

SYMBOLISM, IRONY, AND MEANING IN SELECTED FICTION
OF MIGUEL DE UNAMUNO Y JUGO

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SYMBOLISM, IRONY, AND MEANING IN THE FICTION
OF MIGUEL DE UNAMUNO Y JUGO

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. <u>MIST</u>	11
III. <u>ABEL SANCHEZ</u>	20
IV. <u>THREE EXEMPLARY NOVELS AND A PROLOGUE</u>	28
"The Marquis of Lumbria"	
"Two Mothers"	
"A He Man"	
V. "THE MADNESS OF DR. MONTARCO"	53
VI. <u>ST. EMMANUEL THE GOOD, MARTYR</u>	62
VII. CONCLUSION	73
BIBLIOGRAPHY	78

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Miguel de Unamuno y Jugo was born in Bilbao, Spain, September 29, 1864, and was baptized at 7:15 of the same morning by Father Pascual de Zuazo, priest of St. John's Church.¹ As a child he grew up in a home steeped in the orthodox Catholic faith, and dutifully participated in the local church organization for boys from ten to twelve years of age.² As with nearly all Spaniards of his time, he was thus constantly exposed to religious symbolism and usage which are reflected in both the subject matter and form of his work--despite certain heretical tendencies which have puzzled and attracted both public and critics.

At sixteen Unamuno, a precocious learner, was enrolled at the University of Madrid. Here his philosophical ideas developed, inspired by religious doubts, since away from the protection of a Catholic home, he became acquainted with the ideas of Kant, Hegel, Krause, and Ramón y Cajal, and came to know such Spanish intellectuals as the famed educator

¹Margaret Rudd, The Lone Heretic (Austin, 1963), p. 16.

²Ibid., p. 20.

Sanz del Río, the dramatist Duque de Rivas, and the novelists Pérez Galdós and Leopoldo Alas.³

Unamuno's four years in the Spanish capital as a student brought him into contact with the two schools of political thought in Spain, a liberal group intent on Europeanizing Spain and a conservative group of extreme traditionalists holding orthodox national views. The liberal group advocated synchronizing Spain with the industrialized countries of Western Europe to bring about material progress. The traditionalists wanted Spain to move into the Twentieth Century without radical change; they refused to accept scientific and technological progress as a substitute for what they considered the more substantial, traditional values of an existing religious and social hierarchy. Unamuno, though basically progressive and liberal in outlook, did not fully subscribe to either line of thought but did take fully to himself the desire to rejuvenate Spain. With a persistence that was a part of his character and with a deep and genuine love for his country, he never swerved from this purpose.⁴

In 1884 Unamuno returned to his home in Bilbao, his university career behind him. Here he married his childhood sweetheart; he acted as private tutor and wrote articles for

³Ibid., pp. 49-53.

⁴Arturo Barea, Unamuno (Cambridge, 1952), p. 31.

a Socialist newspaper while preparing for his professional competitive examinations. In 1891 he moved to Salamanca to occupy a chair of Greek language and literature. Here he enjoyed a long but stormy tenure and did most of the early writing that brought him even more into public view as a controversial figure.

Despite the controversy, Unamuno became rector at the University of Salamanca in 1901. He was dismissed from his post in 1914 when the Royalist government found his political views totally incompatible with those of the ruling hierarchy. Upon dismissal Unamuno, in his customary paradoxical vein, declared that " . . . whereas politics is teaching on a national level, teaching is talking politics on a personal level."⁵

The political writings and outspoken declarations of Unamuno continued until in 1924 Primo de Rivera, whose dictatorship had replaced the monarchy, exiled this noisy professor to Fuerteventura, one of the Canary Islands. Unamuno escaped to France and later moved to Hendaye, immediately across the border from Spain, but did not return to his native land until 1930.

In 1931 Primo de Rivera was overthrown and a republic was proclaimed. Unamuno's six years of exile came to an end, and after a few months he returned to his beloved University

⁵José Ferrater Mora, Unamuno, A Philosophy of Tragedy, translated by Philip Silver (Berkeley, 1962) p. 15.

of Salamanca again as rector. In 1934 he was made "Perpetual Rector" and formally retired from teaching. He continued, however, to be so outspoken against governmental corruption that General Franco put Unamuno under house arrest until the time of his death at the end of 1936. It is still not clear whether or not Unamuno died of natural causes or whether his death was hastened by the harassment of the Fascists.

Unamuno was a deeply religious man who spent the better part of his life concerned with his own soul and the souls of his countrymen and others. His philosophical works, however, expressed such a sense of uncertainty and such a departure from orthodox Christianity that they laid him open to both personal and public criticism. His religious quest, publicly proclaimed, was a soul-trying struggle that lasted from his early years to the day he died. Only a courageous and deeply religious man could have persevered in a lifetime search that filled his thoughts and inspired his literary efforts.

Unamuno sent hundreds of articles and essays to Spanish and Spanish-American newspapers, and continued to publish also novels, short stories, and poems regularly up to the time of his death. In addition to the literary output during his lifetime, Unamuno was such a prolific writer that there have been published posthumously poems, personal records, comments, and lectures.⁶ During his lifetime Unamuno published

⁶Mora, Unamuno, p. 133.

forty-seven books. In this listing one single title includes seven volumes of essays; another publication encompasses two volumes of childhood recollections. Of these forty-seven books, ten have been translated into English. These translated volumes consist of five philosophico-religious works, two volumes of poetry, and three volumes of prose fiction.⁷

A study of Unamuno's fiction has to take into consideration his philosophical essays collected in The Tragic Sense of Life, Perplexities and Paradoxes, and "The Agony of Christianity." Particularly most of his basic ideas appear in The Tragic Sense of Life, a monumental philosophical work.

The complexity and extent of Unamuno's political, religious, and philosophical disquisitions have baffled critics, Spanish and foreign alike. Reference to these ideas in the present study has therefore been limited to those that are the most general and obvious. No detailed attempt has been made to key Unamuno's philosophy to the fictional expression of his thought on many facets of Spanish life and character or the condition of modern man. Nor has it been considered necessary to employ philosophical terminology in the discussion of these ideas.

This approach to Unamuno does not propose to deny the fact that he was a polemicist, a poet, a teacher, and a philosopher more than he was a writer of fiction or an entertainer.

⁷Ibid., pp. 131-132.

What is intended is to point out to the average reader in simple terms something of the general signification and method in Unamuno's attempt at the art of prose fiction--at least as it appears in translation.

Unamuno seemed to consider nearly all his works novels, even such philosophical treatises as The Tragic Sense of Life and Our Lord Don Quixote.⁸ In generally accepted sense of the term "novel" or fiction, however, Unamuno wrote eight novels, none of them long, and several short stories. His total output of prose fiction amounts to something considerably less than one-fourth of his total work, if all his letters, newspaper comments, and published lectures are included. The works of fiction appeared under their original Spanish titles in the following order:⁹

Paz en la guerra (1897)

Amor y pedagogía (1902)

"La locura del doctor Montarco" (1904)

"El espejo de la muerte" (1913)

Niebla (1914)

Abel Sánchez (Una historia de pasión) (1917)

Tres novelas ejemplares y un prólogo (1920)

⁸Miguel de Unamuno, Three Exemplary Novels and a Prologue (New York, 1930) p. 13.

⁹A study of bibliographical material available indicates that considerable work remains to be done in determining both the form and dates of publication of Unamuno's prose fiction.

La tía Tula (1921)

San Manuel Bueno, martir, y tres historias más (1933)

La Novela de Don Sandalio, jugador de ajedrez (1933)¹⁰

The prose fiction translated into English is available in three volumes: Mist (Niebla) translated by Warner Fite and first published in English in 1928 by Alfred A. Knopf (New York); Abel Sánchez and Other Stories, the other stories being "The Madness of Dr. Montarco" and "St. Emmanuel the Good, Martyr," translated by Anthony Kerrigan and published by Henry Regnery Company (Chicago) in 1956; and Three Exemplary Novels and a Prologue, which includes "The Marquis of Lumbria," "Two Mothers," and "A He Man," translated by Angel Flores and published by Albert and Charles Boni (New York) in 1930. These three texts, one of them a paperback, have been used in the preparation of the present study.

Unamuno's training and obvious philosophical bias led him to produce fiction in the well known and highly developed European tradition of the philosophic tale represented by such works as Voltaire's Candide or Samuel Johnson's Rasselas. This sub-genre of prose fiction subordinates development of character, setting, and plot to the promulgation of idea, bordering quite frequently upon fantasy, or at least treating realistic convention in cavalier fashion. The philosophic tale also makes extensive use of satire, which is in general one of its

¹⁰Mora, Unamuno, A Philosophy of Tragedy, pp. 131-132.

distinguishing features, especially in the early stages of its development. Unamuno, however, like other more modern practitioners of this mode, is neither fantasist nor satirist per se. Perhaps under the impetus of his times he employs in his stories what may be called a symbolic method along with a bare, almost niggardly surface realism. At the same time his attachment to the tradition of the philosophic tale is underscored by a kind of prevalent irony which makes itself felt particularly in Unamuno's disturbing but skillful and witty use of paradox.

These two basic but divergent impulses, symbolism and irony, suggest the ambivalence not only in Unamuno but in all men. Paradox tends to be a disintegrating or analyzing method called upon for the purpose of destroying the false so that truth may arise and hopefully prevail. Symbolism, on the other hand, is an integrating method which brings together two things not usually thought of as alike. It emphasizes pattern and meaning in the universe. Although both irony and symbolism exist in almost equal portion in Unamuno's fiction, it soon becomes apparent that Unamuno himself was too much involved in the fate of man, too seriously dedicated to arousing man from his spiritual lethargy, even to pretend to commit himself to the withdrawn, superior, and cynical tone associated with the ironic stance. Rather his paradoxes create interest in the question at hand as a means of teaching; never are they expressions of personal disdain. His deeply

religious nature imparted serious tone to his writing; thus symbolism became for him perhaps a more natural means of expressing his ideas. A consideration of these two general literary devices, it is hoped, will shed some light upon the art of a Spanish writer who has in recent years grown to world stature.

Generally speaking, Unamuno's symbolism is church-oriented. He was born a Catholic and remained during his entire life close to the traditions of the Catholic Church. He himself stated that he was a Christian, but he refused to comment whether or not he was a Catholic.¹¹ His lifelong interest in religious questions and his residence in a land pre-eminently dedicated to Church usages, certainly to religious conservatism, naturally inclined him to imagery connected with religious matters. On the other hand, his disapproval of religious rigidity and conservatism, with its mere formalism and its deadening effect upon the mind and spirit of Spain, led him to a critical, almost caustic, and analytical attitude, which expressed itself forcefully in paradox and irony.¹²

The consideration of these two methods and the meaning they impart will be taken up in the chronological succession in which Unamuno's works of fiction appeared, with a purpose

¹¹Rudd, The Lone Heretic, p. 153.

¹²Amalia Elguera, "The Spain of Unamuno," Commonweal, CXXIV (March 3 - September 22, 1961), 13.

of discovering whether Unamuno, as he grew older and wiser, tended to use one or the other with greater frequency or in a different way.

CHAPTER II

MIST

The third of Unamuno's published narratives appeared in 1914. He chose to call Mist not a novela, but in play on the generic term, a "nivola." The book has a prologue written by Victor Goti, a secondary character in the novel; a postprologue signed by Miguel de Unamuno; and an epilogue which proports to be the thoughts of a dog. The prologue and the postprologue symbolize the indeterminate character of the boundary between fiction and reality. Victor Goti, the prologuist, is imaginary; Unamuno, the postprologuist, is real. Unamuno the author presents another alter ego in the person of the protagonist Augusto Pérez. As the author, Unamuno openly declares himself as striving to gain a modicum of immortality by continuing to live in the minds and imagination of his readers, or at least he proposes this possibility.

Augusto Pérez falls in love one day quite suddenly with Eugenia, a beautiful young woman who gives piano lessons to pay off a family mortgage. He pays her family debts, but declaring that she will not be bought, she will have none of him. Then abruptly she promises to marry him but elopes with another of her lovers, Mauricio. In despair and anger Augusto

challenges his creator, Unamuno; and Unamuno kills him off--not as a suicide but as a glutton who eats himself to death.

The themes of this "nebulous" novel are love, man's relation to society, and the nature of reality. Augusto is portrayed as not being in the proper relation to the woman he loves. Everyone in the village seems to know Eugenia; but Augusto, though in love with her, scarcely knows her. While dreaming of love, he actually passes Eugenia in the street without seeing her. He becomes almost a symbol of love. Having been aroused to love by Eugenia, he then falls in love with his laundress, then with his housekeeper. He loves all women, because having begun to love, he feels that he has begun to live.

Augusto remains, however, curiously innocent in his love affairs--singularly innocent of carnal knowledge, despite Unamuno's having apologized in the prologue for pornographic passages which by present day standards never appear. Augusto's affair with the laundress is abruptly terminated at a point when her seduction seems imminent, though anticlimatic. Augusto remains unable to despiritualize his love. As his pursuit of Eugenia becomes more hectic, the image of his dead mother becomes clearer to him; he feels himself still a child. At the last, then, he returns symbolically to his mother's womb in death. He tells his valet, "And undress me completely,

completely. Leave me as my mother brought me into the world, as I was born--if indeed I was ever born."¹ In summation this account sounds Freudian; in the actual reading there is nothing to indicate that Unamuno knew Freud or was using Freud's theories. The effect refers more directly to pure symbolism than to psychological analysis.

Several minor anecdotes of a symbolic nature are narrated within the main story; a childless couple adjusts to a solitary life only to have an unexpected child; an impoverished nobleman marries his landlady to obtain her care in his last, brief days. When she realizes that he may not die and that she has been duped, she leaves him. Each of the stories suggests the distortion of love between man and woman. Even the prologues and the postlogue relate to love. Victor Goti "writes" a prologue and also is a character within one of the interwoven stories, being the father of the child who unexpectedly interrupts the placid routine he and his wife had enjoyed. The dog Orfeo, who "writes" a postlogue, loves Augusto and is loved by Augusto; their relationship seems to exemplify what Unamuno considers the only pure, ideal love: love between animal and master--uncomplicated, at least on one side, by human frailty. Orfeo loves Augusto and dies when Augusto dies. As an animal, however, his love is not the result of calculation, as was Eugenia's, nor the result of any plan or

¹Miguel de Unamuno, Mist, translated by Warner Fite (New York, 1938), p. 314.

feeling. Unamuno thus laments in a symbolic manner the perfect love lacking between human beings.

Unamuno also examines symbolically the relationship of art to life and the nature of reality in his presentation of Augusto in the conventional realistic manner as a real man and then later as an invention of his pen. The fictional character's visit to author Unamuno in his study at Salamanca has overtones of self irony and poses the question of the relation of the creator and the created. Just as Unamuno envisions Don Quixote overshadowing his creator Cervantes, so Augusto Pérez seems superior to his creator Unamuno.² Disillusioned, Augusto has planned to destroy himself and announces his intention to Unamuno. Unamuno, however, tries to convince Augusto that he has no real existence, that he is merely a product of his creator's fertile imagination; therefore, he cannot choose his method of death, nor can he exercise his will. Somewhat reluctantly, Unamuno decides to kill Augusto, but Augusto, having arrived at an understanding of the dubious (nebulous) nature of his existence, now passionately desires to live. He rebels.

You are unwilling to let me be myself, come out of the mist and live, live, live; to see myself, hear myself, touch myself, feel myself, feel my own pain, be myself--you are unwilling, then? And so I am to die as a fictitious character? Very well, then, my lord creator Don Miguel, you too are to die, you

²Miguel de Unamuno, Our Lord Don Quixote, translated by Anthony Kerrigan (New York, 1967), p. 4.

too! And you will return to that nothing from which you came! God will cease to dream you!³

Augusto's existence as a fictional character gains concreteness from his will to live. It is ironical that as he approaches reality, as he at last asserts his will to destroy himself, he learns that he lives only in the imagination of a creator. Augusto, shocked to discover how little control he can exercise over his destiny, advises Unamuno that Unamuno's plight may be no better. Unamuno himself may be no more than a dream in the mind of God. And, after all, what better can man ask?

Does Unamuno cause the silly voracious appetite to come upon and kill Augusto? If so, then can the Creator just as capriciously cause Unamuno's death? Unamuno clearly says, "Yes." He maintains that Augusto died because author Unamuno willed it. Yet, in a paradoxical aside, Unamuno allows Goti, another of his creatures, to dispute his authorial word and declare that Augusto did exercise his will and destroy himself. From the Catholic viewpoint, all of this smacks of a heretical treatment of free will and predestination.

Augusto in his nebulous existence, his shadowy movement, becomes a symbol of the uncertainty of man's existence and its meaning. Unamuno can, with the stroke of a pen, obliterate Augusto. God can likewise, by His whim, obliterate Unamuno. In another sense, Augusto, in his indecisive, unaware state symbolizes the Spanish people, whom Unamuno accused of mental

³Unamuno, Mist, p. 304.

and spiritual lethargy. The indecision of the typical Spaniard addressed by the writers of the Generation of 1898⁴ in such areas as politics, ethics, and religion seems to invite such a comparison. Augusto, for example, treats simple matters, like the choice of a stroll, with silly but "august" seriousness; and until his awakening toward the end, ignores all the really serious matters bearing upon the meaning of life.

Eugenia arouses Augusto to life. Though only a pale prototype of later strong-willed women in Unamuno's fiction, she is oriented not toward reason but toward emotion and instinct. She possibly represents Unamuno's existentialist rejection of Descartes, "Cogito, ergo sum."⁵ Augusto's preference for dreaming is indicative of his weaker personality. He prefers to dream that Eugenia will love him. Augusto considers self-destruction as the solution to his problems; it becomes, in fact, his only problem. Camus, twenty-five years later, poses the same existential question: "there is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide."⁶

⁴José Ferrater Mora, Unamuno, A Philosophy of Tragedy, translated by Philip Silver (Berkeley, 1962), p. 2.

⁵Unamuno, The Tragic Sense of Life, p. 312.

⁶Albert Camus, The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays, translated by Justin O'Brien (New York, 1955), p. 3.

The title Mist is symbolic of man's uncertainty concerning the nature of reality.⁷ In striving to discover just who this Augusto Pérez is, Unamuno is trying to find out who he himself is. He feels the agony of Augusto, who passionately desires to continue to live; Unamuno shares this same passion to live. But this sharing of feeling cannot, according to Unamuno in the prologue to a later work Three Exemplary Novels, be credited to the fact that Augusto is Unamuno in fictional form. Unamuno feels that as a man of flesh and blood he possesses no more real substance than his protagonist.⁸ Unamuno thus philosophizes on the man-God relationship by putting his ideas into a symbolic analogue of a creator and his creation.

Unamuno believed that a man's primary relationship was with himself, and therefore inevitably with God. He wanted and needed a God--one who would not forget him. Don Quixote cried out that "there is no other hell than this, that God should forget us."⁹ Unamuno concluded that without immortality, man is just as unreal as a character of fiction.¹⁰

⁷Marie J. Panice, "Unamuno: Doubt or Denial," Hispania, XLVI, No. 3 (September, 1963), 474.

⁸Miguel de Unamuno, Three Exemplary Novels and a Prologue, translated by Angel Flores (New York, 1930), pp. 25-26.

⁹Unamuno, Our Lord Don Quixote, p. 250.

¹⁰Alfred Stern, "Unamuno and Ortega: The Revival of Philosophy in Spain," The Pacific Spectator, VIII (1954), 310.

He puts character and author (Cervantes and Don Quixote, Augusto Pérez and Unamuno) in the same category. The reality of these fictional characters resembles the authors' reality in that the drama and the novel are never finished; it can be narrated but it keeps on forming. The so-called fictional character has, then, the same being as the man's, the same reality. The dead man lives in the memory, much as the fictional character lives in the memory. For Unamuno, however, this poses the question of immortality: does man exist only when he is remembered?

Unamuno portrays himself and his doubts in the novel, and suggests that a capricious God or creative force determines the life and death of human beings. But, he leaves doubt about Augusto's death as a suicide. Augusto, it is true, must reluctantly recognize the fact that he is only an imaginary creation and that Unamuno may eliminate him. There remains the possibility that Augusto was capable of making his own decision; there is also the hope for man that his will is free, that he can control his own destiny and is not to be ruthlessly wiped out by death.¹¹

The tragic ending of this story, the sad condition of the relationship of man to man and man to woman, reflects the author's pessimism, possibly his vision of impending disaster.

¹¹Germañ Bleiberg and E. Inman Fox, editors, Spanish Thought and Letters in the Twentieth Century (Nashville, 1966) p. 404.

for his homeland. The weakness of Augusto seems indicative of the weakness of the Spanish male. Perhaps the dominance of the women in the novel (Eugenia over Augusto and Mauricio, Eugenia's aunt over her husband) suggests the dominance of the Mother Church over the Spanish people. A dog's devotion to his master becomes a symbol of love without thought or scheming. In some ways Mist is a bitter and disturbing as well as comic book. It well deserves the subtitle, "a tragicomic novel."

CHAPTER III

ABEL SANCHEZ

In Abel Sanchez Unamuno tells a modern version of the biblical story of Cain and Abel. The setting is in Spain. Actually Joaquín and Abel are not brothers, but they are close friends, and "neither Abel Sanchez nor Joaquín Monegro could remember a time when they had not known each other."¹ Abel, apparently with no effort on his part, achieves fame and fortune as a portrait painter. His personality pleases everyone. Joaquín, however, even during childhood, is a tortured soul with a personality that alienates him from his friends and acquaintances. His profession as a medical doctor is less glamorous, less financially rewarding (in Spain) and less aesthetic than Abel's career as a portrait painter.

The two friends become alienated from each other over a fickle woman, Helena, who chooses to favor Abel, though Joaquín loves her passionately. Without effort or gratitude, Abel achieves what Joaquín earnestly desires. Abel and Helena are married. Later Joaquín cynically inquires, "Do

¹Miguel de Unamuno, Abel Sanchez and Other Stories (Chicago, 1956), p. 3.

you think that the benediction of a priest changes an affair into a marriage?"² The marriage does produce a son, Abelito. Joaquín marries Antonia, a simple but virtuous peasant woman, and the girl child, Joaquina, is born of this union.

Abelito becomes a physician, asking to join Joaquín in his medical practice rather than to follow his father's profession as artist. Then the two "brothers," Abel and Joaquín, are inexorably joined when their children marry. The birth of a grandson intensifies the conflict and affects the youngster, since he is drawn to his artist grandfather and feels estranged from his doctor grandfather. As the tale reaches a climax, Joaquín, in a fit of jealous passion, attempts to strangle Abel but controls himself almost immediately. In the excitement Abel dies of a heart attack.

Unamuno wrote Abel Sanchez after a visit to the Italian battle front in 1914. Spain itself had experienced recent political upheavals; and as these tensions increased, Unamuno was shocked into an awareness of how man is pitted against man. The carnage he saw in 1914 was reflected in the hate and envy pictured in Abel Sanchez.

The novel is pertinent to Unamuno's concept of the plight of modern man--his intense soul-searching, his conflict with his fellow man, and his alienation from God. The taunt of "forward" that Unamuno once shouted to his

²Ibid., p. 50.

people and to himself, he changes to "inward,"³ as he searches and examines himself in the characters of Abel and Joaquín. Abel is the artist, the seeker of beauty; Joaquín is the doctor, the discoverer of truths. Together they symbolize artistic endeavor and scientific reasoning that characterized Unamuno himself.

Unamuno's story adds meaning to the Bible story. It is recorded in the Bible how each brother offered the fruits of his labor to God and how Cain's offering was refused. The Bible is silent, however, on why Cain's offering was unacceptable to God. The traditional answer is that God saw the evil in Cain's heart. In Abel Sanchez when Abel is studying the Bible for inspiration to paint the Old Testament scene, Joaquín argues that if Cain were evil, it was God's responsibility for having made him evil. Further, he sees that God has created an impossible situation: those He favors will always be envied by the less-favored ones, and if Cain had not become the first murderer by killing Abel, then Abel would have killed him. Envy, wanting the exclusive love of God, is apparently an inescapable sin, a typical human frailty.

Unamuno further suggests justification for Cain's crime by including in Abel Sanchez the story of two other brothers. One of these brothers was from a province where the practice of absolute liberty in disposing of property existed. Although

³José Ferrator Mora, Unamuno, A Philosophy of Tragedy (Berkeley, 1962), p. 13.

this man was the first born, enjoyed his father's favor, and would normally have inherited a sizeable fortune, he had the misfortune to fall in love with and marry the wrong girl. His father disinherited him, and upon the father's death, the family fortune passed to a second son. This son refused financial aid of any kind to his older brother, who finally left his hometown to live wretchedly by begging and borrowing and hating his more fortunate sibling. The tale suggests that it would have been better for the man to have killed his brother than to have hated him so vindictively: "Action liberates one and dissipates poisoned sentiment, and it is poisoned sentiment that sickens the soul."⁴ Joaquín cannot dissipate the poison in his soul by killing Abel. When Joaquín quarrels with Abel over the love of the grandson, "his hands went out like two claws."⁵ Abel drops dead of a heart attack, leaving Joaquín alone with his envy.

On his deathbed Joaquín ponders why he has been so envious. He laments the innate evil in his soul: "Why must I have been born into a country of hatred? Into a land where the precept seemed to be: 'Hate thy neighbor as thyself.'"⁶

Abel Sanchez thus prefigures the Spanish Civil War and suggests on a broader scale all war and hatred in the world. Unamuno offers love, which redeems hate and envy, as the

⁴Unamuno, Abel Sanchez and Other Stories, p. 113.

⁵Ibid., p. 169.

⁶Ibid., p. 173.

answer to man's need. The dying Joaquín cries, ". . . enough of hatred! I could have loved you, I should have loved you, it would have been my salvation, but I did not."⁷

Though hate is the motivating force in the main plot, two kinds of love appear in the story: mother love and passionate, erotic love. The figurative language describing the two wives, Helena and Antonia, is designed to create a picture of these two kinds of love. There is no physical description of Antonia. Instead, Unamuno concentrates on her inner qualities, her redeeming love for family and everyone. Helena's physical beauty, however, is equally important; Abel's initial desire is to paint the beautiful woman, and he like Joaquín falls under her physical spell.

Antonia is the symbol of maternal love. Joaquín marries Antonia to save himself from the envy that is destroying him. Antonia is a simple but intelligent woman, a devoutly religious woman, too. Joaquín begs Antonia to draw the demon envy from him with a kiss and drown the envy in her blood, "for he will drown in your blood as in holy water."⁸ Joaquín cannot, however, return to her home town, and cannot actually or symbolically return to the innocence of childhood.

Antonia, in marrying Joaquín, accepts a role comparable to that which the Catholic Church adopts toward its members. As Joaquín's wife she is "as a shield and a source of

⁷Ibid., p. 176.

⁸Ibid., p. 76.

consolation."⁹ Just as the confessional is a cleansing device, so she whispers to him, "confide in me, confess yourself to me."¹⁰ In the comfort of her arms Joaquín finds solace when his soul is beset by envy and hatred; in somewhat the same manner that Unamuno revived his soul:

There were periods when, perhaps in order to "economizar virilidad" and to strengthen his spiritual life, Don Miguel would betake himself to San Esteban or the Dominican hostelry on the Pena de Francia, there to mingle with the holy fathers, and join them in their devotions. . . .¹¹

The nature of Antonia's love for Joaquín is strikingly maternal: "'My poor child!' she exclaimed, embracing him. She reached up and took his head in her lap as if he were a sick child, caressing him. . . ."¹²

The beautiful Helena represents carnal love. At the first sitting for her portrait, with Abel painting and Joaquín watching, "both of them devoured her with their eyes."¹³ Later Helena models for a picture of the Virgin, and Joaquín confesses that he prayed before the picture. His adoration has ironic religious significance in that Joaquín is aware that the marriage ceremony has merely legalized her affair with Abel. Abel meanwhile amuses himself with his other models. The irony of Abel's using her as a model for

⁹Ibid., p. 47.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 49.

¹¹Margaret Rudd, The Lone Heretic (Austin, 1963), p. 154.

¹²Unamuno, Abel Sanchez and Other Stories, pp. 50-51.

¹³Ibid., p. 14.

the Virgin is evident to Joaquín, but does not change his lust. Joaquín still desires her even when he calls her "that peacock of a woman, that professional beauty, the fashionable painter's model, Abel's mistress."¹⁴

Antonia is the pure and the innocent female, and in her ability to love and be loved Joaquín should find his redemption. Just as Joaquín and Abel are symbolic opposites of one personality, so are Helena and Antonia opposites of womanhood, Helena perhaps being what the Abel (that is, the artist) in Unamuno desires. Antonia is the woman Unamuno elevated in his philosophy and in his novels, the type that he made his wife. Helena is the satanic, the evil, the mysterious, the beautiful, the forbidden, the unattainable.

Joaquín wants to be able to love Abel, wants to be more like him, symbolizing his desire to merge the facets of their character into a wholesome unity. Joaquín's love for Helena, even after his marriage to Antonia, shows, in the same manner, the need for each element in his personality.

The entire story is based on a series of ironic ambivalences, and counterparts. Abel achieves his fame and good fortune through no apparent effort on his part. Furthermore, he accepts success without question. He possesses Helena without effort. Joaquín can only cry, "She rejects me, who wanted her, and wants you, who rejected her."¹⁵ As a man

¹⁴Ibid., p. 50.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 21.

skilled with words, Joaquín causes the public to understand and fully appreciate Abel's painting of the first fratricide. Years later Abel's son will write out Joaquín's medical discoveries and bring a kind of immortality to Joaquín Monegro.

In another instance of irony Unamuno has Joaquín send Abel as a wedding gift "a brace of magnificent damascened pistols, worthy of an artist."¹⁶ It appears unlikely that an artist, creator and maker, would value such instruments of destruction, or consider them "worthy." The passage is, however, probably symbolic of Joaquín's desire to kill his rival.

In Abel Sanchez Unamuno has given the Old Testament story a deeper and more personal meaning. He feels deeply the tragedy of Cain and presents him as the central figure. In the pages of this short novel he pictures the sin and suffering of one envious and sinful man fictionally conceived in an era of oncoming war and fratricide. And Unamuno's sympathy paradoxically is almost all with this sinner.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 27.

CHAPTER IV

THREE EXEMPLARY NOVELS AND A PROLOGUE

Unamuno's "The Marquis of Lumbria," "Two Mothers," and "A He Man" were published together in 1920 under the title Three Exemplary Novels and a Prologue. The stories form a trilogy, each tale bearing on human passions in conflict with the desire of the individual to endure after death. The stories concentrate on the theme of immortality, with Unamuno taking his usual intellectual approach. These three short novels must therefore be thoughtfully read and reread, if one is to recognize the shifting spectrum of ideas, ideals, and intrinsic truths that flash from the simple prose. In them Unamuno employs a straight-forward expository style, almost completely devoid of rhetorical devices and lavish description. His characters live not because of externals but because the reader becomes aware of their secret passions, dreams, and unspoken desires. The author achieves intensity, if not fullness, of characterization by subordinating time and place to the moving spirit within his tragic personages. Life and the sense of life are nonetheless real, both for the characters and for the reader.

The prologue to the novels is an intrinsic part of the trilogy: Unamuno even suggests that his book might well have

been considered as four novels, instead of three novels and a prologue.¹ The prologue explains that the stories which follow are offered as "samples of life," and as attempts to pinpoint human reality.² Having accepted the theory advanced by Oliver Wendell Holmes that in every man there is "the person one is; the person one thinks one is; the person others think one is,"³ Unamuno goes on to say:

. . . that in addition to the person one is to God (if indeed one is anything to God), and to the person one is to others, and to the person one thinks one is, there is the person one would like to be. And this last, the person one would like to be, is the creator within one, in one's heart, and the person that is truly real.⁴

Thus, Unamuno continues, the real man "whom we might describe in Kantian language as the noumenal man, this man who is all will and idea . . ." ⁵ is the man who exercises his will in obedience to an idea. Unamuno's three stories each examines the consequences of an individual's exercise of his will in obedience to an idea.

In conjunction with these ideas about man and his reality, Unamuno also discusses in the Prologue the nature of reality itself, referring at some length to his previous creation, Augusto Perez, the protagonist of Mist.

¹Miguel de Unamuno, Three Exemplary Novels and a Prologue, translated by Angel Flores (New York, 1930) p. 13.

²Julián Mariás, Miguel de Unamuno, translated by Frances M. López-Morillas (Cambridge, 1966) p. 70.

³Unamuno, Three Exemplary Novels and a Prologue, p. 19.

⁴Ibid., p. 20.

⁵Ibid., p. 22.

"The Marquis of Lumbria"

"The Marquis of Lumbria" takes its name from the manorial house of Don Rodrigo Saurez de Tejada. The Marquis has two daughters--Carolina, the elder; and Luisa, the younger. A suitable young gentleman, Tristan, courts the younger sister; the Marquis eagerly awaits the marriage that will produce an heir to carry on the family name. It is the older sister, however, who carries within her such a desire to perpetuate herself that she seduces the suitor before her sister can marry him. While the Marquis lives, he is able to impose his will on Luisa to marry Tristan. He then forces his elder daughter to retire to the country to bear her illegitimate child. The marriage of the younger sister to Tristan is consummated, and the Marquis lives to see a son, Rodriguin, born to Luisa and Tristan.

Rodriguin, the Marquis's male heir and the legitimate grandson, does not find himself in a happy family group. For some reason--perhaps sorrow and disillusionment--Luisa has lost her will to live; she wastes away and dies. She forgives her sister and Tristan, revealing her knowledge of their sordid affair. The narrative takes a complex turn when Tristan journeys to the country and returns with Carolina as his wife. As might be expected, he then becomes a mere shell of a husband and father; Carolina controls him completely. When she bears him another child during this legal alliance, it is as malformed as their marriage. The second child dies. Using the excuse

that the ten-year-old Marquis Rodriguin is lonesome, Carolina brings to the house a companion for him. This boy is Carolina's son, Pedrito, also fathered by Tristan. Eventually the illegitimate son snatches the title of Marquis from his brother, beginning a re-enactment of the Cain and Abel story. This story of conflict between brothers published at about the same time as Abel Sanchez suggests Unamuno's awareness of the unrest and strife that lie ahead for an awakening Spain some fifteen or twenty years later.

Unamuno employs an omniscient point of view in this narrative so that the thoughts and secret passions of his characters are made known. The foundation of the story and the core of the conflict is Unamuno's favorite theme, the hunger for immortality. The paradox is that though the Marquis' house bars its doors to most of the village activity and seems deadened, it shelters Carolina, who seethes with a lust for life.

The novel begins with a description of the manorial house of the Marquis of Lumbria. The building itself is actually presented more in detail than the family sheltered within its walls. The musty air and unyielding routine symbolize the rigidity of thought of the Roman Catholic Church of Spain, an institution critically regarded by Unamuno. The tradition-bound family headed by the Marquis, who yearns to perpetuate himself in an heir, becomes an indictment of both the Church and the proud but slumbering Spanish people. The Marquis

symbolizes the Spanish people and the house symbolizes the Church. Spain and its people are Unamuno's most intimate and dearest concern, and he analyzes them critically in an effort to urge them to a life more deeply and truly religious--a life based on both reason and faith. The Church, like the House of Lumbria, has become decadent because of corruption within. Further indication of the exact nature of this corruption, however, is not made, except mention of the presence of vermin.

The Lumbrian family, like the Spanish people, are living, yet are dead to change. Unamuno sees Spain as a country whose destiny is entirely in the hands of a privileged class, which ignores the masses. Those who profess to respond to religion, the Marquis and his family, are actually remote from God, just as the house is shuttered against the sunshine and noise of the village. Unamuno harshly portrays church-goers in the ombre players, who ask no questions and accept the rules of the game so obediently that they cease their ombre game at the stroke of ten, "even though there might still be open stakes."⁶ The unspoken comment then becomes: is interest in religion so shallow and false that even the pointless routine of the Church goes unchallenged?

The Church as symbolized by Unamuno is a backward-looking institution, facing itself away from humanity and the problems of humanity. The Marquis takes comfort in the ivy-covered

⁶Ibid., p. 40.

walls of the house, although these same walls conceal vermin. The rigidity and traditional nature of religious thought thus prevent the spiritual fulfillment and satisfaction of the Spanish people.

Although the house is closed to the public and only a chosen few cross its threshold, the intrigues and strife within are known to the villagers. So powerful is the emblem of authority symbolized by the mansion, however, that only whispers are heard of the conduct of the inhabitants. The marriage of the younger daughter and the suitor, Tristan, is celebrated en famille, signifying the Church hierarchy as a closely-knit family of practitioners. The tenacity, too, with which the Marquis clings to life is reflected in the desire of the Church to perpetuate itself in Spain. This hunger for immortality, this desire to continue an existence, any kind of existence, in one's children is the motivating force of both the Marquis and the Church.

The aged Marquis is important to the story because of his desire for a male heir. The Marquesa, however, is dull and indolent. Unable to produce a son and heir she eventually sinks into imbecility. The two daughters quarrel constantly. With such a scene the story begins. The struggle of the women prefigures the struggle between their sons. The daughters personify those opposites of human behavior that Unamuno declares to be within each individual. He believes that "every human being has within him the seven cardinal virtues

and their corresponding mortal sins"7 The tyrant and the slave, the sinner and the saint, the Cain and the Abel reside latent or active in each being.

The lack of physical description of Carolina, the elder, and Luisa, the younger, is notable. Unamuno purposely eliminates all detailed material that might distract his readers; his language is so direct and simple, his truths so naked and brutally presented, that he creates a starkness both repellent and disturbing. The craving for immortality and the struggle between the sisters seem at times a fierce disease ravaging both author and characters.

Carolina and Luisa have spent their lives in this house of Lumbria, an abode as unchanging and monotonous at the quiet river running beneath its rear windows. Above the threshold of the house, Unamuno chooses to place a placque of the Sacred Heart of Jesus with the prophetic inscription, "I shall reign in Spain, more revered there than elsewhere"8 Within, the daughters quarrel to relieve their tedium. Carolina, like her father, hates the sun. More important to the narrative, she has inherited from him the same burning passion to achieve immortality in the form and body of a child. Luisa's will and spirit are subordinated to that of both her father and Carolina. Luisa does, however, succeed in opening the door of the gloomy mansion to a suitor. The sisters fight

⁷Ibid., p. 28.

⁸Ibid., p. 40.

for the love of Tristan. It is a real battle, though one-sided; Carolina is determined to produce a child by Tristan before her sister can do so, thus securing for herself an extension of life and for her son, the title of Marquis.

After Tristan enters the house as suitor, the quarrels and disputes of Carolina and Luisa become more frequent and violent than ever before, but more silent. Tristan, like his fabled predecessor, seems destined by some love potion to fall under the spell of both the sisters. He chooses Luisa, but is seduced by Carolina. Tristan may be symbolic of the new blood, the breath of new ideas, that Unamuno feels his Spanish people should welcome. The disrespect and neglect accorded him by the family, in turn, signify the apathetic rejection of new ideas by the Spanish people and Spanish Church. He is, aside from his biological function, unimportant to the Marquis and to Carolina. He correctly assesses his place in the Lumbrian household as "almost a piece of furniture."⁹ Tristan fulfills his destiny by producing two sons.

Unamuno describes the delicate spirit of Luisa by employing the metaphor of the flower. Tristan falls in love with the girl with the violet eyes and geranium lips. This flower withers and dies, however, when it encounters the burning passion for immortality that possesses Carolina. Luisa's death is described as a draining away of her life blood, comparable to draining the

⁹Ibid., p. 50.

life-giving water from a flower. Paradoxically, it was water that brought Tristan into the household, when Luisa accidentally spilled water on him while she was watering plants on her balcony. Luisa signifies her surrender to death when she refuses to display more flowers, when she designates her son as the only flower. Her son signifies the new life in the Lumbrian household.

Thus with Rodriguin's birth passes Luisa's desire to live. The Marquis dies, his hunger for an heir satisfied. His passionate obsession, however, has instigated his daughters' conflict and eventually the conflict between his grandsons. As the old man dies, he welcomes his heir, Luisa's child, to life. Greeting this new life, paradoxically the dying man gives the baby "the kiss of death,"¹⁰ the implication here being that the child is destined to failure in a conflict with a stronger will.

Carolina is the dominant character in "The Marquis of Lumbria," although she must initially bow to the will of her father, since "he was strong, stronger than I."¹¹ She retires temporarily from the house to rear the son fathered by her sister's husband. Upon the death of her sister she returns, triumphant in spirit and overwhelming in will, imbued with a maternal force that crushes all opposition. Hatred is an overpowering force in "The Marquis of Lumbria." Yet it is a

¹⁰Ibid., p. 49.

¹¹Ibid., p. 65.

love story. Love as presented here is but the thirst for immortality, the wish to eternalize oneself in a loved one. Carolina is fiercely protective of her son Pedrito; he is a part and a prolongation of herself. In his birth she realizes a satisfaction for immortality that is the strongest desire of mankind. Carolina will continue to live in the flesh and blood of her son.

When Carolina re-enters the house as the new bride of the widowed Tristan, she defiantly removes the mourning draperies from the family coat of arms, which her father felt she had defiled. Maliciously taunting the memory of her father, who sought to snatch her son from her, she toys with the idea of daubing the coat of arms with honey to attract the flies he so despised. The full fury of Carolina is revealed, however, as she removes the stone escutcheon to make room for a new one. The stone of the original escutcheon yields not to pressure but only to cutting or chipping. The bronze one envisioned by Carolina can be shaped and molded by the heat of passion, the passion for immortality that Pedrito, with her blood in his veins, will possess. The blood that she spills at his birth, and the blood spilled when blows are exchanged between Rodriguin and him, signify the very lust for life that is his inheritance. The blood-red ruby is a fitting emblem for the new escutcheon, formed in nature by pressure and heat.

The emphasis Carolina places on the blood as a symbol of life blossoming anew reinforces the conception of the family as the sleeping Spanish people. Unamuno's Spaniards have lived too long under the deadening suppression of their religion; they have lost their independent, personal existence. The two daughters open up their house, the one because she loves people, the other because she is determined to snatch continuing life in the form of an heir. Sinful or not, the relationship between Carolina and Tristan results in a new and vigorous life. Perhaps Unamuno sees in this new life the beginning of fresh and radical ideas, the re-creation of the kind of Spain he wants.

Unamuno's concentration on the idea of immortality is centralized in the conception of man's immortal life as an extension of worldly life, achieved through his children. Since this conception of immortality requires no adherence to a belief in God, Carolina can validly question even the sanction of the Church for her marriage. The union itself, producing a child, becomes primarily important. For the Marquis and for Carolina, the will to continue to be finds satisfaction in this carnal sense, a continuing life in the person of a child; their yearning is not for a reward for themselves in Heaven at some future time.

Both of the sisters, like all mankind, possess a deep longing for an assurance of immortality, for a promise, a knowledge that one will be remembered, that one will not

cease to be. Yet from this universal passion for immortality springs envy, a spiritual hunger. Unamuno views this envious desire for recognition as the actual cause of Cain's sin. In the basic struggle of "The Marquis of Lumbria," Unamuno deals with two of his recurring themes, the hunger to live and the Cain and Abel story. There is, again, the possibility that the quarreling sisters and brothers represent the Spanish Civil War that Unamuno could sense, the struggles any change or enforced entrance of new ideas could bring about.

"Two Mothers"

"Two Mothers" is the second narrative in Three Exemplary Novels and a Prologue. "Two Mothers" relates the story of Berta Lapeira, a woman who bears a child, and Raquel, a barren woman with an extraordinary capacity for maternal love. At first, the widow Raquel takes as her lover Don Juan, but her continued childless state is a blight to her life. In sorrow and despair she decides to marry Don Juan to a suitable woman, Berta, who can bear a child for her. The fruit of this union she deliberately plans to claim as her own. By devious financial dealings Raquel gains control of Don Juan's properties and eventually the fortunes of the Lapeiras as well, thus silencing all possible ancestral claim to the infant, Quelina. Soon after the child is born, Juan dies in an automobile accident. Berta, who thinks she is again pregnant, consoles herself with the hope of bearing another child by Juan.

In "Two Mothers" there are three types of love, each represented by a particular character. First there is Don Juan, legendary roué. His love for women has no depth; not because passion is lacking, but because he has no sense of urgency to continue to live. He has no children and desires none. From this lethargic state of his soul, from this childless condition, Berta dreams of rescuing Juan.

Then, there is the love that Berta bears for Raquel. This love takes the form of an admiration of the older woman, a longing to be as powerful as Raquel. Berta unconsciously recognizes the relentless will of the widow and her desire to continue to exist. By imitating the amorous attraction that the widow exerts upon Don Juan, Berta hopes to make him love her. She becomes a reflection of Raquel in mannerisms and dress. Berta remains, however, no match for Raquel in strength of will.

The third and most significant love in the story is the love of Raquel. It is not, however, the love that she feels for a man. Her motivating force is a kind of self love. Raquel loves her own life; to survive has both reality and immediacy for her. She dominates the will of both Don Juan and Berta; thus Raquel is able to extend her life in the form of a child. She so completely possesses Juan that his child by Berta is a part of her. When she holds this child, Raquel can truly

exclaim, "I see myself."¹² Raquel's love encompasses and consumes and is destructive in its selfishness. She will allow nothing or no one to thwart her plan for immortality.

Unamuno suggests that the thirst for everlasting life breeds love between the sexes,¹³ and in this sense Raquel loves Juan. Unamuno then concentrates on the desire for immortality that grips Raquel. She is proud and arrogant; her scorn for men knows no bounds. Juan is reduced to a biological element necessary to her plan.

The plot unfolds in dramatic fashion, with Unamuno writing parts of the story as a play. This device forces the reader's attention to the dialogue. The story takes its title from the two mothers who appeared before Solomon, each claiming the same child. In Unamuno's story Don Juan is the child being claimed. Raquel claims him to father a child in Berta's womb, a child she can possess just as she possesses Juan. Berta claims him as the father of her child, one that she can call her own. Juan feels in danger of being torn apart by the two mothers.

Raquel's longing for immortality is such that she finds no consolation in rationalizing her position. Reason tells her that she is barren. She has had no children by her first husband; she has had no children during her liaison with Juan.

¹²Ibid., p. 125.

¹³Miguel de Unamuno, The Tragic Sense of Life, translated by J. E. C. Fritch (New York, 1921), p. 39.

Reason tells her that there is no expectation that the blessings of a marriage ceremony will change this condition. Reason tells her that her longing will find no answer in a child which is offered to her by her own fecund sister. Yet from the depths of hopelessness Raquel's indomitable will asserts itself. As the most primitive living cell unites with another cell to create a new life, her will has so interpenetrated Juan's that she symbolically causes Juan to produce a child. That this child will grow in another's womb is unimportant; it is a child nurtured by her passionate desire to be immortal, and she can thus rightfully claim it as an extension of herself.

Juan's position in this triangle is that of both mate and child. Sexual and maternal love are inextricably joined; in fact, Unamuno states that "woman's love is all maternal."¹⁴ Raquel yields herself to Juan, knowing that his desire for her makes him suffer. Yet when Don Juan is reduced by her plans to a sobbing hulk of a man, Raquel takes "him in her arms, like a mother . . ."¹⁵ to soothe and comfort him. Berta, too, "would enfold him in her thin arms as if to protect him from some hidden enemy"¹⁶

¹⁴Ibid., p. 136.

¹⁵Unamuno, Three Exemplary Novels and a Prologue, p. 97.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 122.

The widow's plan to secure a child, one that will be an extension of her life, is a plan of conquest and domination. For this reason Raquel embodies that passionate patience and passionate resignation that Unamuno considers essential to those who hunger for immortality. Passionately desiring a child, but resigned to the fact that she can never herself produce one, she plans the domination of first Juan, and then Berta. Juan falls to his death in a real abyss, but not before he has felt himself falling into the deep abyss of "the black shadowy eyes of the widow Raquel."¹⁷ Berta succumbs because she is financially dependent upon the clever widow. When Berta pleads for her child, Raquel's empassioned words, "My Quelina? Who is I, myself . . ."¹⁸ eloquently express the widow's feelings that the child is an integral part of her life.

Berta feels, in a small way, something of the hunger for immortality that possesses the widow. In a sense Raquel has perpetuated herself in Berta by creating a desire in Berta to mimic her, to possess a strong will. Berta probably is pregnant with another of Juan's children; she surely senses the truth and urgency of Raquel's parting words: "It is not well to remain a widow."¹⁹

¹⁷Ibid., p. 88.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 127.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 131.

True to the Unamunian concept of immortality as a passionate desire, not just for the preservation of the soul but of the complete "man of flesh and blood," Raquel cannot be satisfied with her sister's child. That child cannot fulfill her dream, because its acceptance will involve no anguish, no suffering. Immortality must be struggled for. To Raquel the battle and the struggle is as necessary as achieving the goal of immortality. Raquel thus views both death and childbirth, when considered together, as a woman's true fulfillment.

Unamuno sees man's mortality and immortality as a matter of love. Sexual love, the essential love, is, as he describes it, both will and feeling. By sexual love man is able to perpetuate himself. The two in love both give of themselves and both suffer an encroachment of death in the giving. Paradoxically, however, each partner renews himself in the form and being of a child. It is this type of perpetuation, this means of renewing one's life, that Unamuno emphasizes in both "The Marquis of Lumbria" and "Two Mothers." Both Carolina and Raquel represent all humanity in its desire, its longing, its hunger and need to eternalize itself, to find immortality. All women are the embodiment of the original Eve, and all are mothers of the race as they re-create life. Both Carolina and Raquel are in love. They love eternal life with a passion that transcends all ethics, rules, or reason. Unamuno describes woman's love as "more loving and purer than that of man, braver

and more enduring."²⁰ But the fierce, protective nature of that love, the venomous spirit with which these vital women surmount all barriers to their goal of eternal life in the Unamunian concept is startling and brutal.

In "The Marquis of Lumbria," Unamuno deals with a woman's love in relation to producing a child. In the second story, "Two Mothers," he again presents a story of a mother's love. Raquel's love, however, transcends her own barren body and enfolds the child of another's womb. So completely does she assimilate the wills of both Juan and Berta that their child becomes her, satisfying her feverish search for immortality.

Each of the first two narratives in Three Exemplary Novels and a Prologue is dominated by a central figure--a woman forceful, passionate, and willful. The servility of the men, Tristan to Carolina and Juan to Raquel, is strikingly portrayed. The men fulfill nothing more than their necessary biological functions and are themselves submerged in the more dominant personalities of their partners.

"A He Man"

"A He Man," or "Nothing Less Than a Real Man," as it is sometimes translated, is the third story in Three Exemplary Novels and a Prologue. The conflict of the tale involves the battle of wills between Alejandro, a self-made, nineteenth-century tycoon, and Julia Yanez, the beauty of the city of

²⁰Unamuno, The Tragic Sense of Life, p. 137.

Renada. She is the willful daughter of a spendthrift father determined to solve his financial problems by contracting a rich marriage for her. Julia, however, is equally determined to find a man who truly loves her.

Enrique, Julia's first admirer, vows his love and dallies at her window, but is too faint-hearted to steal her away from her father's house. Her second suitor is more aggressive, but even he refuses her demand that they escape her father's domination by committing suicide together. When these two ventures fail, Julia hints to her father that she might welcome the advances of a certain divorced man of the community, disreputable and wealthy. The father is at the point of accepting this outcome, and thus matters stand in the turbulent Yanez household when Alejandro appears in Renada.

Ominous tales immediately circulate concerning how this wealthy stranger acquired his riches after the death of his first wife. Alejandro refuses to comment on his personal affairs and pursues a policy of buying those things that he desires. He purchases the debts of Julia's father; she in turn tragically offers herself to Alejandro as mistress, apparently indulging the martyr complex forced upon her by her father's demands. Alejandro wins Julia's heart, however, by convincing her that he is the real man she has been searching for. She comes to feel that he has rescued her from her father; and he willingly and casually accepts her gratitude, believing that any woman he chooses to marry cannot help loving him for himself.

Julia enters upon a marriage in which she is pampered, dressed, and exhibited to the entire city. Her every wish, but one, is fulfilled: she does not receive a passionate declaration of love from Alejandro. Free at last from the captivity of her father's house, she becomes, paradoxically, a captive of her love for Alejandro. Alejandro, however, steadfastly refuses to declare to her in so many words that he loves her. In a pique of frustration, she eventually embarks on a petty love affair with a foppish count who is in her husband's debt; but still Alejandro refuses to show jealousy. Finally Julia is committed to an asylum until she apologizes for having been so mad as to have even implied that she has had an affair with the count. In the hospital Alejandro for once drops his guard to admit grudgingly his love for Julia. Not long afterward, on her deathbed, she at last seems happy in the thought that her husband truly loves her. Alejandro, powerless against death, takes his own life, determined to follow her.

Carolina and Raquel, of the two preceding exemplary novels, bend their wills toward the perpetuation of themselves in the form of a child; Julia, however, relentlessly and tragically quests for her husband's love. On the surface she seems to be no more than the stereotyped beauty of a small Spanish town, engaging in petty flirtations suggested by romantic novels but functioning in a state of crisis throughout the novel. She harbors strange ideas and exerts her will in a reckless manner.

Unamuno indicates, however, that tragedy follows the introduction of new ideas and a willful disposition, for "an omen of impending tragedy . . ." ²¹ is evident in Julia's eyes.

Julia exhibits a combination of love and fear of her husband: love and admiration for the crude, masculine man and fear of the smoldering passion and ruthlessness, which seem to lie within this man. Sexual gratification results in self perpetuation for each of them, but Julia seeks assurance of some greater and deeper love from Alejandro when their son is born. Her quest is in vain; his love seems based upon physical desire only. "The lovers are tyrants and slaves, each one tyrant and slave of the other," ²² and their love has become a kind of mutual selfishness. Julia begins to realize that her husband is only the man whose mistress she has become. The egotism of Alejandro--that is, his supreme confidence in his wife--is founded not on love, but on the knowledge of the power he exercises over her. His careless dress, his affair with the servant girl, his very coarseness are to him the realities which make him a real man, superior to other men who gaze on his wife. In his assumed role of "superman," too, Alejandro places himself beyond the social and moral laws of his associates. He and his wife compulsively assert their wills as the novel moves toward its tragic finale.

²¹Unamuno, Three Exemplary Novels and a Prologue, p. 135.

²²Unamuno, The Tragic Sense of Life, p. 134.

Unamuno achieves a concentration on the immediate being and exceptional will of Alejandro by offering little knowledge of his past, which is mysteriously tinged with tragedy. Alejandro is significant and important because as protagonist he represents pure masculine will. Those who have dealings with him find him to be ambitious, domineering, and self-centered. Unamuno's philosophical reasoning is that that which determines a man, that which makes him one man and not another, is the principle of unity and the principle of continuity.²³ Because Alejandro is purposefully living his life, because he sees Julia and is determined to possess her, he is satisfying this principle of unity. Alejandro intuitively but carefully guards his being, his real identity. Though he has become wealthy, he chooses to remain essentially a peasant; he is, in fact, rather proud of his humble background. This attitude is important to Unamuno's philosophy of a "he man" of flesh and bone: "To propose to a man that he should be someone else, is to propose to him that he should cease to be himself."²⁴ Alejandro remains himself.

The foppish count, symbolically and actually a nonentity, and a foil to Alejandro, is compared to a lap dog, a pet monkey, an angora cat. Initially dependent upon Alejandro because of a debt, the count becomes increasingly subservient because he is a shell of a man, a mere plaything. Just as the pets of the rich

²³Ibid., p. 8.

²⁴Ibid., p. 9.

are to be fawned over and enjoyed for the moment, so Alejandro regards the count. He amuses Julia; therefore Alejandro endures the count's presence in his home.

Unamuno mocks the count and the upper class of Spain that he represents in the scene of the dinner party. Both the count and Julia are commanded, indeed threatened, by Alejandro to be present, despite the fact that each is afraid to see the other again. The party is conducted with all the frivolous conventions of polite society, despite the undercurrent of Julia's and Alejandro's conflicting wills. Tea is served, because "tea goes very well with explanations between gentlemen."²⁵ Yet Alejandro is no more gentleman by birth than the count is gentleman by behavior.

Alejandro remains the over-powering "I," the ego that asserts itself. In this man one recognizes again Unamuno's rejection of Descartes' rationalistic "I think, therefore I am." Unamuno chooses to proclaim the primacy of existence over cognition. Unamuno seems to say, "I am, therefore I think."²⁶ Alejandro, in effect, says, "I will, therefore I am."

Angel del Rio has noted that Alejandro Gomez is symbolically an important name, "Gomez" being the Spanish equivalent of "Smith." Unamuno has thus suggested the prototypical aspect of his hero. Further significance is attached to the given

²⁵Unamuno, Three Exemplary Novels and a Prologue, p. 213.

²⁶Unamuno, The Tragic Sense of Life, p. 312.

name "Alejandro" when it is recalled that an earlier Alexander conquered the world in ancient times. Unamuno thus suggests Alejandro as a conqueror by name and action. It is fitting, then, that Alejandro purchase the debts of Julia's father, rather than woo Julia and win her by a show of affection. He marries her, satisfied that the "law will sanction my will . . . or my will the law."²⁷ In answer to her questions regarding his past, he boasts that he has no past: "I made myself."²⁸ His use of "I" causes Julia an unknown fear; instinctively she recognizes this "I" as an overpowering expression of his will.

Nietzsche, whom Unamuno studied carefully, theorized that man is activated by a will to triumph through ruthless power. Alejandro in a sense represents raw masculinity and pure will: he is the Nietzschean "superman." Alejandro is a product of his will, a real man in a world that he has created; and he exercises the basic drive of man with the will to live, the will to be stronger, the will to power. From the Nietzschean standpoint truth, beauty, and goodness are relative, since only what promotes the ascendancy of the individual over other individuals and fulfills the urge to power is important.²⁹ Unamuno in "A He Man" hints at the forthcoming Spanish Civil War and foreshadows the tragedy of the broader European power struggle

²⁷Unamuno, Three Exemplary Novels, p. 159.

²⁸Ibid., p. 165.

²⁹Jacques Choron, The Romance of Philosophy (New York, 1963), p. 271.

by consigning his superman to complete destruction and the destruction of those about him.

Raquel and Carolina of the preceding "exemplary" novels were "superwomen," following the Nietzschean tenet that the function of the female is only to bear children. Unamuno takes note of the evil associated with willful people. He does not overlook the suffering and tragedy of weaker people like Juan, Luisa, and Berta; but at the same time he seems intrigued by the more awe-inspiring figures of the strong.

Unamuno presents in his exemplary trilogy instances of the morality, or perhaps the amorality, of man in a concrete situation. These stories are attempts by means of the imagination to present and question Nietzschean thought. In "Two Mothers" Unamuno recognizes the evil in selfishness in Raquel's desire for immortality. Paradoxically, he sees in Nietzschean fashion that this desire in men for immortality in the flesh transcends good and evil. According to Nietzsche, the will to power is so fundamental in nature and in life that mankind must revise its ideas of good and evil, indeed of all morality. Nietzsche thus holds that only the "superman" is important and that he is beyond good and evil. Unamuno actually poses the question of whether this kind of strength excuses itself. The pathetic condition of men and women, the ultimate result of will to power, indicates, however, that Unamuno concludes that overpowering will brings tragedy and sorrow.

CHAPTER V

"THE MADNESS OF DR. MONTARCO"

"The Madness of Dr. Montarco" is the story of a medical doctor who attempts to express the two diametrically opposed sides of his nature: the logical, the practical, and the conventional as set forth in the practice of medicine; the other, the illogical, the fantastic, the satirical, and the highly critical as represented in stories which the doctor writes by way of relaxation.

Dr. Montarco is, in a sense, like Lewis Carroll, who taught the logic of mathematics and produced the illogic of Alice in Wonderland; Montarco is reminiscent, too, of Dostoevsky's underground man who insists upon the irrationality in his makeup. The Spanish doctor, like Dostoevsky's hero, remains unable to reconcile the two polarities of his nature, the logical and the illogical. The people who read Montarco's novels and apply to him for treatment as a doctor become greatly disturbed by his stories. These patients are afraid to submit themselves to the medical regimen of a man who, no matter how successful, writes such zany stories.

Dr. Montarco's readers and patients refuse to understand why he should attempt to vary from the role that society has assigned to him. Unamuno in Our Lord Don Quixote poses the

same question when he asks,

What order can there be, in effect, if each one does not adjust and hold to what is demanded of him, and no more? Of course there could never be any progress along this path, but then progress is the source of many evils. There is no quarreling with 'Cobbler, stick to your last!'¹

Here by sarcasm Unamuno strikes another blow for the madness, the irrationality of art, and poetic sensibility.

Dr. Montarco finally finds himself unable to provide a living for his family. In the end his desperate situation magnifies the irrationality in his makeup, and he is finally committed to an insane asylum where he becomes silent and dies, leaving a huge manuscript entitled "All or Nothing."

As in many of Unamuno's stories, the characterization and setting lack physical detail and fullness; thus "The Madness of Dr. Montarco" becomes a dialectic rather than an imaginative creation of person and place. Figurative language is scarce, but absence of conventional rhetoric enables the reader to appreciate the connotation as well as the denotation of the language.

The struggle of Dr. Montarco to express his polarity seems to suggest Unamuno's own difficulties in Spain and may explain his fondness for paradox. Unamuno, though not a medical doctor, was a gifted teacher who expressed philosophical, religious, and political views considered astonishing and even heretical

¹Miguel de Unamuno, Our Lord Don Quixote, translated by Anthony Kerrigan (New York, 1967), p. 213.

in a conservative and somewhat culturally backward country such as Spain. Unamuno's writings and speeches lost him his position as teacher. Like Dr. Montarco, he experienced difficulties supporting his family. Though not confined in an asylum, Unamuno was forced into exile by Primo de Rivera's dictatorship. Later, during General Franco's regime, he was ousted from his university post. The most striking parallel between the author and his protagonist, however, is the humiliation suffered by Unamuno when General Franco's guards were stationed outside his house for the last three months of his life.² Even though at different times in his intellectual development Unamuno gave favorable consideration to the political theories of both the Communist liberals and the Fascist conservatives in Spain, his exposé of stupidity in high places resembles what Socrates did in ancient Greece and led to both banishment and arrest for Unamuno.

The first person narrator in "The Madness of Dr. Montarco" represents an interested and curious observer of the spiritual, intellectual, and psychological phenomena in the situation. The narrator does not openly support some of the vagaries indulged in by Dr. Montarco, but the reader gets the impression that the person telling the story is very strongly and sympathetically affected. The sympathy of the narrator--obstensibly

²Margaret Thomas Rudd, The Lone Heretic (Austin, 1963), p. 303.

a sensible, average man--induces the reader to open his mind to tolerance, change, and new ideas.

Dr. Atienza, the director of the asylum where the mad doctor is confined, occupies a somewhat different position from that of the narrator. Having been a fellow medical student with Dr. Montarco, the director truly understands the madness that has come over his patient. He recognizes that Dr. Montarco is an artist and not merely a man of ideas, and that:

His ideas were a point of departure, mere raw material, and had as much importance in his writing as earth used by Velásquez in making the pigments had to do with his painting, or as the type of stone Michelangelo used had to do with his Moses. And what would we say of a man who, equipped with a microscope and reagent, went to make an analysis of the marble by way of arriving at a judgment of the Venus de Milo? At best, ideas are no more than raw material, as I've already said, for works of art, or philosophy, or for polemics.³

Dr. Atienza feels also that:

any delusion which proves itself to be practical, or which impels us to maintain, advance or intensify life, is just as real an emotion and makes as valid an impression as any which can be registered, in a more precise manner, by the scientific instruments so far invented for the purpose. That necessary store of madness--to give it its plainest name--which is indispensable for any progress, the lack of balance which propels the world of the spirit and without which there would be absolute repose--that is, death--this madness, this imbalance, must be made use of in some way or other. Dr. Montarco used it to create his fantastic narratives, and in doing

³Miguel de Unamuno, Abel Sanchez and Other Stories, translated by Anthony Kerrigan (Chicago, 1956), p. 199.

so he freed himself from it and was able to carry ⁴ on the very orderly and sensible life which he led.

Dr. Montarco's dualism is like that of another of Unamuno's heroes, St. Emmanuel, who faithfully performs practical religious duties but lives secretly in a state of doubt. Unamuno is also subtly defending himself for his attack on orthodoxy and conventionality which had degenerated into smug self-satisfaction and finally intellectual death for Spain. Dr. Montarco's fantastic stories are also suggestive of Unamuno's own tales and quite in harmony with Unamuno's role as gadfly of the people to whom he is devoted, just as Socrates was devoted to Athens.

Unamuno directly, and Dr. Atienza his spokesman, both point out the superstitious awe and respect with which some societies regard the mad person, and echo Plato's associating art with divine madness. The subtle wisdom of the mad has been notably treated in modern drama by the French playwright Giraudoux in "The Mad Woman of Chaillot," who plots successfully to banish to the sewers all the selfish, huckstering business men and politicians of the world.

Dr. Atienza observing his friend and patient subscribes to this idea that madmen are uniquely endowed with a wisdom that somehow escapes the man with perfect reason. The idea is old and respectable. According to Seneca, "there is no

⁴Ibid., p. 197.

great genius without a tincture of madness,"⁵ and Aristotle himself observed that "no excellent soul is exempt from a mixture of madness."⁶

Dr. Montarco's madness is the symbolic madness that Unamuno holds to be the highest form of intelligence--the refusal to accept actualities because they are reasonable. Reason, he avers, is a liar and a whore⁷ who has debased and stultified the Spanish mind. The Spanish people, following all that is seemingly reasonable, have lacked the nerve to try an unused path, have been too sensible, too timid, too uninspired. They lack the vital spark, this divine "madness," that sets apart the highest and the best. Unamuno puts it very plainly thus:

. . . their limitation is that they want everything given them already masticated, predigested, and made up into capsules ready to be swallowed. Everyone has enough to do simply making a living and can't take the time to chew on a cud which tastes bitter when it is first put in the mouth.⁸

The people of Spain fail to recognize that Dr. Montarco, indeed Unamuno, is attempting to disturb their complacency and set in motion their slumbering sensibilities.

When the narrator and Dr. Montarco discuss the controversy about his continued writing, a common fly trap is mentioned,

⁵Seneca: De Tranquillitate Animi, p. 15.

⁶Aristotle: Problem, Section 30.

⁷Unamuno, Abel Sanchez and Other Stories, p. 190.

⁸Ibid., p. 198.

one which traps the flies because they are unable to crawl out of the trap again. Dr. Montarco points out that just as the flies heedlessly crawl over the bodies of other flies in their attempt to extricate themselves from the trap and death, so man tramples on other men in his attempt to extricate himself from the nothingness of death. As repulsive as this figure is, the picture it points out is that when "a man tries to get ahead of others he is simply trying to save himself."⁹ He is trying to save himself from being lost to the memory of the world. Man even becomes jealous of past geniuses. Realizing that there can be space for only so many men to be remembered, he is constantly afraid that his own present position of fame may slip from him, as his memory is likely to be lost through the years. Unamuno undoubtedly had some such fear in the back of his mind when he wrote in The Tragic Sense of Life, "The heaven of fame is not very large, and the more there are who enter it the less is the share of each."¹⁰ Thus life is representative of one vast fly trap as man climbs over his fellow men, seeking to immortalize himself.

In the asylum Dr. Montarco imagines himself to be the Privy Councillor Herr Schmarotzender and begins to speak of immortality. His ravings "somehow echo all the longings and

⁹Ibid., p. 188.

¹⁰Unamuno, The Tragic Sense of Life, p. 54.

eternal seekings of humanity."¹¹ A sponge, ein Schmarotzender, is one of the lowest forms of creation but even primordial life forms seek immortality. And Dr. Atienza perceives the truth in the madman's ravings and falls under his spell.

The similarity between Dr. Montarco and Unamuno is heightened by their familiarity with Don Quixote and their respect for his wisdom. Each of the three believed it his mission to "stir the spirits of one's neighbors."¹² Don Quixote was mocked by his hosts, but the madness of Don Quixote, his idealism, allowed him to rise above the practical. Seriousness and silliness are described by Dr. Montarco, while he yet retained his sanity, as "two blood sisters,"¹³ because seriousness, which is characteristic of refusal to change, is akin to silliness which is light and variable. Unamuno is not above a sly thrust at himself and his own profession when he has Dr. Montarco declare that "people here [in Spain] have the souls of school teachers."¹⁴ The Spanish people have no imagination. They need a quickening of culture and religion.

When Dr. Montarco is committed to the asylum, he reads and re-reads Don Quixote, and Dr. Atienza notes that:

. . . if you were to pick up his copy of the book and open it at random, it would almost certainly

¹¹Unamuno, Abel Sanchez and Other Stories, p. 201.

¹²Unamuno, Our Lord Don Quixote, p. 30.

¹³Unamuno, Abel Sanchez and Other Stories, p. 182.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 183.

open to Chapter 32, of the Second Part, where is to be found the reply made by Don Quixote to his critic, the ponderous ecclesiastic who at the table of the duke and duchess severely reprimanded the knight-errant for his mad fancies.¹⁵

Chapter 32 of the Second Part of Unamuno's Our Lord Don Quixote is particularly critical of both the Roman Catholic hierarchy and the Spanish upper class. Such caustic portrayal no doubt accounts for Our Lord Don Quixote's being forbidden reading for Spanish Catholics as late as 1953.

In the scene which Dr. Montarco continually reads, the churchman dares to call Don Quixote a fool. Yet the Bible points out¹⁶ that to call one's neighbor "fool" is to risk the wrath of God. The duke and duchess are gravely mistaken also in attributing their social status to merit rather than to the chance of birth. The ecclesiastic, representative of the priests of Dr. Montarco's age, would attempt to judge Don Quixote's vision by the practical standards of the cleric's own narrow spirit. Little wonder that Don Quixote was mocked at such a table. Unamuno states in The Life of Don Quixote that "if Christ our Lord had come back to earth in the time of Don Quixote . . . that grave ecclesiastic . . . would take him for a madman."¹⁷

¹⁵Ibid., p. 192.

¹⁶Matthew 5:22.

¹⁷Unamuno, Our Lord Don Quixote, p. 209.

CHAPTER VI

ST. EMMANUEL THE GOOD, MARTYR

St. Emmanuel the Good, Martyr, one of Miguel de Unamuno's last works of fiction, deals again with the theme of immortality. The protagonist is a priest of the Roman Catholic Church in an isolated mountain village. St. Paul's words preface the story: "If with this life only in view we have had hope in Christ, we are of all men the most to be pitied."¹ Important as the meaning of the verse is alone, an examination of the complete discourse of St. Paul on this subject reveals something of the priest's temperament and basic philosophy.

These words are from Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians. The year is approximately 59 A. D. Paul is speaking to Roman citizens, people whose philosophy of life is the enjoyment of their worldly possessions in the immediate present. He is assuring the Corinthians that because Jesus has been resurrected, they will be resurrected also, if they believe. But, if they do not accept the gift of immortality, after hearing accounts of various witnesses, they have an alternative. They can continue to eat, drink, and enjoy life.

¹I Corinthians, 15:19.

Tomorrow they will die, for all time. Paul is attempting to convert these people from their philosophy of enjoying the "here and now" as much as from their belief in pagan gods.

Don Emmanuel has the outlook of the Corinthians whom Paul was addressing; that is, the priest seems to act upon the principle that the enjoyment of the here and now is most important, and he actually encourages his parishioners to enjoy their simple life here and now: "'First of all,' he would say, 'the village must be happy; everyone must be happy to be alive.'"² He emphasized church activity but did not attempt to limit the joyous activities of the small village. "'Believe in Heaven, [said the priest] the Heaven we can see. Look at it there'--and he pointed to the heavens above the mountain."³

St. Emmanuel the Good, Martyr, is a confessional type of narrative, told in the first person to justify beatification of the beloved priest of the village of Valverde de Lucerna. It tells of a man who was good and became a martyr because he chose to conceal from his parishioners what he considered knowledge beyond their childish faith and understanding. "My God, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"⁴ echoes throughout the story like a haunting cry.

²Miguel de Unamuno, St. Emmanuel the Good, Martyr (Chicago, 1956), p. 220.

³Ibid., p. 227. Italics inserted.

⁴Ibid., p. 214.

The story is related in retrospect by an aged spinster, Angela, who has spent most of her life in this small village. She lovingly recalls countless details in the life of Don Emmanuel, whom she describes as "my true spiritual father."⁵ She is not a reliable witness or narrator, however, because she is biased in favor of Don Emmanuel, who has saved the soul of Lazarus, her brother.

Lazarus, the Biblical man who returns from the dead, is Angela's brother Lazarus who returns from America a materialistic unbeliever, and is resurrected by the priest and made to live again under the protection of the church. Lazarus, also, is the intellectual in the narrative. On an intellectual basis the priest appeals to him. Symbolically Lazarus could be a prodigal, intellectual Unamuno, returning to his own people and faith in the Old World after a long sojourn in the New World of intellectual storm and stress.

In retrospect Angela believes that Don Emmanuel realized that he could not deceive Lazarus in order to convert him. Instead the priest wins Lazarus by dealing truthfully with him. When Angela rejoices with Lazarus over his conversion, she is shocked to hear him explain quite frankly the basis of his return to the church.

He told how Don Emmanuel had appealed to him, particularly during the walks to the ruins of the old Cistercian abbey, to set a good example, to avoid scandalizing the townspeople, to take part

⁵Ibid., p. 207.

in the religious life of the community, to feign belief even if he did not feel any, to conceal his own ideas--all this without attempting in any way to catechize him, to instruct him in religion, or to effect a true conversion.⁶

Lazarus recognizes the deception, and he freely accepts the burden of it from the priest. At the moment of celebrating Mass for Lazarus, the tired priest drops the Host. Lazarus picks up the Host and places it in his mouth himself, symbolically taking over from Don Emmanuel the task of deceiving the villagers. The cock crows at this moment, and like Peter, the priest hears it.

Angela, the narrator, is naturally devout; her nature is such that she has no doubts. Her brother Lazarus understands her spiritual conviction and attempts to remove her from the influence of both the village and the priest. Even after an education in another city, however, she returns to her "convent," the village. Angela remains so unsullied, so pure in spirit, that she becomes a carefully drawn portrait of Unamuno's sister who became a nun. Only in a symbolic manner, though, is Angela a nun. She takes no formal vows. She does begin to experience a kind of motherhood as she feels the "stirrings of maternity."⁷ For just as a nun is symbolically the bride of Christ, so does she participate in the joy of maternity by bringing souls into the Kingdom of God.

Unamuno effectively establishes Angela's religious nature in this manner. Angela, too, establishes her rationale that

⁶Ibid., p. 236.

⁷Ibid., p. 225.

this wonderful Christian priest, in order to bring Lazarus back from the dead, to resurrect him in Christ, has assumed a pose of doubt. Angela introduces the idea that the priest has pretended to harbor the same doubt that Lazarus experiences, thus winning Lazarus' sympathy and confidence. In establishing her religious nature and her gratitude, Unamuno has weakened Angela as a reliable witness. He casts doubt on her interpretation of the priest's motives.

The priest is himself an intelligent man seemingly destined to rise high in church hierarchy, yet he remains in this remote mountain village. Don Emmanuel believes that it is more important for his simple people to have peace within themselves and harmony in the village than for him to be relieved of his burden of deceiving them. As he confides to Lazarus: "I am put here to give life to the souls of my charges, to make them happy, to make them dream they are immortal--and not to destroy them."⁸ He encourages the simple faith of his villagers, urging them to accept the consolation of their religion without plumbing the depths of theology. Indeed, the villagers never question the wisdom of Don Emmanuel. Their life remains uncomplicated and serene. Unlike the restless priest, they are satisfied with their simple village life. The future of their souls seems remote and happy. Local customs and religious belief are a routine way of life: "Everyone went to Mass

⁸Ibid., p. 238.

in the village, even if it were only to hear him [Don Emmanuel] and see him at the altar."⁹ And at the altar of his church, still leading his people in prayer, Don Emmanuel dies. At the moment of death, does he understand these doubts that have tortured him? Is there, as Tennyson wrote, "more faith in honest doubt . . . than in half the creeds . . .?"¹⁰

Angela has set down her story trying to solve the mystery of these two men in her life. Now when she is past her fiftieth year, she speculates that God for "unscrutable purposes"¹¹ caused these good men to believe they were unbelievers. God, she thinks, revealed to them the truth of their faith at the moment of death.

The village of Lucerne de Valverde becomes somehow not a typical Spanish mountain town, but a microcosm. Symbolically, the priest is the author's representation of the Church, with its desire to shield its children from knowledge which might disquiet them. Don Emmanuel is described as a "matriarchal" man, a mother to his parishioners. Why not the more logical father to his people, except for this symbolic suggestion of the Mother Church? The priest ministers to the needs of his children much as a mother does. He even has the "odor of

⁹Ibid., p. 215.

¹⁰Alfred, Lord Tennyson, "In Memoriam," Part XCVI, Stanza 3.

¹¹Unamuno, St. Emmanuel the Good, Martyr, p. 261.

sanctity"¹² much as a church has an odor of incense. He provides his parishioners with the symbolic shirt of righteousness, as he cares for the actual clothing needs of his people. Especially he loves the children, remembering that all must become as children to enter the Kingdom. But the death of an infant seems to him especially sorrowful and depressing because he has come to doubt that man is immortal; because it is sad to be born, only to die; because this life seems all that man has.

Blasillo the Fool has the child-like faith that the believer must assume. The senseless repetition of phrases that the Fool learns becomes an indictment, however, of a formal religion. Indeed, Unamuno makes the Fool the ultimate in acceptance of the priest's teaching. Basillo's repetitions, Don Emmanuel's repetitions, and Unamuno's repetitions of the words, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"¹³ ultimately become the poignant cry of all men, both foolish and profound.

Don Emmanuel is constantly engaged in useful service to others, even on his strolls about the village. On solitary walks he visits the ruins of the ancient monastery and is drawn with a morbid fascination to the waters of the lake. Alone, then, he gives way to his doubts and longs for the nothingness

¹²Ibid., p. 209.

¹³Matthew 27:46.

of death and a release from his burden of deception. He yearns to lie buried in the depths of this watery tomb.

The village is the priest's monastery. The cross that he bears is his inability to believe in immortality. As he leads his congregation in reciting the Creed, he feels no assurance; his inner voice is stifled in the words: "I believe in the resurrection of the flesh and life everlasting" ¹⁴ Don Emmanuel can lead his parishioners, but he himself feels lost.

The fabled submerged city in the depths of the village lake symbolizes the dilemma of all men who harbor thoughts and ideas that lie beneath the surface in the inner recesses of man's mind. When the priest castigates himself for his thoughts, he forgets that only the man truly interested in religion, the man interested enough to probe and question, is religious. A nineteenth century poet stated such an idea: "Who never doubted never half believed./ Where doubt there truth is--'tis her shadow." ¹⁵ And this by all means is one of Unamuno's major tenets, one which he proclaimed in a famous statement of belief:

There may be a rationalist who has never wavered
in his conviction of the mortality of the soul,
and there may be a vitalist who has never wavered
in his faith in immortality; but at the most this

¹⁴Miguel de Unamuno, Abel Sanchez and Other Stories, translated by Anthony Kerrigan (Chicago, 1956), p. 216.

¹⁵Philip James Bailey, "Festus."

would only prove that just as there are natural monstrosities, so there are those who are stupid as regards heart and feeling, however great their intelligence, and those who are stupid intellectually, however great their virtue. But, in normal cases, I cannot believe those who assure me that never, not in a fleeting moment, not in the hours of direct loneliness and grief, has this murmur of uncertainty breathed upon their consciousness For my part I do not wish to make peace between my heart and my head, between my faith and my reason--I wish rather that there should be war between them!¹⁶

But Don Emmanuel, like Unamuno, feels that the religion of life everlasting should console man for being born to die. The priest desires above all that his villagers be happy and enjoy their transient life, and he is a martyr because in supporting their dream of immortality, he kills a vital part of himself.

Unamuno early in his career chastised the Spanish clergy for its part in the spiritual lethargy of his country. He charged that the Church, shielding itself with the doctrine of the infallibility of the Pope and discouraging theological questions, weakened and destroyed healthy faith. Yet Unamuno's repeated use of the mother image, coupled with his frequent harking back to the innocence of childhood, indicates that in the years before his death he recognized the maternal protectiveness of the Church for the vast majority of people. This is not to say that he personally ceased to struggle with his doubts. But he was an aged and weary man, a tired priest

¹⁶Unamuno, The Tragic Sense of Life, p. 119.

administering to his beloved parishioners; and he no longer attempted in his earlier strident voice to rob them of heart's ease.

It has been said that the fire that burns with the fiercest flame burns itself out the quickest. Perhaps Unamuno's burning passion, his lifelong "fight against destiny,"¹⁷ exhausted him. In the words of his Don Emmanuel he commends to the Holy Mother Church those who possess spiritual innocence. The question then is how to attain, or to maintain, this spiritual innocence. Unamuno's answer is found in the words of the priest advising the narrator of St. Emmanuel the Good, Martyr on the selection of her reading and her intellectual pursuits. Education and enlightenment are not forbidden, but the priest advises Angela that "you will do well to read devotional books which will bring you contentment in life, a quiet, gentle contentment, and peace."¹⁸

The battle that continued within the soul of Unamuno was between intellect and faith. The priest chose his closest disciple from the intellectual element of the village. Prodigal though Lazarus was, he "was an intelligent man, and therefore a good one . . ."¹⁹ The priest himself differed from the ordinary Spanish cleric; Lazarus said of him that he was "too

¹⁷Unamuno, The Tragic Sense of Life, p. 104.

¹⁸Unamuno, St. Emmanuel the Good, Martyr, p. 232.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 230.

intelligent to believe everything he must teach"20

Unamuno's intelligence, like that of Don Emmanuel, caused the nagging doubts; Unamuno was incapable of rejecting the intellectuality so basic to his nature.

When Lazarus' mother dies, Don Emmanuel urges him to pray for her soul, assuring Lazarus that when he prays he will come to believe. Unamuno understands the doubts of both Don Emmanuel and Lazarus, since he cannot conceive of a thoughtful individual who has never in the quietness of his soul heard some whisperings of doubts. In speaking to Lazarus the priest confides that as spiritual leader of his village he will keep his doubts to himself, and "let them believe what I could not."²¹ Because Unamuno could not accept the rational proofs of the existence of God, and could find no guarantee for the immortality of his soul, he described heresy in his earliest philosophical works as the sin of thinking for oneself. The priest's words of advice to the narrator of St. Emmanuel the Good, Martyr, possibly indicate the only visible result of Unamuno's modification of Don Emmanuel's quest for religious truth. Peace of heart was not for Don Emmanuel, but he urged Angela that "if doubts come to torment you, suppress them utterly, even to yourself . . . go on believing"22

²⁰Ibid., p. 231.

²¹Unamuno, Abel Sanchez and Other Stories, p. 252.

²²Ibid., p. 240.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Miguel de Unamuno y Jugo lived and functioned all his adult life in a state of crisis. Students of Unamuno and his work can discern at least three major periods of tension. The first was the spiritual crisis he underwent as a scholar at the University of Madrid, when he first began to question his Catholic faith. This experience kindled in him an intense desire for an assurance of his immortality.

Thereafter Unamuno confronted more squarely and more urgently than most young men the possibility that he would pass into nothingness at his death, that he would be obliterated forever. At this time he began probing philosophical and theological questions, and most of his literary effort became directed toward solving the problem of man's immortality and quite specifically his own immortality.

Unamuno experienced another emotional and spiritual crisis upon the death of his infant son in 1902. At this time he began again regular attendance at church and appeared to gain comfort, at least temporarily, from increased participation in Catholic religious observances.

The third crisis, really a series of crises, began about 1912. All of these crises had to do with Unamuno's outspoken stand upon political matters and resulted first in the loss of his university position, second in his exile from Spain, and third in his house arrest imposed by Franco at the very close of Unamuno's life.

Unamuno, a troubled man, was nevertheless an extremely productive writer and had a very obvious purpose in writing: to stir his countrymen to an awareness of what life is and whether there is hope of a continuing life. His constant preoccupation with the immortality of the soul makes it seem likely that, aside from a desire to rejuvenate spiritually his Spanish countrymen, he was attempting to convince himself by airing his own doubts and struggles. All Unamuno had to say about his favorite subject he put into The Tragic Sense of Life; but still he continued to re-express himself in prose and poetry. His fiction is a re-stating, a re-assessment, an affirmation of his philosophical thought. Every story has some reference to the Bible, or to God, or to some religious personage such as St. Paul or St. Theresa. Each of his stories ends in the death of the protagonist, but always the main issue of immortality, the burning question, remains unresolved. The protagonists like Raquel and Carolina and others who wish to see themselves personally perpetuated in children do not receive fully sympathetic treatment. The feeling is left by implication that they come to bad ends.

Unamuno was given to inserting short anecdotes, somewhat in the nature of analogues, to illustrate his ideas. Like any teacher, he used these asides to make certain that his pupils (readers) understood his point. This device is particularly noticeable in his longer works.

Unamuno has been accused of presenting characters who are more symbolic of ideas than representations of real human beings. In other words, they lack flesh and blood. Mariás has called Unamuno's creations his spiritual children; as something of his actual person lived on in the children of his flesh, something of his thinking lives on in the children of his pen. Unamuno himself directly suggests this idea in his quite evident enjoyment at fathering Augusto Pérez, the hero of Mist. Joaquín Monegro, Abel Sanchez, and Dr. Montarco operate as symbols of their author's duality. Carolina and Raquel express their creator's thirst for immortal life in the flesh. Alejandro represents Unamuno's toying with the idea of the Nietzschean superman. St. Emmanuel, a man torn by doubts which he cannot suppress, seems closer to his creator than any of the other characters. Yet, despite the heavily ideational quality of all these protagonists, there is something human and urgent and universal about their struggles and dilemmas.

Unamuno's incidental symbols not directly related to himself are poetic but also rather general in concept, almost to the point of allegory. In his prose he is not given to

profusion of metaphor or flowery rhetoric. His style (as translated) is bare and his imagery basically simple and even earthy. For comparisons he draws more on the ordinary daily life and relationships of human beings than he does upon nature in any of its more poetic or inspiring aspects. His most striking symbolic overtones, however, are drawn from the areas of religion, philosophy, and politics.

A subtle but evident irony pervades much of Unamuno's best prose, and is especially notable in his fondness for paradox. This particular device might indeed be designated as his best known trade mark. The quality of his paradoxes is distinctive. Unlike those of Oscar Wilde or Bernard Shaw, his English contemporaries, Unamuno's sallies have more depth than glitter--a gnomic quality philosophical as much as amusing, with perhaps even a tinge of sadness and pessimism. Unamuno employs the ironic stance most often in reference to the political, social, and religious weaknesses of his time and his people. Political irony appears mainly in the tracts with which this study is not concerned. Social irony is at least hinted at in depictions of the aristocracy in stories like "The Marquis of Lumbria," "Two Mothers," and "A He Man," where essentially weak and impotent aristocratic characters are presented with a kind of mocking inflation. In the area of religion, of course, the irony of the priest's winning an unbeliever to belief by pretending himself to believe is a very striking example of Unamuno's use of ironic signification. Or have both of these

men fooled themselves with thinking that they are not believers? Unamuno preaches and reasons and exhorts and subtly pleads. He never scorns. He is also capable of delightfully playful but semi-serious self-irony as in Mist; and he may be mocking himself, too, when he presents a doubter who keeps his doubts to himself. And the doubter is a priest!

Life was nonetheless no huge joke to Unamuno, nor does it ever appear so to his characters. He makes no attempt either to dismiss or to clown away its perplexities; and yet an unerring but guarded eye for the comic and an ear for ironic overtones lightens what would otherwise be a depressingly pessimistic picture of the human condition as seen by this wise and witty man.

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