

Dr. Rigofredo Granados delivered, *“Love in the Poetry of St. John of the Cross and Antonio Machado,”* as the first presentation of “Works in the Works” Faculty Lecture Series in the Academic Building. He brings both his passion and expertise in this lecture. The speaker discussed different ideas of and approaches to love by two of the greatest Spanish poets of all time, St. John of the Cross - a sixteenth-century mystic, and Antonio Machado - a twentieth-century secular writer, through two of their most representative poems, *“La noche oscura del alma”* (*“Dark Night of the Soul”*, St. John of the Cross) and *“Yo voy soñando caminos”* (*“I go dreaming down roads in the evening”*, Antonio Machado). To better understand these differences, Dr. Granados emphasized how fundamental is the focus on the conflict between the body and soul that both poems address from two diverse perspectives. While St. John of the Cross centered on spiritual and divine love, Antonio Machado, on the other hand, discussed the experience of physical and human love.

As Prof. Granados explained, *“St. John of the Cross’ poem introduced the worldview of the mystical way of life, that allegorizes the inner, spiritual journey of the mystic searching for God in the hope of eventually be granted the grace of meeting the divinity in the center of the soul, and subsequently, fusing with Him in what is called the mystical union - a supernatural experience more or less equivalent to what in Buddhism is associated with enlightenment, samadhi, nirvana.”* Afterwards, he also highlighted the connection between the mystic love for God (divine love, as opposed to the low, imperfect human love) and other ancient philosophical traditions (e.g. Hinduism, Buddhism, Platonism).

This divine love experience is presented in the poem through the allegoric story of two lovers with a dualistic approach: the feminine *soul* (*“la amada”/ “el alma”*) and the masculine *Him* (God, the lover/ *“el amado”*) who, *“after looking for each other for some time through a natural landscape, finally can achieve their purpose of getting together, both becoming one in a mystical embrace, an ineffable experience transcending the boundaries of everything human.”* In this sense, as a precondition to reach the stage of enlightenment and subsequently the uniting way, the mystical student has to renounce all material (the pleasurable, distracting experience of senses) and emotional attachments (affections for family, friends, places, things, etc.) of the low world.

In contrast to this philosophy, the works of the Spanish poet Gustavo A. Bécquer in the 19th century embodied a romantic reaction to the spiritual, mystical worldview. Deeply rooted in this groundbreaking tradition, Antonio Machado revisited the topic a century later. A best example is the poem chosen by Prof. Granados, *“Yo voy soñando caminos”* – *“a poem in which the personal, symbolically projected on visual and musical imagery, constitutes at the same time a reflection on the problem of the human existence”*. The words *“El camino”* (road), *“el sendero”* (path) are metaphorical expressions of the winding, labyrinthian course of life, but not the allegorical representation of a spiritual journey in search for God. In Machado’s view, love comes in the form of desire and passion, carnal love, which has a physical and earthly nature and is consequently associated with the pleasurable experience of the senses.

After his comparative analysis of the two poems, Dr. Granados finished his talk reminding us that ***“love is one expression of the indivisible inner self, where the emotional, the intuitive and the intellectual interplay.”***

I cannot end this review without thanking Prof. Granados for his generosity and sharing with us his wisdom. For almost an hour, it moved and enlightened our souls to a new dimension.