



## 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 INTERMEDIAILITY:

##### *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 visuality 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?

### Intermediality (Cinema and Theater):



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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

**Jarnés, Benjamín.** *Locura y Muerte de Nadie*. Stockcero.

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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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