

ABSTRACT

The Existential Search for National, Individual and Spiritual Identity in Selected Works of Miguel de Unamuno

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Miguel de Unamuno, a well-known twentieth century Spanish writer and member of the Generation of '98, exemplified the human struggle with collective and individual identity in many of his essays, dramas and novels. As a young writer, he and the other *noventayochistas* posed the question “who are we” to the Spanish people as they sought national identity and the true meaning of being Spanish. Later, Unamuno questioned individual purpose in life as well as the role of human life in relation to a divine Creator. One of Unamuno’s best known compilations of essays, *En torno al casticismo* (1912), addresses the question of “who are we” in reference to Spanish national identity, while two of his best known novels, *Niebla* (1914) and *San Manuel Bueno, Mártir* (1931), utilize the existential struggles of the protagonists to examine the questions and often tentative answers to the personal and spiritual existential quest for identity.

The Existential Search for National, Individual and Spiritual Identity
in Selected Works of Miguel de Unamuno

by

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction: Unamuno and the Existential Search

At the turn of the twentieth century, through historical events such as the destruction of the first Spanish republic (1873-74) and the final collapse of the Spanish empire following its defeat in the Spanish- American War (1898), a writer emerged that would influence the new identity of a country in the midst of an existential crisis. Miguel de Unamuno, through his various essays, and novels, or *nivolos* as he called them, searched for truth not only concerning national identity, but also in relation to individual and spiritual identity. Unamuno and other members of the Generation of 1898 called for an identity that was truly Spanish, rather than an amalgamation of influences from abroad. When the author wrote, taught or gave public speeches, he often put forth controversial philosophical views that were incompatible with the prevailing ideologies of his native Spain during this period. On another level, Unamuno struggled with what he believed to be his legitimate purpose in life, as well as what purpose in life meant for other individuals. His works regarding existentialism still serve, not only as inquiries into the nature of the philosopher, but also as tools to grasp the nature of the existential search. One of Unamuno's best known compilations of essays *En torno al casticismo* addresses the question of "who are we" in reference to Spanish national identity, while two of his best known novels, *Niebla* (1914) and *San Manuel Bueno, Mártir* (1931) utilize the existential struggles of the protagonist to examine the questions and often tentative answers to the existential quest for individual identity.

Unamuno was born in the Basque city of Bilbao in 1864. After completing both his bachelor's and master's degree in Bilbao, Unamuno moved to Madrid to pursue a doctorate in philosophy at the University of Madrid. Before this time, the writer considered himself a deeply religious man, but living in the nation's capital, called by one critic "blasphemy center of the city," could be one of the causes for his later questioning of religion and the divine, though these doubts more likely stemmed from his perception of the Catholic church as a corrupt institution (Sánchez-Barbudo 15). Following his tenure in Madrid, Unamuno returned to Bilbao and eventually settled in Salamanca, where he spent most of his life with his wife Concepción Lizarraga and their ten children. He joined the faculty at the Universidad de Salamanca, where he was the chair of the Greek department and later rector, a position similar to that of the President of an American university.

However, in 1914, the writer lost his title as rector at the Universidad de Salamanca due to his political dissent. An avid socialist, Unamuno faced repercussions for his public criticism of the Spanish government. Ten years later, he was exiled to Fuerteventura in the Canary Islands because of his public disapproval of the dictator General Miguel Primo de Rivera (1923-1930). From Fuerteventura, he escaped to Paris, drawing attention to his punishment. He eventually settled in Hendaye, a French Basque town near the Spanish border, where he lived until Primo de Rivera died in 1930. In 1931, his position as rector of the university was restored until 1936 when he again disagreed with those in governmental power. As a socialist and supporter of the Republic, he denounced the ideas of the Nationalists under Francisco Franco and other military figures and the fascist party, the Falange Español that supported the Nationalists.

As Spain suffered political turmoil in the late 1890s, Miguel de Unamuno penned the collection of essays *El torno al casticismo*, which was the first piece reflecting social and political ideologies of the literary group that would come to be known as the Generation of '98 or the "noventayochistas." First published as separate essays in 1895 and then collected and issued as a book in 1912, the compilation became the primary work espousing the movement. The Generation of '98 was formed by a group of Spanish authors who came together because of common frustration stemming from the decadence of their native country. Before the ideology and struggles of this generation were presented in *El torno al casticismo*, a literary precursor to the generation, Benitez Pérez Galdós, had already advanced similar concerns over the decadence of Spain through the voice of his character Refugio in his novel, *La de Bringas* (1881). Refugio tells the wife of Bringas, Rosalía: "Viven en la calle, y por vestirse bien y poder ir al teatro, hay familia que se mantiene todo el año con tortillas de patatas..." [They live in the street, and so that they can dress well and so that they can go to the theater, these families live off of potato tortillas all year...]. The admonition of the bourgeoisie class by Refugio proves that the concerns of the "noventayochistas" arose years before they composed their works. The Generation of '98 believed that demolition of the Spanish empire following the Spanish-American War was to be due to the nobility's collapse into self-indulgence in the decades leading up to the war, reflected in Galdós novel. The *noventayochistas* preoccupied themselves with this disintegration of Spanish identity and called attention to the decadence of Spain by penning unflattering descriptions of Spanish nobility and its role in the demolition of an empire. They called it "el problema de España." This literary movement has been defined as follows: "That which was called the Generation of

'98 was a small group of men, whip in hand, who tried to awaken the consciousness of tired, bored and disillusioned Spaniards" (Ibarra 254). The members of this movement believed the Spanish people were too blinded by tradition to see the changing world. The solution of several of these men was to filter European ideals into Spanish society without destroying the values that already dominated the lives of the majority of Spaniards (Del Mastro 7).

This group of *noventayochistas* consisted of men from the intellectual class, each bringing with him a flair for writing and an interest in existentialism. Though Unamuno is one of the more well-known authors, critics consider several of the others pertinent to Spanish literary history and, moreover, to Spain's identity crisis. Novelists Ramón Valle-Inclán and Pío Baroja, essayist Azorín (José Martínez Ruíz) and poet Antonio Machado explored this same existential question of national identity in their works. In these writings, each brought a different view of the Spanish existential crisis to the public; Valle-Inclán utilized the aesthetic and presented the problem through Spanish legends such as Don Juan (only now as a Catholic, aging, and sentimental seducer) in works such as *Sonata de otoño* (1902). In the essay *Las Nubes* (1912), Azorín creates the symbol for the generation. He uses clouds to symbolize not only time but the confusion in discovering identity and the way in which this search is both constant and ever changing, much like the natural phenomenon referenced in the title. Although all these men had similar ideas covering the "problema de España," or great national existential question, Unamuno's summary of the generation's beliefs in *El torno al casticismo* best reflects the *noventayochistas'* thoughts on the national identity crisis.

From 1894 to 1911, Unamuno took the first steps in his existential journey as he penned the essays that made up *En torno al casticismo*; “La tradición eterna” [The Eternal Tradition], “La casta histórica castilla” [The Historical Castilian Caste], “El espíritu castellano” [The Castilian Spirit], “De mística y humanismo” [Of Mysticism and Humanism] and “Sobre el marasmo actual de España” [About the Current Morass in which Spain Finds Itself]. In the first, he gives the reader a reason for this discussion of the definition of *casticismo* as he writes: “Elévanse a diario en España amargas quejas porque la cultura extraña nos invade y arrastra o ahoga lo castizo, y va zapando poco a poco, según dicen los quejosos, de nuestra personalidad.” [Bitter complainers arise daily because the foreign culture invades and drowns our authenticity, pulling away little by little, according to those who complain, our personality]. When he refers to the *quejosos* or those who continuously complain, Unamuno brings the problem of Spain into the public light; Spaniards must embrace modern ideas, but find a way to preserve Spanish identity in order to be a nation of their own in a changing world. Thus, he calls for a national existential search. In each of the individual essays that compose *En torno al casticismo*, Unamuno discusses the characteristics of *casticismo*, or the essence of being Spanish, and, in noting the strengths of Spain, shows that the nation can overcome the consequences of its previous slide into decadence highlighted in the disastrous outcome of the Spanish-American War. Throughout the collection of essays, Unamuno presents both the ugly and beautiful in the Spanish identity, urging Spanish readers to reconstruct an identity of their own, rather than falling into the trap of satisfying quotidian pleasures. One can assume that *En torno al casticismo* is Unamuno’s first venture into the existential search in that this his essays deal with the national identity crisis and the

timely question of “who are we?” As the author became increasingly interested in the existential question, the national identity crisis of Spain prompted his journey into a deeper exploration of the individual and spiritual existential questions.

Although Unamuno believed Spain was in the midst of an identity crisis, his writings reflected not only a national existential search, but a personal existential search as well. His later writings transcended the national and move towards questions regarding individual spirituality and identity. Through his crisis with religion, he struggled over the nature of the divine and the relationship between creator and creation. In *La agonía del cristianismo* (1925), he explains that Christianity is purely an individual truth and is the reason the individual battles with the truth in its doctrine. In many other essays, such as *Mi religión* {My Religion} (1907), stories and poems, including “El Cristo de Velásquez” {The Christ of Velasquez} (1920), Unamuno questions the reason for existence, the relationship between Creator and created, and the purpose of faith.

In 1914, Unamuno wrote a work of fiction that personified his fear of existential failure in the character of Augusto Pérez. In his introduction to the 1935 edition of *Niebla* Unamuno wrote: “ Augusto Pérez nos conminó a todos, a todos los que fueron y son yo, a todos los que formamos el sueño de Dios- o mejor, el sueño de su palabra-con que habremos de morir” [Augusto Pérez threatens all of us, all of us that did and do know who we are and all who have formed an idea of God, or better of His Word, and we are bound to die] (25). In the novel, Augusto moves from being a young, wealthy man, ambling through life without direction to a man dedicated to a love that gives his life meaning to a man whose search for meaning eventually consumes him and results in his death. Throughout *Niebla*, Unamuno presents the development of Augusto’s individual

identity but also shows the negative outcome of failure to become an active and valuable member of society by portraying Augusto as one who has no impact on his society.

Unamuno also created the character of Eugenia Domingo del Arco, an independent, self-assured pianist who does not question her role in the world, to juxtapose Augusto's identity crisis. However, he ends the novel by presenting the idea that, although the individual forms his or her identity, his or her Creator makes the final decision over what the individual's fate will be.

Later, in 1931, Unamuno wrote a short novel that dealt with the existential struggle through the examination of questions surrounding God, and the divine's existence and role in human life. *San Manuel Bueno, Mártir* presents the story of a priest who teaches salvation through Christ to his village, but cannot convince himself to believe in an afterlife. The novel reflects much of what Unamuno wrote in *Mi religión*. In this essay, he writes that he wants God to exist, but does not know if he believes in the divinity of Christ. The struggle of the protagonist in *San Manuel Bueno, Mártir* mirrors Unamuno's doubts about salvation as described by the Christian church. In the novel, the main character continues to preach this idea, though he himself no longer truly believes it, because it is for the greater good of the people in his village. The narrator of Don Manuel's story, Angela Carballino, also experiences an existential struggle as she witnesses her priest's identity crisis, but in the end maintains the same faith she had at ten years of age. The reader sees Unamuno's conflict with religion and faith in *San Manuel* in that he believed God to exist, but experienced frustration in searching for the divine's function in and purpose for human life.

The roles played by Unamuno's characters in his works of fiction are often those of males who do not comprehend the reason for their existence, passing through life in contemplation and agony, rather than living constructively. In both his novel *Niebla* and his novella *San Manuel Bueno, Mártir*, the protagonists embody the existentialist search characteristic of Unamuno's writings. The first, *Niebla*, is the story of Augusto Perez, a *paseante en la vida* or "passer through life." Augusto is a young, wealthy man who has lived with and depended on his mother for both meaning and material necessities his entire life. The novel introduces the reader to Augusto as a man without a job, living in his parent's house with two of his mother's servants. The protagonist falls quickly in love with Eugenia Domingo del Arco, believing his love and devotion to her to be the reason for his existence. Through the course of the novel the reader discovers, as Augusto attempts to find himself, that the protagonist lacks independence and an assertive will. Augusto endeavors to find his purpose for living in his love for Eugenia, the lead female. In loving her, he hopes that she will return the sentiment, giving him a reason to exist. Augusto's shortcoming lies in his inability to identify his purpose in life. According to Kierkegaard and other existential scholars, the purpose of the existential search is for one to answer the question "who am I?" for oneself (Sanchez-Barbudo 132). The existential journey is an individual one, which means Augusto cannot be successful in answering his existential questions as long as he depends on another to establish his purpose in life.

In *San Manuel Bueno, Mártir*, Don Manuel, the priest of the village of Valverde de Lucerna, struggles with the existential question of God. His is not so much a question of who he is, but the role of the divine in human life. Don Manuel does not lack independence like Augusto, in that he has been alone as a priest for many years. Rather,

the priest's weakness lies in his inability to continue to be an active priest and serve his village when his existential burden becomes too heavy. Don Manuel knows he does not, and never will, believe in an afterlife. He knows what his truth is, but finds that it conflicts with the truth of others. His question then becomes one of purpose. At first, the priest believes his purpose is to give hope through teaching the promise of an afterlife. As the *novella* progresses, he finds that the clash of his individual belief with what he teaches the people and what he feels to be true consumes more and more of his time. Don Manuel succumbs to the burden of his questions and doubts when he finds another who also denies the existence of an afterlife. He then knows that there are others who, like him, find the concept of the afterlife to be difficult, if not impossible, to accept with no physical proof and experiences angst knowing that his "truth" could one day be publicly exposed, thereby damaging the faith of his villagers. Therefore, he feels the pressure of his lie being the source of the village's hope and he is no longer sure of the reason for his existence. These questions and growing doubts consumes the priest's days and he fails to be the priest his parishioners need him to be. While the reason for Don Manuel's death is unclear, it seems that he has nothing left to do but die so that his questions may be answered.

Thus, as Unamuno's works underscore, the Spanish people and well as individual Spaniards faced an existential crisis. Unamuno explores issue of this nation's identity, questioning what being Spanish truly means. The Spanish people faced the disintegration of their empire and loss of status in the international community. Their history no longer gave them a clear set of national values. The second chapter discusses the way in which Unamuno presents this problem in *En torno al casticismo* and how this work calls for

Spaniards to begin to explore and reestablish their identity as a nation. In *Niebla*, examined in chapter three, and in *San Manuel Bueno, Mártir*, discussed in chapter four, Unamuno creates fictional worlds in which each protagonist is unable to create a true identity ; Augusto is unable to establish an individual identity in his world and Don Manuel fails to understand his role in the divine's universe. The reader sees the interaction of Augusto with various characters, noting that Augusto is the only one who has no concept of personal identity. In the same way, Don Manuel witnesses the faith of the villagers and Angela, his "spiritual daughter," but eventually cannot live with the questions surrounding his spiritual identity and continue to impact his society. Thus, as Unamuno's works underscore, the Spanish people, as well as individual Spaniards, faced an existential crisis, a crisis they needed to resolve to find meaning and purpose in life and in the future.

CHAPTER TWO

The Existential Question in *En torno al casticismo*

Miguel de Unamuno's first venture into existentialism dealt with the question of Spanish identity, or what it meant to be Spanish, in the collection of essays *En torno al casticismo*. In these five essays the author writes about a more realistic collective identity for Spain as he describes the historical achievements and failures of the country.

Unamuno's essays provoke an existential search within Spain itself and suggest that he feels the essays are his contribution to the commencement of this journey. In the first essay, "La tradición eterna" {The Eternal Tradition} (1895), Unamuno summarizes his goals for his essays:

Si las reflexiones que voy a apuntar logran sugerir otras nuevas a alguno de mis lectores, *a uno solo*, y aunque sólo sea despertándola una humilde idea dormida en su mente, *una sola*, mi trabajo tendrá más recompensa que la de haber intensificado mi vida mental, porque a una idea no hay que mirar por de fuera, envuelta en el nombre para abrigarse y guardar la decencia; hay que mirar por de dentro, viva, caliente, con alma y personalidad (14).

{If the reflections that I am going to note achieve the suggestion of other new reflections in one of my readers, *only one*, and although it may have only awakened a humble idea asleep in his mind, *only one*, my work will have more reward than that of having intensified my intellectual life, because one must not look outside himself for an idea, enveloped in a name that hides it and preserves decency; one must look at the interior idea, which is living, warm, with soul and personality.}

The publication of the first essay before the Spanish-American war (1898) demonstrates the author's frustration with the degraded state of the country and his desire for Spain once again to find its place in the world. Through the essays, he describes the role of historical and spiritual qualities in national identity. The five essays composing

the work were published in newspapers over a sixteen year period, from 1895 to 1911, and then collected to compose *En torno al castismo* in 1912. In all of the essays Unamuno attempts to paint a true portrait of the Spanish people, how they were and how they are. Through each essay, with his descriptions of their achievements, their failures and the decadence of a people, he does not propose a solution to the identity crisis but begins an unearthing of the true meaning of *casticismo*, or what it means to be Spanish for “*uno solo*” that reads his words.

The predominant ideology in the decades preceding the Spanish-American war had been Krausism, a philosophy that promoted idealism and the fusion of the religious and the scientific (Lafuente 24). This philosophy supported the actions of the bourgeoisie class of the nineteenth century because of its promotion of the pursuit of the ideal, which, in turn, supported the egoism and the avarice of this class. Many intellectuals in the twentieth century followed this philosophy because it supported the search for the ideal and because it averred that one would discover this truth within the spiritual instead of the concrete (Kronik 4). Unamuno opposed the followers of Krausism because he thought that this philosophy caused one to consider only the conceptual rather than the concrete. Although he argues for the importance of spiritual identity, he also argues for the importance of both the concrete and spiritual within an individual. In “La tradición eterna” he writes the following: “De puro sabido se olvida que la representación del mundo no es idéntica en los hombres, porque no son idénticos ni sus ambientes ni las formas de su espíritu, hijas de un proceso de ambientes” (19). {Because of taking things for granted, one forgets that the representation of the world is not identical for every man

because they are not identical, neither are their environments nor the forms of their spirit, which are the daughters of a process of the environments. }

Unamuno's idea differs from the ideology of Krausism in that, there cannot be a single spiritual identity and because men differ given that they are the products of the environment in which they were raised. Unamuno focuses on a collective identity rather than Krausistic ideals because one can observe it in historic productions and in the *intrahistoria* of the Spanish people. Unamuno's ideas developed as he matured; he began "La tradición eterna" at the age of thirty-one and finished with "Sobre el marasmo actual de España" {About the Current Morass of Spain} at the age of forty- seven, a production covering a time-span in which he had experienced life-altering events, thus changing his focus from the national to the individual as the essays progress. However, the philosophy of Unamuno found in *En torno al casticismo* is based on his theory of the formation of national character by climate and geography and his focus on the social, or the interaction of peoples and classes, in order to resolve " *el problema de España*" (Jurkevich 19). *En torno al casticismo* constitute a rapprochement of Krausism, which promotes the search for the truth within the humanities and the conceptual, and the theories of Unamuno himself that combine this philosophy with the tangible that one observes in the physical, historical and social environment of culture.

Unamuno begins *En torno al casticismo* with "La tradición eterna" and with a definition of *casticismo*. He carefully differentiates it from the word that has its origins in *casta*, meaning "a superior animal species or animal," by saying that this definition causes a sense of something extreme, including racism. Unamuno says the following: "...el casticismo del lenguaje y del estilo no son, pues, otra cosa que revelación de un

pensamiento castizo” (14). {...the casticism of language and style are not, well, anything other than a revelation of authentic thought}. In other words, *casticismo* originates from the beliefs of the Spanish people that emerge from historical events. The author continues to describe the essence of being authentically Spanish by creating his own term *intrahistoria*, his theory that history exists within the human condition and that historical occurrences are not acts of God nor caused by evolution (Mora 60). On the other hand, everything in history occurs because of human nature and everything is personal. Thus, the future actions of humans come from collective identity, which is based in the understanding of the history of a people. He calls intrahistory “organic” and utilizes images in nature to expound upon this term:

Es fácil que el lector tenga olvidado de puro sabido que mientras pasan sistemas, escuelas y teorías va formándose el sedimento de las verdades eternas de la eterna esencia, que los ríos que van a perderse en el mar arrastran detritos de las montañas y forman con él terrenos de aluvión, que a las veces una crecida barre la capa externa y la corriente se enturbia, pero que, sedimentado el limo, se enriquece el campo (27).

{The reader has taken completely for granted that, while systems come and go, schools and theories continue forming the sediment of the eternal truths of the eternal essence. The rivers flow into the sea, dragging debris from the mountains and form with it the flood plain. Sometimes, a downpour sweeps away the external cover and the current becomes cloudy, but, once the mud becomes sedimented, it enriches the countryside}.

Here Unamuno draws metaphors from nature to show history as something organic; he writes that the sediment, representative of the truth in life, enriches the land on which it falls. This image represents Unamuno’s belief that the vestiges of history, recordings, stories and memories, form the present identity (Izurieta 94). It would seem that this idea of intrahistory and the eternal tradition suggest that some answers to the existential

Spanish question of national identity are found inside its own history. Unamuno ends this essay by writing thusly:

Mas para hallar lo humano eterno hay que romper lo castizo temporal y ver cómo se hacen y deshacen las castas, cómo se ha hecho la nuestra y qué indicios nos da de su porvenir su presente. Entremos ahora en indicaciones que guíen al lector en esta tarea, en sugerencias que le sirvan para ese efecto (36).

{But, to find that which is eternally human, one must break the temporal caste and see how one makes and unmakes castes, how ours has been made and what indications its present gives us of its future. We now enter into indications that guide the reader in this task, in suggestions that will serve him to achieve this effect.}

In “La casta histórica de Castilla” {The Historic Caste of Castille}, the second essay in the collection, Unamuno explains the role of Castile in the formation of Spain as a nation. In Castile, a region of great importance in Spain’s development, lay the capital city of the kingdom of Fernando II and Isabel I, the Catholic Kings, and was the primary site of the beginning of an empire that controlled a large part of Europe as well as the Western Hemisphere for several centuries. Spain as an empire began in 1492 with various events initiated by the Catholic Kings. While much of their power came from Columbus’ discovery of land in the Western Hemisphere in that year, the ultimate power which created the Spanish Empire began with the expulsion of the last Moorish king from Granada, followed immediately by that of all Sephardic Jews who rejected Christianity. The ambition of Fernando II and Isabel I was to unite Spain under a single religion and a single ideology (Altabé 728). Unamuno describes the goal of the Catholic Kings in the second essay, glorifying their actions. He calls them “potencias españoles” or “Spanish Powerhouses” and hypothesizes that it was they who provoked the participation of all Spaniards in the formation of an empire and a Castilian identity. In his article “Unamuno’s *En torno al casticismo* as Nation-Making” Ibon Izurieta points

out that it is curious that Unaumo praises the efforts of Fernando I and Isabel I to bring Castile to dominance in the Iberian Peninsula and abroad because such glorification seems to contradict his theory of intrahistory (100).

Until the unification of the Iberian Peninsula under the Catholic Kings, Moors, Jews and Christians alike all lived in and contributed to Spanish society. At the time of their expulsion, the Moors had occupied Spain for 781 years, from the time of their arrival in 711 CE. The Sephardic Jews had lived in the country for 1,422 years, since the time their arrival in 70 CE, after the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. Both groups had made significant contributions to business, literature and the sciences (Altabé 729). Therefore, if intrahistory explains the formation of an identity within a historical context, Unamuno denies the role of the Moors and the Sephardic Jews in the already established national identity of Spain in the fifteenth century. He also fails to recognize the racism and prejudice that lay at the roots of the Spanish Inquisition created by Fernando II and Isabel I, an institution that endured from the time of its establishment in 1478 until the nineteenth century (“History of Spain,” *HistoryWorld*).

It seems that the central point of the second essay is the unity of the Spaniards that arose from the creation of Castile by Fernando II y Isabel I. While their legacy endured as Spain became a great empire under the rule of Ferdinand’s grandson, the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V of the Hapsburg line (1516-1556), decades of conflict with other European countries and the eventual secession of the throne to the Bourbon line of France by Charles’ heirs would cause more problems for Spain as a country (“History of Spain,” *HistoryWorld*). The Bourbon kings led Spain through the War of Polish Secession, the War of Austrian Secession and the Seven Years War, rendering it fragile at the time of

the Napoleonic invasion. The success of the French in Spain forced Spain into an alliance with France, thus weakening the empire. Crisis dominated the nineteenth century; Spain experienced the loss of all its Latin American territories and the country became divided because of the Carlist Wars (1833-1875) and because of the its inability to agree on the rightful heir to the throne, the daughter of Ferdinand VII, Isabella II or his brother Don Carlos. Spain seemed to be deteriorating as an empire, resulting in rampant apathy amongst the wealthy (“History of Spain,” *HistoryWorld*). The tradition of the bourgeoisie then became to seek individual fame and fortune, rather than to fight for the good of the country as a whole. A great separation of classes resulted from the decadence of Spanish culture and the avarice of the bourgeoisie that dominated the nineteenth century, which produced a difference in goals for the country.

In the second essay, Unamuno explains that the majority of the Spanish population lives in the countryside and they are the “marcados” or “the marked ones” because of their social status (55). It is possible that the author feels disillusioned by this country that is no longer a strong empire nor is united, but has been reduced to a land shared by various people, groups who do not know each other and thus find their fellow Spaniards “unfamiliar.” In “Unamuno and the Theme of History,” Peter G. Earle supposed that Unamuno’s preoccupation with history and intrahistory originates from his desire to find a connection between the destiny of the human race and the spirit of the individual and what that would mean for the Spanish people (55). The existential question in “La casta histórica Castilla,” the second essay, has to do with the possibility of Spain being a united empire, as it was during the era of the Catholic Kings. With the

presentation of Castile as part of the history of the country, Unamuno proposes the possibility of a united people composed of Spaniards themselves.

Unamuno follows “La casta histórica Castilla” with the third essay, “El espíritu castellano” {The Castilian Spirit}, expounding upon the interior of the collective identity of the Spanish people. In order to express that which he believes forms the spirit of the Spanish people, Unamuno talks about the ideas presented in an assortment of theatrical works. In *Antropología filosófica de Miguel de Unamuno*, Avelina Cecilia Lafuente writes the following about the role of Unamuno’s own dramas in the construction of his philosophy: “Fijándonos en la primera definición, parece evidente que había que considerarse filósofo, puesto que en su obra hay, indudablemente, una concepción del mundo y de la vida; una concepción teórica. Pero también una actitud práctica, reflejada, sobre todo, en las novelas y en las obras de teatro “(Lapuente 41). {Focusing on the first definition, it appears evident he had to consider himself a philosopher, given that in his work there is, undoubtedly, a conception of the world and life; a theoretical conception. But also a practical attitude, reflected, overall, in his novels and in his theatrical works}. Here, Lafuente affirms that Unamuno’s theatrical works contain a sense of the reflection of life and the reality of the world. In this third essay, the reader can see that Unamuno has imitated some playwrights that preceded him because he believes the characters of theatrical works are representative of the Spanish spirit. He begins with a description of Calderón de la Barca’s work:

Calderón, el símbolo de casta, fue a buscar carne para su pensamiento al teatro, en que se ha de presentar al mundo en compendio compacto y vivo, en sucesión de hechos significativos, vistos desde afuera, desvaneciéndose a último término, hasta perderse a las veces el nimbo que los envuelve, el coro irrepresentable de las cosas (68).

{Calderón, the symbol of authenticity, went searching in the theater for a way to flesh out in his thought, because one has to present the world in a compact and living synthesis, in a succession of significant events, seen from outside, ultimately vanishing, until losing itself sometimes in the cloud that envelops it, the unrepresented chorus of things}.

In this passage, Unamuno describes the way in which Calderón captures the essence of the Spanish people by portraying it through the characters of his dramas. He continues with this idea by describing the works of Calderón, Francisco de Quevedo and Lope de Vega and discusses their ideas about the person from the lower class and how he must exist in the same community with the man with whom he has nothing in common. He compares their characters with Cervantes' characters Sancho Panza and Don Quijote in the novel *Don Quijote de la Mancha*. In the presentation of these two well-known characters, Unamuno says that, although they come from different classes and have different ambitions, they journey together, forgetting these differences.

Within the pages of this third essay, Unamuno also describes the presentations of the warrior in the previously mentioned playwrights' works, supposing that this character represents the spirit of the Spanish people. He describes the warriors in Calderón's works thusly: "personas que se plantan frente al mundo, y le arman batallar sin huir del peligro, que en la ocasión se moverán guerra a sí mismos sin destruirse..." {people that put themselves facing the world, and they will engage it in battle with out fleeing from danger, that on such an occasion, they will move the war to within themselves without getting destroyed...} This spirit of the warrior, demonstrated in Calderón's dramas, is the spirit of a hero. Although those who belonged to the Generation of '98 believed that Spaniards should treat historical personalities like El Cid as legends rather than living heroes, they still sought the spirit of a hero that would confront the problems of Spain

without fear. Unamuno presumes that this type of hero still exists because he has existed previously in Spanish history. Later, he talks about the theme of love and honor in these dramas, expressing a belief that these ideals contribute to shaping the Spanish spirit and, by extension, national identity.

At the end of “El espíritu castellano,” Unamuno discusses the Catholic religion imposed on all Spaniards and indicates that it is not part of the Spanish spirit, but a law that enforces obedience. The introduction of this subject matter allows for a transition to the fourth essay “De mística y humanismo” {Of mysticism and humanism}, in which he discusses the importance of an individual’s spirituality versus his forced submission to a particular religion and how spirituality plays a role in the formation of collective identity and *casticismo*. Unamuno’s theory posits that the religion of the Spanish people does not originate from faith, but a fear of the Church’s authority. He introduces this idea first in “El espíritu castellano” and develops it fully in “De mística y humanismo.” The first sentence of the fourth essay states: “Así como la doctrina que forja o abraza un hombre suele ser la teoría justificativa de su conducta, así la filosofía de un pueblo suele serlo de su modo de ser, reflejo del ideal que de sí mismo tiene” (101). {Just as the doctrine that a man forges or embraces usually is the justifying theory of his behavior, the philosophy of a people tends to be its way of being, a reflection of the ideal that it has of itself}. Here, Unamuno affirms that the Church is not justified in its doctrine because, as he says later in the same essay, the justification of a man’s actions comes from that which is moral by nature, rather than coming from the theories of the church about morality. In *A Literary History of Spain*, G.C. Brown describes Unamuno’s belief about the church: “The Church, for example, purveys a remedy for what Unamuno regards as man’s deepest

need, the need not to die. But in the light of reason, the consolation it offers is false, and for a man like Unamuno, as for most of the best Spanish writers of his day, the demands of reason were as excruciatingly imperious as those of sentiment” (Brown 5). Unamuno summarizes the idea of a human’s interior, which he describes in “De mística y humanismo.” He gives the example of Santa Teresa, explaining that she related not the doctrine or the laws of religion in her writings, but rather the power of faith that she encountered in mysticism. He also gives the biblical example of Mary Magdalene, writing that she was pardoned, although the Bible never indicates that she followed a particular doctrine. Unamuno’s hypothesizes that Mary Magdalene was pardoned because of her works done for Jesus Christ instead of her faith. “De mística y humanismo” is one of the most complex essays in the collection because of its presentation of the importance of both mysticism and human reason for the individual. Unamuno opines that, in order to live a profound and spiritual life, the individual must discover that which has meaning outside of physical acts. The key idea of this essay is that man can find reason in human nature, and because mysticism is outside of physical, animalistic instinct, it must be part of reason thus also being a part of human nature. Unamuno therefore questions the role of the Catholic Church in Spanish identity because its laws and its doctrine try to govern mysticism and that which is not part of the physical, human world (in this case, spirituality) cannot be governed. Furthermore, its ideology is forced upon the people rather than allowing them to examine it for themselves.

The essay that concludes *En torno al casticismo* is “Sobre el marasmo actual de España,” in which Unamuno references the present identity of Spain. The title of this particular essay is interesting because the definition of “marasmo” or “morass” is a

“suspension or paralysis of physicality or morality,” (“Marasmo,” def. 2) indicating that Spain has come to a point of stagnation of its personality and a loss of vitality as a culture. He also implies that traditions and collective moral beliefs are non-existent in the country, exclaiming that there is no youth. Unamuno contends that Spain continues to follow ancient traditions without allowing progress or modern ideas. Although Unamuno maintains that a people need their tradition, he explains that, in order to discover the true identity of the Spanish people, they must combine Spanish tradition with modern, international ideologies. In this final essay, the author argues that if youthful spirit is absent from the cities and the villages, there will be no Spanish spirit because the old has already died with the “gran desastre” (or the loss of Spain’s last overseas colonies as a result of its defeat in the War of 1898) and the final fall of the empire (143). In the first sentence of part VI of the final essay, Unamuno says: “Es una desolación, en España el pueblo es masa electoral y contribuible. Como no se le ama, no se le estudia, y como no se le estudia, no se le conoce para amarle.” {It is desolation, in Spain the people are only an electoral mass and pay taxes to it. Since it does not love itself, it does not study itself, and since it does not study itself, it does not know itself so that it can love itself.} That is to say that if there is no renovation of interest in the Spanish spirit and there is no intention of rejuvenating it, there will be no Spanish identity.

Within each essay, Unamuno jumps from idea to idea, intending to point out and provoke his readers to consider a resolution of the “problema de España.” One sees in the writing of *En torno al castisimo* that this work is the author’s first step in his existential search because it is an amalgamation of ideas instead of one single philosophy. In the first essay, “La tradición eterna,” Unamuno attempts to explain his theory of

intrahistory and says that all history is a result of human nature, but human identity is influenced by history. One notes that the author seems to contradict his idea of intrahistory in the second essay, “La casta histórica Castilla,” by denying the role of both the Moors and the Sephardic Jews in the formation of Spain as a nation. The essays “El espíritu castellano” and “De misticismo and humanismo” deal with spirituality rather than the history of a people. “Sobre el marasmo actual de España” presents the problem that Spain faces; it lacks unity to form a new identity based in Spanish tradition and it lacks the youthful spirit that would push it to embark on a national existential quest. The reader of *En torno al casticismo* can see that this collection of essays differs from Unamuno’s later fictional works because of the failure to compose a single philosophy. However, the message of the essays is clear; there is a lack of Spanish identity and, in order to rejuvenate the Spanish spirit, the nation must begin an existential search. In order to continue its existence, Spain has to reformulate a national identity based in its values, history and essence. If it does not, it cannot progress.

CHAPTER THREE

Augusto Pérez: “Paseante en la vida” or existential failure?

As Unamuno shifted his focus from the essay to the novel, he also shifted his focus from examining a nation in need of an identity, to that of an individual without a life's purpose, also in need of a clear identity. *Niebla* (1914) tells the story of Augusto Pérez, a “paseante en la vida” {a stroller through life} recounting his failure in the quest for individual truth. Augusto spent most of his childhood and part of his early adult life in a co-dependent relationship with his mother. During Augusto's childhood, Señora Pérez controlled the protagonist, resulting in his dependence on a dominant female figure. Throughout the novel, this dependence drives him to find a new woman to dictate his life. Augusto seeks a relationship with a woman so he may retain the sense of security and certainty he finds in having a dominant female figure in his life. By looking for this stability in a new relationship, he seeks to replace his mother. The novel *Niebla* is, therefore, the story of the individual who seeks a dominating figure to dictate his path rather than discovering it for himself. It serves, moreover, as Unamuno's warning against a two-dimensional life, a life without true purpose and meaning, or a sense of self-identity.

As the novel opens, the narrator reveals Augusto's character instantaneously as the protagonist decides that the direction of his daily walk will be to follow the first person or animal that crosses his path. The reader observes that the most important decision in the protagonist's day occurs when he must choose to go left or right, demonstrating a lack of depth and purpose in Augusto's life. On his walk, Augusto

catches the gaze of Eugenia, the lead female character and his life changes with an epiphany; he was created solely for the purpose of loving Eugenia. Unamuno describes the first time Augusto witnesses the powerful eyes of Eugenia thusly: “En esto pasó por la calle no un perro, sino una garrida moza, y tras de sus ojos se fue, como imantado y sin darse de ello cuenta, Augusto” (27). {On this day, it was not a dog that came down the street, but a beautiful young lady, and following her eyes Augusto went, as if attracted by a magnet and without realizing it}. This chance encounter marks the beginning of Augusto’s existential search for meaning and his sense of self.

Augusto tells himself that he was created to love this woman; he attempts to define himself by what he feels for Eugenia and by discovering what she feels for him. Jurkevich writes: “In *Niebla*, love brings Augusto Pérez an awareness of his opaque, mother-bound personality” (69). In other words, Augusto’s enchantment with Eugenia suggests that he needs a dominant female figure to guide him. The protagonist feels that his own character is not strong enough to lead him through a fulfilling life. Eugenia is an independent and decisive woman and demonstrates qualities that are typically considered positive in males. Her surname even suggests masculinity; Domingo comes from the verb *dominar* meaning “to dominate” and “arco” implies an arch signifying that her dominant personality prevails over Augusto’s weakness (Jurkevich 70). Also, “domingo” derives from “dominus” meaning “Lord,” which is significant in that Eugenia “lords over” Augusto’s decisions and actions. In the novel, Augusto goes through stages; he first needs Eugenia and wants to marry her. Later, when they are betrothed, he ponders ending the relationship. Finally, when Eugenia elopes with another man, Augusto seeks to find the reason for his creation and his existence, if it is not to love Eugenia. Although

Augusto's feelings for Eugenia are unstable and change with each phase, his life as portrayed in the novel continues to revolve around finding a connection with this woman, rather than becoming an independent man, able to act and decide without the guidance of another, the man he himself perhaps wants to be.

On Unamuno's philosophy of the individual, Paul Ilie writes: "As we will discover, personality is a mask which identifies the empty individual with the role it performs in society. To perform this role without personality is to go through life without a fully humanized self" (60). Augusto's story relates the consequences of living a life without "personality"; the protagonist's empty shell, devoid of an individual identity, feeds off of Eugenia's personality in an effort to create meaning in a meaningless existence. The development of both characters is linear; the novel begins by portraying Augusto and Eugenia as young adults struggling to achieve the life they desire. However, Eugenia's actions because of her personality and independence move her in the direction of her goal; whereas, Augusto's lack of personality and, by implication, his lack of choice causes him to fall further and further into confusion, wandering aimlessly through life with no clear sense of purpose.

Because Eugenia has led Augusto to feel something other than the monotony of everyday life, he believes that the creation of his personality can start with this feeling (Nuñez 134). In a conversation with his dog, Orfeo, the protagonist asks ¿qué soy yo? {What am I?}. He goes on to say: "¿Es ella una creación mía o soy creación suya yo?"(50) {Is she a creation of mine or am I a creation of hers?}. In this question, Augusto expresses doubt over his individuality and even his existence. He wonders if he has created Eugenia in order to bring some type of purpose to his life. He also questions

if he is merely a figment of Eugenia's imagination. The protagonist conveys one of the fundamental questions of existentialism when he asks "What am I?" These questions stem from Augusto's inability to feel any type of emotion before meeting Eugenia. He associates being alive with being able to express and feel emotion and therefore questions whether or not he even existed before this chance meeting (Nuñez 134). Augusto's downfall lies in his belief that he exists purely to love another. He ponders whether or not he would exist at all if Eugenia did not exist.

However, the core idea of existentialism is that one searches for one's truth in his or her existence. In *A Literary History of Spain* G.C. Brown writes: "*Niebla* begins by asserting that existence precedes essence. This was no new idea to Unamuno, *Amor y pedagogía* (1907) already implies that a man has no identity until he begins to commit himself to choice" (16). Unamuno's philosophy on existence further proves Augusto to be an existential failure. Augusto has not chosen to fall in love with Eugenia, but has rather allowed this love, caused by an attraction to a physical attribute, to guide his path. Instinct therefore controls Augusto and he seems incapable of reason, which is necessary in making a choice. He acknowledges this lack of "essence" when he asks ¿qué soy yo? The reader can see that he even fails to characterize himself as human in his use of the interrogative *qué* {what} rather than *quién* {who}. Thus, Augusto has no clear sense of who or what he is, even doubting his existence which he perceives only in relation with another, rather than on his own terms.

It is possible that Augusto's pursuit of a relationship with Eugenia and thus lack of personality stems from his mother's dominance over his life until her death. Following the death of his father, the protagonist could not escape from the clutches of

his overbearing mother. It seems as if she tried to replace her late husband with her son. For the entirety of Augusto's life until his mother's death, he really develops no relationships outside of the family home and thus comes to know only his mother and the two servants in the household. When he graduates from high school, Señora Pérez holds her son on her lap as if he were still a small boy. Under the control of his mother, Augusto is unable to learn who he is. Commenting on Augusto's Oedipus complex and Señora Pérez's dominance, Jurkevich writes: "Certainly she is the most dominant and instrumental in the formation of her son as an individual. Behind her apparent façade of birdlike features hides a shrewd and overpowering woman who "nurtures" her son to the point of robbing him of any sense of self" (67). Even after Señora Pérez dies, Augusto lives in her house and subsists on the money she left him. In essence, Augusto knows nothing of life except for that which his mother has shown him. When he meets Eugenia, he senses that she will dominate his life in a way that parallels his mother's domination. Given that he lacks knowledge of any other way of life, he finds his sense of self in obeying controlling maternal figures. Augusto has lived the majority of his life bending to his mother's wishes and therefore has never developed an identity that is individual to him.

Augusto suffers from relationship issues and from an inability to identify boundaries between himself and others. José M. Lopéz-Marrón describes Augusto as one who is trying to find his place in the world, but cannot seem to overcome the power the women in his life exert over him. He describes the protagonist as living under the "Madre Terrible" {Terrible Mother} and calls the world of which Augusto desires to be a part the "Padre" {Father}. Lopéz-Marrón continues, observing that in order to overcome

this “Madre Terrible,” personified in Eugenia and Señora Pérez, Augusto must develop his own ego, or personality. When Augusto leaves his house at the beginning of the novel, a personal choice of going left or right might have led him to find his individual truth. He instead follows Eugenia, the reason being that her eyes remind him of his mother’s (López-Marrón 38). López-Marrón describes Augusto as being both an adolescent who depends on his mother’s support as he takes his first steps out into the world, as well as one who tries to create an equilibrium between the memories of what he has been taught and his conscious reality. If Augusto has an adolescent mentality, then he is depending on a maternal figure to guide him. Rather than balancing his individuality with the advice given to him in the past, Augusto finds a new director in Eugenia. Though Augusto believes he finds himself when he falls in love with Eugenia, he has actually fallen back into the trap of the “Madre Terrible.”

A significant difference between Augusto and one who is confident in his or her identity is his or her ability to act independently. Unamuno’s first description of Eugenia shows that, unlike Augusto, she has developed an independent personality, showing she is not searching for existential truth because she has already found it in her independence. Shortly after Augusto sees Eugenia in the street and finds himself captivated by her eyes, he begins to send her letters requesting that they meet. In turn, Eugenia ignores his letters and makes no response. Consequently, Augusto begins to stand in the street in front of her house, hoping for another chance meeting. He is fortuitously there to rescue the canary of Eugenia’s aunt and uncle when the birdcage falls into the street and they gratefully invite him into their home, where Eugenia and Augusto truly meet for the first time. Eugenia is cold and uninviting and leaves moments after their introduction. Both

her uncle, tío Fermín, and Augusto compliment the independence that she expresses. As doña Ermelinda, Eugenia's aunt, attempts to apologize for Eugenia's behavior, Augusto says: "Pero ¡si estoy encantado, señora, encantado! Si esta recia independencia de carácter, a mí, que no le tengo, es lo que más me entusiasma! ; ¡sí ésta, ésta y no otra mujer que necesito!" (54). {But I am enchanted señora, enchanted! This strong independence of character that I don't have is what makes me most enthusiastic about her. Yes, it is this one, *this one*, and no other woman, that I need! }

Augusto's telling Doña Ermelinda that Eugenia possesses an independent streak, something he lacks, reveals his need of a guide for his life. Though Eugenia treats Augusto harshly and exits abruptly, this quality still excites him. He recognizes his inability to act independently. Eugenia is almost an alter ego for Augusto, in that she is everything he is not. The reader sees that she has a clear understanding of what and who she wants. Unlike Augusto, she is actively answering the existential question of "who or what am I?"

It is possible that the sharp contrast in parental figures between Augusto and Eugenia has affected their adult lives. Whereas Augusto has lived under the influence of a controlling female as the single parent, an aunt and uncle raised Eugenia instead of biological parents, which technically makes her an orphan. The fact that Eugenia has been raised by tía Ermelinda and tío Fermín has possibly caused her to feel a certain distance from these parental figures, resulting in her independent nature. Not only has she lived her entire life without parents, the only consistent male figure in her life is a self-proclaimed anarchist. In a conversation with tío Fermín, Augusto learns of the uncle's life philosophy: "Sí, señor mío, yo soy anarquista, anarquista místico, pero en

teoría, entiéndase bien, en teoría” {Yes, my good man, I am an anarchist, a mystic anarchist, but in theory, please understand, in theory} (47). The reader does not know whether or not tío Fermín has been a “mystic anarchist” throughout Eugenia’s life, but if so, he could have possibly influenced her views with his belief in anarchism. If she had grown up hearing praise for this political and sometimes theological philosophy, she could have possibly adopted some of the ideas as her own. This too could result in a feeling that her independence is necessary.

Not only do Eugenia’s reaction to Augusto and her upbringing contribute to her independence, but the fact that she works in order to survive proves that she is not suffering the same identity crisis as Augusto. The choice to have a career typically reflects the type of character one possesses. Though she still lives with her aunt and uncle, Eugenia works as a piano teacher. Besides using her wages to pay for her own living expenses, she works to help pay for the mortgage her aunt and uncle owe on their residence. When Augusto tells her he appreciates her musical talent, she informs him that one must work for a living. Eugenia’s statement shows that she knows of Augusto’s lack of a career. Later, as tía Ermelinda tells her that Augusto knows about the mortgage, Eugenia becomes offended and accuses Augusto of trying to buy her, like one would purchase a prostitute. This confrontation between the two underlines the stark contrast between Eugenia’s grasp on the world and reality and Augusto’s confusion. Eugenia knows that in order eventually to live the life she desires, she must work and learn to subsist without always having aid from relatives or friends. Augusto, on the other hand, cannot fathom the idea of working. He has always survived on the wealth of his mother and father and knows no other way of life. He believes that his identity crises will be

solved when he has persuaded Eugenia to love him by paying off her aunt and uncle's debt. Eugenia knows, however, that part of her identity lies in being the "pianista" and being able to provide for herself.

Augusto finds comfort in knowing that he might be able to return to his former way of life of being dominated by the "madre terrible," this time in the figure of Eugenia, but soon finds that her independence and dominance is not enough to sustain his love. Therein lies his existential crisis. Augusto feels he can achieve individual purpose through loving and having a relationship with this one woman, but comes to find it does not result in a fulfilling life and does not bring him truth. Eventually Eugenia allows Augusto to pay for her aunt and uncle's mortgage and the two are betrothed. As he becomes more familiar with Eugenia, Augusto finds that he may not love her. When the protagonist first fell in love, he was in love with an idea, rather than experiencing familiarity and friendship (Parker 211). After the betrothal, Augusto encounters a laundress, Rosario, twice and feels physically attracted to her. When she brings him news that Eugenia is already in love with another man, Augusto is overcome with a combination of jealousy and physical desire and kisses the laundress: "Una niebla invadió la mente de Augusto; la sangre empezó a latirle las sienas, sintió una opresión en el pecho. Y para liberarse empezó a besar a Rosarito en los ojos, que los tenía que cerrar." {A fog invaded Augusto's mind; blood began to pound in his temples, he felt a weight on his chest. And to free himself from it, he began to kiss the eyes of Rosarito, which she had to close.} Upon kissing Rosario, Augusto begins to note that his sense of purpose, which centers on playing a role in Eugenia's life, becomes distorted as he realizes another woman may see him as valuable or useful.

When the “fog” mentioned in this passage consumes Augusto, the role of the “niebla” and Unamuno’s choice of title for the novel becomes evident. At each point in his journey, when the protagonist encounters obstacles in his path to self-identity, he is surrounded by a “niebla” or “fog”, which symbolizes his confusion regarding his identity and his role in society. Francisco Fernández Turienzo explains the significance of Unamuno’s choice of title in “La ‘Niebla’ de *Niebla* de Unamuno” in the following way:

Y finalmente, también se aplica al estado anímico, de confusión y desorientación, en el que se encuentra quien no logra ver claro. Este *ver nebuloso*, “ver” –o entender-confuso y vago, como en penumbra, que también origina un estado de confusión, se configura como el significado sobre el que gira la novela. En realidad, es esta situación de confusión y de desorientación, que se origina de una visión o comprensión “nebulosa” y “confusa,” no clara, la que define propiamente la personalidad de Augusto Pérez, el protagonista de *Niebla* (862).

{And finally, it also applies to the confused and disoriented state of mind, in which one who cannot see clearly finds himself. This *cloudy sight* “seeing”-or understanding-confusing and vague, as if in shadow, that also gives rise to a state of confusion becomes configured as the meaning on which the novel turns. In reality, it is this situation of confusion and disorientation, that originates from an unclear, “cloudy,” and “confusing” vision or understanding, which appropriately defines the personality of Augusto Pérez, the protagonist of *Niebla* }.

At each point in the novel that the author uses the “niebla,” Augusto is in a state of confusion over his identity and finds it impossible to answer his existential questions over the purpose of his life. Augusto’s struggle and confusion, which the “niebla” represents, is exemplified in the previously mentioned passage describing the encounter between Augusto and Rosario. The title of the novel and the repetitive use of the image of the “niebla” therefore symbolize Augusto Pérez’s confusion and disillusion over his sense of identity and his attempts to come out of his existential fog and see clearly who he is.

Since Augusto finds that kissing Rosario eases neither his confusion nor his pain, he falls further and further into the “niebla” or fog that is his identity crisis. He concludes

that love does not exist, unless one is made to feel pain through jealousy (Parker 216).

Again, he feels that in order to live one must feel and because he has felt both happiness and jealousy because of love, he must surely now be living. The problem lies in the fact that kissing Rosario has made him feel something else: desire. This new emotion proves to Augusto that his purpose for living may be something other than loving Eugenia.

Augusto's brief fascination with Rosario shows that defining himself by what he feels for Eugenia will not resolve his identity crisis. Arturo A. Fox writing on this encounter in *El Edipo en Unamuno y el espejo de Lacan* {The Oedipus Complex in Unamuno and the Mirror of Lacan} says thusly: "Pero la inminente iniciación sexual en seguida se frustra, por culpa del propio Augusto: él, que no es capaz de cerrar los ojos, para abandonarse al encuentro amoroso, le pide a Rosarito que no cierre los suyos para poder mirarse en sus pupilas" (71). {But the imminent sexual initiation at once comes to nothing, because of Augusto himself: he, who is not capable of closing his eyes in order to abandon himself to the amorous encounter, asks that Rosarito not close her eyes either so that he may see himself in her eyes}. When Augusto sees his image reflected in the eyes of a woman other than Eugenia, he finds that his existence must have meaning outside of what Eugenia feels for him, because other women see and notice him.

Yet, Unamuno uses both the eyes of Eugenia and Rosario as symbols for Augusto's failing existential journey. In the beginning, Augusto catches the gaze of Eugenia and follows her because her eyes remind him of his mother's. The second time he sees her, Augusto does not recognize Eugenia because he cannot see her eyes.

Augusto attempts to find himself in the eyes of Eugenia as he once did with his mother. Here, Unamuno employs the symbolism of the eyes as a mirror or window to the soul. In

most cases, the eyes will reveal emotion felt in the psyche (Jurkevich 75). If Augusto can see a place for himself in Eugenia's soul, he will feel his purpose in life has been fulfilled. Yet, when her eyes do not reflect what Augusto needs to see, her love and his reason for existence, he turns to Rosario. During this previously mentioned encounter between the two, he begs Rosario to open her eyes so that he can see himself in them, in part because he needs Rosario to see him but also he needs to see his reflection to confirm his own existence. If he is able to see a physical image of himself in her eyes, he will know he still exists, rather than having been totally swallowed by the "madre terrible" (Jurkevich 76). The eyes symbolize Augusto's existential failure in that he desires to find his own identity, but depends on the women in his life to give his existence meaning. He needs to see himself reflected back to him by another to confirm he exists.

Augusto soon comes to the realization he will not find his true identity in loving any woman. Shortly after hearing about Eugenia's other love interest, Augusto receives a visit from Eugenia herself. She tells him that they are only to be good friends and that she is leaving to elope with her longtime *novio* {*boyfriend*}, Mauricio. Upon receiving this news Augusto theorizes that all women are the same person in different forms: "¡Tantas Rosarios! ¡Tantas Eugenias! No, no conmigo no juega nadie, y menos una mujer. ¡Yo soy yo! ¡Mi alma será pequeña, pero es mía!"(191). {So many Rosarios! So many Eugenias! No, no one plays with me, not even a woman. I am myself! My soul may be small, but it is mine!}. At this point Augusto comprehends a new dimension of his existential journey; his existence must serve a higher purpose than submitting to a woman in a relationship. He realizes his soul or "alma" is his own and his identity must

be determined by what he believes the truth is rather than what the “madre terrible” tells him the truth is.

Though Augusto is only able to realize the reason behind his existential journey when Eugenia leaves with Mauricio, she has known herself and the truth for her life for the entirety of the novel. She rejects Augusto and, at one point, even rejects Mauricio because of both men’s lack of employment, deceiving Augusto so he will pay her aunt and uncle’s debt and finally achieving her goal by leaving with the one man she realizes she wants-- Mauricio. In *Niebla*, Augusto and Eugenia have the choice of remaining in the world of the “Madre Terrible” where individual truth does not exist or progressing to a state of individualization where individuals recreate their existence to fit their truth (López-Marrón 44). From the beginning, Unamuno portrays Eugenia as one who has formed her life to fit what she believes to be her reason for existence. She has manipulated the significant persons in her life to play their role so as to accomplish her goals. Though she cannot control tía Ermelinda and tío Fermín due to their blood relationship, she does use them for a physical home and other material necessities until she accomplishes her goal of leaving home. Even Mauricio, whom she has chosen to love, is not her reason for living. She has found her identity in attempting to achieve the ideal lifestyle she has envisioned. While Unamuno does not necessarily condone Eugenia’s choices and lifestyle, her actions and choices represent that she has a clear understanding of the purpose for her existence. If only Augusto could learn that lesson.

When Eugenia disappears, Augusto decides to end his agonizing search for identity by committing suicide, but not before seeking out Miguel de Unamuno in Salamanca to question him on certain existential questions, seeking answers from his

creator. When Augusto arrives, the two converse and after Augusto informs Unamuno of his plan to kill himself, the latter eventually confesses that Augusto is not alive, but rather a character in his novel. Unamuno tells Augusto that he cannot end his life if he is not alive. Augusto reacts by arguing that Unamuno would not be having a conversation with an entity of fiction and then by asking if Unamuno is sure he is the “dreamer” and not “the dreamed.” Since the author stubbornly insists that the protagonist is merely Unamuno’s creation, Augusto eventually gives into his fate, though not without a fight. It seems that Augusto feels his destiny has a better outcome than Unamuno’s when he retorts by telling Unamuno that no one would remember a novelist if it were not for his characters, using the famous Spanish Golden Age author Miguel Cervantes and his character Don Quijote as an example. Unamuno becomes irritated and tells Augusto that as soon as he returns to his home, he will die, which causes a sudden turning point in Augusto’s thought process; he claims “quiero vivir” {I want to live}, meaning that he wants to live an authentic life with personality, rather than having the “madre terrible” drag him through his existence. However, the author continues to insist that his protagonist will die and Augusto decides it is time to leave. Before his departure, he says the following to his creator: “¡Usted también se morirá! Él que se crea se muere. ¡Morirá usted, don Miguel, morirá usted, y morirán todos los que me piensen! ¡A morir pues! {You, too, will die! He that creates, dies. You will die, Don Miguel, you will die, and everyone that thinks about me will die! To die, then!} By saying this, it seems that Augusto recognizes that the only chance for his life to have a purpose will be by dying. Thus, Augusto dies shortly after returning to his house, never having discovered another purpose for his life.

Augusto's search for existence and identity culminates in his confrontation with his creator. His dog Orfeo exercises a similar important function in the character's search for identity by providing him a sounding board to explore his ideas. Throughout the novel, the dog is Augusto's most loyal confidant and is it to Orfeo that Augusto poses the question of "who or what am I?" Orfeo seems to know his role is to be his masters' loyal companion, showing that the only physical being that Augusto impacts in his world is Orfeo and, once again, revealing the protagonist's lack of personality. It seems as though Orfeo's role in Augusto's life mirrors Augusto's role in Unamuno's life: the dog's purpose is to be whatever his master would have him be. However, it is Orfeo who gives Augusto's elegy after the owner's death, thus giving the protagonist's life some sort of meaning, much in the same way Augusto says his existence will create meaning for Unamuno, his master and creator.

As Orfeo contemplates his master's life, he questions how a man could live such a life without purpose. The dog says that humans are interesting animals, being that their lives consist only of talking and dressing themselves so that the opposite sex will not see them nude. He laments his master's wasted life: "¡Pobre amo mío! ¡Pobre amo mío! ¡Fue un hombre, sí, no fue más que un hombre, fue sólo un hombre! ¡Y cuánto, sin él creerlo o pensarlo, ¡me debía! ¡cuánto! ¡Cuánto le enseñé con mis silencios, con mis lametones, mientras él me hablaba, me hablaba, me hablaba!"(284). {My poor master! My poor master! He was a man, yes, no more than a man, only a man! And how much, without his knowing it or thinking about it, he owed me! How much! I taught him so much with my silences, by my licking his hand, while he talked to me, while he was talking to me, while he used to talke to me!}. Orfeo says that Augusto was no more than a man,

reflecting Unamuno's philosophy that the protagonist is nothing more than an empty shell without a personality. Orfeo goes on to say that Augusto's life consisted of nothing more than talking, showing again the protagonist's lack of identity. Orfeo's final words exemplify Unamuno's philosophy on the existential quest of an individual; Unamuno believed that the individual must find an active role in society, without being dragged along by a guide and without spending his entire life pondering life's mysteries.

After his elegy, the "niebla" or "fog" surrounding the protagonist also consumes Orfeo. The dog's death signals a common query in the existential quest: If my creator stops thinking or believing in me, will I die? Before he ceases to exist, Augusto ponders this question and asks himself how it is possible that, if he is only an entity of his creator's imagination, he experiences so much anguish over his forthcoming death. He asks himself the following: "Y ¿por qué surgiendo de las páginas en que se deposite el relato de mi ficticia vida, o más bien las mentes de aquellos que la lean-de vosotros, los que ahora la leéis-por qué no he de existir como un alma eterna y eternamente dolorosa? ¿por qué?"(269). {And, why, coming forth from the pages in which the tale of my fictitious life is deposited, o rather in the minds of those who may read it, the minds of you that read it now-why do I not exist as an eternal soul and as eternally tormented? Why?}. Here, the protagonist surmises that, since his soul has experienced pain and suffering, it must exist in some form. He then wonders how his existence can lack meaning, since his pain has impacted his creator enough to compose a work of fiction. Augusto's theory is then that he must continue to exist after his creator ceases to "dream" or think about him since his story lives on in the pages of fiction; every time anyone reads his story, he will exist again in their minds, or in our minds. However, just as

Unamuno claims he will, Augusto ceases to exist just when Unamuno no longer thinks of him. In parallel fashion, Orfeo dies immediately after his master ceases to exist and ceases to talk to him. Unamuno's question regarding the creator's relationship with the creation is consequently left open for the reader to explore in his or her own existential quest.

The Generation of '98 attempted to persuade the Spanish people that they should identify who they were as a people and find individual truth (Mastro 3). However, the participants of this movement never attempt to offer the definitive answer to the questions of "who are we" or "who am I" themselves. In *Niebla*, Unamuno utilizes Augusto to personify the existential struggle of the Generation of '98. The lead female character, Eugenia, demonstrates the opposite of the existential struggle: certainty of one's role in life. The gender differences between Augusto and Eugenia represent the male trying to overcome the "madre terrible" and live in the world of the "padre." Though Augusto's struggle to find himself ends in failure, Unamuno lays out the existential crisis of the *noventayochentistas* through the contrast between Eugenia's certainty and independence and Augusto's inability to identify his role in the world because of the need for tradition.

Moreover, Augusto's story recounts the consequences of an authentic life. During the confrontation between the author and the protagonist, Unamuno explains that he is a true Spaniard: "¡Pues, sí, soy español, español de nacimiento, de educación, de cuerpo, de espíritu, de lengua y hasta de profesión y oficio; español sobre todo y ante todo; y españolismo es mi religión, y el cielo en que quiero creer es una España celestial y eterna y mi Dios un Dios español..." (265). {Well, yes, I am Spanish, Spanish by birth,

education, in body, in spirit, by language and even by trade and profession, Spanish first and foremost. “Spanishism” is my religion and the heaven in which I want to believe is a celestial and eternal Spain and my God is a Spanish God...}. By expressing this belief, Unamuno reveals the questions he has confronted in his own existential journey. In *En Torno al Casticismo*, he asserts that his country no longer has a truly Spanish identity and, for this reason, he and other individual Spaniards face an existential crisis because of their tendency to form their identity according to the idea of what they identified as Spanish. Unamuno also mentions that God is a “Dios español,” hinting that existential answers are not simply found in establishing a sense of collective identity in a society or in the individual’s sense of purpose and his or her role in society, but rather by an understanding of spiritual identity and the relationship with the divine. He would further explore this concept in one of his final works *San Manuel Bueno, Mártir* {Saint Manuel the Good, Martyr}(1931). Augusto responds to Unamuno’s exclamation, saying: “Bien, ¿y qué? (265). {Well, so what?} Poor Augusto still cannot understand the true reason for having an individual personality and identity. Through these words of the protagonist about his identity, the readers see the importance of both a national collective identity, reflected in the essays of *En Torno al Casticismo* and the individual’s sense of personal identity in the existential quest, which he has traced in Augusto’s failed search in *Niebla*.

CHAPTER FOUR

San Manuel Bueno, Mártir: Existential Struggle for Religious Truth

As is the case with most human beings struggling with existential questions, Miguel de Unamuno again shifted from a general existential search for individual purpose and the meaning of having role in society to a search more focused on spiritual identity and the human's role in the world created by the divine. *San Manuel Bueno, Mártir* {Saint Manuel the Good, Martyr}(1931) narrates the biography of a priest who devotes his life to converting the people of his village to Christianity, though he, himself, does not believe in the resurrection of the body nor the eternal life of the soul. In this novel, Unamuno tells the story of the cleric Don Manuel through the found manuscript produced by his once devoted follower and loyal friend, Angela Carballino. She writes Don Manuel's story at the request of the local bishop for his upcoming beatification. As she narrates, she reveals Don Manuel's descent caused by the terrible secret that either he does not believe or has serious doubts about the reality of eternal life. Her biography chronicles the downward spiral of a priest who begins with a mission to serve others, but who ultimately collapses under the burden of his existential truth.

In the first few sentences, Angela Carballino tells the reader that it is by “modo de confesión” or by “way of confession” that she reveals the truth about Don Manuel's profession and life and will therefore reveal Don Manuel's lack of faith as contrasted with the reason for his insistence that he continue professing the message of Christianity. Unamuno begins the novel with a quote in Spanish from Saint Paul's book of Corinthians which says the following: “Si solo en esta vida esperamos en Cristo, somos los más

miserables de los hombres todos” (83). {If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men}(New International Version 1 Corinthians 15:19).

Thus, the Apostle Paul insists that if Christians believe only in Christ for this mortal life with no hope in eternal life, they will suffer. *San Manuel Bueno, Mártir* revolves around this idea of Saint Paul; it tells the story of the human’s search for purpose as he struggles against his individual truth and tries to reconcile it with Christian hope for the afterlife.

As in *Niebla*, the primary female character reveals the other side of the protagonist’s struggle for individuation. Angela begins as the daughter figure and grows to become a follower, and a student as well as Don Manuel’s confessor (Gullón 48).

Angela describes her role in Don Manuel’s life in the opening sentences of her narration:

“...todo lo que sé y recuerdo de aquel varón matriarcal que llenó toda la más entrañada vida de mi alma, que fue mi verdadero padre espiritual, el padre de mi espíritu, del mío, el de Angela Carballino” (84) {.. and all that I know and remember about that matriarchal man who filled all that my spiritual life entailed, and who was my spiritual father, the father of my spirit, of mine, of Angela Carballino’s.} Here, Angela calls Don Manuel her spiritual matriarchal father, describing the way he nurtured her in her spiritual journey and impacted her identity in relation to the divine. However, the reader later sees that, as the priest collapses under the burden of his existential struggle, she becomes the confessor and he eventually becomes the son of the mother figure Angela has become.

The conclusion of the narration finds Angela as the new priestly or holy figure of Valverde de Lucerna, who has come full circle and now replaces Don Manuel’s function.

In *San Manuel Bueno, Mártir*, Unamuno uses the gender differences of the primary

characters, just as he had in *Niebla*, to convey an alternative perspective of the male existential search, this time in the spiritual dimension.

At the beginning of the narration, Don Manuel appears as a strong father figure and saintly priest who possesses a greater amount of knowledge of the afterlife than most, specifically his parishioners in Valverde de Lucerna. They all want to die holding Don Manuel's hand to comfort them. Unlike Augusto Pérez, Don Manuel seems to have a certain identity; he is well known, not only in the village, but also by the nuns at the school Angela attends, showing that his personality has affected the society. Moreover, he is certain that his duty is to serve the people of the village by professing the message of Christianity. He performs a number of good works, which include being a father figure and Angela says the whole village is in love with him (although "castísimamente" or "most virtuously"). Gayana Jurkevich writes: "The saint of Valverde de Lucerna is comprised of a historic self, whose good works will be remembered by church officials, and a historical self that will form part of the intimate village history, the immortal sediment living at the bottom of the lake" (134). The part of Don Manuel that sacrifices his time to teach and serve the villagers is the identity Angela sees the priest has at the beginning of her memoir. Angela is the obedient student, who trusts what her priest teaches as truth.

The physical environment that Unamuno creates in the village of Valverde de Lucerna reflects the inner struggle of the protagonist. Angela begins her memory of Don Manuel with an optimistic description of the priest, comparing him with the beauty of nature and writes the following description: "Ya toda ella era don Manuel, Don Manuel con el lago y con la montaña" (85). {Everything was Don Manuel, Don Manuel with the

lake and the mountain}. This quote is particularly telling in that it echoes Unamuno's language in *En torno al casticismo* as he defines intrahistoria. This beatification may give Don Manuel a historical identity, but intrahistoria shapes his ahistoric spiritual identity, sedimented in the memories of his parishioners. The mountain described previously is symbolic of the public image Don Manuel conveys to his parishioners in that it symbolizes greatness, beauty and majesty. When the people of Valverde de Lucerna observe Don Manuel demonstrating kindness and self-sacrifice, they feel that he is something much greater and more beautiful than they could be. This understanding makes the priest a quasi-Christ figure for the parishioners. In becoming this Christ-like figure for his parishioners, Don Manuel has the ability to convince them that the Christian life and the hope it offers for an afterlife is the only truth. Even the name Unamuno chose to give this character signals that the priest is Christ-like: the name *Manuel* comes from the Hebrew *Emmanuel*, which means "God with us." Therefore, Don Manuel represents Christ for people of Valverde de Lucerna because of his self-sacrificing Christ-like service to them and the message of hope he preaches. The height and grandeur of the priest's public faith, symbolized by the mountain, is something that they cannot attain. Hence, Don Manuel has the power to direct and lead them in their walk of faith.

However, Angela also compares Don Manuel to the lake and by doing so, alludes to the deception hiding in Don Manuel's private persona. She describes the village in the following way: "...de su aldea prendida como un broche entre el lago y la montaña que se mira en él" (85). {...of his village stuck like a brooch in between the lake and the mountain that looked at itself in it}. This description is the first clue of the existential

crisis of the protagonist that the narrator reveals. One typically views a lake as beautiful, yet mysterious. But when looking at a lake, the observer cannot see what lies below the surface because the waters are dark and murky, and only reflect what is above and around it. Only those who are able to swim their way to the bottom see the things that live in the depths of the lake. Furthermore, legend has it that a sunken village lies at the bottom of the lake and its bells that chime on St. John's day hint at its presence. In this way, Don Manuel is similar to the lake. The parishioners liken the size and magnificence of the lake to their understanding of the mountain and see Don Manuel in the same way; they see the mountain reflected by the lake. Nevertheless, Angela hints that she has uncovered a part of Don Manuel concealed by his public persona. Though Don Manuel has been the reason for the villager's successful Christian community, the lake symbolizes his own soul hiding another truth in its depths. Only those who are able to move past the surface of his public persona can uncover Don Manuel's secret. Angela, like others in the village, views Don Manuel as her mountain; he is her "spiritual father." Yet, she warns the reader that Don Manuel will become more like the lake, with unknown truths in the dark depths of his mind.

As she writes about Don Manuel as the priest and spiritual guide of the people, Angela describes in detail his actions from the pulpit. She explains that, as part of Catholic tradition, the congregation recites a creed in unison during mass. Angela goes on to hint at what she will reveal as Don Manuel's tragic secret: "Y al llegar a lo de 'creo en la resurrección de la carne y la vida perdurable,' la voz de don Manuel se zambullía, como en un lago en la del pueblo todo, y era que él se callaba." (87). {And upon arriving at the line 'I believe in the resurrection of the flesh and everlasting life' the voice of Don

Manuel became submerged, as if in a lake, in that of the voice of the entire village, and it was because he had ceased to speak}. Here, Angela again uses the image of the lake and writes that the voice of Don Manuel was drowned out by the chorus of voices from the people of the village. The imagery of the lake represents, again, that Don Manuel's public reputation in Valverde de Lucerna hides his private persona and his spiritual identity.

The symbolism of the lake foreshadows the end of Don Manuel. Through his relationship with Angela, his tragic secret slowly comes to the surface. In one instance, Angela leaves to visit a friend in another town. She writes that during her absence from Don Manuel, it seemed as though his soul called to her, as if she were dangerously far away. Angela also mentions that she felt it was "as if he would need me" (260). At this point in the narration, she is still a young woman and hesitates to be far from the father figure that Don Manuel has become. Yet, Angela is able to leave Valverde de Lucerna, which shows that even outside the comfort of this community: she is able to retain her faith. This part of the novel represents the beginning of a role reversal between the saint and his follower. He cannot leave the town where his followers never question his motives and go to a place where his true value system could be put to the test.

When Angela feels needed by the man who has been her "spiritual father," she can no longer play the role of the innocent daughter over whom Don Manuel watches. Ricardo Gullón describes the beginning of the conversion of Angela from the "hija" or daughter to "madre espiritual" or spiritual mother of Don Manuel in *Relectura de San Manuel Bueno*, asserting that Angela has seven different functions in relation to Don Manuel, those being narrator of his story, messenger of the truth, confessor of the truth,

witness, helper and daughter-mother to Don Manuel (48). Here, Angela is beginning to reach past the public image of the mountain and dive beneath the murky surface of the lake to the private persona. She is beginning to sense a distance between her faith and Don Manuel's, though she cannot understand what is separating them. At this point, the primary role of Angela as Gullón's "hija-madre" of Don Manuel starts to reveal itself. Moreover, Angela's name itself foretells the shift of roles; the name *Angela* is the Spanish for the English noun *angel*, showing that Angela will become a sort of guardian angel for Don Manuel. Since she also becomes a guardian angel, she feels obligated to remain by his side, to comfort and watch over him, throughout his spiritual identity crisis. By becoming all of the aforementioned personalities throughout the novel, she truly is the daughter who becomes the mother to this priest. In the opening pages she is still primarily the daughter figure, but by being a witness to this reaction of Don Manuel's estrangement from her, she begins to travel in the direction of becoming the mother figure.

The introduction of the secondary character of Lázaro, Angela's brother, causes the protagonist to reevaluate his life's purpose. Thus, the role of Angela begins to change; she has moved from a daughter figure to a student of Don Manuel and this change becomes evident as Unamuno introduces Lázaro. Angela's brother returns to the village of Valverde de Lucerna from a stay in the Americas, hoping to take his sister and mother to the city where the ideas and people are modern. Angela's mother refuses to go, citing Don Manuel and his work in their village as one of the reasons. Lázaro is skeptical and refuses to believe in the priest's faith. Not until after the death of their mother does Lázaro begin to form a friendship with Don Manuel. He becomes the only

other person, besides Angela, to whom the protagonist confides. (Juekevich 136). As the relationship between Don Manuel and Lázaro grows, the latter becomes increasingly like the priest, accompanying him as he visits his parishioners, and he eventually decides to publically profess his faith in the message Don Manuel preaches, although he does not believe it to be true. As he promised his mother, Lázaro takes First Communion.

One of the more climactic moments of the novel and the point at which Don Manuel's existential struggle becomes most apparent is the day of Lázaro's communion. Before the entire village of Valverde de Lucerna, Don Manuel gives Lázaro his first communion, even though it seems that he is nervous and unsettled and thus drops the communion wafer. In this scene, Unamuno writes one of the more poignant verses of story: "Y el pueblo al ver llorar a don Manuel lloró diciéndose: ¡Como le quiere! Y entonces, pues era la madrugada, cantó el gallo." {The people saw the tears on Don Manuel's cheeks, and everyone wept, saying 'How he loves him!' And then, because it was dawn, a cock crowed} (Unamuno 267). The powerful description echoes the story of the death of Christ and the rooster crowing at the moment when Peter betrays his Lord and Savior. In the gospel of Luke, the writer describes this betrayal:

About an hour later another asserted 'Certainly this fellow was with him, for he is Galilean.' Peter replied, 'Man, I don't know what you are talking about!' Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. The disciple Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: 'Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times.' And he went outside and wept bitterly (New International Version Luke 22:59-61).

The biblical reference compares both Lázaro and Don Manuel to Peter. Lázaro has betrayed what he knows is true to be one of the people. On the other hand, Don Manuel is a symbol for the disciple in that his beliefs betray what Christ presents as truth. Prior to the communion, Don Manuel and Lázaro agree that this public act of faith will be

beneficial for the people of Valverde de Lucerna to see Lázaro converted, being that he was formerly a vocal critic of the Church and a nonbeliever in Christianity. However, both the tears and the symbolic crowing of the rooster show that Don Manuel knows he has committed the ultimate betrayal; he, an unbeliever, has baptized an unbeliever (Jurkevich 140).

The relationship between Lázaro and Don Manuel not only appears to mirror the betrayal of Christ by Peter, but seems to reflect, through ironically, the relationship between Christ and another biblical character, Lazarus. The name *Lázaro* is the Spanish of *Lazarus* showing that Lázaro and Don Manuel are meant to represent two well known symbols of Christianity. The Bible tells of the friendship of Lazarus and Jesus and portrays Christ's sorrow (and humanity) when Jesus weeps at the grave of Lazarus (New International Version John 11:35). Upon seeing Jesus weeping the people reacted, according to the writer of the Gospel of John. The writer says: "Then the Jews said 'See how he loved him!'" (New International Version John 11:36). The line is almost identical to the sentiments the villagers express when witnessing Don Manuel and Lázaro's relationship at the latter's communion. The book of John goes on to tell that Lazarus did not stay dead, but rather was resurrected by Jesus.

So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, 'Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.' When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!' The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, 'Take off the grave clothes and let him go'" (New International Version John 11: 41-44).

Lázaro's communion echoes Lazarus' resurrection in the book of John in that the Christian communion symbolizes new life; Jesus gave Lazarus a new life and what the

villagers see is Christ, by way of Don Manuel, giving Lázaro a new life. However, while Christ offers an afterlife to everyone who trusts in his message and professes his plan of salvation as truth, Don Manuel offers hope only to his parishioners. The priest himself does not truly believe in the afterlife Christ offers, rendering Lázaro's communion an act of hypocrisy. Don Manuel also seems to mimicking Christ's action in that Jesus says "I said this for the benefit of the people standing here" (John 11:42) and Don Manuel performs Lázaro's communion for the benefit of the villagers. On the other hand, Christ speaks to God not only for the benefit of the people, but because he believes in his message and that the omnipotent God is his father, with whom he will live eternally. In creating this scene of Lázaro's communion, it seems that Unamuno does not deny Don Manuel's hypocrisy but rather poses the question of whether the hypocrisy is for the greater good, or if Don Manuel is nothing more than a hypocrite. Furthermore, he questions whether acting as if one believed will, in the end, lead to such belief.

Lázaro ultimately reveals the tragic secret of the beloved priest to his sister. Following the baptism, Angela notices that something is plaguing Don Manuel and her brother. Lázaro finally tells her: "Lo que aquí hacía falta es que vivan sanamente, que vivan en unanimidad de sentido y con la verdad con mi verdad, no vivirán. Que vivan."(96). {What they lack is the ability to live in unanimity of feeling and the truth, and with my truth they would not live. Let them live!}. At this point, she realizes that the faith of her priest and her brother do not exist; Angela can no longer be the daughter or even the student. She is furious at her brother's confession and tells both Lázaro and Don Manuel that theirs is a sacrilegious and blasphemous crime. Angela cannot

understand why Don Manuel has masqueraded as a priest when he truly does not believe in the promise of heaven.

Not long after the baptismal scene, the narrator begins to reveal that the priest is in need of a guide on his existential path. As she confronts Don Manuel, Angela asks the man who has been her mentor, her teacher and confessor what he thinks her life's path should be, given that he does not believe in an afterlife. Skirting around her questions about life, Don Manuel answers her with a question; he asks her why she will not marry. He goes on to say that both he and Lázaro believe that she should. Angela replies by asking him if he would suggest that she forget about others and pursue individual interests. In response, Don Manuel says: "Tienes razón, Angelina, no sé ya lo que me digo desde que estoy confesándome contigo. Y sí, sí, hay que vivir, hay que vivir"(97). {You're right, Angelina, I no longer know what I tell myself since I am confessing to you. And yes, yes one has to live, you have to live}. By saying this, Don Manuel not only reveals what he believes is his life's path, but confesses to Angela that he believes that there is no other reason for life than serving others.

This admission becomes the first confession that Angela hears from Don Manuel. Another role reversal occurs when the confessor becomes the one who is receiving the confession, which foretells Angela's future role in Valverde de Lucerna. It is ironic that the priest tells his former student that his meaning or purpose in life lies in being the source of hope for the villagers. He eventually discovers that he can no longer serve his parishioners as his physical body crumbles under the burden of his existential journey. Yet, if Don Manuel can no longer live out the priestly life on which his villagers have come to depend as their source of hope, someone must replace him. The priest differs

greatly from Augusto Pérez, who shows the consequences resulting from lack of personality, in that Don Manuel knows that the purpose of his physical life is to serve the villagers of Valverde de Lucerna. In *Unamuno and Kierkegaard* Jan Evans writes the following about the character:

Unamuno creates Don Manuel to give flesh and bone, context and life to the ethical sphere of existence. At the same time, his character is profoundly conflicted. He effectively fulfills the commitments he has made to his parishioners and draws meaning for his life from that, but he cannot believe in life after death. Don Manuel lives with the open wound, the longing for immortal life without being able to be certain of its existence. But he makes a meaningful choice for his life which is necessary for authentic existence, even if there is no certainty in it (98)

While Don Manuel does not experience an identity crisis in this life, he agonizes over his spiritual identity; he is unsure of the purpose of his spirit or if his soul will even exist once his physical body dies. His agony over his spiritual identity affects Don Manuel's personality and thus his role in society.

The priest soon comes to find that living a lie for the good of the villagers is not enough to satisfy his internal desires, which is to know the truth about life after death. His greatest temptation is to commit suicide by sinking into the lake, thereby learning for certain what happens after death. His body begins to give way under the strain caused by lack of self-truth, eventually leading to his death. Shortly before Don Manuel gives into the burden of existential truth, Angela comes to visit her once-father/mentor. He tells her: "Que no le vea, pues, la cara a Dios este nuestro pueblo mientras viva, que después de muerto ya no hay cuidado pues no verá nada... '¡Padre! Padre! Padre!'"(102). {And therefore, do not let our people, so long as they live, look upon the face of God. Once dead, it will no longer matter, for then they will see nothing...Father! Father! Father!}. When Angela calls out "father, father, father" her conversion from the "hija" to the

“madre” is complete. Though she calls out the word “father,” she also cries out for the son that don Manuel has become and mourns his lack of faith. Following this passage, Don Manuel tells Angela she must go on praying so the sinners may go on dreaming of the afterlife (Unamuno 102). Thus, the work of Don Manuel becomes the task of Angela. She transitions into the priest, the teacher, the messenger of hope and the narrator of Don Manuel’s story.

Yet, the reader sees Don Manuel’s existential struggle not only in the role reversal of the priest and his student Angela, but also through also the voice of the character known as the village idiot, Blasillo. Because of his lack of intellect, Blasillo follows Don Manuel and never questions the priest’s message. The novel tells that Don Manuel’s annual “Viernes Santo,” or Good Friday service, includes the priest reciting the following biblical line, said by Christ the day of his crucifixion: “ ¡Dios mío, Dios mío! ¡por qué me has abandonado?” (86). {My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me?}. Angela then tells the reader that Blasillo walked around the town repeating the line. Blasillo’s repetition of this line gives the impression that he is the physical voice of Don Manuel’s conscience. Blasillo is the antithesis of Don Manuel; the priest knows his purpose and identity for this life, but he lacks a spiritual identity and does not believe he will continue to exist after his physical human life. On the other hand, Blasillo’s life is empty because of lack of individual purpose and identity but his faith in the afterlife gives him hope for a meaningful existence in his afterlife. The day of Don Manuel’s death, Blasillo is at his side, grasping the priest’s hand and sobbing. When the villagers discover the priest is dead, Angela says the following of Blasillo: “Y al despertar a Blasillo nos encontramos con que habíá dormido en el Señor para siempre. Así que hubo luego que enterrar dos

cuerpos” (103). {And trying to wake up Blasillo we found that he had fallen asleep with the Lord forever. Later, then we had two bodies to bury}. When Don Manuel dies, Blasillo’s only function in life, to be the voice of the priest’s true thoughts, dies with him. Angela says that the village believes that Don Manuel spirit had gone to be with God, but she does not say that she believes the same. However, she does say that Blasillo had gone to sleep with the Lord forever, showing that she believes his life would continue, finally giving him some sort of purpose. Since Don Manuel’s only purpose was to serve the villagers of Valverde de Lucerna and he believed his life to be over once he can no longer serve them, he is truly dead. Because of Blasillo’s faith, his life is just beginning.

At the end of the novel, as Angela brings the reader to the present day, she describes the new world in which she lives and writes that she does not know if any of them will ever realize what happened with their saint. She says: “Y no sé lo que es verdad y lo que es mentira, ni lo que vi y lo que soñé-o mejor lo que soñé y lo que sólo vi-ni lo que ni lo que creí.” (106). {Truly, I do not know what is true and what is false, nor what I saw or merely dreamt-or rather what I dreamt and what I merely saw-nor what I really knew or what I believed to be true}. It is evident that Angela has taken on not only all of Don Manuel’s roles, but also his existential burden. She now cannot decipher if the strange betrayal of faith and spirituality by Don Manuel was a dream or reality. She ponders whether it is possible that her story of Don Manuel was reality or if he existed but she created the story of his demise in a dream. At the end of the novel the line blurs for the readers in determining if they have read the story of Don Manuel’s existential journey or Angela’s.

As in *Niebla*, the reader once again faces a problem in determining reality; is what the narrator, Angela, knows as reality real, or is it only a dream? In “Sobre la Complejidad de San Manuel Bueno, Mártir, Novela” {On the Complexity of the Novel *San Manuel Bueno, Mártir*}, Carlos Blanco Aguinaga describes the problem in deciding what is Don Manuel’s reality and what is Ángela’s, observing the following:

“La postura de don Manuel, por ejemplo, nos ha llegado a parecer al mismo tiempo aceptable e injusta; alternativamente, hemos estado seguros de su falta de fe y hemos sospechado que tal vez; creía; pero en esta última sospecha nos han guiado, no las palabras de don Manuel o las afirmaciones de Lázaro, sino la voz de Angela Carballino...”

{The stance of don Manuel, for example, eventually appears to us as acceptable and at the same time unjust; alternatively, we have been sure of his lack of faith and we have suspected [at the same] time, he believed; but in this last suspicion we have been guided, not by the words of don Manuel or the affirmations of Lázaro, but by the voice of Angela Carballino...}

Throughout the story of Don Manuel the reader hears one voice, that of Angela. It is uncertain whether Angela is firm in her faith and understands her existential individuality or if she struggles with the crisis that she describes as Don Manuel’s. It is possible that Angela writes the narration as a diary entry, personifying her fears and doubts in the character of Don Manuel. If this is the case, the cycle of Ángela’s going from the “hija” to the “madre” is false. Yet, even if Ángela’s narration was just a dream, it is still the story of an existential struggle, and the search for the purpose of the individual’s soul or spirit in relation to the divine. Don Manuel questions the strength of Angela’s faith in the afterlife and ask her the following: “Pero tú, Angelina, tú crees como a los diez años ¿no es así? ¿Tú crees?’ ‘Sí creo, padre.’”(97). {“But you Angela, you believe as you did at ten, isn’t that right? Do you believe?” “Yes I believe, Father.”} Although Angela tells Don Manuel when he questions her that she does believe in the message of Christianity

and in the afterlife Christ's offers with the same simplicity she did as a child, it is never clear whether or not she, herself, questions or doubts what she believes to be true about her spiritual identity.

Whether or not this narrative is the story of Angela's or Don Manuel's existential journey, Unamuno uses the female protagonist to narrate the details of this particular struggle. In many other works, Unamuno explores the issue of his Christianity and in this novel he personifies his struggle through the character of Don Manuel. The idea of the priest in Spanish society is that of a man who is celibate, spiritual, and one who is loyal to the Christian faith. This idea of loyalty in the priest carries over to what is expected of the Spanish male. Through his individual existential struggle, Unamuno questions this traditional loyalty. It is possible that Unamuno utilizes a female narrator to tell the story of the male existential journey from a firm faith to a lack thereof. The story takes a conventional priest and prominent male and shows his descent into physical weakness due to the struggle between doubt and belief because it challenges the traditional *machismo* ideology. The woman in *San Manuel Bueno, Mártir* is the one who refuses to denounce her faith and stands firm, despite any doubt she may have. She also becomes the prominent religious figure in the village. The male protagonist, on the other hand, becomes weaker as his doubts and disbelief become stronger and ultimately succumbs to death. Unamuno changes the conformist roles of the male and female in *San Manuel Bueno, Mártir* in order to convey the existential question of faith. The circular role reversal of Angela and Don Manuel brings a different idea of gender roles, hence, presenting the existential problem of the purpose of the individual if he or she cannot be defined by conventional ideas, such as gender or profession.

Moreover, Angela's uncertainty about reality shows that the problem of spiritual identity transcends man and woman, race and culture. In *Unamuno, ansia de Dios y creación literaria* Fernández Turienzo comments on Unamuno's view of spiritual identity: "El concepto de Dios, la conciencia de la distinción hombre-mundo, los conceptos objetivo-subjetivo, prácticamente toda la filosofía, como la historia, nacen de un sentimiento obscuro, inconsciente, indeterminado, intra-histórico, como formulaciones posteriores de una tendencia única, que es la de afirmarse en el propio ser, de un anhelo" (198). {The concept of God, the consciousness of the distinction between man and the world, the concepts of objectivity and subjectivity, practically all of philosophy, like history, are born from an obscure sentiment, unconscious, undetermined, intra-historic, as later formulations of a unique tendency, which is to affirm oneself in his own being, all coming from a desire}. Through reading Turienzo's commentary, the reader of *San Manuel Bueno, Mártir* can suppose that Unamuno did not write the novel to dismiss the belief in a divine being or an afterlife. In fact, according to the author's idea of intrahistory, discussed in *En torno al casticismo*, the reader sees that Unamuno does not deny divine inspiration. According to Turienzo, Unamuno thought that the inspiration for philosophy and the actions that spurred historical occurrences come from somewhere other than what exists in this physical world (198). Therefore, it seems that Unamuno's reason for writing *San Manuel Bueno, Mártir* is not to promote atheist theology, but rather to show the individual struggle with spiritual identity and the question of the afterlife, all the while desperately wanting to believe to calm his existential doubts.

In the last paragraphs of the novel, the narrator of *San Manuel Bueno, Mártir* shifts from Angela Carballino to Miguel de Unamuno himself, fictionalized as a character in his own novel. As the change of narrator occurs, Unamuno writes:

“¿Cómo vino a parar a mis manos este documento, esta memoria de Angela Carballino? He aquí, algo, lector, algo que debo guardar en secreto. Te la doy tal y como a mí ha llegado, sin más que corregir pocas, muy particularidades de redacción ¿Que se parece mucho a otras cosas que yo he escrito? Esto nada prueba contra su objetividad, su originalidad. ¿Y sé yo, además, si no he creado fuera de mí seres reales y efectivos, de alma inmortalidad?” (106).

{And how did this manuscript, this memory of Angela Carballino, end up in my hands? Behold, reader, something that I should keep a secret. I give it to you as it has come to me, with nothing more than corrections, specifically in the editing. So it seems like other things that I have written? This offers no proof against its objectivity, its originality. And besides, how do I know, if I have not created real beings outside of myself, that I have not created soul immortality?} .

Unamuno explains to the reader how Angela’s memoir has come to him and, defending himself, says that even if he did pen the work, how does the reader know that he was not inspired by the immortal soul of Angela Carballino? Therefore, even if Angela and Don Manuel only exist as long as their Creator, Miguel de Unamuno, want them to exist, they live because of their stories even after he stops thinking about them. He uses the term *alma inmortalidad*, or “soul immortality” to demonstrate that the soul or the spirit goes on once the physical existence stops. It is almost as if Unamuno is now saying, although the physical creation ceases to exist once the Creator wishes it so, the spirit or the soul of the creation continues to live.

San Manuel Bueno, Mártir, although very short, is perhaps one of Unamuno’s most famous and most complex works that addresses the question of identity. Just as the readers sees in Augusto Pérez’s encounter with Unamuno and the protagonist’s untimely end, Unamuno does not seem to give an answer to Don Manuel’s questions regarding

spiritual identity or immortality. When Unamuno takes over the role of narrator, he writes the following: “De la realidad de este San Manuel Bueno, Mártir, tal como me le ha revelado su discípula e hija espiritual Angela Carballino, de esta realidad no se me ocurre dudar. Creo en ella más que creía en mi propia realidad (107). {It has not occurred to me to doubt this reality of Saint Immanuel the Good, Martyr, as it has been revealed to me by his disciple and spiritual daughter, Angela Carballino. I believed her more than I believe in my own reality}. Here, the author’s words show that he created both Angela and Don Manuel to explore the frustration the individual expresses when faced with a spiritual identity crisis. Unamuno does not offer a solution to the national identity crisis in *En torno al casticismo*, nor does he offer a solution to Augusto Pérez’s identity crisis in *Niebla* nor to Don Manuel’s agony over the destiny of his soul in *San Manuel Bueno, Mártir*, but he does present realistic questions that individuals stumble upon in the search for their life’s purpose and their role in the world created by the divine. It seems as if Unamuno created the voices of both Angela Carballino and Don Manuel to show the reality of the agony over spiritual identity and the ways in which it affects individual personality and purpose. Unamuno’s creation of both Angela, who continues to serve the people of her village despite her questions and doubts about her faith, and Don Manuel, who allows his spiritual burden to take over his life, ultimately destroying him, underscore the need for balance in the search for answers about spirituality and living an authentic life, as well as its crucial importance to the individual’s well-being.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion: The Existential Search as Reflected in Unamuno's Protagonists

The three works discussed in the preceding chapters, *En torno al casticismo* (1895), *Niebla* (1914) and *San Manuel Bueno, Mártir* (1941) reflect Miguel de Unamuno's interest in the existential search. Unamuno's collection of essays that compose *En torno al casticismo* echo the values of the Generation of '98 and their hope for Spain to establish its own identity and move towards Europeanization. Later, in the novel *Niebla*, the author takes the existential search to a more individual, personal level, recounting Augusto Pérez's failure to create an identity for himself within his society and the telling of his untimely death because of this lack of identity. In his final novel, *San Manuel Bueno, Mártir* Unamuno takes readers to a place to which many do not want to journey as he delves into the questions of the spirit and attempts to explore the role of the human in the Creator's universe. Thus, these three works of Unamuno give readers the opportunity to explore the significance of national and collective identity, personal and individual identity and the possibility of the afterlife as they relate to the existential search on the collective, individual and spiritual levels.

All of the works discussed previously portray characters that fail in their existential search: Spain, Augusto Pérez and the priest Don Manuel. In the twentieth century, Spain experienced a national identity crisis because of the bourgeoisie's collapse into self-indulgence and the country's lack of identity in a global society. Augusto unsuccessfully searches for identity by being dominated by a woman who will replace his

mother and therefore loses the chance to find his true self. Don Manuel tries to establish his role in society and purpose in life in religion, but allows questions and doubts to overcome that which he has found as his life's purpose. Augusto struggles with individuality, only to realize his life has no meaning other than the inconsistent need for him by Eugenia and his mother. Don Manuel believes he can lead the people of his village to a better life, but deteriorates physically and dies under the burden of what he believes to be true, trying to juggle his need to serve his people with his own all-consuming doubts. The vain attempts to establish identity (Augusto Pérez and Don Manuel) or the lack of interest in establishing identity (Spain in the twentieth century) are Unamuno's efforts to demonstrate the consequences of not answering the question of "who are we?" or "who am I?"

Each work highlights the protagonists' (Spain, Augusto and Don Manuel) weaknesses and illustrates how each depends on another human or entity to define his or its identity. In Spain, the bourgeoisie identified itself by wealth and reputation while those who lived in rural areas (the *marcados* or "marked ones" as Unamuno calls them), had no choice but to identify themselves by their labor. In "El espíritu castellano" {The Castilian Spirit} the third essay of *En torno al casticismo*, Unamuno discusses the warrior and describes how he is one who will throw himself into the front lines of war in order to protect Spain, or what the warrior believes to be Spanish. However, Unamuno argues that the people of Spain have fallen so far into decadence, that the concept of what it means to be Spanish, or *castizo*, no longer exists.

Much like Spain looked to wealth and material niceties to soothe their downtrodden soul after the loss of the Spanish-American War (1898), Augusto and Don

Manuel also look to others as their weakness in their existential journey becomes evident. At the beginning of *Niebla*, Unamuno describes Augusto as one who has already found he cannot form his identity by knowing himself, but only by having his life governed by another individual, specifically by a woman. His mother and the lack of career have molded the protagonist into an idle “señorito,” an unofficial title given to the son of a wealthy family, who contributes nothing to the progress of Spanish society. The character of Augusto reflects the image Unamuno had of the individuals that made up the bourgeoisie class in the twentieth century. Throughout the novel, Augusto fruitlessly tries to “find himself” in Eugenia’s and Rosario’s eyes. At the end of the novel when Augusto meets with his creator, Unamuno, who terminates the protagonist’s life, Augusto fades away to nothing, symbolizing the problem of all of the *paseantes en la vida* or “passers/strollers through life” who never succeed in answering these existential questions. Unamuno utilizes Augusto to demonstrate the opportunity for individual and personal truth, and also to show how it is passed over by those who lack the will to discover their identity for themselves. Augusto’s failed search for existential meaning results in his forever being invisible to the society in which he lives. Only his dog, Orfeo, whose purpose in life was serving his master, remains long enough to provide a eulogy of Augusto’s wasted life and then follows his master into death.

Don Manuel is also one who gives into his weakness, which is questioning the existence of the afterlife. In the novel’s opening pages, Don Manuel knows his purpose in life is to bring the people hope and happiness by presenting them the idea of the afterlife, as promised to them by Jesus Christ. The protagonist’s weakness becomes evident only to certain individuals as he finds a companion in Lázaro who comes to accept the same

truth as Don Manuel. The priest struggles to continue serving his parishioners rather than himself, but weakens as his hypocrisy becomes too much for him to bear. In this novel, Unamuno frames the existential crisis in terms of religion and spiritual identity. In the end, Don Manuel can no longer carry the burden of his truth and preach a philosophy that differs from his personal beliefs to his believing, adoring parishioner without becoming physically weak and he eventually dies.

Unamuno juxtaposes Spain with its former, stronger self in *En torno al casticismo* and in parallel fashion juxtaposes Augusto Pérez in *Niebla* and Don Manuel in *San Manuel Bueno, Mártir* with the confidence and certainty of the female characters. In the second essay of *En torno al casticismo*, “La casta histórica Castilla” {The Historical Caste of Castile}, he writes about Spain as it once was, comparing the empire of the Catholic kings and its influence in Europe with a modern Spain that does not have a national identity. Through offering a historical description of Spain, Unamuno shows the potential for what Spain can possibly attain. The unity and strength of Spain during the reign of Fernando II and Isabel I compared with the out-of-control interest in wealth and reputation that dominate the country in which Unamuno lives give readers an image of Spain with a strong national identity and of the country crumbling under its apathy and avarice.

In *Niebla*, Unamuno creates Eugenia as an antithesis to Augusto Perez, making her almost an alter-ego for Augusto; in every area in which he displays weakness, she is strong. Whereas Augusto is unemployed and consistently dependent on strong female figures or the “madre terrible” to determine who he is and where he is going, Eugenia is independent from any parent and survives on her own wages. Augusto can only identify

himself through the way others see him. Eugenia, on the other hand, manipulates her relatives and Augusto so that she can achieve her goal for a life of her own. Though Eugenia, like Augusto, is just one of Unamuno's creations, her physical character continues to exist at the end of *Niebla*, while Augusto's fades away into empty space. Through contrasting the character of Eugenia and Augusto, Unamuno establishes a sharp dichotomy between those who are able to establish individuality and thus succeed in the existential search and those who fail.

Just as Eugenia succeeds in her quest for an independent self-identity, Angela succeeds in balancing belief and doubt to establish an authentic faith in *San Manuel Bueno, Mártir*. Throughout the novel, Don Manuel questions the existence of the divine and cannot believe in an afterlife, while Angela maintains her faith. Both Don Manuel, who has been a strong father figure and mentor for Angela, and her brother Lázaro express a lack of faith in Jesus Christ's promise of eternal life. Angela must then face the lie of the only father figures in her life, and yet manages to maintain her faith. At the end of the novel, Unamuno depicts Angela as one who still believes in the afterlife with Christ, but has questions. She symbolizes the opposite side of the existential question of religion in that she questions but manages to remain loyal to her faith and believes as she did at ten years of age. On the other hand, Don Manuel is never able to move past his doubts although he continues to serve the greater good, even dying in the church.

The collection of essays that compose *En torno al casticismo*, the novel *Niebla* and the shorter novel *San Manuel Bueno, Mártir* all provide Unamuno's readers the opportunity to see the author's own existential journey. As a young writer, he passionately sought a way to expose his country's identity problems, but also to

encourage Spaniards to take a stand and say “this is who we are.” In this way, he is similar to many young adults, idealistic and optimistic about changing the world. While he does not offer a concrete solution to Spain’s identity crisis, if *uno solo* or “only one” reads his words he has inspired ideas and contemplation. Later in life, the author reflected on individual identity as many tend to do as they reach a crossroads in life and wonder what the purpose of their existence has been. Unamuno does so through the eyes of Augusto Pérez in his journey to find himself and uses Augusto’s failure to show the importance of developing a clear self identity. As he grew older, Unamuno begins to explore the belief in afterlife and creates Don Manuel in *San Manuel Bueno, Mártir* to give a voice to all of those who ponder the destiny of their soul or spirit once their human life is over. By showing the way in which Don Manuel’s personality and identity disintegrate underneath his doubt and question, Unamuno challenges readers to live life without allowing the doubts about the next life consume them. He also motivates his audience to consider the sin of hypocrisy versus the greater good without giving an answer to which he believes is right and wrong. Yet, the overall significance of all three works is that they cause the readers to confront the importance of identity, whether it is national, individual or spiritual, and thus ignite a need to embark on an existential quest.

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