

countrymen a broad-spectrum myth around which to rally in their abjectness", es decir, un símbolo que representara los valores que España encarna, valores que en nuestros tiempos mezquinos corren peligro de ser olvidados:

Unamuno, who intuited intrahistory by plunging himself in into the eternal physical and moral landscape of his peninsula, found in Don Quixote another savior crucified and risen from the dead, and with all the intellectual and poetic powers at his disposal, put before Spain, and through Spain, before all men who would listen, the religion of Quixotism, a loyalty to eternity which does not abandon history but categorically refuses to be confined by it.

W. D. JOHNSON

*Texas Woman's University*  
Denton. Texas. U. S. A.

*Miguel de Unamuno's "Canciones" on American Literature.* Translated with Commentary by M. THOMAS INGE.

In addition to his achievements as novelist, poet, essayist, dramatist, and philosopher, Miguel de Unamuno y Jugo, perhaps twentieth-century Spain's most brilliant man of letters, was throughout his career an accomplished philologist and linguist. Among the several languages he read with great ease was English, and for this reason his library was well stocked with classic and representative works of English and American literature. In his personal library of slightly under 6,000 volumes, over 100 are volumes of prose, poetry, and fiction authored by Americans. Included among them are such literary masters as Irving, Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Melville, Whitman, Poe, Holmes, and Longfellow; such philosophic writers as William Ellery Channing, Benjamin Franklin, Henry Adams, William James, Henry George, Andrew Dickson White, John Dewey, and Woodrow Wilson; such moderns as Willa Cather, Floyd Dell, John Gould Fletcher, Waldo Frank, Langston Hughes, Sinclair Lewis, William Vaughn Moody, Lewis Mumford, Ezra Pound, Carl Sandburg, George Santayana, and Edith Wharton; and a number of lesser known but well selected historical, philosophical, and imaginative works.

The majority of these books contain evidence of a careful reading by Unamuno—copious annotations in the margins of the pages and inside the back covers on the endpapers. Evidence of greater significance is the mention and absorption of what he read in his own works. While this subject is one that invites a full-scale study, my present purpose is to take

note of the part his reading in American letters plays in one of his notable poetic works, the *Cancionero*.

Unamuno's *Cancionero*, or *Diario Poético* as it is subtitled, was not published until after his death, the first time under the editorship of Federico de Onís in 1953, and again with revisions by Manuel García Blanco as volume XV of the *Obras completas* in 1963. It is basically a personal diary kept in verse, composed of lyrics from 2 to 50 lines in length, with almost daily entries during some periods. It was begun while Unamuno was in voluntary exile in the Basque French border town of Hendaye in February of 1928. The last entry was made three days before his death on December 31, 1936. In all, the content of over 1750 poems constitutes a profound record of Unamuno's most personal philosophical and spiritual speculations and a fascinating collection of his most paradoxical and literary interest, especially to those who wish to understand the last tempestuous decade of Unamuno's life, it is invaluable. There is nothing else quite like it in modern letters.

A reading of the *Cancionero* indicates that on at least ten occasions, while Unamuno was in the proces of reading particular American authors, he was moved to write poems, either in response to the work in hand or in response to a conjunction of a work and an event in his personal life. The seven writers who inspired the ten poems are Walt Whitman, Herman Melville, Edgar Allan Poe, Sidney Lanier, William Vaughn Moody, Carl Sandburg, and Langston Hughes.

Of all American writers read by Unamuno, unquestionably Walt Whitman had the most singular and profound influence on his thought and work. Unamuno must have first encountered his poetry around the turn of the century, as soon after that references to Whitman and quotations from his verse began to appear in his writings. He wrote one prose dialogue and an appreciative essay on Whitman and translated into Spanish favorite passages from his poetry. In several of his essays, Unamuno expressed agreement with his poetic and philosophic opinions. Of greater interest was Whitman's example in his use of free verse, which broke the barriers between prose and poetry to Unamuno's delight and freed him to write poetry in Spanish with similar disregard for traditional forms and conventions. Perhaps Whitman was of some influence in his choice of free verse as the proper form for his monumental work *El Cristo de Velázquez*.

Among Unamuno's favorite lines from Whitman were those expressing his attempt to embody in his creative work the corporeal reality of his person. "This is no book; / Who touches this, touches a man". Two of the poems demonstrate the influence of these lines, which might have served as an excellent epigraph for the entire *Cancionero*. (The numbers are those assigned by editors Onís and García Blanco).

682 Walt Whitman, tú que dijiste:  
esto no es libro, es un hombre;  
esto no es hombre, es el mundo  
de Dios a que pongo nombre.

6 - II - 29

Walt Whitman, you who said:  
this is no book, it is a man;  
this is no man, it is the world  
of God to which I give a name.

February 6, 1929

828 Me destierro a la memoria,  
voy a vivir del recuerdo;  
buscadme, si me os pierdo,  
en el yermo de la historia.  
Que es enfermedad la vida  
y muero viviendo enfermo;  
me voy, pues, me voy al yermo  
donde la muerte me olvida.  
Y os llevo conmigo, hermanos,  
para poblar mi desierto;  
cuando me creáis más muerto  
retemblaré en vuestras manos.  
Aquí os dejo mi alma—libro,  
hombre—mundo verdadero;  
cuando vibres todo entero  
soy yo, lector, que en ti vibro.

9 - III - 29

I banish myself to reminiscence,  
I go to live in memory;  
look for me, if you should lose me,  
in the wasteland of history.  
Because life is a sickness  
and in living ill, I die;  
I go, then, I go to the wasteland  
where death forgets about me.  
I carry you with me, brothers,  
in order to populate my wilderness;  
when you believe me most dead  
I will tremble in your hands.  
Here I quit you my soul—a book,  
a man—the true world;  
when you are deeply moved  
it is me, reader, who trembles within you.

March 9, 1929

It seems a pity that the work of Herman Melville did not come to Unamuno's attention until late in his life, sometime in the 1920's when an American admirer of Unamuno, Professor Raymond M. Weaver, sent him a copy of his study *Herman Melville: Mariner and Mystic* (1921). Melville might have had an impact equal to or surpassing that of Whitman on Unamuno if he had encountered him earlier, as Weaver himself recognized when he inscribed in the book in Spanish "to Sr. Don Miguel de Unamuno. I beg him to accept this study of a man who also felt profoundly the tragic sense of life". When he came to read *Moby Dick* for the first time, in a copy of the Everyman's Library edition which he purchased in Paris and dated "23 II 25" (February 23, 1925), the excitement he found in the complex, symbolic novel is visibly recorded in the copious annotations and comments he wrote in fine pencil inside the back covers and throughout the pages. Scarcely a page in the volume does not contain some marginal mark from his hand, from Spanish translations for unfamiliar words to the heavy signalling of philosophical passages which excited Unamuno's mind and imagination. The first reading of the novel elicited a second, again recorded by a separate set of annotations following the first inside the back covers. The first reading appears to have occurred during the spring and summer of 1929, while he was yet in exile in Hendaye, as evidenced by these two poems in the *Cancionero* inspired by Melville's American masterpiece.

787 Melville, tu Moby Dick, tu ballena blanca,  
vive en el Tormes de Salamanca  
¿cómo sube de la mar?  
Baja de Gredos por el agua  
en una chispa toda la fragua,  
todo y entero Dios en cada lugar.

5 - III - 29

Melville, your Moby Dick, your white whale,  
lives in the Tormes River of Salamanca  
how has he been brought from the sea?  
He comes down from the Gredos mountains  
through the water  
the whole fire in a single spark,  
the whole of God in every single place.

March 5, 1929

1121

Moby Dick, cap. XCII,  
The Castaway. Herman Melville.

Vió los pies de Dios en las premedoras  
del eterno telar Pip el negrito,  
perdido de la mar en las traidoras  
olas del infinito.

No la cara, sino le vió los pies  
y enloqueció;  
de la tela del destino al través  
la verdad vió.

29 - V - 29

Moby Dick, chap. XCII,  
The Castaway. Herman Melville.

He saw the feet of God on the treadle  
of the loom of eternity, Pip the little Negro,  
lost on the sea in the treacherous  
waves of infinity.  
Not the face, but he saw the feet  
and became insane;  
through the fabric of destiny  
he saw the truth.

May 29, 1929

The only other American writer to inspire two poems in the *Cancionero* is Edgar Allan Poe, whose work Unamuno knew at least as early as 1907, when he mentioned him in his correspondence. Later, Unamuno wrote an essay entitled "La Moralidad Artística" (for *La Nación*, Buenos Aires, August 19, 1923), in which he defended Poe against the psychiatric scrutiny a victim of a society infected with a badly degenerated and provincial common sense which prevented his readers from recognizing the sane aesthetics and lucid logic of his work. Besides, said Unamuno, the artist should be protected from the public examination of his private life, because "An artist is explained by his work, and not his work by him". Unamuno read through two comprehensive anthologies of Poe's fiction, poetry, and criticism, and took special note in the latter of ideas which he found intriguing—such as Poe's discussion in "Mesmeric Revelation" of the idea that "All created things are but the thoughts of God". The poem "Tamerlane" also struck his fancy, where he read in lines 75-85

I have no words—alas!— to tell  
The loveliness of loving well!  
Nor would I now attempt to trace  
The more than beauty of a face  
Whose lineaments, upon my mind,  
Are—shadows on th'unstable wind:  
Thus I remember having dwelt  
Some page of early lore upon,  
With loitering eye, till I have felt  
The letters—with their meaning—melt  
To fantasies—with none.

From the final three lines of this stanza, Unamuno drew the inspiration and epigraph for this poem.

1175

*Till I have felt  
The letters—with their meaning—melt  
To fantasies—with none.  
E. A. POE, Tamerlane.*

Es la eternidad que pasa  
o el momento que se queda?  
es que se para la rueda  
o se echa a rodar la casa?  
Se hizo al átomo Universo  
o es que el todo se hizo punto?  
O es que anda inventando asunto  
para respirar mi verso?

27 - VI - 29

Is it eternity which passes  
or the moment which remains?  
is it the wheel which ceases  
or the house which begins to revolve?  
Has the atom become the Universe  
or has the All become one point?  
Or is it that my verse is trying to find  
a subject in order to breathe?

June 27, 1929

In the second poem, there are explicit references to Poe's poems "The Raven" and "Ulalume", the short story "The Gold-Bug", as well as critical commentary on his life and letters.

1434a Edgar Poe, aquel tu cuervo  
*nevermore*—todo un loro—  
Edgar Poe, todo tu oro  
—escarabajo—es el verbo.

Edgar Poe, tu Ulalume,  
telaraña de palabras,  
en negra entraña te labras,  
blanca sed que te consume.

Edgar Poe, qué trabajo  
tener que vivir al sol,  
*never, nevermore*, alcohol  
no rescata a escarabajo.

14 - I - 30

Edgar Poe, your raven  
*nevermore*—is quite a parrot—  
 Edgar Poe, all of your gold  
 —scarabaeus— is the word.

Edgar Poe, your Ulalume,  
 a cobweb of words,  
 in a black cynicism you create,  
 the white thirst that consumes you.

Edgar Poe, what a labor  
 to have to live in the sun,  
*never, nevermore*, alcohol  
 does not redeem the scarabaeus.

January 14, 1930

Perhaps the most surprising author to be found among Unamuno's favorites is Sidney Lanier, the Georgia poet critic, and musician, who attempted to demonstrate in his verse his theories of the scientific basis of versification and the close identity between music and poetry. Unamuno read thoroughly and with great interest the contents of a 1929 edition of the *Poems of Sidney Lanier*, which an American friend sent to him in 1932. He was fascinated by Lanier's diction—the rich sonorous word choice and the use of unusual and archaic vocabulary—although he appears to have been put off by a section of dialect poems written in a difficult form of Southern illiterate speech. The profuse sensory imagery found in the harmonious "Sunrise" of *Hymns of the Marshes* pleased the Spanish don and the setting in one passage reminded him of scenes in Dante's *Divine Comedy* which in turn inspired a poem which echoes many of Lanier's own lines and the solemn spirit of Dante.

1616

Recordando al Dante al leer el  
 "Sunrise (Hymns of the Marshes)"  
 de Sidney Lanier.

En la orilla celeste  
 del río de los muertos  
 arrebujé una envuelta  
 de estrellas y de sueños;  
 vi boquear sombrío  
 al mítico barquero  
 sin oírle palabra  
 pues su voz es silencio.  
 La nada se vestía  
 de cosas de deseo  
 y pasaban sus sombras  
 llameando reflejos.

Recogido en un punto  
 quedóse el firmamento;  
 la eternidad caía  
 en un solo momento,  
 y escuché en las tinieblas—  
 Dios yacía en el centro—  
 al pasado, la huesa  
 del porvenir entero.

16 - I - 33

Being reminded of Dante upon  
 reading the "Sunrise (Hymns of the  
 Marshes)" of Sidney Lanier.

On the celestial shores  
 of the river of the dead  
 I bundled together a lapful  
 of stars and dreams;  
 I saw the shaded mouthings  
 of the mythical boatman  
 without hearing a word  
 as his voice is silence.  
 The nothingness disguised itself  
 with things of desire  
 and their spirits were passing  
 provoking reflections.  
 Gathered at one point  
 was the firmament;  
 eternity was falling  
 in a solitary moment,  
 and I listened in the darkness  
 —God lay in the center—  
 to the past, the grave  
 of the entire future.

January 16, 1933

Unamuno's admiration for the poetry of William Vaughn Moody is interesting to note, because Moody's reputation, like that of Lanier, has not entirely succeeded in extending beyond the period in which he wrote. He read with equal interest the strident, often declamatory poems of Moody and his ambitious Miltonic verse dramas, which combined the forms of Greek drama with ancient theology and modern evolutionary theory. Among the titles marked as important in his 1901 volume of Moody's *Poems* is "Road-Hymn for the Start", which enthusiastically incites the reader to set forth on the road to high adventure and worldly experience and concludes with this stanza.



Careless where our face is set,  
 Let us take the open way.  
 What we are no tongue has told us: Errand-goers  
     who forget?  
 Soldiers heedless of their hurry? Pilgrim people  
     gone astray?  
 We have heard a voice cry "Wander!" That was  
     all we heard it say.

From the third line of this stanza Unamuno selected the phrase which served as the first line to his poem.

1295

*Errand-Goers who forget?*  
 WILLIAM VAUGHAN MOODY

Recaderos olvidados  
 del recado; las estrellas  
 nada nos dicen, sus huellas  
 no sabemos distinguir.  
 Por el día se nos pierden,  
 se funden de noche en sueño;  
 nos aguarda en tanto el Dueño  
 y se nos pasa el vivir.  
 Recaderos sin recado  
 —es un no ser el olvido—  
 se nos va el vivir perdido,  
 con el vivir porvenir.

16 - X - 29

Errand goers who forget  
 the message; the stars  
 tell us nothing, their trails  
 we are unable to distinguish.  
 Throughout the day they are lost to us,  
 by night they merge into dreams;  
 the Master awaits us in the meantime  
 and life passes us by.  
 Errand-goers without a message  
 —forgetfulness is non-existence—  
 the lost opportunities escape us  
 along with those of the future.

October 16, 1929

In view of his great love for Whitman, it is easy to understand why Unamuno read with enthusiasm Carl Sandburg, who also embodied in his verse a spirited and vigorous sense of the American national character. As a linguist, he also took note of Sandburg's use of American slang, and

at the rear of his copy of Rebecca West's 1926 edition of the *Selected Poems* is found a list which includes such words as *stogie, wop, snozzle, floozies, monicker, and galohe*s. On November 22, 1929, as Unamuno was approaching the end of the volume, he received word of the birth of his first grandson. The happiness brought by this blessed event, combined with the intensified anguish of his separation from his family through exile, led his eye to take special note of the final line in Sandburg's poem "Haze", where he asks the eternal question of the reason for existence. Unamuno's personal emotion conjoined with Sandburg's poem to produce another poem of his own.

1347

Esta mañana, 24 XI, leía en  
"Haze" de Carl Sandburg, el  
poeta de Chicago, esto:

*Why do the cradles of the sky  
rock new babies?*

Hoy, 24 nov. 1929, bautizan a  
mi primero nieto, Miguel Quiroga.

La media luna es una cuna,  
¿y quién la briza?

y el niño de la media luna,  
¿qué sueños riza?

La media luna es una cuna,  
¿y quién la mece?

y el niño de la media luna  
¿para quién crece?

La media luna es una cuna,  
va a luna nueva;

y al niño de la media luna  
¿quién me lo lleva?

(Será luna nueva el 1.º de dic.,  
dentro de seis días.)

24 - XI - 29

This morning, Nov. 24, I was  
reading in "Haze" by Carl Sand-  
burg, the Chicago poet, this:

*Why do the cradles of the sky  
rock new babies?*

Today, Nov. 24, 1929, they  
baptize my first grandson, Miguel  
Quiroga.

The half moon is a cradle,  
and who rocks it?  
and the infant of the half moon,  
what is he dreaming?

The half moon is a cradle,  
 and who rocks it?  
 and the child of the half moon,  
 for whom does he grow?  
 The half moon is a cradle,  
 and turns to a new moon;  
 and the child of the half moon,  
 who takes him away from me?

(There will be a new moon the  
 1st of December, within six  
 days.)

November 24, 1929

A most intriguing and unexpected discovery for one who wanders among Don Miguel's books are two early volumes of verse by Negro American poets—Countee Cullen's anthology *Caroling Dusk* (1927), drawing from a wide perspective of mature and young talent of the period, and Langston Hughes' second volume of poetry *Fine Clothes to the Jew* (1927). Unamuno read both volumes cover to cover and came to know something of the distinctive nature of the Negro folk culture. The combination of bitter lament and despondency, with a crude humor and laughter, characteristic of the "Blues", must have been a paradox that captured his interest and sympathy. While none of the poems in the *Cancionero* contains an explicit reference to either of these volumes, written on the overleaf of the last page in *Fine Clothes to the Jew* is the first draft of this poem, presumably inspired by the sweet and sour melody of Hughes' misery blues.

1329 Ríe, briza, arrulla, llora,  
 cantando sobre la cuna;  
 pobre madre sola, es hora  
 de cunar a la fortuna.  
 Ríe, arrulla, llora, mece,  
 al cantar de eternidad;  
 pobre niño solo, crece  
 en la común soledad.

18 - XI - 29

Laughs, rocks, lulls, weeps,  
 singing above the cradle;  
 the poor lonely mother, it's the time  
 for rocking fate.  
 Laughs, lulls, weeps, rocks,  
 to the song of eternity;  
 poor lonely child, grows  
 in the common solitude.

November 18, 1929

There is no way of knowing how many of the other poems in the *Cancionero* contain a similar unstated and indiscernible inspiration by the creative talents of America and the other countries whose tongues Unamuno read with facility. What is more important than the source of inspiration, however, is the fact of creation to which it led, and the body of Unamuno's work reflects a highly original absorption and utilization of the full scope of western thought and literature.

M. THOMAS INGE

*Arlington Quarterly*, 2 (Otoño, 1969) pp. 83-97.