CHAPTER IV: Other Lives

We have seen that Antonio Machado accepts the idea of death because he does not consider it the end of our existence. Until now, however, we have not looked at what he might feel about any type of existence *post mortem*. Perhaps the key to this situation can be found once again in the words of Juan Ramón Jiménez when he wonders whether his friend has lived more than once: "Perhaps he was, more than one who was born, someone who has been *reborn*. The proof of that, among other things, is his mature youthful philosophy."[1] In fact, after seeing that Machado was interested in the Buddhist concept of nirvana as a solution to the problem of the afterlife, it should be no surprise that he has given serious thought to the idea of reincarnation, which is also part of Buddhist culture. It will be difficult to determine to what extent the poet actually believed, personally, that we live more than once. But, as Dámaso Alonso and Ricardo Gullón have both acknowledged, the idea of reincarnation is present in his poetry.[2] Like the hope for life after death, we will see that the idea of rebirth also appears in Machado's thought. Before considering that, however, I will summarize the theory of reincarnation and then try to show its importance for the cultural environment in which our poet and philosopher lived.

1. REINCARNATION IN WESTERN CULTURE

THE THEORY OF REINCARNATION

For many people—perhaps a majority if we consider the entire world—the idea of reincarnation offers a satisfactory explanation of the meaning of life. It is also clear that in different periods of history this theory has flourished in most parts of the world. Such universality seems to show that it is one of those spontaneous or instinctive beliefs with which human beings have responded to the urgent problems of their existence. What follows is a summary of the most important aspects of this theory.

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[1] Juan Ramón Jiménez, "Españoles de tres mundos," *Sur*, X, 79 (1941), p. 10. The fact that Machado had a "mature youthful philosophy" agrees with something that Machado himself said when he expressed the feeling that he had never been young: "The youth I never lived, / if only I could dream it again!" (LXXXV, OPP, p. 127; and "Someday I will find my youth!" (L, OPP, p. 103).

[2] In his study, "Muerte y trasmuerte en la poesía de Antonio Machado," Dámaso Alonso has stated that "there is no lack of passages in Machado that express the terror of a reincarnated life, the fear of beginning all over again"; *Revista de Occidente*, 5-6 (marzo y abril 1976), p. 22. In his book, *Una poética para Antonio Machado*, Ricardo Gullón discusses the cycles of death and resurrection that are observed in nature, and then he asks: "Could it be that man is subject to this same rhythm, to this fluctuation that promises to return him to the universe with a new (but similar) form? There are many things that suggest a positive response to this question, and they are not lacking in the work of Machado"; (Madrid: Gredos, 1970) pp. 117-118. Although both writers have recognized that the theme of reincarnation is present in Machado's work, neither has made a study of this topic.

With the exception of Spinoza, most pantheistic philosophies also include the possibility, and even the necessity, of living more than one life in this world. When speaking of reincarnation, therefore, it will be necessary to see how it relates to the belief in the union of God and the world. As we saw in the first chapter of this book, pantheism is based on the idea that God is All That Is and that everything is part of His infinite substance. For that reason, each creature has within its self, as its fundamental essence, a small part of divine energy. Although the soul of every human being always retains its divine essence, man loses the awareness of his origin once he is born into the world of matter. Because of the limits of his finite consciousness, he forgets his relation to the Whole and begins to act in a way which is self-centered, rather than all-centered. Because he has free will, he always has the possibility to change his actions and harmonize his will with that of God; however, that is not easy because by acting with self-love, rather than divine-love, the soul is covered with shadows, or imperfections.

The reason the soul must have multiple lives, therefore, is to give it the chance to evolve to the point where it is capable of harmonizing its will with that of God. Most Western religions give man only one lifetime before he is either "saved" or "condemned" for the rest of eternity. But the possibility of multiple rebirths means that the soul has as many lives as it needs to complete its spiritual evolution, and this means that all souls will eventually be reunited with the divine Source of all that is.

As we saw in the previous chapter, there is some difference of opinion with respect to the continuity of the individual. Some of those who believe in reincarnation feel that the identity of the soul is not preserved between the different incarnations, nor in the final reunion with the Whole. Others, however, believe that the soul always retains its individual identity and, when it completes the cycle of its lives on the earth, it will continue to develop on other levels of the divine reality.

THE LAW OF KARMA

The soul's development is governed by a universal law which is called *karma*. This law is based on a principle of perfect balance in which each action produces a corresponding reaction, similar to the Biblical concept that "whatever a man sows, that he will also reap" (Galatians VI, 7). This means that everything that occurs in a person's life is based on a principle of absolute justice in which each action attracts a matching reaction, good for good and bad for bad, love for love and hate for hate, etc. The law of karma applies to this life and will affect future lives as well. The results of our actions do not always appear immediately, but they *will* have an effect, in this life or in a future one. Because of this, the person who understands the law of karma and acts accordingly, can advance more rapidly on the road to perfection.

Once the soul has reached a certain level of development it has the ability to choose the broad circumstances of its new life, and it will usually choose those that give it the chance to make progress in its evolutionary journey. As a manifestation of the totality of being each soul contains the different poles of existence—just as the DNA of each person's body contains both masculine and feminine genes—and it has a potential for being that can never be fulfilled in just one lifetime. In its different lives therefore the

soul will choose to be born with those characteristics which will eventually allow it to develop its full potential, sometimes as a man, then as a woman, sometimes in comfortable circumstances, and at other times in those which cause it to struggle, etc. The karma of each individual, then, is determined by the way in which he or she reacts to the circumstances he or she has chosen and, in terms of the soul's progress toward a higher level of development, karma can be either *good* or *bad*. Bad karma should not be thought of as punishment, but rather as an opportunity to learn and develop; each person has certain problems to deal with and, if they are not resolved, they will keep coming back until they are dealt with. On the other hand, positive actions produce good karma, and the talents or abilities one acquires in one lifetime will also appear in others.

Seen in this way, all that occurs in our life has a purpose, and those things that seem to be bad from the narrow perspective of our finite awareness have the educative result of helping us develop our full potential as a divine entity. And as each individual advances, the Whole also advances. as part of the universal creative process that is the foundation of Life.

WESTERN CULTURE

One of the first things that one learns when studying the theory of reincarnation is that it is not limited to Eastern religions; it has also been present in Western thought. It is seen in the thought of Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato[3] and it later continues in that of Ovid, Virgil, Cicero and Plotinus. There are references to reincarnation in the *Cabbala* and in Jewish mysticism, and there are several passages in the New Testament which refer to the idea of coming back to life.[4] In fact, some scholars believe that reincarnation was part

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[3] There are several references to reincarnation in Plato; in *The Republic* 614-621; in *Phaedrus* 245-252; and in *Phaedo* 73-77.

[4] In spite of the Church's rejection, there are certain passages in the New Testament that appear to refer to the idea of reincarnation. For example, on two occasions Christ insists that John the Baptist is Elijah. First, referring to John the Baptist, he tells his disciples: "If you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who was to come" (Matthew IX, 14); and once again when the disciples ask him about John, He responds: "but I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not know him, but did to him whatever they pleased… Then the disciples understood that he was speaking of John the Baptist" (Matthew XVII, 12-13). There are other passages where the Hebrew people seem to believe in reincarnation: "…it was said by some that John had been raised from the dead, by some that Elijah had appeared and by others that one of the old prophets had risen" (Luke IX, 7-8). Then, Christ was with the disciples: "…as he was praying alone the disciples were with him; and he asked them, 'Who do the people say that I am?' And they answered, 'John the Baptist; but others say, Elijah; and others, that one of the old prophets has risen" (Luke IX, 18-19). On another occasion the disciples must have been thinking of reincarnation when they ask Christ about the sins of a man who has been blind from birth: "As he passed by, he saw a man blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him: 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" (John IX, 1-2). Although it is not mentioned explicitly, reincarnation is implicit since, if this could have been the result of his sins and he was blind since he was born, his sins must have occurred in a previous lifetime. Christ goes on to speak of something else, but he does not criticize the logic of his disciples for thinking in this way. Finally, in Revelations there is a passage which states: "He that conquers I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out of it…" (III, 12), which seems to mean that he who has perfected his self will remain in the Kingdom of Heaven and will not have to "go out," that is, be reborn.

of Christian doctrine in the beginning.[5] The Gnostics, who felt that their beliefs were based on the teaching of Christ to his inner circle of disciples, also held this belief; and the teachings of Origen, who was one of the early Fathers of the Christian Church, included the idea of reincarnation until they were condemned by the Second Council of Constantinople in 553 AD. Since this time, reincarnation has not been part of the official dogma of the Church, but it has persisted in Western groups like the Rosicrucians, the Masons, and the Theosophical Movement, as well as in the thought of many important Western thinkers.[6] An indication that this idea did not have its sole origin in Oriental religion is the fact that many North American Indian tribes also believed that we live more than once.[7] And as part of the broader understanding of the "new consciousness" which has appeared during the past few decades, there has been a growing interest in reincarnation among many New Age groups, and several scholarly books, including those of Professor Ian Stevenson of the University of Virginia, have tried to give a scientific basis for this belief.[8]

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[5] For a study of the relation between reincarnation and Christian thought the reader may consult the following books: Quincy Howe Jr., *Reincarnation for the Christian*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974); Geddes MacGregor, *Reincarnation in Christianity: A New Vision of the Role of Rebirth in Christian Thought* (Theosophical Publishing House, Wheaton, Illinios, 1978); Baghavan Das, *The Essential Unity of All Religions* (Adyar, India: Theosophical Publishing House, 1955); and William Kingsland, *The Gnosis or Ancient Wisdom in Christian Scriptures* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1937).

[6] According to *Reincarnation in World Thought*, edited by Joseph Head and S. L. Cranston (New York: Julian Press, 1955), the list of Western thinkers who believed in reincarnation included Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Cicero, Plotinus, Origen, Giordano Bruno, Emanuel Swedenborg, Benjamin Franklin, Immanuel Kant, Victor Hugo, Honoré de Balzac, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Friedrich Nietzsche, Richard Wagner, Walt Whitman, Leo Tolstoy, William James, C. G. Jung, James Joyce and Salvador Dalí.

[7] In his book *The Soul of the Indian*, Charles A. Eastman, whose Indian name was "Ohiyesa," has written: "Many of the Indians believed that one could be born more than once, and there were some that claimed to have full knowledge of a previous lifetime"; (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1911), p. 167; and in *Rolling Thunder*, Doug Boyd quotes the words of the "medicine man" whose name served as title for his book: "We live many lives. We go through different lives: and sometimes we are able to put together the different lives. That is the way it is. We go from one life to another and we should have no fear of death. It is just a transition." (New York: Delta, 1974), p. 262.

[8] Professor Ian Stevenson holds the Chair of Parapsychology at the University of Virginia and in addition to several studies in scientific journals, he has published *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1974); and *Cases of the Reincarnation Type: Ten Cases from Sri Lanka* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1977). Stevenson has studied more than 1,000 cases from different countries in which an individual—almost all are children because the memory of these incidents usually disappear when the subject is older—remembers details of a previous lifetime. He travels to the place where the remembered events occurred and tries to determine if the memories are accurate, while eliminating all cases that appear to be imaginary or ill-founded. Stevenson, who is trying to think like a scientist, does not claim to have proved that reincarnation actually occurs, but anyone who reads his books with an open mind cannot help but be impressed by the legitimacy of his method and the apparent validity of the results of his investigations.

2. MACHADO AND EASTERN MYSTICISM

It is impossible to determine the exact cause of Machado's interest in the theory of reincarnation, although it may have been, at least in part, a result of his study of the philosophy of Krause at the Free Institute of Learning.[9] There is also a very interesting article by Ricardo Gullón which offers some valuable information about how Oriental philosophy affected Spanish thinking during the last century. In this article, Gullón examines the importance of certain esoteric ideas found in modernism:

> There is a vast esoteric current flowing through the literature of modernism which has been brought together by the rather chaotic accumulation of doctrines that have come from certain Oriental religions, especially from Hinduism, and also from Pythagoras and Gnostic texts, from the Hebrew Cabbala and from Theosophy… Madame Blavatsky and others like her may very well have influenced the way poets and narrators wrote. It seems obvious that these esoteric doctrines attracted them to everything that was related to mystery; they understood them as Orphic attempts to penetrate darkness and, while ignoring other aspects, they searched in them for the lost key to the radical enigmas of our existence: of life and death, and beyond…
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> If I am not mistaken, ideas like these came to Spain around the middle of the 19th Century as part of Spiritualism (the first Spiritualist Society was founded in Cádiz in 1855…)… In 1889 the Theosophical Society was established in Spain… With Theosophy… old Pythagorean and Hindu ideas began to circulate, almost always the capricious version of Madame Blavatsky; some of these ideas, like that of reincarnation, perverted by this fantastical woman, began to mix with the poorly understood ideas of Nietzsche about the eternal return, interpreted, as we might expect, by the temperament and the imagination of each writer.[10]

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[9] In my article "Antonio Machado y las galerías del alma," *Cuadernos hispanoamericanos*, 304-307 (octubre-diciembre 1975; enero 1976), pp. 668-669n, I made some comments about the possible origin of these ideas in Machado's thought that are worth repeating here: "I have made certain investigations which at this point I have not been able to complete satisfactorily. They dealt with three main topics: 1) Freemasonry and ancient thought, including the theme of reincarnation; 2) the relation between Machado and Freemasonry; and 3) the possible relation between Freemasonry and the Free Institute of Learning. Regarding the first topic, in the book *Reincarnation in World Thought* there is a section where it is stated that, although Masons were permitted a great deal of freedom in their personal religious thought—only in some lodges was it necessary to have a belief in the existence of God—many Masons, especially at the higher levels, have shown great interest in reincarnation; Op. cit., pp. 166-167. I have also consulted two other books on Masonry where the author expresses a personal belief in reincarnation and says that it is part of Masonic teaching: see Lynn F. Perkins, *The Meaning of Masonry* (New York: Exposition Press, 1960), pp. 124-125; and Joseph Earl Perry, *The Masonic Way of Life and other Addresses* (Cambridge: Masonic Education and Charity Trust, 1968), pp. 85-86. In these books and another book by J. S. M. Ward —*Freemasonry, its Aims and Ideals* (London: Rider, 1923)—there is a clear relationship between Masonic beliefs and ancient Greek and Oriental philosophy. With regard to the second topic of investigation, it is known that Machado himself was a Mason; see the article of Emilio González López, quoted by Joaquín Casalduero in "Machado, poeta institucionista y masón," *La torre*, XII, 45-46 (1964) pp. 100-102. González López informed me in a letter that Machado was invested in the winter of 1929-1930. I have not been able to determine if he belonged to one of the lodges that require a belief in the existence of God. I do not know if his father was a Mason, but it is known that his grandfather was, according to the book of Miguel Morayta, *Masonería española: páginas de su historia*, reeditado por Mauricio Corlavila (Madrid: Nos, 1956), pp. 341-342. The grandfather lived with Machado's family until his death in 1895; he was also one of the first collaborators of the Free Institute of Learning. Regarding the third topic, González López says in his letter that Nicolás Salmerón and don Hermenegildo Giner de los Ríos were Masons, but he does not know about Don Francisco. In his book about the Free Institution of Learning, Vicente Cacho Viu says

Gullón also goes on to say that, besides their importance for Rubén Darío, these esoteric ideas also influenced the work of several authors of the Generation of '98, including Unamuno, Valle Inclán and Antonio Machado.[11]

It is not my intention to make a complete study of the relation between Machado's metaphysics and Eastern mysticism. However, in order to serve as a complement to our study of reincarnation, the following points of contact can be mentioned.

In an enigmatic poem from "Proverbs and Songs" from the first edition of *New Songs,* Machado asks:

> Western man,
> your fear of the East: is it about
> sleeping, or waking up?[12]

In spite of the Western belief that Oriental philosophy is based on a dream, Machado seems to associate it with "waking up," a frequent topic in his poetry. In an essay about Saavedra Fajardo, Machado gives a double meaning to the words "disoriented" and "orient," when he describes the state of modern European culture:

> The West is becoming more and more disoriented… One way or the other, it will have to orient itself a bit… (OPP, p. 687.

In other words, the lack of direction which Western man has experienced must be corrected by applying the knowledge of Oriental wisdom. In another passage, Machado abandons the play on words and expresses his preferences directly through these words of Juan de Mairena to his students:

> I am teaching you, or at least I would like very much to teach you… to respect Oriental wisdom, which is much more profound than ours, and with a much broader metaphysical scope (OPP, pp. 607-608).

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that Krause himself was a Mason, but there are contradictory opinions regarding Giner and the other professors, and it is therefore impossible to come to a definitive conclusion about the possible relation of the Institution and Masonry; see Vicente Cacho Viu, *La Institución Libre de Enseñanza* (Madrid: Rialp, 1962), pp. 59-60 and the footnote, pp. 218-219."

Now, after having made a more complete study of Krausism, I am more convinced than ever that Machado must have learned many of these ideas from his instructors at the Free Institute of Learning. This is something that probably will never be definitely proved, but for anyone who is familiar with the philosophy of Krause, it will also be clear that his disciples would have been quite sympathetic to the ideas of Theosophy and Eastern mysticism.

[10] Ricardo Gullón, "Ideología del modernismo," *Ínsula*, 291 (febrero 1971), p. 1.

[11] Pablo de A. Cobos also mentions the article by Gullón, with which he is in agreement as he explains in what follows: "Gullón quotes Machado two or three times, alluding to the possible presence of this esoteric current in his poetry and in his thinking, and I would certainly not deny it, because it is certain that his curiosity must have been very stimulated by this current"; *Humor y pensamiento de Machado en sus apócrifos* (Madrid: *"Ínsula*, 1972), p. 36n.

[12] Antonio Machado, *Obras: poesía y prosa*, 2ª Edición (Buenos Aires: Losada, 1973), p. 833.

This belief, that Oriental wisdom is "much more profound" than Western thought, does not mean that Machado was anti-Christian or anti-Western. At other times, he has expressed an attitude of inclusiveness which incorporates Greek philosophy, Buddhism and Christianity, as shown in the following poem from *New Songs*:

> Harvest the mallow,
> and don't eat it,
> said Pythagoras.
> Respond to a hatchet blow
> —said the Buddha, and the Christ!—
> with your aroma, like sandalwood.
> It's good to remember
> the old sayings,
> that will be heard again (OPP, lxv, OPP, p. 282).

This same multi-cultural attitude is expressed once again when Juan de Mairena states that "from time to time humanity produces profound human beings… (Buddha, Socrates, Christ)" (OPP, p. 640).[13] Then, finally, we must not forget that in his later years, Machado's apocryphal poet was "more interested in the Buddhist state of nirvana than in the paradise of the righteous" (OPP, 494). In these different passages he shows some sympathy for the concepts of Oriental wisdom and suggests that these concepts should become part of Western thought in order to produce a well-balanced world.

In addition to his obvious interest in Eastern philosophy, it is also clear that Machado is familiar with some specific theories, as we see in the following discussion of the Buddhist influence on Schopenhauer; here he states that for the German philosopher as well as for the Buddhist, the "ultimate reality" is never revealed within the limits of the phenomenal world: "from it has blossomed the world of representation, the Buddhist dream, the vain appearance in which human consciousness is cut off. If in some way it is revealed to us—in our inner self where the veil of Maya is a little more transparent—it comes as a sensation of pain, a longing for non-being, a desire for nirvana and the destruction of the personality" (OPP, p. 774). Machado uses the term "karma" when he talks about the destiny of modern man (OPP, p. 913), and he refers to "the veil of Maya" (OPP, p. 573 and p. 800) to express the idea that our senses are not capable of comprehending the ultimate reality. This concept is also what Machado was referring to in the "Prologue" to the 1917 edition of *Fields of Castile* when speaks of the "double mirage"—both interior and outer perceptions—of which we are all victims (OPP, p. 51).

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[13] Ricardo Gullón comments on the relation between Buddha and Christ in the work of Machado and other writers: "In Darío as well as in Antonio Machado and Herrera y Reissig, these two figures are equated in various ways; and by their side, similar examples of excellent conduct and doctrine are applied to the names of Socrates and Pythagoras. The 'Christs' that Mme. Blavatsky talks about—'entities who have developed certain superior qualities that are latent in all men'—are not much different from the Christ of Unamuno and Antonio Machado"; Op. cit., p. 11. Cobos also repeats an anecdote that touches on the same theme: "in a gathering of friends, one of many in which we suppose that Machado was present, Don Blas J. Zambrano raised his glass to make a toast that concluded with the following words: 'Like Buddha, like Socrates, like Jesus.' And in an aside, Don Daniel Zuloaga exclaimed, as though summarizing the general agreement, 'I like that guy; he puts Christ in third place'": *Humor y pensamiento…*, Op. cit., p. 36n.

This is also related to the belief that life is a dream, a concept which made him say in an interview that "Calderón is the great baroque poet who gave dramatic structure to an old theme from the legend of Buddha."[14]

Then, there is another aspect of Machado's thought which still must be examined before we see what he has to say about reincarnation. If it is true that the soul is composed of "immortal substance," as he says in poem XVIII, and as he implies in other parts of his work, the soul must not only survive after death; it must also exist *before* it was born in this life. This concept is another result of the pantheistic conception of reality, as I will try to show in the following section.

3. PRE-EXISTENCE OF THE SOUL

THE MEMORY OF FAR OFF DAYS

In his biography of the poet, Miguel Pérez Ferrero says that an incident with dolphins described by Juan de Mairena is something which happened before Machado's birth in Seville.[15] As he concludes his description of this event, Mairena says: "It was a sunny afternoon which I thought I had dreamed one time" (OPP, p. 559). For that reason, when he comments on this passage in another biographical account of Machado's life, Gabriel Pradal-Rodríguez writes about a "dreaming and atavistic Machado whose life began before he was born."[16] Is it true that dreaming allows him to "remember" an incident which occurred even before his birth? Machado seems to affirm it in a poem where he speaks of the importance of dreams which help him remember his former self:

> And you will know yourself remembering
> the clouded canvases of old dreams,
> in this sad day when you walk
> with your eyes wide open.
> Of all your memory, only the supreme gift
> of evoking your dreams is worthwhile (LXXXIX, OPP, p. 130).

I have already pointed out that the act of dreaming is not to be taken literally, nor does it always refer to the illusory quality of the material world. In this poem, as on many other occasions, to dream is equivalent to the use of his intuitive consciousness, while walking with his eyes "wide open" represents the use of his rational mind.

In another poem from this same period, Machado mentions the different periods of time that are recalled in these intuitive dreams:

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[14] Quoted by Aurora de Albornóz in *Antonio Machado: Antología de su prosa*, Tomo II, "Literatura y arte" (Madrid: Edicusa, 1970), p. 226.

[15] Miguel Pérez Ferrero, *Vida de Antonio Machado y Manuel* (Buenos Aires: Austral, 1953), pp. 19-20.

[16] Gabriel Pradal-Rodríguez, *Antonio Machado: vida y obra* (New York: Hispanic Institute, 1951), p. 19.

Some canvases of the memory have
the light of a garden and the solitude of the country,
the tranquility of sleep
in dreams of the familiar landscape.
Others capture the festivities
of more distant days… (XXX, OPP, p. 84).

According to what is said in this poem, there are two types of memory: remembrance of the recent past when the nearness gives an aspect of familiarity; and the vague memories of a distant past which the consciousness has still not actualized with the clarity of more recent events. The "familiar landscape" must be part of what the poet has "dreamt" in this life, but the memory of "distant days" seems to come from somewhere beyond this life in a previous existence. In this way we can understand the true importance of the "supreme gift" because, in dreams which the intuitive consciousness brings the poet, he can at times recall the "glowing foundation" of his divine origin. This is the vision which is described in the poem "Galleries," published in 1904:

I have viewed my soul in dreams
like a long and narrow
dimly lit corridor
with an illuminated foundation…
Perhaps my soul has
the cheerful light of the countryside,
and its aromas come
from there, the glowing foundation… (OPP, pp. 32-33).

Another dream that brings the memory of our divine origin appears in poem LXXXVIII:

Perhaps, in dreams, the hand
that created the stars
made the forgotten music resound
like a note from an immense lyre,
and to our lips came the humble wave
of a few true words (OPP, p. 129).

Finally, it is also "in dreams" where the poet discovers "things of yesterday that belong to the soul" (LXXXI, OPP, p. 120), things that belong to his "ancient soul" (OPP, p. 94); ancient, because it has always existed, like the soul of the beggar in the atrium of the cathedral, of whom it is said: "His soul is older than the church" (XXXI, OPP, p. 85).

At times the poet's intuitive vision is able to penetrate the veil of appearances, as he describes in poem LXII: "The cloud is rent: a rainbow / glows in the sky." But this type of vision also has a disadvantage, because this intuitive recall is never permanent: "And the entire memory was lost / like a soap bubble in the wind" (OPP, pp. 114-115). This helps to explain the sensation of loss which Machado feels when he recalls the paradisiacal garden of his origin: "Where are the gardens filled with roses?" (XLIII, OPP, p. 96); "Soul, what have you done with your poor garden?" (LXVIII, OPP, 118); and, finally, "All of yesterday's gold / has been changed to copper" (XCV, OPP, 133). For that reason, as he says in the following poem from "Proverbs and Songs," Machado is full of longing for his lost origin and hopes to recover his contact with the source of life:

Like me, next to the sea,
river of brackish silt,
do you dream of your source? (CLXI, lxxxvii, OPP, p. 286).

Most of these examples of a previous existence are taken from Machado's early poems. But in order to show that the idea of the soul's pre-existence has not been forgotten in later years, we can point to the article about Blas Zambrano which was written in 1939, a few days before the poet's own death. Speaking of his friend's soul —"that indefinable something which allows us to identify and recognize a person"— Machado states: "that is what Don Blas brought with him into the world."[17] Which means, of course, that his friend's soul existed before the moment of his birth.

AN "INTRODUCTION"

Many of the ideas which we have discussed so far are summarized in poem LXI, which is entitled "Introduction" (OPP, pp. 113-114). In the first lines, the poet speaks of the things he wishes to express with his poetry and again he extols the value of dreams which allow him to view "a divine truth," in "the bottomless / galleries of memory…" The memory is "bottomless" because soul's existence has no end and no beginning; its life recedes until its origin is lost in the infinite time of the divine immortality. And it is only the intuition of the poet which makes possible this "mysterious" recollection:

The poet's soul
is oriented toward the mystery.
Only the poet can
see what is distant
within the soul, enveloped
in murky sunlight…

As he penetrates the veil which covers the distant world of his origin, the poet perceives the creative labor of the bees, symbolizing the divine energy which is converted into the phenomenal world:

there the poet sees
the eternal labor
of the golden bees
of his dreams…

And now that he has perceived the mystery of life's creation, the poet reveals to us the secret of the "divine truth" that was mentioned at the beginning of the poem:

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[17] Quoted from "Don Blas Zambrano," in *Antonio Machado: Antología de su prosa*, Tomo I, "Cultura y sociedad," edited by Aurora de Albornoz (Madrid: Edicusa, 1970), p. 170.

Poets, with our souls
open to the deepest heaven,
in the cruel battle
or the tranquil garden
  we make new honey
out of old suffering;
patiently, we make
the pure white tunic,
and under the sun we polish
the sturdy armor of steel…

The poet speaks to other "poets"—other persons who use their intuitive consciousness to understand the mysteries of the absolute being: "the deepest heaven." He tells them that in this life—"the cruel battle"—and in the peaceful existence both before and after their life in this world—"the tranquil garden"—the soul achieves a state of greater purity—the "new honey"—through the process of suffering. He assures them that life is governed by a universal law: the "eternal labor" of the "golden bees," which represents the law of karma that guides the soul on its long journey toward a state of perfection. According to this evolutionary process, which Machado also mentions in other poems,[18] each person must purify themselves through their "old suffering" which must be accepted "patiently" in order to restore the "pure white tunic" of their soul. And while the soul is tempered in the heat of the divine light, it also polishes "the sturdy armor of steel," the good karma which will protect it in the cycle of new lives before their time in this world is finished.[19] The poet knows all this; but the next stanza tells us that the person who does not dream, that is, the person who does not think intuitively like the poet, will see only a grotesque reflection of the divine reality:

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[18] The image of bees, symbolizing the purification of the soul through the making of honey out of old suffering, appears in the second stanza of poem LIX:

… and golden bees
were using old
bitterness to produce
white wax and sweet honey (OPP, p. 111).

And it appears once again in poem LXXXVI:

  From many bitter flowers
I have extracted white wax!
Oh, time of my sorrows,
you labor like bees! (OPP, p. 128).

[19] On other occasions, Machado relates this idea to the heroic figure of Don Quijote, for example, in "Spain in Peacetime," a poem which is studied in Chapter VI, and in the following poem which was published in a Madrid newspaper during the Spanish Civil War:

For the soul who does not dream,
a deceptive mirror
reflects our image
with a grotesque outline…

And then the poem concludes with a description of the end of this life:

We feel a wave
of blood pass through
our chest... We smile,
and go back to work again.

The day comes when we feel the last surge of blood pass through our heart; then, we smile with the realization that life has not ended, and we renew our evolutionary journey in a new existence. And with this "Introduction" to Machado's ideas about life and death, we are ready to begin our study of the poems which speak of reincarnation.

4. THE THEME OF REINCARNATION IN MACHADO'S WORK

According to Juan de Mairena, one of the most important teachings of Christ is that "the soul of man is not an entelechy because its end, its *telos*, is not in itself" (OPP, p. 528). If not in his soul, where *is* the "end" of man? Perhaps Machado is unable to answer this question rationally, but his intuitive consciousness, which is the source of his poetry, tells him that man's great adventure is to follow the path that *ends* with God, as he states in the final stanza of his poem, "A Young Spain" CXLIV:

You young souls, if you have the will
to reach the highest goal, you will continue your adventure
awake and transparent toward the divine light,
bright as a diamond, like the diamond pure (OPP, p. 236).

On the heath
the witches of Macbeth
dance around and shout:
thou shall be king, all hail!
And on the broad plain:
"they will destroy my happiness"
says the old knight;
"let them destroy my happiness,
but never my fervent heart."

Under the sun that shines
beyond the reach of time
(who can see the crown
of a bloodthirsty Macbeth?)
the enchanters
of the good knight
polish the rusty
tatters of steel (OPP, pp. 723-724).

The forces of evil incite Macbeth—warlike Spain—toward a selfish triumph: "thou shall be king," while on the broad plains of Castile, the "old knight"—idealistic Spain—exclaims: they can vanquish me, but they will never destroy my determination to move toward the light. While this is happening, beyond the scope of temporal existence there is a higher dimension where evil does not exist—"who can see the crown / of a bloodthirsty Macbeth?" In this immortal realm outside of time, the purifying light of a divine sun helps the spiritual Masters (Mme. Blavatsky calls them "the Lords of Karma") create an even stronger resolve which will protect the soul from selfish desires in future lives.

Some of Machado earliest poems express a fatalistic concept found in certain beliefs of Hinduism and Buddhism, that life is a never-ending cycle, a vicious circle from which there is no escape. This is the central theme of the poem "Zenith," from the first edition of *Solitude*, where the poet meditates on the timeless sensation produced by the sound of water:

> In your Oriental garden listen carefully
> to my happy song,
> so that in the sad gardens of the West
> you will recall my cold, clear laughter.
> Traveler, listen now while my psalter
> plays its crystal enigma to your mystery
> of shadows: Your fate
> will always be to journey, oh pilgrim
> of the labyrinth that your dream encloses!... (OPP, p. 37).

In this early poem the sound of water creates the appearance of passing time, but the eternal flow brings no change nor does it offer any hope of escaping from the monotony of the eternal return. Because of this, the poet's destiny is an endless journey through a world of sadness and suffering. The same theme is expressed in the following lines from a poem entitled "The Waterwheel":

> I know not what noble,
> divine poet
> bound the bitterness
> of the eternal wheel
> to the sweet harmony
> of dreaming water
> and blindfolded your eyes,
> poor old mule!... (LXVI, OPP, p. 99).

Here Machado uses the waterwheel to symbolize the "eternal wheel" of rebirth, an ancient Oriental image which represents the idea of an endless transmigration of souls.[20] The "old mule" stands for an individual who is caught in the vicious cycle of repeated lives without ever being able to achieve the ecstasy of nirvana. The "dreaming water" again produces the sensation of passing time, while the "blindfolded" eyes of the old mule represent the limited understanding of the human being who only perceives reality through the veil of Maya.

Equally fatalistic is the poem "Gloss" (LVIII), where Machado repeats the well-known words of the Medieval poet, Jorge Manrique, about the rivers of life that empty into "the sea / which is death." Then, the poem concludes with the following lines:

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[20] C. G. Jung has commented on this important symbol: "According to Oriental religion, the succession of births and deaths is seen as an eternal wheel that continues rolling endlessly"; *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (New York: Vintage, 1965), p. 316. This symbol also appears in *Reincarnation in World Thought*, Op. cit., pp. 30-31.

After the fear of dying
comes the pleasure of arriving.
A great pleasure!
But what about the horror of coming back?
A great sorrow! (OPP, p. 110).

Dámaso Alonso was undoubtedly referring to this poem when he wrote that "there is no lack of passages in Machado that express the terror of a reincarnated life, the fear of beginning all over again." Because if "the pleasure of arriving" is what the soul feels when it finally escapes the sadness of its dream within the confines of the material world, the "horror of coming back" describes the anguish that is felt when life must be repeated once again without the hope of ending this interminable process.[21]

In Hindu scriptures and in primitive symbolism, the moon is sometimes related to the idea of reincarnation.[22] As Mircea Eliade has explained, the moon's form which waxes and wanes in a recurring manner has produced the mythical belief of those who see its invisible phase as a symbol of death, believing that the dead go to the moon and return again, according to the theory of transmigration.[23] For those who believe in this theory, the moon is seen as a resting place for souls while they are not present on the earth. This same concept has appeared in Machado's poetry. For example, on several

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[21] Those who have studied poem LVIII usually ignore the final lines, writing about only the first part of the poem which mentions Jorge Manrique and the "blind flight" to the sea which is death. With the notable exception of Dámaso Alonso, the comments of those who have mentioned the end of the poem are either incomplete or ambiguous. For example, Rodrigo A. Molina does not mention the "pleasure of arriving," and he interprets the horror of coming back as "coming to," or returning to consciousness; *Variaciones sobre Antonio Machado, el hombre y su lenguaje* (Madrid: Ínsula, 1973), p. 31. Constantino Lascaris writes: "In order to interpret these lines, one can either assume that this is a reference to the idea of the eternal return, made popular again by Nietzsche, or that this simply means a return to consciousness, in whatever form that may be"; "El Machado que se era nada," *La torre*, XII, 45-46 (1964), p. 203. P. Cerezo Galán sees these lines as a reference to circular time but does not take seriously the idea of being reborn: "Is Machado indicating here the idea of the eternal return? I think so. And not because he had the slightest belief in it, but because the nihilistic pleasure of the arrival has suggested to him, half-jokingly, the great sorrow of having to begin all over again"; *La palabra en el tiempo* (Madrid: Gredos, 1975), p. 81.

[22] In the *Upanishads* we find the following passage: "But those who conquer the worlds through sacrifice, through charity, and through austerity go to smoke, and from smoke to night, and from night to the waning moon… When they arrive at the moon, they become food, and the gods consume them… But when this is over, they go back to the æther, from the æther to the air, from the air to the rain, and from the rain to the earth… where they are born in the fire of woman. Then they raise up to the worlds and follow the same cycle as before"; from Eva Martin, *Reincarnation: The Ring of Return* (New York: University Books, 1964), p. 38. In *The Secret Doctrine* where she is writing about the ancient religion of Egypt, Mme. Blavatsky also mentions this concept: "The human being, in [Egyptian] esotericism, came out of the moon…; he crossed the whole cycle of existence and then returned to his birth-place before issuing from it again… The moon was the symbol of life renewals, or reincarnations, owing to its growth, waning, dying and reappearance every month" Volume I, "*Cosmogenesis"* (Point Loma, California: The Aryan Theosophical Press, 1917), pp. 227-228. This same idea was also part of the teaching of George Gurdjieff; see P. D. Ouspensky, *In Search of the Miraculous* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1949), p. 85; and *The Fourth Way* (New York: Vintage, 1957), p. 408.

[23] Mircea Eliade, *Images and Symbols* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1961), pp. 72-73; and also Juan Eduardo Cirlot, *Dictionary of Symbols* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1962), p. 205.

occasions the moon appears as a symbol of death; in poem LVI the lunar disc is compared to a "shining skull" (OPP, p. 109), and in poem CLVII the poet exclaims: "With this moon, it seems / that even the shadows get older…" (OPP, p. 259). In another early poem which never appeared in his books of poetry, Machado also seems to describe the moon as the resting place for souls: "And the earth has died… It is on the moon, / the soul of the earth…" (OPP, p. 31). Then, poem XXXIX is a good example of the moon as a symbol of reincarnation. In this composition the poet first describes the bitterness that man feels after the loss of innocence at the moment of origin. Then he continues:

> Pity the poor lover who
> serenades the beautiful moon;
> for all those who come down from the moon,
> for all those who return to it again (OPP, p. 92).

As in the primitive symbolism, the souls "come down from the moon" when they are born, and then "return to it again" when they die.

Another poem from the first edition of *Solitude* expresses the same pessimistic attitude toward life that we saw in the previous poems, but here death is seen as a release from the frustrations of life. The poet awakens from a bad dream and contemplates the boredom of a new day, but then he envisions a pure rebirth following the end of this life:

> And now the soul gets ready to
> begin again the unwelcome hours
> of useless labor, while in the distance
> the mysterious advance of the
> black wave lifts
> its crest of silent foam…
> It carries nurseries of gold
> within its womb of shadows!... (OPP, p. 41).

The poet regrets the need to begin again the "useless labor" of a new day because the passing of time—"the unwelcome hours"—does not offer the hope of making progress in his life. Then, in the distance he senses the approach of a silent black wave that will engulf his existence; however, death is seen as a consolation because it carries in its depths "nurseries of gold," offering the promise of new lives of greater purity.

Then, as the title obviously indicates, the poem "Renaissance" (LXXXII) offers a clear description of rebirth:

> Galleries of the soul… the young soul!
> Its bright smiling light,
> the short history,
> and the happiness of a new life…
> Ah, to be born again, and to travel
> once more on the path that was lost!
> And to feel again in our hand
> the pulse of the good hand
> of our mother… And to travel in dreams
> for love of the hand that guides us… (OPP, p. 129).

A great deal has been written about Machado's "galleries of the soul," but in this context it is a reference to the different lives through which the soul has passed. And here we have one of the clearest examples of reincarnation in the poetry of Antonio Machado: "Ah, to be born again, and to travel / once more on the path that was lost!" Because of the reference to the mother in the third stanza, it has been said that this poem expresses an impossible desire to return to the security of his lost youth.[24] However, this does not coincide with what is said in the second stanza, which is clearly directed toward the future. Here we have more than just a reference to the poet's mother; the use of the adjective "our" suggests something like the feminine principle which is the basis of all life. In fact, to be born again is "to travel in dreams," feeling once again the nostalgia for our lost Creator whose love encompasses us, as we carry Him in our heart.

The theme of "rebirth" also appears in poem XXXVI, which begins with the following lines:

> A young form one day
> arrives at our house.
> We ask: "Why have you come back
> to the old dwelling place?... (OPP, p. 87).

Here the poet describes the birth of a child in the family home and, although no answer is given to this question, they ask about the reason for the child's return to this life—"the old dwelling place."

In the previous chapter we examined the faith in life after death which Machado expressed in poem XXI, but now we can also offer a more complete interpretation of the final stanza of this poem. When it begins, the poet is thinking about the time of his death and the "silence," the inner voice of his intuitive consciousness, tells him not to be afraid because his death will not be the end of life. Then the "silence" concludes:

> You will sleep for many hours yet
> on the old coast,
> and one pure morning you will find
> your boat tied to another shore" (OPP, p. 80).

It is possible to interpret these lines in agreement with the traditional view of afterlife by saying that the soul will sleep for many years in the ground before arising again at the moment of the Final Judgment. However, in view of what we have seen in other poems,

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[24] Sánchez Barbudo has commented: "The poem is clearly a nostalgic view of his infancy when he was guided and did not feel lost. He then went astray in life. This is why he wants to 'return'; and in relation to this past security, in the four final lines there is a concrete, moving memory of the maternal hand that guided him then when he was traveling, as though 'in dreams'"; Antonio Sánchez Barbudo, *Los poemas de Antonio Machado* (Barcelona: Lumen, 1969), p. 103. This seems to be a logical interpretation, but it omits an important point. In the Spanish version of this poem are the words: "volver a nacer" which means "to be born again." Sánchez Barbudo only mentions the word "volver," meaning "return," and totally ignores the word "nacer," meaning "to be born." To be born again is an act that is directed toward the future, and not to the past as he mistakenly interprets it. He also neglects to mention that the word "mother" is qualified by the adjective "our" which is significant, as I explain in what follows.

it seems more likely that the poet means something different here. Because Machado feels that "life is a dream," the phrase "you will sleep for many hours yet / on the old coast" can also mean *you will still live many lives in this world,* before you awaken on a purer level of existence. In that case, "another shore" would not be "heaven" in the traditional sense, but rather another level of divine reality where the soul continues to evolve, having finished the series of its lives on the physical plane.

THE LATER POEMS

The pessimism which Machado sometimes associates with the idea of the "eternal return" is not present in his later poems. So when he returns to Andalusia full of sadness after the tragic death of his wife, the hope of rebirth is a real consolation. A clear indication of this hope is found in these words from a letter to Unamuno when he mentions the possibility of seeing Leonor again: "today she lives on in me more than ever and sometimes I am certain that I will again find her by my side" (OPP, p. 1,016). And this must also be the explanation for what he says in poem CXXV, from *Fields of Castile*, when he thinks about the memory of his wife and then concludes with these encouraging words:

> …Some day, anointed with light from the foundation,
> the virginal bodies will return to the old shore (OPP, p. 193).

In the same way that he speaks of the "young form" that returns to the "our house" in poem XXXVI, the poet now expresses his faith in the rebirth of his wife. The light which anoints these "virginal bodies" comes from the "glowing foundation" of the divine origin which Machado described in the poem "Galleries" (OPP, p. 32) that was mentioned previously. It is the pure divine energy which envelops the soul once it recovers its primordial innocence, and which it still retains when it is reborn in this world.

Three years after moving to Baeza following the death of his wife, Machado learns of the death of his former teacher in the Free Institute of Learning. Then, in his poem, "To Francisco Giner de Los Ríos" (CXXXIX), which parallels the article that was discussed in the previous Chapter, he writes the following words:

> Did he die? We only know
> that he left us by a clear path,
> saying to us: mourn me
> with your deeds and with your hopes.
> Try to be good and nothing more; be what
> I have been among you: soul.
> Live on, because life continues,
> the dead die and the shadows disappear.
> What he has goes with him, the one who has lived, lives.
> Let anvils, resound, and bells be silent!
> And toward another, purer light
> he left, this brother of the light of dawn… (OPP, p. 229).

Besides the faith in life after death that Machado expresses once again in this poem, it is significant when he says: "What he has goes with him, the one who has lived, lives."[25] The first half of this line is an example of the way in which the law of karma operates: one who has accomplished good works in this life takes something with him—his "good karma"—into the next life. Then, the second half of this line can mean that the person who lived in this life, continues to live after death according to conventional theology. But if we interpret it literally, it can also mean that the one who lives now, *has lived* before, in another life.[26]

In "Proverbs and Songs" from Machado's book, *New Songs*, we find the following strange little poem:

> Mr. Saint Jerome,
> put down that stone
> you pound yourself with.
> You hit me with it (CLXI, lxxiv, OPP, p. 283).

Sánchez Barbudo comments on this and other poems in "Proverbs and Songs": "these are banal reflections that seem more like jokes… There are several of these little poems whose meaning is obscure, and it even seems that they lack meaning."[27] Nevertheless, this poem obviously had meaning for the poet, as José Machado affirms: "Of course the poet knows very well why the Saint was pounding."[28] Unfortunately, his brother does not explain what the motive for this poem might have been. Therefore, we can only say with

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[25] The previous line, "the dead die and the shadows disappear," is more difficult to interpret and perhaps should be explained separately. The corresponding prose passage reads as follows: "Only those shadowy beings who are not really alive, actually vanish forever, those who do not live their own life. I believe that only the wicked and the dishonest perish utterly—forgive me for this rather heretical thought—without any possible salvation…"; from "To Don Francisco Giner de los Ríos," in *Antonio Machado: Antología de su prosa*, Tomo I, Op. cit., pp. 153-154. This suggests that Machado does not believe in the final salvation of all humanity. I said in the first Chapter that most pantheists who believe in reincarnation, like Krause for example, also believe that eventually all souls will be reunited with the Supreme Being. However, there are exceptions like the Gnostics and certain Hebrew philosophers. Another exception is found in the philosophy of George Gurdjieff who lived during the first part of the Twentieth Century like Machado. Gurdjieff is a pantheist who accepts the idea of reincarnation. But he also has said that the possibility of continuing to live after death depends on having an "astral body" that only has "crystallized" after many lifetimes. Those individuals who have progressed far enough in their spiritual development can preserve their identity and take another physical body, but the majority of human beings who have not acquired an astral body will not have a future life; *In Search of The Miraculous*, Op. cit., pp. 31-32.

[26] Manuel Tuñon de Lara has made a very good interpretation of this poem: "There are those who are only leftovers in this world, even though they seem to be alive; they will someday die completely, because they never really lived. He who has lived, *lives*, that is, he continues living; he takes something with him because he left something; he leaves his work and his spirit. We must honor this spirit with works and not with grieving"; *Antonio Machado: Poeta del pueblo* (Barcelona: Nova Terra, 1967), p. 114. He does not explain what he meant with the phrase: "He who has lived, *lives*, that is, he continues living."

[27] Antonio Sánchez Barbudo, Op.. cit., pp. 366-367.

[28] José Machado, *Últimas soledades del poeta Antonio Machado: Recuerdos de su hermano José*) (Santiago de Chile: multigrafiado, 1958), p. 7.

certainty that this stone with which the saint was pounding seems to represent the desire to destroy something which, in some way, also includes the poet. We know, however, that one of the polemics in which Saint Jerome was involved was directed against Origen and his disciple Rufinus because they both believed in the theory of reincarnation. If we accept that Machado also believed in this theory, it may be that he felt himself included among those whom the Saint had attacked. In this case, the poem would have a completely logical meaning; and it would not be the only time when Machado used humor to disguise his unorthodox ideas.

In poem from *New Songs*, Machado again associates the moon with the idea of rebirth. In the third part of a series of poems called "Old songs," Machado writes:

> Near the large town of Úbeda,
> whose hills no one will see,
> the moon was following me
> above the olive grove.
> It was a panting moon,
> always keeping pace with me.
> I thought: a bandit
> of my territory! As I galloped
> on my swift horse, someone
> was riding along with me!
> So this moon knows me.
> It scares me, but it makes me
> proud that I have
> once been a captain (CLXVI, iii, OPP, p. 312).

By saying that the moon "knows" him, Machado seems to confirm the idea that was mentioned in the previous section, that the moon is the resting place of souls during the time that they are not on earth. This explains his fear when the "panting moon" pursues him like a reminder of death. But at the same time the image of the moon evokes the memory of a previous lifetime—"someone / was riding along with me"—when he was perhaps the leader of a group of bandits. Of course, it is not possible to know if this is the memory of a specific lifetime. It seems more likely that, stimulated by the image of the moon and by the epic landscape, he feels the sensation of something *déjà vu*, of heroic adventures in which he may have participated.

In a series of poems with the title, "Autumn" that Machado never included in *New Songs* or in his *Complete Poetry* we find another poem that is suggestive of reincarnation:

> Hammer blows
> fall on the black ship,
> the one with the yellow stripe;
> and on the hoops of a
> jovial, big-bellied cask
> for the new wine
> of your heart (OPP, 829).

Aurora de Albornoz has made an interesting study of this little-known poem in which she tries to show that it describes a painting of Dionysius on a ship that was miraculously

filled with grapes; as she puts it: "the grapes oozing with new life are born within the black ship."[29] Although she feels that for Machado the soul works only "for dust and for the wind," her words support the concept of reincarnation. Dionysius is, at the same time, the god of both life and death, and this is the ship that will carry man to the afterlife in which is constructed the cask for the "new wine" of the soul. The grapes—a symbol of new life—are born in the black ship, in the same way that the death of each person brings the promise of a new life for the soul.

The concept of a ship which carries souls to the afterlife is also mentioned in the long poem "Memories of dreaming, fever and dozing." When the poet descends to the gates of the otherworld, he speaks with the ferryman, Caron, and asks for permission to enter. Then, the following dialogue takes place (Caron speaks first):

> Just one way?
> Is there a return?
> Yes.
> Well, clearly, both ways!
> Yes, clearly… and not so clear, because that is very expensive… (OPP, pp. 365-366).

Yes, the poet would like to return after his death, but what does Caron mean when he says: "that is very expensive"? This must be a reference to the law of karma, meaning that he must repay all the debts that he has accumulated in his previous lifetime.

Then, finally, in "Another Climate" (CLXXVI), which is the final poem in the *Apocryphal Songbook*, Machado examines the life of the individual as though it were part of a universal process. The first two lines of the poem remind us of the different lives through which the soul has passed:

> Oh the chambers of time and galleries
> of the soul, how naked!...

Once again Machado seems to affirm that the existence of the soul is divided into a series of successive rebirths. These "galleries" are "naked" because the soul goes from one to another without the heavy baggage of its material possessions. Then, the poem continues with the following suggestive lines:

> The music of the old hours is extinguished
> like a prayer of cloistered joys.
> Time brings a parade of dawns,
> with a trail of extinguished stars…

The end of a cycle—"the old hours"—has come; the "parade of dawns" is a reference to the different incarnations of the soul, while the "trail of extinguished stars" describes the death which occurs at the conclusion of each lifetime. Then, in the lines that follow, Machado ceases to speak only of the individual and describes the end of the entire world:

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[29] Aurora de Albornoz, "El olvidado 'Otoño' de Antonio Machado," *Ínsula*, 185, p. 13. Ricardo Gullón also writes: "The 'black ship' with its yellow stripe is the coffin in which we make our last journey that appears in other poems. Linked to the cask of 'new wine' it associates life and death in the metaphor"; "Mágicos lagos de Antonio Machado," *Papeles de Son Armadáns*, XXIV, 70 (enero 1962), p. 45.

Is a world dying? Is another
world being born? In the marine
belly of the world is another ship
leaving its diamantine wake?
Has the old fleet turned belly up?
Is it the world that was born in sin,
the world of toil and weariness?
Is there a new world that must be saved
again? Again! May God tell us…

Is the life of the world cyclical like Mme. Blavatsky has stated in *The Secret Doctrine*? Does the entire world turn on the wheel of rebirth, like it is stated in the teachings of Theosophy, and in those of Oriental religion? If the world did not achieve salvation in spite of its "toil and weariness," will it have another chance, and another? But God does not say, and while the great powers of the world destroy each other in an apocalyptic struggle, the pilgrim follows his path, seeing in the distance the signs of his destiny:

And a *nihil* of fire is written,
beyond the hostile jungle,
on the sheer granite,
and the ribbon of a road on the mountainside… (OPP, p. 378).

The mountain of granite with its "*nihil*" of fire marks the end of life. But then there is a road and the poem ends with an ellipsis, which suggests that life continues. We do not know where this road leads, but it must go on, like Giner de los Ríos, "toward the light."

THE POEMS DEDICATED TO GUIOMAR

The editors of Machado's *Obras: Poesía y Prosa* published by Losada decided to include, from the poet's letters to Guiomar, "only those passages of literary interest" (OPP, p. 1,035). By doing this they excluded more material from the letters which were already mutilated by Concha Espina, and in doing so they omitted a passage which makes a clear reference to the theme of reincarnation. For that reason, we must turn to the book published by Concha Espina[30] where the passage I am referring to begins on page 117 and then, without any explanation by the author, continues on page 49. This arbitrary way of reproducing Machado's letters causes confusion because the passage of page 49 is difficult to understand if it is not seen as a continuation of the passage on page 117.

The first passage from page 117 contains the words of Machado where he tries to explain the cause of the profound attachment he has felt for his beloved:

> On these occasions when an obstacle to our will impedes the possibility of communicating with you I can measure, by the sadness and the loneliness in my soul, all the deep affection that I feel for you. What a profound impression it has made! It seems like it has been present in my heart all my life… How can you explain this? I explain it by thinking that love not only influences our present and our future, but also changes and modifies our past. *Or could it be that you and I have loved each other in another life? Then, when we met, all we did was to recognize each other. It consoles me to think that, which is platonic…* (The emphasis is mine.)

[30] Concha Espina, *Antonio Machado a su grande y secreto amor* (Madrid: Lifesa, 1950).

Then, the passage on page 49 begins with the last two sentences from the passage we have just quoted, after which Machado continues:

> and in this way, the lover remembers the beloved and weeps for his long forgetfulness before he met her. Although it may seem absurd, I cried when I realized how much I loved you, for having loved you all my life…

And in another passage—we do not know if it is from the same letter—which is found on page 118 of Concha Espina's book, Machado exclaims again: "Ay! You don't know what it is to be so close to the woman you have waited for during your entire life." So we see that it consoles Machado to think that he may have known his beloved "in another life," and he recognizes that to feel like that is to think like Plato, who also believed in reincarnation. The apparent paradox of "his long forgetfulness before he met her" only makes sense if it is known that Machado feels he has loved her in a previous lifetime. It is also for this reason that he says he has loved her: "all my life." These ideas also correspond to something that Machado said in a little known poem which was never included in his *Complete Poetry*:

> "What is love?" a little girl
> asked me. I answered:
> "To see you once and think
> that I have seen you before" (OPP, p. 822).

However, the similarity between the letters and this poem creates another problem because, according to what is said by the editors of his *Obras* (OPP, p. 1,091), this poem was published in 1916, but the letters were not written until approximately twelve years later, in 1928. In the first passage from page 117, when he mentions the idea of having known his beloved in "another life" which is "platonic," there is no doubt that Machado is referring to the idea of reincarnation. It could also be what he means to say in the poem, but the idea of having known, and then having forgotten a woman before seeing her in this life, may also have a different explanation. In the next chapter we will see that the "beloved" is sometimes associated with the feminine aspect of the poet's own unconscious—the "anima" in Jungian terms. This is his unconscious "other half," which is also the part of his self that belonged to the divine consciousness before he was incarnated in this life. Therefore, when Machado speaks of the love he felt for his "beloved," it is difficult to separate the idea of reincarnation from the memory of the feminine part of his self because, according to Jung, the anima is projected on the women a man knows, and she also can appear in his literary fantasies.

This mixture of the two memories—of his "beloved," and the feminine part of his unconscious—is also something we find in the second section of "Songs for Guiomar" (CLXXIII), which corresponds to the passages from the letters we have just read:

I dreamed of you in a garden
high above the river, Guiomar,
a garden of time that is locked
behind bars of cold iron.
A strange bird sings
sweetly in the lotus tree
beside the sacred living water.
All is thirst and all is fountain.
In that garden, Guiomar,
two hearts conceive a mutual
garden at the same time,
and our hours are joined
and intertwined. The grapes
of a dream—we are together—
we squeeze into a clear glass
and forget our double story.
(One: Male and female,
although a gazelle and a lion,
come together to drink.
The Other: such a fortunate
love cannot be,
not even of a man and a woman:
two solitudes in one (OPP, p. 369).

In the following chapter I will study the relation of this poem to Jung's theory of the *anima*, but here we can see its importance for the theme of reincarnation. The "garden" in this poem is a symbol of the paradisiacal life the two souls experience in the beginning, before losing the awareness of their relation to their divine source. It is "above the river" because it exists outside of time; and it is a garden that is "locked" because it is a paradise that has been lost in this life. Just as we saw in the first stanza of poem LIX and in the final lines of the poem "To the Great Fullness, or Integral Consciousness," this is the garden where the "sacred living water" gushes forth from the divine fountain of life. It is also here that the souls can easily satisfy their thirst in the nearby waters of divine love—"All is thirst and all is fountain." The third stanza describes the memory of the life that the poet and Guiomar dreamed simultaneously when they were lovers during the same period of time. At the end of this life, however, they must drink from the waters of forgetfulness and forget the "double story" of their love.[31] When the moment of their reincarnation in this world is approaching, the two

[31] Ricardo Gullón has commented on this part of the poem: "On the boundary between life and death the last thing a man must do is to drink from the water of Lethe, the effect of which is to erase all memory… If a reincarnation occurs and we emerge from the shadows once again, the new self cannot communicate with the previous one through the path of memory, but through impenetrable galleries and labyrinths which are, as Machado describes them, 'blurred'"; *Una poética para Antonio Machado*, Op. cit., p. 178. It is true, as Gullón says, that these "galleries" of a previous life are usually impenetrable. However, there are exceptions, as Ian Stevenson has demonstrated. Eastern scholars also claim that one who has reached a higher level of spiritual development will retain the memory of his or her previous lives. In Jungian terms, this would be equivalent to establishing a relationship between individual consciousness and the collective unconscious through the process of individuation.

guardians of destiny—Mme. Blavatsky calls them "the Lords of Karma"—decree that the poet and his beloved must now live separately—"two solitudes in one." This is also the explanation for what Machado said in the letter when he referred to the times when an obstacle "impedes the possibility of communicating" with his beloved.

OTHER WORKS

The theme of reincarnation is less evident in Machado's prose writing, perhaps because he did not feel that he could present it within an intellectual framework. However, in an essay about the future of Spain, Juan de Mairena seems to suggest that the entire country could be reborn:

> If someday Spain had to play the last card in its deck… I would not put it in the hands of the so-called optimists, but rather in the hands of those who are desperate because of the mere fact they were born… The others would inevitably waste it without playing it, in order to save their miserable skins. They would have lost the last card in their deck and would have nothing to play in the new deck that appears later, in the hands of destiny (OPP, pp.635-636).

This "new deck" that will appear in the hands of destiny must represent a new lifetime. And the card that must be played now, in order to play again in the future, reminds us of the law of karma. However, karma is not only applied to mistakes which must be corrected in this life, or in a future one; it also implies *action*. Those who believe in reincarnation think that in the new life one will have only what one has earned in this one; it is the actions of today that will determine the suffering, or the positive results, of tomorrow. Therefore, if the soul does not make the effort to improve now, it will be that much more difficult, in a future life, to make progress on its return to the Divinity.

In a passage from *The Complementary Ones* (a suggestive title, from the point of view of reincarnation), Machado is speaking about Marcel Proust and the change of personality which sometimes occurs in a man's life. He then continues:

> This observation of Proust shows him to be a fine psychologist… One should also not forget that our spirit has elements for the construction of many personalities, all of them as rich, as coherent and as finished as that—chosen or inherited—which is called our character. What one usually considers the personality is nothing more than the hypothetical person who over time seems to play the lead role. But is this personality always controlled by the same actor? (OPP, p. 777).

When he asks if the multiple personalities that the self assumes "over time" are the representations of the same actor, Machado seems, once again, to have doubts about the continued identity of the soul. It is always difficult for him to resolve this problem; however, in *The Secret Doctrine* of H. P. Blavatsky there is a passage which gives a definite answer to his question:

> Intimately or better, inseparably, connected with karma is the law of Rebirth, or the reincarnation of the same spiritual Individual in a long series of Personalities that is almost endless. These are like the clothing, or like *the different roles played by the same actor* [my emphasis] with which he is identified, and is recognized by the public for a few hours. The real Man, the interior one, who interprets these roles knows that he is Hamlet only during a few days, which on the level of human illusion represents the entire life of Hamlet. He also knows that, last night, he was King Lear, the

> transformation in turn of the Othello of an earlier night. And although the visible exterior character may not know it… the permanent Individual always has full knowledge of it.[32]

Finally, Juan de Mairena was holding forth one day on the topic of death at a gathering in a provincial café and, as if he wanted to shake up the spiritual laziness of a traditionalist friend, he declares emphatically:

> It is useless… to look for Felipe II in the Pantheon of El Escorial, because there, there is absolutely nothing. This cult of death is repugnant. The *past* can only be found in the present… Felipe II has not died, my friend. I am Felipe II!!! Don't you recognize me? (OPP, p. 499).

Does Mairena really feel that he is the reincarnation of Felipe II? There is no doubt that this is in large part a jest. But what is the real intention of the author? Perhaps he is trying to hide his beliefs by making a bizarre exaggeration. But if that is true, why would he hide them in this way? Machado himself gives us the answer:

> This anecdote, reported by of one of Mairena's followers, explains the reputation for being a madman and a spiritualist which he had acquired during the final years of his life (OPP, p. 499).

Can it be that Machado himself had a reputation for being "a madman and a spiritualist" during the final years of his life? He certainly might have, if he had spoken openly about the belief in reincarnation which we have just examined in this chapter.

A PROFESSION OF FAITH

In conclusion, I want to analyze one more poem of Machado which will allow me to summarize, and perhaps to clarify a little more, some of the ideas we have examined in this chapter. It is entitled "Profession of Faith" which, in spite of the title, some critics have used as an example of the poet's *lack of faith*. The poem presents some difficulties which these critics have often failed to resolve because they did not consider them in relation to Machado's pantheistic metaphysics. But if they are seen in the light of the theories we have discussed in this chapter, and in the previous ones, these problems can be resolved. So let us try to determine what the poet actually meant to say in this poem:

> God is not the sea but is in the sea; He shines
> like the moon on the water, or appears
> like a white sail;
> in the sea He awakens, or sleeps.
> He created the sea, and emerges
> from the sea like the cloud and the storm;
> He is the Creator and the creature makes Him;
> His breath is soul, and by the soul He breathes.
> I will make you, my God, as you made me
> and in order to give you the soul you gave me
> I will create you in myself. May the pure river
> of love, that flows eternally,
> flow in my heart. Dry up, oh God,
> the murky fountain of a faith without love! (CXXXVII, OPP, pp. 226-227).

[32] H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, Op. cit., p. 306.

The "sea" in Machado's poetry represents *the unknown*, the veil which hides our beginning and our end—"from a hidden sea we came, to an unknown sea we go" Machado writes in a poem from "Proverbs and Songs" (CXXXVI, xv, OPP, p. 215). So God is not the unknown, but His true being is unknowable—"God is not the sea but is in the sea." He enters our awareness as a reflection of the true reality—"He shines / like the moon on the water"—or as a distant vision of unattainable purity—"like a white sail." He has two modes of being: 1) when "He awakens" His being is *manifested*, and 2) when He "sleeps" it is dormant, or *non-manifested*. He created the sea—nothingness—when he gave human beings the capacity to think of being as it *is not*. He "emerges / from the sea"—from nothingness, or from the unknown—when our intuitive, or non-rational consciousness is able to penetrate the veil created by our rational thought. Each soul is an emanation of God—"His breath is soul"—and since we are part of His absolute reality, He lives within our soul —"by the soul he breathes." In spite of what some critics have said, Machado does not feel that God is only a product of our imagination when he says: "I will make you, my God," and "I will create you in myself." He is referring, instead, to the effort to perfect his soul which is part of the divine being; as his brother, José Machado, has explained: "the path to arrive at God—as the Poet says—is to create Him in oneself by awakening the God that we all have in the depths of our soul" (José Machado, p. 46). And to awaken the God within our self is to make ourselves as pure as He made us in the beginning: "as you made me." Thus, if God were to help him purify the murky waters of his imperfect being, his heart could indeed be a channel for the pristine current of divine love.

This is the goal for which the poet is striving and which he hopes to reach in this life, or in a future existence. And his voice is one of the first, after the rationalism of the past decades, to urge us toward a new spiritual reality in which the "reputation for being a madman" will no longer be imposed on to those who express their faith in the immortality of the soul, and in its ultimate purification. In the next chapter I will try to determine the true identity of Machado's "beloved," and I will examine this topic from the point of view of Jungian psychology.