



STOCKCERO TEACHING KIT (097)

TEXT: *Locura y Muerte de Nadie* (1929/1937)

AUTHOR: Benjamín Jarnés

EDITOR: Víctor Fuentes

PART 1: CONTEXT & CRITICAL ANALYSIS

(Based on the Introduction by Víctor Fuentes and recent critical studies)

1. JARNÉS'S AVANT-GARDE AND LITERARY INNOVATION:

Defining "New Novel":

Locura y Muerte de Nadie (1929/1937) is a seminal avant-garde "meta-novel," lauded as intellectual, lyrical, and anti-novelistic. It deconstructs traditional realist narratives, shifting focus from a presumed reality to textual reality.

Against "Dehumanization":

Jarnés's work implicitly counters Ortega y Gasset's "dehumanization of art," arguing for a "rehumanization" that emphasizes human intimacy and varied interpretations of man by man.

Socio-Political Backdrop:

Written during a period of intense socio-political upheaval in Spain (the "Roaring Twenties," economic crisis, path to the Republic, Civil War), the novel reflects and critiques the emerging mass society.

2. THE "NOBODY" CONCEPT AND INDIVIDUAL ALIENATION:

Subverting Biography:

The title, "Madness and Death of Nobody," paradoxically applies a biographical genre to "Nobody," signifying the annihilation and trivialization of the individual in modern mass and technological society.

Protagonist as Prototype:

Juan Sánchez, the "Nobody" protagonist, embodies the alienated individual, drawing parallels with archetypal figures like Don Quijote and Hamlet ("To be or not to be") and contemporary works like Unamuno's *Niebla* and Kafka's *Metamorphosis*.

Critique of Mass Culture:

The novel questions the relevance of an individual "hero" in a society dominated by spectacle, consumerism, and the media's creation of "idols of crime."

3. FORMAL EXPERIMENTATION AND INTERMEDIALITY:

Novel "About" and "Of" Language:

The text actively debates the status of words and how they shape reality, while simultaneously exhibiting a rich stylistic range, including cultisms, archaisms, wordplay, and a "pluscuampresente" (ever-present) temporal dynamic.



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Cinematic Techniques:

Jarnés integrates cinematographic techniques (montage, dynamic lighting, camera angles, dissolves, tracking shots) to convey the dynamism and viscosity of modern urban life, making characters like Arturo resemble film actors.

Tragicomic Dialectic:

The work embodies a tragicomic blend, finding the ridiculous and pathetic in life. Its dialectical approach (like the clash between the novel's original and revised versions) highlights contradiction as a source of truth and understanding.

4. THE "SOCIETY OF THE SPECTACLE" AND REHUMANIZATION:

Anticipating Debord: J

Jarnés's novel anticipates Guy Debord's "society of the spectacle," critiquing how social relations are mediated by images and how the public consumes "spectacles" (e.g., crime scenes, bank crashes).

Matilde's Transformation:

The 1937 version deepens the character of Matilde, who evolves from an "object of desire" (like Rebeca) to a "faithful heroine." Her relationship with Arturo, rooted in intimacy and respect, represents an antidote to dehumanization and violence.

Commitment to Justice:

The novel's conclusion, particularly through the figure of the anarchist Don Fermín in *El trueno dorado* (Jarnés's posthumous work), underscores the author's unwavering commitment to social justice and solidarity with the working class.

PART 2: TOPICS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

The "Nobody" Protagonist:

How does the concept of "Nadie" (Nobody) challenge the traditional notion of a novelistic hero? What does it imply about individual identity in the context of mass society?

Metafiction and Narrative Convention:

Discuss how *Locura y Muerte de Nadie* uses metafiction to comment on and subvert novelistic traditions. How does the author's self-awareness affect the reader's experience?

"Rehumanization of Art":

Explore Jarnés's critique of "dehumanization" and his project of "rehumanizing art." How does the novel achieve this, especially in its later versions?

Language and Style as Innovation:

Analyze the innovative linguistic features of the novel (e.g., "pluscuampresente" time, descriptive pauses, metaphorical language). How do these stylistic choices contribute to its avant-garde nature?



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Intermediality (Cinema and Theater):

Discuss how Jarnés integrates elements of cinema and theater into the novel's narrative and visual aesthetics. How does this reflect the changing artistic landscape of the early 20th century?

Critique of the "Society of the Spectacle":

How does the novel anticipate theories like Guy Debord's "society of the spectacle"? Provide examples of how media, spectacle, and mass behavior are portrayed in the text.

Evolution of Female Characters:

Compare the portrayal of female characters, especially Matilde, in earlier and later versions of the novel. How does her role reflect a move towards a more humanized, empathetic narrative?

PART 3: SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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PART 4: QUIZ BANK (Multiple Choice)

1. *Who is the author of **Locura y Muerte de Nadie**?*

- A) Miguel de Unamuno
- B) Ramón del Valle-Inclán
- C) Benjamín Jarnés
- D) Ramón Pérez Ayala

Correct Answer: C

2. *What concept does the title character "**Nadie**" (Nobody) primarily symbolize?*

- A) A forgotten hero
- B) The annihilation of the individual in mass society
- C) A mysterious detective
- D) A mythological figure

Correct Answer: B

3. *Jarnés's novel is described as attempting to "**rehumanize art**" in response to whose theory of "**dehumanization of art**"?*

- A) Sigmund Freud
- B) José Ortega y Gasset
- C) Carl Jung
- D) Walter Benjamin

Correct Answer: B

4. *Which artistic medium is extensively integrated into the novel's narrative techniques to convey urban dynamism?*

- A) Classical painting
- B) Opera
- C) Cinema
- D) Sculpture

Correct Answer: C

5. *Which character undergoes a significant metamorphosis, transforming from an "**object of desire**" to a "**faithful heroine**" embodying love and grace in the later version of the novel?*

- A) Juan Sánchez
- B) Arturo
- C) Matilde
- D) Rebeca

Correct Answer: C

Explore the "**Modernism & Avant-Garde: The Renewal of Poetic Language**": This book is part of our comprehensive collection on the renewal of poetic language in early 20th-century Spanish literature: *Luces de Bohemia* (Valle-Inclán); *Niebla* (Unamuno); *Belarmino y Apolonio* (Pérez Ayala); and *Locura y Muerte de Nadie* (Jarnés).

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