

me refiero a Juan Marinello. En el campo de la apreciación crítica empiezan a sobresalir Felix Lizaso, José Antonio Fernández de Castro, Francisco Ichaso, Alejo Carpentier y otros varios que se inician ahora, pero cuyas primicias son ya pruebas evidentes de aguda perspicacia y sutil ingenio. Mucho prometen los nobles arrestos de esta juvenil parvada y mucho hemos de esperar de su generoso esfuerzo. Por de pronto ha logrado conmover la modorra intelectual en que vegetaba el cubano desde hacía años y poner en un aprieto la rutina académica tradicional.

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VIRGILIO DÁVILA. *Un libro para mis nietos*. San Juan, P. R., Tip. Venezuela, [1928], 126 págs.

El conocido y popular poeta puertorriqueño, Sr. Virgilio Dávila, acaba de publicar su quinto libro de versos, manifestando una nueva modalidad poética, que en él no conocíamos: versos para niños.

Cuando aparecieron sus dos primeros libros, *Patria*, 1903, y *Viviendo y Amando*, 1912, Virgilio Dávila se destacó prontamente como poeta erótico-patriótico. Mas tarde su abundante producción lírica hace un definido sesgo hacia el criollismo y publica sus ya agotados libros regionales: *Aromas del Terruño*, 1916, y *Pueblito de antes*, 1917; obras que marcan una culminación de habilidades técnicas y de sensibilidad.

Después de doce años de intermitente silencio, el poeta nos sorprende con los frutos de una nueva vendimia: *Un libro para mis nietos*, libro sencillito, tierno e ingenuo. Sin lucimiento ni modalidades nuevas, Virgilio Dávila permanece fiel a su vieja tradición poética, y depura con rigurosa sencillez las dos etapas anteriores en esta obra que parece escrita expresamente para los escolares que cursan la primera enseñanza.

No obstante, a medida que se progresa en la lectura de sus tiernos versos infantiles, va surgiendo rica y espontánea la vieja vena patriótica, y volvemos a encontrar en la sección *Siempre vivas*, al noble poeta que se inició en 1903, publicando *Patria*.

Libros sin pretensiones, llanos y profundos, nos hacen falta para modelar el espíritu dúctil de las nuevas generaciones. El de Virgilio Dávila tendrá seguramente el unánime aplauso de nuestros niños, ajenos casi siempre a cordialidades de esta índole.

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MIGUEL DE UNAMUNO. *The Agony of Christianity*. Translated by Pierre Loving. With an Introduction by Ernest Boyd. New York, Payson & Clarke, 1928, 183 págs.

Among the works of don Miguel de Unamuno are three capital books which partially convey his unique approach to life. *En Torno al Casticismo* preached the desideratum of the Europeanization of Spain; to him traditionalism and the policy of severing the Spanish people from the culture of the West were suicidal and contrary to the spirit of genuine culture. *Vida de Don Quijote y Sancho Panza* proclaimed the religious necessity for the heroic life, the life of the ideal, adherence to vitalism and faith; it launched a vigorous attack against complacency, provincialism, and mediocrity. These two were evangelical books—for others. His quintessential credo is contained in *Del Sentimiento Trágico de la Vida*, written in the height of his creativity. With an intensity that burns away all meannesses and resistances, he makes us aware of the tragedy which is our human destiny: the impossibility of having our private hunger for immortality, the perpetuation of our flesh-and-bone existence, guaranteed by knowledge and reason. This dialectic analysis is turned into a vital struggle; the suffering caused by it receives no surcease—it is a tragedy that has no reconciliation; hence, he and we remain unpurged after living through the titanic clash released by the confrontation of existence and universals.

The Agony of Christianity is a continuation of this theme. *Agony*, for Don Miguel, has its Greek etymological meaning,—struggle. (The English words *agony* and *agonistic* approach this special meaning of Unamuno. Cf. Milton's peculiar usage in *Samson Agonistes*.) One may grapple with an enemy, man, animal, or inanimate thing, without uttering sickly moans on account of the suffering. Christianity is for the individual, something incommunicable; personal, not societal. Don Miguel's real service to the West has been his insistence that the central problem of all problems is the individual. The nineteenth century "hammered away" for the group, for humanity. August Comte deified mankind. Everyone talked of the race, forgetting that the race, humanity, society are merely abstractions, not realizing that the individual whole, the one which makes all the rest possible, thus underrated, is really paramount. Christianity has been socialized. Within the Church, people have been saying passive obedience, implicit faith, contains salvation; those from without the Church, that life must be made a plenitude in this world. Christianity exacts the celibate life, the negation of society. A man to live like a Christian must be as solitary as a monk, but even a Carthusian monk must come from the group.

These two—individual and group—are opposites. When apprehended with the heart, the tragedy ensues, the *agony* begins. Other antinomies in Christianity create *agony*: Hellenized Judaism or Platonized Pharism. Pauline Christianity conjoined the Greek ideal of the immortality of the soul to the Judeo-Pharisaic hope of the resurrection of the flesh. Because of this dichotomy, "Duplicity is the essential condition of the agony of Christianity and of the agony of our civilization" (p. 140); the living Christian soul wrestles continuously. Don Miguel brings the world of existence and thought into the same arena. And the gladiatorial struggle begins.

Antinomies like body and soul; faith and reason; passion and thought; science and religion; Utopia and practical politics; ethics and current morality, this is but a partial list of these opposites—each is a good yet incomplete, for the contrary cries for integration into our lives. Pascal was painfully aware of this subject. (See his *Pensées* 412 and 413.) The Christian soul must always be a being divided into polarities: war is the price paid for the dreamed peace.

In this book are two chapters on two Frenchmen, Pascal and Père Hyacinthe, who in their respective centuries, the seventeenth and the nineteenth, lived the *agonistic* life. The chapter on Charles Jean Marie Loyson (1827-1912), known as Père Hyacinthe, perhaps is the only essay of appreciation in recent years appearing in English on this stalwart tortured man, who lived in this country in the middle of the last century and exerted some influence. Don Miguel recognizes in these two sons of rationalistic France his brothers in spirit, for they like him lived *agonistically*; they were heretics in the sense: "For a heretic, *haereticus, alperixòs* is he who chooses a doctrine for himself, he who thinks freely (freely?), he who can think freely concerning the right doctrine, he who can create it, create anew the dogma which others declare they profess" (p. 143).

The Agony of Christianity is a translation of a translation. Unamuno upon his return from his exile to the Canary Islands delivered the manuscript to Jean Cassou (born in Bilbao, of Spanish and French parents) for its conversion into French. Mr. Pierre Loving gives us this translation from the French. *The Agony of Christianity* makes the fourth book of Unamuno's cast into English. Don Miguel must chuckle at this translation of a translation, for he himself expresses the desire to retranslate his translated work into Spanish to better savour it.

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JAIME TORRES BODET. *Contemporáneos*. México, Herrero, 1928.

Por una de esas extrañas paradojas frecuentes en el mundo de la cultura, los escritores vanguardistas de América dan casi siempre muestras de mayor templanza que sus colegas de allende el Atlántico. Parece ser que a la juventud de los pueblos americanos debería corresponder una mayor ansia de novedad y más aguda agresividad juvenil. Sin embargo, ocurre lo contrario. En tanto que en España la falange moza ataca valores con furiosa iconoclasia y se da a toda clase de ensayos extravagantes (hoy no tanto como en años pasados) los escritores de la misma edad en América tratan de encontrar las nuevas rutas del pensamiento y del arte con una medida digna de todo elogio. Éste es el caso de un grupo tan distinguido como el de la revista "1928" de la Habana donde destacan escritores de talento como Jorge Mañach, Juan Marinello y Francisco Ichaso, y este es el caso también de la mayoría de los jóvenes mexicanos. El nuevo libro de Torres Bodet es una confirmación más de nuestro aserto.

El autor, que es quizá la figura más visible de la juventud mexicana, no abjura del novecentismo, por el contrario declara abiertamente su fe en los tiempos nuevos. *Contemporáneos* es un alto ejemplo de equilibrio crítico. T.B. define con medida las aspiraciones de su generación, critica sin estridencias ideas en las que no encuentra orientación firme para el porvenir, y al juzgar a poetas y escritores de la vanguardia, temple su entusiasmo y con gran independencia de criterio señala defectos y prisas allá donde los encuentra.

El libro comienza con unas reflexiones sobre la novela cargadas de buen sentido y de atinadas observaciones en las que el autor manifiesta su desacuerdo con las ideas de Ortega y Gasset. También réplica a las teorías del gran pensador español es el capítulo titulado "La deshumanización del arte." El resto se ocupa, salvo dos o tres capítulos, de la poesía actual en España e Hispanoamérica: "Cuadro de la poesía mexicana" y "Notas sobre la poesía argentina" dan de un modo conciso una síntesis completa de la poesía contemporánea en México y la Argentina.

En todas las páginas se advierte una sostenida y honrada preocupación por el arte nuevo y por el futuro literario de América.

A. DEL R.

HUGO WAST. *Black Valley*. New York, Longmans, Green and Co., 1928, 302 págs.

In *Black Valley* Hugo Wast, one of Argentine's foremost and most prolific writers, unravels the story of strange, proud,

hostile, and passionate people, caught in the spell of the haunting and exciting atmosphere of a wind-swept world. It is strikingly contrasted with the beauty and glory of Argentine landscape.

The author, introduced to the American public through the lucid translation of Herman and Miriam Hespelt, takes us to a remote land, a land of grand romantic gestures, great love and hatred, of Castilian gravity and fierce class distinctions. Against this background, Hugo Wast with a masterly hand paints a moving tragedy.

One will remember longest not the plot nor the clear and strongly drawn characters but the background of the story and Wast's study of the primitive society of the mountaineers and peons of the province of Córdoba, the imperious overlords of the land and the lawless individualism which characterizes the pursuit of love and power. He will not forget the land of storms, of overwhelming silence and supreme beauty as fitting scene for terror and tragedy.

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