

Araceli Iravedra Valea (2025). *Son sus huellas el camino: Antonio Machado en la memoria poética del siglo XX*. Madrid: Visor Libros (Biblioteca Filológica Hispana), 360 págs.

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Few titles in recent Spanish literary scholarship announce their governing logic as precisely as Araceli Iravedra's *Son sus huellas el camino*. Drawn from what are perhaps the most widely cited lines in Machado's entire corpus — “*Caminante, son tus huellas / el camino, y nada más*” — the title signals not merely a thematic orientation but an epistemological one: the road exists only in and through the traces left by those who have walked it, and poetic tradition, by extension, is not a fixed inheritance but a retrospective construction shaped by each successive act of reading, appropriation, and creative transformation. The book that follows is itself a cumulative, path-making inquiry through nearly a quarter of a century of engagement with the posthumous fortunes of Antonio Machado in twentieth-century Spanish poetry. Published in 2025 to coincide with the 150th anniversary of the Sevillian poet's birth, the volume brings together twelve substantially revised essays and one entirely new contribution, reshaped through meticulous cross-referencing and expansion into a monograph possessed of genuine organic unity: a coherent central argument, a deliberate narrative arc, and a critical intelligence that speaks in an unmistakably unified voice across its three hundred pages.

The panoramic introductory essay — framed, significantly, as Antonio Machado and “the age that is approaching,” in a deliberately proleptic formulation borrowed from the poet himself — gives that wager its fullest theoretical articulation by working through the central paradox the book exists to explore. As Ángel González observed in his celebrated discourse to the Royal Academy of Spain, the Andalusian poet's distinctive intellectual habit — a lifelong practice of thinking against the grain, of inhabiting his own moment at an oblique angle — rendered him simultaneously resistant to ideological annexation and irresistibly attractive to successive cultural formations in search of a legitimizing ancestor. What José Ángel Valente trenchantly called a succession of

“false” apocryphal images are traced here in their full sequence: the Falangist rescue orchestrated by Dionisio Ridruejo in *Escorial* (1940), which excised the Republican poet’s civic commitments in order to reclaim him as a timeless, politically innocent lyricist; the counter-appropriation mounted by the social poets of the 1950s, who recovered precisely the democratic and fraternal dimensions that earlier maneuver had suppressed; the ritualized mythologization surrounding the 1959 Collioure pilgrimage; the iconoclastic repudiation staged by the *novísimos*; and the systematic rehabilitation of the poet’s legacy in the aesthetic culture of post-Francoism.

The revisionary ambition of the project announces itself most forcefully in the essays devoted to the Falangist liberal poets and the social and critical poets — the argumentative heart of the volume. The first pair of chapters refuses to let the critical conversation rest on Ridruejo’s notorious attempt to recast the author of Campos de Castilla as a “propagandist who was himself propagandized,” demonstrating instead that this group’s engagement with Machado — and specifically with his conception of the poem as a temporally and historically situated utterance— was far more searching and literarily serious than criticism has been willing to grant. A sustained close reading of Leopoldo Panero’s verse shows how specific rhetorical and metrical procedures migrate from the elder poet’s work into Panero’s own, constituting a genuinely original scholarly intervention.

The following essays extend this dual focus — ethical argument and formal practice held simultaneously in view — into the social-realist tradition. The chapter on Blas de Otero reframes what has long been described as tributary homage as something considerably more complex: a form of intertextual ventriloquism in which the authority of the master’s voice is simultaneously invoked and displaced in the service of the inheriting poet’s own aesthetic and ethical self-construction — what Iravedra identifies as “one of the most deep-rooted lyric habits of social realism.” Turning to the generation of the 1950s, the book examines the founding mythology of the Collioure commemoration and identifies Ángel González as the most intellectually disciplined heir of the Machadean legacy in the century’s second half. The essay devoted to the Asturian poet alone develops this claim with remarkable precision: Iravedra traces how González used the definition of poetry as *palabra en el tiempo* as the very architectural premise of his own poetic edifice —not a borrowed slogan but the foundation from which his lifelong argument in defense of poetry,

against both political instrumentalization and formal hermeticism, was built across decades of verse and prose.

From this well-charted terrain the monograph moves, without loss of analytical momentum, into chapters that substantially extend the existing account of the poet's posthumous influence by venturing into less expected directions. The essay on Antonio Machado as *poeta del pueblo* — tracing his transit from social poetry to the *canción de autor* through Joan Manuel Serrat's landmark 1969 album — offers a nuanced account of how the civic Machadianism cultivated by the post-war resistance migrated beyond the readership of verse and embedded itself in mass culture, reaching audiences for whom the name of Collioure carried emotional weight long before they had read a line of his poetry. The irony of this cultural transfer is not lost on Iravedra: the popular consolidation of the Machadean myth coincides almost exactly with its programmatic demolition in the literary field — and it is that demolition the following essay addresses. Titled, pointedly, “the destruction of the myth,” it examines how the *novísimos* directed their iconoclasm not at the poet himself but at the saccharine civic idol his supposed disciples had erected in his name, and how, as the generation matured, figures as divergent as Pere Gimferrer, Luis Antonio de Villena, and Miguel d'Ors each negotiated their own way back toward the work — learning, in the process, to separate the complexity of the poetry from the deformations introduced by its epigones. Against this generational backdrop, the chapter on Antonio Colinas stands out with particular sharpness as “a notice of dissidence”: here Iravedra documents two decades of poetry in which Colinas maintained an unambiguous and theoretically articulate fidelity to the Machadean tradition from within the very generation that had most theatrically renounced it, a gesture of principled intellectual independence that simultaneously confirms and productively destabilizes the received narrative.

The volume finds its natural culmination in the wholly new closing essay, which traces the full arc of Machado's “restitution” in post-Francoist aesthetic culture — from the emergent “nueva sentimentalidad” of the early 1980s to the mature “poesía de la experiencia” of the following decade — and arrives at its most compelling moment in a close reading of Luis García Montero's poem “Colliure,” from *Vista cansada* (2008). Iravedra reads the poem as a triple act of homage — to the author of *Campos de Castilla*, to Ángel González, whose presence at the French cemetery enacts the living continuity of a civic poetic tradition, and to the entire genealogy of committed lyric practice that binds the two figures

across the century — and she shows with precision how the poem does not merely commemorate that tradition but performs its ethical claims in the very texture of its language. The studied deflation of register, the grounding of collective historical memory in the contingency of a particular biographical occasion, the modulation of a first-person voice aware of its own partiality — all of these are identified as lessons drawn from the Sevillian poet and genuinely transformed in transmission rather than passively reproduced. García Montero's own critical account of what that transmission involved — that the older poet taught his heirs to understand that “intimacy does not fall from the sky, but ideology only truly exists when it takes the shape of a gaze” — crystallizes the argument the monograph has been advancing throughout. The poem seals it: among its images of Republican defeat and elegiac mourning appears the line “y el frío de las manos, la palabra en el tiempo” — Machado's defining formula, still generating meaning in a poem written in his memory six decades after his death in exile. It is precisely the kind of evidence that Iravedra's method, at its best, is built to read.

Son sus huellas el camino is, in the end, a work whose scholarly reach and critical intelligence are fully commensurate with its ambitions. The systematic internal cross-referencing, the consolidated bibliography, and above all the sustained coherence of the critical argument make clear that the integration achieved here is genuinely argumentative rather than merely editorial: each essay both stands alone and deepens the others, so that the book rewards consecutive reading and selective consultation in equal measure. Written with the analytical lucidity and intellectual probity that have long distinguished Iravedra's contributions to the study of modern Spanish verse, the monograph advances both a comprehensive account of a century of Machadean reception and an implicitly powerful case for the kind of literary history that can be written when close reading and historical contextualisation are made to answer to each other. For specialists in twentieth-century Spanish poetry, and for scholars concerned with how poetic traditions are constructed, contested, and transmitted across generational divides, it represents a major contribution to the field.

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