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ANDY DEBICKI is synonymous with passionate commitment to twentieth-century Spanish poetry—a commitment that manifests itself in every aspect of his career. He has tirelessly promoted the study of poetry in his students, in NEH Summer Seminar participants, in his many mentees across the country, and in his own books and articles. Countless students have entered his courses at the University of Kansas self-diagnosed as allergic to poetry; they left those courses at the end of the semester not only inoculated but cured and converted. Conversions, passion, literature as a devotion—all that Debicki represents—inspire these reflections on twentieth-century Peninsular literature in today's academy.

Passion (in the sense of love) is not a word we hear much these days in the halls of academe. The humanities especially are more prone to the language of battle—the culture wars, the struggles to stay current, the defeat of the humanities by the social and hard sciences, the turf battles for faculty lines and the spoils (the perks) of the profession. Articles by Francis Oakley and Margery Sabin in *What's Happened to the Humanities?* are respectively titled “Ignorant Armies and Nighttime Clashes: Changes in the Humanities Classroom, 1970–1995” and “Evolution and Revolution: Change in the Literary Humanities, 1968–1995.” In the introduction to that volume, Alvin Kernan summarizes the tone of endless conflict reflected in many of its essays:

Socially, in the latter twentieth century, the humanities, along with some of the “softer” social sciences like anthropology and sociology, have been the battlefields of an extended *Kulturkampf*. The subjects have proven extremely sensitive to pressures for social change in the society at large, to the wave of populist democracy, to technological changes in communication, to relativistic epistemologies, to demands for increased tolerance, and to various social causes, such as black studies, feminism, and gay rights. Every liberal cause—from freedom of speech and the Vietnam War to anticolonialism and the nonreferentiality of language—has fought bitter and clamorous battles on these subjects. (3)

Denis Donoghue, in another article from that same collection, echoes the old saw from a “Pogo” cartoon that

we have met the enemy and they are us: “It is no longer true that the main opposition to the humanities comes from the sciences: it comes from the humanities themselves and takes the form of ‘techniques of trouble’—R. P. Blackmur’s designation of the ways in which we make trouble for ourselves, doubting our purposes” (123). In other words, humanists today undermine themselves by operating on philosophical principles that dissolve their *raison d’être*.

I do not need to rehearse the present climate in humanistic study; it is much discussed and written about. I want to consider the position of Peninsular Spanish literature (particularly twentieth-century Peninsular literature) within this context. If the traditional literary canon and traditional approaches to literary studies have been sites of some of the contentions I have just framed, Peninsular Spanish literature, a former victimizer (dominating the canon and departments of Spanish), has now become victim. Many departments of Spanish literature are experiencing a severe decline in the numbers of graduate (and even undergraduate) students interested in studying Peninsular literature; Latin American studies is the strong favorite. Some departments (one thinks particularly of those at Stanford and Northwestern) have decided to focus their resources and energies almost exclusively on the Latin American area.

In the early twentieth century, Spanish intellectuals like Miguel de Unamuno, Ramiro de Maeztu, and José Ortega y Gasset urged Spain to catch up the rest of Europe in technology and politics. One has the sense that in the second half of the twentieth century, Peninsular

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Spanish studies has been engaged in a similar attempt to overtake the pack—first the French, then the Anglo-Americans, and now the Latin Americans, especially in the area of postcolonial studies. In a 1992 overview of Peninsular studies since the 1950s, Debicki quoted Bruce Wardropper as saying that 1960s Peninsular criticism was “colorless, repetitive and retarded” (“Contributions” 921). Debicki himself found that much writing published on twentieth-century Spanish literature in the 1950s and 1960s was unimaginative. One hopes that we are not repeating that scenario now, not by being too traditional, as we were then, but by being too anxious to emulate what we perceive as the successful strategies of other fields.

Twentieth-century Spanish literature itself offers inspiration for moving beyond this endless competition to sound like everyone else. For Unamuno, the solution to what he perceived as Spain’s irremediable technological backwardness at the turn of the century was “¡Qué inventen ellos!” (“Let them [the other Europeans] do the inventing!”), and he also suggested that Spain quixotize Europe rather than Europeanize itself. While these remedies are themselves perhaps a little too quixotic, we might heed another of Unamuno’s challenges in his essay “¡Adentro!” (“Look Inward!”). His advice to turn inward could be a productive avenue out of the current crisis in Peninsular studies (by crisis, I mean lack of an authentic and original perspective).

If Peninsular literature offers a relative paucity of opportunities to discuss the postcolonial condition, it is rich in passion, intensity, and an almost religious fervor—ample occasions to examine how literature intertwines with our interior lives. We can draw on what has always been best about Peninsular literature—its deep understanding of the human soul and of the soul’s need to engage with a world other than its own in order to understand itself. (This is precisely the lesson of *Don Quixote*, arguably Peninsular literature’s greatest achievement.)

Let’s consider for a moment literature as a religious experience, an experience that leads us outward in order to reveal what is within—*adentro*. Andrew Delbanco describes “the teacher [who] must overcome the incremental fatigue of repetitive work and somehow remain a *professor* in the religious sense of that word—ardent, exemplary, even fanatic” (34). Susan Sontag puts it another way in “Against Interpretation” when she calls for “an erotics of art” instead of a “hermeneutics” (qtd. in Levin 33). George Steiner recommends something bordering on the spiritual when he invokes “transcendence,” “moral intuition,” and “acts of faith” as the only way to counter what he calls “deconstructive semiotics” (qtd. in Levin 41). Unamuno manifested the attitudes Steiner describes when faced with alternatives that were more life threatening than “deconstructive semiotics.” He confronted death by writing; his pen was driven by the desire to leave something of his living self behind in the world, something that might preserve that self eternally. For Unamuno, literature has the power to embody the existential

struggle that he understood life to be. He refused to accept a gap between life and art, and he strove for more than forty years to create works that would have an emotional impact on real people.

María Zambrano kept Unamuno’s aesthetics of emotion alive in the next generation. Her essay “La metáfora del corazón” (“Metaphor of the Heart”) is particularly to the point. In a dense, allusive, and poetic analysis of the heart as a universal metaphor for human emotion, she reveals its many dimensions and its refusal to become hackneyed and clichéd. Zambrano reminds us that the heart is at once physical and conceptual. She calls it the most noble viscera because it enfolds the image of a dark, secret, mysterious interior space that occasionally opens up. Only something that is a constitutionally closed seat of intimacy can open up while continuing to be a cavity, an interiority that offers up its force and treasure without becoming transformed into surface. The heart’s singular property, however, is that it cannot become detached from the entrails; it cannot function independently.

Like Zambrano, Debicki has a special ability to unravel the tangled skein of metaphorical language, and he has done so with some of the twentieth century’s most passionate and complex poets—Federico García Lorca, Rafael Alberti, Vicente Aleixandre, and Dámaso Alonso. Debicki reveals how these poets transform human emotion into poetic language. For example, the guitar’s song in the following lines from Lorca’s “Poema del cante jondo” (“Poem of the Deep Song”) embodies the expression of otherwise hidden feelings: “The guitar makes dreams cry. The whimpering of lost souls escapes from its round mouth. And like the tarantula, it weaves a great star to hunt down sighs that float in its black wooden well” (*Spanish Poetry* 26). Debicki points out that the guitar becomes an agent for emotional release and the conversion of emotions into artistic form. The scene is stylized, the guitar player hidden while his hand becomes a tarantula:

Lorca [thus] takes the focus off any anecdote and places stress on the larger themes. The theme, nevertheless, is vividly captured in the imagery: the inchoate nature of unexpressed feelings is emphasized by the image of the guitar as a deep well, while the miracle of converting feeling to art is stressed by the tarantula’s weaving of a star. (*Spanish Poetry* 26)

Likewise, Debicki emphasizes the Nobel laureate Aleixandre’s ability to transform emotion into poetic language. According to Debicki, Aleixandre found his own voice in his collections *Espadas como labios* (“Swords like Lips”), *Pasión en la tierra* (“Passion on Earth”), and *Destrucción o el amor* (“Destruction or Love”) with “fantastic and nightmarish scenes, constructed from a mixture of real and invented figures; visionary metaphors based on subjective and seemingly arbitrary, rather than objective, correspondences between planes.” Aleixandre’s authentic poetic voice “privileges feeling over form” (*Spanish Poetry* 42).

The degree to and manner in which the poets experience feeling provides Debicki with a means for making larger distinctions about these poets' place in the aesthetic spectrum. Alberti's images in *Sobre los ángeles* ("On Angels") "engender intense, subjective impressions of a world in decay" (44). This emotive, irrational perspective on human life moves Alberti beyond a modernist aesthetic, as evidenced in the poem "Sermon of Lightning Rays":

The city that knows the precipitation of blood toward the dusk of crowns, leans to the left side of death. Let's see! All the outside areas of the soul are now coffins for stars that in a second of distance preferred to burn their faces, rather than relive the last pulsations of the Universe in a cold burst of swords. (44)

Similarly irrational is Miguel Hernández's surrealist progression of images in a sonnet: "Guiding a tribunal of sharks, as with two eclipsed scythes, with two eyebrows blackened and cut by cutting and blackening hearts, mine have you entered, and in it you place a net of irritated roots" (46). Debicki interprets these dense images of the human passions ("the metaphor of the beloved's eyebrows as scythes") as "intense and subjective, yet grounded on an understandable correspondence. The sharks, however, cannot be explained rationally" (46–47).

Debicki finds that Alonso's emotive vision, expressed through a new immediacy in *Hijos de la ira* ("Sons of Wrath"), influenced younger writers for years after it appeared; it "established a new form, almost a new genre, for the expression of an emotive vision in a language that is immediate yet artistically effective" (64). He quotes a passage from Alonso's "Insomnio":

Madrid is a city of more than a million corpses (according to the latest statistics).
At times at night I turn and sit up in this niche in which I have been rotting for 45 years.
And spend long hours listening to the hurricane moan, or the dogs bark, or the light of the moon flow softly.
And I spend long hours moaning like the hurricane, barking like a mad dog, flowing like the milk from the warm udder of a big yellow cow.
And I spend long hours querying God, asking him why my soul slowly rots away,
Why more than a million corpses rot away in this city of Madrid.
Why a billion corpses rot away slowly in the world.
Tell me, what garden do you want to fertilize with our rot?
Do you fear that your great rosebushes of day, the sad lethal lilies of your nights will dry up? (65)

I have been amused by articles appearing in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and elsewhere on the return of

aesthetics to humanistic study. Scott Heller writes, for example, that "[m]axed out on political analysis and cultural studies, scholars in the humanities have begun to talk again about the joys and pleasures of good, powerful—even beautiful—writing" (A15). I especially think of Andy Debicki when I read about the rediscovery of beauty in literary criticism. Debicki, trained in the best New Critical tradition, has always been where literary criticism seems to be arriving today—reading closely, intensely, intuitively, intelligently, passionately. We should remember with Delbanco that "[t]he New Criticism was [. . .] unashamedly driven by an essentially religious impulse" (36). He adds, "Now and then, on good days [he hears] a distant drumbeat heralding the return of such evangelical teachers. They cannot come back soon enough" (38). Debicki does not have to return; thank goodness he is still here with us, showing us the way for an authentic and original Peninsular studies in the twenty-first century—a Peninsular studies that draws on its best—Unamuno, Zambrano, the poets of the Generation of 27—to understand itself and ourselves as emotive and passionate human subjects.

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During the early twentieth century, neo-humanist reforms transformed the landscape of Spanish education. Building upon the new science of child study, known as paidology, teachers joined pedagogues around the world in reading works by Maria Montessori, Jean Piaget, John Dewey, and others. Celebrating open-air schools, sensorial education and active methods of learning, intellectuals including Miguel de Unamuno, Jos  Ortega y Gasset, and Carmen Conde sought to contrast a positivist pedagogy with a phenomenological approach to childhood. Education, they claimed, must adapt to the child's development.

Volume IV: Victorian and Twentieth-Century Literature. Given the myriad changes to British culture and society in the past 200 years, what then might serve as a common narrative frame for this volume of essays? One binding premise of this diverse collection is not surprisingly change itself. Despite the formidable cultural authority of Eliot and the hegemony of New Criticism, their closed canon of "dead white males" (to resurrect a quaint phrase) could not possibly withstand the forces of global change unleashed on English departments in the mid- to late twentieth century.

Spanish literature, the body of literary works produced in Spain. Such works fall into three major language divisions: Castilian, Catalan, and Galician. This article provides a brief historical account of each of these three literatures and examines the emergence of major genres. Although Professor of Hispanic Studies, University of Glasgow, 1932-72; Director, Institute of Latin-American Studies, 1966-72. Author of *A History of Spain and Portugal*; translator of Cam es' *The Lusiads*. See *Article History*.

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