

Translating Rubén Darío's *Azul...*

A Purpose and a Method

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George Umphrey opens the preface of his 1928 edited assortment of Rubén Darío's prose and poetry with the familiar type of panegyric that begins much of the dissemination and exegesis of Darío's work – "No apology is needed for [this] publication...he is one of the great poets of all time." To Umphrey it was nothing more than a quip and a convenient opening statement. Darío had passed away just 12 years earlier but his posterity was assured. The Nicaraguan *modernista* poet has inspired an entire academic and publishing industry in Spanish language literature that is analogous to Milton or Dickens in English.¹ He has had every possible commendation lavished on his legacy, is credited with revolutionizing the Spanish language, dragging it out of two centuries of doldrums following the glorious "Golden Age" of Cervantes and Lope de Vega, and creating the ethos and the identity for an independent Spanish America that would later inspire Borges, Neruda, and García-Márquez. Umphrey had no reason to doubt that any reproduction and exploration of Darío's work, regardless of language, would be self-justifying, but he unwittingly makes assumptions about the future of language study in universities, priorities and structure in literature departments, the publishing industry and commercial audience, and a myriad of other contextual factors that would complicate Darío's legacy.

Umphrey's publication is not a translation but a representative selection of Darío's work in the original Spanish accompanied by criticism and examination in English designed as a pedagogical tool for English speakers in university language departments. In 1928 he naturally assumed that Darío would become an enormous presence in academia and he endeavored to increase the poet's accessibility by offering English language explanations. Although Darío's

¹ The basis of my analogy is fundamentally academic, that just as an English Literature PhD students commonly do their dissertations on the corpus, or even one narrow aspect, of Milton or Dickens, Spanish language and literature experts similarly devote their scholarly lives to the study of Darío.

presence in Spanish language literature departments is every bit as imposing as any scholar could have then imagined, Umphrey would be astonished to see how little known and sparsely treated he is in the English language community. Much of the blame belongs with the aforementioned trends such as rigid specialization in language departments, the rise of theory schools and the correlating drop in emphasis on canon-centric study, the relative drop in the commercial audience and viability of poetry, the relative scarcity of translations *into* the English language, etc...but simply put, any English speaking scholar of literature or even just avid reader recognizes Cervantes and García-Márquez.² Most established literary scholars are familiar with Lope de Vega, Borges, and Neruda. Darío is comparatively lost. There are perhaps a half dozen easily accessible print translations of Darío's work into English, all of which are editorially selected assortments, and a dozen full length critical treatments or biographies. Surely as the language and culture of South and North in the Americas continue collision, in some cases producing fusion, in others assimilation and loss, and in rare but exciting instances the creation of something new, the man who created an artistic identity for the former can offer something to the latter. The question of *why* Darío is so sparsely translated is less important than whether he *should* he be translated, and if so, *how*.

If we resolve to translate Darío then our ultimate goal must be to make the author as meaningful and serious in the study of literature in the English language as Umphrey prematurely assumed would be the case. It is an aggressive goal, but there is modern precedent. Cervantes was translated into English a half dozen times over a two hundred year span before achieving posterity among English readers.³ A single, or even a series, of Darío translations is probably not capable of achieving parity with *Don Quixote de la Mancha*, but pursuit of that

² See Bassnet, 44

³ See Fitzmaurice-Kelley, *Cervantes in England*, 1905.

ideal is reason enough to move forward. If authors and translators limited themselves to projects of that magnitude, there would be precious little literature or analysis to consider. Any intelligent contribution to the life and work of Darío is worthwhile, and even if a translation fails to resonate, it is still part of what Benjamin calls an “abundant flowering” of new life for the original.

In more constructive and realizable terms, we hope to (re)introduce Rubén Darío to the global “marketplace” of literary exchange, to use the economic analogy of Valéry and Casanova. It is an odd charge considering that at his popular peak Darío was quite famous across all of Western Europe and the Americas; his first major publication was touted for its cosmopolitanism. Continuing Valéry’s general marketplace analogy, the transnational “value” of Darío’s work was in its “universality,” but over time that value diminished outside Spanish language communities. The universal aspect of Darío’s work was too metaphysical to retain interest amongst a general audience. His work was not directed at themes of love, loss, delusion and disillusionment, individuality, and redemption (read: *Don Quixote*), rather mystical explorations of a harmonious unity of Art, Beauty, Language, and ontological Truth. The literary “capital” of his ideas decreased with time. Worse still, the rise of “national literatures” has left him in a liminal state; he is partially accepted by Spain and partially by the nations of South America, but the only “nation” that embraces him fully is tiny Nicaragua. A translation must seek to recalculate and communicate Darío’s literary “capital” by making his work relevant and powerful in a new language, and a new time and place.

The term “World Literature” is theoretically fraught, but it stands in contrast to what all comparative literature minds agree is the limiting effect that the rise of national literatures has exercised on the transnational exchange of letters. Damrosch regrounds the term, citing obvious

examples of what can only be called “world literature” such as *A Thousand and One Nights* and assigning common characteristics to those works. In the theoretical sense, a translation is an appeal to Damrosch to accept the translated work as a new entry into this elite field; to assign it “value” in the global literary “marketplace.” To qualify a work must “gain in translation,” which he generally associates with the adaptability of the language and the relatability of the cultural assumptions and themes (289). It appears simple but has proved more complex in application. He notes that Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake* would conceptually be more global, but in fact *Dubliners* more widely translated and read globally. Darío’s corpus ostensibly possesses the characteristics necessary to enter the global marketplace after all, it did once before, and so the onus is on the translator. The question is not whether the “work” gains in translation, but whether the translator can draw out its potential, allowing it to “achieve an effective life” in the English language without violating the impossible to define, yet universally accepted, obligation that a translator has towards the original (ibid., 290).

There are three primary books by Darío and a litany of correspondence, articles, and freely published poetry to consider for translation. The existing print translations, Lysander Kemp in 1965, Acereda and Derusha in 2001, Applebaum in 2002, and the *Penguin Classics Rubén Darío* are all selections from across Darío’s corpus. This miscellany in the translations works against any attempt to expand the transnational exposure of the author. Darío cannot be understood in excerpts; to read “The Nymph” is to believe him to be an escapist, to read “Anagke” is to believe him to be a heretic, “To Roosevelt” a Marxist, “Palabras Liminares” an elitist, etc...each of these works exists in the context of a particular publication. They occupy a specific place and time relative to their creation, their publication, their author’s life, and their historical context. These aspects are critical to a renewed calculation of his literary “capital.”

Darío is as much an historical figure as he is an author; he represents an entire continent's aesthetic response to certain intellectual, sociopolitical, and post-colonial trends to be part of the arc of human literary achievement. Inevitably, part of that original "capital" will be lost in translation; we simply cannot recreate the force of the language, but we can endeavor to compensate with new perspectives, wisdom, and insight. Cutting the works into representative snippets dooms us from the start.

The three major publications are *Azul...* (1888, 1890, 1905), *Prosas profanas* (1896, 1901), and *Cantos de vida y esperanza* (1905). When *Azul...* was first published, Darío was 21 years old, earning a meager living by publishing in a small periodical, and living the cliché life of a starving artist in a rapidly expanding, both economically and culturally, Chilean society. *Prosas profanas* is a complex work that confidently articulated Darío's style and the intellectual stake in the *modernismo* movement for which he was, by then, the spokesperson. *Cantos de vida...* is the height of his poetic achievement, the work that subsequent poets turned to for inspiration in their own innovations, particularly the *vanguard* movement. All of these works have been extensively explored in the Spanish language, and each of them is worthy of independent translation. This essay focuses entirely on *Azul...*, the piece that best captures a young Darío finding his voice and his intellectual and topological place among the poetic geniuses he revered. It is imbued with the passion of his youth and the anxiety that comes from attempting to reconcile his fractured past against an uncertain future. There are two general threads that inform the translation allowing its "value" to shine forth. The first is the self-reflexive thread. Although *Azul...* is Darío's first major publication, more than half of Darío's known poetic output occurred before its publication.⁴ In 1888, at age 21, he was not the

⁴ Miguel Enguídanos, 14, trans. Cecile Wiseman.

spokesperson for a new and exciting intellectual and artistic movement, nor was his talent recognized outside small literary circles in remote cities. *Azul...* is an artistically rendered internal reconciliation which critically informs the language and the style that the translator must address. The second thread is the text's fundamental role in the creation (or articulation) of *modernismo*, the intellectual, artistic, and, in tangential ways, the social movement that came to represent post-colonial Spanish America during a period of massive economic growth, cultural exchange, and exacerbation of economic inequality and social hierarchies. We will first attempt to understand Darío the man before exploring his *effect*, while commenting on various implications for translation.

Félix Rubén García Sarmiento was born on January 18th, 1867 in the small town of Metapa, Nicaragua (since renamed Ciudad Darío). His mother and father separated soon after he was born and Rubén was sent to live with his great aunt and uncle in León, a pensioned retired military officer. They took pains to educate him, and even when his uncle died in 1871 and the pension stopped, his aunt consistently petitioned relatives and influential members of León's political and social world to pay for his continued education, with mixed success. In 1878, at the age of 11, Rubén was granted free school and board from the León Jesuits in the church of the Recollection due partly to the influence of one of his prominent aunts, and partly to his demonstrated intellectual potential. He lived and studied with them for three years, learning Latin, some Greek, and Spanish classical authors in addition to the standard subjects of mathematics, grammar, and history. This stretch of housing, meals, and dedicated structured study would ultimately be the most stable years in Darío's life, a benefit that he would recognize in his middle age. Most biographers credit this period with his exposure to classical mythology,

the capacity of language beyond his native tongue, and the expansive history of western global thought and literature.

When Darío left the Jesuit institute in 1880, he had published several poems in the premier León periodical and his intellectual gifts were well known in the small society of Nicaraguan elites. He moved to Managua on the advice of friends in order to persuade the government to fund his continued education in Spain. Darío was only fourteen at the time, and as his practically minded friends pushed him towards continued education, the poet went through a brief rebellious phase resulting in anti-clerical and politically divisive publications that doomed his chances of government-sponsored travel and education. He moved instead to San Salvador where he received a stipend from the artist-friendly president and began publishing poetry and prose for periodicals and performing at the request of political officials. After an embarrassing episode involving a female singer who was a guest of the President, the police chief brought him to the director of a boy's boarding school, where he was monitored to moderate his excessive drinking and poor financial management. At age sixteen this certainly seems forgivable, but it began a sequence that, for Darío, would never end. He would move to a new city, voyage paid for by friends in the last city and introductions prepared for a patron at his destination. Darío would exhaust his patron's hospitality through his alcoholism, lack of professional reliability, and perpetual indebtedness, and within two or three years members of that intellectual circle would scrape funds together to secure him passage and introductions to a new city. In each case there was a love interest that, until he met his second wife in 1899, was a destructive influence in the practical sense, though certainly critical to the evolution of his increasingly sophisticated and mystical concept of love, beauty, and unity.

Darío returned to Nicaragua after only a year in El Salvador, stayed in León for six months, and eventually obtained a post in the National Library of Nicaragua in Managua granting him access to a trove of new literature, in particular contemporary English and French verse, providing a modest but sufficient income, and beginning a period of prolific writing and subsequent critical attention that initiated the arc towards *Azul*.... This productive period was brief. After a betrayal by the object of his feminine ideal, he fell into despair and alcoholism until, on the advice of an influential priest and with funding from the current President, Darío set sail for Valparaíso, Chile.

José Martínez refers to this seminal event in Darío's life as his "encuentro con la urbe moderna (encounter with urban modernity)." These are indisputably the two most important years in Darío's journey towards poetic perfection. In 1886, Chile was the most prosperous country in South America. It was fully integrated into European trading markets via its exports of nitrates and other natural resources, the government was stable, the economy was vibrant and, relative to neighboring South and Central American nations, inclusive, and the success was complemented by an active artistic and intellectual scene that incorporated the latest trends from Paris and beyond. Darío was no longer the 'boy poet prodigy' performing his work at the direct request of the President and to the applause of the political and intellectual elite. He was another unknown aspiring poet, hustling to get his prose into periodicals in exchange for paltry sums, competing for patronage to publish his verse, and all amidst the fast mechanized pace of burgeoning capitalism. Small towns surrounded by tall trees were replaced with tall buildings surrounded by machines. It is this crash of competing forces, material wealth and progress, against an unreconciled colonial past in search of a new spiritual meaning and truth, that has made Darío such a powerful metonym for the South and Central American experience.

David Miller, in his article “Authorship and Anonymity,” says that whenever a poet’s ethical and economic place in relation to his audience is uncertain, the resulting art necessarily entails a strong thread of self-definition. As Darío vacillated between cities and jobs, drinking heavily, reading through the nights and missing work the next day, commiserating with other starving artists, and ultimately envying the wealth and privilege of the social elite while simultaneously resenting himself for that envy, his internal journey is catalogued by his poetry. In 1887, after a difficult year in Chile, he finally managed to publish a volume of verse titled *Abrojos* (Thistles):

THE POET PUT IN HIS VERSES...

The poet put in his verses
all the pearls from the sea,
all the gold from the mines,
all the ivory from the East,
the diamonds of Golconda,
the treasures of Baghdad,
the jewels and the gems
from the coffers of Nabob.
But as he had,
for making verses, not a crust to eat,
as soon as they were written
he died of need.⁵

The form of the poem is simple Spanish romance in the style of Bécquer, repeated octosyllabic lines without a rhyme scheme, insecure with an attempt at hyperbole to compensate. Darío incorporates many of the influences that would follow him to *Azul*... in this short poem, but without the nuance and originality that he achieves just a year later. He borrows Gustavo Bécquer’s form but fails to connect or create empathy in the reader, Victor Hugo’s preoccupation with the poet’s role but without the resonance or vibrancy, the images of Théophile Gautier and

⁵ Trans. Alberto Acereda, 2001.

the symbolists but without the technical ingenuity or the constructions of beauty. The poem is melancholy and self-absorbed, making the Oriental images seem contrived and the poet's death an adolescent overreaction.

One year later he published the first edition of *Azul...* which included a section entitled "En Chile" that begins:

Without brushes, without palette, without paper, without pencil, Ricardo, incorrigible lyrical poet, fleeing from the agitations and turbulences, fleeing from machines and from disaster, from the monotonous sound of crossways and the clash of horses with their clattering of hooves upon the stones; the throng of traders; the scream of the daily vendor; the incessant noise and endless boil of this port; searching for impressions and pictures, bravely climbing the happy hill which shone like a grand blooming rock, showing off its green outline, the mound crowned by smiling houses in staggering height, surrounded by gardens with billowing vine curtains, bird cages, flower pots, charming fences, and blonde children with angelic faces.⁶

The poet is hopeful and the scene is bright. He "flees" the tumult of modern urban life with nothing but his mind's camera in search of beauty, the ultimate goal of the artist. As Cathy Jade notes, "Despair is assuaged by the redemptive power of art (68)." It is not revolutionary in its form or its content, but it begins to articulate a relationship between the poet and society, art and beauty, wealth and progress, truth and unity, that resonates. Wealth, progress, and the symbols that represent them are merely context instead of the endstate; truth and unity are in beauty and art which, antithetical to the symbols of material wealth, are only found by escaping the "urbe moderna." The language, the symbols, and the nonchalant form with sophisticated diction inspire reflection and empathy in the reader instead of projecting the poet's self-loathing and contempt.

⁶ Translation mine.

This section of *Azul...* is what Darío referred to in his *Historia de mis libros* as a “poem in prose.” The original 1888 edition of *Azul...* contained three substantive parts excluding the dedication to Federico Valera and the prologue by Eduardo de la Barra. They were the series of short stories titled “Cuentos en Prosa” that mirrored Leconte de Lisle’s “Contes en Prosa” in title and format but little else. Then there was the brief journal style prose of “En Chile,” and finally the poetry portion entitled “El Año Lírico.” The pieces in this first edition were mostly written in 1887 and compiled by Darío with the help of some admirers with more organizational skills and access to funds for publishing. It enjoyed limited initial success in Chile, but Darío sent a copy to Juan Valera, a famous author and literary critic in Spain, who published two letters in a popular literary magazine extolling the work for its originality and cosmopolitanism, and essentially created the outsized literary figure of Darío we know today. In 1890, while in Guatemala, Darío published his second edition which removed the dedication and the prologue by Barra and replaced them with the letters by Juan Valera, added three short stories (one to “Cuentos en Prosa” and two to “En Chile”), one longer poem to El Año Lírico, and two sections of shorter poems, one called “Sonetos” with three works, and another called “Medallones” with five short dedicatory poems to contemporary poets that he admired. In 1905 a third edition was published out of Buenos Aires that mirrored the 1890 edition in content but had a few dozen changes in diction and updated spelling and punctuation conventions. Most scholars and editors consider the 1905 edition as definitive because correspondence from Darío indicated he considered that one to be definitive as well.

Speaking of *Azul...*, Octavio Paz wrote that “in its time it was a book of prophecy; today it is an historical relic.”⁷ *Azul...* catapulted *modernismo* as an intellectual movement onto the global stage, and began articulating the ontological and epistemological struggle gripping the

⁷ Translation mine

newly independent Spanish America. It is certainly the post-colonial response and *modernismo*'s articulation of the place of art and beauty in a commodity driven society that makes the work and its author so universal on a sociopolitical level, but many critics sublimate the self-reflective and psychoanalytic threads in the work. Darío's life is fairly well documented after *Azul...* through his own correspondence, so perhaps there is very little need to rehearse his biography in general terms. In isolation, the self-reflective nature of *Azul...* may seem too overt to warrant much treatment. There is only so much to say about the conspicuous intensity of the erotic imagery in relation to his youth and general lack of success with the objects of his affection.

In considering Darío for translation into this time and language, the self-reflexive strain of *Azul...* opens a direct line of exchange between the reader and the author. The challenge for the translator is to mediate that exchange to allow the reader to hear Darío's voice. As Walter Benjamin says, "A real translation is transparent; it does not cover the original, does not block its light, but allows the pure language, as though reinforced by its own medium, to shine upon the original all the more fully" (72). The "pure language" Benjamin refers to is that nonexistent ideal universal language of intent and expression that translation always pursues but never achieves. Self-reflexive literature uniquely accesses that indefinable space; all readers have a language of lust and longing, disappointment and despair, the impulsive excess of adolescence and the nagging existential insecurity about greater purpose. *Azul...* is intensely self-reflexive, and though Darío and this work have transcended far beyond the psychoanalytical realm, for the translator and the reader that are removed by language and over a century of time, understanding that aspect of the work takes on a new urgency. If the translation fails to express Darío's lust and longing in the poetry, or his restlessness and transience in the prose, then today's reader will not

hear Darío, but be simply receiving information about an “historical relic”, what Benjamin calls “a transmitting function” which is “something inessential” (69).

After the poor reception of his work *Abrojos*, in large part because it was considered self-absorbed and unsophisticated, Darío grew rapidly in his deployment of language to separate his explicit self from the text. In the “Cuentos en Prosa” he mediates the self-expression through adapted classical myths and characters, oriental images borrowed from the French symbolists and Parnassians that were his primary inspiration, and stylistically through his formal and abrupt syntax as well as his innovative diction full of archaic Latinisms and Gallicisms. The stories themselves are short, and the plot lines are compact and often tragic; the societal allegories are generally unsubtle but with none of the moralizing political or ideological rhetoric that have generally characterized Spanish and French Romantic poets. For these reasons Juan Valera, in his 1888 review of the work that installed Darío into the literary scene, attributed to the work “a very strange originality” that was “impregnated with a cosmopolitan spirit.”⁸ The style and abrupt syntax are clear reflections of Leconte de Lisle and Méndes, the oriental symbols to Gautier, the obsession with the poet in relation to beauty and art inherited from Hugo, the classical references and language demonstrating obvious exposure to Latin and Greek in the originals, and all in impeccable Spanish. Every element of the work is easily relatable to one of Darío’s influences, yet the pieces are undeniably unique.

The sophistication and cosmopolitanism of the text has a nuancing effect on the self-reflective strain of the stories, allowing the reader to infer and explore instead of receive and react. He uses very measured syntax and careful diction to keep his restlessness and angst from projecting through the prose; the effect is, as Juan Valera notes, that the adept reader intuits the author’s youth but in a manner that is awe-inspiring instead of condescending. For the translator,

⁸ Trans. mine

the theoretical challenge is as Benjamin tasks, to make Darío's youth "transparent," to "reinforce" it, but not "cover its light." Practically, the translator must resist the urge to artificially simplify diction and rearrange syntax for the reader's ease, in particular with colloquialisms. The prose should be slightly stiff in its formality but rarely awkward. Deference should be paid to diction at the expense of rhythmic syntax except when it is clear Darío's Spanish is preferring rhythm at a particular point. The stories are short, the syntax often abrupt, and the plots and social allegories linear and unfulfilling; the reader should finish most stories with a sense of unease as though the underlying tension is unresolved. Imposing overly coherent syntax and simplified diction onto the stories washes away that complexity leaving short, simple, and unremarkable art. In the self-reflective sense, it turns Darío into the adolescent amateur of *Abrojos* instead of visionary of *Azul*....

El Rey Burgeus (The Bourgeois King) is the first story and arguably the most cited and discussed piece in all of *Azul*.... The story begins with a description of an opulent palace full of eastern art and marble statues, and then a king who fancies himself an authority on art, beauty, and knowledge. A hungry poet arrives at his court and, prompted by the king who patronizingly says "speak and you shall eat," delivers a rousing treatise on the truth of art and beauty that ends accusingly:

Y Bien! Rhythms are prostituted, songs are sung about women's moles and poetic syrup is fabricated. Furthermore, Señor, the cobbler critiques my hendecasyllables and the esteemed chemist puts periods and comas on my inspiration. And Señor, you authorize it all!...the ideal, the ideal.⁹

⁹ Translation mine.

The king, upon the advice of his philosopher, gives the poet a music box and relegates him to the garden to play whenever the king or his courtiers pass by. He is forgotten about and freezes to death in the cold winter, all the while turning the handle of his music box.

After its initial publication in a Valparaíso periodical in 1887, the story caused Darío problems as his former boss and editor at *La Nacion* in Buenos Aires assumed the king in the story was fashioned after him. The obvious theme is that the new bourgeois class conferred upon themselves, for no reason other than their material wealth, authority on matters of art and knowledge while they allowed the true poets and true art to freeze. Stylistically the story is Darío's first exhibition of the abrupt syntax and the colorful diction inspired by French symbolists that captivated Juan Valera and a subsequent generation of readers. Of course Darío projects a bit of himself onto the tragic poet, but more importantly he values the prose over the moral, allowing the power of the piece to complement the true meaning instead of shouting the moral at the reader. There is ambiguity and uncertainty trapped in the brevity of the syntax; the story is not a shallow indictment of the 'political elite' or the 'new bourgeois' but a question to society about its perception of beauty and value in a material world.

The translator must resist the urge to over clarify the superficial plot at the expense of the style of the transmission. It is a difficult balance, and one that is hard to articulate, but Darío has a very identifiable tone that contributes to the transcendence of the work. The word choice, in particular metaphors and analogies, is often eccentric such as the "women's moles and poetic syrup" from the above excerpt. Andrew Hurley, in his translation, attempts to make odd associations coherent; his version is that "it may sing songs about the beauty mark upon a

woman's cheek, or concoct syrupy rhymes.”¹⁰ He makes Poetry the agent, turns “moles” into “beauty marks”, and “syrup” into an adjective all to make the prose smoother in English. In this case, there is very little significance to the change other than the annoying knowledge that he has deliberately equivocated on the original, but in many cases these manipulations have consequences.

The last line in the story is “Hasta la vista,” which very literally means “See you next time” or something equivalent, but Hurley elaborates on Darío's original Spanish with “And with that moral to my tale, adieu.” Installing closure and coherence on the text implies that Darío did so in the Spanish which, because the piece is so short and linear, makes it a superficial critique of society instead of a philosophical inquiry into the constructions and value of art in a rapidly changing world. The story is circular; it begins with “el cielo está opaco, el aire frío, el día triste,” and repeats the phrase in the last few lines. “Hasta la vista” is a goodbye that implies we are beginning the cycle anew, that another poet is arriving at the king's court to be ostracized and discarded. Hurley's contrived ending interrupts the cycle and flattens the significance.

The second story in the series, entitled “The Deaf Satyr,” is an adaptation of Orpheus' tale. The satyr, ordained king of his forest by the Olympic gods, climbed the sacred mountain to hear Apollo play his lyre, and as punishment he was made deaf. Then, Orpheus visits him in the forest, plays his lyre to the delight of all the creatures and asks to stay there, but the deaf satyr, unable to hear the lyre and unnerved by the dancing and celebration of the animals, ejects him from the forest. Darío is, of course, Orpheus in the story, and the satyr a caricature of the political or economic elite that is endowed with wealth and power but deaf to art and beauty. It opens:

¹⁰ Hurley, 224

Habitaba cerca del Olimpo un sátiro, y era el
viejo rey de su selva. Los dioses le habían
dicho: “Goza, el bosque es tuyo; sé un feliz
bribon, persigue ninfas y suena tu flauta.”
El sátiro se divertía.

The syntax is very compact relative to the remainder of the story, the diction simple and concise. In Stanley Applebaum’s translation he oversimplifies the diction to conform to American English spoken convention:

Near Olympus there lived a satyr, and he
was the old king of his forest. The gods had
told him: “**Enjoy yourself**, the woods are
yours; be a **jolly rogue**, pursue nymphs, and
play your flute.” **The satyr was having a
good time.**

Throughout his translation Applebaum’s stated goal is to be as faithful to Darío’s Spanish in the literal sense, and in that effort he tends to match syntax when brevity is required. His literalness, unfortunately, often reflects what is taught as equivalent in a high school Spanish course instead of in the context of Darío. The Spanish “goza” does mean “enjoy” but is not reflexive.

Applebaum adds “yourself” to conform to spoken convention; English speaking students of Spanish learn that equivalent because it is easily recognizable instead of requiring a discussion about reflexive verbs versus simple imperative. Substantively, the gods are telling the satyr to enjoy the forest over which they just granted him dominion, not to enjoy “himself.” Applebaum chooses a similar oversimplification with “having a good time” for the Spanish past imperfect “divertía.” “Jolly rogue” is an anomaly; the Spanish “bribón” is a difficult word to translate, and it appears Applebaum considered the word to connote something ‘silly’ in English, hence the word “jolly” for the simple “felíz” to accompany “bribón.” There is little substantive advantage to be had debating this case, but “jolly” is so conspicuous and so muddled with ‘Santa Clause’ associations in American English that it detracts from the setting of the story.

Andrew Hurley recognizes the need to avoid colloquialisms and oversimplification, but abandons Darío's brevity:

Near Olympus there lived a satyr, and he
was the old king of the forest. **Long years
ago** the gods had told him: "**Here, disport
yourself**, the woods are yours. Be a happy
rascal – chase nymphs and play your flute."
Life was great fun for the satyr.¹¹

"Long years ago", "Here, disport yourself", and "Life was great fun" are all elaborations on the original Spanish in an obvious effort to establish a formal, almost distant tone. It avoids the oversimplification of Applebaum, the effect of which is to drag Darío down into adolescent amateurism, but sacrificing the brevity for an artificially and uniquely 'English' formal diction is an attempt to impose coherence and clarity onto what Darío deliberately left abrupt and ambiguous. Hurley has sacrificed an element of Darío's brilliance in order to lighten his supposed reader's burden and has therefore satisfied neither. The brevity, the staccato rhythm, and the slightly unnatural diction such as "Goza," which is very formal, and "bribón", which is very obscure, are the elements that leave separation between Darío and the text, prompting reflection and wonder in the reader.

The self-reflective strain is much less overt in several of the next several stories. "The Nymph" is a somewhat frivolous story about a group of young artists congregating at a castle owned by "Lesbia" and arguing about the existence of nymphs and satyrs until the end when the skeptical poet sees a nymph in the garden. Darío claims it was inspired directly from the Parnassian school, and subsequently the emphasis is clearly on the exotic images and the aesthetic rendering of language and not on weighty themes. "The Veil of Queen Mab" and "The

¹¹ "Long years ago" is Hurley's translation for the single past preterit verb "habían dicho"; "Here, disport yourself" is the translation for the single imperative "Goza", and "Life was great fun" is the translation for the reflexive verb "se divertía."

Ruby” are similar in their emphasis on exotic references over coherence. Many of the earliest critics of *Azul...* accused Darío of merely imitating the Parisian Parnassian school, and it is these stories that contribute to that accusation.¹² In 1883 *Le Nouveau Décaméron* was published in Paris and scholars agree that this was the primary inspiration for the “Cuentos en Prosa.” Darío’s legacy has survived the accusations of imitation, but the relationships between these stories and the Parnassian style contribute to translation. The emphasis of these stories is aesthetic effect and language, not plot coherence or social themes. Just like the effect of artificially imposing closure on “El Rey Burgeus,” any attempt to conform these stories to plot-centric devices in easily accessible English will result in a mere mediocre story, not a transmission of Darío and the birth pangs of *modernismo*.

“La Cancion del Oro” (The Song to Gold) is cited by many scholars as the most important story in the progression, and with the claim that the entire “Cuentos en Prosa” is a chiasm styled after the medieval *Libro de Buen Amor*’s section “De la propiedat que el dinero da” for which “La Cancion del Oro” is the center.¹³ Darío himself never claims this. It is probably a function of the decidedly Marxist perspective that dominated exegesis of Darío through the middle of twentieth century. Another “poem in prose”, the work features a “mendigo” (beggar) who sees an aristocrat descending his coach’s stairs and passing through the elaborate gate into his palace, and responds with a lyrical exposition of the evils of material wealth. When the song is complete, an old woman passes by and asks for alms, which the beggar provides, “mumbling under his breath.” The piece is beautifully written. The language is active and rhythmic with natural crescendos, climaxes, and breaks, and the repeated phrase “Cantemos el oro” (We sing to gold!) gives the progression an excitingly performative quality

¹² See Arellano, *Azul...; Nuevas Perspectivas*, 57, for a discussion about the different forms of imitation present in the “Cuentos en Prosa.”

¹³ See Watland, 121 and Arellano, 73.

that the English equivalent cannot match. We will see in his poem “Anagke” that in his youth, Darío wrote a few works that were expressions of adolescent cynicism and anger.¹⁴ “La Cancion del Oro” implores the translator to sublimate political or social theory in decisions about syntax and diction and emphasize the rhythm and power of the language.

The final three stories have a very different tone and style than the preceding works, with implications for the translator. “El Palacio del Sol” (The Palace of the Sun) and “El Pájaro Azul” (The Blue Bird) are both stories of young artists trapped in an indifferent world. The two artists are not in contrived circumstances like the poet and the bourgeois king; the stories are much more realistic and poignant. In “El Palacio del Sol,” a teenage girl falls ill and her mother and the doctor treat her as though she were anemic. She wanders around the garden, becoming more listless and faint, and just before she dies a fairy appears and carries her away to the sun palace where she is dazzled by light, beautiful art and people, and enchanting music. The story ends with a warning to the “Mothers of anemic young women,” not to cloister their daughters from the beauty of the world. In “El Pájaro Azul,” a poet, Garcín, is the most talented writer of his friends that he meets with regularly at a café in Paris. He complains that he has a blue bird in his brain that must escape but cannot. He believes that once his masterpiece is complete, the bird will be able to leave, but his father sends him a letter saying that he must stop writing verse and return to his home to work in the family store. Garcín finishes the poem, says goodbye to his friends as though he were returning to his father, and shoots himself in the head with a note exclaiming that he left the door open for the blue bird.

The style of the prose changes in the last stories. Darío dials down the formality of his language, the abrupt syntax, and the litany of exotic images for a more conversational and fluid delivery. He seems more comfortable engaging his obsession with the plight of the tormented

¹⁴ *Historia de mis libros*, trans. Andrew Hurley, 380.

poet in relatable stories instead of applying layers of oriental or mythological mediation. Both characters represent a lost generation of artists, trapped by archaic social conventions and forgotten amidst the new obsession with wealth and progress. In “El Rey Burgeus” the focus of the story is on the king, the villain that destroys the poet. In these stories the focus is entirely on the journey of the two tragic heroes; the young girl Berta is unable to articulate her pain until the fairy shows her the beauty and the ideal that she has been denied. Garcín is the tragic alter-ego of Darío, a poet seeking beauty in an indifferent world. The translator must shift the tone in these final stories, focalize the Dariana poets and render the other characters with a dry, cold indifference. There is less conspicuous brevity in the syntax, but the language is still not informal. It is stiff and refined, a reflection of the art-starved world in which Darío believes he lives, but without the eccentricity of some of the more “Parisian” stories.

Most scholars agree the short stories are more innovative in their language and content. The bourgeois king’s castle, Lesbia’s garden, the description of the sun palace, all of these images appear as though Darío extracted the world of Gautier’s *Enamels and Cameos*, in particular “Affinity” with its “Marble, pearl, dove, rose on tree,” and transplanted that world on South American characters and the Castilian tongue.¹⁵ He twists the characters of Pan and Orpheus with a nod to the French and English Romantics but an obvious knowledge of the originals.¹⁶ Darío pins down a millennium of literature and injects his own spirit, all originating from a sporadic education in the most remote of Spain’s former colonies. This, above all, is what amazed Juan Valera. The prose pieces reflect Darío’s sense of transience, his restlessness, lack of stable family and nationality. He turns to French Parnassian and Symbolist conventions for inspiration, finds solace in classical myths taken from Pindar, Homer, and Ovid, and

¹⁵ Trans. Agnes Lee, 38

¹⁶ Baker, 42-44

compensates for his youth with formal diction and abrupt syntax. Abstruse concepts pertaining to the history of world literature (as he knew it), classical philosophy, and the capacity of language to reflect beauty, become foundational for this wandering young artist. However, these stories are not just contrived or borrowed self-reflective characters; they are also the “historical relics” that came to symbolize the modern Spanish language and the essence of post-colonial Spanish American aesthetic sentiments. The translator must capture Darío’s personal inquietude in these characters, but be supremely careful not to filter the greater sociopolitical or philosophical significance of the text by conforming to simplified spoken English convention, or contriving coherence and closure by adapting the Spanish too liberally.

In “El Año Lírico”, the original verse portion of *Azul...*, the self-reflective strain is much more nuanced and speculative, but the understated intimations create exciting opportunities for translation. It is comprised of an ode to each of the seasons beginning with spring and progressing until winter, then a poem by Armand Silvestre that Darío translated into Spanish from the original French, and then the final poem “Anagke,” which Darío calls an “isolated poem.”¹⁷ Each season reveals something intimate about Darío’s character, something that Miguel Enguídanos called “inner tension” in his speech to the Rubén Darío Centennial Studies symposium in 1967. We can see more clearly now, in a different time, place and language, how Darío’s character is borne out in the verse of *Azul...* relative to his poetic achievement as prefiguring the *modernismo* movement.¹⁸ This concept of “inner tensions” helps temper our natural instinct to apply an orderly theory or ontology to his work, and instead embrace the contradictions. *Azul...*, particularly its verse, operates in the “pallid, gray” space he invokes so

¹⁷ *Historia de mis libros*, trans. Andrew Hurley, 380.

¹⁸ Enguídanos, 15

often, amidst the sun-sparkled mist and golden dust that color so many of the images in his poetry.

“Primaverál” (Ode to Spring), is a fascinating piece to consider the disposition of the poet, in part because the poem itself is the least impressive of the four. The form is a simple octosyllabic romance style without a rhyme scheme, and the sequence of images seems out of sync. In the Spanish, the reader can appreciate the “verse llano” (plain verse) internal rhythm with its two stresses per line, generally the minor stress on the third syllable and the major stress on the penultimate or antepenultimate syllable. Romance languages, in particular Spanish, are much better suited to waltzy dactyls than English, and no translation can fully recreate that experience. However, octosyllabic “verse llano” lines were well established by Darío’s time making it unremarkable, and the rhythm does not compensate for overall blandness of the poem. As a reflection of a young Darío, the poem insinuates that spring is not his favorite season. He is searching for images of growth, rebirth, and the greening of barren landscapes, but he cannot find the images or feel the blossoming. There is tension within him stifling the language.

Whitman, in “Starting from Paumanok”, addresses his younger self:

What are you doing young man?
Are you so earnest, so given up to literature, science, art, amours?
These ostensible realities, politics, points?
Your ambition or business whatever it may be?¹⁹

It is helpful to consider the self-reflective strain of Darío’s “Primaverál” as being in dialogue with this excerpt. Whitman is recalling his restless youth with fondness, reliving that exciting period of idealism, exploration, and unlimited potential. Darío is that young man, confronted with the fast pace and anonymity of the “urbe moderna”, but without the fondness of nostalgia, just the anxiety of present uncertainty. Whitman’s poem is effortlessly expansive, sweeping

¹⁹ Leaves of Grass, 22

through time and space as though viewing the landscape and its history in panorama. Darío quite literally cannot see the forest for the trees. “Primaveral” begins:

Mes de rosas. **Van mis rimas
en ronda;** a la vasta selva

In three different translations there are three different renderings of “Van mis rimas / en ronda” precisely because translators, just as readers, have difficulty placing “rimas” (rhymes) as a metonym for the poet in physical relation to the “vasta selva (vast forest).” There are six direct images of forest, jungle, or trees in the first stanza, and despite Darío’s attempt to open the space with “flitting birds” and “floating holy perfume of love,” the landscape never breaks free from the shadow of the “robust, tall, powerful” trees.

In the second stanza the poet addresses the nameless, voiceless, feminized and mythologized counterpart. The arc of the poem shifts from a celebration of Spring imagery to Spring as context for the poet’s pursuit of this faceless ideal known only as “my love” in the refrain that concludes each stanza. He is obsessed with the role and the function of himself as poet, accentuated by the voiceless ideal that the poet feels compelled to seduce even though she is a captive audience, but because the images do not flow freely and Spring does not naturally assume the role of context, there is a slight sense of insecurity that projects through the verse. Nothing on the scale of *Abrojos*; Darío draws his aesthetic and philosophical perception of the poet in relation to society and art from Hugo as his inspiration, and the intellections are subsequently complex and provocative, though not as effectively rendered in this piece.²⁰

The grander themes of poetry and art in relation to society and ontology are critical to any translation effort and we will explore those in our discussion of *modernismo* and the post-colonial effect, but the translation challenge that “Primaveral” presents in relation to the self-

²⁰ See Giese, 44-45.

reflective thread is the difficulty in finding equivalency in prepositions and placement. It is a natural disjoint between Spanish in its descent from Latin, and the Germanic mixed evolution of English, and Darío's tight form and brevity exacerbate the difficulty.²¹ Acereda translates "Van mis rimas / en ronda, a la selva..." as "my rhymes go / round, to the vast forest." The translation is literal but the direct substitution of the Spanish "a" for the English "to" infers much more direction and purpose in the movement of the "rhymes" than "en ronda" insinuates. In terms of the poet's locational relationship to the forest, Kemp's 1965 translation of "wander through..." is more accurate and follows the directionless theme of the poem. The "forest" (bosque and selva in Spanish) is the location of much of the poetry in *Azul...*; it brings to mind his home in Nicaragua and alludes to other poetic traditions such as the "Mountain Girl" of the medieval Archpriest of Hita, and the pastoral settings of Romantic renderings of Pan, both of which were inspirations for Darío. The poet's location in relation to the forest is critical to the relationships between different metaphors and representations throughout the work.

Syllables in Spanish poetry are more fluid than in English. Darío is maintaining a relatively strict octosyllabic structure, and separated by poetic syllables, the second line proceeds "en – ron – da a – la – vas – sta- sel – va." Darío may have used "a la selva" instead of "por la selva" in order to maintain the syllable count. The issue is larger than mere literal equivalency versus manipulation to maintain form. In this poem and throughout the others, the translator must treat prepositions carefully, as indicators of the poet's perceived location relative to his images and inspirations; he must avoid the tendency in English to compensate for the brevity and

²¹ Prepositions such as "allá" and "aquí", and demonstratives such as "esto" and "eso" have charted paths from the nominative and accusative cases of their Latin equivalents. The terms are more formal and encompassing in Spanish literature than their taught English equivalents such as "over there" for "allá". "Allá" not only refers to the distance in relation to the object, but can simultaneously function as a pronoun. To achieve the same intent in English, students learn "that one over there." Obviously, when dealing with poetry where form and sophistication are critical, that English equivalent is often not desirable.

lexical interchangeability of Spanish by including unnecessary prepositions. If there is no appropriate vocabulary to treat location such as Kemp's "wander through", the translator must develop a comfort with ambiguity and let the context and theme of the poem fill the gap for the reader. Prepositions that are not substantively critical or absolutely necessary should be omitted.

"Estival" (Summer Song) is a sharp contrast from "Primaverál." It is a long lyric poem that follows a male and female tiger through an elaborate, sensual courtship and mating ritual that culminates with "touch; the impulsive / forces pulling with astonishing force / Oh great Pan!...pollen, sap, heat, tendons, bark." The poem cycles twice, building potential energy, then exploding and allowing the debris to settle. The first cycle is the tigers' courtship culminating the arrival of Pan to celebrate the fervor of their sexual union. Then the second chapter opens with the Prince of Wales embarking on a hunt, his servant train and dogs enveloping him, spotting the pair of tiger lovers, the shot of the rifle and the female tiger with her "belly torn open." The language is rapid and violent with few overt metaphors or classical invocations compared to the other works. Anticipation, eroticism, and anguish are the dominating threads throughout the poem, but applying this intensity to tigers instead of humans or standard mythological characters throws the reader slightly off kilter. The poem is undeniably sticky. It grabs the reader, builds suspense, and inspires reflection about the intended representations and the possible meaning of the sordid ending where the male lion (the female was killed by the hunter) dreams he is opening his lover's belly with his claws and devouring their unborn cubs.

Darío writes in his own *Historia de mis libros* several decades later that he intended, with "Estival", to "render a piece of force."²² The piece has generated very limited critical discussion and there is only one accessible print translation into English. What critical discussion exists in Spanish revolves around the representations and potential allegories from a sociopolitical

²² Trans. Andrew Hurley, 380.

perspective. It seems odd that few notable critics have explored “Estival” psychoanalytically. Darío is a young man in a perpetual state of unrequited love that transposes an intensely vivid lustful interaction and subsequent disaster onto fantastical beasts. In much of “El Año Lírico” we get the impression that Darío is flooded with inspiration, emotion, fleeting and grand yet unclear ideas, and that the poet is compressing and managing the torrent through tightly formed and concise language, anguishing over every word and trying to subdue his visions. That impression is strongest in “Estival” where he channels passion and violence onto exotic beasts, and creates a tragedy with a foul final image. All of this in a lyric form of intermittent seven and eleven syllable lines with different rhyme schemes depending on the length of the stanzas. In order to match the line length or the rhyme, the translator would have to sacrifice the critical pace and the active voice, all for a mediocre replication of form that would be dangerously close to creating a ‘sing-songy’ effect.

Autumnal (Autumn Song) is the peak of Darío’s poetic accomplishment in *Azul*.... It is the only poem from this first work that he dedicates more than a sentence to in his own *Historia de mis libros*, and he recalls the inspiration and the experience of writing the poem fondly, saying it contains the “intimate music” of his “pleasant yearnings.” Autumn is Darío’s Spring, a journey and an awakening. It is in the same lyric style of alternating heptasyllabic and hendecasyllabic lines, but it creates a much different musical effect than “Estival.” The language flows smoothly and breaks free, finally, from the stifling heat of an enclosed jungle to achieve the floating panorama that Whitman does so effortlessly. “Autumnal” reveals the euphoria that overcomes Darío when he finds his voice and his aesthetic. He flies with his “friendly fairy” exclaiming “Más!” as she shows him beautiful image after beautiful image, creating some of the now iconic Dariana images such as “the pallid afternoons” and “into the blue.” The refrain

creates a gradual crescendo which Darío manages perfectly with internal rhythms and repeated images, until the end when he sees a beautiful woman's face, and it is that of the Pierides. The fairy gives the poet a knowing smile and, culminating the crescendo and closing the ring structure, he is left resting his "pensive head" in his "burning hands" just like the "tranquil clouds" that opened the poem. At the height of his inspiration he must accept that the truth he seeks, the perfection of art and beauty, will always be just out of his reach. But it is not a despairing disillusionment; it is a joyful realization that his poetic calling is the pursuit of perfect harmony.

Octavio Paz celebrates the verse in *Azul...* because he believes that Spanish and Spanish-American romantics, unlike their English and French language contemporaries, never defined their movement or understood what space their poetry should occupy. It is a view shared by most scholars of 19th century poetry. *Azul...* encapsulated and began to define a rising intellectual tide in Spanish America and "Autumnal" is its seminal piece of verse. One of the last images before the crash caused by the Pierides' face is the wind carrying "músicas nunca oídas" (music never heard). It is reminiscent of Keats' *Ode on a Grecian Urn*:

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,

Darío finds his own philosophical harmony in the solace of becoming one of the "more endear'd" ears, able to celebrate the "unheard" melodies while those "sensual ear[s]" continue in ignorance.²³ It is the intellectual seed of *modernismo* that would blossom in the years following *Azul....*

²³ It is impossible to know if Darío knew Keats' work or invoked him intentionally, but we do know that Darío became familiar with English romantic poets in general while working in the National Library of Nicaragua a few years before *Azul...*

The translator must celebrate with Darío, imbuing the images in English with the same power and grace that the original achieves in Spanish. There are two translations of “Autumnal” into English, one by Acereda and Derusha in 2001 which is a standard literal rendering, and another fascinating adaptation by Salamón de la Selva, a Nicaraguan poet, who converts the poem to a 19th century British romantic poem a la Keats or Shelley. Selva must compromise much of the literal equivalency between languages to construct his iambic pentameter closed couplets, but the classic English meter and Selva’s effective manipulation of internal rhythm does impressively mirror the pace and fluidity of Darío’s Spanish. The Acereda and Derusha is certainly adequate to convey the meaning, but their attempt to simulate the ‘verso llano’ internal rhythm of the Spanish with anapests amidst the iambs sometimes results in a failed compromise. The diction suffers, particularly at the points where power is in concision, when the translator prefers the rhythm over the words. For example, they translate ““músicas nunca oídas” as “kinds of music never heard before” in order to develop an adapted ‘verse llano’ instead of letting the diction project the power in “music never heard.” It is worthwhile to pursue as close an English rendering of the rhythm and form as possible, but strength in diction should never be compromised to that end.

“Invernal” (Winter Song), Darío’s finale in the season sequence, warrants significant treatment from a self-reflective perspective despite being largely overlooked in the secondary literature over the past century. Like “Primaverál,” the scene is closed, but here it is a deliberate contrast between the “Great Andes” and the small single-lamped room with its burning fireplace. And like “Primaverál,” we meet a nameless, voiceless feminized ideal in the second stanza, but in winter she becomes eroticized. She is not a fairy or a nymph, or a feminized personification of Art, Beauty, or Poetry. She is a woman bathed in the firelight, her “bare shoulders and neck”

covered for warmth, her hands “touching his hair / breath grazing his cheek” in a “thousand ardent caresses.” Darío’s winter ideal is the physical object of his “infinite longing.”

Petrarch’s Laura operates in the physical and the transcendent realms simultaneously and Darío is trying to strike the same balance. In *Rime sparse*, Laura is at times very real, offering the “open gift of your lovely eyes and your angelic sweet voice,” and when she is most real, the poet retreats into faith, asking Christ to remind his “wandering thoughts” that “today you were on the cross.”²⁴ As Durling states in the introduction to his translation, “Petrarch brought woman down from Heaven to earth,” but the poem is not about her, it is about the paradox of desire and rationality, an affective exploration of the Augustinian critique of sexuality.²⁵ Darío wants his winter woman to similarly occupy both worlds. She is physical warmth in a dark and cold world, and she is an expression of the unity of Love, Beauty, and Art. The exotic, oriental images are intended to counterbalance the sensual descriptions and confer a metaphoric quality on his winter queen, but Darío cannot yet manage these two levels smoothly and the woman’s sensuality overpowers the aesthetic. Petrarch’s *Rime sparse* has a dilatant quality, grounded in the passage of time, events and anniversaries that inspire nostalgia, and a consistent point of friction between the Christian ethic and the power of physical love. The work therefore takes on a didactic and sage-like quality. Darío’s aesthetic is not as tethered, and his inner conflict not as well developed, presumably because he is so young. He can *feel* the power of physical love and desire, but he is still searching for the transcendent ethic that is its opposite. On the spectrum of classic poets that influenced Darío, “Invernal” comes off much more like Sappho than Dante or Petrarch.

²⁴ *Rime sparse, Numbers 62-63*, trans. Robert Durling.

²⁵ Durling, 7.

The final two poems in the original 1888 edition of “El Año Lírico” were “Pensamiento de Otoño” (Autumn Thoughts), the translation of Armand Silvestre, and “Anagke”, a poem that Darío claims rose out of a moment of “disenchantment and the bitter taste of certain readings not likely to raise one’s spirit into the light of the supreme truths.”²⁶ The latter does present a reflection of the philosophical confusion and religious cynicism that plagued a young Darío, but neither poem contributes meaningfully to our understanding of the poet’s state of mind. In the 1890 edition he added a call to action piece entitled “A un poeta” (To the poet) where the poet is compared to post-emasculation Hercules and Samson, imploring him to recover the strength of his poetic voice and not “be a slave to some beautiful eyes.” It has also received very little critical attention and, beyond an early prefigurement of Darío and the *modernismo* movement’s conception of the role of poetry in art, it does not offer a meaningful self-reflective perspective.

It is much more difficult to identify a common lesson for the translation of the verse in “El Año Lírico” than it is to generalize about the style and currents within the prose. To Parnassians such as Gautier, from whom Darío got so much inspiration, form was paramount.²⁷ Most critics of Darío, particularly more contemporary scholars, focus on the internal rhythm and the force of diction in the verse over the form.²⁸ Julio Tigerino states every poetic device in *Azul...*, the rhythm, structure, meaning and metaphor, all reduce to diction in what was a deliberate effort by the poet (13). This question of whether to attempt to mimic form has plagued previous translators. Applebaum chooses a strictly line by line literal approach in all of his verse translation, and even as I have repeatedly valued diction over form, his results show that a balance must be struck. The product seems amateurish, precisely the opposite effect we want to portray of a transitional text that broke out, in part, due to the contrast of sophistication

²⁶ *Historia de mis libros*, 380, trans. Andrew Hurley

²⁷ Agnes Lee in his translation of Gautier, 12.

²⁸ See Julio Tigerino, “La Palabra y el Ritmo en Rubén Darío.”

and youthful vitality. Acereda and Derusha achieve a much nicer balance, but there are obvious sacrifices in diction to achieve elements of form and rhythm. It is an unequal exchange, the power of Darío's diction for a watered down approximation of his form.

The majority of exegesis of Darío revolves around *modernismo*, his mystical anagoge, and the social and political intersections of these elements; correspondingly, most of the criticism focuses on Darío's later works that exemplified these themes more directly. What is more important than laboring over the extent to which a translation of *Azul...* should mimic the verse forms, is informing every independent decision with our understanding of the poet. *Azul...* foreshadows the future of *modernismo* and Darío's intellectual philosophies, but it is easy to rely on general criticism and then overstate its presence in this work. The Darío of *Azul...* is still becoming himself, breaking from the long winded and presumptuous work of his childhood, the morose self-absorption of his late adolescence, and ultimately maturing as an artist. *Azul...* is the expression of an artist discovering his craft. The translation must accentuate the erotic, resist the urge to over-clarify relative locations with English prepositions, and generally prefer the diction over the form whenever the two cannot be reconciled. Instead of asking what Darío would have done were he an English poet, we must guide our translation according to the elements that we know Darío valued.

The idea that a translator may ask what Darío would have done were he an English poet is a profound segue into a discussion about the meaning and evolution of *modernismo*, in particular its relationship to sociopolitical criticism and ideologies. *Modernismo* was a uniquely Latin American response to Western models of progress. The cosmopolitan nature of *Azul...*, the adapting of traditional Castilian language with Gallicisms and archaic Latinate forms, and the emphasis on images of beauty over character development and moral or political themes, all

reflect fundamental aspects of a society operating with complex ethnic, cultural, intellectual, and ideological divisions. For Latin America, the late 19th century was a unique, very brief, and extremely important transitional period. It was only decades beyond its own independence from Spain, and still adjusting to that independence with institutions and a language that were stamped by the former colonizer. Meanwhile, European economic powers, in particular Britain throughout this period, were expanding their footprint in major trading cities creating the dichotomy between the progress of European capitalism that engendered some necessary concessions of sovereignty, and the ideal of self-determination and a political and social identity for which the newly freed Central and South Americans longed. Finally, in 1898, the United States would defeat Spain in a war over the remaining few colonies that would begin the century of constant military intervention, political coercion, and economic dependence that has created the political, social, and ideological binary that persists today. *Modernismo* is the only intellectual movement that is both uniquely Latin American in its post-colonial context and exists outside the specter of United States' domination. It is a perspective that is increasingly relevant as the Hispanic and Anglophone U.S. cultures continue their collision, and one that can never be captured by asking what Darío would have done were he an English speaking poet.

It can be tempting to dismiss everything that does not immediately inform the translation of *Azul...*, to learn only enough context and apply just enough theory to create a satisfactory product, or to simply rely on the predominance of Darío in the Spanish language literature world as justification for a translation. Susan Bassnett consolidates a lot of theoretical chatter in her observation that translators “are not innocent producers of text. The works they create are part of a process of manipulation that shapes and conditions our attitudes to other cultures while purporting to be something else” (99). The only way for a translation to realize the potential of

this work is to communicate the essence of an embryonic *modernismo*, and make it relevant today. There is purity in *Azul...*, purity in a young poet that is remarkably well read but not yet tinged by critics or the Academy, and purity in a people that are anxious but excited, disconcerted by the present but optimistic about the future. For this brief period, Latin America wanted a voice that expressed beauty without the disenfranchisement of colonialism or the depressing politics of capitalism. Our goal is to preserve that moment of expression in its relative purity, first by understanding *modernismo* in its own time and ours, and then by devising a strategy for translation that is theoretically sound and practical.

Cathy Jade divides *modernismo* into two distinct periods. The early movement emphasized aesthetics, language, and expression while the later movement began the explicit search for a Spanish American identity (19). She gives credit to José Martí as the first genuine modernista, but it was the rise of *Azul...* to literary preeminence that created the phenomenon that books are written about today. Gautier and the Parisian Parnassians were Darío's primary influence, and the movement quickly assumed Gautier's brand *l'art pour l'art* as its central tenant. According to the Parnassians, art was considered to have intrinsic value, external to society or philosophy, and the poet's role was to create beauty with his verse and not be beholden to a patron or a worldly polemic.²⁹ The French spokespeople for this movement were rejecting bourgeois values, at least in their art, and it is that general strain that we read in the young, conflicted Darío trying to survive in Chile. He borrowed their images to construct a world of poetic beauty parallel to his own world. Gautier's "Affinity: A Pantheistic Madrigal" ends with the line "Pearl or marble, rose or dove,"³⁰ images that Darío carried throughout *Azul...* as depictions of the exotic ideal, aristocratic opulence, youthful amorous anticipation, and artistic

²⁹ Cruickshank, 17

³⁰ Trans. Agnes Lee, 41

perfection. In Gautier, each word is a component of a meticulously constructed poetic formula, a combination of stresses and consonants to fit a rigid form, and a culmination of a tight stanzaic progression depicting a singular image of beauty. Darío appropriates these images for their aesthetic value but is never so isolated in his devotion to form.

The French opposition to normative relationships between society and art has a history rooted in the French Revolution; since then, artists had begun questioning their patronage relationship to the aristocracy, and the new bourgeois during this period of capitalist expansion was a natural extension.³¹ The Spanish American cultural context was not so linear; artists and poets did not have the national epic tradition, the historical ties to the political and religious elites reinforced by artistic institutions, or pride in a “national language” in the way that Vossler explains European linguistic consolidation. The Spanish language is a colonial institution imposed onto Latin America, and Darío’s incorporation of French, Latin, Greek, and to a lesser extent English and Italian, reflects the poet’s linguistic transience. In association with French Parnassianism, early critics of *modernismo* accused it of being escapist, of failing to engage the weighty questions confronting these newly independent societies and instead retreating into mythology and oriental images. At the advent of *modernismo*, the critical conversation was a competition between different schools, the Parnassians, Symbolists, Decadents, Positivism and Formalism, and various other perspectives that forced each into its own narrow camp for the sake of uniqueness. *Azul...* incorporated strategies and images from all of these schools but with a previously unheard Latin American voice; Darío may have attempted to escape the social and political forces that surround him through artistic impression, but his place and time in history would never allow his work to be categorized in the same artistically ‘escapist’ genre as the French Parnassians.

³¹ Baker, 38

Towards the end of Darío's life he published a letter on *modernismo* that defined it in more geopolitical terms. He states that "In Latin America, we had this movement before Castilian Spain, and for reasons of the utmost clarity: our immediate material and spiritual commerce with the many nations of the world..."³² This quote comes as he reflects on his impact in Latin America and the kind of identity that the continent engenders. Scholars in the mid-twentieth century seized on such excerpts to describe Darío's corpus in Marxist, anti-imperialist, and post-colonial terminology. Once *modernismo* was separated from the comparatively small conflicts over different intellectual school's modes of expression, critics focused on his social and political currents. Despite his distant, and at times dismissive, treatment of contemporary politics, it is truly as Fidel Gonzalez noted in 1988: politics necessarily invades all of his works...in his time one always chose sides (36). This perspective on *modernismo* continued into the late 20th century with culminating works by very sophisticated Marxists such as Ángel Rama who applied complex theories such as "transculturation" to help contextualize the mixture of races, responses to colonialism, responses to the inequality of capitalism, and responses to the then visible intervention of the United States in Central and South America in relation to *modernismo* literature. In this light, the bourgeois king represents the quintessential imperialist and capitalist, surrounding himself with self-proclaimed experts, dictating hierarchies of art and value based on imported models, and marginalizing indigenous voices. Some scholars distorted every element of Darío's work to fit a Marxist social model. Arturo Torres-Rioseco, in a speech that reads more like an angry rant than scholarly exegesis, claimed that in *Azul*... Darío created a new language in mythology in response to his disgust at the "incipient culture" of capitalism. That type of claim discounts millennia of literary evolution

³² Trans. Hurley, 371

for Pan, Orpheus, and the other characters that Darío invokes, all of which the poet was well versed in and to whose tradition he consciously contributed.³³

In more recent years the emphasis on Darío's politics and the connection to post-colonial and other Marx derived theories has nuanced into a perspective that is both socially engaged but intellectually independent of politics. *Modernismo* is now understood to be a more than an escapist world of fantasy art or a call for worker revolt, but rather an encompassing and somewhat mystical reaction against philosophies and world views that created the economic inequality, violent imperialism, and brutish theories of social Darwinism.³⁴ Artists such as Darío were proclaiming that even as oligarchs, European trade markets, and rigid class hierarchy kept economic and political challenges in check, art would not be tamped so easily. Their desire was not to dismantle the economic or political system, but to "establish a mode of discourse" that responded to the anxiety felt by a generation of Spanish Americans who were realizing that the "breakthroughs" of so called modernity were not resolving any existential angst but rather exacerbating it (Jrade, 17). Literature was privileged over the cacophony of political rhetoric because it was seen as the older, truer representation of history and the human condition. They were searching for unity, harmony, and truth in poetry, something they believed was found in expressions of beauty. Consider Berta, the "anemic" young woman, languishing in a dull, closed society with commoditized art surrounding her in an aristocratic garden, close to death until a phantasm expands her mind and shows her true beauty. In this vein, the classical myths offered a sense of timelessness and comprehensiveness that counteracted the effect of an increasingly fragmented, rapidly changing world.

³³ Trans. David Flory, 86

³⁴ Jrade, 36

Viewing it in retrospect, we are at an advantage in understanding and articulating what *modernismo* meant to different literary and cultural communities in different times.³⁵ We certainly understand *modernismo* better than Darío did when the first edition of *Azul...* was published. Although *Azul...* is generally considered to be “apolitically aesthetic” in the sense that *modernismo* was not yet mature, it is steeped in post-colonial context.³⁶ Lawrence Venutti says that the greatest “scandal in translation” is that it forms static identities in the translated culture through omission, assimilation, and domesticized aesthetics (67). Niranjana takes it further, relating the practice of translation to the reinforcement of “asymmetrical relations of power that operate under colonialism (2).” Post-colonial studies have shown that a hierarchical relationship between languages has emerged, one in which the ‘dominant’ language submerges the ‘weaker.’ If we incorporate Walter Benjamin’s discussion about the “ideal” language of unitary expression and Derrida’s concept of language as metaphor, we see that submerging Darío’s “language” in translation re-disenfranchises the voice that is trying to instate itself in *Azul....*

The project takes on new urgency today as the intersection of the traditional Anglophone United States and the Spanish hablante Latin community becomes more vibrant, in some cases violent, in other cases inspiring. Latin America and the United States occupy what Mary Louise Pratt terms a “contact zone” between cultures, a place where “disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of dominance and subordination” (4). Her 1992 book is a precursor to the explosion of theoretical and journalistic exploration of the ongoing cultural collision between Latin America and the U.S., particularly along the Mexican-U.S. border. Just as Darío in 1888 could never have comprehensively articulated how

³⁵ Eguídanos, 15

³⁶ Jade, 42

modernismo would form the Latin American intellectual ideal, today we cannot imagine what “voice” will ultimately capture this moment for either side of the asymmetrical struggle. It is for this reason that *Azul...* is so “translatable” in the Damrosch sense that the issues and values are relatable across boundaries. Translation, done well, can narrow the gap between cultures in collision and begin to equalize, at least culturally, the asymmetries that characterize the relationship. Walt Whitman brought to life an America with a never-ending horizon and endless optimism, then Upton Sinclair revealed the closed spaces and characters suffocating beneath that optimism. Darío and *Azul...* in translation can demonstrate what the Latin American intellectual and poetic ideal was in its pure state – not for the Spanish American literary scholars that already know Darío, but for the Anglophone scholars that continue to operate as though the Spanish language and its literary tradition are not infiltrating every aspect of U.S. culture and identity.

It is much more difficult to articulate a practical strategy for translation in the post-colonial context than it is to articulate a lofty goal about ‘preserving and empowering the voice of the original.’ Darío makes it even more difficult due to his ambivalent relationship with the cultural institutions of Western Europe. In his later works we see him try to reconcile his “hands of a Marquis” with his mixed indigenous bloodline and the asymmetries of power surrounding him, but his own identity was one of a pure artist.³⁷ He believed himself to be part of the line of poets from Homer to Hugo, not a voice for the oppressed. Niranjana does not offer any practical guidance for navigating ambivalent relationships. Instead of strategies for “narrowing the gap” between cultures in translation, she endeavors instead to “think through this gap” (9). Venutti offers a bit more help. In *Scandals of Translation* he charges the translator to limit the

³⁷ Trans. Aceredo and Derusha, 113. *Palabras Liminares* was published as part of *Prosas Profanas* in 1896 after Darío was already the spokesperson for the *modernismo* movement and was continuing to define its tenants in relation to the cultural and artistic space it occupied. The Darío of *Azul...* did not yet command that voice or that space.

ethnographic movement within the text, to resist the urge to “suppress the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text” for the sake of the dominant culture’s audience (67). It is an idea he develops further in *The Translator’s Invisibility* where he calls for the “foreignizing” of translations, essentially an end to the practice of making the translator transparent. Perhaps the clearest guidance comes from Dryden:

“[the translator] ought to possess himself entirely and perfectly comprehend the genius and sense of his author, the nature of the subject, and the terms of the art of subject treated of. And then he will express himself as justly, and with as much life, as if he wrote an original.”³⁸

I would never contend that a translation is the same as an original, but Dryden’s advice to learn as much about the work and the author and let that knowledge inform every decision is refreshingly accommodating.

The cast of characters in *Azul...* that could potentially take on representations of colonialism or exploitative capitalism is long. The bourgeois king, the Olympic gods and deaf satyr, Lesbia, the tragic father of Garcín, heartsick mother of Berta, and the tiger hunting Prince of Wales. Just like the translator should not impose coherence onto Darío’s ambiguity or ‘Englishize’ his brevity, the translator must strike a balance between maintaining the ostensible political indifference in *Azul...* yet recognizing the undeniable colonial influences in these characters. Lesbia must carry an air of undeserved entitlement as she drinks her “chartreuse”, then confidence and sagaciousness as she declares the existence of nymphs, then childlike innocence at the end when she “looked at me like a cat and laughed like a little girl being tickled.” The father of Garcín must be both cause and victim of his son’s death. Berta’s mother must be conflicted and genuine in her concern. All of this must be communicated in Darío’s brief syntax. Luckily for the translator, the post-colonial stamp in *Azul...* is very submerged

³⁸ Bassnett, 149

limiting the number of direct lexical decisions that create issues of hierarchal representation. Even in stories and poems with overt social commentaries, Darío avoids accusations save that of the bourgeois king, and even that allegory is steeped in oriental images and fantasy mediating the effect. In “The Bale,” a dock worker’s hardworking, intelligent teenage son, working to help feed his family, is killed by a massive bale when the chains on which it is suspended break. There is no capitalist aristocrat controlling the ship, no slave master whipping the back of the workers, just the tragedy of a poor working family. It is much the same with Garcín and Berta. Darío does not directly discuss the political or social cause of their sickness, and he spends very little time developing the characters that prompt the tragedy.

The power of the colonial subtext is in its understatement, and the real risk in translation is rhetorical; domesticizing the text into English will fix Darío and the work to its surface level content, deny the uniquely innovative nature of the language, and fail to communicate how Darío’s inner tension reflected the asymmetries surrounding him. Hurley’s translations of the short stories exemplify the stifling effect of what Venuti terms “ethnocentric negation” (81). In “The Palace of the Sun” Darío repeats a description of Berta as “gentil como la princesa de un cuento azul.” Hurley morphs “cuento azul” into “fairytale” (instead of “blue story” as it translates literally) in order to be more accessible to his English speaking audience without concern for the layers of significance behind Darío’s use of color to project tone. The Anglophone reader perceives “fairytale” in comfortable and domestic terms evoking childhood nostalgia or particular character and thematic associations. Throughout *Azul...*, the color that is the title represents the artistic ideal, and that significance is tied to Berta through this “cuento azul.” It is part of the inner tension operating within text, the struggle for an ideal through art and beauty, and Hurley whitewashes to turn it into a “fairytale.” Worse still, when the prose is

Englishized, the stories become mediocre in their simplicity. Berta now has none of the familiarity of the English fairytale princess, and none of the complexity of Darío's ideal. Hurley does the same when he morphs "Hasta la vista" at the conclusion of "The Bourgeois King" to "And with that moral to my tale, adieu." The English reader should be aware that the themes, characters, and diction are foreign and unfamiliar, and that the depth of the work requires some small effort at cross-cultural consideration, not unidirectional cultural transference.

Preserving the "foreignness" of the text in translation can become counterproductive if in the process we create something that does not connect with the new audience. No matter how we define our norms or couch our theory, a translation can simply be *bad* if, as Damrosch says, it "fails to convey the force and beauty of the original" (168). Striking a balance between the cultural uniqueness of the work and communicating the beauty and force is somewhat straightforward in the prose. We preserve Darío's diction, avoid English 'catch-phrases' that come with their own unique cultural assumptions because we, the translator, believe them to be 'equivalents,' and conform the syntax to English convention sufficiently to prevent an awkward reading experience from masking the potential of the work. It is a more difficult balance in the verse because issues of form and rhythm complicate diction. Strictly literal translation results in what Damrosch would characterize as *bad* in its failure to convey the beauty of the original, but too much leniency with the diction to preserve Darío's form and the piece loses its "soul," as he believed each word to contain.³⁹ Often, the result is the previously discussed unequal exchange resulting in watered down diction for the sake of an approximation of form. The project is not doomed to mediocrity, however it requires more participation by the reader to bring out the complexity. Each element of Darío's poetry is an adaptation of the influences that inspired him, from the Parnassian and Symbolist images to the Hugoesque obsession with the poet's location,

³⁹ Trans., Aceredo and Derusha, 113.

the Sappho inspired eroticism, and the return of Pan to his more classical role. The translator must preserve those influences in the verse, and the reader must recognize and appreciate how these different voices come together to fertilize the egg of *modernismo*.

Returning to the “Hasta la vista” example, if the target audience for this translation is the American English speaking reader, the translation paradoxically performs best if the original Spanish is retained. Since Alurista and the Chicano movement began in the 1960’s, there has been an explosion in both theoretical literature and fiction that mixes Spanish with English, exploring the cultural assimilation that continues around us.⁴⁰ The vast majority explores the Spanish hablante perspective of the cultural shift, and the effect that English is having on the Latin American Spanish language. Diffusion has occurred in both directions, albeit unequal, but even in cases where Spanish phrases or concepts are borrowed by Anglophones without change, they are still often referred to as “mock Spanish” by Spanish language scholars, highlighting the tension operating within this “contact zone.”⁴¹ Retaining Darío’s Spanish at critical points throughout the text in a sophisticated and understated way has theoretical and practical advantages. First, it immediately accentuates the foreignness of the work for the reader, divorcing it from the assumptions and associations tied to the English language literary tradition. Second, it generates more options for retaining the form and the cadence in the poetry, and the tone in the prose.

In “The Bourgeois King” the court and poet continuously address the king as “Señor”; it is a more versatile phrase in Spanish than in English, and rather than struggle between “your highness”, “sir”, or the various other potential equivalents, it can remain as “Señor.” This will separate the king from the associations of royalty built through a thousand years of English

⁴⁰ Bassnett, 83

⁴¹ González, 293

language literature, and place the poet and the king in the world of metaphor where they belong. Some exclamatory phrases such as “Dios mío!” and “Y bien!” are simple opportunities to remind the reader of Darío’s Latin American context, and again, avoid encumbering the phrases with the connotations of their English equivalents. Others, such as “y más allá” as a preposition indicating location in “The Song to Gold,” beneficially complicate the poet’s perceived location by forcing the reader to traverse languages. Finally, refrains offer unique opportunities to retain the thread and the force that Darío intended, particularly in the verse. “Primaverál” concludes each stanza with a celebration of Spring to his “amada mía” and in Autumnal the fairy continues to ask the poet “Más?.” These are just a few examples of the places within *Azul...* that Darío’s Spanish can be retained to the benefit of the text, the reader, and the diachronic evolution of the “contact zone” between Anglo American and Latin American literary scholarship that has thus far been a demonstration of Latin American resentment and Anglo American obstinacy.

In *Songs of Experience* William Blake asks of the tiger, “What immortal hand or eye / Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?” His tiger is fierce and barbaric, described in terms of anatomical strength and machine-like precision, causing the poet to question his maker. The tiger represents a part of creation that man cannot understand. We cannot reconcile the tiger’s ferocity, brute strength and capacity for destruction with our Christian ethic or our presumed vision of utopia. How could a fierce animal, one capable and willing to destroy the innocent lamb that is so connected with Christ, be a part of a coherent creation story? “Did he smile his work to see?” Darío’s tiger in “Estival” is the beauty of creation. His ferocity, his animal strength and fecundity, his “broad claw / that drives fiercely into the nape of the bull / and tears flesh” represent the unified, harmonious artistic ideal that establishes coherence in the creation myth. For Darío, the question is not why did God make the tiger, but why did God make man.

In order for *Azul...* to “gain in translation,” it must inspire that question in the engaged reader. It must make the reader wish to restore the satyr his hearing so that Orpheus can serenade him, beg to be taken to the palace of the sun, and question why the faces of the Pierides halts instead of inspires the Autumnal ode.

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Stories in Prose

The Bourgeois King

Amigo! The sky is opaque, the air cold, the day sad. A happy story..., as if to distract the foggy, gray melancholies, frozen here:

In an immense, brilliant city there was a very powerful king that had capricious, luxurious suits, both black and white nude slaves, horses with long manes, brilliant weapons, hunters with bronze horns and swift hounds that filled the wind with their fanfare. Was he a poet king? No, amigo mío: he was a bourgeois king.

The sovereign was very enthusiastic about the arts and favored his musicians with grand munificence, his makers of dithyrambs, painters, sculptors, apothecaries, barbers, and fencing champions.

When he went to the glade, together with wounded, bloody deer and wild boar, he would make his professors of rhetoric improvise alluding songs; the servants would fill cups of bubbling, golden wine and the women would clap their hands in rhythmic, handsome movements. He was a sun king in his Babylon full of music, laughter, and the noise of banquets. When he was weary of the city's tumult, he would hunt, deafening the forest with his train; he would make the frightened birds leave their nests, and the shouting would reverberate through the most hidden of caverns. The dogs, with their elastic paws breaking the weeds in their path, and the hunters, inclined on the necks of their horses, their fiery faces and hair in the wind, making their purple mantles flutter.

The king had a magnificent palace where he had accumulated treasures and marvelous objects of art. He would pass between groups of lilies and expansive ponds, being greeted by swans with white necks, before him, vain footmen. What taste. He would climb a staircase full of alabaster and emerald columns that had, along the sides, marble lions like those of Salomon's throne. Refinement. In addition to the swans, he had a vast aviary, as he loved the harmony of their soft sounds and trills; he would go stand by them to bolster his spirit, reading novels by Msr. Ohnet, brilliant books on grammar, or Hermsillescan literary criticism. Yes indeed: staunch defender of literary academic correctness and the latest art trends; sublime, soulful infatuation with the sculptor's sandpaper and orthography.

Japanese! Chinese! For opulence and nothing more! He was able to give himself the pleasure of a dignified salon in the style of Goncourt and the millions of Creoses: bronze

chimeras in fantastic and marvelous groups with open gullets and coiled tails; lacquer from Kyoto, with incrustations of leaves and branches from monstrous flora, and animals from unknown fauna; a variety of strange butterflies on the walls; colorful fish and roosters; masks with infernal gestures and eyes as if they were alive; halberd with ancient blades and handles with dragons devouring lotus flowers; and in eggshells, tunics of yellow silk, like clothing made from a spider's silk, sewn from red herons and from green rice plants; and jars, porcelain from many centuries, from those in which there are Tartar warriors with skin that they cover up to their waist, and that they wear haughty arches and bundled arrows.

Apart from that, there was the Greek salon, full of marble: goddesses, muses, nymphs, and satyrs; the salon of gallant times, with paintings by the great Watteau and Chardín; two, three, four, so many salons!

And Maecenas passed through them all, his face inundated with majestic certainty, his belly happy, and a crown on his head, like a king from a deck of cards.

One day, they brought before his throne a rare species of man where he was surrounded by courtiers, rhetoricians, and masters of equestrian and of dance.

- What is this? - asked the king.

- Señor, he is a poet.

The king had swans in his pond, canaries, sparrows, tropical birds in his aviary; a poet was something new and strange.

- Bring him forward.

And the poet:

- Señor, I have not eaten.

And the king:

- Speak, and you shall eat.

So he began:

- Señor, I have been singing the language of the future for a long time. I have spread my wings in the hurricane, I have been born in the season of the dawn: I seek the hidden race that should wish for, with a hymn in the mouth and a lyre in hand, the rising of the great sun. I have abandoned the inspiration of the depraved city, the alcove full of perfumes, the flesh muse that

fills your soul with trivialities, and your face with rice powder. I have broken the fawning, weak-stringed harp against the Bohemian cups and the jars they use to skim the wine that intoxicates without giving strength; I have thrown off the mantle that made me appear like an actor, or a woman, and I have dressed in savage splendid style: my rags are of púrpura. I have gone to the jungle and stayed vigorous, full of fecund milk and the liquor of new life; on the shore of the rough sea, shaking my head beneath the strong black tempest, like a strong angel or an Olympic demigod, I have rehearsed the yambo, giving the madrigal over to forgetfulness.

- I have caressed the great Nature, and I have sought, from the warmth of the ideal, the verse that resides on the star at the edge of the night sky, and in the pearl in the ocean's depth. I have wanted to thrive! The season of great revolutions is coming, with the Messiah's total light, total excitement and potency, we must receive his spirit with the poem that is to be his triumphant arch, with strophes of steel, strophes of gold, strophes of love.

- Señor, the art is not in cold marble sheaths, nor in cheap paintings, nor in the excellent Msr. Ohnet! Señor! Art does not wear pants, does not speak bourgeois or dot all of its 'i's'. It is dignified with a gold cloak, or naked and feverishly kneading clay, paints with light, is opulent, and strikes like the eagles' wings or thrashes like the lions' claws. Señor, between Apollo and a goose, prefer the Apollo, even if the one is clay and the other ivory.

- Oh poetry!

- Y Bien! Rhythms are prostituted, songs are sung about women's moles and poetic syrups are fabricated. Furthermore, Señor, the cobbler critiques my hendecasyllables and the esteemed chemist puts periods and comas on my inspiration. And Señor, you authorize it all!...the ideal, the ideal.

The king interrupted:

- You've all heard him. What is to be done?

The philosopher proposed:

- If you will permit it, Señor, he could earn his meals with a barrel organ; we could place him in the garden, close to the swans, for when you pass.

- Yes – said the king; and addressing the poet, - you will turn a crank. You will shut your mouth. You will sound a barrel organ that plays waltzes, quadrilles and gallops as if you preferred not to die of hunger. A bit of music for a bit of bread. Nothing of gibberish nor ideals. Id.

And from that day forward you could see the poet at the edge of the swan's pool, hungry and doing turns on the crank: tiririrín, tiririrín...embarrassed by the sun's rays! When the king passed nearby, tiririrín tiririrín...if he needed a meal, tiririrín tiririrín. All amid the mocking of

the birds, free, coming to drink the dew from the lilac blossoms; amid the buzzing of the bees that would sting his face and fill his eyes with tears...bitter tears that rolled down his cheeks and fell onto the black earth!

Winter came, and the poor poet felt the cold in his body and soul. His mind seemed petrified, the grand hymns were forgotten, and the poet of the mountain crowned with eagles was nothing but a poor devil doing turns on a crank: tiririrín!

When the snow fell, the king and his vassals forgot about him; he sheltered his birds, but left the poet to the glacial air that bit his flesh and lashed his face.

One night, as the white crystal snow fell, there was a feast in the palace, and the light from the chandelier laughed happily over the marble, over the gold and over the tunics of the old porcelain Mandarins. They applauded to absurdity at the toasts from the distinguished professor of rhetoric, saturated with dactyls, anapests, and pyrrhics, while the champagne bubbled over with its luminous, fleeting fizz. Winter night, celebration night! And the unhappy poet, covered in snow, stationed near the pool, did turns on the barrel organ to warm himself, frozen stiff and quivering, insulted by the North Wind beneath the implacable, frozen whiteness, passing the somber night resounding gallops and quadrilles amongst the leafless trees; finally he died, thinking of the coming day's sun, and with it the Ideal...in which art would no longer wear pants but rather mantles of flames or gold.... It was not until the following day that the king and his courtiers found him, the poor devil of a poet, like a sparrow frozen to death, with a bitter smile on his lips and his hand still on the barrel organ.

Oh my friend! The sky is opaque, the air is cold, the day is sad. Foggy gray melancholies are afloat...

But how much a handshake and a greeting can warm the soul! Hasta la vista.

The Deaf Satyr

Near Olympus there lived a satyr, and he was the old king of his forest. The gods had told him: - Goza, the forest is yours; be a happy rascal, chase nymphs and play your flute. The satyr reveled.

One day when father Apollo was playing his divine lyre, the satyr left his kingdom and dared to climb the sacred mountain and surprise the venerated deity. For this, Apollo punished him, turning him deaf as a rock. Crippled, in the forest brush full of birds showering trills and bursting forth lullabies. The satyr heard nothing. Philomela would come to sing to him from

above his tangled and vine-crowned head, songs that would arrest the flowing of the forest brooks and redden pale roses. He would remain impassive, or he would emit brutish snorts and leap merrily and lasciviously when he could discern, through the cracked foliage, a round white waistline stroked by the sun's blond light. All the animals would surround him like a master to be obeyed.

When he appeared, in order to distract him, they would dance hymns of the bacchantes inflamed with their crazy passion, and accompanying the harmony close to him were adolescent fauns, like beautiful youths that would reverently caress him with their smile; and although he did not hear a single voice, nor the sound of the rattlesnakes, he enjoyed himself through other means. This is how the bearded king with goat hands passed his life.

He was a capricious satyr.

He had two court advisors: a lark and an ass. The first lost its prestige when the satyr became deaf. Before, if he tired of his lasciviousness, he would blow sweetly into his flute and the lark would accompany him.

After, in his grand forest, where he could not even hear the thunder from Olympus, the patient animal with the long ears served him as mount, whereas the lark, at the height of dawn, would fly from his hands singing as it rose to the sky.

The forest was enormous. The lark maintained the canopy as its home; the ass the pasture. The lark was greeted by the first rays of the sun's light and drank the dew from the forest's shoots. It would wake the oak tree, saying "Wake up old oak." It would relish in the kiss of the sun; it was loved by the morning star. And the deep blue, so vast, knew that the lark, so petite, existed beneath its immensity. The ass (though it had not then conversed with Kant) was an expert in philosophy, according to common report. The satyr, watching him browse in the pasture, moving his ears with a grave air, had a high opinion of that sage. In those days the ass did not have the bad reputation as it does today. Moving his jowls he would never have imagined that words of praise would be ascribed to him by Daniel Heinsius in Latin, Passerat, Buffon and the great Hugo in French, Posada and Valderrama in Spanish.

Were the ass, ever patient, to be bit by flies, he would frighten them with his tail, giving a few kicks now and then and reverberating his strange guttural chords beneath the forest canopy. He was spoiled. Sleeping on the pleasant black earth, the herbs and flowers imbued him with their scent. The great trees tilted their foliage to give him shade.

In those days, Orpheus the poet, terrified at the miseries of men, intended to escape to the forests where the trunks and rocks would understand and listen with ecstasy, and where he

could lose himself in a tremor of harmony and the fire of life and love in the sound of his instrument.

When Orpheus played his lyre Apollo himself would smile. Demeter would feel joy. The palms would spill their pollen, the seeds would burst forth, the lions would gently sway their manes. Once a carnation transformed into a red butterfly and flew off its stem, and a fascinated star descended and turned into a fleur-de-lis.

What forest could be better than the satyr's, where he would be loved and treated like a demigod; a forest full of joy and dancing, beauty and lust; where nymphs and Bacchantes were always caressed and always remained virgins; where there were grapes and roses and the sound of ancient hymns, and where the poet king would dance before his fauns, drunk and gesturing like Silenus?

He went with his laurel crown, his lyre, his proud poetic face, erect and radiant.

He stood before the hairy, crude satyr, and to request his hospitality, he sang. He sang of the great Jove, of Eros and Aphrodite, of the gallant centaurs and the ardent Bacchantes. He sang of the cup of Dionysis, and of Baco's reign that wounded the happy air, and of Pan, emperor of the mountains, sovereign of the forests, satyr-God who could also sing. He sang of the intimations of the air and the great mother earth. He explained the melody of an Aeolian harp, the whisper of a grove, the grating noise of a conch, and the harmonious notes that float from a reed flute. He sang the verses that lower the sky and please the gods, those that accompany the baritone in an ode and the tambourine in an Apollonean hymn. He sang of snowy beast and engraved gold cups, the bird's crow and the glory of the sun.

From the moment the song began, the light rose to brilliance. The enormous trunks swayed in unison, the petals fell from the roses, and the irises inclined languidly as if in sweet despair. Orpheus could make lions howl and pebbles cry with the music of his rhythmic lyre. The most furious Bacchantes had shut their mouths and the listened to him as if in a dream. A virgin naiad who had never once been profaned by the satyr with a single look, approached the singer timidly and said: "I love you." Philomel had flown down to settle herself on the lyre like Anacreon's dove. There was not even an echo save the voice of Orpheus. Nature felt his hymn. Venus, passing close by, asked from afar with her divine voice: - Is Apollo here by chance?

And in all that immense and marvelous harmony, the only one that heard nothing was the deaf satyr.

When the poet concluded, he said to him:

- Did you enjoy my song? If yes, I will stay here with you in the forest.

The satyr directed a glance at his two counselors. It was necessary for them to determine what the satyr himself could not understand. That glance solicited an opinion.

- Señor – said the lark, straining to produce the strongest voice his crow was capable of – let he who has sung with us stay. His lyre is beautiful and potent. He has offered you the grandeur and the strange light that today you have seen in your forest. He has given you his harmony. Señor, I know about these things. When the naked dawn comes and awakens the world, I climb the profound skies and release from above the invisible pearls of my song, and in the light of the morning my melody inundates the air, and the atmosphere rejoices. Well, I tell you that Orpheus has sung well, and he is one of the elect of the gods. His music intoxicated the entire forest. The eagles have drawn close, flying around our heads, the blooming bushes have stirred delicately their censored mysteries, the honeybees have left their cells to come and listen. As far as I'm concerned, señor, if I were in your position I would award him my vine shoot wreath and my reign. There are two forces: the real and the ideal. What Hercules would do with his wrists, Orpheus does with his inspiration. The robust god would tear the very Atos mountain apart with a single punch. Orpheus would tame it all with the efficacy of his voice, from the Nemean lion to the Arcadian wild bull. Amongst men, some were born to forge metal, others to draw out the sprigs of grain, others to do bloody battle, and others to teach, glorify, and to sing. If I am your cup, I give you wine, reward your palate; if I offer you a hymn, reward your soul.

As the lark spoke, Orpheus accompanied him with his instrument, and a vast, encompassing lyric sigh escaped from the green fragrant forest. The deaf satyr grew impatient. Who was this strange visitor? Why, in his presence, did the wild voluptuous dancing cease? What were his two counselors talking about?

Ah! The lark had sung, but the satyr had not heard him! Finally, he directed his attention to the ass.

Do you not have an opinion? Well fine, before the enormous resounding forest, beneath the sacred blue, the ass moved his head from one side to the other, grave, obstinate, silent, like a wise man meditating.

Then, with his cleaved foot, the satyr struck the ground, wrinkled his brow with rage, and without realizing anything, shouted, ordering Orpheus to leave from the forest:

- No!...

Neighboring Olympus heard the echo, where the gods were joking and a chorus of weighty laughter resounded that would forever afterwards be described by man as Homeric.

Orpheus left the forest sad, and was ready to hang himself from the first laurel that he found along the way.

He did not hang himself, but he did marry Eurydice.

The Nymph **(A Parisian Tale)**

In a castle that had recently been purchased by Lesbia, the devilish, capricious actress whose extravagances had given the world so much to discuss, we found ourselves six friends together at the table. Aspasia presided over us, while at the same time entertaining herself by sucking on a moist white sugar cube between her pink fingertips like a greedy young girl. It was *chartreuse* time. It looked like precious gems dissolved in crystal glasses, and the light from the candelabras disintegrated in the half empty cups where there remained a hue of purple Burgundy, gold champagne, and liquid emerald mint.

After a good meal, we spoke with enthusiasm about artists of good character. We were all artists, some more and some less; there was even an obese intellectual flaunting a large knot on his monstrous tie hanging over the white chest of his shirt.

Someone said:

- Ah yes, Frémiet!

And from Frémiet we spoke of his animals, his masterly chisel, his two bronze dogs that, close to us, one searched for a prey's trail while the other, as if watching the hunter, raised his neck and hoisted his thin tail, erect and tense. Who spoke of Mirón? The intellectual, that recited, in Greek, the epigram of Anacreon: - Herder, take your oxherd farther away to graze so that you don't start believing that Mirón's cow is breathing and want to take it with you.

Lesbia finished sucking on her sugar cube, and with an Argentinian snort:

- Bah! For me it is satyrs. I would love to give life to my bronzes, and if it were possible, be a lover to one of those velvety demigods. I must tell you though, I adore centaurs even more than satyrs; I would let one of those monsters steal me away from my satyr lover, just to hear the lament of his loss and him playing his flute in sadness.

The intellectual interrupted her:

- Excellent! Satyrs and fauns, hippo-centaurs and sirens, they really existed, like salamanders and the phoenix.

We all laughed; but Lesbia's irresistible, loving voice rose above the chorus of mockery, and on her flushed, handsome face was a look of resplendent pleasure.

- Yes – continued the intellectual – With what right does modern society deny the facts affirmed by the ancients? The giant dog, tall as a man, that Alexander saw is just as real as the kraken spider that lives in the depths of the sea. Saint Anthony Abbot, at ninety years old, went in search of the old hermit Paul who lived in a cave. Don't laugh Lesbia. The saint wandered through the wilderness, leaning on his staff, without knowing where to find the person for whom he searched. After much walking, do you know who told him the path he should follow? A centaur, 'half man and half horse', so says the author. It spoke as if it were angry and fled so quickly that the saint lost sight of him immediately, the monster galloping with his hair blowing in the wind and his belly towards the ground.

- In that same trip Saint Anthony saw a satyr: 'little man with a strange figure, he was next to a brook, had a hooked nose, a rough and wrinkled complexion, and the bottom part of his counterbalanced body finished off with goat's hoofs.'

- Neither more nor less – said Lesbia. – M. de Cocureau, future member of the Academy!

And the intellectual continued:

- Saint Geronimo confirmed that in the time of Constantine Maximus, a live satyr was driven to Alexandria, his body having been preserved when he died. Furthermore, the emperor of Antioch saw him.

Lesbia had returned to fill her cup with mint, and she moistened her tongue in the green liquor like a feline animal would.

- Albertus Magnus says that in his time they caught two satyrs in the mountains of Saxony. Heinrich Kornmann assures us that in Tartar lands there were men with just one foot and only one arm on their chest. Vincentius saw in his time a monster that was brought to the king of France; it had the head of a dog (Lesbia laughed); its thighs, arms, and hands were as hairless as ours (Lesbia convulsed with laughter like a little girl being tickled); it ate cooked meat and drank wine with gusto.

- Colombine! – shouted Lesbia. And Colombine came, a little lap dog that resembled a snowflake made of cotton. She took her up in her arms and amid the explosions of laughter from everyone:

- Here, the monster that had your face!

And she gave her a kiss on the mouth while the animal shuddered and inflamed its nostrils like they were full of voluptuousness.

- And Phlegon of Tralles – the intellectual concluded elegantly – affirmed the existence of two types of hippo-centaur; one of them like elephants. Furthermore...

- Enough of your knowledge! – said Lesbia. And she finished drinking her mint.

I was content. I had not even parted my lips.

- Oh! – I exclaimed – Nymphs for me please! I desire to gaze upon these naked creatures of the woods and fountains, although, like Actaeon, I would be torn apart by dogs. But nymphs don't exist!

That concluded the happy concert with a grand release of laughter and people.

- Y qué! – Lesbia said to me, burning me with her faunlike eyes and with a hushed voice so that only I could hear; - nymphs exist, you shall see!

It was a spring day. I was roaming through the castle park with the air of a hopeless dreamer. The sparrows screamed on the new lilies and attacked the scarabs who defended themselves from the pecks with their emerald shells, with their breastplates of gold and steel. In the roses, the carmine, the vermillion, the penetrating wave of sweet perfumes; farther along the violets, in grand groups, with their gentle color and their virgin scent. After, the tall trees, the dense foliage full of a thousand bees, the statues in the shadows, the bronze discobolus, the muscular gladiators in their powerful gymnastic poses, the perfumed gazebos covered in vines, the porticos, beautiful Ionic imitations, white and lascivious caryatids, vibrant telamons of the Atlantic order with arched backs and gigantic thighs. I roamed through the labyrinth of all these nice things, when I heard a noise towards the shadows of the tree grove, in the pool with the white swans like alabaster sculptures, and others with necks that are half ebony like a white leg with a black stocking.

I came closer. What had I heard? Oh Numa! I felt what you felt when for the first time you saw Egeria in the grotto.

It was in the center of the pool, between the quietude of the frightened swans, an actual nymph, dipping her rosy flesh in the crystal water. Her hips, on the edge of the foam, appeared at times golden in the opaque light that shone just enough through the gaps in the leaves. Oh! I saw irises, roses, snow, gold; I saw an ideal with life and form, and I heard the murmuring of a wounded nymph between the bubbles, like a melodious, mocking laugh that boiled my blood.

Quickly the vision fled, the nymph surged from the pool, similar to Venus in her wave, and gathering her brilliant dripping hair, ran through the rose bushes, past the lilies and violets,

and farther past the thick groves until I lost her – Oh! – at a bend; I remained there, a lyric poet, a mocked faun, staring at the great alabaster birds that were laughing at me, inclining towards me their long necks punctuated with brilliant agate beaks.

Afterwards, we six friends from last night ate lunch together; between us all, triumphant, with his big dark tie on his chest, the obese intellectual, future member of the Academy.

And suddenly, as we all chatted about the latest work by Frémet in the salon, Lesbia exclaimed with her happy Parisian voice:

- There!, as Tartarin says: The poet has seen nymphs!

Amazed, they all contemplated, and she looked at me...looked at me like a cat and laughed like a little girl being tickled.

The Bale

Far away, on the horizon, as if drawn with a blue pencil that separates the water from the sky, the sun began sinking with its golden dust and its whirlwind of purple sparks, like a great red-hot iron disk. Meanwhile the customs dock remained motionless; the guards patrolling from one side to the other, their caps pulled down to their eyebrows, glancing here and there. The enormous arms of the dock cranes were still, the dock hands were heading home. The water murmured beneath the dock and the damp salty breeze that blows off the sea at dusk kept the nearby boats in a steady pitch.

All of the deckhands had already left except the old man Lucas, who that morning had broken his foot trying to lift a barrel onto a small cart, and had worked the entire day despite the resultant limp, and was now seated on a rock with his pipe in his mouth looking sadly across the sea.

- Hey, old man Lucas! Are you resting?

- Well yes, boss.

And he began to chat, that loose and agreeable banter that I enjoy striking up with those rugged, blue-collar men that live a life fortified by tough work, the kind of work that is good for the health and the strength of one's muscles, nourished by the seeds of the bean and the boiling blood of the vine.

I looked on that rugged old man with affection, and I listened intently about his family, all of them under-privileged, all of them a bit coarse, but all with good hearts. Oh, so he was a Soldier! So as a boy he fought at Bulnes! So he still had to resist the urge to go with his rifle to Miraflores! And he is married, and he had a son, and...

- Yes sir, it's been two years since he died.

Those eyes, boyish and brilliant beneath his gray, bushy eyebrows, became misty.

- And how did he die? At work, while providing food for our plates, my wife, the children and myself, patrón, because I was sick at the time.

And he related it all to me, at the beginning of that night, while the evening mist covered the waves and the city turned on its lights; he, on the rock serving has his seat, put out his black pipe and brought it up behind his ear, and stretched and crossed his thin muscular legs, covered by his filthy workpants rolled up over his ankles.

The boy was very respectful and very hard working. They had wanted to send him to school from the time he was a little boy, but poor folks should not be learning to read when they are crying from hunger in their hovels!

The old man Lucas was married and had many children.

His wife carried that sickness of the gut that plagues the poor: hyper-fertility. As such there were many open mouths demanding bread, many dirty little ones rolling in the filth, and many lean bodies shivering from the cold; we had to go out for our food, find rags to wear, and for that reason, live constantly out of breath and working like an ox.

When the boy grew old enough he helped his father. A neighbor, the blacksmith, wanted to show him his trade, but since he was so weak then, like a bag of bones, and in the forge one has to slog it out, he became sick and returned to the tenement house. Oh, he was so sick! But he didn't die. He didn't die! Even though he lived in one of those human sardine cans between four old, ugly, dilapidated walls, on the filthy alley of lost women, constantly reeking, lit up by just a few streetlights, with the perpetual calls to those ladies of the night made by harps and accordions, and the noise of the sailors en route to the brothel, desperate from the chastity of a long sea voyage, drinking by the barrel, shouting and stomping like prisoners. Yes! Amid the putrefaction and the racket of debauchery, the boy lived, and soon he was healthy and walking again.

Soon after he turned fifteen years old.

The old man Lucas had succeeded, through countless privations, in buying a canoe. He became a fisherman.

At daybreak he went to the water with his boy, carrying his fishing gear. The boy would row, the father would bait the hooks. They returned to the coast full of hope to sell their catch, amidst the fresh air and the opaque mist, singing loudly some sad tune, their oars held triumphantly high, dripping sea foam.

If they made a good sale, they'd go out again in the afternoon.

In winter there was a storm. Father and son, in their little craft, endured the madness of the sea's wind and waves. It was difficult getting back to shore. They lost their fish and everything to the water, thinking of nothing but saving their own skin. They fought like desperate men to reach the shore. They were close; but a terrible gust pushed them against a rock, and the canoe shattered into splinters. They left just bruised, 'thank God', as the old man Lucas himself tells the story. After that they both became dockhands.

Yes, dockhands; on those large, flat, black vessels, hanging from the chain, grinding like an iron snake from the crane that looked like a gallows; rowing in rhythm as they stand; going from the steamboat to the dock, the dock to the steamboat; screaming "hiiooeeep!" as they pushed the heavy cargo, trying to hook it on the strong nails as they lift it, balancing like a pendulum...yes! Dockhands. The old man and the little boy, the father and the son, together straddling a bale, together struggling, together earning their daily wage for them and their bloodsucking loved ones in the tenement house.

Every day they went to work, dressed in old rags, waists encircled by maroon bands, their heavy rough shoes making noise as they walked before removing them prior to work, throwing them in the corner of the boat.

So began the hustle and bustle, the loading and unloading. The father was careful:

- Son, watch you don't bust your head! Your hand is going to get caught in the rope! You're going to lose a leg!

He taught him, trained him, supervised his son, in his own manner, with his brusque, weathered, blue-collar language, and like any concerned father.

And then one day the old man Lucas couldn't get himself out of bed because the rheumatism had swollen his joints and pierced his bones.

Oh, the food and the medicine still had to be bought; that's for sure!

- Son, go to work, earn your silver; today is Saturday.

And the son left, alone, almost running, without breakfast, to his work.

It was a nice day with clear light and a sun like gold. On the dock the trolleys rolled along their tracks, the pulleys grinding, the chains clashing. It was the grand confusion of dizzying work: the sound of iron clanking all around, the wind passing through the forest trees and the fishing rigs on the boat line.

Old man Lucas' son was beneath one of the dock jibs with a few other dockhands, unloading hurriedly. This vessel, full of bales, had to be emptied. From time to time the large chain with a hook at its end would descend, rattling with the turn of the pulley; the young workers were packaging the cargo with a doubled rope, attaching it to the chain, and raising it like a fish on a hook or lead on a sounding line, one moment still, the next swinging from side to side, like someone clapping in the void.

The cargo was stacked. The waves moved the bale-filled boat methodically. The bales formed something of a pyramid in the center of the deck. One was particularly heavy, very heavy. It was the biggest one, wide, fat, and smelled like tar. It was on deck of the boat. A man stood on top of it, a small figure on that massive base.

It was like all the other bundles, wrapped in canvas and secured with iron banding. On its sides, splitting the black lines and triangles, was lettering that looked out like eyes. "Diamond lettering" said old man Lucas. The iron banding straps were secured with gritty large-headed nails; at the core of this monster, more than likely, fine linens and percales.

It was the only bale left.

- Here comes the beast! – said one of the dockhands.

- The big guy! – another agreed.

And old man Lucas' son, anxious to be done, preparing himself to be paid and have breakfast, tied a checkered handkerchief around his neck.

The chain lowered, dancing in the air. They tied a big knot to the bale, checked to make sure it was secure and screamed: "Bring'er up!" while the chain lurched with the huge mass, screeching and lifting it into the air.

The dockhands, standing, watched the enormous weight rise, and the prepared for it to hit the ground when they saw a terrible thing. The bale, the massive bale, slipped out of the knot like a dog slipping out of a loose collar, and fell onto the old man Lucas' son, who between the

edge of the vessel and the huge parcel was left with a broken back, his spine twisted and spouting dark blood from his mouth.

That day there was no bread, nor medicine in old man Lucas' house, rather a smashed little boy, whom the old rheumatic hugged, crying, between the screams of his mother and the children, when the cadaver arrived at the cemetery.

I left the old dockhand and, with a spring in my step, left the dock, taking the road from the house and considering philosophy with all the laziness of a poet, while a glacial breeze, coming from a far away sea, pinched tenaciously away at my nose and my ears.

The Veil of Queen Mab

The queen Mab, in her carriage made of a single pearl, drawn by four coleopterons with gold breastplates and wings of precious gems, walking on a ray of sunshine, slipped out of the garret window where there were four skinny men, bearded and impertinent, lamenting like a couple of wretches.

In that time, the fairies had imparted their talents onto the mortals. To some they gave the mysterious wand that fills heavy trade chests with gold; to others, the marvelous seeds that, once shucked, stuff the granaries with riches; to others, the crystal that lets you see gold and precious gems in the kidney of mother earth; to some, a thick mane and muscles like Goliath, and enormous mallets for striking red-hot iron; and to some, strong heels and agile legs to ride the swift steeds that waft their manes as they drink the wind.

The four men complained. One had been given by his luck a quarry, the other a rainbow, another rhythm, and the other the blue sky.

The queen Mab heard their words. She said to the first:

- Y Bien! Here I've been in the great battle of my marble dreams! I have extracted the rock and I have the chisel. You all have something, some gold, some harmony, others the light; I believe in the white divine Venus that exalts in her nudity beneath the sky's recessed colors. I want to give the masses line, and handsome sculpture, and I want colorless blood like that of the gods to circulate through the statue's veins. I have the spirit of Greece in my mind and I love the nudes with fleeing nymphs and the fauns with outstretched arms. Oh Phidias! To me you are proud and august like a demigod, king of eternal beauty's district, standing before an army of beauty that before your eyes hurls the magnificent chiton, showing the splendor of form of their pink, snowy bodies.

- You strike, wound, and subdue the marble, the crash rings like a verse, so harmonious that the cicada adulates you, loved by the sun, hidden amongst the shoots of virgin vines. For me the Apollos are blond and luminous, the Minervas splendid and severe. You, like a magi, turn the rock into an image and the elephant's tusk into a chalice. Seeing your greatness I feel the agony of my insignificance. Because the glorious times have passed. Because I tremble before the gaze of today. Because I contemplate the immense ideal and the exhaustive forces. Because even as I chisel the block, discouragement arrests me.

And the other said:

- Today I shall break my brushes. Why should I want the rainbow and this grand palette of blooming meadow if ultimately my painting will not be admitted into the gallery? How will I continue on? I have spanned all of the schools and all of the artistic inspirations. I have painted Diana's figure and Madonna's face. I have teased the colors from the countryside, its tints; I have adulated the light like a beloved, and embraced her like a lover. I have been an adorer of nudes, with its magnificence, with its fleshly tones and its fleeting tints. On my canvas I have tendered the halos of the saints and the wings of the cherubs. Oh, but always disenchantment! Suffering! Selling a Cleopatra for two pesetas just to be able to eat!

- And I, who could in a shudder of my inspiration paint the grand masterpiece of what I have inside!...

And the other said:

- My soul is lost in the grand illusion of my symphonies, I fear all deceptions. I hear every harmony, from the lyre of Terpander to the orchestral fantasies of Wagner. My ideals shine amidst my inspired audacities. I have the perception of the philosopher that heard the music of the stars. All noises can be arrested, all echoes susceptible to combination. Everything fits in the line of my chromatic scales.

- The vibrant light is a hymn, and the melody of the jungle finds its echo in my heart. From the sound of the tempest to the song of the bird, everything intermingles and connects in the infinite cadence. Meanwhile, I see nothing but the jeering masses and the cell of an asylum.

And the final man:

- We all drink the clear water of the Ionian fountain. But the ideal floats in the blue; in order for our spirits to bask in the supreme light, it is necessary to ascend. I have the verse of honey, of gold, of hot iron. I am the amphora of the celestial perfume: I possess love. Dove,

star, nest, iris, you know my abode. I have eagle's wings for those incommensurable flights that part the magic gusts of the hurricane. And to find my rhymes, I search in two mouths joining; the kiss bursts forth and I write my stanza, and then, if you see my soul, you will know my muse. I love the epic poems, because from them emerge the heroic breath that waves the fluttering banner on the tips of spears, and the plumes trembling on helmets; the lyric songs, because they speak of gods and of lovers; and the eclogues, because they smell like verbena and thyme, and the sacred breath of the ox crowned with roses. I would write something immortal; but instead I am weighted down by the suffering of hunger and misery.

Then the queen Mab, from the floor of her carriage made from a single pearl, took a blue veil, almost impalpable, as if made from sighs or from the glances of blond, pensive angels. And that veil was the veil of dreams, of the sweet dreams that makes us see the world through a rose colored lens. And with it she wrapped the four skinny men, bearded and impertinent. Those men ceased to be sad because hope penetrated their chests, and the happy sun their heads, with the little devil known as vanity, that consoles poor artists with its profound deceptions.

And from then on, in the lofts of brilliant, unhappy men, where the blue dream floats, they consider the future as dawn, hear laughter that quiets the sadness, and dance strange farándolas around a white Apollo, from a pleasant countryside, from an old violin, from a yellowing manuscript.

The Song to Gold

One day a tattered man, a beggar by all design, perhaps a migrant or maybe a poet, arrived, beneath the shadow of tall poplar trees, to the grand street of palaces, where there were power struggles between the onyx and the porphyry, the agate and the marble; where the tall columns, the handsome friezes, the golden cupolas, receive the gentle caress of the dying sun.

There were, through the glass windows in the vast rich edifices, faces of elegant women and charming children. Through the iron fence posts he discerned extensive gardens, green expanses speckled with roses and gently swaying branches, rhythm, as if under the law of some cadence. And there in the grand salons should be the purple tapestry full of gold, the white statue, the bronze china, the Oriental vases covered in blue fields and thick rice paddies, the grand curtain pulled back like a skirt, ornate with opulent flowers, where the oriental ochre makes the light vibrate on the gleaming silk. Farther along, the Venetian mirrors, the rosewoods and the cedars, the nacles and the ebonies, and the black, open piano that laughs, showing its keys like a beautiful set of teeth; the crystal chandeliers, from which rise the profuse white wax candles that define aristocracy. Oh, y más allá! Over there, the expensive painting gilded by time's passage, the portrait signed by Durant or Bonnat, and the precious watercolors in which

pink tones seem to emerge from the pure sky and envelop in a sweet wave, everything from the distant horizon to the humble, trembling grass. Y más allá...

(The afternoon wanes.

A splendid and shiny carriage arrives at the doors to the palace. A couple descends from the carriage and enters the mansion with such haughtiness that the beggar thinks: decidedly, the young eagle and his mate are going to their nest. The team, noisy and restless, with a lash from the whip, pulls the carriage forward making the stones flash. Night.)

Then, in that crazy mind, hidden by a threadbare cap, sprouted something like the seed of an idea that passed through his chest, constricting him, then arrived at his mouth as a hymn that ignited his tongue and made his teeth chatter. It was the vision of all beggars, of all the lost, of all the drunks, of the ragged and the wounded, of all that live, Dios mío!, in perpetual night, feeling their way through the shadows, falling into the abyss, all for lack of a crust of bread to fill their stomachs. And then happy peat, the soft bed, truffles and bubbling golden wine, satin and *moiré* that smiles with your touch; the blond gentlemen and his brunette fiancé covered in gemstones and lace; and the great hourglass that Luck uses to measure the life of the opulent, dropping gold coins instead of grains of sand.

That species of poet laughed; but his face had Dantesque air. He grabbed a dark loaf from his bag, ate, and gave his hymn to the wind. Nothing is crueller than that song after that bite.

Cantemos el oro!

Cantemos el oro, king of the world, that brings fortune and light wherever it goes, like fragments of a shattered sun.

Cantemos el oro, born from the fertile womb of mother earth; immense treasure, blond milk of that giant udder.

Cantemos el oro, mighty river, fountain of life that gives youth and beauty to those that bathe in your marvelous current, and ages those that deny your torrent.

Cantemos el oro, because from it are made the tiaras of pontiffs, the crowns of kings and the imperial scepters; because it flows through mantles like solid fire, and fills the cups of archbishops, shines on the altar and sustains the eternal God in radiant custody.

Cantemos el oro, because we can be one of the perdidos, yet gold can partition us from the abject madness of the tavern and the shame of adulterous alcoves.

Cantemos el oro, because, upon leaving the mint, it carries on its disk the proud profile of the Caesars, and stuffs the chests of their vast temples, banks, moves trains, gives life, and fattens the bacon of the privileged.

Cantemos el oro, because it gives us palaces and carriages, fashionable clothes and fresco busts of pretty women, genuflections of adoring backs, and the beams of eternally smiling lips.

Cantemos el oro, father of bread.

Cantemos el oro, because it is, in the ears of pretty ladies, the essence of a diamond's sparkle, the tip of a beautiful pink conch; because on their breasts it feels the beating of hearts, and in their hands it can be the symbol of love and a sacred promise.

Cantemos el oro, because it shuts the mouth that insults us, restrains the hands that threaten us, and blindfolds the thieves that serve us.

Cantemos el oro, because its voice is enchanted music; because it is heroic and shines in the cuirass of Homeric heroes and in the sandals of the goddesses and in the tragic buskins and in the apples from the garden of the Hesperides.

Cantemos el oro, because from it comes the strings of great lyres, the hair of the most tender lovers, sprigs of grain, and the peplum that they Olympic dawn wears as she rises.

Cantemos el oro, prize and glory for the worker, and fuel for the bandit.

Cantemos el oro, that traverses this carnival world disguised as paper, silver, copper, and even lead.

Cantemos el oro, yellow like death.

Cantemos el oro, regarded as vile by the hungry, brother to coal, the black gold that incubates the diamond. King of the mine, where men struggle, and rock tears; powerful in dusk's light, where it is tinned with blood; idol of the flesh; the thread from which Phidias made Minerva's suit.

Cantemos el oro, in the horse's harness, the war chariot, the sword's hilt, the laurel that accompanies luminous heads, the cup of Dionysian feasts, the pin that wounds the slavegirl's breast, a star's rays, and the champagne that bubbles like a boiling topaz solution.

Cantemos el oro, because it makes us gentile, educated, and cultured.

Cantemos el oro, because it is the rock of all friendship.

Cantemos el oro, purified by fire, like man is through suffering; etched by the file, like man is by envy; beaten by the hammer, like man is by want; exalted by its silk casing, like man by his marble palace.

Cantemos el oro, slave, disregarded by Saint Jerome, rejected by Saint Anthony, vilified by Macarius, scorned by Hilarion, cursed by Paul the Hermit, who had as his castle, a rough cave, and as his friends, the stars of the night, the birds of dawn, and the bristly, savage beasts of the desert.

Cantemos el oro, calf god, marrow of the rocks, mysteries and silent to its core, yet bustling in the light and life of day, sounding like a chorus of tambourines; fetus of the stars, residue of light, incarnation of ether.

Cantemos el oro, become the sun, in love with the night, whose black shirt pours forth brilliant stars, after their last kiss, as if with a great collection of sterling coins.

Oh, wretches, drunks, the solemn poor, prostitutes, mendicants, vagrants, thieves, bandits, beggars, pilgrims, those of you who are banished, those of you who are idle, and above all, you the poets!

We shall join the fortunate, the powerful, the bankers, the demigods of earth!

Cantemos el oro!

And the echo carried that hymn, a mixture of a moan, a dithyramb, and a cackle; and now that the cold, dark night had arrived, the echo resonated through the shadows.

An old woman passed by and asked for alms.

And that species of ragged man, beggar by all design, perhaps a migrant or perhaps a poet, gave her his last crust of hard bread and marched off into the terrible shadows, mumbling between his teeth.

The Ruby

- Ah! So it is certain! So that Parisian wise man has succeeded in getting from the depth of his retorts, his incessant rattling, the crystalline púrpura that is embedded in my palace walls!

Having said that, the small gnome came and went, from one place to another, in small bounds, towards the deep cave serving as his home; it made his long beard tremble along with the bell on his pointed, blue knit cap.

In effect, a friend of the centenary Chevreul – quasi Althotas, - the chemist Frémy, just discovered the way to make rubies and sapphires.

The gnome, excited, unsettled, – who was in the know and had a genius full of vigor – continued his monologue.

- Ah, wise men of the middle ages! Ah, Albertus Magnus, Averroes, Ramon Llull! You all could not see the great sun of the philosophic stone shine, and I have it here that without studying Aristotelian formulas, without knowing prediction and necromancy, arrives this man from the nineteenth century creating in the light of day that which we made in our underground sanctuaries. Well the incantation!, a fusion for twenty days of a mix of quartz and aluminum dust; coloration with potassium bichromate and oxidized cobalt. Words that truly seem like a diabolic language.

Laugh.

Then he stopped.

The symbol of the crime was there, in the center of the cave, on top of a large gold rock; a small ruby, round, a shiny point, like a pomegranate seed in the sunlight.

The gnome blew into a horn, the one he carried around his waist, and the echo resonated through the hollows. A moment later, a racket, a horde, an uproar. All of the gnomes had arrived.

The cave was wide, and in it a strange white brightness. There was a shimmer from the carbuncles sparkling on the tips of the stalactites, incrustated, sunken, packed in, with overlapping focal points; a sweet light illuminated it all.

In that resplendent light, one could see the marvelous mansion in all its splendor. On the walls, on chunks of silver and gold, between streaks of lapis lazuli, were formed capricious pictures, like the Arabic frescos of a mosque, a great plethora of precious stones. The diamonds, white and clean like drops of water, prisms emanating from the crystals; close to the agate suspended from the stalactites, the emeralds spread their resplendent greens, and the sapphires, in strange heaps, in bunches hanging from the quartz, resembled large, trembling, blue flowers.

The gilded topaz, the amethysts, encircled the edges of the space; and on the cave floor, set in opals, on the polished green agate, emerged in intervals a trickle of water, falling with a musical sweetness, harmonious beads, like the whispers of a softly blown metallic flute.

Puck had been interfering in the matter, that swindler Puck! He had brought the symbol of the crime, the false ruby, that which was there, on the rock of gold, like a profanation amongst the glimmer of all that dream.

When the gnomes were together, some with hammers and short axes in their hands, others in elegance, with brilliant red caps, full of jewels, all strange, Puck spoke like this:

- You have all requested that I show you proof of the new human falsification, and I have satisfied your desire.

The gnomes, seated on floor, pulled on their mustaches; they thanked Puck with a delayed inclination of the head, and those closest to him examined with surprised gestures the beautiful wings, similar to those of a butterfly.

He continued:

- Oh Earth! Oh Woman! From the moment I saw Titania I have been nothing but a slave to her, an almost mystic adorer.

And then, as if speaking in the pleasure of a dream:

- Those rubies! In the great city of Paris, flying invisibly, I saw them all around me. They shone on the necks of courtesans, in the exotic decorations of the nouveau rich, on the rings of Italian princes and the bracelets of prima donnas.

And with a perpetual cunning smile:

- I snuck into a certain pink, very stylish, boudoir...there was a beautiful woman sleeping. I pulled a medallion from her neck, and from the medallion the ruby. There you have it.

They all burst into laughter. What a story!

- Eh, amigo Puck!

Afterwards they gave their opinion of that false rock, work of man, or a sage, which is worse!

- Glass!

- Curse!

- Poison and Cabala!

- Chemical!

- Pretending to be a piece of the rainbow!

- The reddish-blond treasure from the depths of the globe!

- Made from the setting sun's solidified rays!

The oldest gnome, walking with his crooked legs, his great white beard, fatherly look, face full of wrinkles:

- Gentlemen! – he said – You don't know what you are talking about!

Everyone listened.

- I, who am the oldest amongst us, given that I am now barely able to hammer the sides of uncut diamonds; I who have seen those deep castles form, who has chiseled the stones of the earth, who has mixed gold, who one day punched a wall of stone, and fell into a lake where I violated a nymph; I, the elder, will tell you how the ruby was made. Listen.

Puck smiled curiously. All the gnomes turned to the ancient, whose white hair paled in the light of the jewels and whose hands extended his moving shadow on the walls, covered in precious stones, like a canvas full of honey where they toss grains of rice.

- One day, we, the squadrons that have as our cargo the diamond mines, we made a strike that shook the entire earth, and we left in flight through the balers of the volcano.

- The world was happy, everything was in vigor and youth; and the roses, and the green fresh leaves, and the birds in whose beaks enter the seed and burst forth chirping, and the entire field, greeted the sun and the fragrant spring.

- There was the melodious, blooming hillside, full of trills and bees; it was a grand, sacred nuptial celebration of light, and deep in the trees the sap burned, and in the animal everything was shuddering, or bleating, or in song, and the gnome smiled in pleasure.

- I had left through a dormant baler. Before my eyes there was an expansive meadow. With one jump I was on a great tree, an old holm oak. Then I descended the trunk, found myself near a stream, a small clear river where the water chatted, telling crystalline jokes. I was thirsty. I wanted to drink there... Now, listen better.

“Arms, backs, naked breasts, Asiatic lily, roses, ivory rolls crowned with cherries; echoes of dawn laughter, celebrations; and there, between the foam, between the broken lymphae, beneath the green branches...”

- Nymphs?

- No, women.

- I knew which grotto was mine. With a blow to the ground, I opened the black stone and arrived at my dominion. You all, poor things, young gnomes, you have so much to learn!

- Beneath the new fern shoots I slipped out, onto some rocks disjointed by the foaming, roaring current; and to her, to the beauty, to the woman, I grabbed her waist, with my once muscular arms; she screamed, I hit the ground; we descended. Astonishment above us, beneath, the powerful, victorious gnome.

- One day I hammered a piece of an immense diamond that shone like a star and broke into pieces at the strike of my hammer.

- The floor of my workshop looked like the remains of a shattered sun. The lady lover rested on one side, her pinkish body between the flowerpots of sapphire, empress of gold, in the milk of crystalline rock, everything naked and splendid like a goddess.

- But on the floor of my dominion, my queen, my love, my beautiful, she fooled me. When a man loves to no end, his passion penetrates every part of him, making him capable of moving through the earth.

- She loved a man, and from her prison she sent him her sighs. These passed through the pores of the earth's crust and reached him; and he, loving her as well, kissed the roses of a certain garden; and she, the beloved, had – I took notice – sudden convulsions in which she stretched her fresh, pink lips like the petals of a hundred roses. How could they feel each other like this? Being who I am, I have no idea.

- I had finished my work: a great mountain of diamonds made in one day; the earth opened her granite veins like thirsty lips, waiting for the brilliant tearing apart of her rich crystals. At the job's end, tired, I dropped the little hammer that broke a rock, and I slept.

- I woke in a minute to hear something like a wail.

- From her bed, from her mansion more luminous and luxurious than those of all the queens of the Orient, she had escaped as a fugitive, desperate, that love of mine, my stolen woman. Oh! And wanting to escape through the open entrance made by my granite block, naked and beautiful, she destroyed her white body, smooth like orange blossoms and marble and rose, on the blade of those broken diamonds. Her sides wounded, she gushed blood; the groans would move you to tears. Oh the pain!

- I woke up, took her in my arms, showered her with passionate kisses; the blood ran more, saturating the area, and the great mass of diamonds turned blood red.

- I appeared to feel, as I kissed her, an impassioned perfume coming from that fiery mouth: the soul; the body remained inert.

- When our patriarch, the hundred year old demigod of strange lands, passed through those lands, he found that multitude of red diamonds...

Pause.

- Did you all understand me?

The gnomes, very grave, stood up.

They examined more closely the false stone, formed from the sage.

- Look, it doesn't have sides!

- It's shine is dull!

- Imposter!

- It's rounded like the breastplate of a beetle!

And all the way around, one over here, another over there, they came and ripped out of the wall pieces of arabesque, rubies as big as oranges, red and scintillating like a diamond made of blood; and they said:

- Here's what's ours, oh mother earth!

There was an orgy of light and color.

And they threw the giant shining rocks into the air and laughed.

Then, with all the dignity of a gnome:

- Y bien! The contempt.

They all understood. They took the false ruby, tore it to pieces and tossed the fragments – with terrible disdain – into a hole that, below, gave way to an ancient carbonized jungle.

Afterwards, on his rubies, on his opals, between those resplendent walls, they began to dance, holding hands, a loud, crazy farándola.

And they celebrated with laughter, the sight of themselves so large in the shadows.

Now Puck flew outside, in the buzzing of dawn newly born, path through a meadow in bloom. And he murmured – always with your blushing smile!:

- Earth... Woman...

“Why you, oh mother earth! You are big, fruitful, with a sacred, inexhaustible bosom; and from your earthen womb sprouts the sap of the robust trunks, and the gold and the diamond water, and the pure fleur-de-lis. Purity, strength, inimitable! And you, mujer, you are flesh and spirit, everything that is love!

The Palace of the Sun

For you ladies, mothers of the anemic girls, goes this story, the story of Berta, the little girl with olive colored eyes, vibrant like the branch of a peach tree in bloom, luminous like the dawn, gentle like the princess from a blue tale.

Now you shall see, wholesome and respectable Señoras, that there is something better than the arsenic and the metal to ignite the purple in those pretty virgin cheeks; and it is necessary to open the door of your little loving bird’s cage, above all when the season of spring arrives and there is ardor in the veins and in the trees, and a thousand atoms of sunlight abuzz in the gardens, like an swarm of gold on the opening roses.

After her fifteenth birthday, Berta became depressed and her blazing eyes were encircled by melancholy bags.

- Berta, I bought you two dolls...

- I don’t want them, mamá...

- I brought you the *Nocturnos*...

- My fingers hurt, mamá...

- Entonces...

- I’m sad, mamá...

- Well, let’s call the doctor.

So the tortoiseshell ringed spectacles arrived, the black gloves, the distinguished looking bald spot, and the double breasted frock coat.

It was natural. The development, the age...clear symptoms, lack of appetite, something like constriction in the chest, sadness, occasional stabbing pains in the temples, palpitations...you already know; give your girl arsenic globules, then showers. The treatment...

And as spring began, she started to treat her melancholy, with globules and showers, Berta, the girl with olive colored eyes, vibrant like the branch of a peach tree in bloom, luminous like dawn, gentle like the princess from a blue tale.

In spite of everything, the rings persisted, the sadness continued, and Berta, pale like a precious marble, arrived one day at death's doorstep. Everyone in the palace wept for her, the wholesome and sentimental mamá began to think about the white palm casket of lost virgins. Until one morning, at the hour of dawn's smile, the listless anemic descended to the garden alone, as always, with her vague, melancholic apathy. Sighing, she wandered listlessly here and there; even the flowers were sad upon seeing her. She leaned against the base of a splendid, bizarre faun that, its marble hair wet with dew, bathed its splendid nude body in the light. She saw an iris raising its pure, white cup to the blue, and she stretched out her hand to grab it. It was not good... - yes, this is a story of fairies, señoras mías, but now you shall see their application to real love –she had barely touched the cup of the flower, when a fairy burst forth suddenly in its tiny, golden cart, dressed in brilliant, impalpable threads, with a coat of dew, a diadem of pearls, and a silver wand.

Do you believe that Berta was frightened? Not one bit. She clapped her hands cheerfully, revived as though under a charm, and said to the fairy:

- Are you the one that loves me so much in dreams?

- Rise – answered the fairy. And as if Berta had been shrunk, in such a way that she fit in the shell of the golden carriage, which adorned the curved wing of a swan on the water's surface. And the flowers, the proud faun, the light of day, looked at them as the fairy's carriage moved with the wind, and Berta, calm and smiling at the sun, the little girl with olive colored eyes, vibrant like dawn, gentle like the princess from a blue story.

When Berta, the divine coach already stopping, ascended the garden stairs that looked like emerald, everyone, the mamá, the cousin, the servants, formed with their mouths a shocked 'O'. She came leaping like a bird, with her crimson face full of life; her bosom full and beautiful, caressed by her chestnut hair, free and careless; her arms naked to the elbow, half showing the web of her almost imperceptible azure veins; her lips slightly parted in a smile, as if emitting a song.

Everyone exclaimed:

- Hallelujah! Gloria! Hosanna to the kings of [Aesculapius](#)! Eternal glory to the globules of arsenic acid and the triumphant showers!

And while Berta ran to the restroom to put on her most luxurious brocades, they sent for the old man with the tortoiseshell ringed spectacles, the black gloves, the distinguished looking bald spot and the double breasted frock coat. And now, listen you all, mothers of the anemic young women, how there is something better than arsenic and iron to ignite the crimson in these

pretty virgin cheeks. You all already know of course, it was not the globules; no, it was not the showers; no, it was not the pharmacist who returned Berta to health and life, the girl with eyes the color of olive, happy and vibrant like the branch of a peach tree in bloom, luminous like dawn, gentle like the princess from a blue story.

And thus Berta found herself in the fairy's carriage and asked her:

- Where are you taking me?

- To the palace of the sun. – And of course the girl felt like her hands were burning with excitement and her little heart leapt as though filled with impetuous blood. – Listen – continued the fairy - I am the good fairy from the dreams of adolescent girls: I am she that cures your chlorosis by simply bringing you in my carriage to the palace of the sun, where you are going now. Be careful not to drink too much of the nectar of the dance, and do not faint in those first rapid happy moments. We have arrived. Soon you will return to your dwelling. One minute in the palace of the sun leaves years of fire in your body and in your soul, my young friend.

In truth, it was a fine enchanted castle where you could almost feel the sun in the air. Oh, what light, what fire! Berta felt like her lungs were filling with the air of pastures and of the sea, and her veins with fire: she felt relaxing harmonies in her brain, as if her soul had expanded, as if her feminine skin had become smoother and more elastic. Then she saw real dreams and heard intoxicating music. In vast dazzling galleries, full of brightness and aromas, of silks and of marbles, she saw a whirlwind of partners snatched up by the invisible and consuming waves of a waltz. She saw the other anemic girls who, like herself, had arrived pale and sad, breathed in that air, and then threw themselves into the vigorous, svelte arms of youth, whose golden whiskers and fine locks shined in the light; and they danced, danced with them in ardent intimacy, listening to their amorous compliments that went straight to their souls, breathing in from time to time the air, impregnated with vanilla scents, tonga beans, violet, cinnamon, until they were in a frenzy, panting, exhausted, like doves fatigued from a long flight, falling on silk cushions, their breasts palpitating, their necks rosy, and like that, dreaming, dreaming about intoxicating things.... And she as well! She fell into the whirlwind, the seductive maelstrom, and she danced, she screamed, she passed between spasms of unsettling pleasure; and then she remembered that she was not supposed to overindulge on the wine of the dance, although she did not cease looking at her handsome companion, with his big eyes and spring-like gaze. And he pulled her through the vast galleries, clinging to her waist and adorning his listener with the calm, rhythmic tones of the language of love, iridescent and fragrant sentences, from the crystalline and oriental times.

And then she felt as if her body and her soul filled with the sun, an outpouring of strength and life. No, do not wait any longer!

The fairy returned her to her palace garden, the garden where she would cut the flowers with the swell of perfume that rose mystically from the trembling branches, floating like the wandering soul of the dead lilies.

Mothers of anemic young women! You rejoice in the victory of arsenic and hypophosphite from el señor doctor. But in truth I tell you: it is necessary, for the benefit of those pretty virgin cheeks, to open the cage door for your loving little birds, above all in the spring time, when there is ardor in the veins and in the saps, and a thousand atoms of sunlight buzzing through the gardens like a swarm of gold on opening roses. For chlorosis, the sun in their bodies and in their souls. Yes, the palace of the sun, for girls like Berta, she with eyes the color of olives, vibrant like the branch of a peach tree in bloom, luminous like the dawn, gentle like the princess from a blue story.

The Blue Bird

Paris is an entertaining and terrible theater. Amongst the visitors at Café Plombier, good and determined young men – painters, sculptors, writers, poets – sí, everyone searching for the old green laurel!, none were better liked than poor Garcín, almost always sad, good absinthe drinker, dreamer that never got drunk, and, like an impeccable bohemian, a brave improviser.

In the dilapidated little hovel of our happy reunions, saved on the plaster of the walls, between the sketches and profiles by some future Delacroix, were verses, entire stanzas written in the thick, crooked hand of our *blue bird*.

The blue bird was the poor Garcín. You don't know why they called him that? We baptized him with that name.

It was not a simple caprice. That excellent young man had the sad wine. When we asked him why, when we all laughed like fools and little boys, he would wrinkle his brown and stare fixedly at the ceiling, and answered us, smiling, with a certain bitterness:

- Comrades: you are all aware that I have a blue bird in my brain; as a consequence...

It also happened to be that he enjoyed going to the fresh countryside when spring came. The air of the forest did his lungs well, according to what the poet told us.

From his excursions, he used to bring back bouquets of violets and a thick book of madrigals, written beneath the rustling of the leaves and the wide, cloudless sky. The violets were for Niní, his neighbor, a youthful, rosy young woman with very blue eyes.

The poetry was for us. We would read them and applaud. We all had a compliment for Garcín. He was a genius that should shine. The time would come. Oh the blue bird would fly so high! Bravo! Bien! Hey, waiter, más absinthe!

Garcín's principles:

Of the flowers, pretty blue bells.

Of the precious gems, the sapphire.

Of the immensities, the sky and love; that is to say, Niní's pupils.

And the poet repeated: - I believe that neurosis is always preferable to stupidity.

Occasionally Garcín was more sad than customary.

He would walk along the boulevards; he watched indifferently as the luxurious coaches, elegant people, beautiful women passed him by. He would smile at the jeweler's window display; but when he passed by a book store, he would walk up to the window, sniff around, and, upon seeing the luxurious editions, he declared himself decidedly envious and would wrinkle his brow; to settle himself he would look up to the sky and sigh. Then he would run to the café in search of us, agitated, fanatical, he would order his glass of absinthe and tell us:

- Sí, inside the cage that contains my mind there is an imprisoned blue bird longing for liberty.

There were some that came to believe he had lost his reason.

An alienist, whom we informed of what was happening, characterized the case as a special monomania. His expertise in pathology left him no doubt.

Decidedly, the despairing Garcín was crazy.

One day he received, from his father, an old provincial rag trader from Normandy, a letter that more or less said the following:

- I know about your insanity in París. As long as you remain like this, you will not get from me a single *sou*. Stop being idle and come back to sell books in my shop, and when you have burned your manuscripts full of nonsense, you can have my money.

He read this letter in the Café Plombier.

- Will you go?

- Will you stay?

- Do you accept?

- Do you decline?

Bravo, Garcín! He tore up the letter and, tossing that rag out the window, and improvised a few stanzas, that ended, if my memory serves:

Yes, I will always be an idler

That which I applaud and celebrate

While in my brain remains

The cage of the blue bird

From then on Garcín changed his character, he became talkative, he gave us a shower of happiness, he bought a new coat and began a poem in tercets, titled...well its clear: *The Blue Bird*.

Every night in our circle he would read something new from the work. It was excellent, sublime, eccentric.

In it there was a beautiful sky, a fresh countryside, lands that sprouted as if from Corot's magic brush, children's faces peeping out between the flowers, Nini's eyes damp and big, and in addition, the good Lord sent flying, over all of that, a blue bird that, without knowing how or when, nests in the mind of the poet, where he remains imprisoned. When the bird wants to fly, opening its wings and bouncing against the walls of his cranium, the poet would raise his eyes to the sky, wrinkle his brow and drink absinthe with a little water, smoking a cigarette down to the filter.

That's where the poem stood.

One night Garcín arrived laughing but nevertheless very sad.

The beautiful neighbor had been taken to the cemetery.

- News! News! The last verse of my poem. Niní has died. The spring arrives and Niní departs. The violets are saved for the countryside. Now all that's left is an epilogue to the poem. Publishers won't even deign to read my lines. You all will soon have to disperse. The Law of time. The epilogue should be titled: *How the blue bird escaped in flight to the blue sky.*

The height of spring! The trees in bloom, the clouds pink at dawn and pale in the afternoon; the smooth breeze that moves the leaves and makes the ribbons on straw hats flap with that special noise! Garcín had not gone to the countryside.

He was here, with a new suit, coming to our beloved Café Plombier, pale, with a sad smile.

- Amigos míos, a hug! Embrace me all of you, strong, like this; tell me goodbye, with all your heart, with all your soul...the blue bird flies...

And the poor Garcín cried, hugged us, gripped our hands with all his strength and left.

We all said:

- Garcín, the prodigal son, looking for his father, the old Norman. Goodbye muses!; adios, Gracias! Our poet has decided to sell rags! Eh! A glass for Garcín!

Pale, worried, depressed, the following day all the regular patrons of Café Plombier, those of us that had made such a commotion in that dilapidated little hovel, found ourselves in Garcín's room. He was lying on his deathbed, his sheets soaked in blood, his skull torn open by a bullet. On top of the dresser there were fragments of brain matter...Horrible!

When, having recovered from the initial shock, we could cry before our friend's dead body, we found with him the famous poem. On the last page there was written these words:

Today, in the midst of spring, I leave open the cage door for the POOR BLUE BIRD.

Oh Garcín, how many of us have your same sickness in our brains!

White Doves and Brown Herons

My cousin Inés was blond like a German. We grew up together, since we were very young, in the house of our wonderful grandmother who loved use very much and made us see ourselves as siblings, looking after us carefully, seeing that we didn't quarrel. Adorable, that little old

woman, with big flowers on her dress and her hair curly and pulled back, like an old marquis by Boucher!

Inés was a little older than me. Nonetheless, I learned to read before her; and I understood – I remember it very well – what she recited by memory, mechanically, in a little pastoral, where she would dance and sing before the baby Jesus, the mother Mary and the señor Joseph; all to the delight of the simple older persons of the family, that laughed their honeyed laughter, lauding the talent of the actress.

Inés grew. I did as well; but not as much as her. I should have entered school, a terrible and depressing boarding school, to dedicate myself to the dry studies required to graduate, to eat the standard dishes of students, to not see the world – the world of my youth! – and my house, my grandmother, my cousin, my cat, an excellent roman that would rub against my legs affectionately and fill my black pants with white hairs.

I left.

There at school my adolescence woke up completely. My voice took on fluty and hoarse timbres; I reached that ridiculous age where a little boy passes into youth. Then, by some special phenomenon, instead of preoccupying myself with my professor of mathematics, who never got me to understand Newton's binomial, I thought – still vaguely and mysteriously – about my cousin Inés.

In time I had many profound revelations. I realized many things. Among them, that kisses were an exquisite pleasure.

Time.

I read *Pable y Virginia*. I arrived at the end of the school year and I left, on vacation, quick like an arrow, down the road to my home. Libertad!

My cousin – but, Dios santo, so quickly! – had turned into a complete woman. In front of her I felt embarrassed, a little serious. Whenever she addressed me, I would smile at her with a simple smile.

Inés was already fifteen and a half years old. Her hair, golden and shining in the sunlight, was like a treasure. Light-skinned and slightly red, her face was created by Murillo, if you saw it from the front. At times, contemplating her profile, I would think of a splendid Syracuse coin with the stamped face of a princess. Her dress, formerly short, had descended. Her bosom, firm and full, was an occult, supreme fantasy; her voice clear and vibrant, her blue pupils, ineffable, her mouth full of the fragrance of life and color of purple. A wholesome, virginal springtime!

My little grandmother received me with open arms. Inés declined to hug me, she extended her hand. After that I did not dare to invite her to play the same games as before. I felt shy. Now what!?! She must have some of the same feelings as me. I was in love with my cousin!

Inés, very early in the morning on Sundays, went with our grandmother to mass.

My bedroom was neighbor to theirs. When the church bells sang their resonant morning call, I was already awake.

I would listen, with an attentive ear, to the rustling of their clothes. Through the slightly cracked door I could see the pair of them leave, talking in loud voices. My grandmother's antique gathering skirt and Inés dress, tidy, fitted, to me always revealing, would pass by me with a whish.

Oh Eros!

- Inés...

- ...?

And we were alone, in the light of the Argentinian moon, sweet, a beautiful moon like those in Nicaragua!

I told her everything I felt, supplicant, stuttering, tripping over my words, now fast, now reserved, frenzied, fearful. Yes! I told her everything; the strange, debilitating anxiety that I experienced when she was near; the love, the longing, the sad insomnia of my desire, my thoughts fixed on here there in the meditations of my school; and I repeated the great word like it were a sacred oration: Love! Oh, she should be delighted to hear my adoration! We would continue to grow. We would be husband and wife...

I waited.

The pale celestial light illuminated us. The air brought us tepid perfumes that for me I imagined as propitious for passionate lovers. Golden hair, paradisiac eyes, burning, parted lips!

Suddenly, and with a smirk:

- Look at this! How silly...

And she ran like a happy cat to where our wonderful grandmother was situated, quietly reciting her rosary and her responsorial.

With a brazen laugh like a malicious student, with daft air:

- Hey, grandmother, he just told me!...

They already knew I was going to say it!...

Her laugh interrupted the old woman's prayers, who remained pensive and fingering the bead on her rosary. And I saw it all, spying, from a ways away, and I cried, yes, I cried bitter tears, the first of my disillusionments as a man.

The physiological changes that occurred in me, the agitation of my spirit, affected me deeply. My God! Dreamer, a little poet as I believed myself to be, beginning to grow my peach fuzz, I felt full of illusions in my head and verses on my lips; and my soul and my pubescent body was thirsty for love. When would that powerful moment arrive that would illuminate a celestial vision in the depths of my thirst, the moment that would tear away this seductive veil?

One day, in the midst of summer, Inés was in the garden watering the plants, between the bushes and the flowers, those which she called her friends: some white doves, charming, with their lovingly musical snowy white necks. She wore a dress – always when I dream of her she is dressed the same – bluish gray, wide sleeves that let one see her entire satiny, alabaster arms; her hair pulled back and damp, and the unruly fuzz on the nape of her light and pink neck, that for me was like a curly light. The birds walked around her, imprinting on the dark ground the carmine stars of their feet.

It was warm. I was hidden amidst the foliage of some jasmine. I devoured her with my eyes. Finally my elegant cousin came close to my hiding place! She saw me trembling, my face turned red, in my eyes a strange, a caressing call, and she began to laugh cruelly, terribly. Y bien! Oh, that was not possible! I launched myself rapidly in front of her. I must have looked audacious and formidable, and she retreated, as if surprised, a step.

- Te amo!

Then she began to laugh. A dove flew onto one her arms. She pampered it, giving it wheat seeds from between the pearls of her young, sensual mouth. I came closer. My face was together with hers. The naïve animals surrounded us... a strong, invisible wave of her feminine aroma bewildered my mind. I fancied Inés a beautiful human dove, white and sublime; and at the same time full of fire, ardor, a treasure of bliss! I said nothing more. I took her head and I gave her a kiss on the cheek, a quick kiss, burning with furious passion. She, a little embarrassed, turned and fled. The doves were startled and leapt in flight, creating a dull noise of flapping wings on the rustling bushes. I, overwhelmed, remained motionless.

After some time I left for a different town. The blond, white dove had not shown my eyes that paradisiac dream of mysterious delight.

Ardent, sacred muse of my soul, the day had come! Elena, the gracious, the happy, she was my new love. How sacred that mouth would become, murmuring those ineffable words to me for the first time!

She was there, in a city at the edge of a lake in my country, an enchanted lake, full of flower islands and colorful birds.

The two of us were alone holding hands, seated on an old pier, beneath which the dark, blue-green water sloshed musically. It was a caressing twilight, one of those that are the delight of tropical lovers. In the opal sky we saw a tranquil transparency that diminished until it changed to tones of dark violet, over the part of the orient, gradually converting into a blushing gold on the deep horizon, where vibrating obliquely, the red and fading final rays of the sun. Pulling in with desire, my adoring lover looked at me and our eyes said passionate, strange things. The depths of our souls sang in intoxicating unison like two invisible and divine Philomels.

In ecstasy I looked at the tender, ardent woman; I caressed her chestnut hair with my hands, her face the color of canella and roses, her mouth like Cleopatra's, her body striking and virginal; and I heard her voice, softly, very softly, whispering affectionate phrases, so low as if they were only for me, afraid that perhaps the vespertine wind would carry them away. Believe me, her eyes of Minerva inundated me with happiness, green eyes, eyes that would always please the poets. Then we shifted our gaze to the lake, still full of an idle sheen. A large group of herons paused near the bank. White herons, brown herons, the kind that, when the day gets warm, go to the shoreline for fear of the crocodiles, who with their wide jaws open, drink in the sun on the black rocks. Beautiful herons! Some hid their long necks in the waves or beneath their wings, and appeared like large spots of living, rose colored flowers, moving and calm. Occasionally one would, on a single leg, smooth out their feathers with their beak, or remain motionless, sculptural and hieratic, or some would take short flights, creating in the depth of the shore, filled with green, or in the sky, capricious pictures, like a flock of cranes from a parasol.

I imagined, together with my love, that from that land high above the herons would bring me back unknown, dreamlike verses. The white herons were the purest, most voluptuous, with the purity of the dove and the voluptuousness of the swan; neat, with their royal necks, resembling those of English girls that together on those curly pages that you see in those pictures where Shakespeare is reciting in the London court. Their wings, delicate and white, evoking thoughts of fading nuptial dreams; all of them – as the poet says – like carvings in jasper.

Ah, but the others have something with more charm for me! My Elena gave me a feeling similar to them, with her color of canella and roses, striking and elegant.

The sun had already disappeared, pulling all of the opulent purple of the oriental king. I had flattered my lover tenderly with my oaths and sickly sweet, warm phrases, and together we continued in a languid duo of immense passion. Up to that point we had been two dreaming lovers, mystically consecrated, one to the other.

Suddenly, and as if drawn by a secret force, in an inexplicable moment, we kissed on the mouth, both trembling, a kiss that for me was sacramental and supreme: the first kiss received from the lips of a woman. Oh Salomon, biblical and real poet! You said it like no one else: *Mel et lac sub lingua tua.*⁴²

Oh, my adorable, my beautiful, my loving brown heron! You have in my memory, which in my soul forms the highest and most sublime, an immortal light.

Because you revealed to me the secret of the divine delights in the ineffable first instant of love.

⁴² There is honey and milk beneath your tongue

The Lyric Year

Primaveral

Month of roses. My rhymes they go
in circles about the vast jungle,
collecting honey and scents
among the blooming flowers.
Amada, come. The great forest
is our temple; there, quivering,
floating, a saintly perfume
of love. The bird flies from
one tree to another, and greets
your beautiful, rosy face
like at dawn; and the holm oaks,
robust, tall, powerful,
shaking, when you pass,
their trembling green leaves,
arching their limbs as if
to permit a queen to pass.
Oh, amada mía! Es el dulce
tiempo de la primavera.

*

Look me in the eyes;
give your hair to the wind,
so that the sun may bathe its gold
of saving and splendid light.
allow my hands to squeeze
yours of rose and silk,

and laugh, with lips revealing
their fresh, and purple dew.
I will tell you rhymes,
and you will listen smiling;
and if by chance some nightingale
comes, and sets himself nearby
to tell some story
of nymphs, roses, or stars,
You shall not hear notes nor trills,
rather, amorous and enchanted,
you will listen to my songs
fixed on my quivering lips.
Oh, amada mía! Es el dulce
tiempo de la primavera.

*

There is a fountain clear
that springs from a cavern,
where bathing nude,
the white nymphs play.
They laugh with the fountain's bubbles,
they cleave the serene lymph;
amongst the crystal dust
they fluff their locks,
they know the hymns of lovers
in the beautiful Greek language,
that in glorious ancient times
Pan invented, in the fields of flower.

Beloved, I put in my rhymes
The most powerful word
from the phrases, from the verses,
from the hymns of that language;
and I will tell you that word
Steeped in Hiblean honey
Oh, amada mía! Es el dulce
tiempo de la primavera.

*

They move in their vibrant groups,
the honey bees circling
like an aureal whirlwind
that makes the white light happy;
And on the talking water
passing radiant, and flashes of light,
with their crystalline wings
the iris dragonflies.
Oye: the cicada sings
because it loves the sun, that
in the jungle, sifts golden dust
between the thick leaves.
Its breath, the mother earth
gives us in a fecund sigh,
with the soul of the calyx,
and the scent of the herbs.

*

You see that nest? There is a bird.

They are two: the male and the female.

She has the white crop,

he has the black plume.

In their throat, chirping,

the soft trembling wings;

and their beaks crashing

Like kissing lips.

The nest is a canticle. The bird

incubates the trill, oh poets!

from the universal lyre

the bird plucks a chord.

Blesséd is the sacred warmth

that made the buds spring forth,

Oh, amada mía! Es el dulce

tiempo de la primavera!

*

My sweet muse Delicia

brought me a Greek amphora

chiseled from alabaster,

and filled with the wine of Naxos;

and a beautiful cup of gold,

the base adorned with pearls,

so we could drink the wine

that is propitious to the poets.

In the amphora is Diana,

real, proud, and slender,

her divine nudity

her elegant composure.
And in the luminous cup
is the Venus Citeran
tended close to Adonis
whose caresses she disdains.
No quiero el vino de Naxos
Nor the amphora's lovely handles,
Nor the cup where Cipria
pleads for Adonis' beauty.
I want to drink the love
alone from your auburn mouth.
Oh, amada mía! Es el dulce
tiempo de la primavera!

Estival

I

La tigre de Bengala
with her lustrous hide, stained in sections
happy and gentle; she is extravagant.
She springs from the slopes
of a ridge to the dense
reedbed of bamboo; then to the rock
rising up at the mouth of the cave.
There she lets out a roar,
shaking like crazy

her bristly coat stands on end from pleasure.

*

The virgin beast is in love.
It is the month of passion. The ground is like
embers. And in the sky
The sun, immense flame.
Through the dark verdure
the kangaroo leaps, fleeing.
The boa swells, sleeps, warms himself
by the torrid light;
the bird sits
to rest on the green summit.

*

Feel the whispers of the furnace;
and the Indian jungle
with wings from the heat,
releases, beneath the serene
sky, a sigh of 'sí.' The vain tiger
fills her lungs with breath,
and finds herself handsome, proud, powerful,
Her heart beats, her breast swells.

*

She contemplates her great claw, hidden,
the nail of ivory; she touches
the edge of a rock,
probes and scratches it.
Looks at her flank,

her pointed tail whipping,
color black and white,
mobile, lavish;
then the belly. Following
She opens her wide gullet, arrogant,
like a queen she demands homage;
afterwards she scouts, searches, moves. The beast
exhales something akin
to a wild sigh.
A roaring call,
she heard. With alacrity
She looked to one side and the other.
And her green, dilated eyes sparked
when she saw the tiger's head
emerge on the peak of the hill.
The tiger approached.

*

He was beautiful.
Gigantic in stature, the skin radiant,
flank tight, neck robust,
he was a Don Juan feline
in the forest. He walks in strides
silently; sees the quiet, solitary tigress,
and shows his white
teeth, and hoists
his tail with grace.
To see him walk,

his body flow with elegance and gallantry.

To see his muscles pulsate

beneath his skin, they say

this beast was

the violent gladiator of the mountain.

Hair standing on end,

he licks his lips. When he moved,

his weight flattened

the springy green grass;

the noise from his breath like

the pant of a bellow.

He is, he is the king. Scepter of gold,

no, rather the broad claw

that drives fiercely into the nape of the bull

tearing the flesh.

The enormous black eagle, with pupils

of fire and the dazzling hooked beak,

of the eagle; the deep, calm

waters of the great croc; the elephant

the valley and the steppe;

the viper, climbing the reeds of the bluff;

and its warm nest

in the suspended tree,

the soft, sweet bird

that loves first light

He, the cave...

*

He did not envy the lion his mane, nor the rude colt
his hoof, nor the burly
hippo his stout frame,
who beneath the canopy of bushy
Baobab, rumbles the wind.

*

This is how the proud go, arrive, flatter;
responding the tigress awaits him
with caress for caress exchange
her savage ardor, the carnivore.

*

Afterwards, the mysterious
touch, the impulsive
forces that pull with astonishing strength;
and, Oh Great Pan!, the idyllic monster
beneath the vast primitive jungles.
Not he from the muses of the acquiescent hours,
soft, affectionate,
in the bright dawns
and the blue, pensive nights;
rather he which ignites, animates, exalts, all
pollen, sap, heat, tendons, bark,
and in lively torrents he emerges and leaps
from the bosom of great Nature.

II

The Prince of Wales leaves for the hunt
through forests and through mountains,

with his great servant train and his dogs
of the finest breed

*

Silencing his horde of vassals,
halting his dog team and horses,
with a disconcerting look,
he contemplates the two tigers, from the entrance
of the cave. He demands his shotgun,
and advances, he shows no emotion.

*

The beasts caress each other. They haven't heard
the multitude of servants.
To those terrible beings,
drunk on love,
with chains of flowers
they have yoked each other
to the snowy conch of Citeres
or to Cupid's chariot.

*

The insolent prince
advances, draws near, now he stops;
now points and shuts one eye; now shoots;
now from the weapon the bang
resonated through the thick forest.
The tiger leaves fleeing
and the female remains, her belly torn open.
Oh, she is going to die!..., but before, weak, stiff,

gushing blood through the open wound,
with pain in her eyes
she looked at the servant train, and released a moan
Like the “ay!” of a woman...and fell dead

III

The beast, brave and wild, that fled,
in the burning rays
of the sun, later slept in his den
Then he had a dream:
that he buried his claws and his teeth
in the rosy, pink belly
and chest of the tigress; and that he devoured
as if delicate desserts
after lunch and dinner
- like a tiger amongst gluttons –
some dozens
of soft, red and pink babies.

Autumnal

In the pallid afternoons
tranquil clouds roam
in the blue; in their ardent hands
they rest their pensive heads.
Ah the sighs! Ah the sweet dreams!
Ah the intimate laments!
Ah the golden dust that floats in the air,
behind those trembling waves they look

with damp and tender eyes
with mouths inundated with smiles,
the crimped locks
and the caresses of rosy fingers.

*

In the pallid afternoons
A fairy friend tells me
The secret stories
full of poetry:
lo que es the birds sing
lo que es the breeze carries,
lo que es that roams in the mist,
lo que es that little girls dream of.

*

One time I felt the wont
of an infinite thirst.
I said to the loving fairy:
“I want in my soul
to have the inspiration, profound,
vast: light, warmth, scent, life.
She told me: “Ven!” with an accent
that a harp would use. In that voice was
the divine language of hope
Oh the thirst for the ideal!

*

On the peak
of a mountain, at midnight,

she showed me the burning stars.

It was a garden of gold

With petals of flames that flutter.

I exclaimed: "Más!"

*

The dawn

came next. The dawn smiled,

with light on her brow,

like a timid youth

that opens the gate, and then is surprised

by curious, magic pupils.

And I said: "Más!" Smiling

the skyblue fairy friend

burst out: "Y bien! The flowers!"

*

And the flowers

were fresh, beautiful,

steeped in aroma; the virgin rose,

the white margarita,

the gentile madonna lily and the convolvulus

that hangs from the shaken branch.

And I said: "Más!"

*

The wind

carries rumors, echoes, laughter,

mysterious whispers, palpitations,

music never heard.

The fairy then carried me to the edge of the fog
that covers our infinite desires,
the profound inspiration,
and the soul of the lyres.
And she strummed. And all was dawn.
In the depth appeared
the beautiful face of a woman.

*

Oh, never,
Pieredes, will you say the sacred words
That my soul would feel!
With her wondering smile:
“Más?...” said the fairy, and I had
then, fixed my eyes
on the blue; and in my ardent hands
I put my pensive head...

Invernal

Night. This vagabond wind carries
the numb wings
and frost. The great Andes
lifts your white summit to the immense blue.
The snow falls in flakes,
the transparent crystalline pink;
In the city, the delicate shoulders
and necks wrap for warmth;

the cars come and go,
happy pianos ring, the air shines;
and, if there is no fire for warmth,
you strip the poor.

I am with my lustrous illusions
and my intimate nostalgia,
together with the chimney
stuffed well with crackling timbers.
And I begin to think: Oh, if I were
her, the object of my infinite desires,
her from my crazy dreams
and my pensive blue nights!
How? Mirad:
From the pleasant stay
in the tranquil extension
I would pour from the lamp, luminous
opal light.
Inside, the love that burns;
outside, the cold night,
The patter of rain on the crystals,
and the shopkeeper that shouts
his monotone and sad melopea
at the glacial breeze.
Inside, the circle of my thousand delusions,
the songs of crystal notes,
those hands that touch my hair,

a breath that grazes my cheek.
a perfume of love, a thousand stirs
a thousand ardent caresses;
she and I: the two together, the two alone;
the lover and the loved, Oh poetry!
the kisses from your lips,
the triumphant music of my rhymes
and in the nearby black chimney
the brilliant log that bursts into sparks.

Oh! how wonderful were the heater
full of gemstones!
Topaz and carbuncles,
rubies and amethysts
in the wide Etruscan cup
replete with ashes.
The sheltered beds,
the fluffy pillows
the skins of Astrakan, the warm kisses
that the tepid and dewy mouths give!
Oh, old winter, save us!
Season that brings with the frigid snows
the drunk love
And the wine of pleasure in your mochila.

Sí, she would be at my side,
giving me her smiles,

she, the one that robs me of my stanzas,
that my reason imagines;
the one that, if I am dreaming,
comes close and visits me;
She that, beautiful, has
the ideal body, grand eyes,
something of marble, white light of the stars;
Nervous, sensitive,
she shows her gentle and delicate neck
from the ancient Hebe;
signs of beauty from the goddess,
smooth arms of the nymph
lustrous hair
raised from her frizzy nape,
and ears that reveal
profound desires and passionate life.
Ah, to see her flesh,
to possess her caresses,
to feel on my lips
The kiss of her love, I would give my life!
Meanwhile, it is cold.
I contemplate the flames that are flickering,
singing happy songs with tongues of gold,
mobile, capricious, and restive,
and in the nearby black chimney
the brilliant log that bursts in sparks.

Then I think about the choir
of happy lyres.
In the cultivated cup of black wine:
the bubbling cup whose borders shine
with flickering and shifting iris
like a necklace of prisms;
the black wine that inflames the blood
and puts cheer in your heart,
and makes the crazy poets write
aureal sonnets and splendid silvas.
The winter is drunk.
When its breezes blow,
the blood of the vines.
emerge from the old casts.
Sí, I will paint your head of white hair
with a crown of wine leaves.
The winter is Galeoto,
because in the cold nights
Paolo kisses Francesca
on her eager mouth,
as her blood runs like fire
and her heart beats passionately.
Oh crude winter, save us!
Season that brings, with the frigid snow
The drunk love
And the wine of pleasure in your mochila.

Adolescent passion,
looks and caresses:
how she would tremble in my arms
the sweet love of mine,
giving me with her eyes the sacred light,
with her scent of flowers, divine sap!
In the bedroom the lamp
spilling the opal light;
hearing us so alone
sighs, echoes, laughs;
the sound of kisses,
the triumphant music of my rhymes
and in the nearby black chimney
The brilliant log that bursts in sparks.
Inside, the love that burns;
outside, the cold night!

Pensamiento de Otoño

(By Armando Silvestre)

The year flees to its end
like a stream that passes,
carrying from the West
fugitive, pallid light.
And like that of the bird

that sadly tends its wing,
the flight of the memories
that launches into space
languishes in the immenseness
of the blue as it roams
the year flees to its end
like a stream that passes.

Some of the soul still wanders
through the dead calyx
from the late volubiles
and the trembling rose bushes.

And, from the distant lights
to the deep firmament,
in wings of perfume
still it returns in a dream

Some of the soul still wanders
through the dead calyx

*

Song of the departed
they imitate the turbid springs.

If it pleases you, amor mío,
we could return to the path
which there in spring
together, hands joined,

we follow, drunk
on love and affection,
through the pleasing trail
of your swing branch
fragrant avenues
that the flowers fill with perfume.
Song of the departed
they imitate the turbid springs.

*

A canticle from lovers
to your sacred beauty
woman, eternal summer,
immortal spring!
Sister of the astro igneous
that through the immenseness
in all seasons pours
fecundity, without ceasing,
from the splendid light
the golden torrent.

A canticle from lovers
to your sacred beauty
woman, eternal summer,
immortal spring!

A un poeta

Nothing more somber than a titan that cries,
man of the mountain, chained to an iris,
that moans, strong, that implores, booming:
Victims of themselves in their fatal martyrdom

Hercules, loco, that at the feet of Omphale
laid down his hammer and refused to fight,
hero that puts on feminine sandals,
bard that forgets the vibrant muse.

Who yoked the robust lions,
spinning, enslaved, with the weak wheel;
without labor, without pushing, without action
Fists of metal and surly wrists!

It is not for the poet to tread on carpets
where the feminine dances triumph:
rather be the shining rays that pierce the shadows,
rather write the verses that resemble spears.

The proud stanza flashing like lightning,
his furrow exuding the splendid light
and the bog of disgrace and of ridicule
unable to see the eagle on its summit

Brave soldier with your helmet of gold,
cast the dart that burns and that tears,

That charges rude like the charge of a bull,
That drives steady, like the lion, its claw

Sing valiantly and in singing, do your work;
That which offers oxen if judged a mountain:
the idea in the bad, breaks and tears,
like in the virgin jungle the bison.

That which says the inspired mouth
resounds in the people with an exotic word;
noise of the swells to lash the rock,
voice from the cavern and breeze from the mountain

Leave, Samson, from Delilah's bosom:
Delilah deceives and cuts your hair.
Don't lose the strength from the bolt of your arm
to be a slave to some beautiful eyes.

Anagke (Greek for Fate)

And the dove said:
"I am happy. Beneath the immense heavens,
in the blooming forest, together at the carafe
full of honey, together at the smooth shoot
and dampened by the drops of dew,

I have my home. And I fly,
with my longing of birds,
from the loved tree of mine
until the distant forest,
when the jocund hymn
from the wakening of the Orient,
comes from the naked dawn, and shows the world
the modesty of the light on your face.

My wing is white and silky;
the light gilds and bathes it
and the zephyr sweeps it.

My feet are like rose petals.

I am the sweet queen
That rules your fowl on the mountain.

In the floor of the picturesque forest
there is the large tree in which I formed my nest;
and I have there, beneath the fresh foliage,
a fledgling without equal, newly born.

I am the winged promise,
the living oath;
I am who carries the memory of the loved
For the thoughtful lover

I am the messenger
Of sad desirous dreamers,
that flutter saying loving things
together with a perfumed duchess.

I am the lyre of the wind.
Beneath the blue of the deep earth
I show from my beautiful and rich treasure
the treasures and elegant things;
the murmur in the mouth,
the stroke in the wings.

I wake the talkative birds
and they sing their melodious songs;
I place myself with the blooming lemon trees
And I spill a rain of orange blossoms

I am all innocence, all pure.
I ruffle up in the wants of desire,
and I shake in the intimate tenderness
of a touch, of a rumor, of the flap of wings.

Oh immense blue! I love you. Because to the flower
you give the rain and the sun always shining;
because, being the palace of the Aurora,

as well you are the roof of my nest.

Oh immense blue! I adore
Your smiling cloudscape,
and that the delicate fog of golden dust
where the sweet smells and dreams go.

I love the faint veils
of floating mists,
Where I tend to the affectionate breezes
the silky fan of my feathers.

I am happy! Because the glade is mine,
where the mystery of the nests are found;
because the dawn is my celebration
and the love my exercise and my battle.

Happy, because from sweet desires filled
with warmth, my fledglings are my pride;
because in the virgin jungles resounds
The celestial music of my murmur.

Because there is not a rose that does not love me,
nor gentle bird that does not listen to me,
nor pretty singer that does not call me!...

Si? –said an infamous sparrow hawk,
And with furor he put her in his stomach

*

Then the good God, there in his throne
(while Satan, to distract his spite,
applauded that wild bird)
began to meditate. He wrinkled his brow,
as though, to remember His vast plans,
and review His periods and His commas,
that when He created doves
He should not have created sparrowhawks.