre la tierra impía

largas horas de lágrimas y afán.  
(*A Don Jacinto de Salas y Quiroga* 43)

Dominated by this spirit, the poet, in intimate contact with nature, knows the rhythm, the music of objects, and his obligation — as Zorrilla saw it — is to reveal nature's hymn to man:

... el orbe ante mis ojos  
despliega los misterios  
que impulsan la infinita  
y excelsa creación;  
y hollando los escombros  
de tronos y de imperios,  
revienta en armonía  
mi libre corazón  
(*Introducción* 20),

that universal harmony to which Bécquer would also later refer.

For Zorrilla, poetry, above all, is music, and from this is derived his predilection for the metaphor of the *ruiseñor* and of the *trino*. His song obeys a *sublime inspiración* that allows him to capture and to penetrate worlds of mystery and harmony: fundamental concepts of Zorrilla's poetry, but also of all modern poetry, concepts which underline and empower this revealing and discovering propensity, as well the magical element of the lyrical. The analogical vision of the universe, intimately connected with the cabbalistic, the demoniacal, etc., links up with this scheme of things. The analogic view comprehends the universe as a vast language of rhythms and correspondences; the poem comes to be a microcosm, a reading of the universal rhythmic language. This concept of the universe, as Octavio Paz explains, is reborn after Romanticism and ends up giving shape to the essence of all contemporary poetry. Zorrilla must be seen in this context and to this may be attributed the musical potential of his verse. Paz notes, for example, that there is a correspondence between accentual versification and analogical vision (89 and subsequent pages).<sup>7</sup>

Consequently, his poems constitute or produce themselves as *imitaciones*, a word that is repeated again and again, like an echo of the consonances and tonalities of the hymn:

No hay canto, ni suspiro,  
lamento ni murmullo, <sup>la</sup>  
cuyo eco misterioso

fingir no sepa yo,  
...  
La música comprendo  
que en las volubles hojas  
resuena la presencia  
del céfiro fugaz...  
Yo entiendo de las aves  
los cánticos distintos...  
Entiendo el agorero  
graznar de la corneja,  
la ronca voz de buitres  
que huele su festín;  
del solitario búho  
la temerosa queja,  
y el amoroso trino  
del ágil colorín.  
Y el ruido con que vuela  
la errante mariposa  
...  
Los mágicos rumores  
que elevan diferentes  
las diferentes aguas  
del bosque o el jardín... (*Introducción* 20-21)

The preponderance of the musical links Zorrilla with symbolism and makes him, as such, an antecedent of Bécquer and of the poetic groups that follow. In his desire to *imitate* and *reproduce* music, *el ruido*, he achieves extraordinary effects through the exploitation of phonostylistic techniques and, like Rimbaud, discovers the *colour* of the words. Thanks to the phonic symbolism and to the selection of the chosen lexical system, he builds his own particular poetic world, the idealized nature of which he himself — poeta/ pájaro — forms a part, and which he quietly steals up on to express the *irracional*, the chromatic and musical *mystery* of the objects, the magic of what is imbued, the world of the *chimera*, of the incorporeal... we are on the threshold of *modernismo*: Spanish Symbolism.

Certain hours of the day or conditions of the spirit are ideal for this *misterio* which his poetry tries to mould, and by using symbols and images of the senses, he makes that *misterio* more perceptible and more incandescent. The night, the half-sleep of lying nearly awake (those "horas sin hora / en que nuestras horas cesan...," *La noche inquieta. Fantasía* [129]) and that special state of *rêverie* are some of the moments that favour inspiration because the senses are disturbed: "El oído oye murmullos, / el olfato <sup>lo</sup> aspira olores, / los ojos crean colores / en delirio tan pueril (*La noche y la inspiración* [119]). They are the moments in which a thousand "delirios," "bultos," "fantasmas" and "seres aéreos" are perceived. These reveal a hidden mystery which the poet attempts to penetrate and comprehend. It is when reality becomes rarified (the same

<sup>7</sup> Also see Cathy L. Jade (114-122).

"sombra murmura") and when the consciousness of whether one is living or dreaming is lost:

¡Oh de la noche incomprensibles ruidos!  
Ayes que hervís en la tiniebla oscura...  
¿Quién sois? ¿Dó vais? ¿De dónde sois venidos?  
¿Qué voz ajena en vuestra voz murmura?  
(*Vigilia* 221).

And together with the night, dreaming or lying awake, solitude is evoked in such a way in Zorrilla's verse that the reader is transported to the mystical symbolism of San Juan de la Cruz in his *soledad sonora*; and provides a bridge toward the early verses of Juan Ramón Jiménez. In Zorrilla:

La soledad y el silencio  
exhalan vaga armonía  
que el oído no oiría,  
y atenta el alma escuchó.  
Una música con formas  
que al resbalar en la mente  
nos deja lánguidamente  
la idea de que pasó  
(*La noche y la inspiración* 119).

The *soledad sonora* that only the poet can come to perceive, as with Juan Ramón's "pájaro errante y lírico" (65), becomes an interlocutor with nature. Jiménez takes one step forward from Zorrilla's personification ("Por qué murmuras arroyo? / y tú, flauta, por qué cantas? / qué bocas duermen en la / sombra del aire y del agua?," when he evokes, through symbols and through the *paysage d'âme*, a hidden presence [105]).

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In Zorrilla's poems the *noises* (ruidos) join with the *chimeras*, in the most varied conformations; exactly, as I have shown above, as with the key poets of *modernismo*. As Gerardo Diego points out: "De la palabra o mito griego no queda apenas nada. La quimera y lo quimérico ya es algo distinto, acorde con la sensibilidad morbosa del nuevo siglo" (40). In Zorrilla, as the verses quoted have shown, beings that speak of the irrational and of the marvellous or magical belong to the world of imagination and fantasy. Hence *Impresiones de la noche*:

Hay pensamientos que en la noche viven  
en un rincón de la memoria echados,

cual los insectos que su ser reciben  
de los arbustos a que están pegados.  
Duermen al parecer; mas como aquéllos  
al soplo de una brisa se levantan,  
crecen, vuelan, y al fin toman, cual ellos,  
formas medrosas que la vista espantan.  
Hijas del miedo, y de la fe contrarias,  
vagas visiones de la noche umbría,  
bullir las vemos en la niebla fría,  
nada en la esencia, y en la forma varias.  
Quimeras que hallan siempre en la memoria  
silenciosa mansión, gracias postizas,  
y que reciben faz, cuerpo e historia,  
en los cuentos y error de las nodrizas. (243)

One of the last of the author's texts, *Los gnomos de la Alhambra* (taken as a continuation of the incomplete *Granada*, and included in the volume *Gnomos y mujeres* of 1886) is the best example of this world of the chimerical, while at the same time this world is identified with magic, the occult, and the caballa, themes which the modernists will elaborate further. Zorrilla is still, however, the poet who reflects on what he intuitively feels; in his moulding of mystery, all too often, rhetorical gestures and emphases are given too much relevance. He is more descriptive than lyric. All of these attitudes will be rejected by the young poets in their intimate and lyric treatments of these themes.

Zorrilla argues the caballist's opinion ("Dicen los cabalistas, y se aferra / en creerlo tal vez gente muy grave, / que hay millones de seres bajo tierra / que elementales de ella son...") in order to deny it, but writes in defence of mystery and of the undefinable (*Gnomos y mujeres* 34).<sup>8</sup> In the fragment entitled "La ronda de los gnomos," in which beautiful examples of Zorrilla's accumulative style can be seen, once midnight arrives ("la hora cabalística") the fairy kings and the genies of the air, Titania and Oberon, conjure up the strange beings who begin the magic dance. These beings are sylphs, houris, watersprites, salamanders, sirens, profetesses, pythias, elves, *brucólocos*, druidesses, *estregas*, vampires, lamias, lemurs, sphinxes, *vestiglos*, goblins, *martinillos*, spirits, hobgoblins, fairies, *endriagos*, and skeletons. The poet's knowledge and familiarity with this "multitud quimérica" comes from cabalistic and demonological treatises which he alludes to in the text's accompanying notes. This will explain the particular personality of each one of the beings. It is a magical world (a

<sup>8</sup> In the notes to the poem Zorrilla writes: "De si me aconteció en sueño o en vigilia no me he podido todavía dar cuenta exacta. Los poetas gozamos de una doble vida en una región ideal, cuyas puertas estarán siempre cerradas para los no iniciados en los misterios de la fe, del espiritismo y de la poesía" (*Gnomos y mujeres* 103).

term that Zorrilla, like the *modernistas* who will employ it later, used frequently) which the contemporary poets will also invoke, interested as they were in the occult.

In the creation of this poetic world, as noted above, the poet concedes a sensorial value to the words which speak of music, colour, and sensuality.... It is in his *Orientales* that Zorrilla achieves his highest achievements in the creation of this idealized world. In the recreation of the Arab world and in the evoking of Granada, he relies on lyricism and the refinement of the verse. Some of the poet's best verses are found among his texts with an Oriental theme, for example those that begin with the lines "Corriendo van por la vega", "De la luna los reflejos", "Escucha hermosa cristiana". These verses contain beautiful and consummate descriptions which exemplify the character of this sensorial poetic world. One such example is the world of the palaces of the captain of the *gomeles* (in "Corriendo van por la vega") or of that of King Hazem (in the romance *La sorpresa de Zahara*):

It

Tengo un palacio en Granada,  
Tengo jardines y flores,  
tengo una fuente dorada  
con más de cien surtidores  
.....  
ni en Córdoba ni en Sevilla  
hay un parque como el mío.  
Allí la altiva palmera  
y el encendido granado,  
junto a la frondosa higuera  
cubren el valle y collado.  
Allí el robusto nogal,  
allí el núpalo amarillo,  
allí el sombrío moral  
crecen al pie del castillo.  
Y olmos tengo en mi alameda  
que hasta el cielo se levantan,  
y en redes de plata y seda  
tengo pájaros que cantan.  
(*Corriendo van por la vega* 47)

Mirra y esencias de flores  
arden en pebetes de oro,  
y el sol de los miradores  
anubla el humo de olores  
que avaro respira el moro.  
El aire colman de ruido  
dos fuentes azafranadas;  
y en su murmullo perdido,  
se oye el trinar dolorido

de las aves enjauladas.  
(*La sorpresa de Zahara* 264)

And, too, the beauty of its women:

¡Oh, qué bella nazarena  
para un harén oriental,  
suelta la negra melena  
sobre el cuello de cristal,  
en lecho de terciopelo,  
entre una nube de aroma,  
y envuelta en el blanco velo  
de las hijas de Mahoma!  
(*Dueña de la negra toca* 37)

Zorrilla also mixes equally both oriental and classic elements in the *modernista* style:

Yo te daré terciopelo  
y perfumes orientales,  
de Grecia te traeré velos,  
y de Cachemira chales.  
(*Corriendo van por la vega* 47)

The same is true in his poem *Al último rey moro de Granada, Boadil (sic) el Chico*, in which these elements are joined together: "como en otro Paraíso, / los pomposos laureles de Eurotas / y los húmedos tilos del Pamiso;" and, later,

El jaspe, el oro, el mármol, los cristales,  
se ostentan en su espléndido recinto,  
y ansiarán sus recuerdos orientales  
los escombros de Atenas y Corinto. (151)

In the longer poems like *Granada* and *Los gnomos de la Alhambra* the worlds of the oriental and of the occult or magical are fused; idealization and refinement grow: "Granada, cuyo cielo sostiene el paraíso / sobre arcos de zafiros y bóvedas de luz," "preciosa perla orlada de rica pedrería". Granada's plain is "un chal morisco bordado de colores," its "árabes palacios labrados con encajes"..., and their inhabitants are: "Huríes, de los ángeles / quiméricas hermanas, / divinas cortesanas / de amores manantial," "candentes salamandras / más rojas que el coral," "las Hadas / sobre sus grifos blancos / encabalgadas" ... The lexicon and the associations used by Zorrilla in *Los gnomos de la Alhambra* bring him close to *modernismo*.

The contribution of Zorrilla's verses to the enrichment of poetic language is decisive. From among the chimeras and oriental beauty emerge palaces, *qasidas*, rich



— *lelele* —

tapestries, sapphire canopies, crystalline nymphs, wild lilies, purple violas; but also the zephyrs, the auras, and the mists which are often deemed to be the exclusive province of poets with Becquerian tendencies. Yet, the echoes, murmurs... or *lelles* (plural *lelilles*) (an Arabic term) bring us back to the "material" value (plastic or sensorial) that language has for Zorrilla. *Modernismo* and all modern poetry is founded on the polysemous nature of language.

\* \* \*

In spite of the influences of Victor Hugo, the fashionability of *orientales* and Arab Spain, according to experts on the subject, is actually a result of Zorrilla's work.<sup>9</sup> His magic and chivalrous vision of Arabic Granada and the topics that he conceived to describe it are passed on to the new literature of the 1890s. In the same way, the lyrical *serenatas* of varied metre and of amorous character, or the *leyendas y romances* which (some of which also have an oriental theme), in Zorrilla-like style, are cultivated in the second half of the nineteenth century, can also be traced back to the work of the *modernistas*. With respect to the legends, Aguilar Piñal observes that, "A la sazón era Zorrilla el vate popular; sus leyendas eran aprendidas de memoria por niños y por viejos. De técnica fácil no podía ningún joven poeta de entonces sustraerse a la tentación de componer su leyenda".<sup>10</sup> From them will come the predilection for the mysterious plot, the surprise ending, the idealization of the traditional chivalric world, the courteous behaviour of the characters and musical chromatic styles, all of which essential in this recreation of the exotic Romantic vision. In the dedication of his

<sup>9</sup> Both Soledad Carrasco Urguti in *El moro en Granada en la literatura [del siglo XV al XX]* and Antonio Gallego Morrell in *Diez ensayos sobre literatura española*, argue that the topics of Arabic Granada inherited by the *modernistas* come from Zorrilla's work. Names such as those of Eduardo Marquina or Francisco Villaespesa come up in this connection. With respect to the latter, we also should note that some of *modernismo's* diffusion, along with Zorrilla's influence, should be attributed to European symbolism. See Richard A. Cardwell's "El jardín finisecular: *Tres fuentes* de Villaespesa." (23-24 and 26-32).

As far as the influence of Victor Hugo is concerned, a subject not raised here, it is one of the most discussed and remarked upon questions by the critics of these authors. All coincide in how they develop rhythmic and thematic elements. In the case of the *orientales*, in the way the French poet uses them one may also note the symbiosis between the oriental side and the magical element. Hugo wrote in his poem *Granada* (included in *Les Orientales*): "La Alhambra es un alcázar que los genios crearon maravillosamente como un sueño y la llenaron de armonías; fortaleza con almenas festonadas y vacilantes, en la que de noche se oyen mágicas palabras, cuando la luna, al través de las mil arcadas árabes, siembra los muros de tréboles blancos" (I quote from the prose version of Jacinto Labaila, in the fifth volume of the *Obras Completas* of Hugo. [134]). Other concrete influences related to Hugo have also been incorporated, as for instance in the text *De la luna en los reflejos*, which reflects these influences in its tone and metre (a combination of eight and ten syllable verses). See A. Parker and E. A. Peers: "The influence of Victor Hugo on Spanish drama."

<sup>10</sup> Aguilar Piñal mentions concrete examples in the case of Reina, (64 and 18).

oriental legend, *Alí*, Rubén Darío mentions the syle "mitad perlas, mitad mieles y flores, de las leyendas del maestro Zorrilla." In this work, as in *La cabeza del Rawí*, one may note topoi that come from Zorrilla: the "eco blando y sonoro," the "guzla de oro," the "sonoro instrumento," the "viento murmurador" (Darío, *Poesías completas* 424). These verses, from the first lines of *Alí*, and the very horse race that is described in the following stanzas, recall *La leyenda de Al-Hamar*.<sup>11</sup>

From the traditionally-based romance and legend new ties can be discovered that lead toward Antonio Machado's *La tierra de Alvar González* or to the *romances* of Federico García Lorca. Lorca who, like Machado, declared on repeated occasions his admiration for Zorrilla, proposed to combine the narrative and lyric aspects of the *romance*, developing the narrative aspect of Zorrilla's poetic *leyenda*.<sup>12</sup> Even Juan Ramón Jiménez — little attracted to the pompous style of Zorrilla — though he did recognize his "destellos felices" — singles him out as a link between nineteenth-century poetry and Antonio Machado in his use of "lo popular directo" and in his "revalorización del romance."<sup>13</sup> With regard to the resurgence of the *romance*, it is also equally necessary to mention the name of the Duque de Rivas.

Finally, Zorrilla's work also offers suggestive examples of the idealization of the medieval world of the courtier and knight, found later in Darío, Villaespesa and Manuel Machado. Consider, for example, the romance *El paso de armas de Beltrán de la Cueva*, which begins:

¡Espléndida cabalgata!  
¡Caballeresco tropel!  
La Reina viene montada,  
y el Rey, la brida dorada  
asiendo de su corcel. (287)

\* \* \*

Two further themes — together with the above — are also relevant to Zorrilla's modernity. The first is the theme of the orgy, used by the romantics as a token of their sense of marginality and amorality, a theme which reappears later in the texts of authors of a bohemian or decadent tendency and even in *Ninfeas* (1900) of Jiménez. The classical debt in Zorrilla (the goliards, for example) is clear in *La orgía*

<sup>11</sup> Andrés R. Quintián, in *Cultura y literatura españolas en Rubén Darío*, refers to the relationship between Darío and Zorrilla. He also analyzes the poem "Alí" (68 and subsequent pages).

<sup>12</sup> In this regard, see the quotes cited by J.M. Aguirre: "Zorrilla y García Lorca: Leyendas y Romances gitanos," where he analyzes other points of contact between both authors (75-92).

<sup>13</sup> See "El romance, río de la lengua española," in *Prosas completas* (258-259).

(105-06) or in *Canción. Música del Sr. D. S. Iradier* (203-04). They are topical and fashionable compositions and lack in vigour: "El mundo duerme niñas;/ bebamos y cantemos,/ que más no sacaremos/ del mundo engañador... " (106). Espronceda's "A Jarifa, en una orgía" is more bleakly powerful.

The second of the themes, more characteristic of his latest period, is the social one. Fragments of *Los gnomos de la Alhambra*, of *El cantar del romero* (whose prologue is interesting in this context), of the *Album de un loco* and texts like *La ignorancia*, among others, have merited for him the title of "regeneracionista."

The poet's social preoccupation can be noted in an early sonnet reproduced below. The social theme here is motivated by the exploitation of Spain's artistic patrimony and, thus, of Art itself:

¡Torpe, mezquina y miserable España,  
cuyo suelo, alfombrado de memorias,  
se va sorbiendo de sus propias glorias  
lo poco que ha de cada ilustre hazaña:

traidor y amigo sin pudor te engaña,  
se compran tus tesoros con escorias,  
tus monumentos ¡ay! y tus historias,  
vendidos llevan a la tierra extraña.

¡Maldita seas, patria de valientes,  
que por premio te das a quien más pueda  
por no mover los brazos indolentes!

¡Sí, venid ¡voto a Dios! por lo queda,  
extranjeros rapaces, que insolentes  
habéis hecho de España una almoneda! (249)

To be sure, these verses are very distant from the more idealized texts considered up until this point. Nevertheless, it is Art which forms an obsessional theme.

In this way Zorrilla's ideas coincided with what the younger generation of the modernist era were to criticize concerning the nineteenth century. With them he censures the lack of concern on the part of governments and leaders towards culture and education (*La ignorancia*, *La inteligencia*) and, along with them, he is dubious concerning the consequences of progress which is carelessly utilized by a mercantilist society (in fragments of *Los gnomos de la Alhambra*, the poem *El pinar...*). In the same way, he rejects the degradation of literature, art and culture at the end of the century: he relegates festive poetry, flamenco — the "charanga y pandereta" which are, in *El cantar del romero*, "los sonidos de gañotillo, los meneos de lupanar y los salvajes pataleos de lo que llama cante y baile flamenco", — zarzuela or the bullfight with a disposition between haughty and ironic that is similar to that of Manuel Machado in

"Los poetas de hoy," included in *La guerra literaria* (99-104). It is a Zorrilla who seems to be ahead of his own time in embracing the propositions of the so-called "Generation of 98" who defended these pre-regenerationist ideas, but who later, betrayed by their own members, were incapable of carrying out their aims. At all events, he is a committed poet who looks to the future.

\* \* \*

The rich expressiveness of Zorrilla's work was recognized by the young Spanish and American authors who came to the forefront in the new century. Yet, their closeness to and desire to deny him ended up by obscuring Zorrilla's achievement. While there are many negative comments, those found in the work of some of the most outstanding representatives of the new literature are, on the contrary, favourable. Among the Americans, the most unabashed praise comes precisely from Rubén Darío, who, by the same token, did not receive praise from other figures of Realist poetry, including Núñez de Arce or Campoamor. Darío held similar opinions about contemporary poetry's position vis à vis the nineteenth century. From among the three poets mentioned, Darío notes that Zorrilla was "el más poeta, sin duda alguna." And, he affirms: "encarna toda la vasta leyenda nacional, y es su espíritu el espíritu más español, más autóctono de todos, desde el mundo múltiple en que se desbordó su fantasía, una de las más plétóricas y musicales que haya habido en todas las literaturas..." (*Obras completas* 76).<sup>14</sup> In his own work, however, the early influence of Zorrilla would give way to that of Bécquer and later to the French Symbolists; in the end, these influences are welded together to create his own personal style.

As with Gerardo Diego later, so Azorín was able to appreciate and to defend the "modern" essence of Zorrilla. After calling him "nuestro más grande poeta del siglo XIX" (208) he emphasized that: "En Zorrilla [...] hay lo que no encontramos sino de raro en raro en los demás poetas españoles: un elemento de vaguedad, de misterio, de idealidad" (209), that mystery which, in the words of Manuel Machado — one of the essential defenders of the romantic poet in twentieth-century literature — becomes even more emphatic: "su riquísima vena castiza tienen (sic) ya las auras y los matices de la nueva poesía, de que son en realidad los primeros precursores" (*La guerra literaria* 101).<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Darío also recalls him in *Tierras solares*, (*Obras completas* 912, 917, 953-54) and in *Opiniones*, (*Obras completas* 413-414). Likewise, he figures among the poets mentioned in the poem *Manuel Reina*, in *Homenajes y estelas*.

<sup>15</sup> Machado also makes the exception of Zorrilla in his criticism of the *viejos* in his article "El modernismo y la ropa vieja."

Manuel Machado's appreciation of Zorrilla is palpable in his own verses from *Tristes y alegres* (of 1894, written in collaboration with Enrique Paradas), and above all in texts with oriental (*Dormida*) or legendary (*El rescate*) themes (Allegra 206; Orozco Díaz).

One might say that while the impact of Zorrilla's poetic output is indebted to the author's great inventiveness and facile creativity, it also fails because of that very facility. Zorrilla is more given to emphasis than to shading of feeling, which is the hallmark of *modernismo* and of the following generations in their attempt to refine expression and in their search for complete verbal harmony. The poet introduces a new expressiveness and a concrete way to feel the verse, but his agility and musicality often degenerate into grandiloquence, victims of an excessive rhetoric. It is entirely justifiable that he should be accused of the unpardonable sin of modern poetry: insincerity. Bécquer represented the opposite side of the tendencies mentioned with reference to Zorrilla: formal simplicity and intimacy on one side, sincerity on the other. A clear equilibrium. To these qualities the predilection for his poetry in the present century is indebted. Save for the lone case of Bécquer, Luis Cernuda refuses to recognize any merit in nineteenth-century poetry. Rather, he considers it hard to believe that "alguien, por gusto, lea a Zorrilla o a Espronceda, digan lo que quieran algunos recalcitrantes" (31). "Por la boca muere el pez..." writes Jorge Guillén when he speaks of the excessive ambition of the verse of the last century (351).

Miles de alados seres, que quienes sean  
ignoran ellos mismos, revolotean  
en torno suyo dándolas con sus alillas  
aires, rumor y fresco cuando aletean...

wrote Zorrilla in *Los gnomos de la Alhambra*. Gerardo Diego appears to recall fragments like these, in his favorable evaluation of Zorrilla, when he refers to his ability to use metre (a gift which Pedro Salinas also recognized in him): "[El tenía] el don del ritmo métrico y el más sutil del ritmo que ya no se funda en la materialidad de las sílabas, sino en la delicada elasticidad de las palabras aladas" (*Estudios románticos* 34). However, for the contemporary ear it may even seem that this last sentence of Gerardo Diego is more poetic than Zorrilla's verses. Zorrilla's poetry responds to a different concept of emotion, to a sensibility unlike that of the present day, but *there is emotion*, there is life in his verses, though there we may not always be able to see the forest for the trees. Perhaps we have to prune a little to note the values that have not always been well understood, but which form a part — as an inheritance, as we have seen — of all contemporary poetry. Of course, this legacy, together with other influences, like that of Victor Hugo, is a complex one.

Manuel Machado was able to see this clearly in the first stanzas of the sonnet that he dedicated to Zorrilla (and which Dámaso Alonso found so strange [565]):

Si fue Zorrilla sonoro río  
viento en la fronda y en el mar, fecundo  
campo, monte selvático y profundo...  
Decid también que fue aura y vislumbre,  
temblor de luna en misterioso lago,  
secreto dulce, tierna mansedumbre,  
fin<sup>1</sup> matiz, presentimiento vago. 10  
(*Obras completas* 207-08)<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> The poem to Zorrilla comes after another dedicated to Darío and comes before one on Campoamor. Dámaso Alonso refers to these poets at the beginning and at the end in "Ligereza y gravedad en la poesía de Manuel Machado," in *Obras completas* (Tomo IV).

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