

The Interpenetration of Some Ideas and Images in González Prada's Prose

González Prada expresses his social and political philosophy in his prose through the constant use of imagery. A general overview of the content and style of his essays has gained recent critical attention,¹ but the interpenetration of message and imagery merits an even closer look at the Peruvian's prose. I shall focus on certain patterns of interweaving images and ideas found mostly in *Horas de Lucha* and *Anarquía*—two collected works representing many newspaper articles and some speeches written from 1898 to 1909. The images therein reveal diverse ideological currents molding Prada's thought and also the purpose of his polemics as he conceived it. The ideas can be philosophical assumptions, but they can also be overt messages.

Concepts of social Darwinism, positivism, and anarchism are mixed together with seeming inconsistency: the evil bestiality in man, the dignified beast as man's equal, a scientific disintegration of society, evolutionary and scientific progress, the revolutionary apocalypse of the collapsing structure, and the utopian anarchy which mysteriously arises like a phoenix. To understand the lack of one constant logic of ideas and images even within the same essay, we must distinguish the realities and the ideals within his vision of society. Social Darwinism is criticized as the reality in Peru; anarchy is either implied or proposed as the ideal for the future.

Both style and message are usually contoured according to the audience which González Prada is trying to awaken into action. Although it is part of his anarchist credo that the intellectual and the proletarian are absolute equals, our polemicist creates more elaborate metaphors, a more pessimistic tone, and simply more insults in exposing a greedy, decadent society when addressing the intellectual elite. The newspaper articles and speeches for the proletariat, on the other hand, show a more straightforward style and more optimistic tone about revolution and anarchy. The literary critic, then, need not be perplexed by a stylistic "bivalencia antagónica."²

Using very different styles, Manuel González Prada elaborates on the importance of disseminating progressive ideas and convictions in two speeches—one written for the Liga de Librepensadores del Perú in 1898,³ the other for the Federación de Obreros Panaderos in 1905. With an aesthetic formula of the insult not unlike that of Juan Montalvo, he obliquely admonishes the anti-clerical freethinkers for not putting their ideas into action: "Cuando se abriga una convicción, no se la guarda

religiosamente como una joya de familia, ni se le envasa herméticamente como un perfume demasiado sutil."⁴ Religiosity and the hoarding of wealth are considered equally insulting.

González Prada then suggests two very different imperatives in sharing progressive ideas with all. Progress in rational, as opposed to religious, ideas and biological evolution are metaphorically fused in this insult to traditional religion: "Si todos los filósofos hubieran filosofado en silencio, la Humanidad no habría salido de su infancia y las sociedades seguirían gateando en el limbo de las supersticiones." (p. 40) Ignorance is bestial; to become fully human, man must progress beyond the limbo toward utopian rationality—a heaven on earth. Yet González Prada goes beyond the eighteenth-century Enlightenment concept of progress incorporated in nineteenth-century positivistic thought. He adds the second, moral imperative of generosity. Underlying it, we can detect unstated anarchist assumptions of nature. Thus he elaborates on the earlier image of hoarding wealth—ideas as privately owned jewels—by suggesting that ideas must be shared with all because they belong to none.

The anarchist denial of private ownership is followed by the anarchist ideal of absolute equality in levelling distinctions in nature and society. Consider the ambiguous language in the following parallel of man and beast, society and nature. It is a key passage in understanding contradictions that underly Prada's imagery of bestiality: "al ofrecer el pensamiento a los desconocidos, a los adversarios, a nuestros mismos aborrecedores, imitamos la inagotable liberalidad de la Naturaleza, que prodiga sus bienes al santo y al pecador, a la paloma y al gavián, al cordero y al lobo." (p. 41) The victim and the predator in the animal world are compared to good men and evil men in society. Naturalistic Darwinism and moral hierarchy are confusingly paralleled. Just as nature is anarchic in nourishing all animals, the author would have us believe, so also progressive thinkers must not discriminate in enlightening enemies and friends. (It shall become clear that Prada is thinking in terms of the exploiter and the exploited, the ruling class and the masses.)

Thus, an anarchist ideal is hidden behind the language of naturalistic reality, the intellectual fad of the epoch. To convince, to spread new beliefs, one must use a style, vocabulary, and imagery meaningful for the particular epoch and the audience. Prada suggests the need for a transportive, communicative style through an image of the flight of ideas: "Lo humano está, no en poseer sigilosamente sus riquezas mentales, sino en sacarlas del cerebro, vestirlas con las alas del lenguaje y arrojarlas por el mundo para que vuelen a introducirse en los demás cerebros." (p. 40) In this particular speech, the audience was an intellectual elite, so that the style was profusely elegant.

Inspiring the freethinking intellectuals to spread progressive ideas, versus luring the workers in a labor union to adopt such ideas: in these

tasks, González Prada emphasizes different aspects of the same philosophical assumptions, and in different styles that appeal to different mentalities.

Our *despertador de conciencias* begins his lecture to the bakers' union (given in 1905) with a simple, fictitious conversation in which the hard-working farmer envies the poet's idyllic life of song. The attention of the bakers is captured, for they see the poet-speaker, González Prada, in this way. Yet Prada wants to instill the idea that the laborer and the intellectual do equally important work with this easily understood and unoriginal simile made by the fictitious poet: "Como te engañas, oh labrador! . . . Los dos trabajamos lo mismo y podemos decirnos hermanos; porque si tú vas sembrando en la tierra, yo voy sembrando en los corazones. Tan fecunda es tu labor como la mía: los granos de trigo alimentan el cuerpo, las canciones del poeta regocijan y nutren el alma." (pp. 51-52)⁵ Note that each of the two similes is preceded by a straightforward, prosaic clarification, so that the significance cannot escape the most untrained mind.

After the poetic comparison of their work, Prada proposes the alliance of the intellectual and the worker—but it is an anarchist cooperation in which there is no hierarchy of leaders and followers, teachers and students. The intellectual should not consider himself the worker's "lazarillo," for it assumes a "jerarquía ilusoria" as well as a non-existent limitation on the worker's perceptiveness. (p. 54)

Anarchist ideals based on the naturalistic reality emerge most clearly in the speech to the bakers' union with the visualization through symbols of this message: property is evil because it is based on an unjust system of violent possession. Again, González Prada is careful to thoroughly explain his anarchist interpretation of the Roman symbol for property, "una lanza": "Este símbolo ha de interpretarse así: la posesión de una cosa no se funda en la justicia sino en la fuerza; el poseedor no discute, hiere; el corazón del propietario encierra dos cualidades del hierro: dureza y frialdad." (p. 59) The proprietor is totally identified with his symbolic weapon. His violent conquest of property is etymologically resonant in the symbol of the iron lance—*hiere, hierro*. The unpleasant tactical qualities of the lance—"dureza y frialdad"—are transferred to the proprietor to make him despicable.

Prada again turns to the etymology of another word—Caín—to give the same message of violent possession. The Biblical allusion requires no foreknowledge, for it is fully explained: "Según los conocedores del idioma hebreo, Caín significa el *primer propietario*. No extrañemos si un socialista del siglo XIX, al mirar en Caín el primer detentador del suelo y el primer fratricida, se valga de esa coincidencia para deducir una pavorosa conclusión: la propiedad es el asesinato." (p. 59) Thus, the audience of workers is receiving a lucid, compact lesson in historic myth, the elaboration of symbols, and anarchist philosophy. Prada's conclusion about this interpretation of property is also anarchist—the

right of the exploited to revolt. His image of revolution as “el grito de los hambrientos lanzados a la conquista del pan” (p. 60) echoes Kropotkin.

Let us now reflect on the distinct approaches toward ideas in general and the concept of property specifically in the two speeches. For his audience of elitist intellectuals, González Prada attacks the hoarding of ideas as private property and urges them to be shared, while for the labor union, he justifies rebellion against the owners of real property—we can imagine factories, plantations, mines. However, he also induces the bakers to accept progressive ideas of newspapers by likening these ideas to nourishing food, namely, bread. The idea of the intellectual and the worker as equals is now narrowed down to a simile of the journalist and the baker. Prada obviously wins the bakers’ sympathy toward the intellectuals, and also their curiosity about the workers’ newspaper in which he wrote most of his anarchist thought, *Los Parias*.

It is no accident that he follows with a definition of the newspaper as the educator of the workers. The oxymoronic images are meant to be a stimulus for learning, not irony: “Cierto, el diario contiene la enciclopedia de las muchedumbres, . . . el libro de los que no tienen biblioteca, la lectura de los que apenas saben o quieren leer.” (p. 53) The positivist’s style in González Prada comes out in bio-chemical imagery; as the scientific treatment of a disease, the workers’ newspaper is “el saber propinado en dosis homeopáticas, la ciencia con el sencillo ropaje de la vulgarización.” (p. 53) Remember the more elevated tone of the same image—dressing up ideas—that was used for the more aesthetically trained audience of freethinkers: *hay que* “vestirlas con las alas del lenguaje.”

The speech written for the freethinkers does not state the role of the newspaper in spreading new ideas. It does evoke the Enlightenment metaphor for the minds of silent, inactive *librepensadores*: “Linternas cerradas alumbran por dentro.” (p. 40) Outer darkness is silence; the inner illumination is inactive knowledge. González Prada later applies this common metaphor to the role of the newspaper, but with a much more elitist attitude than in the bread-equals-newspaper speech to the bakers. So he writes in an intellectual newspaper, *La Idea Libre*: “Abundan cerebros que no funcionan hasta que *su diario* les imprime la sacudida: especie de lámparas eléctricas, solo se inflaman cuando la corriente parte de la oficina central.” (p. 97) It is at the same time a mechanical image (typical of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment) and a chemical one (reflecting nineteenth-century positivism).

However, all is not reduced to scientific calculation and control. According to Prada, the radical journalist must convince and inspire the masses, since his message replaces the old religion: “Más que el sacerdote, el periodista ejerce hoy la dirección espiritual de las muchedumbres.” (p. 96) The impact of the idea disseminated through a newspaper can be spiritual and hence incalculable: “es la piedra lanzada en medio del Océano, y no sabemos a qué profundidades pueda bajar.” (p. 96)

(We shall later see how the Ocean is a repeated symbol for the masses.) Whether it be turning on the electric current, or dropping a rock in the ocean's depths, González Prada has clearly depicted the elitist's image of his impact, precisely to inspire an elite into action.

Prada's varied and inconsistent use of images of bestiality reveals the transitional nature of his philosophy: a dog-eat-dog social Darwinism is the reality of Peruvian society around 1900, but all men and beasts should be equal and will be so with utopian anarchy. In 1898, he is quite serious about the Darwinian survival of the fittest. Still horrified by the memory of the disastrous War of the Pacific, when Peru was caught militarily unprepared, our social critic is arguing for national military strength.

Thus, in an 1898 speech, the imagery evokes the choice of either strength or servitude. Two types of beasts are paralleled by two modes of iron: "hagámonos fuertes: el león que se arrancara uña y dientes, moriría en boca de lobo; la nación que no lleva el hierro en las manos, concluye por arrastrarlo en los pies." (p. 38) In short, prey or be preyed upon; fight or be enslaved in chains. The image which Prada evokes by parallel here is the weaponry of man and beast. Rubén Darío will six years later (in 1904) capture it in metaphoric fusion. The "férreas garras"⁶ of U.S. military strength in Rubén Darío's poem, "A Roosevelt", though the same image, is used for a very different message by the Nicaraguan poet—an anti-military, anti-imperialistic one. González Prada himself uses the same imagery to express a different ideology seven years after his 1898 speech. By 1905, he fears the grip which the Peruvian military has over society: "A ciertos felinos no se les arranca la presa sin arrancarles los dientes."⁷ The plea in this particular article (published in a workers' newspaper) is for anarchist terrorism to undermine the military build-up used to suppress strikes and Indian rebellions. New wine in an old bottle!

The bestial opportunists preying upon a victimized society is one of the most predominant images in González Prada's prose. In 1898, in the wake of defeat, our polemicist depicts Peruvian society as a demoralized, decadent carcass. Politicians of all parties prey upon it and fight for the spoils "como los buitres se lanzan sobre la carne de la res desbarancada y moribunda." (p. 17) This image of bestial gluttony is applied to the conspicuous consumption of social spectacles. High society in Lima stuffs itself with banquets, bullfights, theater, and other entertainments beyond its real needs. Prada reduces the extravagant Peruvians to mindless stomachs: "Todos convierten su cerebro en una prolongación del tubo digestivo." (p. 17) The metaphoric formula of this insult produces, in effect, a ridiculous caricature.

The images of corrupt politicians as greedy parasites vary in tone from the most terrifying to the most belittling. Enormous influence and terrifying control are conveyed in this image of the family oligarchy: "Familias enteras, a modo de gigantescos pulpos, desenvuelven uno y

mil tentáculos que van a introducirse en los vericuetos de la Caja Fiscal." (p. 158) Compare this to the image in another article—"la olla del presupuesto." (p. 177) Corrupt exploitation of the nation's wealth is described in terms of bestial voraciousness. On the other end of the scale, politicians are reduced to microscopic bacteria living off of a decadent political system: "los políticos se agitan—agitación de vibriones en las entrañas de un cadáver." (p. 160)

The image of the nation as an exploited body becomes shockingly repulsive with such bestial gluttony of the ruling class as this: "Como la culebra de los cuentos populares, sueltan sus labios a los pezones de la Nación, chupan hasta extraer sangre y nos dan la punta de su nauseabunda cola." (p. 150) Society is repeatedly depicted as a decadent woman. For example, the personification of Limeñan society creates a most vivid social, religious, sexual insult: "Lima es la zamba vieja que chupa su cigarro, empina su copa de aguardiente, arrastra sus chancletas fangosas y ejerce el triple oficio de madre acomodadiza, zurcidora de voluntades y mandaderas de convento. (p. 102) The use of a "zamba" would have a threatening shock effect on the racist society that Lima was. To shock the intellectual elite reading the newspaper, *La Idea Libre*, then, Prada implicates religion with unacceptable social, sexual, and racial habits.

To disgust the workers reading *Los Parias*, our journalist uses a bestial image which mocks the religiosity and the *economic* interests of the elite. The religious superstitions of the wealthy collect like "las deyecciones de los pájaros."⁸ Elaborating on this euphemism for bird defecation, Prada then exposes the basis of their wealth with an obnoxious allusion to smell. He speaks of "una nobleza con olor a huano y salitre."⁹ Indeed, not a few elites made their fortunes on the collected bird dung fertilizer, *huano*, as well as the smelly mineral, *salitre*. With such a disgusting correlation of social status and economic interests of the elites, González Prada effectively builds up the workers' disrespect for them.

High society preys on bestial defecation, bestial politicians prey on the society, yet we have not yet come full circle. For the exploited are seen as beasts as well as the exploiters in Prada's naturalistic imagery. Even the exploited can display a bestial violence. For example, Indians forced to fight on either side of a civil war become victimized beasts because they lack ideas, class consciousness, or a sense of justice. "Nada tan fácil como hacer de un ignorante una bestia feroz." (p. 16)

More basic to Pradian imagery than men exploited as ferocious beasts is the image of men as enslaved beasts of burden—as work horses, above all. Racist exploitation of Indian labor is bitterly described through metaphors of bestial treatment: "desde los primeros albores de la Conquista, los blancos hicieron del indio una raza sociológica, o más bien una casta ínfima de donde siguen extrayendo el buey de las haciendas, el topo de las minas, y la carnaza de los cuarteles." (p. 22) In another article, the writer complains that working the Indian beast to death is

not rational, not even naturalistic: "Las hormigas que domestican pulgones para ordeñarles, no imitan la imprevisión del blanco, no destruyen a su animal productivo." (p. 224) The comparison reveals a Darwinian outlook on the order of nature—hardly anarchist. Five years later, in 1909, however, the imagery of servitude has become mechanical in its dehumanization: "Hombres hay convertidos en algo inferior a las acemilas, en verdaderos aparatos que sólo realizan actos puramente mecánicos. Han perdido todo lo humano y, primero que nada, el instinto de la rebelión."¹⁰ The capitalist, Prada adds, is the worker's god and his executioner. It is a typically anarchist vision: authoritarian society has dehumanized the worker to the point that he does not even feel the natural instinct to rebel against authority.

Highly socialized men or those with authority have become so dehumanized and so beastly according to our anarchist's judgment that the horse, in comparison, has more dignity. Twice he uses Mark Twain's aphorism, "Cuánto más conozco al hombre, más admiro al caballo." (p. 191) It is fascinating to see how this comment is employed to expound on very different facets of anarchist philosophy in two articles published in 1906 for different types of readers.

The article found in *Horas de lucha*, "Nuestros aficionados," seems to be directed at and against the *gente decente* and their favorite entertainment—bullfighting. Prada uses Mark Twain's humorous aphorism at the very beginning as a springboard for a very serious indictment of man's bestiality in allowing the horse to be slaughtered in the bullfight. He pleads for more humane treatment as part of the moral evolution toward civilization but points out that most men are still at a lowly, bestial stage: "la mayoría está lejos de haber eliminado su parte de mono." (p. 191) Darwinism is here fused with Auguste Comte's faith in moral progress. This leads to a biological positivism typical of the late nineteenth century: man as an animal must evolve and become more civilized, in other words, less bestial. One way of being more civilized, then, is to treat animals humanely.

González Prada also adds an anarchist precept to justify man's humane treatment of animals, stating that animals are man's equals and his companions. He therefore denies hierarchy in nature, yet it is based on Darwinian evolutionary theories that man had animal origins. We begin to sense the contradictions in the mixing of naturalistic, positivistic, and anarchist concepts. Naturalistic: man is bestial in the full negative sense of the survival of the fittest. Positivistic: man can and must rise above his bestial state in a biological *and* moral evolution. Anarchist: the beast is man's equal in his right to exist with dignity and freedom. Our anarchist thinker converts this last dogma into a religious, Zoroastrian-type respect for all life: "Bárbaro el que inútilmente deshoja una flor o destruye una planta, bárbaro el que innecesariamente o por mera diversión suprime un insecto." (p. 193) Note that the commandment is modified by positivistic, utilitarian considerations.

The treatment of human and animal workers is paralleled in the following plea for the horse: "obrero como el hombre, como el hombre merece disfrutar los beneficios de una ley protectora." (p. 192) Although Prada never in this article states a revolutionary, anarchist cause, he does reveal its philosophical assumption of absolute equality among men and beasts and applies it to a legal, reformist goal. Contrast this to the more radical tone of the same concept in the following passage published in a workers' newspaper: "entre el empleado del tranvía y el caballo [que lo tira] hay una semejanza y debe existir una simpatía: ambos son la presa del mismo tirano."¹¹ The vocabulary here incites indignation and rebellion, not legal reforms.

Similarly, when compared to its message in the article against bullfighting, Mark Twain's aphorism takes on a much more revolutionary, anarchist message in the article, "Necedades," originally published in the workers' newspaper, *Los Parias*.¹² In it, Prada relates the frustrated attempt by Spanish anarchists to assassinate King Alfonso III, in which horses were killed by accident in the bombing instead of the monarch. This time the aphorism climaxes the article. It is transformed into a sarcastic yet deadly serious call for tyrannicide in the context of the attempt in Spain. "Nos contentaremos con parodiar al humorista Mark Twain y decir: 'Cuánto más conocemos a los reyes, más estimación sentimos por los caballos.'¹³ Tyrannicide, of course, is a basic strategy of the anarchist. On another occasion, the Peruvian *pensador* reverts to the concept of the tyrant's bestiality (he is no longer human) to justify tyrannicide. Thus, "Al matarle no se comete homicidio." And he directly quotes Montalvo's simile reducing the tyrant to a lowly state of bestiality: "se le puede matar como se mata un tigre, una culebra."¹⁴

Certain categorical assumptions in Prada's images of beasts become apparent: some animals are good, like horses, and others evil, like snakes. This inequality—applicable to men as well as beasts—denies an absolute concept of anarchy and instead affirms a moral hierarchy in nature by which the evil and the good are usually equivalent to the exploiter and the exploited, the predator and the victim, the strong and the weak. Such is the old, naturalistic order—before the awakening of the weak victim to revolutionary strength which will lead toward utopian anarchy. González Prada repeatedly employs an imagery of the awakened beast (first weak, then strong) in order to give confidence to the masses. For example, "si las muchedumbres tienen sueños de marmota, conocen despertamientos de león."¹⁵ Revolutionary ideas bring about the awakening: "Sin hombres animados por el oxígeno revolucionario, la Tierra formaría un amodorrado reino de quinquendones."¹⁶ This elitist statement, with its witty imagery and exclusive vocabulary, was not written for an immediate public in 1914. In contrast, when the journalist writes for a newspaper in 1901, he directly insults the proletariat for accepting its politicians, its exploiters: "Pobre rebaño que se congratula y satisface con la facultad de elegir a sus trasquiladores."¹⁷

But this image of sheepish weakness is immediately followed by one of dormant power just waiting to be unleashed: "Más que un rebaño, las muchedumbres son gigantes encadenados con telarañas."¹⁸ The article ends on this optimistic note: the insult has been transformed into encouragement for revolution. The webs insinuate how easy it is to break out of servitude: they are unpleasant webs, not iron chains.

The role of violence in breaking the bonds of society is essential to the anarchist apocalyptic vision. González Prada prefers open, brute violence to a social Darwinism legalized and rationalized by laws. A yearning for the struggle on the level of absolutely free individuals is expressed in this image of simple savagery: "Queremos hallarnos en una selva, frente a frente de un salvaje con su honda y su palo, no en un palacio de Justicia cara a cara a un leguleyo pertrechado con notificaciones y papel de oficio." (p. 137) The mocking tone suggests utter contempt for the exploiters' hypocrisy of being civilized. The anarchist assumption is that the individual cannot break away from the oppressions of society by working within the system. The savagery of the struggle is not demeaning; it is natural, necessary, and liberating. On the other hand, the insulting bestial image for magistrates seems imprisoning, impotent, and ugly: "guardan en la cabeza un nido de ratones." (p. 136) Thus law is the sepulcher of the intellect (p. 131)—an anarchist's anti-legal image.

Very similar to the entangling legalism of society and its violent solution is an image used in the speech for the bakers' union. In contrast to the geometric complexities of revolutionary theorists, Prada claims, "la multitud . . . sigue el ejemplo de Alejandro: no desata el nudo, lo corta de un sablazo." (p. 55) There is a difference, however, with the previous image of one against one in the jungle. The masses replace the individual as the protagonist in the apocalyptic solution to the world's complex problems.

In contrast to the revolutionary apocalypse ushering in the utopian anarchy, our philosopher-poet also forges images of mankind's gradual evolution and elevation. For example, the slow progress is a struggle in this metaphor: "La Humanidad es una inmensa caravana, mejor dicho, un ejército con sus perezosos y sus cobardes . . . El nivel de la especie humana sube muy lentamente, pero sube." (p. 76) On another occasion, the ascent to utopia seems mysterious and almost mystical: *La Humanidad* "asciende por una escala misteriosa y cada día se acerca más a una cumbre de serenidad y luz."¹⁹ Enlightenment thus takes on the air of heavenly revelation. The ascent is not always a peaceful evolution, because rebellion can give momentum for progress: "los gritos de alarma . . . arrancan a la Humanidad de su letargo."²⁰ This is hardly a positivistic vision of scientific evolution.

On the other hand, organic-chemical images from science sometimes visualize, not progress, but rather the moral disintegration of society. For instance, the following metaphor refers to the lack of steadfast poli-

tical convictions among Peruvian journalists: "especie de moléculas errantes, nuestros famosos publicistas entran hoy en la combinación de un sólido, mañana en la de un líquido, pasado mañana en la de un gas." (p. 99) This ultimate evaporation not only ridicules the dissolute journalists of the old regime; it subtly implies their eventual disappearance. The scientific language shows how much the Age of Positivism made its imprint on Prada's imagination. Yet the message of disintegration is very different from the constructive progress acclaimed by the typical positivist.

From positivism González Prada takes his pretense of scientific knowledge in foreseeing the anarchist future. Of course, the prediction is hardly positivistic: "La Ciencia contiene afirmaciones anárquicas y la Humanidad tiende a orientarse en dirección de la Anarquía."²¹ It is the key passage in understanding Prada's attempt to bridge two philosophies and to use the scientific imagery of positivism at the service of an anarchist message. But is this presumably scientific process, which is leading to anarchy, revolutionary or evolutionary? First, Prada sometimes uses scientific similes to suggest that there are deterministic laws in nature and society which can be observed and controlled. Second, revolution is seen as the acceleration of a determined evolution: it is compared to heating up water to speed up the evaporation which is going to happen anyway.²² We can now better understand the previous image—the evaporation of those journalists without convictions. Social disintegration will, Prada assumes with great faith, usher in the utopian anarchy.

It is revealing to compare Prada's imagery of the rational, scientific revolution before and after his stay in Europe from 1891 to 1898, for his visit to Spain during a period of intense anarchist activity undoubtedly turned him toward anarchist thought. Consider this image, written in 1889 for an elitist audience, describing the role of elitist ideas and popular action in any social change: "Las cuestiones sociales son problemas, planteados con la pluma en el silencio del gabinete, resueltos con pólvora en el fragor de las barricadas. Los Enciclopedistas plantearon la ecuación, el pueblo francés encontró la incógnita."²³ This image of the French Revolution as mathematically conceived and executed precedes González Prada's conversion to anarchism and its religious faith in apocalypse. Even when violence is depicted in the imagery of 1889, social change is on a certain, predictable course: "un acontecimiento en marcha, . . . desaparece como locomotora en el túnel i [sic] de cuando en cuando estalla en medio de un pueblo, como súbita llamarada de fuego subterráneo."²⁴ Revolutionary ferment is not always visible, yet social change is always in horizontal progress, inevitably heading toward its unstated destination.

Fifteen years later, in a workers' newspaper this time, González Prada uses a train metaphor to elaborate on the anarchist concept of abolishing the state. The belief that "el movimiento social" is impossible without "el motor del Estado" is compared to the mystery some ignorant people

feel over how a train can run without animal traction.²⁵ Obedience to the State is unnecessary servitude; a more modern engine is implied but not specified. People immaturely fear anarchic freedom from the state and want to be led: "en plena libertad, vacilamos como ciegos sin lazarillo, temblamos como niño en medio de las tinieblas."²⁶ Prada elsewhere speaks out against the intellectual as "lazarillo del obrero." Considering these two instances of the same image, we may infer the idea that every individual must grow to a mature capacity for independence. Of course, one of the most basic tenets of anarchism is the absolute freedom of the individual from controls by the state, structured society, or any kind of hierarchical leadership.

Society is repeatedly seen in the image of a decaying structure, ready to collapse with the anarchist revolution. On one occasion, it is described as a decrepit building propped up by iron columns—the new armaments of the military establishment.²⁷ The anarchist agitator adds that, although popular revolts are better controlled, at the same time individual terrorism also becomes more effective with the use of these new weapons.

The collapsing structure of society—the anarchist vision of apocalypse—is portrayed in both speeches: one for the *librepensadores*, and the other for the bakers' union. Many elements of the imagery are the same, but the messages are somewhat different. In both cases, the natural catastrophe of a rising flood (the masses) will destroy the elevated structure (the hierarchical society). For the intellectuals, it is a warning against indifference, isolation, inaction: "el que vive a las orillas de un río puede no acordarse de las aguas pero las aguas no se olvidan de él, cuando el río sale de madre. No sirven torres de márfil ni montañas de cumbres inaccesibles." (p. 47) Elsewhere, the imagery of isolated elevation explicitly signifies the decadent upper classes: "La muerte moral se concentra en la cumbre o clases dominantes . . . El Perú es montaña coronada por un cementerio." (p. 22)

In contrast to the warning for the intellectuals, the vision of the flood destroying the decadent structure becomes a message of confidence and encouragement for the workers: "Mañana, cuando surjan olas de proletarios que se lancen a embestir contra los muros de la vieja sociedad, los deprecadores y los opresores palparán que les llegó la hora de la batalla decisiva y sin cuartel." (p. 60) In this speech given to a labor union, Prada then depicts a frightened old regime helplessly surrounded by the flood of the masses: "los opresores huirán a fortificarse en castillos y palacios . . . ; al ver que el auxilio no llega y que el oleaje de cabezas amenazadoras hierve en los cuatro puntos del horizonte, . . . repetirán con espanto: ¡Es la inundación de los bárbaros!" (p. 60)

But the vivid polemicist rejects this image of an evil catastrophe and instead implies the apocalypse as a natural blessing: "No somos la inundación de la barbarie, somos el diluvio de la justicia." Prada thus spurs on the revolutionary masses with a moral, celestial sanction. Although

he always rejected religious dogmas and institutions, his moral righteousness here becomes apparent. The image shifts from the horizontal to the vertical; in a larger sense, his philosophy implies a radical shift from a naturalistic reality to an anarchist retribution.

The aggressive imagery of power for the workers suggests a fated destiny, whereas for the intellectual audience there emerges a warning to the indifferent, isolated people to become active in social change: "no habiendo querido actuar como personajes del drama, figuran como víctimas en el desplome del edificio." (p. 47) The punishment implies a free choice not taken.

Conclusion—A Parenthesis, a Tangent, and Some Wine

The anarchist apocalypse is, in a sense, the instantaneous vision of that previous, pseudo-positivistic image—the scientific disintegration of society. The transitional nature of Prada's thought from 1898 to 1909 is well represented by the highly ambiguous statement that "La Ciencia contiene afirmaciones anárquicas y la Humanidad tiende a orientarse en dirección de la Anarquía."²⁸ Let us confine the period and the ambiguity with a parenthesis. Two images of the vertical vs. the horizontal, one written in 1880, the other in 1915, unambiguously reveal the change in Prada's ideas, his preoccupations, and the tone of his style.

In 1880, Prada the positivist pleads that the new scientific truth be written with simplicity in literature, yet he makes his plea through the most elaborate imagery and complicated syntax:

Sí, verdades aunque sean pedestres: a vestirse con alas de cera para elevarse unos cuantos metros i [sic] caer, es preferible tener pies musculosos i triple calzado de bronce para marchar en triunfo sobre espinas i rocas de la Tierra.²⁹

Note the desire to be firmly grounded in a reality of horizontal progress. Verticality represents an elevated, complicated style which tries to escape reality. (Of course, in this flowery passage, Prada himself is blantly inconsistent with his message.) That was in 1880.

By 1915, Prada the despondent anarchist gives a completely different, moralistic meaning to the imagery of the vertical and the horizontal. Immoral, bestial voraciousness is correlated with the horizontal position:

Nuestra geometría moral no conoce líneas verticales. La horizontal es la posición favorita de las meretrices y de muchísimos peruanos: ellas boca arriba y abrazando al hombre que paga, ellos boca abajo y lamiendo los pies del tiranuelo que arroja la pitanza.³⁰

In thirty-five years, the Peruvian social critic has become much more pessimistic and moralistic at the same time. Moral outrage has replaced optimistic rationalism.

Let me outline a tangential thesis not developed in this paper. Prada's imagery could be studied for its shifting between the horizontal (being grounded in naturalistic reality) and the vertical (the impulse toward a moral elevation). Positivistic evolution seems one connecting link; it is a slow struggle upward to civilization. Anarchist revolution, on the other hand, destroys the old vertical order, the social hierarchy, and permits a phoenix-like moral elevation. I have made this scheme of imagery a logical sequence for the sake of clarifying its philosophical origins; González Prada does not. Instead, he mixes these images and others just as he combines his philosophical ideas.

Some of the confused variety in the imagery, then, directly reflects the fusion of different ideological currents. On one level, his basic, philosophical vision of society and the essence of his images show certain parallel developments in time. But a writer can emphasize certain aspects of the same philosophical vision in order to bring forth different messages, and he can do so by changing the style of a basic image. On another level, then, message and style are modified according to the didactic purpose of effectively communicating with a given audience—such as intellectuals or workers.

Without proving it, Robert G. Mead makes the following generalization about the correlation of González Prada's ideas and images: over the years, increasingly scientific metaphors reflect an increasing positivism.³¹ I would disagree. Prada becomes increasingly anarchist, and he tends to express his changing philosophical ideas with the same old images. New wine in old bottles. The wine given to the workers is more potent, making them drunk with revolution; while the wine offered to the elites is somewhat diluted. The worker's bottle is simple and bold in its form; Prada would offer the intellectual a more complex, often-times grotesque, design. Grotesque images that would shock and awaken social consciences.

"Cada lugar y cada situación requieren su lenguaje: en el salón no se habla como en la calle ni en las horas de calma y normalidad como en vísperas de las grandes conmociones populares." These are the words of Manuel González Prada himself toward the end of his writing career.³² For those interested in pursuing the evolution of his ideas in the context of changing times and places, it would be advisable to consult the detailed and well-documented biography by Luís Alberto Sánchez, *Nuestras vidas son los ríos*.³³

John Skirius
University of California, Los Angeles

FOOTNOTES

1. Eugenio Chang-Rodríguez, "El ensayo de Manuel González Prada," *Revista Iberoamericana*, Num. 95 (abril-junio 1976), pp. 239-249.
2. See Miguel Angel Calgano, *El pensamiento de González Prada*, (Montevideo, 1958), pp. 34-35. This perplexed critic resorts to unwarranted psychiatric second-guessing to explain the apparent stylistic "schizophrenia."
3. Fearing the radical ideas, the government prevented Prada from giving the speech by obstructive police tactics. Luís Alberto Sánchez, *Don Manuel*, Lima, 1930, pp. 187-188.
4. Manuel González Prada, *Horas de lucha*, (Ediciones Peisa: Lima), 1969, p. 40. All subsequent citations of this edition will be made in the text itself in parenthesis.
5. This speech, entitled "El intelectual y el obrero", can also be found in *Anarquía*. Given its message and style geared toward the worker, it is more appropriate in *Anarquía* than in *Horas de lucha*, but for the sake of convenience we have cited the more popular book.
6. Rubén Darío, *Cantos de vida y esperanza*, Salamanca: Ediciones Anaya, 1968, p. 53.
7. *Anarquía*, Lima, 1948, p. 42.
8. Manuel González Prada, *Prosa Menuda*, Buenos Aires, 1941, p. 15. Most of the articles collected in this book were originally published in *Los Parias*.
9. *Prosa menuda*, p. 15.
10. *Anarquía*, p. 122.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 144.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 62-64.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 64.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 92.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 83.
16. Manuel González Prada, *Bajo el oprobio*, Paris, 1933, p. 134.
17. *Anarquía*, p. 126.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 126.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 77.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 78.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 81.
23. Manuel González Prada, *Páginas libres*, Lima, 1946, p. 281.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 280.
25. *Anarquía*, p. 29.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 41.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
29. *Páginas libres*, p. 47.
30. *Bajo el oprobio*, p. 84.
31. Robert G. Mead, Jr., *González Prada—el pensador y el prosista*, N.Y., 1955.
32. From *Bajo el oprobio*, quoted by his son, Alfredo González Prada in the introduction to *Prosa menuda*, p. 11.
33. Luís Alberto Sánchez, *Nuestras vidas son los ríos (Historia y leyenda de los González Prada)*, Lima: Universidad Nacional de San Marcos, 1977.