

Words of Walking in Modern Spanish Literature

My dissertation studies figures of walking in Spanish Iberian texts from the late 19th and early 20th century in order to better understand how writers in Spain formulated their own sense of modernity. Historically this time period moved away from pedestrian movement as trains, trams, and eventually automobiles became the primary modes of displacement. I take the position that Spanish writers at this time defended peripatetic behavior and by extension forged a modernity that permitted and benefited from idleness, curiosity, and risk-taking.

I examine works that use pedestrian activity as a means of reflection, renovation, and rebellion in what José-Carlos Mainer has called the Silver Age of Spanish literature. These include: *Superchería* (1889) by Leopoldo Alas (Clarín); *Camino de perfección* (1902) by Pío Baroja; *Soledades, galerías y otros poemas* (1903-1919) and *Campos de Castilla* (1912) by Antonio Machado; *Niebla* (1914) by Miguel de Unamuno; *Un río, un amor* (1929, published 1936) by Luis Cernuda; and *Poeta en Nueva York* (1929-30, published 1940) by Federico García Lorca. The itinerant figures in these texts experiment in ways that do not necessarily lead to profitable conclusions, but their walking is a recourse for the writers to explore the expression of individual desire, to re-envision the national identity of Spain, and to challenge the norms of language and composition.

I divide this project into three chapters. The first deals with the persistence of pilgrimage and mysticism at the fin-de-siècle through the figure of Santa Teresa de Ávila in works by Clarín, Baroja, and Machado. I show that these writers saw in Teresa a model for spiritual voyage guided by desire, which is itself based on distraction and wandering. In the second chapter I investigate the excursion programs of the Institución Libre de Enseñanza, an educational organization founded in 1876 that formed an intellectual bridge across generations from Clarín to Unamuno and Lorca. An aspect of its pedagogical program involved group trips to the Sierra de Guadarrama, and the travelogues and articles written about these trips show that as Spain underwent modernization there was a critical consciousness of what role the countryside would play in the national identity. With an understanding of the mystical and the rural in the perspective of Spanish writers on modernity, in the last chapter I study the meaning of city walking in texts by Unamuno, Lorca, and Cernuda. My research traces the development of the *paseante*, an urban stroller specific to Spanish letters and which predates the *flâneur*, a term that only gained currency in France in the early 19th century. I find that the *paseante* represents a voice of critical self-reflection that makes it a subversive figure who uses the city as a space to exercise his capacities of artifice and destruction.

This investigation is of interest to the discipline of Hispanic letters because it is a topic that brings together areas of literary analysis frequently treated as disparate fields: poetry and narrative, fin-de-siècle and avant-garde, the Generations of 1898 and 1927. It is also a treatment of a topic that has been otherwise studied extensively in French, German,

and English literature, but relatively little in Spanish. Moreover, the majority of research that has analyzed ambulant characters in Spanish literature resorts to merely applying extant theories of walking from other literary traditions onto Spain. My dissertation, however, looks for motivations for walking that are unique to the Spanish cultural history and political climate of the late 19th and early 20th century. In this way my project is able to confront longstanding critical bias. Whereas scholars almost unanimously talk about Spain as a latecomer to the modern era in the Western world, my vision of itinerancy in Spanish literature tells a different story. I show that Spanish writers resisted the paradigms of modernity that took hold in other countries, arguing that their particular outlook is evident both in the way they represent walking and the manner in which walking structures their texts.