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A MODERN DON QUIXOTE

TONIGHT I reach the end of my journey through Spain with you, and after treating the themes of the hero and the gallant it remains for me to develop the theme of the mystic: after the Cid and Don Juan it must be Don Quixote. In this lecture I shall describe one personality, Miguel de Unamuno, not only because he is the most significant figure in Spain today, but because he might be called the modern Don Quixote.

Now to sum up some of the points that I raised in the other two lectures. In the first I touched on the 1898 generation. I told you about the mediaevalism of Spain, and I showed you how important Spain is spiritually in the world today owing to its particular individual qualities, its strength of mediaevalism. All these points may be summed up in the author whom I shall study tonight.

You will notice the breaking up of the old order in Spain, the regionalism of its literature and its art. We notice also how the Castilian always absorbs the stranger and so there is a constant state of fusion between these two tendencies of regionalism and absorption. We have examples in the Andalusian, Velásquez, the Cretan El Greco, the Extremenyan Zurbarán, the Valencian Ribera, the Basque Zuloaga, the Andalusian Machado, who becomes the poet of Castile; then also Baroja and Unamuno, both of the Basque country but writing in Castilian. Also another point that strikes us is the theme of revolt that echoes through many

writers. Baroja, with his cold analysis, introduces a deep sense of disconnection into the Spanish novel: Ramón del Valle-Inclán writes of the haughty seigneur with the long beard and deep sense of refinement. With the generation of 1898 there comes into the novel the love of nature, of the old towns and their primitive folk. And then, also, the poets of this generation of 1898 widen the scope of poetry and make a close study of Gongora in his obscurest manner and cherish such poems as the "Poliphemus" and "The Solitudes." In this way the way is prepared for the invasion of modern theories of art. After Rubén Darío we find Juan Ramón Jiménez who has added several new strings to the modern Spanish lyre. In the field of criticism and scholarship after the great Menéndez y Pelayo we find a group of younger men who perform a great work in editing the masterpieces of the past—such men as Menéndez Pidal, Américo Castro, and Ortega y Gasset. Amongst all these men Miguel de Unamuno stands on an eminence because he embodies the traditional Spain and as such he is the greatest Spaniard since Goya.

I have some very vivid pictures of Unamuno in my mind, before exile and after exile. I remember him as I saw him in 1921; at that time I spent some days with him in Salamanca where he was Professor of Greek at the University. He was certainly the symbol of that august university town. In the evening we would go to the Plaza Mayor for coffee, and his table was surrounded by myriads of sightseers who had come from all parts of Europe to pay court to the "mystic." When surrounded by friends and admirers he would become jovial and fire off one paradox after another. He delighted in pulling the beards of solemn old professors and adopting with them the Socratic method of pretending to be ignorant. He would also discuss the plots of his novels

in the intervals of making, with extraordinary agility, queer little paper birds. In Salamanca he was in his element for it was a small town steeped in Castilian tradition. In the mornings I have seen him walk ten miles without feeling the slightest touch of weariness. In appearance he resembles an oak tree, with an owl's head. Everything suggested strength, the strength and steadfastness of the Basque, a rugged simplicity not devoid of a certain crudeness. In his dress he shunned adornment; his coat was buttoned right up to the neck. His actions were brusque, and one felt that he was the personification of the hardy mountaineer, peaceful in his home-life, fond of the country and its simple pleasures. In an age that glorified in exotic refinements, when the word decadence was the symbol, as a French poet has said, of purple and gold, meeting Unamuno was like breathing the air from the mountains. In his study there were no dimmed lights or mysterious corners—all was sunny, and from the broad balcony we could see in the distance the graceful tower of the Monterey, which might be a symbol of Salamanca's beauty. Unamuno has always been a voracious reader: books in every language were strewn about his room, and he seemed to be equally at home in the literature of England as in that of South America. In the evening he would walk slowly along the banks of the river Tormes, where once Lazarillo the Knave used to scamper. The shadows of night descended rapidly; not a sound could be heard save from time to time the deep boom of the church bells in the distance. Over the broad, parched plain of Castile here and there a ghostly cypress tree, while across the water the cathedral loomed gigantic. At such moments Unamuno would become reflective and ponder over the destiny of Spain. He gloried in the warring conflicts that are to be found in the Spanish soul: the mystery of the Arab, the

steadfastness of the Germanic and the fierceness of the Iberian races. It was then he would give vent to his intense Quixotism. I have heard him quote :

Cada vez que considero
Que me tengo de morir
Tiendo la capa en el suelo,
Y no me harto de dormir.

Death immortalizes us ; nothing passes, nothing disappears into emptiness ; the smallest particles of matter, the weakest blow given is made eternal and there is no vision, however fleeting it may be, which is not reflected forever somewhere. Our life is a drama, a momentary lighting up of the dark substance, and when the passing flame dies down, its reflection descends to the depths of darkness until a supreme spark will light it up forever one day. For death does not triumph over life with the passing of the latter. Death and life are meanings which we use in this prison of time and space ; they both have a common root which stretches down to the eternity of the infinite, to God, the Conscience of the Universe. Unamuno hates modern civilization, with its steel and stress. Ever since the eighteenth century he says that Europe has been disciplining itself according to the principles of Voltaire and his goddess of reason ; men have tried to play the part of Hans Sachs, and mark with their hammers the mistakes of Walther's inspired song, but the true Spaniard has always shunned such theories and abstractions. Unamuno would even have us go back beyond the "Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance," back to the Middle Ages. He says : "I feel that my soul is mediaeval, and that the soul of my country is mediaeval. I feel that it has passed perforce through the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Revolution, learning from them, yes, but without letting its soul be touched ; and Spanish Quixotism is naught but the

most despairing struggle of the Middle Ages against the Renaissance.”

The second vision I have of Unamuno shows him to me in Paris after his exile. It is not my intention to discuss his politics, or the reasons that governed the Spanish authorities in their decision, for I have always considered him far above the dust of party encounters. The philosopher should follow the example of Marcus Aurelius and live on top of a mountain. Whenever Unamuno tried to enter the arena of politics his message for us became dimmed with rhetoric. Like many great Spaniards of the past, he is full of passionate egoism. As a man of passion he did not think always of the good of the community, or the group, but rather of the world of fantasy created by his individuality. As Salvador de Madariaga says: “The most serious business for the Spaniard is to save his soul, and to save his soul means to maintain the spontaneity and integrality of individual passion in the face of the social activity of generally accepted ideas, and above all of collective passions.” It is difficult to make such a man plane down his rough individuality to the smoothness required by a modern world. He has said that he feels like a man, “nothing less than a whole man,” and thus week after week he wastes his individual talent firing political article after political article, full of sound and fury, instead of retiring to his mountain summit to gaze into the world of imagination. In his exile it was France that gave him the helping hand. Intellectuals like Valéry Larbaud, André Gide, Paul Souday, and the Comtesse de Noailles welcomed him to Paris, and it was on the fifteenth of May, 1926, that Jean Cassou published a vivid sketch of Unamuno in the *Mercure de France*, proclaiming him a modern Don Quixote, who cries out in the wilderness. “Such is the agony of Miguel de Unamuno,” he says, “a wrestler, wrestling

with himself, with his people and against his people; a man of war, hostile, fratricide, tribune without a party, solitary exile, preaching in the desert, provocative, vain, pessimistic, paradoxical, torn to bits between life and death, invincible and yet always vanquished." It was in cosmopolitan Montparnasse that I saw him then. He was seated in the "Ronde" surrounded by admirers. I heard the same stories and paradoxes. I marvelled at his mental vigor, but his words did not thrill me as they had done in Salamanca. The life of Paris, surging interminably along the boulevards, submerged this man who had seemed to wield the power of a dictator in his native town.

When I saw him for the third time it was last year, at Hendaye, the little Basque town, on the borderland between France and Spain. Like many of the pilgrims to Spain, I halted there to see the "mystic"; not knowing his address I wandered on a sultry afternoon into the biggest café in the square, when all the inhabitants seemed to be asleep, and there were no sounds save the buzzing flies; but there, alone, in the dimmed vaulted room I saw Unamuno. He was seated at a table reciting to himself his poems. In the last year he has recovered a great deal of the vigor which amazed us at Salamanca. Here he is in his beloved Basque country, the country of his birth, only twenty minutes from Spain. From both countries people throng to see him, and here he pursues indefatigably his literary work. The inhabitants of the town all touch their hats to him and call him "Master," and so again, he seems to live the feudal life that is so dear to him.

Unamuno, when speaking about his works, loves to discuss his novels, for in them he has shown himself capable of great originality of thought and expression. It is remarkable that so few of them are available to English readers,

especially when we remember the similarity he bears to such authors as Samuel Butler. For Unamuno the novelist's art is not a mere *art d'agrément*; he tries to introduce again and again the philosophical thesis, and fuse it with his fantasy. Then again, so irrepressible a controversialist cannot keep clear from discussions. More than once he has said: "I cannot live without discussions, or contradictions, and when nobody outside discusses with me, or contradicts me, I invent someone within myself who does it." In Unamuno's novels we watch the great struggle between his personality as a writer and his personality as a man, and hence the contradiction. As a critic has said, his brain is like a parliament in permanent session, and he may say of himself in the words of Alfred de Vigny: "Je ne suis toujours de mon opinion."

Those are my visions of him, but to Unamuno all life is a pilgrimage to the tomb of Don Quixote. As he says, in the life of Don Quixote and Sancho: "I believe that we may set out on the holy crusade to ransom the sepulchre of Don Quixote from the power of the scholars, priests, barbers, dukes and canons who hold sway over it. I believe that we may preach the holy crusade of ransoming the sepulchre of the Knight of Darkness from the sway of the Knights of Reason."

You see the idea: the rescue of the Knight of Darkness from the sway of the Knights of Reason—to get away from all this rationalism that has been dominating Europe in the past. It will be no easy task to follow our author on this pilgrimage, for the Knights of Reason hold most of the modern world in their power, and they jealously guard the tomb to prevent Don Quixote coming to life again. To become a devotee of the new religion of Quixotism we have to set up on a pedestal as a priest a man of whom we are not

sure whether he was really made of flesh and bone, a man who was more likely purely fictitious. We have also to face the universal ridicule poured on us by the Knights of Reason.

I remember once when lecturing in Sweden I happened to call the Swedish people "Quixotic," because they had made such wonderful sacrifices in the cause of their country's art, and after the lecture one man catechized me severely for having used the word "Quixotic" in connection with the Swedish people, for, he said, "Quixotic meant ridiculous." In interpreting the word in this sense he was following all the little scholars, barbers, and canons, who are mounting guard night and day over our Knight. They are unable to see that what seems ridiculous in the mean, everyday world, may be the height of nobility upon high. Don Quixote made the whole world laugh, but he never made a joke. His seriousness aroused laughter among those who dwelt in the plain and were unable to breath the air of the mountain top. Don Quixote, like Brand, dwelt among the snows and held that "he is mad who is alone." When madness becomes collective it becomes a reality, and Unamuno cries out that what is wanted in Spain today is to inspire the whole people with the madness of someone amongst them.

In the commentary on the life of Don Quixote he suggests in a most subtle way the background of Spain without ever describing scenery. We remember how Flaubert said of the immortal book: "Comme on voit partout ces routes d'Espagne qui ne sont nulle part décrites!" and Unamuno has followed the same method. The land that produced Don Quixote is parched and poor; the men who cultivated it carried on an incessant struggle with the earth. They were originally wanderers guiding their flocks from pasture to pasture, over the lonely uplands, past the ghostly cypress trees, or else, unable to meet their wants, they wandered

away to far-off lands. Don Quixote, with his meagre visage, was one of them, and he would rise up with the dawn and hunt from place to place.

According to Unamuno, all the origins of Spain are contained in that book. At one moment we are in the rough, oaken land of the Basque, the descendants of the old Iberians; at another we wander through the melancholy glens of Galicia, where we hear the plaintive Celtic pipes; then through the plains of Castile and the mountains of Aragon. We pass through the Sierra Morena into the romantic Andalucía, where dwell the descendants of the Abencerrajes. Against this eternal background of Spain Unamuno sees many national heroes, possessing the temperament of the Sorrowful Knight, and one of the great qualities of this commentary is that he establishes the relationship. For Unamuno, Don Quixote is not as solitary as we imagine him. He is not mad, nor abnormal, nor isolated. He compares his hero to other heroes, such as the Cid, Santa Teresa, Pizarro, Ignatius de Loyola, especially Ignatius de Loyola. We see how Don Quixote carries to realization many of the dictates of Jesus. He has the sweet humility that springs from great and noble charity, and he seems to reflect the spirit of the Redeemer. Then he is intensely Spanish in his heroism, and his God is the God of the age of chivalry. He has the pride of combat of the Cid, the exalted loyalty of Pizarro; like Santa Teresa and St. John of the Cross, he dwelt in his own dream-land and climbs the mystic ladder in the journeying of the soul, wearing the colors of faith, hope, and charity. Of him we might say in William Blake's words:

I give you the end of a golden string
Only winded into a ball,—
It will lead you in at Heaven's gate
Built in Jerusalem's wall.

But the nearest parallel, according to Unamuno, is with Loyola, who was a great military captain in religion. In Spain there was more need of the fighting captain than the contemplative mystic, in days when the church was assailed on all sides. If we look at any Spanish church, say, the Cathedral at Avila, for instance, is it not like a frowning, beetling fortress of the spirit? The bastions repel the infidel; the very land around is harsh and rugged. The peasants there have a proverb which describes it: *Cantos y Santos*—"Stones and Saints." The earth may not bloom in fertile harvest, because God has given it to be a symbol of beauty that exists only within the soul. But, when we advance within the frowning fortress, into the dark, mysterious nave, the glimmering lights of the side altars, the chanted prayers that float through the wide expanses, the fragrant incense that mounts and loses itself with the sounds in the mists of the vaulted roof—all these explain the soul of Don Quixote and the great mystics of Spain. External life mattered little to them, for they were following the narrow dream-path, and to reach the bourne it mattered not what wounds, what dolours, what famine, what ridicule they had to suffer on the way.

Take the Spanish word, *hidalgo*, which we translate as "noble"; this word means that men have two births: the first one is natural, and all have equal share in it; the other is spiritual. When a man does a heroic deed, then he is born afresh, and wins newer and better parents than he had before. Yesterday he was the son of Pedro and grandson of Pancho; today he is called the son of his works, and there is a Spanish proverb which says: *Cada uno es hijo de sus obras*—"Everyone is the son of his own deeds." When we read Don Quixote we too often see the cap and bells of the clown, and there is a cruelty in our laughter. We love to see

some poor creature belabored, just as when we go to the circus we roar with laughter when Arlecchino's back resounds beneath the blows given by Pulcinella. There is nothing benevolent in our laughter at first, and it is as harsh as that of the laughter of the schoolboy, but little by little the personality of the hero grows upon us, and a certain tender sadness tempers the comic.

George Meredith says that if we detect the ridicule and our kindness is chilled by it, we are slipping into the grasp of satire.¹ But in this humor which you get in Don Quixote, and which is reflected all through Spanish literature, Cervantes does not allow us to lose our sense of kindness. He never beats his hero with a satiric rod, nor makes him writhe and shriek aloud; rather does he laugh all round him, rolls him about, deals him a smack, drops tears on him, owns his likeness to us and to our neighbors; spares him as little as we shun; pities him as much as we expose, and, in a word, moves us by the spirit of humor. This is what the literary humor of Cervantes means.

It is only natural that Unamuno, being a Spaniard, should see his hero in the tragic mould. Our Don Quixote is a different being, embodying as he does that quality of humor with its rich life of heart and mind in one, which we have come to regard with our sense of superiority as essentially English. We should not follow Unamuno too far in his tragic interpretation, for if we did Don Quixote would be shorn of some of his greatness, which consists in holding the balance between laughter and tears. I feel that we should have a Don Quixote of a broader style—one who embodies humor as well as tragedy.

The spirit of Cervantes is a two-headed Janus, which with one face laughs and with the other weeps. Son of the

¹ Cf. George Meredith: *Essay on Comedy*.

Renaissance, he had all that vigorous curiosity and joy of life which we find in that epoch when there was a bloom on the modern world. All the privations, all the sufferings and disappointments of his life could not kill in him his delight in the beauty of nature, and the romance of discovery. The contrast is characteristic of Spain, with its brilliant sunlit spaces, its cavernous shadows. Before Cervantes there had been merry vagabonds, such as the Archpriest of Hita, carousing and singing ribald songs with his Moorish dancing girls, or Celestina, the Spanish bawd, and Lazarillo, hugging his flabby belly. Unamuno peers deeply into the shadow, leaving us above. He descends with the lonely Knight into the cave of Montesinos, where he may learn all the secrets of the world of fantasy. In all his works, Unamuno seems to perceive at hand the solitary figure of Don Quixote. In defending the Knight he awakened in himself an intense spiritual quality, and it was by these means that he was able to fly in the face of that oppressive rationalism which has been weighing down the world for the last thirty years. I think that it is important to interpret the book in this way, and especially to take it in connection with the other works of Unamuno. Let us compare his well-known *Sentimiento Trágico de la Vida*—"The Tragic Sense of Life"—in this work we find the most complete expression of his philosophic and religious spirit. Like all Spaniards he is forever rebellious and anti-academic, and it is not for him to follow the well-trodden path of scholarship, and add to the mass of erudition. He has never aspired to easy conquests, but rather towards the heroic; but, in literature, as I said before, I imagine him joining hands with such steadfast rebels as Fray Luis de León. As life went on he has become more and more of a mystic, wrapping himself up in solitude. Some critics have compared him to Tolstoi,

but Tolstoi's mind was a passive one, and he preached to the full the doctrine of turning the other cheek. Unamuno is so excited by the spirit of Christianity that he battles, and battles in agony. The world for him is full of the dust and clangor of conflict. There is even harshness in his poetic works, due to the incessant struggle within him.

Take such a poem as the *Cristo de Velásquez*, wherein he sums up the whole essence of Christianity. How different that poem is, with its sombre passion, to such poems as those on Salamanca, wherein we find once more that serene resignation which was so striking in the poems of Fray Luis de León.

Alto soto de torres que al ponerse
Tras la encinas que el celaje esmaltan,
Dora a los rayos de su lumbre el padre,
Sol de Castilla.

The Tragic Sense of Life of Unamuno forms a striking appendage to his poetry, and it explains to us why Unamuno stands like a venerable oak, in the midst of the modern wilderness. Today we are unable to face a life of contemplation for our mind is dashed hither and thither in search of new ideas. Religions rise, religions fall, and few schools resist the tide of radical logic. Unamuno refuses to bend his branches this way and that to the fickle breeze; he is a visionary, and he sees before his mental eye the vast panorama of Spain, as it must have appeared to Iñigo de Loyola or St. John of the Cross. He refuses to accept the cold, pitiless materialism of the modern world, and to banish forever all hope in the hereafter. In his book he was the scholar, with that intense hunger for immortality on the one hand, and the intellectual reason on the other, the tragic history of which he says throughout, is that of a scholar. Reason tries to rationalize life and make it resign itself to

death. Life tries to win reason over to its side by calling it to its aid to justify fresh visions. After reading this book, in which the author cuts his way through the deep jungle of philosophy, ancient and modern, we are not given much consolation, naught in fact save the sceptical *Que sais-je?* of Montaigne. The whole book might be described as an adventure in the life of the author, for, after struggling with it, his personality as a writer ascended to greater heights. In Spain no one has tried to build up schools of philosophy, for there it is only the individual that counts. Every Spaniard is a king in his own life, and does obeisance to no one, and the whole of his life is spent in the attempt to achieve the perfect expression of his individuality. As we look over the vast field of Spanish endeavor, we do not find so many great ideas as great men. Critics have pointed out how deeply Spanish literature has been affected by the idea of death. In life he is a king, wielding a sceptre of power and majesty. Deep down does he strike his roots in his country's soil, and when he gazes at the splendor of heaven it is with all the belief in the majesty of life on earth, but then:

Within the hollow crown
That rounds the mortal temples of a king,
Keeps death his court, and there the antic sits
Scoffing his state and grinning at his pomp,
Allowing him a breath, a little scene,
To monarchize he fear'd and kill'd with looks,
Infusing him with self and vain conceit,
As if this flesh which walls about our life,
Were brass impregnable, and humored thus
Comes at last and with a little pin,
Bores through his castle, and farewell King.

Always you find this idea of death; we find it in the earlier *Autos Sacramentales*; we find it all through the drama of Calderón. What is the whole mass of poetry of St. Teresa

and St. John of the Cross but an invocation to death? At times we reach Nirvana, with such philosophers as Miguel Molinos with his quietism. *The Tragic Sense of Life* is a long monologue by Unamuno on the subject of death. His central idea is that man is all the more man, that is to say, the more divine, the greater capacity he has for suffering, and because he sees us all plunged in materialism with our eyes turned away from death, he preaches ceaselessly his gospel of the Middle Ages and Don Quixote. Don Quixote has been raised by him to a mystical plane; the windmills have become theologians, rationalists, and even Jesuits—in fact all modern inquisitorial orthodoxy. This new Don Quixote rides out to overthrow the goddess Reason, whose temple was built by Voltaire, in favor of a God that may become a living person in our hearts.

There is irony and even humor in Unamuno's writings, but no frivolity, and he said on one occasion: "The glory of Spain is principally due to the fact that it cannot be either frivolous or jovial." Some of this may well seem paradoxical to you, and you may disagree with him. I personally disagree with Unamuno in many things. In the campaign he made against certain people I think he was terribly unjust.

In one of his later books, *L'Agonie du Christianisme*, he continues his sermon against modern materialism, exclaiming as he had done in a previous book against those unhappy modern European countries where people only live thinking of life: "unhappy countries indeed, those wherein men do not continually think of death!" The central idea in this book is that man is not born with a soul, but he has to make himself one before he dies. Christianity is in a state of agony for Christ, according to St. Matthew, it brought us, not peace, but agony and struggle. "Think not that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring

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peace, but the sword." Just like Christianity, Christ himself is always in agony, and it was Pascal who wrote in *Le Mystère de Jésus*: "Jésus sera en agonie jusqu'à la fin du monde; il ne faut pas dormir pendant ce temps-là." And so all the life of a true Christian should be agony, just as we see in Spain those tragic crucifixes, which represent the cult of Christ on the Cross, who called out: *Consummatum est*. According to Unamuno, the agony of Catholicism grew tenfold that day when there was proclaimed at the Vatican the Jesuitical dogma of the infallibility of the Pope. Unamuno takes Pascal's side, and analyzes the conflict of rationalism and mysticism in *Le Père Hyacinthe Loyson*, a conflict that our author feels forever within him. According to him, Europe was cut in two by the Reformation; rationalism developed, and the Christians have been able to unite for patriotic ends, but never for religion. Nationalism and socialism have no place for Christ. Christianity is above all these things, for war and peace are not the Kingdom of God. Christianity is a purely individual thing. How ridiculous it is for religious people to speak of progress. For Christ, and for all those who believed in the approaching end of the world, progress must have seemed senseless—one cannot progress in holiness. Today, in the twentieth century, we cannot be more holy than in the second, fourth, or eleventh century. A Christian does not think that progress will help our soul's salvation, for civil and historic progress is not a path on which the soul journeys to God. The doctrine of progress would bring us to Nietzsche's superman, but the Christian must believe that his aim is not the superman, but immortality. Is there progress after death, is a question that the Christian has asked himself many times, but the majority of simple believers like to imagine the next life as a period of peace and contemplation, a kind of fusion of

past and future, a recollection of hope in an everlasting present. Unamuno hates to think of this period of eternal peace, and he quotes the example of Dante, who, alone, created in all its details a society of hell, purgatory, and paradise. The *Divina Commedia* is a biblical comedy, terrible in its agony, and the bitterest scorn of all is cast by Dante on Pope Celestino V, who was canonized as a saint by the Roman Church, because he renounced the Papacy. "Che fece per viltate il gran rifiuto," he says, as he condemns him. Poor Celestino! He places him at the entrance of hell, amidst those who have no hope of death; those who have lived without sin and without praise; those who have not struggled and agonized, and whom we should pass by without mention.

The whole life of Unamuno may be summed up in the two words *conflict* and *faith*. If you could see him, you would not visualize for him a period of eternal peace; I cannot think of him in such a state. However we may criticize his arguments, his contradictions, his pedantries, we must admire his noble personality. At a period when Europe has evolved a machine-made civilization, and everything is offered up to the goddess of materialism, Unamuno becomes one of the greatest voices of that eternal Spain which has never entirely regarded itself as European. In some of his books you will violently disagree with him, but he will stir you up, and that is what I think a book should do for you. He hits you and you hit him back, and that is what I wanted you to get in my last lecture, this idea of tension.

Lately Spain has followed the way of other nations and erected its modern machinery, its skyscrapers and factories so it may compete with the rest, but all that modern civilization which has been dashed on like a rapid coat of new paint does not change the soul of Spain. When we wander over

the uplands of Castile, and enter the lives of those peasants who work ceaselessly on that parched land of kings, or when we descend into the Vega of Granada, still peopled with the phantom of the Moors, we realize that the message of Spain to the modern world is that of Unamuno—to cry out in the desert a hymn to Don Quixote. We, above all, need such a message in our Anglo-Saxon world. Though we have constructed a great and enduring civilization, building stone upon stone, yet we have reached a period when the chill of weariness has set in. So material have we become that those stones of our edifices seem to be crumbling away; our mansions have become dark and dreary because there is no vision to light up the halls within. Spain may be an inspiration to us because Spain is a symbol of faith. We may all learn from Don Quixote, who was not afraid of being laughed at. We have followed Sancho Panza, as he ambled alone through his humdrum life of unilluminated toil. Let us pray that we, like Sancho Panza, may meet the Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance, who will open up before us the path to the higher life of the soul.

Let us now for a moment touch on some of his novels, for you see he is not only a writer of serious books, but he has also written novels, and I think some are of great interest. The basis of his first novel, *Paz en la Guerra* (Peace in War), is laid in the third civil war, and he describes the episodes of the siege of Bilbao, where Unamuno was born. When he was a child, Unamuno often heard from witnesses accounts of that heroic event; hence the accuracy of detail and realism is closely studied by the author. But he does not draw a huge epic picture like Zola in *La Débâcle*; rather does he follow Tolstoi, in his close attention to the inner life of the characters. This is in many respects the fault of the book. The inner drama eclipses the outer, and

we feel that the author was too interested, or too much occupied in the psychology of his characters to describe their background. In this novel, as in others from his pen, descriptions of landscape give place to descriptions of inner conflict. In this respect it is interesting to note the contrast our author offers to Blasco Ibañez, who sacrifices character-drawing and psychology to scenery. Unamuno's type of novel, which he has called by the name of *nivola*, instead of *novela*, is an intermediary between the novel and the drama. In some respects his style bears certain resemblances to the explosive methods of Pirandello. In both authors the characters often weary us by their hairsplitting arguments and their apoplectic rhetoric. The similarity our author bears to Pirandello shows itself still more in another novel entitled *Amor y Pedagogía* (Love and Pedagogy), which is a fierce satire against false knowledge. Avito Carrascal, the hero, wants to make his son into a genius at any cost, and the whole book shows the tragedy of the father's hopes. In the end, the wretched victim of a son finds an end to all his woes in suicide. After his death, Unamuno, the author, goes off in search of Don Fulgencio, the boy's master, in order to ask him what impression the death of his pupil has made upon him. The whole book, as critics have shown, is a rehearsal of a later novel entitled *Niebla* (Mist). *Niebla* has a central place in Unamuno's work, for it is full of doubts and inner conflicts. Over it there seems to flow the eternal spectre of Hamlet. "Yes, but doubts on all sides attack me," exclaims Augusto Pérez, and his friend, Victor Goti, answers him: "All the better, my little Hamlet, all the better. Are you doubting? Then you are thinking. Do you think? Then you exist." There is a certain humor in *Niebla*—humor that conceals inner suffering. Sometimes we are in doubt whether he is serious or joking. The character

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of Augusto Pérez is autobiographical, and anyone who has known Unamuno cannot fail to see in this character the mystic of Salamanca. In the life of the man we see faithfully studied the influences that love and death may have on a sensitive soul. Nowadays we are not satisfied to read the commonplace novel of love, adventure, and incident; we want to penetrate beneath the mask, deep down to the great problems of life, and it is especially when we are full of the enthusiasm of youth that we long to escape out of the deadening atmosphere of convention. Books like Papini's *A Man Finished*, lead the way for youth, because by cutting down false and worn-out images, they make the world possible for a new literature. So it is with such a novel as *Niebla*, which, in spite of its pessimism, comforts us by its sincerity. "Here in this poor life of ours, we only care to make use of God; we claim the right to open Him just like an umbrella, so that He may protect us from all sorts of evil." Augusto Pérez seeks eagerly for initiation into love through Eugenia. After he has met her, he becomes the eternal Don Juan of Spain, but though he is successful with women, he loves no one except Eugenia, and she disdains him. There are many subtle touches which make us regret that the author has not written more books of this type, and many details that show how deeply the art of Unamuno is based on the simple folk of Spain. One detail in the book—the author introduces a little dog called Orfeo, which Augusto found in a park. He becomes Augusto's great confidant and friend, and after Augusto's death Orfeo utters some of the deepest reflections in the whole work. "Poor Master! Soon they will bury him in a place they have destined for this. Men keep or herd together their dead to prevent dogs or crows devouring them, and so that there may remain something that every animal beginning with man leaves in

the world—his bones.” They herd together their dead! Fancy an animal who speaks of “herding together his dead.” The novel has the additional merit of anticipating in a way Luigi Pirandello. The plot is a plain unvarnished story of love and jealousy, but Augusto, the wronged party, does not end the story in the conventional manner; he follows the six characters of Pirandello, and goes off to find the author. When he meets him in Salamanca, he informs him of his intention to commit suicide. The author, however, tells him that he cannot die, as no such person exists in reality as Augusto; that he must go on living in the fantasy of the author. It is the same idea as Pirandello’s, but Unamuno does not pursue it so far as Pirandello, who says that when a character is born it acquires such independence, even of the author, that it can acquire a meaning which the author never thought of giving it.

In *Abel Sánchez* Unamuno displays still more profound psychological sense, and some critics hold that it is one of the best novels of modern Spanish literature. There are two male characters in contrast and three women characters. Joaquin and Abel are lifelong friends; they have grown up together, and started life together. Joaquin, on the other hand, attracted no sympathy on account of his mournful disposition; even his jokes had the grimness of death about them. After their degrees they decide on their professions. Abel becomes a painter; Joaquin a doctor. Joaquin is in love with his cousin, Elena, but she employs all her caprices to make him suffer. The tragedy of the book arises from Joaquin’s good nature in introducing the girl to Abel, because, naturally, like all the rest, she finds Abel more charming. Finally Joaquin is driven to the awful thought: “If I arouse no sympathy in anyone it must be that I was condemned from birth,” and so his passions lead him to insult

Abel, the friend who has deserted him, but it is all to no purpose, because Abel with his cold, serene character cannot work himself up into passion. Eventually Abel is touched by his friend's sorrow, but Elena is the one who remains inflexible, and the former yields to the temptation of Eve: "You are right, Elena, we are not going to destroy our happiness by any thought of what poor Joaquin is feeling and suffering," and so Joaquin becomes more despairing every day. He loves Elena passionately, although he hates her at the same time, for he sees in Abel one who has been favored unjustly by destiny. Later, when Abel falls gravely ill and calls Joaquin, the doctor, to cure him, the latter could easily make him die without anyone being the wiser, but he is too noble to do such a thing. And so the book goes on—"Joaquin and Abel grow old, but in Joaquin's heart there still burns the love for the wife of the other man." The character of Joaquin is studied with extraordinary minuteness; his whole mind is full of struggle; he is one of life's vanquished and envy devours him through and through. His struggle is the struggle between the passions of the world and the inner call of conscience. Step by step the author analyzes his character, pitilessly, to such an extent that very often he reaches down to the depths of his subconsciousness. Abel does not interest us very much, because he is mostly a foil to Joaquin Monegro; he is the serene, self-satisfied citizen, who is never disturbed by the surging billows of passion. If Joaquin is a magnificent description of the male mind, another of his novels, *Tía Tula*, possesses the same qualities in respect to the female mind. It is difficult to believe that Unamuno possesses such a deep knowledge of a woman's mind. His ruggedness, his harsh virility, his self-centered character would lead us to suppose him lacking in the *finesse* necessary for analyzing her psycho-

logically; but in *Tía Tula* he is at times as subtle as George Meredith.

Tía Tula (Aunt Tula) is a symbol of the devoted spinster, the affectionate maiden aunt whom we meet so often throughout Spanish life. Such women frequently save the destitute families of their relations, educate the children, give dowries to the girls and put the sons into professions. It is all characteristic of the strength of Spanish family life, which lies in its strong feeling of community of blood. No country in Europe shows greater solidarity in its family-life, and in this book of Unamuno's, it is possible to study the whole question deeply. The Spaniard is a furious individualist, and it is only this great strength of family unity that forces him away from his egotistic outlook. At the beginning of the book *Tía Tula* resembles Elena in capriciousness; she delights in curbing to her will the weak Ramiro Cuadrado; she carries renunciation to so high a pitch that at times she is even inhuman in her virtues. She is the stuff that the earlier Spanish saints and mystics were made of. The following passage gives some idea of her personality: "Once you spoke of saints who make sinners; perhaps I have had an inhuman idea of virtue, yet when you first turned to my sister, I did what I should have done; besides, I must confess, men, until you came, Ramiro, have frightened me. I have never been able to see aught in them but the beast—children, yes, but as for men, I have always fled from them." It is as if we were listening to one of the gaunt inquisitors of 1600, and owing to this proud and relentless spirit she consumes her own body and Ramiro's life. At last one day she exclaims to her confessor: "All my life has been a lie, a deceit, a failure!" *Tía Tula* devotes herself to the children of the marriage which she, herself, had renounced. It is Rosa who has married Ramiro, but the children are *Tía*

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Tula's as much as their mother's. When Rosa dies she asks Tía Tula to marry Ramiro, but even then the latter refuses, saying that from marriage new children may come, new children of her own flesh, and she does not think it right to be a stepmother to the children of her sister. Her real reason probably is that deep down in her mind she feels the sting of that pride she had shown on the former occasion, and subconsciously she wants to revenge herself on Ramiro, who had fallen before the charms of Rosa. It is all very complicated and Unamuno makes those poor puppets puff and perspire, rush about, and agitate themselves even to the point of frenzy.

The novels of Unamuno are of great interest, because he has not simply tried to follow in the well-worn path of those modern writers of fiction who turn out machine-made books, with the same regularity as Mr. Ford turns out cars; he always tries to give new ideas and personal impressions. We cannot say he follows the French, the Russian, the English, or the German school, because all the time he is Unamuno, the Spanish-Basque. As he says of himself: "I am Spanish by birth, by education, body, spirit, language, even profession; Spanish above all, and before all, and Spanish is my religion; the heaven in which I wish to be is a celestial Spain, and my God is a Spanish God—the God of our Lord Don Quixote, a God who thinks in Spanish, and who said in Spanish: 'Let there be light,' and the Word was the Spanish Word."

WALTER STARKIE.



