RECOVERING ADRIAN DEL VALLE’S POR EL CAMINO

AND

BUILDING TRANSNATIONAL MULTILITUDINOUS COMMUNITIES

A DISSERTATION

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DEDICATION

They say it takes a village to raise a child. It is equally true that it takes a village to complete a dissertation. To my village, then, I dedicate this project and hope to someday justify the faith and prayers, sacrifice and patience, and constant encouragement they have offered in supporting my family and me these many years. Bless you, all.
ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION: Recovering Adrián del Valle’s *Por el camino* and Building Transnational Multitudinous Communities

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This dissertation is a recovery project, and as such it introduces Adrián del Valle, a prolific Spanish-born literary modernista and anarchist activist who dedicated his life to social reform in in turn-of-the-century Cuba and beyond. In addition to a critical introduction, this project includes my translation of his 1907 collection of integrated short stories *Por el camino* [Along the Way], which, as all of his works, is long out of print. *Por el camino* complicates critical models grounded in nationality and therefore invites us to construct and apply an alternative model better suited to handling a transnational epistemology of space, which allows for the constant flow of people, ideas, and texts, as well as commercial and political influences, across borders. In developing this epistemological framework, I blend two theoretical concepts—“multitude” and “imagined communities”—to situate del Valle in his dynamic historical moment. Del Valle wrote *Por el camino* in the throes of the Second Industrial Revolution, the Age of Synergy, which I argue can be understood as an early age of globalization. *Por el camino* also stands at the crossroads of Latin American modernista short fiction and the international anarchist movement, thus challenging critical positions that treat modernismo as an apolitical and socially apathetic literary movement obsessed with elitist aesthetics and escapism and anarchism
as a mutually exclusive movement wholly concerned with achieving practical social and political reforms. Through my reading of del Valle’s work, I demonstrate that modernismo and anarchism are two manifold and simultaneous responses to the complex socio-political, economic, cultural, and spiritual crises that grew out of Latin America’s transition into modernity.
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PREFACE

Recovering del Valle

Recovery work is not an infectious trend among today’s literary scholars. That said, it has continued to be the topic of some critical discussion. Corinna K. Lee and Jacob Brogan proposed a special session for MLA 2013 titled “The Poetics of Literary Recovery.” “Recent scholarship has all but consigned recovery projects to the dusty sections of the literary historical past,” they write in their CFP. “The very idea of recovery, it would seem, has become an embarrassment” (Lee). Yet they issue a panel proposal soliciting a discussion treating the very subject. It is, they argue, because there are still questions of methods, models, and social and political implications related to recovery work that need to be addressed. University of Waterloo’s Professor Victoria Lamont offered a graduate course in literary recovery last year (2011-2012). She claims it has been a serious trend in American literary scholarship since the 1980s, citing Henry Louis Gates’s recovery of black writers and critiques of the American canon by scholars like Jane Tompkins and Paul Lauter.

This dissertation is a recovery project, and as such my intent is to introduce the modern reader to Adrián del Valle, a Spanish-born writer, publisher, and activist who spent the better part of his life striving to improve the quality of life of people across a world caught in the throes of globalization. I hope to accomplish this recovery by offering a translation of his 1907 collection of integrated short stories Por el camino [Along the Way], which, as all of his works, is out of print and has therefore been inaccessible. I also offer a critical discussion of the historical and cultural context in which del Valle lived and worked.

Historian Kirwin R. Shaffer has participated in recovering del Valle, particularly to the extent he has drawn on del Valle’s fiction to construct a fuller image of anarchism in Cuba’s
cultural history. “Fiction helps us to understand what the anarchists were seeing, interpreting, and imagining,” writes Shaffer. “By the same notion, it helps us understand how anarchists tried to get their readers and viewers to imagine Cuba’s past, present, and potential future” (Countercultural 19). Yet while del Valle was concerned with Cuba and Cuban anarchism, he was also concerned with the Americas, Europe, and beyond. To follow his gaze, therefore, I will practice a critical approach that allows for the perpetual motion of agents in and between those spaces.

In keeping with this multinational bearing, del Valle is in the company of revered Latin American national heroes like Simón Bolívar, who led Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia to independence; José Carlos Mariátegui, political philosopher and journalist who agitated for indigenous enfranchisement throughout Latin America; and José Martí, the “father” of the Cuban independence. Each exhibited the most exalted patriotic dedication. Each strove to implement visions of pan-American cooperation, even unification. Each believed in the tremendous potential of political and social institutions that evolved organically from local soil. Still, del Valle never made it into the writings or speeches of Cuban nationalist iconic figures like Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, or Roberto Fernández Retamar. One reason may be that del Valle placed Cuba, the Americas, and other peoples in comparable standing, elevating humanism over “Cubanism.”

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1 I will use Martí as a touchstone in the following chapters but will not consider his influence to any significant depth. For more detailed discussions of his politics and aesthetics in relation to this project, see Roberto Fernández Retamar’s “Martí and His (Third) World,” (1965) 2009; Ivan Schulman’s Martí, Darío, y el modernismo, 1969; José David Saldivar’s “Nuestra América’s Borders: Remapping American Cultural Studies,” 1998; Jeffrey Belnap and Raúl Fernández’s collection of essays José Martí’s Our America: From National to Hemispheric Cultural Studies, 1998; and Laura Lomas’s Translating Empire: José Martí, Migrant Latino Subjects, and American Modernities, 2008.
Another contributing factor to del Valle’s being left behind may have its origin in the definitive break that occurred between the socialists, anarchists, and anarcho-syndicalists before the first congress of the Second International in 1889. The anarchist groups were not invited, and their absence set international socialism on a clearly distinct path. Following Cuba’s independence from Spain in 1898, the United States governed Cuban politics directly and indirectly until 1909. Legally elected presidencies and short-lived revolutions passed through the political landscape until 1959, when socialist Fidel Castro succeeded in overthrowing the Batista regime and establishing himself as supreme leader. To consolidate a Cuban nationalist spirit under socialism, Castro invoked the memory of José Martí as the forerunner of their contemporary political and economic ideology. By this point del Valle’s nineteenth- and early twentieth-century anarchism had become altogether incompatible with mid-twentieth-century socialism and later full-blown communism because both required hierarchical governments to impose strict control over the populace and, at its very core, anarchism rejected any form of institutionalized oppression. Bearing this in mind, it is no wonder that post-Castro Cuba has not afforded del Valle the status it has its other great writers, activists, and revolutionaries. This lack of attention to his work has naturally consigned del Valle to the ranks of anonymity from which I hope to recover him.

This project is loosely modeled after works such as *José Martí: Selected Writings*, edited and translated by Esther Allen (2002); *The Squatter and the Don* by María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, edited by Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita (1997); and *The Collected Stories of María Cristina Mena*, edited by Amy Doherty (1997). The latter two are published by the University of Houston’s Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage Project, “a national program to locate, identify, preserve and make accessible the literary contributions of U.S. Hispanics from colonial
times through 1960.” Under the direction of its founder Nicolás Kanellos, one of the most widely published scholars in the field of U.S. Hispanic literature, it has already made thousands—and it hopes to eventually make hundreds of thousands—of literary works, essays and letters, personal histories, diaries, etc. accessible to the world, with the chief intent to broaden and enrich curricula in the humanities and influence the way we view history (*Latinoteca*). It was Dr. Kanellos that I first contacted about the possibility of recovering a Latin American or Spanish author with ties to North America as a dissertation project, and it was he who started me on the path that led to Adrián del Valle.

Each of the aforementioned titles approaches the task of recovering his or her respective U.S. Hispanic author in different ways. Roberto González Echevarría, in his introduction to Esther Allen’s translation of José Martí’s work, reproduces a detailed historical context that led up to Martí’s martyrdom. It explains that he labored ceaselessly to win freedom for his country and to establish a pan-American community. Although he did not succeed in the latter, he did manage to unite the leaders of Cuba’s former attempts to wrest independence from Spanish colonial rule. He saw “a free Cuba ruled by love and justice, free of prejudice and oppression, exempt from arbitrary rule by military leaders, in harmonious commerce with the rest of the world, and enjoying absolute self-determination” (*Martí* xi). Del Valle would not, and it appears that he did not, disagree with Martí’s vision, only his means of achieving it. As an anarchist, del Valle aspired to social and political change through peaceful reform, not militant revolution. In the end, independence was won with blood, and Martí’s greatest fear that “nightmarish” militarism would occupy Cuba throughout the post-independence era became a reality (*Martí* xv).
Echevarría writes that “Martí’s life and death are so intertwined with his literary pursuits that it is impossible to separate the political man from the poet—one does not make sense without the other” (Martí ix). The same may be said of del Valle, except that whereas Martí gave his life in death on the battlefield, del Valle dedicated his life to striving for the improvement of living conditions in Cuba and abroad. And whereas Martí’s literary contribution was largely poetry, del Valle’s was short fiction. Even so, Martí set a high standard of innovation and idealism for poets, orators, essayists, and journalists who would follow, especially among revolutionary writers. For Echevarría, Martí’s greatest success was his chronicles. “They were a blend,” he writes, “of reportage, tableau, and essay that Martí took to its highest form through his powerful imagination” (Martí xviii). He cites description of the execution of four anarchists in Chicago as an illustration:

Parsons has died in the fall; one quick turn, and he stops. Fischer swings, shuddering, tries to work his neck free of the knot, extends his legs, draws them in, and dies. Engel rocks in his floating hangman’s robes, his chest rising and falling like the swell of the sea, and strangles. Spies dangles, twisting in a horrible dance like a sackful of grimaces, doubles up and heaves himself to one side, banging his knees against his forehead, lifts one leg, kicks out with both, shakes his arms, beating against the air, and finally expires, his broken neck bent forward, his head saluting the spectators. (Martí xx)

At the same time Martí is heralded as one of the forefathers of modernista poetry—a literary aesthetic that amplifies beauty through hyperbole, attention to form, and lyrical innovation—he is also capable of capturing the raw brutality of human existence in the objective detail of the journalist and the stark drama of the naturalist. Del Valle, too, moved between these generic styles.

Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita argue in the introduction to their edited edition that Ruiz de Burton uses three strategies “to create a narrative space for the counter-history of the
subaltern, the conquered Californio population” (7). They note *The Squatter and the Don* was the first narrative written in English from the perspective of the vanquished Mexicans following the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo in 1848, and as such constituted what contemporary scholars call revisionist history. They suggest Ruiz de Burton sought to create “a bracketed history [that would] question dominant ideological discourses touting the ‘American way’ as a just, democratic and liberating system.” They also assert that “the very act of writing and publishing this historical romance was a form of empowerment for the collectivity” (7). Sánchez and Pita offer a detailed biographical sketch of Ruiz de Burton, including her family’s history, and consistently tie events and circumstances in the novel back to it throughout their analysis. They also recount capitalistic aggression, the expansion of the railroad, Mexico-U.S. political history, and the complicated social and cultural dynamics between Anglo squatters, Californio aristocrats, and Indian workers.

Sánchez and Pita make a sound argument value of recovery projects. Recovery projects may, for example, undermine the power of the “hegemonic culture” that seeks to “erase minority discourses, silence denunciatory voices and leave tremendous lacunae in the history of marginalized groups” (49). In comparison, the “hegemonic culture” that *Por el camino* at times seems to struggle against is not a culture per se, but the many forces activated by globalization, and the “minority” or “marginalized groups” are the victims of the aggressive practices of global capital and coercive government. But we will discuss this in greater detail in the coming chapters. Sánchez and Pita also suggest that Ruiz de Burton’s novel “invites readers to learn from the wreckage of the past in order to struggle in the present against a new invasion” (48). The early twentieth-century historian, literary critic, and philosopher Walter Benjamin similarly theorizes the power of the past to interrupt the present with the “now,” forcing us to
acknowledge the unexpected (and sometimes unwelcome) similarities between the past and the present. Del Valle’s work, too, will do its fair share of “disrupting the present,” particularly as we discuss the distress experienced by turn-of-the-century societies and individuals that the unprecedented acceleration of technological advances in communications and travel seem to have brought on.

Amy Doherty introduces her recovery of María Cristina Mena’s works with a critical analysis, beginning with a biographical sketch that includes an extensive account of her publishing history “Her writing shows,” writes Doherty, “her critical ability to acknowledge [U.S. stereotypes of Mexicans] and confront them while still maintaining her audience.” She gave her readers a taste of the “exotic” without demeaning or objectifying her characters. She subtly negotiated the challenge of entertaining “a privileged, conservative, Anglo audience” while commenting on the intersection of U.S. and Mexican cultures and economic policies—policies not so distinct from those addressed by Ruiz de Burton and del Valle (xi). In addition to treating intercultural themes, Mena “artfully responded to contemporary political and social issues” (vii). One function of her work was to “reveal the changing roles of women in relation to U.S. commercialism” and then suggest “alternative roles” for them (vii-viii). As evidence for this point, Doherty suggests that in all Mena’s stories, the female protagonists “move fluidly across boundaries of class, race, and nationality” (ix) and “creatively undermine hierarchical dichotomies of man/woman, American/Mexican, and science/religion” (xxxviii). Doherty cites critical works across the ethnic American literary spectrum—Gloria Anzaldúa’s Borderlands/La Frontera, Tey Diana Rebolledo’s Women Singing in the Snow, Paula Gunn Allen’s The Sacred Hoop, and Trinh T. Minh-ha’s Woman, Native, Other—as useful models for thinking about subversive behavior. In recovering Mena’s work today, 99 years after her first short story was
published in *Century Magazine*, Doherty brings to light one writer’s poignant treatment of pressing issues that were not fully understood, much less appreciated, in her day. Why did Mena’s short stories not gain enough traction to propel her to greater literary notoriety? Why were her works not collected sooner? Possible answers may include logistical and commercial concerns such as print runs and distribution as well as socio-economic factors of leisure and disposable income. I submit, however, that other, subtler reasons that might have contributed to our losing touch with Mena’s work could be that it generated an awkward tension between what her publishers wanted their target audiences to read and what she wanted them to see. Similarly, del Valle, whose works also fell short of the threshold to successive generations failed to find resonance with a vast enough readership to sustain demand for more print runs. I will explore the reason for this failure in later sections.

As early as 1888, when he was only 15, del Valle was already publishing political commentary in Barcelona’s pro-labor periodical *El Productor*. This series of editorials on socialism, “Cartas a un amigo” [“Letters to a Friend”], he signed as Palmiro. They were all—about thirty of them—reprinted the following year in Havana’s own *El Productor*. And it was not long after that he became editor of a student weekly (Loveira 11). He traveled through France, Belgium, and England before landing in New York in 1892, where he integrated himself into radical political circles. He soon took over as editor of the Spanish-language anarchist newspaper *El Despertar* [*Wake Up*] and continued in that capacity until February 1895. During

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2 I have not been able to corroborate my suspicion through a comprehensive examination of his works, but it appears that del Valle authored his revolutionary writings under the name Palmiro de Lidia, whereas his anarchistic writing he signed as Adrián del Valle. This is not illogical, considering the difficulty in positioning oneself in the political environment surrounding the conflicting currents of social and political reform and separatism in Cuba in the 1890s. He published yet another piece, *Cultura psicofísica: para vivir cien años* (or *Psychophysical Culture; to Live One Hundred Years*), which, by its title, does not appear to be a political work, in 1911 under the name Hindus Fakir. I also discovered in the late stages of my research that “Adrián del Valle” may be a pseudonym as well for Abdón Terradas.
the opening salvos of Cuba’s final push for independence from Spanish rule, he sailed to Havana to ally himself with revolutionary intellectual elites. Unable to reach rebel forces in the field, he returned to New York, where he continued his efforts to support the Cuban cause for independence through editing radical literature for several periodicals while establishing a press of his own (El Rebelde, or The Rebel), again under the pseudonym Palmiro de Lidia, and working as a tobacco roller (Countercultural 15). In 1896 he co-founded the magazine Cuba y América with Raimundo Cabrera in New York, over which he became president in 1909 and edited for fifteen years (Pierre Basterra).

Del Valle returned to Cuba in January 1899, only weeks after the U.S. Navy had routed the Spanish fleet at Santiago Bay, and continued to work for social reform in the new nation until his death in 1945. During the first month of North American occupation, he founded the anarchist paper El Nuevo Ideal, “defender of absolute freedom and workers’ demands,” which lasted for two years (Loveira 9). Over the years he continued to collaborate with key players on publications, as writer and editor, in the national and anarchist publishing industry in Cuba. He wrote for El Mundo [The World] and El Tiempo [The Times], a pro-Cuban daily, not to be confused with another El Tiempo, the supplement to Cuba y América, intended to “dishispanicize” Cuba and Americanize it completely (Basterra). He also wrote for the foremost anarchist newspapers ¡Tierra! [Land!], Rebeliόn!, and Nueva Luz [New Light], and between 1912 and 1913 edited the anti-clerical journal El Audaz [The Audacious] (Countercultural 15-16). He contributed regularly to La Última Hora [The Last Hour] and Heraldo de Cuba [Cuba Herald], in which he wrote about issues during World War I; La Nación [The Nation], in which he wrote about happenings throughout America and Cuba in particular; La Reforma Social [Social Reform]; the monthly alternative health and anarcho-naturist magazine; Pro-Vida [Pro-
Life], which he founded and edited; and the highly regarded Revista Bimestre Cubana, published by the Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País in Havana (Countercultural 15-16). He also wrote for La Revista de Filosofía [Philosophy Magazine] and another La Nación out of Buenos Aires, La Ilustración Artística [Artistic Illustration] and El Diluvio [The Flood] out of Barcelona, and Inter-América out of New York (Loveira 10-14). My objective in detailing del Valle’s wide-ranging and prolific publishing history is to generate a sense of the extent of his sphere of influence.

In 1925 he was invited by Teresa Mañé (Soledad Gustavo) and Joan Montseny (Federico Urales), founders of La Revista Blanca [The White Review], to write a novella for their debut issue of La Novela Ideal [The Ideal Novel], a new supplement to the weekly anarchist magazine. The result was Mi amigo Juan, which turned out to be the first of over 500 such short novels to come over the next 13 years. These “militant anarchists sought other means of distributing libertarian propaganda among the new generation of workers,” and one of them was La Novela Ideal (Eulália Vega 6). They published fiction that propagated anarchist ideas “through sentiment and emotion, in the struggles to institute a society without masters or slaves, without governments or governed” (Joan Montseny qtd. in Vega 6). “We do not want red novels, nor modernistas,” they wrote in La Revista Blanca in 1924, for they espoused the naturalist and realist school of Emile Zola as a model to bring literature to bear on social issues.3 “We want novels that expose, beautifully and clearly, episodes of embattled lives for a libertarian society. We don’t want any literary ramblings that fill pages and say nothing. We want ideas and feelings, mixed with heroic acts that elevate the spirit and support action. . . . We want optimistic

3 They rejected modernismo for “being decadent and pessimistic and also the estheticism of art for art’s sake” [“. . . decadent i pessimista i també l’esteticisme de ‘l’art per l’art,’] (Montseny qtd. in Vega 8). Note: All translations in this project are my own, and I will not provide the original Spanish text except in cases in which I find it significant in some way.
novels which fill the soul with hope, clean and serene, strong, with some cursing and crying” (Joan Montseny qtd. in Vega 7).

Lynn Hunt, in talking about human rights, argues that public exhibitions of visual art or reading fiction about love and passion help “spread the practices of autonomy and empathy.” In reference to Benedict Anderson’s phenomenon of “imagined communities,” which depended heavily on newspapers and novels to create and sustain long-range nationalisms, Hunt coins the term “imagined empathy” to describe the phenomenon that served as the foundation of human rights rather than of nationalism. It is imagined, not in the sense of made up, but in the sense that empathy requires a leap of faith, of imagining that someone else is like you. . . . Novels generated it by inducing new sensations about the inner self. Each in their way reinforced the notion of a community based on autonomous, empathetic individuals who could relate beyond their immediate families, religious affiliations, or even nations to greater universal values. (32)

Mañé and Montseny understood the power of literature to soften hearts, enflame passions, and rally spirits to a cause as well as inform and teach. Their invitation to del Valle to contribute to La Novela Ideal indicates their belief in his ability to produce the kind of empathy Hunt argues is essential to building an ideological community. I imagine it was this combination that endeared del Valle’s literary work to Loveira over his overtly political writings, along with del Valle’s unflagging optimism. His philosophy of betterment, Loveira contends, only allows him to see art as a means of human expression, passive when it captures life’s scenes through keen observation, active when it provokes restlessness in the soul that leads to a desire for improvement (14-15).

And we shall see these very qualities exemplified in Por el camino.

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4 “Queremos novelas que expongan, bella y claramente, episodios de las vidas luchadoras en pos de una sociedad libertaria. No queremos divagaciones literarias que llenen páginas y nada digan. Queremos ideas y sentimentos, mezclados con actos heroicos, que eleven el espíritu y fortalezcan la acción. . . . Queremos novelas optimistas, que llenen de esperanza el alma; limpias y serenas, fuertes, con alguna maldición y alguna lágrima.”
LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

Novels
Marta. (Published under the pseudonym Palmiro de Lidia.) New York, 1894.
Jesús en la guerra [Jesus in the War]. La Habana, 1917.
Juan sin pan; novela social [Juan Without Bread: a Social Novel]. Buenos Aires, 1926.

Plays
Soledad la mulata [Soledad, the Mulatta]. (“Soledad” is here used as a name, but as a common noun it means “loneliness.”)

Short Story Collections
Cuentos inverosímiles [Unlikely Tales]. La Habana, 1903; 1921.
Por el camino; cuentos [Along the Way: Short Stories]. Barcelona-Madrid, 1907.

La Novela Ideal
Mi amigo Julio [My Friend Julio] (1) 1925
Jubilosa (10)
Náufragos [Castaways] (15)
Camelanga (37)
Arrayán (46)
Aristócratas [Aristocrats] (58)
Ambición [Ambition] (66)
El príncipe que no quiso gobernar [The Prince Who Did Not Want to Rule] (75)
El tesoro escondido [Hidden Treasure] (102)
De maestro a guerrillero [From Teacher to Warrior] (109) 1928
Contrabando [Contraband] (126)
Cero [Zero] (157)
Tiberianos (209)

Social and Political Writings
El ideal del siglo XX [The Ideal of the Twentieth Century]. (Palmiro de Lidia.) La Habana, 1902.

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5 These titles were published as part of the La Novela Ideal weekly supplement to La Revista Blanca. The number corresponds to the particular issue, but the dates are unknown, as they were not printed on the novels’ covers. The first issue, Mi amigo Julio, was printed in 1925, and if one issue was printed roughly each week on a consistent basis, then Tiberianos, del Valle’s last novel in the series, might well have been published by the end of 1930. Each is about 32 pages in length. For further reading on La Novela Ideal, see Marisa Siguan Boehmer’s Literatura popular libertaria: trece años de “La Novela Ideal” (1925-1938). Ediciones Península: Barcelona, 1981. Pp. 143-55.
Socialismo libertario [Libertarian Socialism]. La Habana, 1902.
Cultura psicofísica: para vivir cien años [Psychophysical Culture: To Live 100 Years].
    Published under the pseudonym Hindus Fakir. Cuba y América, La Habana, 1911; 1920.
Kropotkine, vida y obras [Kropotkine: Life and Works]. La Habana, 1925.
El naturismo [Naturism]. La Habana, 1926.

Other Writings
Tradiciones y leyendas de Cienfuegos [Traditions and Legends of Cienfuegos]. La Habana, 1919.
Cuba antes de Colón. 1935 translation of M. R. Harrington’s Cuba Before Columbus (1921).
Cuba a pluma y lápiz; la siempre fiel isla. 1928 translation of Samuel Hazard’s travel book Cuba With Pen and Pencil (1873).

Works of unknown genre
Daniel Boone
Demasiado tarde [Too Late]
El mundo como pluralidad [The World As Plurality]. La Habana, 1924.
En el mar, narración de un viaje trágico; novela [At Sea: Narration of a Tragic Journey: a Novel]
La ciudad prohibida [The Forbidden City]
La eterna luz [Eternal Light]
La flor marchita [The Tainted Flower]
Oro en Nevada [Gold in Nevada]
Sangre de Oregon [Oregon Blood]
Todo vence el amor [Love Conquers All]

*These titles are listed without dates, except where given above, in the archive of La Biblioteca Nacional de España [The National Library of Spain] in Madrid, Spain.*
CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Del Valle came of age when the clock and newspaper were expanding global interconnection (Galison; Anderson, *Imagined*). Scientific discoveries were producing faster, more efficient and, consequently, more affordable means of travel and communication. People and ideas moved far and fast. These developments catalyzed industrial, commercial, political, and cultural expansion, and fostered tremendous opportunities as well as unfavorable living conditions. The pre-1880 years saw the innovation of the telephone, sound recordings, and light bulbs. In 1881, Wabash, Indiana, became the first electrically lit city in the world. By 1890, entrepreneurs, scientists, and venture capitalists had conspired to develop a reliable incandescent light, create networks of electricity-generating plants, build electric motors, trains, internal combustion engines, and crude oil tankers. Before the turn of the century, they had engineered the diesel engine, discovered x-rays, and brought the wireless telegraph online. By the time World War I started, Henry Ford was mass producing cars that could be purchased with only a few months’ wages, the U.S. and German militaries were building reconnaissance aircraft, and North Americans were enjoying the wonders of radio broadcasts, hydrogenated fats, and air conditioning (Smil 25). Local markets no longer limited local businesses, and national borders no longer contained national politics. Once finite forces, kept in perpetual check by the natural barriers of topography and the artificial boundaries of socio-economics and military conquest, were spilling over, making themselves felt in new places and in new ways.

A worldview that had relied on these arrangements was becoming obsolete. The influence of individuals, ideas, and institutions was spreading while empires and nations came apart. These conditions might have been unremarkable, considering that the world was in a
constant state of expansion and development, except that these changes were transpiring so quickly. This accelerated pace disrupted everyday life. It was as if the earth were shrinking under the cartographer’s gaze as he reduced oceans and continents to a two-dimensional plane with compass and square. This geographical shrinkage demanded a revision of epistemologies of space. Ricardo Padrón suggests that

> the modern West has given determinative power over many aspects of life to space as it is conceived geometrically, and has done so at the expense of space as it is perceived or lived. Modernity naturalizes geometric, optical, isotropic space as a fundamental epistemological category, and thereby gives undue authority to the abstractions of the mapmaker, the surveyor, the planner, the architect, and the like. (28)

Time, too, contracted as Greenwich Mean Time, adopted as an international convention in 1884, standardized the way people reckoned and coordinated time. The most distant reaches of the globe were temporally standardized (Galison). The spatiotemporal paradigm shift is evidenced in the nineteenth century’s sprawling transnational business models, invasive international political practices, and social and cultural revolutions.

Vaclav Smil calls this period of unprecedented change the Age of Synergy. “A new civilization was born,” he writes, “one based on synergy of scientific advances, technical innovation, aggressive commercialization, and intensifying, and increasingly efficient, conversions of energy” (8). With an eye to its social and cultural repercussions, twenty-first-century social scientists have named the forces associated with this dynamic, socio-economic, political, cultural, and spiritual upheaval “globalization.” The term has gained currency over last decade, and until now has been used to denote the flux of global forces straddling the turn of the twenty-first century. I submit, however, that what is sometimes called the Second Industrial Revolution, the 30 or so years between the 1880s and World War I, also warrants the appellation.
As I will point out in detail in the chapters that follow, the cumulative forces that comprised this phenomenon had a tremendous impact on the world. In particular, I will focus on two manifestations of the resulting change—the emergence of modernismo and anarchism as transnational reactions—insofar as they provide historical and cultural contexts in which to study del Valle and his work.

Del Valle’s involvement with the mobile members and ideas of the international anarchist movements during the decade of revolutions that inaugurated the twentieth century and the years following forces us to explore critical models that embrace his movement and influence through constantly shifting spaces. Del Valle and his work, then, complicate critical models grounded in nationality. Hence, if we are to accommodate these dynamics, we must apply or construct a model that is better equipped to handle alternative epistemologies of space. Throughout this project I practice just such a critical approach, one that allows for the constant flow of participants, ideas, and texts, as well as commercial and political influence, across borders. I do this by engaging three concepts that find common ground in del Valle’s life and work. First, although he published Por el camino in Cuba nine years after he had relocated to Havana, the themes he addresses extend far beyond the sandy beaches of his new island home. They transgress ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and national boundaries. Yet even as these themes represent a diversity of perspectives, they collectively embody a virtual paradigm of the world from which del Valle drew them. In this paradigm, globalization emerges as a vortex of transnational forces that infiltrates every aspect of contemporary institutions and life, from the global empire and multinational corporation to the conscripted Spanish sailor and Caribbean plantation slave.

Throughout this project I show how Por el camino reflects upon the effects of these globalizing forces on the West during this Age of Synergy. I do this by giving an overview of del Valle’s
history and close readings of selections from the collection. This dissertation, then, serves not only as a recovery project, but also as an exploration of a critical model that embraces the constant motion of writers, texts, and ideas through transnational spaces.

Second, *Por el camino* stands at the crossroads of Latin American modernista short fiction and the international anarchist movement. As of yet, no one has written a comparative study of the two in concert; I believe this is because many critics and contemporary movements (i.e. the Vanguardistas) have treated modernismo as an apolitical and socially apathetic literary movement obsessed with elitist aesthetics and escapism. Other movements have treated anarchism as a movement exclusively concerned with achieving practical social and political reforms (Davison 29). The fact is, both assessments are right and wrong. In addition to revitalizing a Spanish literary tradition that had grown stagnant over the preceding centuries, many modernistas also sought to encourage social reform through political and diplomatic service, radical activism, fiction, and poetry; and anarchists, in their efforts to bring about social reform, likewise appealed to propaganda and literature as a means to educate, encourage, and inspire action. They also resorted to more drastic measures, including strikes, bombings, and outright assassination to punctuate their message. As one of many strategies they implemented, and the only one that I will directly address in detail, literary anarchism capitalized on the power of fiction to capture the imagination and influence readers’ emotions (Hunt). It is apparent, then, that modernismo and literary anarchism are not unrelated; they converge in del Valle’s life and works. In the process of considering the ways that del Valle combines the principles, values, objectives, and methods employed by each movement to express its respective ideologies—my

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7 For recent critics who reject the notion of modernismo’s social and political awareness, see Raúl Silva Castro (1963), Julio Hernández-Miyares and Walter Rela (1987), Aníbal González (2007), and Oscar Espinal Durón (2007).
argument in chapter 2 complicates the critical perspectives that have segregated modernismo and anarchism.

Third, del Valle’s notion of patriotism runs against the grain of 19th-century nationalism. I make this observation not because he represents a unique position, but to place him in company with other, more familiar figures like José Rizal and Mahatma Gandhi. He left home in his early twenties for the Americas to support the revolutionary efforts of one of his homeland’s overseas colonies because he believed in the right of all people to enjoy freedom. Yet despite his opposition to Spain’s brutal efforts to deprive another generation of Cubans of those blessings, he never villainizes Spain in his fiction. He does, however, speak against the political philosophies and governmental structures that lead to oppressive rule. At the same time he strives to create a transnational community of like-minded people, in which each person retains his singularity even as he espouses the shared values of the community and works toward common objectives.

Globalization

A foray into conversations surrounding globalization quickly reveals that the social sciences have been concerned with this phenomenon since the early 1990s. Globalization is the range of economic, social, and political dynamics that has grown out of the global spread of capitalism, technological advances in communication and travel, political and social transformations resulting from decolonization, and the proliferation of social networks that support transnational migration, politics, and financial practices (Smith and Guarnizo 4). Arjun Appadurai characterizes the rapid changes in “the tenor of intersocietal relations” caused by globalization over the past few decades as “rupture” and attributes them to the fact that migration
and media “have become so massively globalized” (*Modernity* 2, 9). It is the adverbial modifier “so” in this statement that undermines his argument because it suggests that the break he theorizes differs from previous historical ruptures only in terms of degree, not nature. Even so, I intend only to complicate Appadurai’s argument by suggesting that globalization is not a rupture with the past that marks a new age, but is instead a resurgence of the forces that mark its onward march, distinguished by new catalysts that expedite and facilitate spatiotemporal transgressions.

The urgency associated with globalization studies stems from the increasing permeability of national borders (and some argue the sovereign integrity of the nation-state itself [Appadurai, “Grassroots” 4]), the destabilization of regional economies, and increased awareness of widespread social and political strife. Economists, sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists, historians, and cultural studies scholars are thus seeking to understand the effects and implications of a world becoming increasingly interconnected. Given that studying such a vast array of complicated relationships across space and through time requires highly sophisticated models and means of quantifying and qualifying data, specialists are still grappling with functional definitions and methodological approaches. “Transnational” is a term that conceptualizes the range of practices and processes that move in global spaces, whether they are related to capital, social ideologies, political influence, supranational institutions or movements, individuals or families, media, etc.

Historian David Gerber talks about transnationalism in epistemological terms. He explains that it “posits the existence of modes of understanding and of behavior that span homelands and destinations and defy conventional time and space, especially national boundaries” (61). His understanding, however, is based in the relationship between origins and destinations—“sending” states and “host” countries, homelands and new lands. Gerber, and
others who shared his epistemology, focused their research on the relationships and means of propagating them that migrants maintained with family members that stayed at home and how they adjusted to life in their new communities. Thus social scientists often conceive these relationships as occurring between two nations, usually between a point of origin, or sending nation or homeland, and a destination, or hosting nation or new land.

Peggy Levitt and Nina Glick Schiller claim that this “unilinear assimilationist paradigm” has been losing ground. They argue it captures too limited a spectrum of the migration experience, and is being replaced with a focus on the interactive networks and modes that emerge within the migratory dynamic (1005). They also explain that since theory in the social sciences presumes that the nation-state is the norm and that social behavior and transactions carried beyond state boundaries are not, there is a need to “remove the blinders of methodological nationalism” because “while nation-states are still extremely important, social life is not confined by nation-state boundaries” (1007). In the following chapters, I address some of the strides academic discourses have made to accommodate our increasingly diverse global environment. We see in this shift the evolution from a concentration on the bi-directionality of transnational migration to its multidimensional aspects. Eva Østergaard-Nielsen applies this principle by including transnational political engagement, the influence of global networks, institutions, norms (such as international human rights) and nonstate entities to migrational dynamics. This enables her to extend inquiry through several “multilevel processes, structures, and actors” and to account for a range of transnational forces (760).

Smil contends that globalization’s “profound and abrupt discontinuity” led to “lasting consequences [that have] no equivalent in history” (13). Among these lasting consequences are modernismo and anarchism. Modernismo is, I argue, a predominantly aesthetic reaction to the
discontinuity of globalization and is manifest in the poetry and fiction of a generation of innovative literary artists, including del Valle. Anarchism, too, is a widespread reaction to the disruption of socio-economic and political forces, and its ranks also included del Valle. *Por el camino* embodies a confluence of these two movements, of their ideological leanings, themes, stylistic tendencies, and dispositions.

**Anarchism**

Richard Sonn describes anarchism as “an authentic response to the dual revolution of the nineteenth century, the capitalist-industrial and the liberal-democratic” (xii-xiii). Whereas the modernistas reacted to the spiritual unraveling of psyche and society, the anarchists reacted to the economic and political instruments of coercion, suppression, and exploitation. “Nationalism, imperialism, and monopoly capitalism,” he continues, “coalesced to bring unprecedented power and prosperity to the privileged strata of European and American society. Anarchism represented the most striking negation of all these forces” (11). Through literature, education, unions, and non-exploitative communities, schools, and businesses anarchists gave substance to their ideology. They did for themselves what government should have done. They established an order of self-sufficiency in preparation for the day when the practices of dominative rule would become obsolete, for when real progress would be achieved. While modernistas and anarchists critiqued the –isms that were unhinging their world, the “privileged strata” were touting the wondrous, life-enhancing opportunities brought by enlightened progress. But the concept of progress to anarchists was integrally connected to their conviction of the perfectibility of humanity, which supported their optimism in tremendous possibilities for social reform, even a utopian society free of hierarchical forms of government. They spoke of progress, then, in terms
of social and political enlightenment and growth, and not in terms of technology or commerce. That said, anarchists valued scientific discovery insofar as it provided means to improve the quality of life and an ontological alternative to organized religion, particularly of the kind enforced by the church.

As we peruse the stories in *Por el camino*, we find that del Valle treats Spaniards, Cubans, *Criollos*, and natives with genuine respect and interest. As an anarchist he resists the nationalistic fervor of his age. This is not to say that anarchists are not or cannot be patriotic or share a sense of pride for one’s people and homeland. They simply promote the enjoyment of freedom for the entire human family over privileging some selection thereof, and in this way participate in a positive effect of globalization—the interconnectedness of peoples around the world. It was the way rulers and the ruling classes organized, manipulated, and compelled people to adopt certain loyalties and behaviors that the anarchists challenged. Moreover, it was the peculiarly “modern” form of political and territorial organization of the nation-state that they were determined to overwrite. By addressing contemporary issues on the international and local levels in the same volume of short stories, del Valle’s fiction contributed to the anarchist movement both on the international and the local levels.

Del Valle lived in and commented on a diverse national, socio-cultural, political, racial, and linguistic landscape without emphasizing the tensions that inhabited it. What we see is a reflection of a worldview acknowledges the day-to-day dynamics of diversity on multiple levels. This observation by no means suggests that he was oblivious to the intense relational dynamics of his times, for he was intrinsically engaged in them. And the breadth of the assortment of countries, nationalities, classes, races, and languages brought to life on the pages of *Por el camino* suggest a deliberateness of articulation. While he promoted mutual understanding and
cooperation between members of the anarchist movement at home and abroad, we should remember that while his work supported a community without borders, it did so without undermining an emerging national Cuban identity. As Shaffer suggests, they are not mutually exclusive objectives. It is possible to develop “both a sense of national and international consciousness simultaneously” (Countercultural 5-6). The anarchist objective, then, was neither to establish an isolated, singular identity nor to solicit a concession of individuality to an amorphous, anonymous collective, but to promote a sustained engagement in a dynamic tension between the two. The anarchist objective was to create a dynamic transnational imagined community grounded in anarchist ideologies. But there was a parallel to this response to which I now turn.

Modernismo

In 1934, Spanish scholar Federico Onís made a statement that every critic of Hispanic American literary modernismo has addressed since. He wrote: “Modernismo is the Hispanic form of the universal crisis of letters and spirit that initiates the dissolution of the nineteenth century around 1885 and which manifested in in art, science, religion, politics, and gradually in every other aspect of life” (xv).° I have come to believe, as noted above, that modernismo is not, as Onís claims, a “universal crisis of letters and spirit,” but a Hispanic literary reaction to the spiritual aspects of a crisis in Western civilization. Ivan Schulman, also in agreement, states that the literature of modernismo is one expression among many of a wider-spread Hispanic American crisis of spirit. Again, I extend the reach of the crisis, and dedicate an entire chapter to explicating anarchism as possibly another of Schulman’s “expressions.”

° “El modernismo es la forma hispánica de la crisis universal de las letras y del espíritu que inicia hacia 1885 la disolución del siglo XIX y que se había de manifestar en el arte, la ciencia, la religión, la política y gradualmente en los demás aspectos de la vida entera, . . .”
Cathy Jrade approaches the discussion from a different angle. She suggests modernista writers were the first to “experience and appreciate the all-encompassing alteration in the fabric of life in Spanish America brought by modernity” (Development 5). Hispanic Americans, she adds, felt a sense of loss, fragmentation, and alienation (“Modernist” 8). Modernistas mounted their response against this sense of crisis, of fragmentation and dis-integration from themselves and their world.

Critics and cultural historians have variously called modernismo a movement, a school of thought, an epoch, a period, a tendency, an attitude, a generation, and more, and each of these labels makes assumptions about its cause, nature, purpose, function, implication, and value. Juan Ramón Jiménez, a twentieth-century Spanish modernista poet and critic, who, in 1935, was responding to the earliest waves of criticism, contended that, more than a literary tendency, modernismo is a “tendencia general”—that is, a widespread tendency: “What we call modernismo is not about a school of thought or of form, but of attitude. . . . [It is] a great movement of enthusiasm and freedom toward beauty” (qtd. in Ricardo Gullón, 32). For C. A. Longhurst, writing in 2002 with nearly a century’s hindsight to his advantage, modernismo is “a mode of being and thinking,” a “critical concept” (107, 269). Ned Davison, in a similar vein, treats modernismo as a “state of mind” in 1966 (27). Ricardo Gullón, another critic writing in the 1960s, agrees with Jiménez that “above all, it is an attitude,” and further adds that modernismo “gives tone to the epoch” (20). Donald Fogelquist asserts in 1967 that it is “simply a manifestation of a state of contemporary spirit, of a universal tendency, whose origins are found

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9 Hispanic America’s modernismo is not to be confused with Anglo American Modernism. It is not the same, but a distinct manifestation of the same phenomenon that affected “art, science, religion, politics, and gradually every other aspect of life.” I will directly engage neither modernity as an ontological phenomenon nor Anglo American Modernism, but will limit my discussion to Hispanic American literary modernismo as a cultural context within which to better understand del Valle’s work.

10 La Voz, 18 marzo 1935, Madrid.
deeply rooted in the transcendental philosophy that shakes the foundations of the vast social fabric that we call the modern world” (qtd. in Schulman 15-16). I list these various critical pronouncements on modernismo without extended commentary because perhaps better than any textbook definition I might borrow or invent, displaying its inherent complexity and conflict through the eyes of modernistas themselves and critics that followed will hint at its nature and function. I speak of modernismo on the one hand in terms of its being a movement and treat it, as Fogelquist puts it, as “a state of contemporary spirit” on the other.

Short stories appeared in modernismo’s earliest stages, just before poetry and well before the novel. Some of the most prominent figures—José Martí, Rubén Darío, Julián del Casal, Manuel Díaz Rodríguez—wrote across generic boundaries. Yet despite the difference in generic approaches, modernista tendencies, techniques, worldviews, and sensibilities saturate the works of the age. The writers of Spanish America published their first modernista works within a very short time of one another—too short, perhaps, to attribute it to mutual influence. Martí published Ismaelillo [Little Ishmael] in 1882 while living in New York; Casal published Nieve [Snow] in 1892 and Bustos y rimas [Busts and Rhymes] in 1893 from Havana; Darío published Azul . . . [Blue . . . ] in 1888 in Chile; Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera and Salvador Díaz Mirón wrote Cuentos frágiles [Fragile Tales] and Poesías escogidas [Selected Poems] respectively in 1883 and 1886 in Mexico; and José Asunción Silva published Nocturno [Nocturne] in 1894 while in Bogotá. Gullón describes the spontaneous emergence of this new aesthetic as an “abrupt eruption, like spring.” “A thousand currents of communication,” he explains, “fly across the Atlantic, in both directions, and go from country to country, from sea to sea, from the high plains to the pampa, spinning an unbreakable web of tiny invisible threads,” thus indicating the transnationality and

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adaptability of the movement to different regions within the Spanish-speaking world (38). Cathy Jrade and Ned Davison share the opinion that the sudden and simultaneous explosion of literary modernismo across such a vast region is due to positivism’s cultural penetration of Europe, the United States, and Hispanic America through the 17th and 18th centuries, due to progress in transportation and communications technologies, increases in literacy among the lower and middle classes, and advances in print capitalism. It was the combination of these developments that precipitated the “crisis” to which the modernistas responded (Jrade, *Development* 12; Davison 17). Jrade further implicates the “ideological impact of positivism,” along with its materialistic support of bourgeois values, effectively replacing religion and metaphysics with science, leaving a “spiritual and aesthetic vacuum” (Jrade, “Modernist Poetry” 11). Gullón credits philosophical positivism as well, but also industrialization, class conflict, the increasing politicization of life, the rapid spread of capitalism as a force that elicited a “complex and at times devastating reaction” from not only the general population but artists in particular, and the spread of anarchism (69). In 2002 Nelson Orringer refers to an “economic and cognitive crisis” as having triggered the modernista response (139). Without using the actual word, Gullón, Jrade, and Orringer come tantalizingly close to today’s notion of globalization in all of its socio-economic, political, cultural, and spiritual manifestations as the spark that ignited the flames of modernismo.

In the following discussions, I articulate and defend four primary arguments. The first of these is that Adrián del Valle’s 1907 collection of integrated stories, *Por el camino*, both reflects and reflects upon, or in other words, is simultaneously a product of and a critique of, the monumental disruption of life that grew out of the last few decades of the nineteenth century. To two of the names already given to this era—the Second Industrial Revolution and the Age of
Synergy—I wish to add “globalization” as a descriptor for the nexus of forces and processes occurring in it. As I have already hinted, there is some resistance to applying a term already assigned to what some consider a uniquely modern phenomenon to what I perceive as being similar in kind and in relative degree. This earlier surge of the forces of globalization spawned two far-reaching and profoundly influential movements: modernismo, a an artistic and spiritual response, limited to the Spanish-speaking world, and anarchism, a social, economic, and political response that affected many nations in the Western hemisphere and beyond. The critics of modernismo attribute its genesis to a general spiritual and aesthetic crisis, while the anarchist reaction grew out of a rejection of so-called technological progress. Del Valle enters this discussion at what appears to be a singular point where modernista themes and stylistic tendencies converge with those of literary anarchism, and as Por el camino embodies this convergence, I explicate a number of selections in illustration. Moreover, I show how he complicates the traditional critical positions of both movements. Lastly, as mentioned above, I lay out evidence suggesting that del Valle’s multi-pronged approach to recruit the world’s population to anarchism amounted to constructing, or at least aiding in the construction of, a transnational imagined community of free peoples.
CHAPTER 2
Globalization

Del Valle and his contemporaries lived in a time when the expansion, complexity, and speed of global networks was comparable to what we experience today through cell phones, e-mail, social media, satellite TV, Internet, etc. The recent development of affordable cellular and satellite communications is comparable to the development of the telephone in 1876, which, by 1892 afforded near-instantaneous communication between New York and Chicago (Headrick 115). Both modern cell phones and nineteenth-century telephones are significant moments in the expansion, complexity, and speed of global networks.

What are the effects of the increased affordability and convenience of today’s long-distance travel by transcontinental airliners and bullet trains over yesterday’s travel options as compared to Henry Ford’s mass-produced Model-T? Consider the explosion of opportunity recently made available by capital ventures and advances in Internet technology. They allow individuals around the world to integrate themselves directly into vast and sophisticated global markets. These markets are outstripping the efforts of global regulatory bodies to govern their behavior. When we consider the implications of these markets in del Valle’s late-nineteenth-century Cuba, we find striking similarities in the speed and extent of life-altering changes. Cuba’s war of independence, for instance, falls into the middle of this challenging transition.

In 1893, José Martí led revolutionary forces into Cuba, initiating the final and ultimately successful phase of a protracted struggle for independence from Spain. By late 1898, the United States had entered into armed engagements with the Spanish following the sinking of the U.S.S. Maine in Havana Harbor. By the close of 1898, the U.S had acquired the remnant of Spain’s territorial possessions in the Caribbean (Puerto Rico, Cuba) and the Pacific (Philippines, Guam).
U.S. military forces occupied Cuba on and off for the next eight years, while Washington enacted unilateral policies that undermined the sovereignty of Cuba and paved the way for international predatory capitalists to take advantage of her underdeveloped government and economy. Del Valle moved his permanent residence to Cuba in 1899 and experienced the growing pains of an infant nation caught in the global turmoil. In order to more fully understand *Por el camino* in this context, I have explored a critical model that is free of what Peggy Levitt calls “the blinders of methodological nationalism” and is, moreover, capable of integrating the historical and cultural variables that tend to resist capture by approaches anchored in the nation (1007).

Similarly, cultural historians, in trying to navigate the turbulent waters of globalization, are confronted with questions of how to perceive, assimilate, and articulate the relationships between institutions, individuals, and societies; the paths of migration and travel; the flow of capital, ideas, and political influence Paul Gilroy tackles this challenge in his foundational work *The Black Atlantic* (1993), in which he makes a case for approaching the cultural history of the Atlantic as a “single, complex unit of analysis . . . and [using] it to produce an explicitly transnational and intercultural perspective.” His critical model transcends “both the structures of the nation state and the constraints of ethnicity and national particularity” and may therefore be helpful as we look at del Valle in his own transnational context (15, 10). He approaches this mobile interchange and creation of ideas as a process, and in doing so he trades the notion of fixity for fluidity and nationalistic paradigms for transnational models in motion. The image of the sailing ship is particularly appropriate for his critical model because it evokes the middle passage and the constant transgression of national boundaries, and because it represents “a living, microcultural, micro-political system in motion” (4). He recognizes that in challenging
“racist, nationalist, or ethnically absolute discourses . . . has been viewed as a provocative and even oppositional act of political insubordination” (1). Admittedly, Gilroy’s attempt to rewrite history in a new framework is a political act because it demands a reconsideration of the (in)stability of exclusionary discourses and inherited assumptions, the very assumptions upon which the current national, social, ethnic, and racial identities are founded. Understandably, we are also seeing tension grow between conventional and transnational approaches in literary and cultural studies.

Gilroy rereads 300 years of African American writing and performing in the light of transnational cultural dynamics. Each of person “experienced a shift in their view of American racial dynamics” through travel and education in Europe and political engagement with people overseas (17). We might apply to others what Gilroy writes of DuBois. Before his travels he was an “African American” or “Caribbean islander,” but he later become “something else which evades those specific labels and with them all fixed notions of nationality and national identity” (19). Gilroy discusses “black musics” and the social relations that support them by approaching them from multiple directions. One such approach entails exploring the process and implications of globalizing black music and how it is “reflected in localized traditions of critical writing,” market dynamics, and aesthetics. He engages in a prolonged discussion of antiphony as a widespread traditional practice, which he argues is a democratizing and communifying force that “symbolizes and anticipates (but does not guarantee) new, non-dominating social relationships.” Further, he argues that it blurs the lines “between self and other” while it brings together “one fractured, incomplete, and unfinished racial self” into conversation with others, creating not only a pleasurable experience but one that engenders what Appadurai describes as a “community of sentiment” (75-79).
Gilroy also addresses the issue of handling “artistic products and aesthetic codes which, though they may be traced back to one distinct location, have been changed either by the passage of time or by their displacement, relocation, or dissemination through networks of communication and cultural exchange” (80). By implication, then, when we remove music from the locality where performers and participants occupy the same space (live performances, group sing-alongs, etc.), to the global sphere where performers and participants share music but are separated by geographical and cultural distances (radio, digital recordings, YouTube, etc.), we still witness the formation of an “imagined community” whose breadth and diversity is suspended by social, cultural, ethnic, and commercial ligatures. Gilroy’s model helps us talk about del Valle, his artistic production, social reformative efforts, and political activism at the turn of the twentieth century. Del Valle was born in Spain, traveled Europe, and lived in the United States, sharing in the day-to-day realities of other peoples, living in their spaces, participating in their struggles, and exchanging ideas, before moving to Cuba. Due to the increasing availability of printing presses and materials, distribution networks, and cost efficient practices, publishing presented itself as a ready means of sharing his expanding worldview, strongly colored by ideologies of international anarchism, through fiction. Thus, del Valle was able to reach beyond his immediate locality and influence the thoughts of people too far away to ever meet. He was able to tap into a growing imagined community of widely scattered, like-minded strangers the same way artists of Gilroy’s Atlantic have done.

Despite the argument that globalization is a recent historical phenomenon spurred on by recent advances, particularly in media technology and dissemination, I must acknowledge that the world has seen much cultural traffic over time and across great distances. Nevertheless those dealings between culturally and spatially separated peoples, until recently, required a prohibitive
expenditure of time and resources. The print revolution, according to Appadurai, was only a “modest precursor” to our world today, in which we experience “an altogether new condition of neighborliness, even with the most distant from ourselves” (Modernity 28-29). Yet consider the multiple successive technological leaps that stimulated all kinds of progressive revolutions throughout history, particularly in the nineteenth century, including those contributing directly to the advancement of publishing as a means of forming connections. Each brought with it a sea change in the interactions between individuals, peoples, and the world they inhabited, each initiating a new modernity. The challenge of meeting this existential shift was not merely about adjusting to new ideas and gadgets; it was very much about handling the shock that these technological leaps caused by moving so rapidly.

Paolo Virilio talks about the philosophical notion of “accident,” in which he claims that everything that is brought into being contains within it the seed of its own undoing. “If no substance can exist in the absence of an accident,” he explains,

then no technical object can be developed without in turn generating “its” specific accident: ship=ship wreck, train=train wreck, plane=plane crash. The accident is thus the hidden face of technical progress . . . one thing that must be considered here is the preponderance and role of the speed of the accident, thus the limitation of speed and the penalties for “exceeding the speed limit.” (Virilio 92-93)

Thus, it is above all the velocity at which change takes place, and not the change alone, that precipitates accidents. If the above-mentioned technological advances had evolved at a slower, steadier pace, remaining under the “speed limit” of social assimilation, perhaps those affected adversely could have adjusted without having to experience so much anxiety.

In an interview with Carlos Oliveira, Virilio posits the implications of today’s worldwide real-time communications. “A possible symptom of this globalization, of the eventuality of such an accident,” he suggests, “was the stock exchange crash of 1987. We will no longer live in local
time as we did in the past when we were prisoners of history. We will live in world time, in
global time. We are experiencing an epoch that spells the international, the global accident”
(Carlos Oliveira). While this prediction may or may not be a shadow of things to come, it is
certainly indicative of an historical phenomenon that has already occurred. Where Virilio
conceives of accidents in concrete terms—that is, in creating a ship, for example, one
concurrently creates the circumstances that will inevitably give rise to a ship wreck—we can
apply his concept to the non-material reality of globalization, for along with all the potential
benefits it brings—opening market borders, expanding economic opportunities, encouraging
multinational cooperation, facilitating social and cultural exchange, etc.—it is nonetheless
accompanied by detrimental side-effects. While I am not arguing that globalization will end in
some worldwide cataclysmic event, I do affirm that it causes, and has caused, socio-economic,
political, cultural, and psychological distress.

Walter Benjamin describes “shock” as the result of a person’s unpreparedness to
experience the abrupt introduction of stimuli. He quotes Sigmund Freud in his explanation that
when a person’s “shield” is not strong enough to ward off the “excessive energies at work in the
external world,” he is likely to suffer trauma. Thus, “the more readily consciousness registers
these shocks,” Benjamin continues, “the less likely are they to have a traumatic effect” when
they reach the subconscious (161). Freud asserts that the subconscious tries to retroactively
manage trauma caused by shock through dreams. Benjamin quotes the French poet Paul Valéry,
who attributes a similar function to recollection: “Recollection is . . . an elemental phenomenon
which aims at giving us the time for organizing the reception of stimuli which we initially
lacked” (161-62). Dreams and recollection, then, may be two ways the subconscious works to
deal with the trauma caused by shock after it has occurred. Valéry’s mention of time is
significant here because of its relation to speed. Time (time to prepare for or to process stimuli) and speed (the speed with which we are confronted with those stimuli) are inversely related. Therefore, when events occur at a rate of speed that exceeds a person’s ability to prepare to accept them, he experiences shock. We may extrapolate a principle from this relationship of velocity to shock as it applies to the individual and apply it to cultures, societies, economies, and other groups and institutions. This principle exists everywhere, even where potentially trauma-inducing stimuli are present, but they do not inflict shock because they materialize at a manageable pace. This perspective may serve to expand the notion that globalization is a contemporary phenomenon that owes its existence to electronic media, rising transnational corporations, and the expansion of global capital.

Globalization is an evolutionary process that becomes apparent only when it surges forward, breaks the “speed limit” in a dramatic way, and overruns societies’ defenses, leaving them in a state of post-traumatic stress as it did the generation of late nineteenth-century Western Europe, the United States, and Spanish America. Paul Jay posits that it makes more sense to view globalization as an historical process that spans “the long histories of imperialism, colonization, decolonization, and postcolonialism” and unfolds in “ever-accelerating phases” due to the convergence of new technologies (36, 41). He is concerned with how contemporary literary and cultural studies have been influenced by, and are responding to, globalization. Jay explains that the humanities has been practicing several transnational approaches to literature, including “commonwealth studies, comparative literature, and postcolonial studies,” and, since the 1990s, multiculturalism, border studies, and diaspora studies. Jay is not proposing an overthrow of traditional national models. He is encouraging other approaches to studying literature that supplement, complicate, and challenge them, and take into account the
transnational dynamics connected to “the origins, production, and concerns of what we have called ‘English’ literature” in a global framework (5, 72).

Globalization has influenced a shift in the academy over the past few decades, one that, as Jay puts it, is has turned “the guiding principle of literary studies—that the literature we ought to study gets its significance from its engagement with universal human experiences that transcend historical circumstances [Matthew Arnold] . . . nearly on its head.” Literary studies began to address the historical context of the texts we read, paying attention to the “material circumstances of both their production and consumption,” and how they affect the way we engage with literature. “The older, unitary, aestheticized, ahistorical, and universalizing paradigm for literary studies that developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,” he continues, “collapsed under the imperative to understand literature as a multicultural object of knowledge full of social and cultural information and expressive of a whole range of different experiences and identities” (20-21). He cites the Civil Rights movement, accompanied by women’s, gay and lesbian, and Chicano/a rights movements as precipitating the emergence of new fields of literary and cultural studies inquiries. Minority and multicultural, women’s, and queer literatures began to be studied as such, with commensurate theoretical paradigms and analytical models. Their introduction into the academy, along with postcolonial studies, continued the break with the supremacy of national literatures because they redefined location altogether as they drew our gaze away from maps of political borders and invited us to consider ways of engaging economic, political, social, and cultural spaces, thus “providing a framework for studying literature and culture in a transnational context that moved beyond and explicitly questioned older Eurocentric models of ‘comparative’ analysis” (2).
The conventional nation-based approach to literary studies has a valid contribution to make even when we are reading in what Appadurai predicts will shortly become a postnational age ("Grassroots" 4). A transnational approach to literary and cultural studies generates new perspectives and understandings in a world very different from the one in which traditional critical models were developed. Where the approaches disagree is in how to contextualize globalization.

It makes sense to view globalization as an “ever-accelerating” process that passes through phases. What Appadurai calls contemporary globalization, I suggest, is only a resurgence or reconvergence of the transnational cultural, social, political, and economic flows that intersect in significant ways from time to time. The difference between the period of globalization through which we are passing now and those that occurred in the past is one of degree and speed, facilitated and catalyzed by electronic mediation. I reaffirm, then, that del Valle’s generation underwent a transformation that was for them every bit as complex, exciting, terrifying, and fragmenting as ours. Jay characterizes the transnational turn in literary studies as “a wholesale remapping of the locations we study” (8). This is true in the sense that we have complemented more conventional, “cultural nationalistic” scholarship that is oriented to national literatures with a shift of the critical gaze to include deterritorialized spaces like gender and race. Even so, nation-states will remain, at least for the foreseeable future, powerful spatial points of reference as we explore the relational dynamics between peoples, places, and times and their literatures.

Rather than challenge the preeminence of location as a foundational referent in social and cultural critical models, Rob Wilson acknowledges it as he analyzes how discourse can be a powerful third-party tool for (re)territorializing space to (re)create advantageous social and cultural identities, and economic and political entities. In one essay he applies a “critical
“regional” approach to APEC’s (Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation) appropriation of “Asia-Pacific” as a signifier in commercial and political-economic contexts. This, he argues, “bespeaks a postmodern utopia of post-orientalist consumption.” He accuses APEC of subtly raising this “nonthreatening” banner under which to gather the numerous, diverse economies in and around the Pacific Ocean to “override” internal and international issues by diverting the players’ attention to market-related opportunities (389-93). Wilson charges that APEC’s employing this manipulative discourse in order to “ease trade barriers and to liberalize markets in the region in a consensus-like, patchy, culture-conscious, quasi-systematic way” (391). What it hopes to accomplish, he claims, by “transnationalizing” the economies in the region and selling it under the convenient designation “Asia-Pacific,” is to form in the eyes of international would-be investors and corporations a “coherent geopolitical or cultural framework” that would inspire commercial confidence in the region (390). This model, he suggests, stands to benefit global corporations who will ultimately capitalize on increased access to the resources of smaller countries, who are bundled up with larger, more powerful entities, due to limited restrictions. But the implications are cultural as well as economic.

If national borders and sovereignty are becoming less significant indicators of power than strategic, transnational economic alliances within a given geographic sphere, then the process of shaping the region into a “postcolonial, if not postnational, identity” through the increasingly popular usage of the term “Asia-Pacific,” is already underway (Wilson 389). But more than deconstructing the term “Asian-Pacific,” pointing out that constructing a new singular unit out of vast regions with little in common is not only irresponsible, it is “dangerous” and “naïve” because it ignores, bypasses, or simply disregards “the cultural complexities and historical issues within the region in order to form this new identity” (Wilson 393).
Wilson points out the unsteadiness of the foundation upon which APEC is trying to build a community. He addresses the rhetorical strategy of community building, arguing that “imagined into consensus-like shape by some user-friendly trope of trans-oceanic Pacific ‘community’ from Asia and the Pacific, APEC would fuse disparate units small and large, from city-states, superpowers, and Third-World entities, into a vision of regional coherence, teleological optimism, and regional ‘cooperation’” (390-91). Dressing disparate peoples in the trappings of community and giving them one all-inclusive name makes them vulnerable to political and economic manipulation and exploitation, because when the controllers of discourse deprive them of their individual names, they deprive them of their singularity, their voices, and even their discursive existence. This becomes, then, a strategic political project that makes negotiations much more convenient for APEC to further its interests, because it may ostensibly engage with a single, signified entity that is, however, composed of multiple, unattached constituents.

Even so, Wilson recommends that we take advantage of APEC’s indiscretion and turn it into something good. He suggests that since there now exists a name to identify the roughly delimited region of cultures in and around the Pacific Ocean, we ought to develop a field within the disciplines of literary and cultural studies around it. “Asia/Pacific,” then, may serve as a “critical signifier . . . in which opposition, location, indigeneity, and an alternative discursive framing of the region can be articulated” (389). Wilson effectually reappropriates this newly coined term by giving the objects of its intention (the peoples, cultures, nations, etc. it refers to) access to the discourse that was created to take advantage of them. Wilson explicates these “extra-literary matters of globalization and location haunting APEC’s ‘imagined community’ of transnational unity and regional forms” in the interest of an Asian-Pacific Cultural Studies. “We
need to begin articulating a ‘critical regionalism’ in the Asia-Pacific region,” he urges, “one respectful of Asian and Pacific heritages, diasporas, and communities, but wary of hegemonic designs articulated upon these diverse localities and social groupings” (394). “Seizing the narrative apparatus,” Wilson continues, “. . . is part of any culture’s struggle to emerge, exchange, and legitimate its deepest concerns” (397). In fact, to self-actualize, any individual, group, or movement must “seize the narrative apparatus” that signifies it, or that individual or group, etc., becomes vulnerable, as we have already seen, to invention by those who would promote unilateral agenda.

This appropriation embraces genuine transnational cooperation while it quietly seeks to erase the singularity of the individual entities with which a regional or multinational conglomerate would otherwise have to negotiate. The practice of identifying several nations as a collective and assigning it a name that on the surface connotes a degree of unity that does not exist on a deeper level is a gross discursive perversion. A transnational narrative apparatus can be a dangerous thing. A state-centered narrative apparatus, while it too can be risky inasmuch as it can tend to exclusionary and nationalist sentiment, would, in this type of situation, empower the constituent nation or group, who may or may not wish to cooperate with or be identified with its neighbors in a collective. In the APEC example above, if the separate peoples and nations of the Asia/Pacific region controlled the master discourse to the extent that they were able to represent themselves and their particular interests under their own names, then it would be much more difficult for predatory powers to impose reductive nomenclature on them and thereby limit the force and volume of their protests. Conversely, a transnational narrative apparatus, once it takes hold and becomes part of the master discourse, may invite openness and regional cooperation and reinforce the sovereignty of each player in a multitudinous arrangement. This
discussion applies to del Valle’s efforts to help shape the discourse, the public perspective, and perhaps ultimately the very nature of the movement, that surrounded nineteenth-century Cuban anarchism.

*The Multitude, Imagined Communities, and Rhizomatic Networks*

As we discuss del Valle in the context of globalization, we quickly become aware of the complex combination of opportunities, challenges, and tensions that increased contact between local and global economic, social, political, and cultural forces bring about. Two theoretical concepts—the “multitude” and “imagined communities”—used in juxtaposition may support a critical model rooted in transnational activity to help us situate del Valle in his mobile milieu. In the late 1800s, the world’s empires, kingdoms, and principalities based on monarchical forms of rule were coming apart and nation-states were arising, evolving, assembling (and being assembled), and gaining critical mass by circumscribing neighboring peoples and territories within its clearly demarcated borders. In this state of tumultuous transition, when traditional forms of government were losing their ability to support and command allegiance, new structures of alignment and control were beginning to emerge. In this moment of widespread geopolitical metamorphoses, largely precipitated by the forward march of globalization, people were ushered in and out of shifting social relationships and power dynamics. The powers that had once exerted such control over their lives were decentralizing, disassembling, and reassembling in new configurations. Economic, social, and cultural forces increased in influence as governmental powers waned in the scramble to gain new footing. Richard Sonn explains that the concept of individual independence that people were beginning to experience was a modern concept that emerged “with the breakup of the older, corporate society” (xiv). In this context the bonds that
once held societies together, that shaped and sustained their very identities, weakened, thus allowing people to reimagine their relationships to each other and to the powers that governed their lives in novel ways.

My interest in the multitude grows out of a belief that del Valle, although perhaps neither consciously nor in these terms, wanted to build a vast multitudinous community of like-minded individuals around the world under the banner of anarchism. In other words, he supported the gradual transformation of scattered multitudes into intricately linked but cohesive, distributed communities that allowed for singularity within the collective. Multitude, as a phenomenon of human group interaction, is not new to the twenty-first century. In his *Tractatus Politicus*, Baruch de Spinoza argued for the grand possibilities inherent in the *multitudo*, which is, as indicated semantically, a plurality that continues as a plurality, never collapsing into a One. The multitude retains a sense of many, allowing any number of disparate individuals and groups to not only hold onto but revel in their independent, singular identities, and stay true to their respective objectives and agenda. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, following in the spirit of Spinoza’s optimism, explain that the multitude differs from *the masses*, which connotes the same oneness as *the people* but void of conscientious behavior—on the individual or collective level. All individuality is subsumed in indifference and uniformity. What binds the multitude is not the predominant tendency of apathetic masses to face the same direction while grazing on a mountain pastures or the momentum that stampedes them over a cliff. Neither is it the people, eager for leadership and committed to concrete objectives, willing to do its part, sacrificing for the common good.

The multitude is an invisible, shapeless, multidimensional network of people with no static boundaries, yet exists in a perpetual state of readiness to respond to internal or external
forces. In other words, though we cannot see it when at rest in a state of dormancy, it is nonetheless alive, ebbing in a constant state of responsive fluidity. It may remain in this multitudinous status indefinitely, but it may also (apparently) spontaneously erupt into a community in a surge of cohesion catalyzed by the assumption of a common purpose.

Circumstances and conditions of every multitude differ and are therefore uniquely susceptible to the influence of changes in their environments. The social, political, cultural, and economic circumstances in each Arab nation that rose in rebellion in 2011, for example, combined to form an elixir whose fermentation over time had built enough pressure to explode the right element was introduced into its environment. December 17, 2010, at 11:30am in the Tunisian city of Sidi Bouzid, Mohamed Bouazizi drenched his body with an accelerant and set himself on fire in front of the governor’s office. By the time he died fewer than three weeks later, protests sparked by his self-immolation had engulfed the country. And only 10 days later on January 14, 2011, 23-year Tunisian president Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali sought asylum in Saudi Arabia, leaving a vacuum into which a new government would emerge (Fahim; “Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali”). Bouazizi, by all accounts a simple, hard-working family man and loyal friend, deployed the most devastating social weapon conceivable—his life—to achieve an objective that although we may approach it through conjecture, social and psychoanalytic theory, and assumptions drawn from a re-assemblage of circumstances immediately and distantly preceding the event, we will never know his full reason or intent. Notwithstanding, within hours an angry multitude filled the street where Bouazizi had sacrificed himself to protest his martyrdom (Observateurs 1).

State media denied the existence of any public disturbance until Monday the 20th, when it finally reported that Bouazizi’s suicide had been an “isolated” incident, and expressed its “outrage at attempts to take it out of its context and exploit it for unhealthy political ends”
But the people of Tunisia knew what was happening and knew what the media were doing, because Internet social media sites like Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and activist blogs were alive with chatter and mounting video footage (“A Twitter Snapshot”). Such was the case throughout the time span of the revolution that ended the old regime, modern advances in information communication technologies (ICTs) and overwhelming public access to portable telecommunications devices facilitating near-instantaneous transmission of critical developments. Tunisia was only the beginning of a long and tumultuous spring across the Arab world: President Hosni Mubarak relinquished his hold on the reins of power in Egypt to his vice president, Maummar al-Gaddafi lost ground against rebel units backed by European and Middle Eastern states in a civil war, Syrian security forces continue to make it virtually impossible to protest by arresting, torturing and killing activists (Hendawi and El Deeb; “NATO to Police”; Sly).

Each is an example of a multitude that metamorphosed into a community, even if only for a short time, when a new variable was introduced into an already highly charged environment. The disruption of the status quo was rapidly communicated throughout the immediate system, and beyond, via personal, social, and broadcast networks to the point of saturation. In Sidi Bouzid, then, what had been a multitude of 40,000 people at 11:30 had by early afternoon become a community sharing in and expressing outrage over the injustice of a single act perpetrated against a street vendor virtually unknown to any but his immediate family, according to reports. Wherever this quickening occurs, it is likely to spread, imbuing or igniting neighboring multitudes in social or political potestia with self-consciousness. This concept leads us to a desire to better understand the conditions, dynamics, and mechanisms that precipitate peaceful protest, violent riots, and/or revolutionary action. It is just as important to recognize
how the impetus of change travels within the collective, how it is communicated and passed on, and how the group transforms as a result. Thus, del Valle, in his efforts to create a community out of a transnational multitude, drew on real-life contemporary events (the Spanish-American War, the Russo-Japanese War, espionage in England and Russia, etc.) from across the world that possessed elements that would draw people together in the support of the anarchist cause.

Hardt and Negri’s position that the multitude exists not only outside the state, but in opposition to it, makes it a particularly appropriate model with which to discuss anarchism. The multitude does not aspire to power through revolution or the destruction of capital; nor does it derive its purpose or existence from the force of conflict. It cannot. For as soon as the multitude becomes aware of a collective commonality, forms an agenda, melds together in such a way as to engender a shared sense of belonging, mutual tolerance, and good will, it has already transformed into an “inoperative community” (Nancy). The depth, intensity, and duration of the metamorphosis depend upon countless variables that combine to initiate it and sustain it. Anarchists in general, and del Valle among them, sought to foster such a sense of community in the multitude. They embraced community because rather than requiring the surrender of a person’s individuality to a hierarchical ruling structure, it guarded and supported its growth and expression. Community empowers the individual by making available privileges and opportunities through collective action and coordinated effort, thereby amplifying progress and productivity synergistically.

We witness its latent power when it manifests itself in the form of an emerging community, when it is mobilized into temporary overt action such as public protest or, as described above, or when it is transformed into an enduring political entity such as a party or state. But again, it does not exist because it acts; it acts because it exists. It has no single,
motivating agenda coupled with a sense of belonging, but is a finite unity whose collective force is contingent upon the needs of a given moment. The multitude, then, is a state of being, a mode into which and out of which a group may fall when a unifying force is introduced or removed. Del Valle represents one such source of unifying energy as he recruits supporters to the international anarchist ideology through his fiction, which was integrated into the wave of text that would be distributed through the transnational media networks that produced and disseminated pro-anarchist news and literature, the effect of which would include drawing together people from across national borders and reinforcing the reflexive paradigmatic shift between the local and the global and the global and the local spheres (or micro- to macroscopic or individual to collective and vice versa). This constant shifting back and forth between spatial perspectives relating the parts to the whole is symptomatic of a sense of dislocation (we might think of it as epistemological deterritorialization) brought on by globalization. Gaining a greater perspective on these dynamics will help us better understand modern phenomena of social movements and political change. These social movements grow out of a shared sense of community among its members. They do, in contrast to the multitude, agree on common priorities and share sentiments that bind them in a single cause. Benedict Anderson’s work in particular helps us move from the raw potentiality of the multitude to the identifiable and determined nature of the imagined community.

I mentioned above that the multitude is not a mindless mass of humanity. Neither is it a formally organized collective of individuals who acknowledge an ongoing, communal relationship within a clearly demarcated geographic region, who have taken a name, and whose sovereignty is recognized by other like communities, groups, nations, or states. Even so, as Anderson seeks to understand the origins and forces that give rise to and sustain the concept of
nation as a social and political entity, his model of the “imagined community”—*imagined*
because the members “will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear
of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion”—may help us understand
what vivifies, motivates, and transforms the multitude into a community (*Imagined* 14).

Anderson asks what force drives them to imagine their identity to be bound so inextricably with
the nation-state to which they belong. One among the many possible explanations he posits is
that they share social ceremonies (in the Hegelian sense) such as reading the daily paper. The
notion that other people are reading the same words about events they have in common at the
same time every day, day after day, despite being separated by many miles, contributes to this
sense of community. Appadurai calls the “conditions of collective reading, criticism, and
pleasure” a “community of sentiment,” which reflects the experience of a group that imagines
and feels things together (8), and he relates this to the ability of Anderson’s print capitalism—the
proliferation of novels, newspapers, and other print media—to enable people separated by
distance to nevertheless think of themselves as part of a group. The large-scale production and
distribution of printed materials reduced “the need for face-to-face communication.” They both
agree that “the act of reading things together” evokes a sense of community (28). This may be
the single greatest determining factor in distinguishing the multitude from a community—the
*sense* of shared purpose and experience.

Anderson’s exploration is based in the phenomenon of nationalism, and his objective is to
define it and account for nationalistic sentiment among people who will never meet. And though
my objective is different, his process of investigation may aid in treating the question of what
makes a community. Del Valle’s residence in Havana allowed him to congregate with other
anarchists, debate the virtue and practical application of their beliefs, shape a common ideology,
and unite around a clearly defined cause with like-minded actors in real time. The Cuban anarchist community was only one satellite hub of the greater international movement, but it constituted a community in the traditional sense of daily, or frequent, face-to-face interaction. Thus, although Cuban anarchists might have been separated by vast distances from other anarchist enclaves, they were aware of them, had personal, ongoing relationships with them, and planned activities together. Such was the international nature of anarchism. The Cuban anarchists had nurtured ties with anarchists abroad, therefore participating in the “imagined” realm of community. Anderson explains that late nineteenth-century Cubans and Filipinos (and Puerto Ricans and Dominicans), for example, read about each other’s anarchist and revolutionary objectives and actions in newspapers, magazines, and personal letters. And to a degree they coordinated actions (Flags 2). Still, he proposes that we need to understand community “by aligning it not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with the large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which—as well as against which—it came into being” (Imagined 19). This cultural system seems to be at the very least the set of pre-existing conditions that prepares the multitude for transformation into a community, such as the socio-economic and political atmosphere that encouraged the Arab Spring.

There is, therefore, a self-awareness in and of an imagined community as a thing, even if a discourse has not yet clearly evolved to distinguish itself from other collective entities. But the study of the multitude, as we shall see, is not limited to social and political movements, per se, but considers a range of motives and shape-shifting capabilities—which brings us to another property of the imagined community: its mobility. Anderson suggests that once the “cultural artefacts [sic]” that give rise to an imagined community are created, they take on a “modular” quality, “capable of being transplanted, with varying degrees of self-consciousness, to a great
variety of social terrains, to merge and be merged with a correspondingly wide variety of political and ideological constellations” (Imagined 13). Although I do not believe that Anderson is suggesting a formula for creating communities, I do believe that as we examine *Por el camino* we will be explicating one such cultural artifact. Popular literature serves as a vehicle for an unlimited range of themes, messages, doctrines or ideologies, and I suggest that it can be a subtle, powerful, and sustainable quickening force to the multitude. Its simplicity and entertaining qualities allow it to filter through many levels of society, from the highest to the very lowest rungs on the socio-economic ladder.

Del Valle illustrates the transformation of a multitude into a community in one of his simple short stories from *Por el camino* as a once shapeless group, in this case a flock of birds, undergoes a collective change under the unifying influence of a leader. “Exodus of the Birds” is a utopian tragedy in which “there lived happily and in good harmony numerous colonies of birds.” One day they “saw with surprise a class of very strange animals, totally unknown to them, enter their domain.” As this new species of creature, featherless and beakless, decimates their population with guns and lead traps, the birds move to the high mountains for refuge. Sometime later, when “a bird of brilliant plumage” arrives and preaches the ideas of liberation, a grand assembly is gathered to decide their collective future. Ultimately, they exemplify the very kind of process through which a multitude may pass on its way to becoming a community when they make a decision that affects the life of every member of the group. It is at this point of recognition of and acknowledging their interconnectedness, amplified by their mutual dependence on one another for survival, and making the determination to act in concert that they become a community. This phenomenon plays out in today’s headlines as exemplified in the illustration of the Seattle WTO protests. We might also consider the London riots in 2011 or the
riots triggered by the acquittal of Rodney King’s attackers in Los Angeles in 1992. There was a latent tension residing in pre-existing sets of socio-economic and cultural conditions that, when ignited by aggressive acts perpetrated by an instrument of oppression, in these cases law enforcement officers, the multitude exploded into a community of expedience. Community may not be the right word, but is not a mob something of a flash-community? Whether for nefarious or beneficent purposes, the mechanism is the same: the network of connections comprising a multitude become emboldened and contract to draw into closer social, and perhaps physical, proximity the multitude’s constituents to form a community. Although this is not a primary objective of this project—a full treatment would carry us beyond its scope—a brief introduction to one critical network model will offer a useful metaphor for envisioning the interconnectedness of anarchists scattered over the Western Hemisphere at the turn of the twentieth century and beyond.

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari have developed a model of “acentered systems,” or “finite networks,” after the shape of the rhizome. Unlike rooted plants or trees, rhizomes function like grasses, reaching out in all directions, establishing a thick mat of connections with other like and unlike elements. Indeed, any point on a rhizome can connect with any other. As communication occurs, the new stems that come into existence do not add to the rhizome, multiplying its parts; they change its very nature, for there is no center to which to add. It is, at any given time, a multiplicity, possessing only “determinations, magnitudes, and dimensions” (*Plateaus* 9). And where multiplicities send out lines that connect with other lines from other

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12 We are caught between discourses here. The events surrounding the WTO (“N30”) convention in 1999 are variously referred to as The Battle of Seattle, Seattle Riots of 1999, WTO demonstrations, etc. while the civil disturbances that occurred in the UK in 2011 and in LA in 1999 likewise bear a range of descriptors such as march, riots, protests, demonstrations, even insurrections. Clearly, much depends upon one’s perspective of such events in determining the discourse employed to discuss them.
multiplicities, plateaus evolve. Thus, plateaus have no end and no beginning and can be “read starting anywhere” and continuing in any direction. When a rhizome breaks, it regenerates itself from old lines or sends out new lines, which present ever-increasing entryways into it (Plateaus 13). There are no obstructions to connectivity, to participation in the multiplicity, or the multitude. The multitude, then, is a network of subjectivities that persist in constant flux as a singularity (Virno 21, 76). This rhizomatic heterogeneous connectivity can help us understand the behavior of the multitude as communication passes from any given individual, who is interchangeable and defined only by his or her immediate function, to any other through channels that do not exist until they are used. By adapting this principle to del Valle, we may be able to better understand how local sentiments and conditions influence and are influenced by sentiments and conditions around the world. He was instrumental in sustaining networked connections by writing and publishing his own work throughout the Spanish-speaking world, promoting transatlantic writers by establishing presses and editing newspapers and magazines, developing personal associations with key anarchists, and supporting them on speaking tours.

By providing a platform from which numerous other thinkers might promote the anarchist ideology, he was able to multiply his efforts and catalyze others’ in the service of the cause. He established presses in Spain, the U.S., and Cuba; he edited for other publications; and he hosted and arranged a propaganda tour for Errico Malatesta (Shaffer, “Crucible” 58). In essence, he functioned as a rhizomatic “plateau” to which multiple surrounding nodes connected, and in this sense, with the comings and goings of anarchists from Europe, the multitude can also be likened to a living organism whose cells and tissues replace and refresh themselves, rejuvenating and literally becoming a different organism over time. It responds and reacts to stimuli in its environment, yet it is not senseless. It has a shared “common” intellect composed of
all its participants. It communicates from one extremity to another, in three dimensions, constantly and with near simultaneity—especially in today’s techno-mediated world. This model of the rhizome informs a discussion of the relationship between multitude and networks—networks comprising the ligatures of association and communication between individuals, families, groups, or institutions. We find that common support of “broad” values, a sense of mutual interest, and adaptability to environmental forces and objectives appear and reappear, because they are amazingly flexible. And so long as they remain so, a network can react and respond in healthy ways to fluctuations in its environment. When it becomes rigid, which occurs when some force seeks to impose structure upon it, it can break. But then, like the rhizome, it mends itself, closes the gap, reconnects broken lines, and expands. According to this model, networks are virtually unstoppable, and although I would not extend this metaphor to that extreme, I do maintain a belief in the impressive degree of resilience that a network organization displays. Though modern embodiments of network-connected multitudes and communities have the incomparable advantage of far-advanced technologically mediated communication over those from 100 years ago, the salient difference is found primarily in the speed of communication.

As electronic media increasingly links audiences across national borders and facilitates new kinds of conversations between movers, Appadurai suggests that the number of “diasporic public spheres” will continue to grow (Modernity 21-22). Environmental, human rights, women’s, and other activist movements, as well as major transnational separatist movements, Appadurai explains, “conduct their self-imaging in sites throughout the world, where they have enough members to allow for the emergence of multiple nodes in a larger diasporic public sphere” (Modernity 22). So, too, did anarchism’s “self-image” on the pages of newspapers,13 I use the word participants as opposed to members because there is no registration form to fill out, no dues to pay, no obligation to engage. It is a come-as-you-will arrangement.
journals, and magazines throughout the faltering Spanish empire. Such was the emergence and proliferation of the anarchist community in Cuba—and every place where anarchist communities emerged—which developed its own character under the influence of its particular environment, and although it was geographically isolated from other anarchist communities, it constituted an independent but connected “node” of the international anarchist network, as did anarchist communities in North America, Spain, France, Russia, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines.

Electronic media, Appadurai continues, influence all other media “because they offer new resources and new disciplines for the construction of imagined selves and imagined worlds,” and “as with mediation, so with motion” (Modernity 3-4). That is, media, especially when enhanced by modern electronic platforms, and mass migration occur simultaneously and act on one another, creating “irregularities” in cultural flows because both images and audiences are unbound by traditionally conceived spaces, i.e., local, national, regional, thus inviting an “explicitly transnational” approach (Modernity 9). Increased mobility, then, seems to precipitate new identities. Besides the dissemination of ideas and images via media, then, people in motion likewise act as carriers. Even as they participate in and act upon their new environments, they are likewise acted upon by changing environmental influences, including other people. One would be hard pressed, for example, to find a person who does not have friends, family, or other acquaintances who have not moved to, from, through, or between other cultural and national spaces. This mobility, again, casts these actors as mediators of globalization (Modernity 4).

Closer to the truth, however, might be to characterize these players, at least in del Valle’s day, as mediators of reactions to globalization.

Today’s rapid acceleration of communication through techno-mediated networks and the increasing access to them by people around the world is more similar than different than that
experienced in turn-of-the-twentieth-century western societies. The accompanying expansion of
global capitalist practices and consumer markets, advances in industrial technology, and
increases in the affordability of shipping, transportation, and labor have precipitated abrupt
migrations and transformations in the way people live their lives. They have become more
mobile, more exposed to foreign events and affairs. Scholars in the social sciences and
humanities call this phenomenon, which permeates every level of local and international socio-
economic, cultural, and political existence, globalization. Far from being a new human
experience, I have argued that it has happened before—perhaps many times throughout history—
precisely during the last third of the 19th century and up to the First World War. The critical
models of multitude, imagined communities, and rhizomatic networks give us a handle on
understanding and talking about how groups of people interact and work together. During this
early Age of Globalization, societies changed their shapes, leaving individuals to reconstruct the
ways they interacted with one another. This transition from social and political cohesion to
varying degrees of disassemblage followed into an era of nation-building. The modernistas were
not so concerned with re-creating society in a new image; they were determined to reestablish a
sense of harmony and balance. The anarchists, on the other hand, in opposition to the re-forming
of hierarchical states to govern people’s actions, sought to promote a philosophy of freedom and
communal living through, among other things, entertaining and educational literature. Del Valle
participated in both approaches. He demonstrates consistent and powerful tendencies toward
both movements in Por el camino. At the same time del Valle treats modernista themes, which
the next chapter treats in detail, including the angst occasioned by modernization and
globalization, “progress” and social issues, individualism, cosmopolitanism, and the search for
cosmic harmonies, he promotes the libertarian ideologies of anarchism. He illustrates similar
values, those professed by the anarchist movement, in *Por el camino*: war (“The Banquet” and “The Spy”), the angst of modernization (“What Attracts” and “Fear”), “progress” and urbanization (“The Miracle” and “The City Sleeps”), nationalism and global humanism (“Father’s Love” and “A Sailor’s End”), honor and loyalty (“After the Dual” and “The Journalist and the King”), and love (“Marmórea” and “Rendezvous”). The next two chapters will focus on the areas of overlap, where he strove to sort out the “unresolvable contradictions of bourgeois life”. In the next two chapters, I will focus mainly on the major areas of overlap, where the two seem to respond to like forces, albeit in their own respective ways.

14 Hardt and Negri reflect on Mikhail Bakhtin’s assessment of Dostoevsky’s work in *The Problem of Dostoyevsky’s Poetics*. 
CHAPTER 3

Anarchism

The anarchist movement emerged in the late 1800s in response to the disruptive and disorienting changes brought on by globalization. For with all the advances in the theories and applications of science, communication, travel, industry, and governance, not only did there seem to be little beneficial trickle-down effect, the effects of progress exacerbated the already difficult situation of people struggling for subsistence in a postcolonial state. “All the dominant forces of the modern world guaranteed the average person’s lack of control over his or her own life,” explains cultural historian Richard Sonn:

People were dominated politically by the elite classes and economically by their bosses; they were estranged from meaningful relations with their fellow beings by factory discipline and impersonal city life. The anarchists agreed with socialists that people were exploited by the bourgeois capitalist order, but they saw the crux of the problem as not economic but political and spiritual, in terms of domination. The human essence was to be free, to be self-determining, self-conscious, self-motivating. This essence was being denied by all the forces of growth and centralization, by the very scale of modern civilization: big cities, big factories, big states. (2)

The rapid and widespread onset of political and economic disenfranchisement to which Sonn refers precipitated an abrupt reaction from the peoples of Western nations and their overseas empires. Social and spiritual cohesiveness, as Sonn also mentions, were among the casualties of early globalization. These reactions coalesced into what became the anarchist movement. One of its strategies included raising working-class awareness of the causes of its collective plight through education and entertainment. To this end anarchists established literary presses and newspapers, organized labor unions and, at times, assassinated prominent public figures in very public ways. While some confused, “simple souls” adopted violence as an extreme variation on the theme of propaganda of the deed, Adrián del Valle encouraged the practice of education
through popular literature (52). His tenure in the publishing business, coupled with his commitment to anarchist ideals, amounted to a formidable asset to the anarchist project. Moreover, while he is not alone in criticizing the effects of globalization through fiction, he stands apart in his preference for irony and short short fiction, even flash fiction. In this chapter, I will provide an introduction to the history, themes, and values of the strand of anarchism that del Valle subscribed to and explicate his role in promoting them through a discussion of selections from *Por el camino*. Along the way, as it were, I will also explore ways he complicates the anarchist project through his incorporation of modernista themes.

Using the press as his instrument of influence, del Valle reinforced the movement’s notion of progress, which Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, the “true father” of anarchism, “defined as the march from authority to liberty” through inspirational short fiction (Sonn 23). Since literary magazines and newspapers were less expensive to print and distribute than bound collections or novels, they were more affordable to purchase, making them an ideal vehicle for disseminating anarchist ideals among the literate of the lower classes. Anarchist literature depicted idealistic themes and values in dramatic, heroic images at the same time they critiqued socio-economic and political ills, which included coercive authoritarianism of any kind; governmental policies that imposed conflict between people’s loyalty to the state, the family, and others; the notions of progress in a rapidly globalizing world; the collateral effects of industrialized capitalism; and the materialistic degradation of bourgeois values. These issues and others show up in *Por el camino*. And while it might not have been a calculated tactic of the movement, the creation of a transnational anarchist community—perhaps more accurately, a network of transnational communities that gathered core ideologies—was nonetheless an eventual result of circulating a constant stream of anarchist literature and propaganda in print through social circles. Pamela
Maria Smokaloff notes that when *Por el camino* was published in Havana in 1907, print runs were very unlikely to have exceeded 200 copies (10). I imagine, then, that what copies have survived remain in Cuba.

Kirwin Shaffer explains that as Cuban anarchists “Cubanized” the movement by creating a counterculture to engage and criticize the “larger hegemonic culture,” they “modified the larger impulses and issues of international anarchism to fit the specific cultural, ethnic, and political realities on the island.” Yet, they were also committed to “an internationalist vision of the island” that would foster a sense of unity with communities beyond their shores (*Countercultural* 2, 24). Even as they struggled for change at home, agitating for governmental, health and education reform, and gender equality, they worked against the globalizing instruments of industrial capitalism, government, and organized religion. Frank Fernández reinforces Shaffer’s position on Cuban anarchists’ orientation to the global nature of the movement, asserting that through the war years (1895-1898), “Cuban anarchists both at home and abroad tended to act more in accord with their principles than with their nationality” (*History* 35). Thus, the central motivating agent was not the nation but the principle of freedom. The anarchist movement did not come into being to liberate peoples from colonial rule or to expel foreign occupiers or to separate themselves from tyrannical governments via civil war. Anarchism’s primary purpose, then, was to liberate all people from any oppressive ruling entity. It became, Anderson explains, “the main vehicle of global opposition to industrial capitalism, autocracy, latifundism, and imperialism,”15 all means of subjecting people to various mechanisms of control (*Flags* 54). Fernández affirms that anarchism’s ultimate objective was to secure “the greatest possible amount of freedom for all”—

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15 *Here, latifundismo* is the Latin American system of land management that originated with the military conquest and colonization of the Americas. It is similar to feudalism in that it entails parting out enormous tracts of land, into the tens of thousands of acres, to individual owners or families.
that is, people ought to be free to the extent of being allowed to do whatever they wish so long as they do not infringe on the rights of others. Anarchists hoped to provide an alternative to the “unholy trinity of Church, capital, and state,” which worked in concert to undermine the freedoms of the turn-of-the-century proletariat by hitching it to the tandem yokes of spiritual, socio-economic, and political servitude. This is why the principles of anarchism could allegedly be transplanted anywhere around the world without regard for political, racial, or linguistic differences. This is not to say that anarchists did not share a sense of pride in their culture; rather they saw themselves as participants in a cause, members of a community, whose purpose extended out into the world and encompassed peoples everywhere. Stories such as the one that follows emphasize the role that the state plays in ruining lives.

In, “A Sailor’s End,” a story from Por el camino, a Spanish sailor, “a young man, almost a child,” lies dying on a cot following the destruction of the Spanish fleet at Santiago de Cuba by North American naval forces. He is so near death that the doctors advise against moving him aboard the imperial viper Ciudad de Roma bound for home. “And the poor boy, who had not lost consciousness and who understood all they said, did not allow the slightest groan to escape his lips; so alone, seeing his companions walking or carried out of the hospital and set sail for Spain.” One sailor stops, kisses him, and goes on his way, crying. Only hours later, the boy’s remains are buried with those of thirty other fallen sailors. At this point the narrative tone shifts abruptly to an impassioned monologue lamenting the waste of life caused by war and the desertion of loyal patriots by the Fatherland that had obliged them to fight and die in the first place. “Poor sailor,” it begins,

dead in the fullness of youth, the bloom of life, the happy age of pleasures, villainously murdered by that insatiable monster called national honor! . . . And who knows if as delirium invaded his mind he cursed his luck, cursed his god, and
cursed his unfeeling fatherland that after requiring of him the sacrifice of his life, abandoned him to a miserable death.

Whether the sailor in this story enlisted of his own accord or was impressed into military service is irrelevant because the state is the ultimate author of war, and whether it forces or entices its people to fight is a matter of semantics, as both methods are morally repugnant in anarchist eyes. Here del Valle appeals to readers’ sympathies as a part of a rhetorical strategy common to literary anarchism, not only in this story but in the other stories in the collection, as he strives to bring them to an awareness that the victims of coercive governments are not limited to foreign nationals and enemy troops, but that they include the dead and dying left behind on both sides. His use of affect to evoke empathy from his readers for the “poor boy” is not as a universalized substitute for the “human” or national hero like the monument to the Unknown Soldier. He presents, rather, a real person with a name and a mother who would never see him again, inviting the reader to identify with him and his experience on a personal, visceral, not a symbolic, level. Although the Spanish Crown is clearly implicated in this story, it is not the real target of del Valle’s criticism. He is careful to direct the reader’s critical gaze, rather, to the political philosophy behind the model of government that relies on control or coercion anywhere.

The Cuban separatist community led by José Martí’s camp has been ramping up for all-out revolution because they had determined that the only possible means of improving the quality of Cuban life was to eliminate Spanish rule altogether. While Martí had vehemently attacked anarchism for rejecting traditional politics and patria, the anarchists conversely viewed his ambitions as nationalistic and altogether misguided (Flags 187). By the time of the Congreso Regional Cubano convened in 1892, Fernández writes, anarchists had already condemned the notion of nationalism because the ideologies that support it are inherently exclusionary (History
Within this context of “diverse international influences,” Shaffer explains, Cubans of all walks and politics “struggled to imagine and forge a national identity.” In this identity vacuum, political, religious, and business leaders promoted a specifically national version of identity while anarchists, including del Valle, promoted a version compatible with international interests (Countercultural 22, 35). I suggest, however, that del Valle’s primary objective was much larger in scope, that he intended not so much to create a Cuban national identity as to strengthen an emerging transnational community of free peoples by means of and under the canopy of the international anarchist movement. It is therefore the phenomenon of community, not nationality, Mikhail Bakunin is attempting to articulate while del Valle is striving to create it from a global multitude. This explains, in part, his belief that revolution was not the answer; it would only accomplish a small part of what he had envisioned.

Building a Transnational Community

Prerequisite to the formation of an imagined community of people moving in and between nations is the freedom to embody and express one’s individuality. One of the major problems of government, according to anarchists, as discussed above, is the impulse to resort to coercive force to achieve its ends. One strategy is to de-individualize the population, supplanting the inclination to preserve the self with the obligation to support the state. Nationalism at its most conservative ultimately demands fidelity to the state above all else, and it is the tension between this patriotic duty and other loyalties that del Valle addresses in Por el camino. In “Father’s Love,” for example, Colonel Ferrándiz, leader of a Spanish imperial contingent tasked with suppressing rebel guerrilla forces, is confronted by the very circumstance that he feared most: his son Carlos, a rebel leader, is brought before him as a prisoner.
“It’s you, Carlos, if my eyes do not deceive me.”  
“It is I, Father,” he said, looking at him with filial love.  
“The moment I have so long feared has arrived. Just as well, he said,  
smiling sadly, “that we meet without weapons in our hands.”  
“The weapon that my hand holds could never be turned against you.”  
“Why not?” he asked bitterly. “Am I not your enemy? Have you not  
rebelled against your father, and worse, your country?”  
“Against you? No, my Father. I love you too much to rebel against you.  
Against my country . . . ?” He hesitated and then answered in a self-righteous  
tone, “I cannot rebel against a country I do not have.”  
“Your country is Spain.”  
“I was born in Cuba.”  
The colonel stepped forward with his arms folded. “Yes, in Cuba. But  
Cuba belongs to Spain, and in your veins runs my blood—Spanish blood.”  
“Spanish blood! Blood has no nationality. It is human, only human.”

Carlos’s response reveals a key element of anarchist ideology: the formal, artificial construct of  
the nation-state may be imposed upon a group of people, but it does not supersede the  
relationships that evolve naturally between people. Colonel Ferrándiz employs the same coercive  
discourse to manipulate his son as the nationalistic state might to control its people, convoluting  
the possessive-protective quality of a patriarchal relationship. But Carlos challenges his father’s  
rationale by deconstructing the logical fallacy he subscribes to, exclaiming that blood—his  
blood—signifies more than an exclusive bond to a single source, be it family or nation. 16 He  
belongs to a vaster “community” than Spain. Del Valle taps into a sensibility that transcends  
individual and historical particularity and associates it with a “metaphysical conception of man,”  
one that connects the past with the present and future (Anderson, Imagined 9). Benedict  
Anderson discusses the phenomenon of erecting a monument to the Unknown Soldier. Despite  
its being an empty tomb, or precisely because it is empty, he asserts, it is “saturated with ghostly  
national imaginings” (Imagined 9). In other words, it mobilizes affect in the service of creating a  
sense of universal (or national unity, in this case), by setting up an anonymous figure as

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16 Spoiler warning! Even so, the story’s resolution brings into question the depth of his father’s commitment to his own argument when he allows his son to escape and takes his own life.
representative of all, the identity of which could be imaginatively, empathically assumed by anyone who views it. Here, del Valle employs a similar tactic as above in “A Sailor’s End,” however to a different end. In “A Sailor’s End,” he focuses on engaging the reader’s emotions on the level of personal identification by particularizing the character and his experience. In “Father’s Love,” he appeals to a broader sense of interconnectedness. These approaches do not contradict; they mutually reinforce one another. This practice of mobilizing affect belongs to what Lauren Berlant calls the politico-aesthetic tradition of sentimentality, which “is put forth in the name of the authenticity of feeling, especially the feelings of love and suffering, the claims of which stand on the high ground of an ethics beyond politics” (638). Carlos suggests, then, that blood both is and is not a valid classifier of identity and communal bond. The key, at least for Carlos (and the anarchist movement), is that the bounds of its signification must extend more broadly. Anything that would contain, curtail, or otherwise diminish absolute freedom for all, is inadequate.

More than hope, this belief in the ability of a world of individuals to work together unselfishly for the common good and to sacrifice personal interests for a healthy social balance on a global scale, without limiting one’s rights, is evidence of the anarchist’s confidence in human potential and is manifest in his insistence upon creating societies void of rule from above. Although hope is not a pervasive theme throughout Por el camino, one particular piece sends a message of unmistakable faith in man’s ability to improve. “I am an endless source,” sings the fountain in “Spring Song,” “open to all who thirst. To the poor and rich, the noble and peasant, wise and ignorant, strong and weak, good and bad I offer my restorative waters equally.” The spring recalls previous encounters with people who came to her in dire circumstances, each of whom continued his or her journey not much better than when they had arrived. The first was a
man, feet bloodied, hair disheveled, and hands tied behind his back, driven by armed guards. After he had refreshed himself with her waters, he was again forced to continue his march at gunpoint. “Was he a criminal? Was he innocent?” the spring wonders. “It mattered not to me. For me, he was simply an unfortunate person. . . . Ay! If only I had been able to satisfy his yearnings for peace and freedom as I had his thirst!” There was also a woman who had come with her children, crying with hunger, and stopped to rest. At the sight, the spring wondered, “Why, if there is enough water for all, there is not enough bread for all?”

The spring is startled when she realizes that a traveler has sat down beside her. She is further surprised when she learns that he understands her, for few listen and none understand. He explains to her that pain has taught him the language of Nature, for which he has paid with bits of his soul. “Pain drove me away from others,” he says. “They have poisoned my soul with falsehood and egotism.” “Are you the only good one?” she asks. “Are you so much better?”

While the spring acknowledges the shortcomings of humanity, she ultimately insists on its ability to better itself. She compares it to a barren valley “where only scattered weeds” once grew that brought forth vegetation in abundance when her nourishing waters flowed into it. “Humanity, too, is an uncultivated valley,” she explains to the traveler, “that is only beginning to be fertilized by the idea of improvement. But the constant effort of tireless workers who look to the future is needed for the ideal to be realized.” This parable within a parable teaches a simple moral lesson by invoking a clear analogy between an individual (and by extension a society) and nature. Given the right influence, she suggests, people always have the potential to improve (or “perfect oneself” or “become complete”), for “in nature everything is susceptible to change and improvement.” “But what can I do? I, alone?” the traveler asks. The spring answers with a call to action for all. “Unite your efforts with the good,” she urges. “What can a single drop of water
accomplish? Nothing. Not even wet the throat of a tiny bird. But join enough drops to fill a glass and you will have enough to quench thirst. Add more drops until you form a stream, and you will make fertile a valley.” A single altruistic individual, despite his energy and genius, stands little chance of changing his environment, much less the world. But a community of workers determined to strive together to build a free society can accomplish their goal. This is the spring’s message to all who have become disillusioned with the foibles of humanity: take courage, unite your efforts, and make the world free.

Del Valle sets up an ironic dialogue between the traveler and the spring, the human and the non-human, in this story. That the spring must educate, encourage, and inspire the human protagonist, reminding him of the possibilities of his species, suggests a couple of things. First, human and non-human subjectivities are connected on a metaphysical level, but only the non-human appears to be aware of it, suggesting that if we look and listen carefully to nature, we might learn something of ourselves, our neighbors, and the world we live in. Del Valle founded and edited a naturist journal called *Naturismo*, in which he published articles on health education, nutrition, and living in greater harmony with nature. Living this way would lead to living in greater harmony with our surroundings. Second, though man is clever and capable, he is neither superior to nor independent of nature, from which there is much he can learn. In “The Vultures’ Banquet,” for instance, the vultures mock man’s stupidity and arrogance as they deconstruct his belief in the reason for war. “Wars,” one vulture says to another, “are made purely and simply to provide us with fresh meat,” not to make progress. In “The City Sleeps,” the narrator looks questioningly at the knowing stars, wondering whether there are homeless people living among them. In “Love and Philosophy,” Lorenzo lies awake all night gazing at the stars, hoping they will offer him answers to the questions that try him. For anarchists, people are
part of a cosmos that is much more aware and integrated than most suppose, the human and non-human more closely related to each other, and the state seeks to make itself a surrogate.

Anarchists contend, then, that the highest purpose of existence is not to establish and uphold the state; it is, rather, to enjoy the right to vital, unbounded freedom. This freedom is to be enjoyed first by the individual and then by the social collective as individuals strive to engage in and perpetuate communal relationships through a mutual extension of rights. However, in anarchist eyes, history has shown time and again that once a community evolves into a nation-state—that is a formalized condition in which it seeks to be recognized as an independent sovereign power that wishes to participate in the established nation-state ideology—tyranny will arise. Thus all-out revolution against Spain, a là Martí, would ultimately result in little more than replacing imperial rule with autocratic rule in the guise of a governing party—the only difference being that it was elected to power (Sonn 7, 49). Therefore, the most reasonable way to achieve anarchist objectives for social improvement is to reform the existing governing system. Yet, despite del Valle’s faith in the anarchist ideology, he conceded that to vehemently oppose the separatist movement in Cuba might ultimately amount to denying the people their freedom. Any individual, he writes, “who struggles against tyranny of any type cannot help but struggle for the independence of Cuba” (qtd. in Fernández, History 43). Del Valle’s position, then, is anchored most profoundly in the strictest principles of freedom, even more so than in the anarchist movement. This sensitivity to freedom for all was obviously not unique to del Valle, for we see like-minded individuals combining into revolutionary groups, groups forming pockets of rebellion, pockets reaching out to other pockets, individuals, and groups to form network communities. And we see them overcoming with greater speed and facility obstacles that stumped previous generations’ attempts to liberate themselves from oppressive powers, obstacles
such as linguistic and geographic barriers, the cost and speed of travel and correspondence, and literacy and limitations of distributing printed materials. As these challenges diminished with technological advances, the possibility of an (imagined) transnational anarchist community was becoming a reality.

*The Press*

As Benedict Anderson has noted, the push for Cuban self-rule was the first of many anticolonial movements around the world that was beginning to build networks of contact with one another (*Flags* 54-55). Anarchism was not an anticolonial movement in a typical sense, but it gained footholds in societies that were agitating for freedom and reform nonetheless. The concurrence of Cuba’s final push for independence in 1895 and the Philippines’s first in 1896, for example, was not accidental. Anderson suggests that Cubans, Filipinos, Puerto Ricans, and Dominicans, the last of Spain’s overseas empire, not only read about each other, but developed “crucial personal connections and, up to a point, coordinated their actions.” These relationships were important if for no other reason than that they constituted “transglobal coordination” on an unprecedented scale (*Imagined* 2). Transnational politics, commerce, travel, correspondence, etc. were not new to the modern age. Approaching the turn of the twentieth century, however, we see an abrupt acceleration of transnational dynamics, which catalyzed discoveries and developments in every field of human endeavor, as well as crises in the same. There were assassinations in France, Spain, the U.S., and Serbia, to name a few, between the 1880s and 1910s, leading up to the breakout of the First World War. But what makes this particularly significant to our discussion is that the assassins felt that they were performing for what Anderson calls “a world-audience of news agencies, newspapers, religious progressives, working-class and peasant
organizations, and so on” in addition to local audiences (*Flags* 3). They concluded that appealing to the sensibilities of peoples and nations as members of a global community might garner sympathy and attract tangible support for their respective causes. And the press became their weapon of choice.

Agitators protested with their voices, their pens, their fists, and, when necessary, their bodies. Take the “father” of Filipino independence José Rizal, for instance. In 1887 he published *Noli Me Tangere* [*Don’t Touch Me* in Tagalog], in which all the characters are either colonizers or colonized. But in his second book, *El filibusterismo* [*Filibuster*] (1891), his characters are no longer limited to Spaniards and native subjects; it “is littered with casual references to Egypt, Poland, Peru, Germany, Russia, Cuba, Persia, the Carolines, Ceylon, the Moluccas, Libya, France, China, and Japan, as well as Arabs and Portuguese, Canton and Constantinople” (Anderson, *Flags* 6). Thus, according to Anderson, whereas the audience of *Noli Me Tangere* may be considered limited, or directed specifically toward Filipino and Spanish readers, it seems apparent that the intended audience of *El filibusterismo* is opened to the entire world (*Flags* 53).

Now, I want to draw some parallels between Anderson’s assessment of *El filibusterismo* with respect to its supposed intended audience and *Por el camino*. First, if we accept Anderson’s argument that Rizal sought out a wider audience due to his incorporation of a multicultural cast, with periodic eruptions of foreign speech (that is, not Spanish), and references to contemporaneous international events, then we must also accept *Por el camino*, for it not only contains those very elements in abundance, many selections of the collection are set in locations around the world, with frequent outbursts in foreign tongues. Second, if Rizal, who was committed to a national cause, appealed to an international audience for support, why would del Valle, who was committed to a truly international cause, limit his target readership to any
narrower scope? Third, Rizal traveled and studied in Europe—including Germany, but particularly in Spain—where he established contacts and built relationships with radical thinkers and activists there. Del Valle also traveled and studied throughout Europe, where he was deeply entrenched in anarchist circles before leaving for the Americas, where he intensified his involvement in anarchist activities. While we cannot be sure at this moment to what extent he maintained direct connections with anarchists in Spain and then New York and New Jersey before relocating to Havana, it would follow that given the international nature of the movement and the fact that he participated in no fewer than three anarchism- or revolutionary-related publishing endeavors in the United States, he would have accumulated viable contacts for future correspondence.

José Peirats describes the two decades between 1880 and 1900 as “a kind of renaissance” brought about by anarchist intellectuals, during which time the socialist literary production was encouraged and anarchist presses established (22). In 1886 the political climate thawed enough for Barcelonan anarchists to found the journal La Acracia [Anarchism], followed by the daily El Productor [The Producer] in 1887, and the journal La Solidaridad [Solidarity] was established by Filipinos in 1888. In 1887, Catalán anarchist Enrique Roig y San Martín, who became one of the most “influential and respected” leaders of the movement in Cuba, founded another El Productor, which, according to Fernández, “quickly became ‘must reading’ among the working class in Havana” (History 20). Readers learned from its pages that they were not alone in the world of class conflict, they came to view anarchism as an alternative to Spanish economic and governing models, and they connected them through foreign correspondents to like-minded peoples throughout the Caribbean Basin and beyond (Fernández, History 20). Lily Litvak reminds us of the “exchange” of anarchist publications between European and Latin American
countries, citing *El Despertar [Wake Up!]* out of Brooklyn and *El Esclavo [The Slave]* out of Tampa as two long-running examples of papers whose pages were graced by the most prominent names of Spanish anarchism, including Palmiro de Lidia (pseudonym of Adrián del Valle), for whom columns were always reserved (265, 275).\(^{17}\) Carlos Rama affords del Valle, the “renowned journalist,” significant credit for furthering the anarchist cause in Cuba, beginning with *El Nuevo Ideal* (clxv). By the mid-1890s, however, amidst the growing frequency of strikes, repression of labor movements increased, resulting in the closure of *El Productor* and the imprisonment of its editors. Even so, anarchist publications continued to multiply in Cuba through 1905 (clxvi).

In fact, dozens of journals, pamphlets, and magazines, as well as daily, weekly, and bi-weekly newspapers, issues numbering in the tens of thousands, ran off anarchist presses between the 1880s and 1920s. The majority were published in French, Spanish, English, and Italian, with offices located in France, Spain and Spanish America, and the United States. They often cross-published articles, as in the example of the two *El Productors*. In a cursory study of the founders and collaborators of these presses, a handful of editors and writers pop up time and again in different countries, writing in different languages. Pedro Esteve, a good friend to del Valle, for example, worked at *El Despertar* in Paterson, New Jersey, during the 1890s. In 1894 he spent a several months in Havana, during which time he interviewed Enrique Creci, a prominent Cuban anarchist, before returning home. Then in 1899, he moved to Cuba and worked with del Valle, a long-time friend since their days in Barcelona, and Luis Barcia to found *El Nuevo Ideal*. Also

\(^{17}\) Martín, Muñoz, and Montseny write: “When [del Valle] arrived in New York, the Spanish-language anarchist newspaper *El Despertar* appeared, founded by the libertarian group El Despertar a la Vida [Wake Up to Life]. Later, it was edited by Pedro Esteve. This publication lasted many years, and for a time, appeared in Paterson, NJ” (*kclibertaria*). It sounds as though Martin, et al, are suggesting that del Valle had something to do with the establishment of the paper, but the Spanish original is somewhat ambiguous.
living in Paterson was Errico Malatesta, (in)famous Italian anarchist and founder of at least five periodicals, who also wrote for *El Despertar* and who engaged in regular propaganda tours through the United States, the Caribbean, and South America (Fernández, *History* 34-42). It was also he who had encouraged del Valle to leave England and sail for New York in the first place. Anselmo Lorenzo, founder of the Barcelona *El Productor*, was also imprisoned at the same time (Peirats 23). He survived incarceration in the notorious prison fortress of Montjuic, where countless Spanish, Latin American, and Philippine rebels and anarchists were tortured and executed (Anderson, *Flags* 169). Joan Montseny (aka Federico Urales), patriarch of the Urales family and also a survivor of Montjuic, founded *La Revista Blanca* in Barcelona. Peirats suggests that it printed the best writers of international anarchism, among whom he lists Palmiro de Lidia (Adrián del Valle) (54). Fernando Tárrida de Mármol was a Cuban creole who took degrees from universities in Spain and France, wrote regularly for *La Revue Blanche* [*The White Review*], a French fortnightly, *Acracia, El Productor, La Revista Blanca* and other publications.

Del Valle serves as a transitional character because he published not only as a journalist and social activist but as a fiction writer. Hispanic American anarchist movements benefited from strong writers and improved means of printing and distribution. “In their newspaper columns, poetry and short story collections, novellas and novels,” writes Shaffer, “these men and women imagined their world from an anarchist viewpoint and framed the anarchist struggle for readers” (“Dynamite” 12). One of these writers was del Valle, who Shaffer describes as the “more erudite fiction-writing counterpart” to Cuban-born Antonio Penichet’s didactic style.

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18 Anderson also notes that Tárrida’s *Les Inquisiteurs d’Espagne* linked Manila, Montjuich, and Havana (192).
19 A more comprehensive and systematic study of the anarchist press during the heyday of anarchism is beyond the scope of this project, but I suspect that once engaged, plotting the locations of presses, with their respective ranges of distribution, and tracing the movements of anarchist writers and agitators, we could sketch a closely and thoroughly integrated network.
writing more books, plays, and short novels than any other Caribbean anarchist (“Dynamite” 13). Litvak quotes from the first edition of Tierra Libre (Barcelona, 1908) on the power of the printed word:

The newspaper is the surest, most universal, and most efficient form of disseminating propaganda, defense, and attack. More than the word carried off by the wind, it strengthens the weak, gives courage to the timid, and roots with greater force convictions and love for ideals. The printed word works harder and better on the conscience of the individual, suggesting appropriate thoughts and intimate comments that valued concepts read, in that periodic conversion between him and the printed page, he sees expanded concepts and new horizons. (259-60)

Even though literary figures and political activists agitated for revolution, their worldviews and the weapons they used were very different. While some resorted to assassination and labor action, others lived by the words of Stéphane Mallarmé: “La vraie bombe, c’est le livre” [“The true bomb is the book”] (qtd. in Lida 362). While earlier progressive movements struggled to disseminate their ideas in print, the anarchists, as mentioned above, benefited from advancements in the publishing industry. Yet despite their increased distribution, they still contended with the challenge of widespread illiteracy.

In addition to organizing community literary events, in an effort to reach beyond the literate populace, lectores, or readers, were brought in, particularly in the tobacco plants in Florida, Cuba, and Puerto Rico, to read aloud from newspapers and fiction printed throughout the Spanish-speaking world to laborers while they worked (Shaffer, “Dynamite” 10, 33-34; Fernández, History 129). Shaffer reiterates the anarchist approach to broadening its audience

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20 “El periódico es la acción más firme, más universal, más eficaz para la propaganda, la defensa y aun el ataque. Más que la palabra que se lleva el viento, robustece a los débiles, da coraje a los tímidos y arraiga con más fuerza las (260) convicciones y el amor hacia los ideales. La palabra impresa obra más y mejor en la conciencia del individuo le sugiere pensamientos propios, comentarios íntimos que avaloran más los conceptos leídos, y en esa conversión periódica entre él y la hoja impresa, ve conceptos más dilatados y nuevos horizontes” (Tierra Libre (Barcelona), I, núm. 1 (11 agosto, 1908), 1.).
through organizing cultural meetings, including poetry and fiction readings and theatrical performances “to teach anarchist theories of freedom, egalitarianism, internationalism, and progress” (Countercultural 14). As an active anarchist, del Valle supported the “transatlantic anarchist community,” producing cultural materials as a writer and editor, and when he returned to Cuba from New York only weeks after the Spanish fleet was sunk in Santiago Bay in December of 1898, he established the weekly paper El Nuevo Ideal, adding to the retinue of anarchist newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, and books. More than relying on his voice alone, he leveraged his experience in the publishing business by providing more platforms from which others might promote anarchist ideals, thus compounding the number of outlets and increasing the means of dissemination. Of course, advances in print technology, telecommunications, and transportation greatly facilitated success in this collective endeavor. Yet at the same time they benefited from the progresses of science and industrialization, anarchists resented the negative side-effects of globalization—effects caused by the very means to which they owed so much of their success.

*A Comment on “Progress”*

While anarchists may value scientific progress insofar as it liberates the soul from ecclesiastical bondage—or technological progress when it facilitates faster, broader, and more affordable means of distributing ideologies to the masses—they do not appreciate it when it contributes to the accelerated destruction of natural resources, increased exploitation of the laborer, or deepened poverty of the proletariat. If we judge the nature of progress and its value to the movement by reading *Por el camino*, we should not be surprised to find conflicting sentiments played out in its pages. Del Valle opens “The City Sleeps” with the following lines:
“Above, in the dark firmament, shine stars with the pure glimmer of ideal worlds.” This has a sharpening effect to the contrast between the distant, ethereal beauty of an impersonal cosmos and the dark reality of the here and now in Havana’s Central Park. The first-person narrator assumes a dramatic, journalistic style as he describes the scene.

The electric light bulbs no longer light the vanities of impotent affluence, which only go there to show off the latest fashion and hairstyles, silks and jewels; but they continue lending their clear light to the plants, the flowers, the green leaves that, without artifice, such as Nature created them, beautify the solitary park.

But the “satisfechos,” or the wealthy, do not interest him. He goes in search of the unfortunate who have no home, family, or friends to comfort them. “The little birds have their nest, the plants a piece of earth, the animals a lair, the savages a hut; but these don’t have anything. Anything at all! Not even the right to sleep peacefully upon a hard bench in the square.” The narrator is intrigued by one of the “homeless wretches” he sees draped backwards over a bench, sleeping in a painful contortion with his mouth wide open. The narrator wonders what series of events would have brought this man to such a state and such a place, and what his future might entail.

Then, moving onto the Parque de Colón, he finds no “sleepers,” deducing that the local palos had just passed through.21 He does, however, notice the alligators in the pond nearby. They are happier than men, he says. They have a home and a place to sleep without fear of being disturbed. It is this observation that prompts him to say aloud, “In our Christian society, . . . it is better to be an alligator than a man without a home.” “And I thought I saw,” he adds, “there at the bottom of the pond, a huge alligator, mouth open, laughing bestially at my exclamation.”

Here, again, the human and non-human meet on a metaphysical level of understanding and

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21 A palo is a night stick carried by a constable and therefore becomes the metonymic reference for him.
agreement, the non-human mouthing a silent “amen” to the narrator’s protest against the apathy of both church and state, two institutions whose supposed and professed raison d’être is to serve and protect their people, and criticizing the progress-gone-wrong in the city. The narrator closes the scene with nearly the same lines with which he opens it, and in framing it thus foregrounds the awful ironies that it portrays. “Above, in the dark firmament, bright stars with pure glimmers of ideal worlds went on shining. Could there be beings without homes there too?”

Del Valle is not the only social intellectual to comment on the destructive side-effects of capitalism and industrial progress coupled with bourgeois indifference. But as a piece of fiction criticizing the socio-political complex of modern civilization, “The Vultures’ Banquet,” also mentioned above, is unique in its brevity, poignancy, and over-the-top ironical conceit. This fable opens upon the quiet scene of a busy Manchurian village that, before the sun has set, is overrun by “the soles of uniformed murderers” on their way to a military engagement. As the soldiers march on, a flock of vultures approaches from the horizon. Two of them stop to rest on a nearby hill in anticipation of the approaching battle, and the feast that will follow, and together give thanks to “the merciful God of vultures, who makes men destroy each other for our benefit.” Del Valle leaves no room to misunderstand his position on government-sponsored violence, the irony of birds of prey speaking condescendingly about humanity amplifying the point. The ironic indictment continues as we learn that the reason for the war is vain, for there are no spoils for the victor, since neither side obtains the land over which they fight.

“Then why do they fight?”
“Human mysteries, brother. Our reason as birds of prey is incapable of explaining it. Their motives must be, do not doubt it, that not in vain man prides himself in being the king of creation and in having invented the sublime and incomprehensible words of progress and civilization.”
“Progress” and “civilization” appear italicized in the original text, indicating that the narrator intends them to be read ironically. This story, in juxtaposition to “The City Sleeps,” justify an interpretation of the socially dominant perspective of the time to be one of rampant progress toward a greater level of civilization, and del Valle’s emphasizing these two words while using them in a ridiculous context suggests that his view of progress and civilization differs from that of the majority. As explained above, the anarchists celebrated progress and civilization, only they, like del Valle, envisioned them manifesting in ways different than what they were witnessing. In the next chapter, I will expand the context of this discussion to include the modernista take on these two concepts of globalization.

By the time the vultures reach the battlefield, homes have been reduced to rubble and orchards ruined. The waters of the stream are red with the blood, and the land is littered with the bodies of the fallen, their corpses mutilated, blown apart by bombs and shrapnel. The narrator draws our attention to two powerful scenes, one that reinforces the irony of empty sacrifice for the state and the other a hint at the beauty of humanity freed from the coercive bonds of patriotism and national honor. First, “a Russian colonel, wrapped in a cape of colors stained with blood and blackened dust, cries out with his last breath, ‘I die for Russia!’ His horse, also mortally wounded, hearing the voice of his master, raises his head and lets it fall, dying as well, without knowing it, for glorious Russia.” Then, “two soldiers, a great Cossack and a tiny Japanese, help each other treat the wounds that together they had caused.” In the first instance, the horse only knows suffering. It derives no consolation from the belief that as a service animal its sacrifice is somehow sanctified due to its offer to the state. An anarchist might argue that the Russian colonel’s ignominious death is no different than that of his dumb beast—only that he bears the belief that his death has meaning that justifies it. Still, del Valle again juxtaposes
human and non-human subjectivities, both victims to the cult of “progress.” In the second instance, the one-frame image is a powerful testament to the strength of the human instinct for compassion and connectivity despite politically (or ethnically, linguistically, culturally, or geographically) determined animosity (or separation)—and therefore the potential for an imagined community unrestricted by conventional, traditional, or cartographic delineations—that the anarchist ideal proselytizes.

Their appetites now satisfied, the vultures gather around. “Brothers,” the elder cries, “let us give thanks to the Great Vulture for having bestowed upon us such a succulent feast. Man, proud and ignorant, believes that he fights in defense of high ideals and suffers no lack of wise men who affirm that wars are an inherent element of progress. Error, crass error, my brothers. Wars are made purely and simply to provide us with fresh meat. Long live war!”

These closing remarks suggest that war stands in direct opposition to reason and true progress, which would lead one to build community based on the empathy and mutual beneficence exhibited by the wounded soldiers who worked together to save others. Relying on birds of prey as the purveyors of this philosophy is the grossest of ironic statements. So called modern, civilized societies—terms that every civilization through the ages has adopted to describe itself, boasting superiority over the predecessors and claiming to be functioning on the razor’s edge of human development—resorted to waging war with one another instead of negotiating means and spaces in which to accommodate their respective needs.

To Educate and Entertain

The anarchists sought through literature to spread a truly progressive ideology in a generation rife with global conflict and revolution despite its rapid advances in scientific and technological advances. This was, of course, only one face of the anarchist movement’s complex strategy for teaching and recruiting global populations into a transnational community, but it is
where del Valle’s efforts are most apparent. As a work of fiction, *Por el camino* supports the major functions of anarchist literature—to educate and entertain—by mixing dramatic plots and convincing characters that confront socially pertinent issues that readers can identify with. Lynn Hunt borrows Lord Kames’s (*Elements of Criticism, 1762*) notion of “ideal presence,” in which the reader imagines himself to be transported into the narrative, to discuss the affective power of the novel has a way of creating “a sense of equality and empathy through passionate involvement in the narrative” due to a biological capacity for it (56, 39). This is possible because the autonomic nervous system has a difficult time distinguishing actual events from imagined events. The degree to which a reader surrenders himself to the events and emotions depicted in the fictional world he enters determines the depth of his physiological, mental, and emotional response to it. Hunt also asserts that readers come to identify with characters from other social classes, ages, sex, nationality, etc., and “as a consequence to see others—people they did not know personally—as like them, as having the same kinds of inner emotions. Without this learning process, ‘equality’ could have no deep meaning and in particular no political consequence” (40). Del Valle, as any fiction writer, was surely sensitive to the power of fiction to evoke powerful emotions, proselyte beliefs, and motivate action, and to these ends he employed literary techniques that would encourage readers to identify affectively with his characters and their plights.

It is beyond the scope of this project to explore what linearity there may be between del Valle and Hispanic American authors writing nearly a century later in the United States, but I would like to consider Luis Valdez briefly because of the peculiarly similar circumstances between the socio-politics of his day and del Valle’s, and because he offers some criteria to guide our analysis of anarchist literature. Literary critic Manuel Martínez-Rodríguez describes
the Chicano literature of the 1960s, including newspapers (El Malcriado and El Grito del Norte) and journals (El Grito, Con Safos and Aztlán) established through the Southwest, as “vehicles for political and literary communication” dedicated to the service of La Causa [The Cause] (110). In 1965 Valdez founded El Teatro Campesino Cultural [The Workers’ Cultural Center] to dramatize the plight of farmworkers in the Delano, California, grape industry. In the introduction to his book Actos: El Teatro Campesino, he summarizes the aesthetic objectives of the organization’s early years: “Chicano theater must be revolutionary in technique as well as content. It must be popular, subject to no other critics except the pueblo itself; but it must also educate the pueblo toward an appreciation of social change, on and off stage.” By application, the acto pursues five goals: “inspire the audience to social action. Illuminate specific points about social problems. Satirize the opposition. Show or hint a solution. Express what people are feeling” (qtd. in Martínez- Rodríguez 110). “We see in this theatrical manifesto,” writes Martínez-Rodríguez, “a synthesis of the dominant aesthetic of the moment: a revolutionary attitude relative to literary and social questions, accompanied by a decided rootedness in popular culture, as much in its content as in its principal images; a didactic design that inspects the artistic creation from an undeniable utilitarian framework” (110).

Valdez, then, drew on the immediate circumstances most relevant to his community and through representing them in dramatic form, brought attention to their plight, promoted a social and political agenda of reform, and encouraged activism. Martínez-Rodríguez reminds us that the majority of Chicano writers came from rural or working-class families, not professional writing backgrounds, and therefore knew the realities of Chicano life first hand. “A great number of [their] works,” he writes, “were dedicated along with a major or minor dose of social protest, to giving testimony to that experience of suffering and struggle” (110). But Valdez’s vision
extended beyond his own work; he constructed and practiced a revolutionary aesthetic in line with a Latino literary tradition that preceded him and set the course for generations to come, and solidified a community around a cause. It must be noted here, too, that the depth and intimacy of this approach, so closely associated with people’s adjacent and intertwined lives, cannot help but strengthen the bonds they share within a community.

A contemporary of Valdez, Tomás Rivera, wrote the short composite novel . . . y no se lo tragó la tierra (1971), for example, in which he poignantly addresses the challenges facing one community, explores its collective consciousness through individuals of all ages and genders, and testifies of the sense of community they share. Rivera was, in his own words, “literarily establishing a community” (qtd. in Martínez-Rodríguez 115).22 Shaffer credits del Valle, too, with facilitating communal cohesion among Cuban anarchists through promoting literary and cultural events (Countercultural 207). Whether it’s friends or neighbors performing plays or reading short fiction and poetry in public meetings, or lectores reading the daily news, political tracts, or fiction to factory workers while they roll cigars, it is the same. It is the proximity and simultaneity of their collective experience that matters. The specifics of the text or the age or gender of the participants and audience are secondary. When people engage in the process of cultural creativity and expression, especially in a social context charged with emotion, the degree and intensity of their connectivity increase. The anarchists understood this.

Marisa Siguan Boehmer writes that anarchists, like Valdez and Rivera, found in literature “an attractive ideological vehicle” for exemplifying political and social problems, raising social awareness, offering solutions to them in an effort to propagate the Ideal, and building communities, and made it their “instrument of resistance” (5, 11-12). Anarchist writers

22 Again, Spanish, Latin American, and U.S. Hispanic social realism warrants treatment much more comprehensive than the scope of this project allows.
determined that in order to reach the most diverse and widespread audiences, in addition to producing overtly political and heavy philosophical treatises that appealed to a rather limited audience, they would benefit from producing short fiction, which, being more engaging and accessible, would motivate the masses with whom stories were more likely to resonate. The constant appeal to affective narratives reinforces the depth of their impact. Clara Lida emphasizes that fiction that is “stripped of artistic pretensions . . . tones down theoretical dryness and facilitates the popularization of complicated revolutionary concepts” (360-61). It does not get in its own way by overtly indoctrinating the reader when it might subtly educate. Literature, then, is a tool that fulfills the measure of its creation when it speaks to the masses in a language that reaches them on their level of comprehension, when it engages their interest, when it encourages, and when it arouses passions that will “transform the inner nature of the individual and produce a more moral society” (Hunt 57-58). We have here a common weight placed on the practical appeal to fiction as an implement for progress that we see in del Valle’s work.

Reviewing plays for La Voz del Dependiente [Voice of the Dependent] under the pseudonym Palmiro de Lidia, he praises works that serve a utilitarian purpose, and in the introduction to his own 1898 play Fin de fiesta, he expresses his desire to create art that would at the same time be both useful and reflect common people’s lives (200). Shaffer summarizes the defining characteristics of del Valle’s social realism thus:

In a larger sense, Del Valle was partly a realist and partly a dreamer. Thus, one must read [his] stories as he intended his audience to read them—as a combination of social realism and what scholars of utopian studies . . . call ‘social dreaming.’ That is, from a social realist perspective, Del Valle’s stories portrayed (if not altogether accurately described) the everyday conditions of the poor, while criticizing the hegemonic culture that maintained those conditions. (Countercultural 159)
In this aesthetic of change and resistance, stories grounded in the places and anxieties of the community converge with critical themes social degradation and injustice. These, combined with tales cast in the straightforward and often graphic depictions inherent to realist writing, evoke empathy while educating readers and moving them to action.

Del Valle’s “In the Hospital” is a flashback framed by a single, dramatically detailed scene in the present. The setting is a women’s hospital, in which everything was white: the naked walls, the clean sheets that covered the little cots placed in a double row, the emaciated faces of the sick, the wimples of the sisters of charity. And such immaculate whiteness, bathed in the placid light of the twilight, cast a hue of strange pallor that produced in the senses a vivid sensation of cold and loneliness, of great and infinite sadness.

It was the last refuge of Marta, a once happy girl whose unfortunate circumstances drove her to the city where she was forced into prostitution by her aunt and cousin. Here del Valle makes an insightful observation. Without exonerating Marta’s exploiters, he argues that she was victimized not by two horrible individuals but “by the terrible necessity of existence” and characterizes her tormenters not as inherently evil, but as symptomatic of a general social condition. “The society, the same society that hurled her into the mud, withheld redemption from her.” The themes we encounter in anarchist literature echo, unsurprisingly, those of the movement itself, among which are resentment toward aggressive capitalism and bourgeois materialism, conflicted loyalties, and “progress.” Just as anarchists who espoused propaganda of the deed as legitimate means of protest understood that they were performing for a global audience, literary anarchists like del Valle promulgated propaganda of the word, also with the world as their stage. Yet while their attention to these darker realities of life during this early wave of globalization does not resemble the angst exemplified by the modernistas, whose “tortured lives” were played out in their
writing, the kind of social realism that we see in Por el camino, as illustrated in “In the Hospital,” is well represented in anarchist and modernista literature alike.

Consider again the quote by Richard Sonn that opened this chapter. People felt a loss of self-determination because of the increased control economic and political elites exercised over their lives, the weakening of social bonds disrupted a sense of stability, urban sprawl encouraged by rampant industrialization further separated people from the land, their families, and their peace of mind. Far from writing in their “marble towers” high above the disturbances raging in the streets below, the modernistas mounted an aesthetic response to globalization that revealed an intimate awareness of the problems confronting society and an acute sense of spiritual fragmentation. On one hand, argues Boehmer, anarchist writers rejected “the literary vanguards of the times as well as the earlier modernism and [tried] to create a vital and popular art” (12). Rama counters, stating that two of the most famous modernistas of the twentieth century, Leopoldo Lugones (a contemporary of del Valle) and Jorge Luis Borges, held libertarian political views (libertarianism being less extreme and less aggressive, but otherwise very similar to, anarchism), which is not to say that they were card-carrying members of their local anarchist chapters, but that the proximity of their politics might qualify them as a bridge between Spanish and Latin American anarchism and modernismo (335).\footnote{Goic called for just such a study nearly 50 years ago, and it has yet to appear (page). Although such an in-depth analysis is beyond the scope of this project, it is nonetheless a step in the right direction.} In Por el camino we see these forces in dynamic interaction. Del Valle does not present solutions to the challenges of globalization, but he does bring them into bold relief in writing that constitutes a hybrid of anarchist and modernista tendencies.
CHAPTER 4

Modernismo

Modernismo is Spanish America’s broad and manifold cultural response to the complex spiritual crisis that grew out of its transition into the Modern era. While it is true that Western societies had been experiencing transitional pangs for centuries, the abruptness of the convergence of advances in print technology, increases in readership, and faster, cheaper means of distribution that facilitated the exchange of ideas across borders disrupted the normal flow of life (José Barrios Mora 155). Rapidly industrializing societies found themselves unprepared to meet challenges of such magnitude to their ontological paradigms precisely because they had come on with such speed. Walter Benjamin calls the effect of this disruption a form of “shock.” People did not have time to raise a protective “shield,” to borrow a term from Sigmund Freud, against the rush of stimuli or prepare to process all the changes taking place (Illuminations 161).

In chapter 2, I proposed that the anarchists reacted to the social, political, and economic disturbance by engaging in activities that would encourage reform. In this chapter, I will extend that argument to the modernistas, who mounted a literary response to the same phenomenon, which I equate with globalization. I will also position Adrián del Valle as an alternative modernista, for while he exhibits many modernista tendencies he also deviates from them in interesting ways. Exploring his strain of what we might call “anarcho-modernismo” will, I hope, challenge their boundaries in ways that will generate new and productive conversations about both Hispanic American modernismo and anarchism. In order to see del Valle in this context, I will first review the standard narrative of modernismo and then explore the ways Por el camino complicates that narrative.
Modernismo is notoriously difficult to define despite the ease with which we may list typical stylistic and thematic characteristics. In his prologue to Venezuelan modernista José Asunción Silva’s *Poesías completas* [Complete Poems], the early twentieth-century Spanish modernista and critic Miguel de Unamuno vents his frustration with those who try to reduce “such diverse and opposing things” to a common category (19). Ned Davison attributes the challenge of categorizing and classifying modernismo to the non-existence of an ideological or stylistic core, where instead one finds instead a “vigorously diversified center” (28-29). This, I suggest, is due in part, if not entirely, to the modernista determination to elevate the individual. It was paramount that artists be allowed to express their individuality without hindrance. They abandoned classical literary style and structural forms, and created new styles and techniques of expression that correlated more closely with the spirit of a new age. Given this dynamic aesthetic context, modernistas produced highly idiosyncratic works, especially in the earlier years, before a sense of coherence had evolved. Thus, the “center” that eludes Davison was an aesthetic dialectic, a conversation between artists, their art, and ideas. He suggests, however, that notwithstanding they had no manifesto to channel their creativity, they nevertheless treated many of the same themes, explored the flexibility of language in similar ways, and shared in a common “quest for distinction and artistic uniqueness.” Oscar Espinal Durón, whose work concentrates on the Central American modernista short story, has compiled a list of attributes that later critics generally agree describe Hispanic American modernismo: cosmopolitanism and exoticism, an obsession with the literary autonomy of Latin America, the femme fatale, France as a cultural reference, Parnassian and symbolist aesthetics, preciosity, the ivory tower, challenging growing industrialization, anti-bourgeois sentiment, the search for pure art, reference to “noble worlds, kingdoms, and eras past,” color, precious stones, and objects. “In narrative genres,” he continues,
“modernismo opposed realism and preferred lyrically idealized descriptions of refined Bohemian life” (12-15). Ivan Schulman further adds:

Almost all modernistas, in their eagerness to expand the expressivity of literary Spanish, assimilated unusual elements that enriched the language: color, plasticity, antiquated rhythms, sculptures in prose and verse, pictorial transpositions, impressionist and expressionist structures, periodic interspersion of realist and naturalist styles, particularly in the novel. (45)

Federico Onís suggests that realism and naturalism appear more often than “periodically” in the modernista novel and that there is a “true incorporation of realist and naturalist styles” into lyrical prose (135). Ricardo Gullón observes that “as always, love and death go together in poetry; consuming love . . . because modernismo is sensual, erotic as it is spirited and spiritual, and death, ever present in the life of these restless, tortured souls.” Modernista writers José Asunción Silva and Leopoldo Lugones, for example, committed suicide, José Santos Chocano murdered a journalist and was later stabbed to death on a streetcar, Julián del Casal and Julio Herrera y Reissig died of heart attacks, José Martí was killed in battle, and Delmira Agustini’s ex-husband shot her twice in the head before killing himself (Gullón 25-26). “In modernismo,” adds Schulman, “you’ll find neither philosophers nor systematic thinkers” proposing theories and therapies, “but the tortured expressions of Martí, Nájera, Silva, Casal, Nervo, González Martínez, and Rodó, as well as others . . .” (38).24 C. A. Longhurst, echoing the sentiment of other critics, writes that “we accept and use the term modernismo, not only to designate a literary trend, but principally, and above all, a period, a way of being and thinking of an epoch that encloses within itself a crisis” (266).

I quoted Onís in the introduction, characterizing modernismo as “the Hispanic form of the universal crisis of letters and spirit.” I would amend his statement and cast modernismo as

24 José Martí, Cuba; Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera, Mexico; José Asunción Silva, Colombia; Julián del Casal, Cuba; Amado Nervo, Mexico; Enrique González Martínez, Mexico; and José Enrique Rodó, Uruguay.
the aesthetic *response* to the literary and spiritual crisis in Hispanic America, not the crisis itself (xv). Schulman views modernismo as a “protest and flight before spiritual emptiness, a product of the debilitation of norms and long-held traditions by positivism and the ideas of the new experimental science” (21). Literary modernismo, then, constitutes the rebellious manifestations of a generation of writers and poets who struggled to find peace in a world void of philosophies, traditions, or ideologies that could provide stability in an age dominated by “faith” in science and materialism. Gullón attributes this “complex and sometimes devastating reaction” to “industrialization, philosophical positivism, the growing politicization of life, anarchist ideology and practice, the rise of capitalism and the bourgeoisie, neoidealisms and utopias, all mixed together” (69). Cathy Jrade also asserts that “Spanish American modernismo protested the technological, materialistic, and ideological impact of positivism that swept Spanish America as it entered the world economy during the nineteenth century,” all of which led to a “crisis of beliefs . . . similar to the one that had dominated intellectual circles throughout the West since the onset of modernity” (*Development* 4-5, 12).25

Positivism’s “dry intellectualization” was incapable of offering a satisfactory replacement for the institutions and traditions that had sustained Spanish America in the past. The Catholic Church, for instance, provided education, support to the needy, spiritual guidance, faith, and hope for a better world to many Americans notwithstanding its historical complicity with other institutions of oppression. But as the Church lost ground before positivism’s approach, its power to function as a social and cultural constancy diminished. It could not alleviate the socio-economic stresses caused by new market dynamics and the distribution of wealth. It could not

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25 To reiterate, Spanish American modernismo should not be confused with Anglo American Modernism.
offer meaning or solace to the suffering. And it could not mend fractured psyches and societies.

Jrade puts it this way:

. . . the Spanish American modernistas traced the anxiety of their age to fragmentation: individuals were out of touch with themselves, with their fellow humans, and with nature. . . . They longed for a sense of wholeness, for innocence, for the paradise from which they had been exiled by the positivist and bourgeois emphasis on utility, materialism, and progress. The hope for amelioration resided in integration and the resolution of conflict. (“Modernist” 11)

**Beauty of Form and Cosmic Harmony**

Max Henríquez Ureña writes that “the agonies of the contemporary soul always had a deep resonance in this literature” (31-32). The constant struggle against what Gullón calls *angustia* (variously translated as “anguish or distress,” “anxiety,” or “angst”) and the sense of fragmentation and alienation gave rise to the modernista quest for beauty of form and harmony as closely related healing, or atoning (at-one-ing), forces. Davison suggests that more than just the need to revitalize the language, modernistas sought to encourage “beauty and idealism in the face of the ugliness of daily life and the surrounding materialism” in a constant effort to balance the harsh realities of life (35). Jrade points out the frequent allusion to “images of unity” as alternatives “to the prevailing sense of change, discontinuity, and fragmentation” and to the modernista “desire to reveal the hidden order of the universe through the grace, beauty, and harmony of poetry” (*Development* 21, 95). “There is a truth,” writes Gullón,

. . . embodied in beauty, an ethic bound to the aesthetic, to the vital and creative harmony; that ethic reflects the light of the unfading values: love, liberty and justice, so intertwined that who attacks one attacks all. . . . To create something beautiful is to contribute to the enrichment of the collective soul, and to stimulate a chain of sensations and feelings that favor . . . the elimination of unjust situations. To write a poem, to write poetry, is to express a significant and profound truth on the level of humanity. (61-63)
One of the means of translating art into practical function in the “real world” is through symbolism, for while beauty may be an end in itself, it one may also mobilize it in the service of other objectives. The swan, for instance, became an icon of purity as writers and poets invoked it to counter the epochal mentality geared toward utility and productivity. The rose served as a reminder to the politician of forgotten campaign promises. It was also an emblem of rebellion.

“In the golden age of capitalism,” writes Gullón, “when nothing appeared to have value if it did not produce economic benefits, rebels against the wave of materialism raised the banner of pure beauty” (47-48). “To create the image of a harmonious universe,” he continues, “is to levy an accusation against those responsible for the current disharmony” (85). Modernismo, then, was not about swans or roses or mythical places or recovering a lost paradise. It was not about escape or delusion. It was very much about speaking out against and staving off the encroachment of “progress.” “. . . mi protesta queda escrita sobre las alas de los inmaculados cisnes, tan ilustres como Júpiter” [. . . my protest remains written upon the wings of immaculate swans as magnificent as Jupiter], writes Rubén Darío, in the preface to his 1905 collection of poetry and short stories Cantos de vida y esperanza [Songs of Life and Hope].

Perhaps if they could create order out of chaos through rhyme, rhythm, and form, they could restore order to a cosmos gone awry. Or maybe mimicking cosmic rhythms and patterns in their poetry and prose would bring order to their lives. Either way, they believed in the restorative powers of beauty and cosmic harmonies. Jrade explains that the modernistas believed in a “divine and harmonious order” that, in place of former belief systems that had been discarded, “supplies a satisfying response to the modern world—to facile assumptions about science, scientific knowledge, and the unexamined positivist pursuit of progress” (Development 28). Yet even as they believed—or perhaps because they believed—in a grand cosmic unity that
binds human and non-human subjectivities everywhere, they were fervent defenders of individuality and champions of uniqueness in artistic creativity.

_The Individual, National Literatures, and the World_

Modernismo, according to Manuel Machado, was “anarchy, absolute individualism” (Donald Fogelquist 663), and Schulman asserts that “an examination of the ideological whirlwind brings us back to the essential factor of the modernista evolution—individuality” (35-36). Darío leaves no room for misunderstanding regarding his position on the question of individuality in modernista circles. In “Palabras liminares” he declares that “there is no ‘my’ literature . . . to mark the way for the rest. My literature is _mine_ in me. Whoever servilely follows my tracks will lose his personal treasure. . . . [Richard] Wagner, to Augusta Holmes, his pupil, said one day, ‘First, imitate no one, and above all, me’” (xx). Irving Howe explains that in its early stages, modernismo manifested “an inflation of the I, a transcendent and orgiastic exaltation of the subject . . . in the interest of personal vitality” (14-15). Even as modernismo began to assume the shape of a bona fide literary movement, writers strewn across the varied terrains of Central and South America vigorously maintained, and even “exalted,” their singularity, thus paradoxically fulfilling one of the key unifying principles of their shared sentiment. The iconic figures of modernismo responded to the same critical stimulus (globalization) at the same time, however independent of one another and despite their distribution over a multinational landscape. They constantly negotiated their individual and unique creative genius with their participation in what became a transnational socio-political, cultural, and literary movement. As they were exerting their intellectual, moral, and creative freedom, former colonies were experiencing newfound freedom and becoming nations in their
own right. These new states were negotiating the challenges of their independence as well as
their interdependence with other emerging American nations. Jrade suggests that modernistas
struggled first to find their own voice through an effort that was simultaneously aesthetic and
political before contributing to a uniquely American mode of artistic expression (“Modernist” 9).

After winning their political independence from Spain, people in the Americas sought to
establish a place for themselves in the world. In Cuba, specifically, I can imagine thousands of
spectators surrounding Santiago Harbor in December 1898, watching yanqui naval vessels
pummel the Spanish Caribbean squadron and shouting for joy when Cristóbal Colón, the last of
the armored cruisers, struck her colors and scuttled herself in defeat. I can see them
congratulating each other, celebrating their newly won freedom, and returning to their homes
with unexpected but very important questions: What music do we listen to now, and what do we
call it? Whose fashion of clothing do we follow? What literature do we read, and what do we call
it? What do we call the literature we write? Schulman summarizes this dilemma, stating simply
that “literary modernismo was the American form of seeking a mature identity” (43). Rubén
García explains that

in this stage, the Latin American societies had been assured political sovereignty,
were fully organized institutionally, and sought, in their brief history, the
components of a national identity. Many centuries of Spanish domination had left
profound traces and the model they chose to imitate no longer resided in the
Motherland, but rather in other European nations, which went through a process
of modernization that attracted an economic and political class better
accommodated to the American territory. (“El Modernismo: Contexto Histórico”)

With modernista poetry, according to Roberto González Echevarría and Enrique Pupo-Walker,
Hispanic American literature came of age despite what many critics of the time considered to be
the overwhelming influence of French letters (xi). Santiago Argüello admits to the inspiration
modernistas drew from the French symbolists, but asserts that their real source “was a social,
poetic and even scientific emanation from the whole of humanity and made up of aesthetic origins; of highly diverse philosophies; scientific currents and multiform aspirations; . . .” (qtd. in Davison 4). The Americans could see in French trends, adds Espinal Durón, the “most audacious . . . tendencies of the epoch” and, using these qualities as starting points, pushed forward into new territory, creating a unique space for themselves among the literatures of the world. Furthermore, he points out that while they published separately, they soon recognized that “their tendencies amounted to a general change, a new aesthetic, a new sensibility, and a new language” (11-12). Thus they assumed or accepted the designation of modernistas. Conversely, Jrade argues that the modernistas self-consciously tried to construct national literary identities in Latin America, as well as a collective Latin American identity as a whole, among the cultures of the West (“Modernist” 21).

I am less inclined toward the notion, however, that inventing national literatures was any more a deliberate pursuit than was starting a formal literary movement. Reviving, invigorating—even initiating—regional and national literatures was a natural byproduct of modernista artistic productions. This newness of expression led to what would become new literatures, for until that time one could only speak of Spanish literature, whether it was written in Spain or in its colonies. Modernismo was not a campaign, but a vast, aesthetic response to the general breakdown not only of the socio-economic and political structures previously discussed, but national, cultural, and spiritual traditions and identities. But as the modernistas reflected and reflected upon the general disruption of life that I have argued in previous chapters is the collateral damage of globalization, they perhaps inadvertently but nevertheless effectually contributed to carving out a space in the world for a distinctly Spanish American literature. As modernistas from various Hispanic American nations explored new literary aesthetics and commented on the cultural and
socio-political particularities of their respective national circumstances—Martí in Cuba, Darío in Nicaragua, Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera in Mexico, Leopoldo Lugones in Argentina, and so on—they also exhibited a cosmopolitan spirit as they embraced connections beyond national boundaries.

That modernistas sought out and established connections with one another over time and great distances does not contradict their reverence for the Yo [the I]. Neither did the exaltation of the Yo limit their freedom to work together, to share and borrow elements from one another, or to support their nations’ emerging literary identity. They participated in a constant dialectic that accommodated—even celebrated—a simultaneous and absolute individualism with an open cosmopolitanism. Indeed, Davison claims as a principal characteristic of modernismo “a cosmopolitan spirit, love of the exotic, and the open literary manifestation of the power of individuality and originality in each writer” (24). This openness to peoples, ideas, and traditions from neighboring as well as faraway places is an indication of modernismo’s awareness of and, I submit, commitment to social and political reform around the world. For Darío, cosmopolitanism was a departure from one’s home, one’s country, and one’s language in search of “something indefinable” (Paz 131). The precise geographic location of distant lands mattered much less than the fact of their being distant. The farther, the better (Gullón 106). This departure, though, represents an expansion, an incorporation or assimilation, of foreign elements rather than the abandonment of one’s own. Break the word “cosmopolitan” down. The Greek cosmos anciently referred to “order” or “a system in harmony” and has since come to mean “world,” “universe,” or, by extension, “people.” Polis means “city” and politis “citizen.” What we have, then, is essentially a “citizen of the world.” If we anchor our working definition of cosmopolitanism to its etymological foundations and pare away the connotations that restrict its application, we have
the perfect word to describe modernistas and anarchists alike, for they both considered themselves just that, citizens of the world who contributed to causes and participated in movements that transcended social, political, economic, ethnic, and linguistic boundaries.

Social and Political Engagement

Throughout this project I have at times referred to a persistent critical undercurrent that is determined to cast modernismo in an asocial, amoral, apolitical, and apathetic light despite the immense volume of readily accessible evidence to the contrary.26 Certainly there are those individuals who mimicked the trappings of modernista art, but they are not representative of the whole. There were many who published socially and politically poignant literature.27 There were yet others who, besides publishing, also participated in national and international political and diplomatic circles. Jrade affirms that modernistas “understood their goals to be profound and far-reaching and their efforts to be simultaneously philosophic, aesthetic, and political” (Development 15). Thus, to argue that modernismo as a whole amounted to no more than an unrestrained revelry of artistic freedom and a rejection of traditional mores and values, with no politically salience, socially awareness, or spiritually restorative properties, privileges a minority of voices comprising only a narrow cross-section of its constituency.

Critic Raúl Silva Castro claims at late as 1963 that modernismo “attempted to raise itself to a totally artistic plane and avoided giving its works any political, social, religious, or moral implication” (41). While that may be true for some writers, it is not true of the best-known figures. Even before then, as early as 1956, Carlos García Prada, also in response to the

26 For critics who reject the notion of modernismo’s social and political awareness, see Raúl Silva Castro (1963), Julio Hernández-Miyares and Walter Rela (1987), and Oscar Espinal Durón (2007).
27 For political and socially significant modernista literature, see works by Julián del Casal, Rubén Darío, Jaime Freyre, José Manuel González y Prada, Julio Herrera y Reissig, Barba Jacob, Leopoldo Lugones, José Martí, Enrique González Martínez, Manuel Gutiérrez Náyera, Amado Nervo, José Asunción Silva, and Guillermo Valencia.
accusation that modernistas “lacked social sensibility,” summarizes the overtly social and political activities in which the most prominent modernistas engaged:

As artists almost all of them were refined and aristocratic, that is true; but as men, most of them participated fully in the vital historical current: González Prada, Martí, and Valencia took a very active and influential part in the public life of Peru, Cuba, and Colombia, their respective countries. Darío, Nervo, Jaimes Freyre and González Martínez served theirs in the diplomatic fields. González Prada and Barba Jacob were journalists of protest, and revolutionaries, and Lugones unleashed social and political storms with his sharp visionary words. Apart from the active struggle were Darío, Casal, Silva, Gutiérrez Nájera and Herrera y Reissig, and nevertheless, how well they interpreted so many aspects of the collective soul, and how they have contributed to reveal and shape it. (qtd. in Davison 27)

Davison affirms that as early as 1966 scholars had begun to acknowledge García Prada’s assertion (29). Still, in 1969 Schulman responds to the lasting opinion that modernista art is “evasionist,” “removed,” or “treasonous” and that the common elements of swans, peacocks, mythological creatures, gems, exotic places, and aristocratic airs comprise only one aspect of modernista art (39). Irade writes in 1996 that “while innumerable studies have contributed to our understanding of the movement, its image is increasingly refined by recent examinations of the profoundly philosophic and political nature of modernista texts . . .” (“Modernist” 7). She further affirms the essence of “modernismo’s faith in the transformative capacity of art, that is, its ability to see beyond the stultification of everyday existence and entrenched worldviews and to perceive truths that can act as correctives to human foibles and failed social systems” (Development 139). In 2007, Aníbal González contends that modernista writings were “far from being frivolous, superficial, or escapist,” but were rather a place where they “worked through not only their personal problems and aesthetic theories but some of the most urgent issues of their day.” “Despite the frivolous image they assiduously cultivated,” he continues, “the Modernists’ prose shows their deep preoccupation with broad cultural and social issues, and particularly with the
relation between literature, culture, and society” (70). I anticipate del Valle’s place in this
cultural milieu becoming clearer as I explore the ways that he negotiates the modernista elements
of style, beauty and harmony, individualism and cosmopolitanism, and social and political
engagement in selections from Por el camino.

Del Valle’s Anarcho-Modernismo

Del Valle exhibits quite a range of periodic literary tendencies including, but not limited
to, the realist propensity for describing the mundane details of everyday life and the naturalist
inclination to compose protracted, descriptive passages that are scientific in nature and to depict
life’s brutal realities with vivid clarity. He combines typical modernista elements, including the
femme fatale, consuming love and sensuality, death and tragedy, mythology, science, social
commentary, and reactions to industrialization. He also explores the notions of beauty of form
and cosmic harmony, but he does so without, I believe, the modernista conviction of their power
to change the world. Art, for him, must do more than provide aesthetic pleasure, more than
diversion. The qualities of modernismo that del Valle espouses are those that coincide with and
reinforce the anarchist project and promote its sensibilities. Modernismo’s lyricism and
musicality, emphasis on ornate language, French aesthetics and art for art’s sake, overt eroticism
and decadence, consequently, bear less value for the anarchist writer who relies on the
functionality of art to inform, entertain, motivate, and mobilize readers to social and political
action. He adopts a cosmopolitan attitude (as a “citizen of the world,” not as privileged escapist),
filling his stories with characters and languages and places from around the world, along with the
modernista skepticism of its counterfeit, globalization. Del Valle’s hybridization of literary and
ideological values from modernismo and anarchism inevitably leads to a consideration of the
political applications of art in his immediate historical moment and of the transformative potential of art in general. He employs myths and fables as instructive genres, for example, embraces the power of the *Yo*, and draws on realist and naturalist narrative styles, in his effort to lower bourgeois elitism, raise the proletariat, and unite the multitude into a vast, transnational community.

This is where I see del Valle, occupying the intersection between these two contemporary, and in many ways compatible, movements. Yet as much as his work possesses modernista qualities, it diverges from them in interesting ways. The way he tirelessly engages with questions of spiritual, social, and political turmoil—now as a modernista, now as an anarchist—places him in a larger and more complex cultural context than had he adopted the styles and ideologies of one or the other. It is my hope that looking at del Valle’s work through these alternating lenses will contribute to his continued recovery as a dynamic literary and social figure in turn-of-the-century Cuba. I see del Valle as one of Gullón’s tormented modernista souls because, despite his having lived what appears to have been a life of meaningful service and modest success, we find traces of deep struggles in his fictional dialogues with the irreconcilables of his day in *Por el camino*. What sets him apart is his belief in the possibility and capacity to reform social institutions and political practices, and to improve as individuals (Gullón 56). The pessimism we often find in modernista art is, as I intend to show, almost entirely absent from his work. At worst he reveals a tentative optimism, and at best an abiding hope for better days.

*Beauty, Harmony, and Balance*
Marisa Siguan Boehmer has suggested that anarchist writers sacrificed, or at least put little stress on, aesthetic quality as they entertained and informed their readers, preferring more practical language to flowery composition. Clara Lida explains that the anarchists’ “preoccupation with ideological content” overrode their interest in “aesthetic achievements” (361). Thus, despite his incorporating modernista themes in Por el camino, as a literary anarchist, del Valle’s primary concern was to promote anarchist ideologies that would contribute to social reform. Popular short fiction is one of the means he chose to accomplish this. As one might expect from an anarchist writer, then, his writing, though entertaining, does not often reflect aspirations to the lyricism or literary richness of other modernistas. But sometimes it does. Del Valle’s style ranges from journalistic minimalism to verboseness, stacking up modifiers until they tip over. Thus, he does not eschew “high” aesthetic in favor of a so-called popular one; he embraces them both and deploys them according to the tenor of the story he tells. He is, perhaps, at times guilty of violating Joan Montseny’s manifesto-like pronouncement quoted in the Preface: “We don’t want any literary ramblings that fill pages and say nothing” (Vega 6). Montseny printed this at the same time he invited del Valle to write the debut Novela Ideal for his La Revista Blanca. He must have recognized enough depth of substance in del Valle’s writing to have extended such an invitation.

Del Valle engages the modernista notions of beauty and cosmic harmony in Por el camino. Yet, even as he does, he challenges their relevance to a world in turmoil. In his variation on the Greek myth of Pygmalion, “Marmórea,” the protagonist Máximo convinces his friend Prince Boris that he has the technology to vivify the marble statue of a beautiful woman he has carved. She was

28 Marmórea is a feminine derivative of the noun mármol, meaning “marble.”
splendid in form, the lines irreproachable. There she stood, with both hands to her breasts, as though offering them; the head slightly raised, the lips parted in a charming smile, the hair hanging freely. She was the perfect creation of an inspired artist who had managed to personify in a block of marble all the physical graces of Woman.

Máximo puts the statue in a great crystal urn fitted with electrodes before throwing a switch that sends an “electro-radiovital” current through the motionless form. Only seconds pass before it comes to life. Boris claims his property, the living, breathing Marmórea, and takes her home.

After some time together, however, Boris returns to Máximo and complains of his unhappiness.

“You fulfilled your promise in giving life to Marmórea,” he said, “but you forgot to give her what is most important.”

“What is that?”

“A soul.”

“A soul . . .” repeated Máximo, thoughtfully. “You never asked for one. You fell in love with a body, not a soul. You only asked me to animate a body to enjoy its beauty.”

I wonder whether del Valle isn’t commenting on the validity of beauty alone to solve “real-world” problems. Marmórea’s perfection of form and symmetry and voluptuousness intoxicates Boris. They distract him from the substance that might have brought him true happiness.

Aníbal González explains that “modernist writing presupposes that there is a profound unity and harmony to the cosmos” (“Modernist” 72). Jrade attributes to the modernistas a dialectical approach to understanding the relationship between the conflicting elements of the universal crisis they were responding to. “The entire universe is one harmonious and orderly extension of God,” she writes,

whose soul permeates all and is identical with the great soul of the world. Universal harmony is demonstrated both in the beauty of music and the regularity of the heavenly bodies. The image of celestial music results from the fusion of these two points and distills the modernist view that the universe is a living, rhythmically pulsating extension of God in which all elements are signs that indicate its essential unity. (“Modernist” 20)
While this is apparently true of many modernistas, it is only partially true of del Valle. In “Spirit Music,” another selection from *Por el camino*, the first person narrator’s Italian friend Dorio is an artist who perceived “harmonies where for others there was only silence or imperceptible murmurings; but for him the vibrations of light held no secrets, the whispers of the spring, the shaking of the leaves, the rumors of the breeze, the flight of insects, the songs of the birds, and the undulation of the waves.” When the two arrive at Dorio’s apartment, Dorio shows his guest the inaudible harmonium, a musical instrument he has invented. He places a headset with cables attached to it on the narrator’s head and plays a series of musical pieces that he composed. Before long the narrator removes the headset and leaves Dorio’s apartment, complaining that the machine “produced a painful sensation of ill-being with its vague and mysterious noises.”

When the narrator returns to the city after several months away, he learns that Dorio has been institutionalized. When he visits him, Dorio immediately begins to talk again of his “spirit music.”

“Your inaudible harmonium?” I interrupted, my curiosity piqued.
“I destroyed it. Men are not worthy of enjoying the wonders of my music.”

When I was about to say goodbye to him, he drew me to a corner of the room with much mystery, and after he had assured himself that we were alone, he quietly told me these last words: “Universal harmony is God, and souls are the notes that form the great harmony. Keep this revelation to yourself and do not divulge it, for others would not understand.”

In trying to locate del Valle’s position in this story, I have determined that he either believes in the divinity of universal harmony as Dorio does, believes in cosmic harmony but is unconvinced of its applicability, or he subscribes to modernista belief in the redemptive potential of cosmic harmony, but is saddened by its ultimate powerlessness. A fourth possible interpretation of del Valle’s position is that he is keeping an objective distance beside the nameless narrator as a
dispassionate, though empathetic, observer. This I dismiss outright, because the range and depth of moral and philosophical debates in which he engages in the short stories of Por el camino alone suggest that he is not the type of person to remain aloof to such a conversation. If del Valle is casting Dorio as a representative modernista, and if he supports the notion that Dorio, or the modernistas, do indeed recognize naturally occurring patterns and beauties that other people overlook, he may be validating their contention that by imbuing their writing with musical harmonies and “perfect” forms they are actually evoking, or tapping into, cosmic harmony and are thus making the world a better place, one work of art at a time. Dorio has made it the object of concentration and ingenuity to help others perceive what he perceives in the hopes of introducing them to metaphysical realities through his compositions. Perhaps his belief is if we all possessed this gift of awareness of how intricately, though subtly, connected our lives are, we might be more inclined as individuals and societies to behave more harmoniously. We would practice greater tolerance, patience, kindness, and cooperation. Del Valle’s writings lack, however, the kind of resolutions that I would expect to see if he were totally convinced of the modernista project.

According to the second interpretation I mention above, del Valle positing an alternative direction in the modernista movement, suggesting that they should adopt more practical means of creating harmony in the world. There are no supernatural forces, mystical powers, or underlying universal connections, he may be suggesting, to tap into to remedy the crisis of our generation. I cite “Marmórea” in support of this position, for if del Valle rejects the transcendent power of beauty by itself, as I argue above, he may also reject the value in trying to reproduce cosmic harmonies on a small scale, e.g. in poems and short stories. In “The City Sleeps,” for example, the narrator looks to the distant stars as impassive witnesses to suffering on earth. It’s not that the
stars do not exist or are not aware; they are simply unable to change things on earth. In “Love and Philosophy” Lorenzo lies awake all night contemplating the stars, which speak “to him in their mysterious language” and which evoke in him an infinite sadness. The spring in “Spring Song,” having observed acts of cruelty, pain, and selflessness throughout the ages, nevertheless argues for the immense potential for human improvement. These examples hint at del Valle’s view of the interrelatedness of the cosmos, God, nature, and humanity. They also tug on a persistent thread that runs throughout Por el camino. They juxtapose non-human entities existing in harmonious relationships with manmade chaos, which amplifies their distinctiveness. Perhaps the stars’ language is “mysterious” to Lorenzo because he has lost the ability to interpret their words. The traveler who sits beside the spring, as I discussed in chapter 2, was the first human to hear her song, much less understand it. Nature—the cosmos, the universe—is aware. There is an order to her ways which, if we “listen” closely and act, we can draw upon to create harmony and bring about real change in the world.

The kind of harmony or balance del Valle practices in Por el camino is not of the pleasant, melodious kind other modernistas seek. Whereas it is common among other modernistas to create harmonies in prose or poetic style, form, and sound, del Valle creates harmonies of a sort by setting up dynamic emotional, spiritual, and intellectual environments where assonant forces can collide, combine, separate, and recombine in spontaneous and unexpected ways. He sets up his stories to play out, as I mentioned above, dialectic interactions with opposing, or apparently opposing, forces. In the West, we often evoke the image of a T-shaped scale when we talk of balance. In this system, we weigh two objects against each other, setting them in opposition to one another to evaluate their relativity. When we try to achieve
equilibrium between the two extremes, we may reduce the mass of the heavier side or increase the mass of the lighter side. This dualistic paradigm only allows for an either-or relationship.

Now, if we accept this model as a miniature model of the universe (or society, business, life, etc.), then we trap ourselves into limiting our realities. On the other hand, if we were to resist imaging our world according to the dualistic model of the scale, which necessarily poses everything in direct conflict with every other thing, causing tension and anxiety, and substituted the image of a spinning top, we would experience life in a vastly different way. I am really talking about changing our reality by embracing a cognitive metaphor that arranges all kinds of beliefs, forces, and philosophies in a sustainable dialectic (Lakoff and Johnson). When we adopt the perspective of contradicting forces in dualistic terms, we leave ourselves very limited conceptual latitude. If we adjust our perspective and adopt a dialectical discourse, one that allows us to explore other vectors and intensities of intersecting forces, we will find the range of possibilities opening up. Del Valle avoids head-to-head discursive confrontations in Por el camino. Instead, he integrates a collection of tales that, although they deal with forces in conflict, we would have a hard time arranging into neatly opposing pairs. Even when he does set up opposites, he does so with the intent of exploring their interactions without a determination to reconcile them. Perhaps he is trying to induce “shocking” recognitions through his frequent staging of human and non-human worlds. This kind of indirect provocation to think more deeply about our relationship to each other and the world is not typical of anarchist writing despite its rhetorical strength. In keeping with this subtlety, del Valle leads the reader to see new connections and above all resists platitudes. This constancy of conflicts and subtle tensions, perhaps more than anything, characterizes his work for me. It creates a dynamic that seeks harmony and balance in juxtaposition, interaction, and motion.
In “Cora,” for example, the first story of the collection, Cora’s father promises her in marriage to Frisco, who is at best indifferent to the arrangement. When he overhears Cora plotting his murder with her lover, saying, “I don’t like to deceive. . . . I would prefer that you killed him,” Frisco runs away. What surprises me about what comes next is Frisco’s rationale. “And while I walked,” he says, “remembering Cora’s words, I felt neither hate nor contempt. She preferred my death over deceiving me; another woman, crueler, would have deceived me without thinking whether it had been preferable to kill me.” Del Valle positions hate, deceit, mercy, treason, love, and other emotions not in paired oppositions, but in close proximity, allowing them to interact without passing judgment on them. In “The Miracle,” another story from Por el camino, del Valle pits faith against science, or reason, yet despite his providing closure to the fictional plot, he refrains from drawing a definitive conclusion. In this tale, four distinguished individuals debate the existence of miracles. In the course of their discussion, one of the characters recounts a personal experience in which a comrade at arms would have been killed in battle except that a scapular he was wearing over a billfold had stopped a bullet from penetrating his heart.

“Then, general,” exclaimed Doctor Montanos, “the miracle was owed to the billfold.”

General Vilanez, twisting his enormous mustache, said, “Billfold or scapular, the fact is there was a miracle.”

In these, and indeed in most, of the short stories in his collection, del Valle chooses to present irreconcilable forces in various circumstances for exploration and debate. Yet while he captures in Por el camino a wide range of social, philosophical, and spiritual questions, he resists making grand syntheses.
His is not the kind of harmony or balance that a level scale in momentary stasis represents, but the kind that resembles the kinetic motion of a spinning top. With this model of balance, or harmony, while the individual stories of *Por el camino* possess internally interactive dynamics, they also integrate and interact with one another both independently and with the collection as a whole. I see in this a parallel to the individual person, with all his or her internal conflicts, interacting with other individuals as well as with the multitude as a collective. They “swirl” into and out of one another’s orbits in continuous, reciprocating motion, momentarily privileging one, then the other, and so on. Del Valle illustrates this principle in “Spirit Music,” which I have also discussed above.

Walking through the dark streets to his apartment, Dorio urges his friend to look closely at the falling snow and says,

> Each snowflake is a distinct note that when united with others forms chords, and these in turn constitute the snowy harmony. Observe how they fall, one by one, with different movements. From the immense variety of their changes results the linking of chords that evoke in the mind strange compositions. And like snow, everything in nature has its special harmony, untranslatable through the sounds that the human ear can perceive.

I read this as a metaphor for the singularity of individuals in relation to the collectivity of the multitude. Each flake possesses its unique beauty and complexity which, when settled onto a blanket of other similar but distinct other flakes, only appears to lose its individuality. This relationship is fragile because one crushing footfall or tightly packed snowball erases thousands of flakes’ inherent uniqueness, reducing them to a single, anonymous entity. In the same way, dozens of independent writers can be called modernistas, claims Onís, and yet maintain “their radical and forceful originality” (*Antología xvii*).
The Individual and the World

The way del Valle correlates the individual and the collective challenges conservative models of nationalism because it empowers the individual. All individuals. Yet at the same it does not undermine the strength and potential of the collective, so long as it exists in a symbiotic relationship with the individual and not an exploitative one. There is a conspicuous absence of national, racial, ethnic, or otherwise exclusionary discourses in *Por el camino* because each represents a manner of reducing singularities into anonymous collectives. Rob Wilson points this out in his discussion about APEC that I considered in chapter 1. Perhaps this is due to the anarchist project’s explicit commitment to bringing together all peoples into a level, communal relationship. Del Valle’s inclusionary perspective is typical of anarchism, and it is also a slightly distorted mirror image of modernismo’s cosmopolitanism. “Father’s Love,” also discussed in chapter 2, dramatizes this very notion when Carlos argues that his “blood has no nationality; it is human, only human,” and therefore there is no ultimate authority to which his father might appeal to persuade him to support imperial rule, or any other political, social, or moral agenda that pits one person against another. Modernistas and anarchists both valued above all personal freedom, whether one exercised it aesthetically, socially, or politically.

Del Valle reveals his global perspective in his multi-national cast of characters and settings and multilingual vocabulary—all common elements in modernista writing. He sets “The Death of Tiberia,” for example, in the United States, near Fort Hamilton, New York. The first-person narrator and his travel companion, Tiberia, pretend to be Spanish sailors so they can sell contraband smuggled in from Cuba. We soon learn that Tiberia is actually from Cádiz, a region in southern Spain, while we are left to guess the narrator’s origin. In the source language text, the English word “bar-room” is italicized, marking it as a term foreign to the intended audience.
Whereas “bar-room” has any number of near equivalents in Spanish (taberna, tasca, cantina), del Valle’s decision to use the English term captures the uniquely yanqui character of a North American bar because it evokes images directly associated with it rather than with a Spanish taberna, tasca, cantina, etc. In the same story, rather than crossing language borders as with “bar-room,” “cañita” may be crossing regional or dialectical borders within the Spanish language. Caña is cane, the plant, but it is also by extension a tall, thin glass for serving beer or wine. By further extension, it has come to refer to beer in general, and even more specifically to draft beer. The diminutive form used in the text, cañita, may be best brought over as “a drink,” as in “What I wouldn’t give for a drink.” It also appears italicized in the text despite its being a Spanish word in a Spanish-language text. This may suggest an acknowledgement on del Valle’s part that its usage is different than that with which his intended Spanish-language audience would be familiar.

“Engine 33” also contains a number of multinational elements. It is set “no great distance from Chicago,” the train engineer is North American, and the station chief is “a man of medium age, Irish by the look of him,” who speaks with a strong accent. Again, the narrator does not give any clues to his identity or nationality, but as the tale closes he approaches his friend Fini, who is Italian, thinking “about the two bambinos in Tuscany that would wait in vain” for his return. The Spanish word “hijos” would convey the same meaning as “bambinos,” yet del Valle uses the Italian term in direct association with his Italian character. In a similar spirit of character-to-speech reinforcement, the conductor, presumably North American, or at least a native speaker of English, exclaims in the source text, “¡Maldito hijo de perra!” (or “Damned son of a bitch!”). My interest in this phrase is not to make an excuse to cuss in my dissertation, but the fact that this phrase is not native to either Iberian or Caribbean Spanish. It is a literal translation of the
conductor’s speech. So, to the native Spanish-language reader, although the phrase has been translated into standard Spanish vocabulary and syntax, it nevertheless sounds “funny.”

Other examples of del Valle’s cosmopolitan worldview include, but are not limited to, the settings of “The Vultures’ Banquet” and “A Childhood Adventure,” the former set in Russia and the latter in Paris and its environs, and both figuring the Sino-Russian War as a backdrop. Again, his interest in foreign places and peoples seems to me less one of fascination with the exotic than practical inclusion, and this applies-to-the-“real world” practicality adds substance to the modernista project. In “Infidelity,” one character refers to a certain Mr. Willey as a member of an elite class, who wants to experience Carnaval. From this it appears that Mr. Willey is either a visitor or a newcomer to the region and is, by his name, presumed to be Anglo-Saxon. “The Spy” is set in a French restaurant on Charlotte Street in London, in St. Petersburg, Russia, and later in a Siberian labor camp, with characters including a French communist, a Russian political refugee, a Russian spy, and an anarchist of unknown nationality named Pedro Martini. Del Valle never undermines this frank inclusionary spirit with exclusionary discourse, for *Por el camino* is entirely devoid of any hint at national prejudice or accusation. As I suggested in chapter 2, del Valle refrains from implicating Spain in the suffering that colonization and subsequent wars of independence have caused. He sides neither with the Russians nor the Japanese in the two aforementioned stories. He does not disdain the wealthier classes, or even the king, depicted in other stories. Del Valle is not looking for a specific entity, domestic or foreign, to blame for the injustices of life. He does, however, implicate the institutions, philosophies, and traditions that perpetuate abusive hierarchical structures of authority, which are not inherent to any socio-economic, political, ethnic, or racial group. This is precisely where del Valle brings the cosmopolitanism of modernismo and the transnationalism of anarchism together. They both
engage with relevant issues in their various communities, protecting and promoting individual freedom of expression and mobility while nurturing a sense of community that reaches beyond social, national, etc., boundaries. They both seek to improve social and political systems, something that a class of aesthetic elites trying to avoid the reality of a world unraveling would not do.

Social and Political Engagement

Del Valle serves as further confirmation that far from sequestering themselves away to escape the ails of contemporary society, modernistas were intimately familiar with and painfully sensitive to their devastating effects. Furthermore, they made significant efforts to contribute to the improvement of the same, recognizing, as did the anarchists, that art has the power to create new realities. In chapter 2 I looked at “The City Sleeps” in the context of the anarchist agenda to raise awareness of the deplorable living conditions of the poor. Del Valle’s social realism continues in “What Attracts,” which possesses a distinctly modernista spirit. The narrator describes a cityscape in overtly personified language as Octavio, the protagonist, approaches it from the countryside. “The city! There it lay before him, beautiful, tempting, offering new emotions and attractions, new agonies and deceptions. From her he had flown in search of forgetfulness and tranquility. To her he was returning, unaware of her power over him.”

As the reader follows Octavio through the concentric rings of poverty-ridden barrios, he encounters images of weary, sweaty men, walking in silence, many of them carrying small bundles in their

29 *La ciudad,* or the city, is grammatically feminine. Terms like *mujer, dama, muchacha,* etc. are both all grammatically and naturally feminine. The narrator first talks about the city. Then he introduces Andrea, the woman he is going to see, and from that moment on, he conflates the two. Since Spanish uses the same third person singular pronouns to refer to the woman as to the city, both the animate and inanimate, the reader experiences enters this space of rapidly oscillating referents, which makes it impossible to tell when the narrator is referring to the city and when he is referring to the woman. Del Valle capitalizes on this natural ambiguity to great effect, essentially equating the city with the woman.
hands. Young women, some mere girls, passed by him, pale and weak and poorly dressed. They were the worker bees of the city-hive who, after a grueling workday, returned home sad and poor.

In the dusty, uneven road—this neglected slum road—children ran about barefoot and half naked. From the doorways of decrepit, little houses stared sickly women, some with babies in arms.

Idlers and workers congregated on the corners, in the bodegas and out. He had to move aside to let a drunk pass, ambling unsteadily from one side of the street to the other, trailed by a troupe of street urchins. Farther on, in front of a tenement, the angry voices of two women insulting and threatening each other startled him, their cries mixed with the barking of a mad dog and the wail of an inconsolable child.

These are not the words of a disconnected wannabe aristocrat. Del Valle, with the world as his audience, mingles the telltale sensibilities of an anarchist agitating for social reform with the imagistic flair of a perceptive modernista. Gullón adds that “the “modernista” writer is in the first place a modern man, and as such is conscious of his duty as citizen and believes in the possibility of political and social reform. . . . The conviction of forming part of a community obligated them to think in realistic terms and penetrated literary work . . .” (59-62). In this, the realm of social responsibility, anarchists and modernistas overlap in purpose and method. Neither supports philosophies or structures that limit creativity, expression, opportunity, or mobility. Indeed, both embrace and vehemently defend individuality while simultaneously striving to reform social and political institutions, practices, and conditions that will do the same.

In “Por el camino,” the short story that bears the name of the collection, del Valle explores the tension between two laborers as they make their way to a coal mining camp. The underlying stresses here are inherent to the discrepancies in the quality of life enjoyed by the wealthy and the poor, but the conflict that arises between the characters is not a direct result of capitalistic opportunism. It is not about being rich or poor, although this dichotomy does
reinforce the circumstances that invite conflict. The challenge becomes one that each character faces—that is, what to do about living in a world in which the “haves” reduce the “have nots” into mass collectives and disenfranchise them of comfort, opportunity, and freedom. The unnamed protagonist narrates his encounter with another traveler, “by all appearances a vagabond, one of those restless spirits that wander, errant, in search of adventure. He spoke little and rarely looked ahead, but when he did, one could see something sinister that left one ill at ease.” They walk on until they come upon the coal mine director’s manor house, surrounded by immaculate gardens and wrought-iron fences. Inside people are dancing and laughing. The narrator seems indifferent to the scene, eager to make camp by nightfall, but his companion stops to accuse the revelers of “enjoying themselves while others are working or getting drunk.” Only moments after they again take up their journey, the traveler returns to the house. When he rejoins the narrator a few minutes later, he urges him on, saying, “Let’s go. Quick, if you value your life.” “What do you mean?” “Nothing. You’ll find out soon enough.” At some distance farther on, the traveler directs the narrator’s attention back in the direction from which they had come, and when the narrator realizes what the traveler had done, he attacks him. But before he can do any harm, the traveler throws him to the ground, and with his knee on the narrator’s chest, he growls, “Coward! I believed you were stronger, but I was wrong. You are unworthy to be my companion. Go your way, and I’ll go mine.” With that, he gets up and walks on, and the narrator shouts after him, “You’re pathetic. Weak. You only know how to hate.”

These characters play out an ontological contest between tolerance and hate, inaction and action. The much broader subtext, however, challenges entire belief systems that support institutionalized inequalities and ultimately exacerbate the anxieties that undermine individuals’ and communities’ sense of well-being. It is in this socio-economic, cultural, political, and
spiritual context that Adrián del Valle composed and published Por el camino, sending up his voice as another protest against globalization. At the same time he supported the anarchist campaign to reform dysfunctional social, economic, and political institutions, he also imbibed the modernista spirit. At first glance, it is unlikely that anyone would identify him as a modernista because his style is atypical of the movement. There is little preciosity, lyricism or musicality, and no emphasis on color, precious stones or gems, for instance. Yet despite the absence of these stylistic trappings, one finds a full range of the meatier aspects of modernismo in del Valle’s work: cosmopolitanism, reactions to growing industrialization, anti-bourgeois sentiment—or at least strained even-handedness—mythological references, and parables.

I also perceive a constant tension running through the rest of Por el camino. Del Valle engages the modernista belief in the power of beauty to stave off the encroaching commotion of modernity and heal broken souls and societies, but I sense that he remains unconvinced of its real ability to manage it. As he illustrates in “Marmórea,” perfection of form carved out of cold, lifeless stone, although appealing and gratifying for the moment, has no soul and therefore no capacity to bring about lasting joy. “Artistic Love,” another selection from the collection, pits the love of art against the love of another person. In the end, the musician who sacrifices a future with her lover for a glorious career on the stage eventually finds her life empty, joyless, and full of regret. What was once so alluring has become a disappointment because it has no substance behind the façade. In “The City Sleeps” and “Love and Philosophy,” even as the protagonists meditate upon the stars and other celestial bodies, they mourn their impotence to render assistance to those who suffer on Earth. Again, del Valle acknowledges the modernista belief in grand cosmic harmonies but does put his trust in them to improve people’s lives. González brings the anarchist and modernista perspectives together when he suggests that modernistas
concern themselves with how the sociopolitical and cultural changes in turn-of-the-century Spanish America forced writers to shift from being practitioners of their art into intellectuals in the full modern sense of the word, that is to say artists, scholars, or scientists who strategically and publicly address issues of political and social import beyond the narrow confines of their disciplines. (98)

González captures what I believe to be del Valle’s position, that is, that artistic expression, and even cosmic powers, though uplifting and strengthening for a time, requires practical application to be of any real-world value. This is the perspective of the literary anarchist who believes that his job is to educate the masses about their right to individual freedom and community cooperation, and the vices of materialism and hierarchical authoritarianism through entertaining literature, thereby eventuating in social and political reform, and motivating him to do something about it.
PART II

On the Translation

A translation is unavoidably the product of a dialectic struggle between the elements of language, discourse, culture, politics, time, and a myriad other forces that act on individuals. Matthew Arnold and F.W. Newman, two prominent 19th-century literary figures, represent the two principal philosophical positions between which 20th-century translators find themselves. Arnold believed that a translation should reproduce in the modern reader the same effect that it produced in the ancient reader. Newman, on the other hand, argued that a translation should preserve a cultural and historical distance (Apter 13, 14). I acknowledge these polar perspectives, but resist the dichotomous discourse they encourage, because while one seeks to construct a “purified” sense of difference, the other reaches for a distinct sense of identity. They both depend on a stable “present” for a vantage point to view the past. I, however, am interested in connecting the past and the present without collapsing the two into absolute difference or absolute identity.

Rather than to strive for faithfulness to the signified or the signifier in the source language (SL) text, my task as translator is to embrace the space in between. Every linguistic act requires the speaker to select among the best available signifiers—these are not limited to lexical items, but syntax, tone, pace and rhythm, volume, etc.—for the signifieds he intends. The receiver reverses the process by rummaging through boxes containing life’s range of signifieds (emotional, psychological, cultural, religious, and so on) to match up with the incoming cluster of signifiers. Bakhtin’s heteroglossia describes this dynamic in terms of negotiating the multitude of voices that point at an object of intent. Yet even this discourse is oriented toward the notion that the meaning of a SL text is a discernible object that can be explicated—which sets us up for a “right” or “wrong” scenario. Walter Benjamin rejects the notion of “accuracy” in translation...
altogether, as judged by its fidelity to the original, and focuses on the process, or “mode of
signification,” of approaching the author’s intention (Mino-Pinkey 79).

Makiko Mino-Pinkey, assessing the implications of Derrida’s logocentrism, asserts that
“if the non-identity between signifier and signified initiates the linguistic process of ceaseless
shifts from signifier to signifier, seeking a signified, and meaning results from this process rather
than from being located in the fixed signified, there is no stable meaning to be transported in
translation” (81). This opens the way for a dialectical negotiation of the space between signifier
and signified. Multitude perpetually resides in that ever-fluctuating space, never yielding to the
imposition of clearly defined signification, because, as mentioned above, the moment it is
territorialized by a sense of community it is no longer, by definition, a multitude. Its nature has
changed, much like the rhizome.

Bakhtin also helps us avoid the trap of dualistic thinking. Any given utterance, regardless
of the language in which it is issued, is by nature and association multi-vocal, or multivalent.
Every word bears the weight of its experience: linguistic etymology and historical usage;
idiosyncratic, poetic, and figurative deployment; religious, cultural, educational, or political
appropriation. These are not a burden on its back or branches growing out of a single trunk with
roots; they are its very nature. Every time a word is used anywhere by anyone, it changes, like
the rhizome. In translating a target-language (TL) text, I recognize that whatever meaning I
derive from it is not—and cannot be—precisely what the author intended and, therefore, instead
of trying to pin down semantic equivalencies on a word-to-word or sentence-to-sentence basis in
a narrow approach that privileges one voice at a time, I work toward bringing over the objective
field, or fuller range, of intention and meaning through multiple voices: vocabulary, nuance and
etymology, rhythm, pacing, register, ambiguity, circumlocution, commentary. Rather than limit
interpretive possibilities for the TL reader, I strive to capture as many extra-semantic valences as possible. In my role as intermediary in this dynamic environment, then, I create a new text similar to, but unapologetically different from the original. This relationship is unavoidable, but not undesirable. Jorge Luis Borges celebrates the translator’s “infidelity, his happy and creative infidelity,” which amounts to a “glorious hybridization” between author and translator (106).

Having studied Adrián del Valle’s social and political leanings and spent countless hours reading and re-presenting the stories of *Por el camino* have prepared me to perpetrate just such an act of “creative infidelity.”
# ALONG THE WAY

by Adrián del Valle

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Cora

Having eaten my frugal meal, I stretched out on the ground on my back, with my hands beneath my head. Work was hard. My body’s tired. Close by sat old Tomás on a fallen tree trunk, smoking a cigarette he rolled himself. Mino had gone down to the beach with his fishing gear. Cora washed pans in the open kitchen of the shack and sang in her pleasant contralto voice.

The sun had just set, casting a golden hue over the distant horizon, silhouetting stands of swaying palms. The ambience, calm and placid, invited one to rest.

“You asleep?” asked the old man.

“No,” I said.

After a moment of silence, he spoke again, “Listen, Frisco.”

I sat up, directed my eyes toward him, and paid attention. He had taken the cigarette out of his mouth and looked thoughtfully at his daughter.

“Come here, Cora,” he called to her.

When she was at our side, questioningly us with her big, black eyes, the old man went on.

“You’re a sober young man, intelligent and hard-working. I don’t know anything of your past. I don’t know who you are or where you come from, but none of that matters to me. I judge you by the way you treat me, and as it has been good, I judge you favorably. The rest is your business.

“You also know nothing of my past. I myself have done everything I could to forget it. Neither do you know where I come from. Yes, I know, I come from far away and from many places, but today I am only interested in this little plot of land upon which I live, waiting for the day when I cease to be what I am, to be converted into some other thing that I don’t know.”
The old man stopped talking to draw on his cigarette and continued, “Look,”—and he pointed at Cora—“she’s the only thing I value in life. I have sometimes thought about the man that would take her away from me, and I have hated him without knowing him. It’s an irrational hate, the selfishness of the father who in his only daughter he has placed all his love. A moment ago, seeing you stretched out at my side, I thought that if you were this man, there’d be no reason to hate you. Do you want her? . . . She is beautiful, hard-working, and I believe she is not a bad person. What do you say?”

The proposition caught me by surprise and for a moment I didn’t know how to respond. I didn’t dislike Cora, but it had never really occurred to me to make her my wife.

“What do you say, Frisco?”

“For me . . .” I answered mechanically, “she is the one who should decide.”

“You heard him, my daughter,” said the old man. “What do you say?”

Cora, her olive face turning red and fixing her gaze on the ground, answered with a subdued voice. “Whatever you want, Father.”

The old man went to her and, taking her by the hands, said, “Any other man than Frisco, I would hate. For your good and mine, I like him.” And, turning to me, he added, “Whenever you wish, Frisco, make her your wife.”

***

I couldn’t sleep, thinking about the scene from that afternoon. Running away from the conflicting feelings, I had left the city, looking for peace and tranquility of spirit in that lonely corner of the world. I didn’t dislike Cora, pretty, industrious, and by the looks of it uninitiated into the battles of passion. I might have been happy with her, as far as it was possible to be a
disillusioned man who only asked for peace of mind and a little affection from a creature that knew how to make love in a hammock.

Tired of tossing and turning in my hammock, I hopped down and went outside. The moonless night, serene and starry, inspired meditation. I took a few steps, and as I passed by a pile of firewood destined to be converted into charcoal, I heard the murmur of voices. I listened carefully. Those that were speaking on the opposite of the woodpile were Cora and Mino. They were talking about me.

“Tired of tossing and turning in my hammock, I hopped down and went outside. The moonless night, serene and starry, inspired meditation. I took a few steps, and as I passed by a pile of firewood destined to be converted into charcoal, I heard the murmur of voices. I listened carefully. Those that were speaking on the opposite of the woodpile were Cora and Mino. They were talking about me.

“I can’t,” she said. “I hate Frisco with all my soul. I only love you, do you hear? Only you.

“Don’t be silly,” said Mino. “You know your father has a bad temper, and you’ll be taking a big change if you disobey him. He can’t stand me and will never consent to your being mine. The best you can do is marry Frisco.”

“And you? . . . and I?”

“You and I . . . well, we’ll do what we’ve always done, love each other and see each other.

They stopped talking for a moment. Then I heard Cora’s voice. She said, marking each word, “I don’t like to deceive. No, I don’t like it. . . . I would rather you killed him.”

A chill ran through my entire body. I didn’t want to hear any more. Oh, the beautiful, the innocent Cora!

I returned to the hut and a stretched out again in my hammock. I drifted into a state of semi-consciousness, trying to think of something but couldn’t do it. The first light of dawn found me with my eyes open. I heard voices in the next hut. People were waking up to begin their daily
work. I dropped out of my hammock, gathered my books and clothes into a bundle, and with a quick step set off down the beach road toward the next town.

And while I walked, remembering Cora’s words, I felt neither hate nor contempt. She preferred my death over deceiving me. Another woman, crueller, would have lied to me without thinking twice.

When the sun appeared on the horizon, I was already far from the old collier’s shack. Contemplating those happy rays that gilded earth and sea, I thought that wherever there are human beings, the same passions are brought to light.

Meanwhile, the astral king rose majestically, the roosters repeated their triumphant cry, the birds their plaintive calls, and the waves the eternal song of the grieving sea.

2

Along the Way

It was a sad winter day. Earth and sky were possessed of nature’s desolate beauty in death. The firmament, cast over with threatening clouds, the kind that release tiny and cold droplets. The turbid silhouettes of leafless trees standing out against bare ground, void of vegetation, and a distant hamlet.

My companion walked in silence. I had met him the night before in the village inn. He was, by all appearances, a vagabond, one of those restless spirits that wander, errant, in search of adventure. He spoke little and rarely looked ahead, but when he did, one could see something sinister that left one ill at ease.

That morning as we left the inn, he said, “Did you say you were heading for the mines?”

“Yes.”
“I’ll go with you.”

We walked a long stretch without speaking, oppressed by the wind and the rain. For the sake of breaking the silence, I exclaimed, “Damned weather.”

“Damn you,” he responded.

“What! I suppose it’s my fault that it’s raining and the road impassible?”

“No, but it’s your fate to live how you live and wander aimlessly down life’s paths.”

“What do you know of my fate?”

“Now, don’t get angry,” he said calmly. “People like you get it. You’re pathetic, a coward that passively accepts, and without resentment, all of life’s little miseries.”

“I admire your rare qualities of discernment,” I said, ironically.

“There’s no merit in seeing what cannot be hidden.”

“Granted, I may be pathetic and cowardly, but you, judging by the situation you’re in, the same as mine, can’t be much better.”

He remained quite a moment, pensive, and then said, “That is true. There is so little difference between you and me at the moment that there’s no point in arguing over who is better.”

The rain had ceased, but the horizon was still overcast. The road extended endlessly before our view, and as the sole mark of life in the deserted landscape, we watched a loaded cart pulled by a yoke of oxen lumber along.

“Tell me about your life,” he said, unexpectedly.

“My life?” I said, surprised at his sudden curiosity. “I’m sorry, but I can’t accommodate you; I’ve lost the satchel in which I carried my journal, and as I have no memory—”

“Nor shame,” he added, with disgust.
I looked at him, furious, and was tempted to punch him. His insolent and mocking eyes that never blinked, but more than anything, his muscular physique halted the impulse, leaving me to content myself with displaying a quiet contempt.

“Don’t get mad,” he said, smiling, “having no shame is not a crime. You don’t need it to live, and even less to thrive. Two things I detest with my whole being: shame and love. My parents, who were undoubtedly in love but who were embarrassed by my conception, abandoned me at birth. Their love gave me a life beyond desire; their shame condemned me to an existence of ignominy and misery. What do you think of that?”

“That you are an unfortunate soul.”

“Don’t pity me. I hate compassion as much as I do love. Unfortunate? Never! Better call me a dog or a thief. I revel in my fate. I rejoice in being able to hate or scorn. I was born unto evil and it I will abide. I don’t know whether it is my fault or that of others, and I don’t care to find out. I only know that it is my fate. Do you believe in fate?”

“No.”

“Then you are deceived. Fate exists and all submit to her. For my part, I comply with the resignation of a cannonball heading for its designated target. I obey without analyzing all the impulses that I feel.”

We moved aside to allow the cart, guided by a young, blond boy who urged the oxen on with his cries and a long rod.

“Look,” my companion said to me, gesturing toward the oxen, “in them there is neither drive nor will to break the yoke that binds them to the cart. Whether they wish it or not, they must pull it. Such is fate to men.”
Walking, walking, night came on, and with it, fatigue. Wanting to arrive at the mines as soon as possible, we had paused no more than an hour at midday to eat and rest in a bad bodega along the way.

We ambled on somewhat disoriented, unfamiliar with the region. Fortunately, when we least expected it, we found ourselves before a manor house surrounded by a well-groomed garden.

Peering through the iron railings, we could see that the ground floor was brightly lit. We listened to the chords of a piano and watched as dancing couples passed time and again behind the panes of glass. The piano stopped, and we heard laughter and pleasant voices.

“They’re having a party,” I said.

“Yes, they’re enjoying themselves while others are working or getting drunk.”

“What others?”

“The miners, man.”

I understood. Judging by the signs, this must be the house of the director of the mining company. “Then, the town won’t be far. Come on.”

“Wait,” he said, dryly, without moving.

I watched him, wondering. He was literally stuck to the gate, both hands on the iron bars and his gaze fixed on the house. Along the sandy path of the garden we saw two men advance, speaking lively.

“Come on,” I repeated.

He didn’t answer me. When the two men drew closer to the fence, they looked at us with surprise and caution. “What are you doing here? What do you want?” asked the elder of the two.

“Nothing,” responded my companion.
“Well, if you don’t want anything, be on your way.”

I backed up a couple of paces. My companion stood still.

The two men turned away and disappeared to the left. A moment later, from a little way off, I heard a voice say, “Andrés, loose the dogs on the bums by the gate.”

Scarcely had he pronounced the words when two enormous mastiffs hurled themselves at the fence, barking furiously. My companion cried out and fell back. One of his hands was bleeding.

“Did they hurt you?” I asked.

“It’s nothing,” he said, calmly, wrapping his hand in a handkerchief. “A love pat.”

By the diffuse light that reached us, I could see his face, perversely pale and wasted. In his eyes blazed the fire of hate.

We again took up our journey, but only moments later he stopped and said, “Wait here a minute,” and disappeared behind the garden wall.

Some five minutes later he reappeared.

“Let’s go. Quick, if you value your life,” he said.

“What do you mean?”

“Nothing. You’ll find out soon enough.”

He quickened his pace and I followed, trying in vain to imagine the meaning of his enigmatic words.

I noticed that every so often he turned his head, looking expectantly toward the estate. We were already at a significant distance when my companion, grabbing me by the arm, said, pointing in that direction, “What do you see there?”
“Smoke and a reddish glow,” I answered after brief observation. “One might think the house is burning.”

“And he would not be mistaken.”

I looked at him, astonished. I saw in his eyes, more intense than ever, the flame of hate, and in his thin lips the nervous tightening that the realization of a vengeful desire imprints.

“And was it you, was it you who—?”

“Yes, it was me. What about it? Paybacks for the dog bite.”

“You son of a—!” I launched at him with the intent of pummeling him, but before I could achieve my objective, I felt myself caught by my belt, jerked up, and thrown to the ground. With his knee pressing down on my chest and his hands around my throat, nearly strangling me, he growled, “Coward! I believed you were stronger, but I was wrong. You are unworthy to be my companion. Go your way, and I’ll go mine.”

And, casting me a look of disgust, he got up and left.

I sat up, aching, and with great effort shouted after him, “You’re pathetic. Weak. You only know how to hate.”

He made no response and continued down the road until he disappeared, mingling with the shadows of the night.

In the opposite direction, the fire troubled the horizon with shadows of light.

3

The Death of Tiberia

Long and hard was the road. My anxious eyes searched in vain for the end, always stretching out evenly before us, deserted, whitened by dust.
Poor Tiberia! He, so happy and witty, walked sadly now, his head down, with a slow and unsure step. He scarcely answered my questions. He stopped often and held his head, on which he had tied his handkerchief to stop the bleeding from a wound.

Bad day it had been for us. We hadn’t managed to sell any of our inventory of cheap cigars from home, which we sold as imported Cuban cigars, pretending to be Spanish sailors. At a bar they tried to steal our crates, which we only managed to save by exchanging blows. Tiberia had gotten the worst of it, taking a bottle to the forehead.

“I don’t feel so good,” my companion said, with a hoarse voice. “I don’t think I can go any farther.”

There was pain in his eyes. His typically brown face, recently shaven, whose sharp features stood out beneath the wide brim of his hat, was pale and pinched, expressing intense suffering.

“Do you want to go back to Fort Hamilton?” I asked.

“No. Maybe it will pass with a little rest.”

We turned into the wood just off the road. He sat on the ground beside a tree, leaned his bandaged head on it, closed his eyes, and remained still.

I sat beside him on the cigar crates. The sun had disappeared, and the hazy colors of an autumnal twilight enveloped what I could see of the countryside.

“Do you hear that?” said Tiberia, raising his head.

“What?”
“Guitars, castañuelas,\textsuperscript{30} singing. . . . For a second I thought I was back home, far away. It must be an illusion. Ah, if only it were true!”

“You have a fever. You’re burning up.”

“It’s been a while since I left,” he went on, “at least twenty years. Twenty years of adventourous and hard life. Everywhere I have gone, I’ve always been a stranger, unknown, a foreigner; everywhere viewed with disdain, treated with contempt. No one knows the joy of living in his homeland until he leaves her.

“You feel nostalgia, after twenty years. It’s about time.”

“It’s not nostalgia exactly. It’s that for twenty years everywhere I go I’m a stranger. Hey, take the flask of whiskey out of my bag.”

I did as he asked, and after taking a good swallow, he said, “I feel better. Say what they will, whiskey is strong medicine. It comforts the body and enlives the spirit. I prefer manzanilla,\textsuperscript{31} the aromatic manzanilla. Ah, what I wouldn’t give for a drink! Do you really not hear that guitar? I would swear I was at the tavern of Tío Pacorro. Bah! It’s an illusion. My beloved Cádiz is so far away.”

He put into these last words such a bitter tone that he moved me. To console him, I said, “Some day you’ll return.”

He looked at me with lost eyes, and with a slight tremble on his lips he said, “Who, me? Return to Cádiz? No, never. You hear? Never again.”

Then, calmer, he continued. “I left, never to return.”

“Some disappointment, a disgrace? . . .”

“An wound to the soul that an evil woman gave me.”

\textsuperscript{30} Castañuelas [castanets].

\textsuperscript{31} Manzanilla is a type of sherry produced in Cádiz, Spain.
“Twenty years ago? Time should have scarred it over.”

“It was very deep.”

“You could forget.”

“I’ve forgotten, at times, but the memory always comes back to torture me.”

“And she—was she your wife?”

“She was mine because I was hers, because I worked for her, because I thought only of her.”

“And she deceived you?”

He lowered his head, immersed in the memory. At the end of a good while, as though speaking to himself, he said, “That constant guitar playing and that rhythm of the castañuelas are driving me crazy. Ah, Micaela, how well you dance! How well you play, Joseito! Olé! ¡Qué siga la zamba!”32

He laughed ironically and ground his teeth. Suddenly, he became serious and stared into the void.

“Don’t think about it.”

“I can’t help it. There is something that stings my conscience.”

“Did you kill someone?”

He nodded his head.

“Her?”

“No, not her. If only—”

“Then, who?”

32 ¡Qué siga la zamba! [Let the gypsy dance continue!]
He didn’t answer me. He was listening to an imaginary sound, eyes wide open and his breathing rapid. “The strumming, the castañuelas . . .” he mumbled.

An insane curiosity came over me. I shook him by the arm and repeated, “Who did you kill, Tiberia?”


“She cheated on you with your brother.”

“No. With my brother, no.”

“Why did you kill him, then?”

“Why? You want to know why? Fine, listen, but give me a little more whiskey.”

He finished off the contents of the bottle and continued. “One night, I surprised her writing. I went after the paper, but I only got a piece of it. What remained in her hand, she had time to swallow. From the piece that I read, I realized that she had deceived me, but I couldn’t tell with whom. Blinded by jealousy, I took out my sevillana and threatened to kill her if she didn’t tell me the name of the hated rival. After a brief scuffle, and her feeling the point of my knife penetrating her flesh, pronounced a name: that of my brother Juan. I didn’t want to know any more. I threw her violently to the floor and left. A little later at Pacorro’s pub, Juan fell with a tremendous knife wound in his chest.

“Then, it was true that your brother—”

“No. That viper deceived me, giving me the name of my brother Juan to save her accomplice.”

“How did you find out?”

“How? I don’t know. . . . Let me—I feel bad.”

---

33 *Sevillana* [a fighting knife].
He became quiet and closed his eyes.

Night had fallen completely. Heavy darkness enveloped us. The stillness of the wood was only interrupted by the intermittent chirp of crickets. A cold, gentle breeze troubled me, so to stretch my legs I headed for the road.

When I returned to Tiberia, I found him in the same position, leaning against the tree. I sat down at his side, thinking him asleep. A good moment went by without his making the slightest movement.

“Tiberia,” I said, quietly, several times. When he didn’t respond, I shook him by the arm, but the pressure tipped his body over. I took his hand, which was frozen. I lit a match, and by its light I saw the marble face of Tiberia, whose glassy eyes saw nothing and from whose mouth dribbled bloody foam.

For a moment I looked on with sadness and emotion at the inanimate body of my companion. Then I stood up and with very slow steps, I left the wood. Back on the road, I hurried along and, wrapped in shadows, body and soul, made my way to the city.

4

Engine 33

We had been hanging around the station for a while, waiting for a freight train. Our objective was to climb onto one of the cars without being seen and travel as far as we could.

While my companion rested, stretched out in a field near the tracks, I made my way with measured step to the small wood building that served as a station, in the doorway of which stood the station chief smoking calmly, the enormous pipe always in his mouth and his hands in his
pockets. He was a man of medium age, Irish by the look of him, and of kind countenance. I greeted him courteously and asked him in bad English, “What time does the next train leave?”

He took his left hand out of his pocket, removed the pipe from his mouth, spit twice, and answered with a thick Irish accent, “Well, it doesn’t ever leave, because there are no more passenger trains until tomorrow at six.”

“But you are standing guard,” I dared to say.

“Yes, because I’m waiting for freight train 33 that will pass inside of ten minutes.”

And having said this, he put the pipe back in his mouth and his hand in his pocket, disposed, it appeared, to offer no further explanation.

Neither did I need any. I knew what I needed. I thanked him and, walking quickly, I went in search of my companion, who I found sleeping. “Hurry, Fini,” I said, shaking him, “our train is will be here any time.”

At that precise moment the whistle of the locomotive sounded in the distance.

“Is it a freight train?” he asked, jumping up.

“Yes. The station chief just told me so.”

“Then there’s no time to lose. Come on.”

We crossed the track and ran to several large piles of old wood and iron across from the station. We hid behind them.

“Hey,” said Fini, a man accustomed to that mode of travel, “do what you see me do. The car I jump on, you jump too, first getting a good hold with your hands and then your feet. This is a good time for us.”

Actually, it was about to get dark. It was that solemn moment, always melancholy and sad, when the twilight dissolves into shadows that grow until they fill the whole horizon.
Another whistle blew, very near us, and we saw the train crawl around the bend. The gigantic mass of a locomotive advanced majestically, with imposing grandeur, until it stopped a short distance from where we were hiding.

We heard muffled voices of baggage handlers and the sound of carts being dragged along the planks for some time. Then a bell rang, the iron monster whistled and, growling laboriously, tugged at the long convoy. It passed in front of us with its enormous lamp lit, like a great luminous eye that scrutinized the deserted track. The cars filed off, picking up speed little by little.

“Now!” yelled Fini, jumping with the agility of a cat onto an uncovered coal car.

I imitated him, hardly realizing what I was doing, but with such bad luck that when I had a good handhold I couldn’t secure a foothold no matter how hard I tried. Fini came just in time to help, and I finally managed to climb up.

Meanwhile, the train had reached regular speed and with some effort we jumped from one flatbed car to the next until we reached a car that was covered. We climbed up the vertical ladder attached to one side. Once on top we could see that there were two more cars, also covered, to the end of the train.

We lay face down on the roof. “It’s a good idea to stay in this position,” said Fini, “because it’s less dangerous, especially if we pass through a tunnel. What’s more, we avoid being seen by the conductor.”

The train picked up speed. Night had closed in, and we could no longer distinguish anything of the countryside. Fleeting shadows of posts and trees passed like a sigh. Sometimes we could make out the distant lights of lone farmhouses or the blackish masses of hills. By and by the train whistle announced the approach to a station, at which it would not stop, the passing
over a bridge, or the crossing of some highway. From the locomotive’s chimney often escaped red sparks mixed with a dense cloud of black smoke that, as it expanded, enveloped us. The wind beat constantly with fury and particles of coal beat our faces mercilessly, adding to our suffering.

A long whistle cried in the distance, to which our train immediately responded. A passenger train approached along the other track, passing with the dizzying and clamorous roll of a hundred iron wheels.

Our locomotive whistled again. My companion shouted something to me that I didn’t understand.

“What did you say?”

Moving close to my ear, he said, “Be careful. We’re going through a tunnel. Don’t lift your head much.”

Suddenly the darkness deepened to the point that nothing could be discerned, and the noise of the train increased to an extraordinary degree. At the same time, the atmosphere became denser, making it difficult to breathe. It took some ten minutes, which seemed interminable to me, to pass through the tunnel. When we came out of it, I breathed heavily, satisfied, and I looked happily on the starry firmament.

“You know, traveling like this isn’t very pleasant,” my companion said to me.

“It would be worse to travel on foot,” I replied, philosophically.

For a good while we remained quiet, attentive to the monotony of the train, which became the strange music of infinite variations that easily adapted to the caprices of my imagination. My musical digressions were interrupted by intense human cries, but from where they came or what they meant, I couldn’t tell.

“Did you hear that?” I said to Fini.
“Yes, and I’d swear the shouts are coming from the engine room.”

A few minutes of silence followed, during which time the train picked up much more speed. Then we saw a shadow coming toward us, jumping from car to car. At the same time, the conductor of the train appeared on the roof of the car where we lay. Upon seeing us, he exclaimed without surprise, “What are you doing here?”

“Well, as you can see,” my companion answered, calmly, “traveling the most economical way possible.”

Without responding, he looked toward the uncovered car that preceded ours and said, turning to the man that we had seen coming only a little before, “What’s going on, Williams?”

“Something horrible. The stoker, in a crazed fit of fury, just killed the engine driver and threw his body on the track. Then he ramped the train up to full speed.”

“Damned son of a bitch!” exclaimed the conductor. Then, after a pause, he added, “It is necessary, at all cost, to avoid a great catastrophe. These three last cars are full of dynamite for the mines. If we don’t do something about that damned crazy man, he will blow us all straight to hell.”

I looked at Fini. “This trip might cost us more than we figured,” I said.

All he gave in response was a shrug of the shoulders. I understood. That adventurous Italian had seen himself in worse situations, and his heart never missed a beat.

“What do we do?” said the man from below.

“Try, by all means, to stop the train at the next station, even if we have to incapacitate the crazy man.”

“I don’t dare go alone—”

“I have here a good companion,” said the conductor, taking out a revolver.
“There’s no need to use it,” said Fini. “I’ll take care of the lunatic while you work to stop the train.”

The conductor looked at me a moment as if doubting that the little Italian, although strong, could fulfill his promise. “Okay, we’ll try it. Let’s go.”

We climbed down the ladder and went from one car to another. The train rolled on with an extraordinary speed, making our advance more difficult and dangerous. Finally we arrived at the engine and jumped over the coal bunker. From there we saw perfectly the enraged stoker who, bent over, threw shovelfuls of coal in the burning mouth of the boiler with fury. Fini, without hesitating, leapt lightly into the engine cab. At the sound of it, the stoker straightened up, fire in his eyes and, shouting hoarsely, rushed at Fini with his shovel raised.

It was a moment of terrible anguish for me, because I believed I was about to see my companion’s head smashed in. Fortunately, the conductor fired his gun with such accuracy that he hit the stoker’s uplifted arm, causing him to drop the shovel. Then a hand-to-hand battle ensued, quick and silent.

Each man fought with titanic strength to overpower the other. Thus that tragic pair, covered in blood and the sinister glow cast by the red sparks of the open boiler, moved closer and closer to the threshold of the left door until, losing their footing and without a sound, still locked in combat, they fell to the tracks.

***

At the next station, whose name I’ve forgotten but remember wasn’t any great distance from Chicago, freight train number 33 stopped.

The station chief, puzzled that the train had to stop when it should pass through, asked the conductor, “What’s going on? Is something wrong?”
“We come without an engineer and without a stoker. And, we have to go help two men that have fallen from the train a few miles from here."

Moments later we left on handcar. Some ten miles back, at the bottom of a steep embankment, we found the bloody and lifeless bodies of the two men. The stoker was face down, Fini face to the sky, and both illuminated by the first rays of the nascent sun.

I approached my friend and looked at him with emotion. I thought about the two bambinos in Tuscany that would wait for him in vain, and unable to hold back a tear, I said softly, as though he could still hear me, “Poor Fini! Dearly cost you the last journey. You paid with your life.”

5

Fear

As usual, seated in the comfortable dining room, they passed the evening in silence until bed time. He read, she sewed, and both of them nodded from time to time, overcome by sleep.

Juana entered without a sound and placed a steaming cup on the table. “Your tea, don Antonio,” she said, softly.

“Ah, good. Did you sweeten it?”

“Yes, sir. Would you like anything else?”

“No. You may go and rest.”

After bidding them a good night, the servant left, and for some time her muffled steps could be heard climbing the wooden stairs leading to the fourth floor.
Antonio picked up the cup and drank in sips. Then he settled back in his chair, adjusted his glasses, and continued his interrupted reading.

Suddenly, he exclaimed to his wife, “Marta! Marta!”

Dozing, she started and lifted her head. “Ah! You scared me.”

“Do you know what the paper says?”

“Some lie, I’m sure.”

“No, no. It’s important. It’s about robbers.”

“Robbers?”

“Seems a band is roaming round these parts. Last night they showed up at Big Mike’s place and carried off his money, effects, and a horse.

“Oh my! One never be too careful.”

They continued chatting a while until, the topic now exhausted, they began to doze again.

A nod larger than the rest woke Marta, who put aside her sewing, yawned, rubbed her eyes, and said to her husband, “Put down your reading, Antonio. It’s late.”

Antonio did not answer. It had been some time since he had stopped reading, and with his beard against his chest and his arms crossed over the newspaper he had laid over his legs, he slept placidly.

Marta shook him by the shoulder. “Let’s go, man, wake up. It’s time for bed.”

“Eh? Oh, yes. I wasn’t sleeping. You’re right, it is time to go to bed. Is the door locked? Did you set the bar?”

“Yes.”

“Good. Get the light.”
Marta stretched out her arm, but before she reached the lamp a loud knock at the door froze her in place. “Someone’s here,” she said, with a trembling voice.

Man and wife looked at each other, stunned. Their little house, situated beyond the outskirts of town, stood alone off the main road. A visit at this hour of the night seemed suspicious.

A second knock came louder than the first. Antonio, after a moment of hesitation, walked toward the door.

“For goodness’ sake, don’t open it,” Marta said.

“I won’t, but we need to know who’s knocking.” He approached quietly and listened, holding his breath.

A third knock made him jump back and exclaim, “Who is it?”

The deep voice of a man, somewhat muffled, answered, “A lost traveler, tired and sick, who begs for shelter for the night.”

The woman, more afraid by the second, said softly, “Don’t answer. He’s trying to trick us. He’s a robber.”

Antonio answered in a strong voice, “This is not an inn, good man.”

“I know, and for that reason I ask you for refuge as a favor, for which I am willing to pay.”

“Town is not far, scarcely half a league.”

“I cannot walk any farther.”

“Make an effort.”

“I am sick. Fever burns me up. Open up, for God’s sake.”

“It is useless to insist. We do not open for anyone at these hours of the night.”
There was a moment of silence. The man did not leave. One could hear his fatigued breathing. Antonio and Marta, their faces contracted and pale with terror, stared at the fateful door with wide eyes.

Another knock, hard and sharp, made them back up.

“Again! What do you want?” said Antonio, trying in vain to give firmness to his voice.

“Take pity on me. Have compassion on a fellow human being. Give me water, at least. I have a burning thirst.”

“We have no water. You will find everything you need in town.”

Another long silence followed, interrupted once in a while by the faint rumor of vague words that the stubborn traveler uttered. Then he knocked again, and seeing that they did not answer nor open, he beat against the door repeatedly, crying out crazily, “Open, open, open. . . .”

Driven mad by terror, husband and wife piled up tables and chairs behind the door, he arming himself with his hunting shotgun and she brandishing a great ax. “Get out of here if you don’t want me to kill you like a dog,” said Antonio.

And the woman added, “Away, away, scoundrel, swine, thief.”

But the man knocked again, though less forcefully, begging, “Water, I need water.”

Finally he quit speaking and knocking, and his unsteady steps were heard walking away.

What a night it was for the old pair. The slightest sound startled them, their eyes open wide, everywhere seeing threatening shadows, and the fear, at times, shook their bod, caused them to tremble.

The faint light of the dawning day brought a measure of calm to their perturbed spirits, and the first rays of the sun chased away the last vestige of their unsettling dread. Then they
decided to open the door with caution, and when they did they saw on the ground, almost at the very doorstep, a bulky satchel.

Antonio picked it up and examined its contents, which consisted of various papers and a fair amount of money.

“Who could this bag belong to?” asked his wife.

“The robber must have dropped it,” he said.

At that moment two mounted police passed in front of the house. “Good day, don Antonio and company,” said the sergeant. “Have you heard the news?”

“What news?”

“Well, this morning we found some poor man very close to here, already a cadaver, and without any sign of violence.”

“What do you mean? Was he dead? Completely dead?”

“So dead it was like he’d forgotten to breathe. Anyway, good day to you.”

“Good-bye.”

When they had gone, Antonio asked his wife, showing her the satchel, “And what do we do with this?”

“We keep it, you old fool.”

What Attracts

Out of breath, he reached the top of the hill and, once there, studied with eager eyes the distant city cast in yellow by the setting sun.
From the formless mass of the metropolis, he could discern only towers, rooftops and smoking chimneys. The sea, a smooth surface of copper tones, flashed in the distance, lending a shining and nearly uniform background.

The city! There it lay before him, beautiful, tempting, offering new emotions and attractions, new agonies and deceptions. From her he had flown in search of forgetfulness and tranquility. To her he was returning, unaware of her power over him.

“The forgetfulness you do not find in me,” she seemed to say to him in her language without words, “you will surely find somewhere. Come. I keep a high and sunlit garret for you, where you can dream in search of peace, or a dark and fetid hovel where you may disgrace yourself in search of narcotic stupor. Come. …”

And he went to the great city glowing in the twilight, with the consciousness of a tiny insect drawn to a bright light.

***

Night was falling when he reached the outskirts of town.

Along the way he met weary, sweaty men walking in silence, many of them carrying small bundles in their hands. Young women, some mere girls, passed by him, pale and weak and poorly dressed. They were the worker bees of the city-hive who, after a grueling workday, returned home sad and poor.

In the dusty, uneven road—this neglected slum road—children ran about barefoot and half naked. From the doorways of decrepit, little houses stared sickly women, some with babies in arms.

Idlers and workers congregated on the corners, in the bodegas and out.
He had to move aside to let a drunk pass, ambling unsteadily from one side of the street to the other, trailed by a troupe of street urchins. Farther on, in front of a tenement, the angry voices of two women insulting and threatening each other startled him, their cries mixed with the barking of a mad dog and the wail of an inconsolable child.

He was entering the city through its bitter gates. For a moment he felt a longing for open spaces, for broad horizons. It was a brief surge of angst that made him hesitate, but he thought of *her* and walked on.

***

He left the outlying district behind and moved deeper into the more populous part of the city.

Accustomed to the quiet repose of the country, the noise and commotion of the streets dulled his reason, further weakening his will.

The memory of Andrea took possession of his mind. Would he go back to that woman from whom he had fled, when he abandoned the city, ruining his career and his future? Would he again suffer her twisted and unhealthy influence?

He gathered his thoughts and with the eyes of his soul saw how she really was, beautiful and enigmatic, her body proud, her gaze deep and cool. The vision drove him on. Embracing him she whispered in his ear, “Only in my arms will you find rest. Come.”

And unable to resist, he went to her.

***

He did not have to knock; the door to the room was ajar. He pushed it gently and went in. There she was, her back turned toward him, sitting on a chair looking sad or pensive.

“Andrea,” he said, softly.
The woman rose quickly, but unsurprised. “You. It’s you, Octavio,” she said, stepping forward, reaching out to him.

“Yes, it’s me. Are you surprised to see me?”

“No. I’ve been waiting for you for some time. I knew you’d come back, because I wanted it so bad, with all the power of my soul. Now, you are with me again, and this time, it will be forever, won’t it? Forever!”

And enfolding him in her arms, she drew him to her heaving breast and held him tight.

The emptiness of that embrace crushed the fragile wings of his will, and for a moment—one fleeting moment erased by the touch of burning lips—he mourned the life of freedom that he would never enjoy again.

7

The City Sleeps

Havana rests from the labors of the day, still, tranquil, folded in shadows.

What solitude, what sad solitude, that of the streets of a city sleeping!

All is silence, rarely interrupted by the rapid passing of a carriage or the hurried step of a pedestrian running late. The lights of the thin lamps, flickering, offer hardly any light. Above, in the dark firmament, shine the stars with pure glimmers of ideal worlds.

El Parque Central is deserted. The electric light bulbs no longer reveal the vanities of impotent affluence, who only go there to show off their makeup and hairpieces, silks and jewels. But they continue to lend their clear light to the plants, to the flowers, to the green leaves that, without artifice such as Nature had created them, beautify the empty park, casting their flickering shadows over the sandy ground.
The theaters are empty, the cafés are closing. In the few windows of the aristocratic hotels one can see lights shining. In luxurious restaurants can be heard bursts of laughter, happy sounds of nocturnal orgies. . .

I keep walking.

The wealthy do not interest me. I go in search of the unfortunate.

***

There they are. I see some of them strewn out on the benches of the square.

They have no home to shelter them, no family to take them in, no friends to encourage or comfort them. The street is their house, so high that it has for its ceiling the starry sky; the bench is their bed, hard bed, but not as hard as the heart of the night patrol, the jealous guardian of public order who will not hesitate to drive them from their temporary refuge. And which modern errant Jews, driven by the anathema of an angry God, reincarnated in the person of a policeman with a palo,34 will again have to take up their journey, wandering in tatters with their anguishes and infinite pains through the streets of the sleeping city.

There they go, their look sullen and their gait uncertain, the unhappy vagrants. The little birds have their nest, plants a plot of earth, animals a lair, savages a hut. But these have nothing. Nothing! Not even the right to sleep peacefully on a hard bench in the square.

***

One of the homeless wretches attracted my attention. He was seated almost on the edge of the bench with his head hung back such that he was folded nearly in half by the back of the bench. His neck was very tense and his mouth was wide open with expression of anguish. He breathed wearily, snoring from time to time. Only a profound exhaustion could explain how that

34 Palo [policeman’s nightstick or billy club]
man slept in such an awkward position. I couldn’t make out his features, his being in the shade of a tree, but he appeared to be a man of age, with a scant beard and dressed in rags. Beside him on the bench lay a little wrapper and an empty can of milk.

I gazed on the human ruin for a brief moment, deducing, by his present state, his past and his future. Yesterday an existence of labors; today a life of privation; and tomorrow, oh, tomorrow, perhaps an ignominious death in some obscure corner of the city, maybe in front of the stable door of a noble gentleman, who eats in peace and rests at ease, through which noble beasts draw his luxurious carriage.

That unfortunate soul intrigued me. I might have woken him to ask something of his present life, to question him about his past, to have an interview that would surely yield more of life’s wisdom than one could glean from daily interaction with great leaders of politics, literature, and art. But I dared not interrupt his slumber, conscientious that I had no right to rob him of a few minutes respite to satisfy my curiosity.

I continued walking. I saw many unfortunate souls sleeping on the benches, in a variety of extravagant, and at times comical, positions. One, arms crossed over his chest, gave enormous nods, as if affirming obstinately the right to sleep on that bench, the collective property of all citizens, and more so when they are inhabitants of the moon. Oh! So little good did his mute affirmation do him. From a ways off came a policeman, palo in hand, ready to violate, with the right of force, the right of free sleep on a bench of the square.

There were no sleepers in the central square of the Parque de Colón. One could tell that the people of the palo had just passed through. Out of curiosity, I approached a small pond in the square. The alligators, happier than men, had a home there and slept soundly, without the fear of having their slumber interrupted. And in light of such, a profoundly philosophical thought
occurred to me. “In our Christian society,” I said aloud, “it is better to be an alligator than a man without a home.”

Then I thought I saw there, at the bottom of the pond, a huge alligator open his mouth wide and laugh bestially at my exclamation.

As I was leaving the park, walking past the last bench, the voice of a boy detained me.

“Got a cigarette, mister?” he asked.

I went closer. There sat two boys, almost children. One slept and the other, the one who had spoken to me, kept watch.

“What are you doing here?” I asked.

“Just what you see, resting.”

“And this?” I said, pointing at his companion.

“He sleeps while I keep an eye out. When a cop comes near, I talk out loud so he thinks we’re both awake, having a conversation, and he doesn’t bother us. Then I sleep, and my companion keeps watch and does the same. That’s how we sleep, the two of us, in spurts.

I gave him a cigarette. We chat on a bit. He told me about his life and miracles, then we said goodbye like two old friends about the time his companion awoke.

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Above, in the dark firmament, bright stars with pure glimmers of ideal worlds went on shining.

Could there be beings without homes there too?
The Vultures’ Banquet

I

Once again, rising that morning over a vast Manchurian plain, the sun shed its rays on the happy scene of talking birds and working men. The first greeted the glorious apparition of the heavenly body leaping and chirping in the bower, the second, plowing fields and putting cattle to pasture.

Meanwhile, in town the women busied themselves with domestic chores, the children run about half naked through the streets, and the elderly, sitting in the doorways of their homes, were content to spend yet another day at peace, comforted by the memory of their past lives as peasant laborers.

II

The sun had not reached its zenith when the plain was invaded by a numerous army, fully armed. Wherever it went, it left a path of destruction: felled forests, devastated crops, raided villages, and a panicked hoard that fled before them, abandoning their homes, their meager riches, the hard-earned fruits of many years’ work and sacrifice.

The sun, now in its decline, cast a dying light over sad and deserted towns, despoiled of any vegetation and vilely trampled by the hooves of horses, by the wheels of wagons, and by the soles of uniformed murderers.

III

On the distant horizon, the failing light of the setting sun sketches an advancing wispy, black cloud.
It is a colony of vultures following the army, anxious to satiate their appetite with the hot cadavers of the fallen.

Two vultures from the colony, fatigued by the long journey, break away, fold their wings, and stop to rest on the top of a hill.

“Brother,” says one, “do you see any prey?”

“I see nothing,” says the other. “The birds appear to have abandoned the place. The houses are empty of man and animal. The earth, as far as I can see, offer not the least trace of life. All is desolation and sadness.”

“It is because the defenders of the fatherland have passed through here. Do you hear a sound far off?”

“I hear nothing. It seems the battle has not yet begun.”

“Unfortunate. I have a hunger for fresh meat and a thirst for hot blood.”

“Do not be impatient. We will have our feast soon enough.”

“True. Thanks be to our God, the merciful God of vultures, who makes men destroy each other for our benefit.”

“There is something I have not been able to understand. What reason have men to kill one another?”

“In this case it appears they are killing each other because some are Russian and others are Japanese, and the ones and the others argue over the possession of a piece of land that is neither in Russia nor in Japan. But the most curious of all is that those who fight, win or lose, will acquire not the tiniest bit of the disputed terrain.

“Then why do they fight?”
“Human mysteries, brother. Our reason, as birds of prey, is incapable of explaining it. I do not doubt that man prides himself in being the king of creation and in having invented the sublime and incomprehensible words “progress” and “civilization.”

The distant thunder of cannon fire interrupts the conversation between the two vultures.

“The battle has begun,” says the elder. “Let us fly. The banquet will be ready.”

They take flight and joined the colony, disappearing into the distant horizon.

IV

The great valley is a horror. The houses are mounds of rubble. The ruined orchards have lost all vigor and freshness. The banks of the stream, where the combatants fought terrible hand-to-hand battles, are strewn with corpses, and the gently running waters have acquired the reddish tint of blood. The trenches constructed to defend a pass overflow with lifeless bodies. Every so often, one sees mutilated limbs, amputated by the force bombs and shrapnel. The dismounted cannons and abandoned carts, with their dead horses, complete the incredible spectacle of death.

From the silent valley, enveloped in the shadows of the setting sun, there arise from time to time cries of anguish, groans of pain, agonizing death rattles.

A dying Japanese officer ponders with sadness on the wife and children he shall never see. Two soldiers, a great Cossack and a tiny Japanese, together help each other treat the wounds that they have caused. And farther on, a Russian colonel, wrapped in a cape stained with blood and blackened dust, cries out with his last breath, “I die for Russia!”

His horse, also mortally wounded, hearing the voice of his master, raises his head and lets it fall, also dying, but without knowing it, for glorious Russia.

V

The feast is laid.
A great beating of wings and a chorus of hoarse caws announces the arrival of the fellow guests.

Bright their eyes, beating their wings, and outstretched their curved beaks, they plunge into the human remains.

VI

Their voracious appetite now satiated, the carnivorous fowl gather around a cannon upon whose muzzle one of them perched, its beak bloody and dangling human entrails.

“Brothers,” he caws. “Let us give thanks to the Great Vulture for having bestowed upon us such a succulent feast. Man, proud and ignorant, believes that he fights in defense of high ideals and suffers no lack of sages who affirm that wars are an inherent element of progress. Error, crass error, my brothers. Wars are made purely and simply to provide us with fresh meat. ¡Viva la guerra!  

A deafening chorus of caws answer him, and they all take flight, beating their wings triumphantly, bright their eyes and bloodied their curved beaks, disappearing into the distance of another banquet.

9

The Journalist and the King

“The people, hungry for freedom and justice, aspire to the establishment of a true democracy that guarantees its full sovereignty. The monarchy, a remnant of the past, is called upon to disappear under the formidable pressure of. . .”

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35 ¡Viva la Guerra! [Long live war!]
Ricano held his pen and ran his left hand over his head several times in search of a hair to hold onto, as he tried to find a graphic word that permitted him to round out the final paragraph of his article. An inconvenient yawn ended the expedition over the immense desert of his bald head and the mental processes of his brain, reminding him that he’d had to go without food that day. Fortunately, it was the end of the month, and he hoped to collect the modest salary that he earned writing the subversive editorials of *El Pueblo*,\(^{36}\) which would allow him to enjoy a pair of fried tenderloins with half a bottle of genuine Rioja at El Gorro Frigio.

A pair of tenderloins! But, what if he didn’t get paid? This cruel thought did not robe him of his appetite, but it did his happiness. Returning to reality, he again focused his attention on the piece of paper he had before him.

He reread the last lines: “*The monarchy, a remnant of the past, is called upon to disappear under the formidable pressure of . . .*”

The voice of the office boy distracted him. “Señor Ricano, go to the office before you leave.”

The tenderloins were a sure thing!

He wet his pen and wrote rapidly, finishing the article, “. . . a pair of breaded tenderloins.”

He put down the pen, grabbed his hat, and left.

***

The clock tower struck three when Ricano left from the editorial department, happy as castanets before the certain prospect of a good supper. They were so few and far between. The

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\(^{36}\) *El Pueblo* [The People]
unappreciated profession of opposition journalist did not allow him to attend properly to his stomach.

On his way to the restaurant, Ricano thought about the hardships of his life. Beaten down by disappointment, few illusions brought happiness to his heart. The only thing that he maintained fresh and alive was his political conviction, staunchly republican, for which so much had been sacrificed without any real benefit. Ah, if only he wasn’t a slave to his principles! If only his luck had been different! Others, with less intelligence but more audacity had achieved high positions.

Ricano interrupted his meditations. He had arrived at the restaurant. The tenderloins awaited him. His stomach was about to do its job.

***

The first tenderloin finished, he was ready to attack the second with equal ferocity when his eye lit on a gentleman that, well dressed and seated at a neighboring table, looked at him intently. He didn’t like the way he looked at him. The gentleman suddenly stood and went to sit at the same table as the old journalist.

“Do you know me?” he asked.

Ricano made an effort to swallow his bite, which threatened to choke him and answered, somewhat startled, “I haven’t had the pleasure.”

“Okay, then. If you will promise me to be discrete, I will tell you who I am.

“Sir—”

The stranger pegged his lips to Ricano’s ear and quietly said, “I am the king.”

“The king!” he exclaimed, excitedly, dropping his silverware and opening his eyes wide.
“Yes, sir. The king in person. Nobody would guess, would they? It is because I am very well disguised. Every night I go out to take a closer look at my ungrateful subjects. Palace life bores me, the courtiers irritate me, the politicians that govern wear me out, leaving me only the role of a gilded puppet. If only I were an absolute king! The constitutional system has reduced the king’s power by half. It is preferable to be president of the Republic to being a constitutional king. Are you a Republican?”

“Sir, I am the editor of *El Pueblo.*”

“Did I not tell you? Republican through and through.

“The necessities of life . . . my democratic principles—”

“I do not accept excuses. Put ’er there. I like an honest man. I am so sick of palace hypocrisy.”

Ricano had quit eating by now. Being in the presence of the king had stolen his appetite and tempered his republican convictions. To speak with the king, face to face, at a table in a café!

“You are very kind,” continued the king, “and I am inclined to favor you. What may I do for you?”

“I, sir—”

“None of that. All you need do is ask.”

“The truth is, Majesty, I dare not—”

“I have an idea. You say you are a journalist? Well, we are going to establish a newspaper, of which you shall be editor, with a salary of 500 pesos a month. You shall defend the ideas of the king. All my ministers have their voices in the press, and it is only right I should have mine.”
The journalist opened his mouth, but the king gave him no time to answer.

“No objections, my friend. It is decided. What else shall I give you to defend the monarchy rather than the Republic? Principles, convictions, ideals . . . absurd remarks that do not add any meat to the stew, if you know what I mean.”

When the king had left, the waiter approached Ricano’s table and, winking maliciously, said, “You have been very patient in putting up with that man’s nonsense.”

“What! You know him?”

“Sure. He is a poor man who is convinced he is the king.”

Ricano thought he was going to faint. All his illusions had suddenly collapsed. He was condemned to go on as the obscure journalist of the opposition, for whom profit is little and the glory scarce.

But what pained him most, having come back to reality, was to think that in the future he could no longer brag about his political loyalties, of firmness of his ideals.

Even he, when the hour had come, was willing to sell his convictions for a plate of lentils.

10

A Sailor’s End

When they boarded the viper City of Rome, the Spanish sailors that were captured by the Americans in the naval battle of Santiago de Cuba, one of them, a prisoner of the death that stalked him, remained on enemy soil, stretched out on a miserable hospital cot.

He was a young man, almost a child, named José Rodríguez. His condition was considered to be so grave and so near death as to not be worth the trouble of transferring him to the ship.
“It would be cruel to try it,” said the doctors. “He would die before we got him aboard.”

And the poor boy, who had not lost consciousness and understood everything they said, did not allow the slightest groan to escape his lips. So alone, seeing his companions walk or carried out of the hospital to return to Spain, with great difficulty he turned his head and stared at them intently with his large, black eyes.

Upon leaving, a strapping sailor who walked with the aid of a crutch, stopped a moment before the agonizing boy, kissed him with the tenderness of a mother, and went on his way, crying.

Oh! They were more fortunate than he. They were returning to their abandoned homes, with the pleasant anticipation of embracing their mothers, who patiently awaited them, to that beloved creature who lit candles for their speedy return. But he, a poor orphan of fortune, was doomed to die there on that ratty cot in a foreign land, far from his people, surrounded by strangers and without the least hope, perhaps to be nourished for a while and then inhumanely left to die, of returning to the home he had left and to embrace his dear mother, who would be waiting for him now in some forgotten village in Spain.

Two hours later, when the City of Rome raised anchor and set sail for the Spanish coasts, the poor sailor, forsaken on enemy soil, in the grip of death, experienced again in his delirium of agony the horrors of the battle at sea. In the night, his lifeless body was buried in the hill where the remains of thirty other Spanish sailors lay at rest.

***

Poor sailor! Dead at the height of his youth, in the flower of life, in the happy age of pleasures, villainously murdered by that insatiable monster called national honor. What would he think of the injustice of his miserable fate, of being forced to watch from his deathbed as his
companions, more fortunate than he, returned to their beloved home? What thoughts of anguish and desolation would torment his failing brain, looking on alone, deserted, given over to painful memories of horrors and bloody battles without a friendly voice to mitigate his suffering, without the caresses and watchful care of a mother to ease his last moments, without a ray of hope to carry his tired mind to the calming flow of consolation?

He would think, first, about the mother of his soul, whom he would never see again, about the beloved members of his family, about the friends of his childhood and the girl who first woke love in his adolescent breast. He would think about his traitorous luck that drove him aboard a ship of war to go and fight and die in defense of something they called patriotic honor, but which, in reality, he did not understand. He would think about the privations and awful treatment he endured on board; about the fights and days of angst spent in Santiago; about the terrible, final catastrophe; about the saga of horrors that followed the destruction of the squadron; and, finally, he would think about the days of captivity he spent in that hospital, his body devoured by fever and his spirit broken by the bitter memories of hard experience.

And a final thought that would add the last drop of sorrow to the bitter cup that he drank, he would remember the sad irony of his fate, which condemned him, in the hour of his greatest agony, to watch as his companions, more fortunate than he, went to their homes with eager hearts, perhaps broken but enlightened by the soothing glow of hope.

And who knows whether as delirium invaded his brain he cursed his fate, cursed his god, and cursed his inhumane Fatherland that, after requiring the sacrifice of his life, abandoned him to the emptiness of a unhappy death.

***

The poor sailor died. Who will remember him?
Perhaps the generous companion who wept over his bed, and with the tenderness of a mother, kissed him good-bye. I remember now as I write, my eyes moist and heart heavy, his sad and lonely end. But, ay! His mother, the poor woman who, with mourning in her soul and a year in her eyes, she who waited in vain for him in some forgotten village in Spain, she will forever remember him.

11

Her Eyes

Those black eyes, with their angry gaze, troubled Robert like a mysterious puzzle. He walked to her and, taking her hand, said softly, “Why do you always look like that, so odd?”

“I don’t know. I look the only way I can look.”

“I mean, there is something indefinable in your eyes that wounds and mortifies: anger, coldness, indifference, rancor, hate. . . .

“Hate . . .” she repeated softly. “Yes, it must be hate.”

“What is it that you hate?”

“What do I know? Everything.”

“Are you sure? Do you love nothing?”

“Love . . . I don’t know what it is.”

“Do you not long to find out?”

“No.”

“You are very unfortunate, Luisa.”

“For me, to hate is the only pleasure in life.”
“Why do you hate?”

“What does it matter to you?”

She fixed her eyes on him more intensely. Roberto felt her look like a sharp pain but defied it. A momentary feeling of aversion toward her overpowered him and he insulted her.

“That’s how I like it,” she said to him, with an insolent smile and ever steady, provocative stare. “Insult me, hate me. I prefer your disdain to your compassion.”

***

It was not sympathy, nor sensual love, nor even compassion that attracted Roberto to that woman. It was her cold, resentful, hurtful look like the sharp steel of Toledo. It was the enigma of her black eyes, sinisterly beautiful like the fallen angel and, and like his, they were wrathful and defiant.

What were those hopeless eyes hiding? Insanity? Innate evil? The secrets of a painful life? That, he did not know, and in vain he tried to guess it. All his cares, all his attentions, all his tenderness, at first feigned, later sincere, could not overcome that relentless look.

As time went on, he came to know little by little Luisa’s story, and he could explain her bitter look. She was unlucky, daughter of the ignoble union of misery and vice, who had only known pain and the contempt of others. The first tyrants in her life were her own parents, her childhood having been an awful Calvary, where she had left pieces of her soul, the most precious pieces because they were those that contained the seeds of affection, tenderness, goodness, love. Then, as a woman, she had only known the scorns, insults, and loathing of society, and she avenged herself by putting in her look all the immense hate that had accumulated in her breast throughout her tortured life.
And Roberto, noble of heart, when he came to understand the wild rebellion that those black eyes possessed, came to love them with passion and desired that they could take on, for him and him alone, the sweetness of loving eyes.

***

One day, as Roberto entered in Luisa’s room, he saw her from behind, hiding her eyes with a handkerchief. She was crying. He could hardly believe what he was seeing. Those cold, arrogant, indignant eyes that were always dry . . . were finally moist with bitter tears?

He approached quietly and, leaning down to her he said with sweetness, “Why are you crying?”

With a quick movement Luisa raised her head and Roberto saw, moved with emotion, that those beautiful eyes, veiled by tears, directed at him a sweet, supplicant and amorous look. It was the first time that she looked at him that way.

“Why are you crying?” Roberto asked.

“I’m crying because I can finally love.”

Roberto finally understood and, leaning farther down, kissed her eyes, murmuring, “Love of mother . . . Blessed be the love that redeems!”

12

The Exodus of the Birds

On a little island in the Pacific lived many colonies of birds in happiness and harmony.

It was an exceptional island, with abundant vegetation, rich in shrubs and trees that offered seasonal fruits and peaceful refuge to the winged inhabitants. Its climate was temperate,
crystalline streams abounded, and it found itself free, to their great fortune, of ravens and other birds of prey. In sum, that land was the paradise of the birds.

What a most delightful existence, tranquil and beautiful! At the appearance of the first ray of the sun, thousands of singing birds greeted it, sent up a hymn in honor of the great Helios, who emerged resplendently from among the liquid waves, gilding the sky, sea, and land. Then the little birds moistened their feathers and beaks in the pure streams, hopped among the pebbles, pursued each other, playing, one with another, picking at the ripe fruit that had fallen from the trees and taking great flights to rejoice in the pleasure of beating their wings, to receive the caresses of the sun and breathe the pure atmosphere of the heights.

At midday, when the sun was hot, they took shelter in the forests, where they jumped endlessly from branch to branch. At the fall of evening, they returned to their games and their flights, until they grew tired, but always happy, at the disappearance of the last light of twilight, they sought refuge in their nests to rest and love.

***

One day the happy little birds saw with surprise a kind of very odd animals, totally unknown to them, enter their realm. They walked, putting one foot after the other. Instead of wings, suspended at their sides were certain appendages that moved ridiculously as they walked. They had no feathers, and on their beakless faces could be seen a black hole.

At the beginning they took pity on the strange creatures, unable to fly and practically forced to drag themselves along the ground like vermin.

The compassion soon gave way to terror.

Those beings brought with them some infernal apparatus that they rose with their limbs and with it shot out a ray that mortally wounded the trusting little birds. If this were not enough,
they set out clever traps to catch them alive and imprison them in tiny latticed cells which, allowing them to see the beauty of the fields and the broad horizons, made their bondage all the more painful and more desirous of their lost freedom.

The island was soon invaded by those featherless demons that gradually cut down the forests, taking possession of the fields, which they prepared in their manner and placed in them black guardians that ever stood with their threatening arms spread wide to keep the hungry birds from descending in search of sustenance.

The community of the birds was shrinking, decimated by the lead and hunters’ traps and through the lack of vital nourishment, finally driven to the highest hills to avoid total extermination. But life was dangerous there, wanting of the beauties and the fruits that the plains offered them.

***

One spring day, deep excitement swept through the community. It had been some days since a bird of brilliant plumage and daring beak had arrived from distant lands who, from hill to hill, thicket to thicket, and nest to nest, had gone preaching the ideas of liberty. And on that morning a great assembly was going to take place to decide once and for all the future of the hunted birds.

On the top of a hill that offered a broad, flat expanse, many thousands of birds met. Perched on a rock, overlooking the multitude, the bird of brilliant plumage, after shaking his wings to impose silence, chirped thus: “Beloved companions. The selfish race of man, eternal enemy of our lineage, has invaded this beautiful island, and overwhelming hills and planes, has made a tranquil and happy life impossible for you. With what right has man done this? With the right of force, the principal that man obeys and respects but is prohibited among us poor and
weak little birds. It would be useless to tell man that we too have the right to life; he would laugh at us because he is the only animal that adds mockery to brute force, being brutal and ignoble, and at the same time hypocritical and deceitful, since notwithstanding he hunts us and murders us with impunity, he raises his voice in song and composes admirable phrases.”

A thundering chorus of chirps and trills interrupted the orator. Finally he made silence and a nightingale said, “We must declare war on man.”

“Impossible,” answered the orator. “We are too weak.”

“Let us use our minds,” added a sparrow. “We will attack the cultivated fields.”

“We are not courageous enough to brave the scarecrows that protect them nor sufficiently clever to avoid the traps.”

“What shall we do, then?” cried a thousand beaks.

“Abandon this land that man has made intolerable to us, flee to a place where the cursed race is unknown. We have wings to fly. Neither hills, rivers, nor seas can stop us. The sky is ours. Let us fly, fly without rest until we find a new paradise where the human serpent is unknown. Many shall fall, exhausted, lacking in strength, before we achieve the desired end, but it does not matter, because it is preferable to die flying in defense of an ideal than to live miserably and always threatened in the insecure bowers of a land infested by men.”

***

The day after that memorable congress of birds, the inhabitants of the island watched in amazement as a vast cloud formed by millions of birds described a great circle and drifted eastward until it was lost in the distant horizon.
The beautiful birds never returned. In the shady woods were never again heard their songs. The poets asked the silent glades for inspiration in vain, and the lovers sighed for chaste and pure verses.

13

Love and Philosophy

They walked through the sandy and deserted paths of the garden, lit by the dying glimmers of the setting sun. Settled the breeze, still the leaves, mute the birds, only the rhythmic steps and the hushed voices of a man and woman disturbed the silence.

After much discussion of random things, they had come, in the natural course of conversation, to the theme of love. Lorenzo, from the first phrases, felt embarrassed by emotion. Dionisia, normally happy and playful, suddenly became serious.

“Love,” said Lorenzo, responding to something Dionisia had insinuated, “is the sacrifice made by two people who want to live for each other.”

“No more than sacrifice? Is there no joy?” objected Dionisia.

“Joy is in itself sacrifice.” Then, seeing that she had grown quiet, he added with a trembling voice, “Have you ever loved, Dionisia?”

“No, never.”

“Have you never felt even a certain affection for someone?”

“Affection? Oh, yes. You, for example.”

“I—what?”

“I like you.” And she raised her dark eyes toward him, a mischievous look.

Lorenzo, suddenly thrilled, said, “I too feel a great affection for you.”
“Really?”

“Yes.”

He wanted to express in words the tender feelings that he felt for her, but emotion held his tongue and he was only able to show through his anxious eyes all the feeling that burdened his soul.

She had listened to him with her eyes down, awaiting a declaration, but seeing that, after a long pause, nothing came, she raised them and, looking at him with a smile, said with a certain irony, “I did not believe that philosophers, so serious, so formal, so . . . you know, so above human passions, had the time or inclination to feel a great affection.”

“You are cruel, Dionisia.”

“Not really. Just sincere.”

“That means—”

“That you, who knows so much, who has come to understand the mysteries of the infinite, still has not managed to learn what how to unlock a woman’s heart.”

They walked on in silence, without exchanging another word or glance.

***

Having given himself from a young age up to the study of philosophical inquiries, Lorenzo considered love an obstacle to the studious man’s mental development, and this had led him to view women as a dangerous distraction. But it happened that, now in his thirty-fifth year, he had found along the way the beautiful Dionisia and fallen in love with her like a schoolboy, leaving behind his philosophical theories to think only about the charms of that adorable creature.
The failure of his conversation with Dionisia had wounded him deeply, and before his fast fading dream of love, experienced for the first time the bitter pain that brings a deep sense of angst and uneasiness.

Disheartened, he said goodbye to Dionisia and returned to the guestroom of her parents country home, and dropping onto a divan, he lay still, his eyes settled on a piece of sky framed by the window, in which he saw shining luminous, twinkling points, distant representations of mysterious worlds.

“To hear nothing,” Lorenzo said to himself, “to feel nothing, to think nothing. To see only the peaceful tranquility of distant worlds. How wonderful! Rejoice in the silence, my heart, far, very far from the brain that would plague you with its contemplations. Leave me, delusions of impossible joys, cruel temptations. Be gone, fondness, tenderness, love. Let the welcome calm of silence invade me. To not feel, to not think . . . Who could live like this forever!”

But his meditation upon the starry firmament, rather than soothe his mind, awoke in him the sadness of the infinite, an immense sadness, like space, and how it feels without being understood.

It was as though the stars spoke to him in their mysterious language. “Fool,” they said, “why do you trouble yourself with such insignificant things? Disappoint, disillusion, suffering . . . the pains of human amoeba. Raise your thought to us. We are stars, suns, nebulae; we are worlds undiscovered, unknown, lost in space without end.

“It is true,” said Lorenzo, “you are worlds and suns, but you cannot give me what I long for: love.”

Before those mysterious enigmas that filled the infinite, feeling and thought returned only to be aimlessly lost in the abysses of space. The anguish of soul pleased him like the throbbing
spasm of sensual joy pleased the body. He wanted to feel the infinite more, always more. He wanted his meandering thoughts to become lost in endless space. Fondness, tenderness, pleasure, love, what were they after all? Fleeting moments of the soul. Only space was enduring, eternal, immutable. Oh! But also incomprehensible. The riddle of the Universe, like love, was indecipherable.

***

Happy gleams of daybreak rose in the east. The luminous points went out one by one. Aurora appeared blushing in her beauty. Helios appeared, his disc of fire, sending to the sleepy earth torrents of golden light.

Lorenzo went out to the garden to breathe the fresh, morning air. He had scarcely walked few steps when he met Dionisia, who was picking flowers. In answer to his greeting, she said, “Good morning, early-bird philosopher. How was your night?”

“Very well, Señorita Dionisia. I spent it conversing with the stars.”

“And what did they tell you?”

“Oh, so many things! Among them, they assured me that it was as impossible to know the heart of a woman as it is to divine the mysteries of the infinite.”

“Well, they lied to you. The heart of a woman who loves is easy to comprehend.”

“How?”

Dionisia, as her entire answer, fixed her gaze on him, putting into it such eloquent expression that Lorenzo could not help but understand. He could see in those beautiful eyes the answer to the question that more than once had troubled his spirit.

“Love, my dear Dionisia,” he said, kissing her on the lips, “is the only philosophy that explains the mystery of life.”
The possibility of infidelity has been troubling her spirit and embittering the joys of a happy wife for days. Her Carlos, would he love her with such sincere passion that no other woman could induce him to commit the slightest indiscretion? Anita believed it, or at least, she wanted to believe it, for she could not conceive the purity of love admitting the faintest shadow of deceit or disloyalty. She was a naive and passionate dreamer who, by upbringing and even heredity, attributed romanticisms to love that conflicted with reality.

To convince herself that Carlos felt for her a love so intense that, were it the situation to arise, he would know how to reject every temptation, she wrote him the following note with a trembling hand: “Carlos, tonight I await you at the Lyric Ball. Search among the masks for the black cowl with white ribbons. A friend.”

II

At luch, Carlos seemed particularly happy and charming. Anita, on the other hand, was sad and melancholy. She knew that his cheeriness was due to the rendezvous that her letter had arranged, and the certainty of her idol’s infidelity weighed on her so heavily that only with great effort could she hold back her tears.

“What is wrong with my little wife that she is so serious and quiet?” Carlos said to her.

“Me? Nothing.”

“Something is wrong. This seriousness is not natural for you.”

“Well then, yes, I do feel sad. I don’t know why. I would like to find a way to distract myself. If you would like—”

“Speak. You know that my greatest desire is to please you.”
Anita stood up, went to Carlos and, putting her arms around his neck from behind and moving her face close to his, said sweetly, “If my dear husband would be so kind as to take me to the masquerade ball this evening—”

“What, are you crazy?”

“Sane as ever. Look, I will disguise myself and you pretend to seduce me. After the ball, to dinner, and then back home . . . What do you think?”

“This is ridiculous. You cannot be serious. What’s more, tonight I have a commitment.”

“A commitment?” repeated Anita, anxiously.

“Yes, I have to show Mr. Willey around. He wants to learn about our Carnaval. We’ll walk a bit, we’ll go to the theater, maybe stop by the Lyric, then eat. He will probably keep me until well past midnight.”

“Mr. Willey . . . Are you sure it is Mr. Willey who is waiting for you?”

“Anita, do you doubt me? Am I worthy of so little trust?”

“If truly love me, let me come with you.”

“Impossible, impossible,” he said and, standing, got ready to leave.

Anita, devastated, dropped onto the divan, fighting back the tears that struggled to come out. Carlos went to her and, taking her in his arms, said, “Don’t be a baby. Come on, give me a kiss, as proof that you won’t hold this against me, and until I return.”

III

Left alone, she cried in silence, thinking about her misfortune. There was no longer any room for doubt; the love Carlos felt for her was neither pure nor sincere enough to avoid deception. All it had taken was a simple, anonymous meeting to cast her aside, to forget her. The blow was harsh and wounded her dignity as a wife and a woman.
A sudden idea made her raise her head and dry her eyes. Why not carry out the stratagem to the end, pretending to be the unknown friend, hidden beneath the hood and the disguise? Thus would the conviction would be absolute, without a shadow of doubt.

IV

Back from the ball, Anita, upon entering her room, tore off the hooded cloak, which she threw with rage on a chair. Then she recalled one by one all the events of that night: her entrance in the grand ballroom, her fear and insecurity upon seeing herself alone and exposed to the rudeness of the attendees, the encounter with Carlos, the sensuality that invaded her as she danced with him and feeling the force of his arms, the ardent words of love that she heard from his lips, the intense desire that she saw manifested in his face, the wish to take her to a private booth in the restaurant, and lastly, her escape, taking advantage of a moment of confusion. All of it she remembered in minute details, arriving at the awful conclusion that Carlos did not love her and that he was unworthy of her unblemished affection.

The sound of the door opening made her turn her head. Before her stood Carlos, looking at her and then at the cloak, confused. “What is this, Anita?”

“Nothing. That I too went to the ball.”

“That you—that is not possible. You are lying.”

“I’ll say it again. I went to the ball, and with that costume that you see.

A flash of jealousy and spite darkened Carlos’s mind. And ignoring the possibility that his wife had fooled him, that she had wounded his pride in believing himself to be her absolute master, he felt the urge to insult her and approached her menacingly. “If this were true, if you had thus trampled my dignity—”
Anita stood arrogantly. “And what! If it were true, I would have done nothing more than follow the example you gave me, to do what you are doing. But don’t worry, I have not trod on your dignity as husband. I have, however, become convinced of your indignity as a man. I was she who, desirous to enter into the firmness of your love, wrote you the note in which I invited you to the ball at the Lyric. I was the hooded figure that you met at the ball and that you surely took for an easy conquest.”

“You! It was you!” Carlos cried, angrily. “But, what motive could lead you to that charade?”

“To convince me that your love was a lie, that you were capable of deceit.” She could not continue, halted by sobs.

Carlos felt tenderness and compassion for his romantic little wife and, moving closer to her, humble and contrite, exclaimed, holding her hands, “Forgive me.”

Anita doubted a moment, but thinking that after all he had not consummated his infidelity, she forgave him.

The Miracle

“But, is it possible that you do not believe in miracles? Ah, if only you had seen what I saw in Lourdes! In me you have an example. I went there sick and left cured by the sole force of faith.” And saying this, the devout, beautiful baroness looked triumphantly at her listeners.

“Madame,” said the skeptical Aladro, “the time of miracles has passed, if there ever was one. As far as supposed miracles of faith are concerned, when they occur, they are no more than the effects of auto-suggestion.”
“Today there are no miracles other than those of science,” added Doctor Montanos.

“My word! Some pair of heretics you are. But there is Vilanez, who surely entertains no such religious ideas. True, General?”

“Baroness, if it were only to leave you defenseless before the attack of these gentlemen, I would have taken the party of faith.”

“Bravo, General! You are as valiant as a chivalrous knight.”

“I firmly believe, like you, in miracles,” continued the general, smiling discretely at the flattery of the baroness, “and all the more due to an experience I had in which I saw a powerful one materialize before my very eyes.”

“Really?” exclaimed the baroness, joyously. “Tell us, then, won’t you? Tell us, and let us see whether we cannot convince this pair of unbelievers.”

“Your wish is my command, my dear baroness. And keep in mind,” he said, directing himself at the other two gentlemen, “that my eyes saw what you are about to hear.”

Aladro shrugged his shoulders like a man who already knows that there is no miracle that can convince him. As regards the doctor, he smiled ironically and said, “Let us see about the general’s miracle.”

“In one of the campaigns that I prosecuted against the Moors of Mindanao when I was a captain, I had in my service, as assistant, a certain Filipino boy educated by the priests, who distinguished himself by his religious zeal. He possessed a scapular of the Virgin that he carried continually upon his breast and which he would not have given up for all the riches of this world. He said that with the scapular in place, the holy relic that was passed down to him by his grandmother, he did not fear death; and the truth was that few matched him in valor and temerity in battle, a quality that I attributed to his unbreakable faith in that piece of cloth on which was
crudely painted the image of the Virgin Mary. Before entering into action, the first thing my aide did was to take out the aforementioned scapular and hang it outside his clothing so that it was well visible, for thus, it seems, he had more faith in its efficacy. In one of the most violent battles that we had, I ordered my men to give a bayonet charge to take an enemy trench. With sword unsheathed and revolver in hand, I continued ever onward, hearing bullets whistle all around me. To my side was the faithful assistant. Suddenly I saw him waver and fall to the ground. ‘And so it goes,’ I said to myself. ‘Not even the scapular could save him.’ I continued the advance. I do not know what happened next, but I do remember that when I saw myself standing above the trench, owner of the enemy terrain, the aide was again at my side.

“‘You, here?’ was all I could manage to exclaim in amazement.

“‘Yes, my captain,’ he responded. ‘The scapular saved me.’

“Indeed, gentlemen, he had the charred scapular. It appeared that a bullet had struck the boy, and the violent impact had knocked him down, but without penetrating his body.”

“Remarkable, General!” said the baroness, in a triumphant tone. “What do you say to that, you two skeptics?”

“Madame,” answered Aladro, “the words of the general deserve every kind of respect, but—”

“You are sure that the bullet struck him?” observed the doctor.

“Very sure, as I later saw the bullet with my own eyes, which had remained embedded in a great leather billfold full of silver and copper coins that my assistant wore at his breast and was precisely below the scapular.”

“Then, General,” exclaimed Doctor Montanos, “the miracle was owed to the billfold.”
General Vilanez, twisting his enormous mustache, said, “Billfold or scapular, the fact is there was a miracle.”

16

Artistic Love

They strolled arm in arm in quiet conversation through the garden, having left the noise of the salon.

“If you love me,” said Alejo, “why are you rejecting me? Can you not love art and love me?”

“No,” Regina answered, “both loves at the same time are incompatible. The affection that I would dedicate to you I would rob from art, and vice versa. Marrying you, I would see myself obliged to give up my dreams of glory. The sacrifice would be too great. You know well, dear cousin, that if the love you profess is great, greater is my ambition to win a name in the world of art.”

“You prefer art to me,” he said, with deep sorrow.

Regina hesitated, but finally she answered with firmness. “Yes. I prefer art to all else, and if art were not so demanding,” she continued, pressing Alejo’s arm gently, “above all, men, I would prefer you.”

***

From the garden rose the songs of birds and the rustle of leaves, enveloped in aromas of flowers.

It was a beautiful spring morning, full of sunshine and freshness from a clear sky, from intoxicating atmosphere. It invited one to fill his lungs with air, moved the heart placidly, awoke
ideas of peace, of tremendous calm, invited one to enjoy life. But the joys of nature failed to reach Regina. Her soul, veiled by persistent melancholy, was incapable of feeling the pleasures from without. And those rays of sun that penetrated her room, brightening everything with its vibrant and fertile light, did not succeed in dispelling the black shadows that darkened her mind.

She was sad and somber. In vain she had tried to enliven her by spirits playing a happy waltz on the piano. The contrast of the stirring music and the beauty of nature with her melancholy state of mind only exacerbated her pain. She closed the piano and dropped her arms in discouragement.

Memories, at once painful and dear, troubled her mind. Her thought flew fifteen years back and saw herself when she counted only twenty Aprils and had a virgin and passionate heart, not yet jaded by disillusionment. She had already begun in that long ago epoch to revel in glory. Possessed of great musical talent, she distinguished herself as an accomplished pianist, winning accolades and fame in private salons, which encouraged her and evoked the desire to express her genius in a wider field. Her love for art came to overwhelm her soul, numbing her to all other passions.

Had she ever loved anything beside her art? Yes, she had loved Alejo, but she sacrificed her human love for artistic love. How blind! She believed that it would save her soul from the influence of vulgar life but only managed to become a willing victim to the tyrannies and vanities of artistic life.

She was admired, celebrated, applauded. How little that fame that had converted her into a celebrity now appealed to her, the fame that had led her away from that profound love that creates homes, that converts the virgin into mother.

Artistic love. Empty love.
Its vain pleasures, perversely flattering, could not satisfy the longings of her impassioned soul for affection. How unfortunate she was, despite all her fame! Without hesitation she would have exchanged everything for a quiet and happy home where she would ever hear the caring voice of a beloved husband and the silvery laughter of dear children.

Dream, beautiful dream that by her own choice she would never realize. She was 35 years old. A few grey streaks hid in her abundant hair; premature wrinkles threatened to disfigure her pretty face. She had lost her youth, the best years of her life surrendered to a fruitless love. It was too late now to think about other loves. For her the joys of wife and mother were forfeit.

A voice called to her, unheard for a long time, and distracting her from her thoughts and causing her to turn her heard. A cry of joy escaped from her mouth. Alejo stood in the doorway.

***

“Yes, dear cousin,” said Alejo, “I have arrived just today, and my first visit has been to you. But I find you changed. You are more . . . more a woman, but as beautiful as ever. And you? How do you find me?”

“Well, I also find you more a man, but always arrogant.”

“It has been so many years. If you knew how often I have thought about you and how happy your brilliant triumphs have made me.”

“Is that so? The memory cannot have been that intense, if I did not deserve even a single letter from you.”

“Oh, forgive me, Regina. It was not for lack of love or forgetfulness. At the beginning I did not write you because I always feared to open the wound in my heart, the one left by your indifference, by putting my feelings on paper. Then learning from the newspapers that you went
from triumph to triumph, touring the great capitals, ultimately influenced my silence. That and not knowing your address. Later, the mishaps of life, my new situation—"

“Your new situation . . . ?”

“Yes. Don’t you know? I am married. I married a beautiful American girl. Not so pretty as you, but very pretty all the same. Look, here is her picture and a picture of my children.”

Alejo took out of his wallet a photograph of a woman and two children. Regina looked at them in silence, sadly moved. That man, the only one she had ever loved, could now never be hers.

“Pretty wife and beautiful children,” he said, returning the picture to his wallet. “You will be happy with them.”

“Happy. Happy as possible.”

“Then, you do not miss your first love,” added Regina, with a certain painful irony.

“Don’t you believe it. At the bottom of my heart there remain the embers. The disappointment was terrible for me. I searched for forgetfulness in distant lands and to find it as quickly as possible I tried to substitute one love for another. It was not easy to do it. Only the passing of years and my children have gotten me over my first love. How ungrateful you were! But I do not blame you. You did well. You were not born for the quiet life and monotony of the home. Your talent requires broader horizons, a freer, more worldly life.”

“That is true.”

“You were lucky to be born for a life of art. Honors, applause, high esteem, privilege, glory . . . It is all for you. You should be happy.”

“Oh, yes. Completely happy.”

And Regina turned and hid her face to cry.
Lily’s Dream

“Mamá, will the three kings bring me lots of things?”

“Yes, dear, lots of things.”

“I want a really big doll, with a satin dress.”

“Okay, okay.”

“And a little bed, and a little car, and a parlor game—”

“Don’t worry, you will have it all. But sleep, because if the kings come and find you awake, they will be angry.”

“Okay, Mama. I’ll go to sleep right now.” And closing her eyes, the little Lily quieted down and lay still, painting on her lips an imperceptible smile.

Her mother sat beside her bed, watching over the sleep of the precious being. A moment later, Lily’s voice distracted her again. “Oh, Mama!” she cried, raising her head, “I want to see the kings.”

“But honey, you’re crazy. Don’t you know the kings cannot be seen?”

“Then tell me how they look.”

“I have already told you a hundred times. One is white, another bronze, and the third is black.”

“How wonderful the white one must be!”

“All three are good, sweetheart.”

“And where do they carry the toys?”

“Come now, no more questions. Off to sleep you go if you don’t want to make me mad.”
“I’ll fall asleep in one second. . . . Don’t forget, I want a big doll and a bed and parlor game—”

“You shall have it all.”

The little girl settled down, then, “Wake me up early,” she said.

“Again!” cried the mother, pretending to be mad.

“Don’t be angry, Mommy. I’ll go to sleep.”

Gentle sighs followed these words. Then soft and steady breaths indicated that the girl was now asleep.

The mother stood, looked at her lovingly a moment, kissed her, and tiptoed out.

Lily dreams. What is she dreaming? It is easy to guess. She sees the magi kings with their bright clothes, knights on saddled horses and followed by an endless retinue. The white king leads, his curly golden beard reaching his chest. His blue eyes look to all sides with kindness, directing his beautiful pages to the places where they are to leave the precious assorted gifts that they bring on great camels. The bronze king follows him with a plump gentlewoman the color of ebony. The black monarch comes last, who frightens Lily a little, with his bright gaze.

The procession goes on endlessly. The camels follow one after another with their prized cargos of toys in a thousand shapes and colors. What most attracts Lily’s attention are the dolls, whose pretty faces peak over the top of the boxes that the camels carry. They come in all sizes, tiny and fragile some, tall and arrogant others. One of them reaches out her arms, begging Lily for help and protection, and she wants to cry out to the good white king to give her that doll. But as hard as she tries, her voice does not leave her throat and she feels an unspeakable anguish that draws tears from her eyes.
The royal entourage continues passing by, and Lily realizes with horror that they leave nothing on her balcony. How could they forget her who has been so good? She tries to scream, beg, but unable to do so. She watches as the kings move into the distance with their camels loaded with toys, carrying away the pretty doll with blue eyes who reached out her arms in supplication.

***

Lily awakes upset. The light of the dawning day softly warms her room. She remembers the doll with blue eyes, the camels, the kings and pages. Was it all a dream? She jumps from her bed, walks to the balcony, and looks out the window.

And oh, what she sees! Could she still be dreaming? She rubs her eyes to see better and holds her breath so she doesn’t fog up the glass. Her little heart leaps with joy. There is no longer any doubt. There, on the balcony, standing out from among the other toys in a great basket, reaching out lovingly to her, are the arms of the adorable doll with blue eyes and golden curls.

She does not hesitate. Warily she opens the balcony and gathers the doll up in her arms. She kisses it, hugs it, looks at it with love, forgetting the other toys.

“Oh, my little doll, my beautiful little doll!” she exclaims, excitedly, squeezing it in her arms.

Then she closes the balcony and lies down again with her precious cargo. She holds it at her side, tightly, as if to lend it the heat of her body. She speaks to it softly, very softly, recounting her dream. She kisses it a thousand times until, tired out, she falls back asleep, hugging her doll, smiling and speaking to it in her dreams.

A ray of sun, sneaking into the room, reaches the bed and swaddles the two little blond heads in its gilded light.
Father's Love

The colonel paced anxiously in his quarters. A vague restlessness overshadowed him, a certain, profound unease that compelled him to move, unconscious of bodily fatigues occasioned by a long and difficult march, to distract his spirit.

Military duty! Hard and inhuman duty it was that forced him to fight against his own son. He was not afraid of combat. He did not fear death. But he trembled at the thought that in some unexpected accident of that war, he would find himself face to face with his only son, in whom he had placed his hopes and desires.

In his noble breast of military honor, harsh battle waged between fatherly love and the duty his country demanded of him. The first told him that he ought not take part in a war that could arm him against his own son; the second reminded him of the oath he had taken to his flag and required of him the sacrifice of his own life in defense of the nation he was obligated to protect through the double bond of his military career and his patriotic sensibilities. How does one resolve the conflict without offending love or duty?

The presentation of an officer at his door interrupted Colonel Ferrándiz’s worried pacing and even more worried reflections.

“News, Teniente Cabrales?” he asked.

“Yes, mi coronel. Our patrol has brought in a number of prisoners, a captain among them.”

“Good, good. We shall talk about this later. Let me be for now.”

“It’s just that—” began Cabrales, indecisively.

“What? . . . What is it?”
“The rebel captain requests to speak with you.”

The colonel stood still, pensive, and then ordered, “Show him in.”

He fixed his eyes on the door, waiting, his heart pounding and his mind invaded by a horrible foreboding. The lieutenant did not take long to return with two armed soldiers conducting the captive.

Ferrándiz had to support himself on the table so as not to fall. Before him stood his own son.

With a gesture, he ordered the soldiers and lieutenant to leave. Then he said, “It is you, Carlos, if my eyes do not deceive me.”

“It is I, Father,” he said, looking at him with filial love.

“The moment I have so long feared has arrived. Just as well,” he said, smiling sadly, “that we meet without weapons in our hands.”

“The weapon that my hand holds could never be used against you.”

“Why not?” he asked, bitterly. “Am I not your enemy? Have you not rebelled against your father, and worse, your country?”

“Against you? No, my Father. I love you too much to rebel against you. Against my country?” he hesitated and then answered in a self-righteous voice, “I cannot rebel against a country I do not have.”

“Your country is Spain.”

“I was born in Cuba.”

The colonel stepped forward with his armed folded. “Yes, in Cuba, but Cuba belongs to Spain, and in your veins runs my blood—Spanish blood.”
“Spanish blood! Blood has no nationality. It is human, only human. If I fight against Spain, it is out of hate for her, but for love of the people where I was born. Patriotism means nothing to me, always tainted with exclusivity. I fight for the liberty of Cuba as I would fight for the liberty of any oppressed people.”

Ferrándiz, dejected, fell into a chair, holding his tortured head in his hands. A tremendous dilemma has presented itself to him and with horror saw that whatever solution he might choose would cause him deep sorrow. His son was his prisoner. If he turned him in as such, he would betray his fatherly instincts; if he released him, he would betray his military duties.

“Carlos,” he said, raising his graying head, “you are my prisoner—”

“I know.”

“—and you are my son. Do you understand my situation?”

Carlos shuddered and looked, apprehensive, at his father. “There is only one way to resolve the problem that breaks my heart.”

“Speak, Father.”

“Give yourself up.”

“That, never. I would rather you handed me over as a prisoner. For me it would be dishonorable, for you a disgrace. You cannot wish to have a cowardly and treasonous son.”

The colonel stood, looked on his arrogant child with emotion and, opening his arms could only cry, “Carlos!”

They stood, lost in a tight embrace for some time. Then the colonel, pushing his beloved son away, said, “Before a soldier, before a patriot, I am a father. Come.” And he led him to the door, which he opened wide and, pointing to the deserted countryside, said, “You are free. The
jungle awaits you. Defend in her the freedom of Cuba. Who knows but reason and justice are on your side!”

***

When the colonel was sure his son found had himself far away, he closed the door, drew his revolver, and put a bullet in his head.

19

After the Duel

Cruel, agonizing moments!

I remember them as the most deserved curse of my life.

A few paces from me, stretched out on the earth, covered in blood, a man lay dying. And it was I who had wounded him.

Leaning against a tree, eyes staring blankly at the ground, my thoughts wandering through a mental wasteland and sensing only the rhythm of my pounding heart, I awaited the conclusion of that tragic scene.

With disturbing persistence, the hushed words of the dying man still echoed in my head. “Marcos, you have been unfair with me. You insulted me and then you killed me. It is true your honor demanded it, but what is honor that it should require a man’s life!”

My honor! Madness. With blood I had hoped to cleanse it, yet with blood I had only stained it.

He had been my friend, my best friend, but a woman, the eternal apple of discord, had come between us.
One day at a grand ball, Julián said to me, “Is it true what they say, that you are going to marry M?”

“True it is.”

“Well, it is folly.” And coming near to my ear, he said something so repugnant that, unable to contain myself, I cried, “You lie!”

“Do not shout, Marcos. I have proof.”

“You lie!” I repeated and, raising my hand, I struck him.

He tried to retaliate but the onlookers that had gathered round held him back.

Then, the inevitable: the duel. My anger, my honor, demanded it. Public opinion, which dictates that such affairs between gentlemen be settled with pistols or swords, demanded it.

And there was the result: a dying man, and I with remorse and doubt gnawing at my soul.

Conquering my pride, I tried to get to Julián to ask his forgiveness. But it was too late.

I heard, like a curse, the voice of one of the doctors saying, “He is dead.”

Dead! And I had killed him—murdered him—in compliance with all the rules of honor.

I was horrified. I looked at my hands to see whether there had been blood on them, but no, they were white and clean. The dagger of honor, the sword, has a very long blade in order that when a gentleman kills another, he does not run the risk of getting blood on their hands.

I approached resolutely and, standing before the warm corpse of my poor friend, swore a solemn, unbreakable oath. I swore to never fight again.

***

After a brief silence, Marcos added, directing his words to his two listeners, “Here is the reason, gentlemen, that forces me to decline the high honor of fighting with his second.”

“But your honor—” began one of the seconds.
“Honor? I shall repeat to you the final words of my unfortunate victim: ‘What is honor that it should require a man’s life?’”

20

Mother!

Leaning over the table, he wrote feverishly, without his pulse trembling or his pen faltering in the rapid race over the blue lines of the broad sheet of paper. The light of the lamp, concentrated by the lampshade, shined fully on his pale face into which the trials of a difficult life had carved deep lines.

Four bells rang out plaintively and threateningly in a nearby clock tower. A cock crowed in the distance. A cricket chirped its piercing song. And then all became quiet again.

Fernando stopped writing. He moved his chair to the table, sat down, and read:

Forgive me, Mother. I am leaving this world without the consolation of holding you one last time in my tired arms. But you are far away, Mother, very far, and I cannot come to you. Oh, if only you were close by. If your arms could encircle me and your lips kiss me and your tears wet my neck and your words console me, perhaps then the obsessive idea that bores into my brain would evaporate in the heat of your maternal embrace.

Motherly caresses, how tender, how comforting they are! I shall never rejoice in them again.

I owe to you my existence, Mother. And today, the life I freely take, to you alone must I give the reason.

Life is very hard on me, and I am too weak and cowardly to resist its hardships. Since my childhood, you know very well, adversity has pursued me with cruel determination. Do you
remember? I was barely seven years old when my father suddenly disappeared. What a wonderful memory I have kept of him. He seemed to love me. I was for him the sum of all desire. In me he placed all his hopes and wishes. And how did I repay his affection? I loved him more than you, and I loved you very, very much.

His mysterious disappearance was for me the first and greatest tragedy of my life, which your words could not ease when, upon asking for him, you answered me tearfully, “Your father, my poor child, has abandoned you. He has been very bad, very bad.”

Bad, my father? No, it was not possible. Oh! If you had been able to read my thoughts, you would have been horrified. I came to believe that you were worse than he. This thought grew stronger as I grew older. A time arrived, a moment of eternal remembrance, in which I in my turn abandoned you, and this modern errant Jew began his pilgrimage through the world in search of his beloved father. And I found him. At last, I found him. If only I had not.

I do not wish to tire you, dear Mother, with the story of my incessant search, but I must not leave unspoken the result of my interview with him upon discovering his whereabouts.

I knew that he lived in this city, under an assumed name, in great luxury and ostentation. Fortunate speculations and a marriage of convenience had made him extraordinarily wealthy. Relying on my wits, I managed to see him in his office. I revealed my identity and tried to wrap my arms around him, but his cold stare stopped me.

“My Father—” I said plaintively.

“I do not have a son,” he replied, dryly.

“I am Fernando, your—”

“I do not know who you are, nor do I care.”
“You are rejecting me—?” I did not have time to finish. A bell sounded, and a servant appeared in the doorway.

“Escort the gentleman to the street.”

Oh Mother, Mother of my soul, what shame and what pain! Unable to pronounce a word, my eyes full of tears and staggering like a drunkard, I left that cursed house with a wounded heart. And that man was my father? No, it was not possible. It could not be. Oh, forgive me Mother. I had no right to doubt you.”

He had written thus far. Fernando, concluding his letter, sat and pondered. His eyes, dry and bright, stared into space. He saw an image of the grieving woman who had given him life.

The cock crowed a second time. Fernando stood and walked to the open window to breathe the refreshing morning breeze. In the far off sky he could discern the faintest glow of dawn.

“It is a new day dawning, the last of my life,” Fernando murmured. He lingered there in thought, leaning in the window, contemplating the magnificent view of the day’s first light.

As the shadows dissipated and light spread across the broad sky, indistinct hopes touched his soul, easing away dark ideas. Die? No, he must not die. Far, very far away, a woman, sinner perhaps, but humbled and redeemed by maternal love, mourned his absence and anxiously awaited his return. It was his mother.

With a brisk movement he backed away from the window, walked to the table, across which the bright, happy light of the first ray of sun shone, and finished writing:

Mother, when I began this letter I thought only of death. Upon finishing it, I think only of you. I love you with all my heart, dear Mother. I shall return to you, loving you much more than when I left you. Wait for me with open arms. I need your love.
Mother, dear Mother, I shall see you soon.

21

The Black Cloak

He wondered at the mysterious letter. It had come, it appeared, from a woman who had invited him to attend the grand masquerade ball that was to take place that evening.

He lived a secluded life, cultivating few friendships and dedicated entirely to the care of his young daughter. His few friends were incapable of playing a Carnaval trick on him. As for lady friends, he had none. Who, then, could be the woman with the black cloak and red ribbons who, according to the message, he was to meet at the ball?

A voice very dear to him interrupted his meditation. “A kiss, Papá.”

He turned around. It was his Rosita. He took the little blond head in both hands, looked at her a moment with tenderness, and deposited on her smooth forehead, covered with curls, two very long kisses. “Are you going to bed now? he asked her, lovingly.

“Yes, Papá. Good night.”

He followed her with his eyes and listened to her chatter a bit in her room as the nurse undressed her. In that small and pretty being were summed up all his love and hopes. She was six years old. It had been five since her mother’s lips had touched her forehead. Painful memories came to mind, reopening the poorly healed wounds of his soul. With a brusque movement he passed his hand over his brow and stood. He did not want to remember.

He thought about the invitation he had received from the stranger. An affair? Who knows? Meeting her would distract his troubled spirit if nothing else.

He quickly dressed, kissed the sleeping child, and went out.
***

Entering into the theater floor, converted into a great ballroom, a profound sense of unease came over Lorenzo. It had been years since he had even been a spectator of Carnaval’s lunacy, which no longer entertained nor interested him despite its lively raucous. Indifferent, almost bored, he watched the pairs of dancers pass by his side and the groups of amusing and revolting masks. His eyes searched for the mask in the black cloak with red ribbons. Before his eyes could find it, he felt her take him by the arm at the same time a voice, somewhat unnatural, said in his ear, “You’re on time.”

“Are you the one who sent the letter?”

“The same.”

“May I know who you are?”

“Not now.”

“Shall I know later?”

“Who knows?”

Lorenzo felt his arm pressed firmly by the one in the mask. The adventure was beginning to interest him. By the exuberance of her body, by her walk and her voice, he thought the woman must be young, and perhaps beautiful.

The orchestra began a waltz.

“Shall we dance?” he asked the mask.

She responded by leading him to the dance floor.

***
Throughout the night, the mysterious mask was Lorenzo’s inseparable companion, all the while trying in vain to discover who she was. But what most intrigued him was that the woman had a certain abandon and gestures he could not place.

They left shortly before the ball ended. A victory awaited the woman, giving the coachman the address to Lorenzo’s home.

“You are taking me to my house?” he asked, surprised.

“Yes. Do you not know why?”

“I do not.”

She sat quietly a moment, deliberating, and then said, “You spoke of a daughter at the ball, in whom you have placed all your love.”

“That is true.”

“Well then, I would like—”

“What? Speak.”

“Would you permit me to kiss your daughter?”

There was now in her voice a peculiar accent that reminded Lorenzo of the voice of the disloyal and cruel Juana who, even if she still lived, for him and his daughter, had died. Could this be her?

“And what could interest you so much in a girl you do not know?” he asked.

“Is she not your daughter? That is enough for me to love her.”

“Then, you love me.”

“With my whole soul.”

“But you will understand that I cannot return the love of a mask. Tell me who you are. Show me your face.”
“Let us make a pact.”

“How so?”

“Allow me to see your daughter, and then you shall see my face.”

“I accept.”

The coach stopped. It had arrived.

***

They walked quietly toward the girl’s bed. She was sleeping soundly, with innocent abandon. Her little pale face had a placid expression.

“How beautiful she is!” said the woman, leaning over to see her better.

Thus she remained for a long time. Lorenzo divined the woman’s deep emotion. No doubt remained; it was her. “Kiss her, Juana,” he said, softly.

Without showing any surprise at being recognized, she removed the mask and kissed the child’s forehead.

Lorenzo watched the sinful and sad mother, and the innocent and pure daughter. How beautiful and similar they are!

After long minutes of silent contemplation, Juana suddenly stood, placing her handkerchief to her eyes. “That is enough. It hurts to see her.” And then, turning to Lorenzo, she reached out her hand.

He backed away with uncertainty. They looked into each other’s eyes an instant, then she suddenly threw her arms around him and kissed him long and with desperate passion on the lips.

“Goodbye,” she said, and left the room.

Lorenzo was about to pursue her, but the child’s frightened voice stopped him, crying,

“Papá, Papá.”
“What is the matter my daughter?”

“What is that woman?”

“She is . . . a mask. The black cloak.”

“She scares me, Papá. Tell her not to come back.”

Lorenzo heard a stifled sob behind the door and unsteady steps walking away.

22

Wasted Lives

A letter. My heart is heavy.

They tell me such sad things, the letters I receive. They are nearly always heralds of pain and misery.

The envelope evokes distant memories in my mind—memories from that first youth in which, the heart full of fire and the brain of fancy, one feels the excitement and energy to win glory, the gilded dream of every artist’s soul.

The letter is written on a desk in the café Continental. I guess it by the letterhead of the envelope. Ten years ago, in that establishment, we four dreamers, youths of twenty years, more or less, met every night. And between sips of coffee, we spoke of literature and music, argued and often shared our future projects, our hopes of triumph, our longings for glory, one with another.

Marcial spoke of his plays and his novels that directors and editors would vie for; Roberto recited stanzas of the admirable poems he was writing; Pablo, the café pianist, sang selections of the melodies that would immortalize his name; and even I timidly dared—being the youngest and least confident in my abilities—to share my literary interests.
Many times we engaged in heated debates.

“Literary art,” said Marcial, “must be all idea, all passion, all sentiment. It must stir souls, move hearts, cause brains to think. We should speak of life, of what has been, what is, and what shall be.”

“Literature,” Ricardo argued, “must have as its sole objective the cult of beauty, and beauty is uniquely in its form.”

“You condense literature into a pretty word, a chiseled phrase, obscure expressions, and that is stupid and foolish.”

“And you seek to reduce it to the description of the obscure, vile and mediocre, which is immoral.”

“You are a rhymer of empty words.”

“And you, a remover of trash.”

Here the discussion degenerated in dispute and required the musician’s or my intervention to restore calm.

“Gentlemen,” said Pablo, “do not upset yourselves over such a little thing. After all, literature is nothing more than a limited manifestation of art. True art, art par excellence, that which causes one to feel most deeply, is music.”

“You’re out of your mind!” replied Marcial. “Music, more often than not, is an irritating noise, like what’s his name said.”

“Music,” answered Ricardo, depreciatively, “cannot evoke beauty of form as graphically as poetry.”

And thus went our discussion until it was time for the café to close, and the times were not few that we continued our conversation in the deserted streets.
What times those were! If only they could return, those dark swallows of which Becquer spoke. They are far away. Ten years. A long time for fruitless battles. Since then, the illusions have abandoned my soul, one by one, like golden leaves discarded by the tired tree, incessantly battered by a life full of mishaps.

Then, I could not pass for twenty; today I look like I’m thirty. Morally, I feel old, tired, powerless. Oh! Even a few premature grey hairs have sprouted from my head. It is all I have gained. But, losing myself in my memories, I have forgotten to read the letter. It’s from Pablo, the pianist. Let us see what he says.

*My friend, Alfredo, It has been a long time since I last wrote to you, and the fault is mine. But what do you expect? When life is laborious and hard, the blues overpower you and damned if you feel like writing.*

*By your last letter, I see that you are not happy and that your bad luck has pursued you to distant lands. Don’t think I have been more fortunate than you. At least you have had good fortune of traveling the world, of experiencing new sensations. I, I have consumed the best years of my life in a corner of this café, playing the piano to amuse customers. Nothing remains of my dreams of glory but the distant memory. Our friends have not prospered either. Poor Ricardo died of tuberculosis two months ago without having found anyone to edit his poems. Marcial is wasting away as a gossip columnist for El Pueblo, with the pleasure of seeing one play rejected and a novel whose first and only edition is selling for the price of paper.*

*We are failures, my friend, a bunch of true failures.*

Failures! It’s true.

What has become of those dreams of glory? They evaporated at the slightest contact with reality.
What did we do to deserve it? Very little, almost nothing. Weak spirits, mediocre intellects, we lacked strength, daring, will. We spent our energy in vain, without making any contribution to society. The farmer, the city worker, the miner do something useful. But we, we have produced nothing of any benefit, believing all along that we were somehow superior to them. Imbeciles!

What wasted lives we’ve lived!

23

The Rendezvous

_Tonight, at eight._

The note said no more, but neither was there a need. Cándido reread it a million times, while his eyes shined contentedly and a triumphant smile grew on his lips.

He would finally realize his golden dream: to speak freely with Marcela, to express the intensity of his affection without reservation.

It was his first affair, and this added new excitement to his meeting. Then an untimely memory embittered his happiness. Some time ago, he had been deceived by a woman to whom he had given, along with his name, a treasure even more precious than his first love. It was a fleeting memory that quickly dissipated.

He dressed meticulously, groomed himself with great care, tried out a number of arrogant attitudes in front of the mirror, and left his house an hour before the arranged time, hoping to calm his impatience by walking to the adventure through the city streets.

***
Through a strange mixture of ideas, as soon as he thought of Marcela, the woman whom he was going to meet, he thought of Ophelia, the ungrateful woman who had cheated on him. Their images combined in his mind and he melded them into the same anathema, rolling them together into a single lover, until he came to doubt his own identity, not knowing whether he had become the deceived or the deceiver.

By a force of will he focused his thoughts. He tried to drive away the memory of Ophelia and think only about Marcela. But he tried in vain. His thoughts always flew to the first. Could it be that he still loved her? He was persuaded that the love he had once professed to her had been replaced by contempt, but how could he forget the bitter disappointment that still consumed his heart? How could he not miss that peaceful and happy home that the caprice of a woman had forever torn apart? Oh, women! They were all the same. Could it be that Marcela, who in a short while he would hold in his arms, was also an example of the eternal frailty that forgets her duties, carried off by the rush of a passionate moment? Reaching deeper, he asked himself whose fault it was, the woman’s or the man’s. He thought that if Marcela ultimately gave in to his advances, it would not be without a struggle. He recalled that he had pursued her, flattering her with the constant protest of a false love, with the traitorous strategies of a lying passion, drawing her little by little to the abyss. No, she was not entirely to blame.

He feared to continue the implications any further. He looked at his watch; the anticipated hour was growing near.

***

When the waiter carrying the service had left, Cándido closed the door to the private booth and sat beside Marcela. He took her hand, which she abandoned passively, and he kissed it repeatedly. “Do you love me?” he asked her.
“If I did not love you,” she replied, “would I have come to see you, forgetting my marital duties?”

A chill ran through Cándido’s body. Perhaps it was these same words, he thought, that Ophelia had pronounced the first time she had cheated on him. Why, in those moments, would his mind race back to the cruel memory? He tried to cast it aside, tried to wrap the beautiful woman that he had at his side in his arms and speak loving words in her ear, but his arms would not move and his mouth remained mute.

She looked at him, surprised by his silence and passivity. Cándido realized that the situation had become absurd. He stood and paced. Marcela, unmoving, became lost in thought, her gaze fixed on the floor.

“Could she be thinking of her children?” Cándido wondered.

This new consideration further chilled his amorous passion. Undoubtedly that was Marcela’s first downfall, and he was the cause of it. What would be the consequences? Oh, how well he knew them! Why, then, would he ruin the life of a man who had done him no harm? Why cause, perhaps, the unhappiness of innocent children? Why destroy a peaceful and happy home? There was still time to avoid doing harm.

He returned to his place on the divan and again took Marcela’s hand, but this time without kissing it. “Do not judge me badly, Marcela,” he began.

“And why should I?” she replied, looking intently at him with her beautiful eyes.

Cándido, indecisive, wiped his forehead. “Do you love your children?” he asked, suddenly.

“I adore them.”

“Do you love your husband?”
Marcela lowered her head, troubled.

“Yes, you love him,” said Cándido, “because he is good, because he is the companion of your life, with whom you have suffered and rejoiced, because he is the father of your children. And you are right to love him. Caught up in a fleeting passion that spoke only to your senses, kindled by my protestations of love, have you been able to forget for a moment.”

“You have brought me here to tell me this?” said Marcela, trying to stand.

He held her back gently. “Listen. When I came here, believe me, the thought of speaking to you like this was far from my mind. Your first words provoked this reaction in me. They opened a wound I had believed to be healed. I, too, was married and was a father. A wretched man robbed me of the love of my wife and caused the unhappiness of my children. If you only knew how I suffered. If only you knew . . .”

He stopped, lost in the painful memory. Emotion tightened his chest, constricted his throat, and darkened his mind.

When he returned to reality and looked at Marcela, he saw tears on her cheeks.

“No,” he went on, “that I was a victim of such selfishness does not justify my becoming the agent of another’s ruin. If you had no children, if you had no husband, we could love each other freely in the light of the sun, but to love each other as hypocrites in shadows, to deceive, and to cheat ourselves . . . that is neither noble nor honorable nor generous.”

Marcela stood and without a word, put on her hat and straightened her dress, trying in vain to hide her embarrassment.

“Marcela!”

She turned, drying her eyes with her handkerchief, and extended her hand to Cándido.

“Thank you,” she said. “Thank you.”
And she left.

***

For a few moments Cándido listened to her retreating footsteps. “It is love that walks away from me,” he said, with sadness.

Then he sat back down, buried his face in his hands, and cried in silence.

24

Marmórea

“Over here, Máximo,” Prince Boris said, raising the portière and pointing at the marble statue.

He found himself in the middle of a salon, and its snowy whiteness stood out against the red tapestries that surrounded it. It was the representation of a graceful woman, splendid of form, the lines irreproachable. There she stood, with both hands to her breasts, as though offering them; the head slightly raised, the lips parted in a charming smile, the hair hanging freely. Thus she was the perfect creation of an inspired artist who had managed to personify in a block of marble all the physical graces of Woman.

The jaded prince, in his declining youth, having enjoyed all the pleasures and joys of every love, realized that he had never loved with true passion, because he had yet to find the flawless beauty that he had forged in his mind through the tedious moments of disenchantment. And lacking a being of flesh and bone, he worshipped in that statue the embodiment of the ideal woman that reality had denied him.

After a moment of silent contemplation, Boris said, as though speaking to himself, “If this inert marble, cold and lifeless, could be animated, breathe and feel—"
“Why shouldn’t it?” replied Máximo.

“Are you joking?” added Boris, turning toward his friend.

“In a way.”

“Then, do you seriously think there could be a way to impart life to this statue?”

“I am convinced of it.”

“But that would be a miracle, and I did not think that you, a man of science, believed in miracles.”

“I not only believe in them, I am determined to make them.”

Boris looked at him in disbelief, as though he doubted his mental stability.

“I am not crazy,” Máximo said, smiling. “Lend me a moment of your attention and I will convince you that what you believe to be a miracle is nothing more than a transformation of matter. I can convert this chunk of solid marble by means of certain chemical processes of which I am familiar into tissue, tendons, muscles, nerves, bones, blood, and humors, all of which are ultimately necessary to form a human organism. This I can achieve without compromising the statue’s exterior beauty.”

“And what are the chemical processes that you employ to bring about the transformation?”

“Processes? Ah, this is my secret which, for the sake of my fellow man, I shall not divulge. Let it suffice that the transformation is based in the scientific principle that all matter is derived from a single substance, that only its manifestations are distinct, that these obey the numbers and movements of electrons that form each atom of matter. The whole of my secret, then, lies in knowing how to dis-integrate the atoms that constitute this block of marble and then
reorganize them into the organic elements that comprise the human body. ¿Does my explanation satisfy you?"

"To a degree. Yet, I still do not understand how you can arrange the necessary elements to bring about such a marvelous transformation."

"It is up to you to find out. Do you wish to give human life to this statue?"

"Oh! It is the greatest unrealized desire of my life. If you performed such a miracle, I would be the happiest of mortals."

***

The statue was carried to Máximo’s laboratory, where it was subjected to certain preliminary procedures such as enclosing it in a great crystal urn into which were introduced two probes at the top, which were then connected to a fixture that covered its head.

Máximo flipped a switch, sending a powerful electro-radiovital current through the inanimate body, which in seconds began acquiring the pale rosy tint of living flesh, the breast moving with regular rhythm.

"It lives!" cried Boris, rushing forward toward the urn.

"Wait," said Máximo, holding him back. "Do not be impatient."

He opened the urn and, putting his hands on the head of the living statue, with his thumbs over its eyes, said, "Marmórea, come out. Live and enjoy life!"

And Marmórea, the statue become woman, came out of the magic urn smiling, and Boris received her in his arms.

***

For some time Boris was the happiest of men. He loved Marmórea with intense passion, admiring in her Venustian body the highest of all corporal perfections.
His happiness lasted but little. It did not take long to notice that her beautiful body enclosed a cold soul, unfeeling and hard, as though it reproduced in spirit the physical qualities of the marble from which she had been formed. Never did passion stir Marmórea’s body. Her lips returned kisses with automatic movement; her eyes saw without passion; her sculpted arms knew not how to wrap around the neck of the lover with affection; never did desire flush her pale cheeks nor quicken the beats of her heart nor draw sweet words from her mouth.

Again he went to Máximo his friend for help. “You fulfilled your promise in giving life to Marmórea,” he said, “but you forgot to give her what is most important.”

“What is that?”

“A soul.”

“A soul . . .” repeated Máximo, thoughtfully. “You never asked for one. You fell in love with a body, not a soul. You only asked me to animate a body to enjoy its beauty.”

“You are right. I fell in love with a beautiful body, but now I understand how little it matters without a beautiful soul. Máximo, my friend, a soul for Marmórea!”

“The soul, Boris, is not created. It is formed. Marmórea, like every thing and every being, possesses a rudimentary soul that is capable of unfolding and becoming perfect. Leave her with me and I shall attempt to develop her spiritually.”

“How long will it take?”

“It is much more difficult to transform a soul than transform a body. Give me a year.”

“Agreed.”

***

At the appointed time, Boris returned to the house of Máximo, his heart swollen with hope.
“Here I am,” he said. “Your time is up. Have you kept your end of the bargain?”

“Judge for yourself.”

Máximo sent for Marmórea, who presented herself without delay, beautiful as always but now expressing a quickness in her step, intelligence in her look, feeling in her whole being. She was Marmórea with a soul.

Boris cried out in exaltation and, opening his arms wide, said, “My Marmórea . . .”

But Marmórea looked at him with indifference and took a step back.

“Marmórea,” Máximo said, sadly, “it is Boris, your lord and master.”

“No, Máximo,” she said. “He can never be my master who only desires my body. You are my master, you who formed my soul and taught me to love.”

And so saying, she went to Máximo and put her arms around him.

***

The next morning the Saint Petersburg newspapers carried the sensational tale that Prince Boris had surprised his lover in the house of Doctor Máximo and that, blinded by anger and jealousy, riddled them with bullets. They added that the prince had completely lost his reason, and as proof of his insanity referred to the story of Marmórea.

25

Spirit Music

Dorio was a great artist. He had been born to feel and express aesthetic emotion. What a fine sensibility he had! He perceived harmonies where for others there was only silence or imperceptible murmurings, but for him the vibrations of light held no secrets, the whispers of the spring, the shaking of the leaves, the rumors of the breeze, the flight of insects, the songs of the
birds, and the undulation of the waves. Listening to him explain, with his sweet Italian speech, the strange melopoeia that his mind conceived, I could not ascertain whether he was a splendid lunatic or a stupendous genius.

I met him at Bleecker’s Italian Restaurant in New York, where he ate every day, and I only seldom went, attracted by Dorio’s conversation and the delicious macaroni that was served there. During the after dinner conversation, draining one cup after another of a black liquid that they called coffee and smoking a long wooden pipe, we talked a good deal about art.

“Mio caro,” he said one night in his sonorous voice, pleasant as a caress, “the music of sounds, as harmonious as it may be, does not come close to inaudible music, that which reaches the brain without passing through the ear.”

“I cannot conceive of a music without sound,” I said. “It is as if you are speaking to me of a sea without waters, a light without luminous waves, a being without body.”

“As impossible as it may seem, do not doubt that it exists.”

“But music specifically consists of the harmonious combination of sounds.”

“Vulgar, material music, yes, but not supernatural, divine, spirit music that moves souls without troubling them with the irritating vibrations of the material world.”

“Your spirit music is an illusion.”

Dorio stared at me a moment and exclaimed, “And if I proved that what you believe is an illusion is a reality—”

“You would succeed in convincing me.”

“Then come.” And without another word, he shook his pipe and rose to his feet. I followed suit and we left the restaurant.

***
The street was deserted. It was snowing, but the absolute absence of wind gave the ambience a quiet majesty. We walked silently, well wrapped in our coats, sinking our feet into the thick layer of snow that covered the streets.

“Do you perceive,” Dorio said, stopping, “the harmony of the snow?”

“I do not perceive anything, save for a horrible coldness in my feet. Let us keep walking.”

“Wait. Each snowflake is a distinct note that when united with others forms chords, and these in turn constitute the snowy harmony. Observe how they fall, one by one, with different movements. From the immense variety of their changes results the linking of chords that evoke in the mind strange compositions. And like snow, everything in nature has its special harmony, untranslatable through the sounds that the human ear can perceive.”

“Presumptions, Dorio.”

“Ah, if only you could appreciate as I do the snowy harmony that at this moment enflames my mind with sensations which I am incapable of expressing! You would not say that they are mere presumptions. But your spirit is not prepared because it is yet unfamiliar with the harmonies of the inaudible. I shall introduce you to them.”

***

When we arrived at his apartment, a tall building with a certain look of poverty, located on a dirty street of the Italian barrio, he led me into a small room, carpeted in sky blue. It was furnished with a divan of respectable age judging by the fringe and bobbles; two cane chairs, in good condition; and an organ of very special and complicated construction that would be difficult to describe, not because of my utter ignorance in questions of music but because it was an instrument very different from the usual.
Dorio guided me to the divan as he went to the instrument. “What do you think this is?”

“By its shape, it appears to be a small organ.”

“Precisely. It is an invention of mine, and I have given it the name of armonium inaudible, the inaudible harmonium, really. Through it I have succeeded in intensifying the most delicate of vibrations, those which even the finest ear cannot perceive, and the distant noises of the infinite that, due to their being produced at incommensurable distances, we are not able to hear them. The result is inexperienced harmonies that elevate the soul toward ideal regions of pristine beauty.”

“But how were you able to—?”

“Do we not have the microscope, which allows us to see the marvels of the invisible world, the telescope that explores distant regions of space? Well, I have invented the audisminimo, an apparatus that collects and amplifies the finest vibrations, and the audiscosmos, which makes the most distant sounds perceptible.”

“And those instruments—”

“For now, let it suffice to know that they exist and that thanks to them I have been able to construct my harmonium, which is destined to produce a revolution in music. You shall be the first mortal, after the inventor, who will enjoy the preeminence of its marvels. Come closer.”

I sat down next to the harmonium and placed a zinc headpiece with earphones on my head. Wires attached to the exterior surface and ran out from the back of the apparatus.

“You will first hear ‘The Grand March of the Worlds,’” Dorio said, as he adjusted the headpiece. “Since you are unaccustomed to spirit music, I will explain its significance.”

With rapid movements he moved the organ registers. At the same time I heard something like a whistle, then a very faint sound that grew and receded alternatively while strange whispers,
indefinable rumors, and mysterious vibrations that came from very far away mixed together. It formed a totality of strange sounds not altogether exempt from a certain exotic harmony from beyond the limits of the rationally imaginable. And joining with it, like a hushed echo, was the voice of Dorio, saying, “Preludes of the infinite. The atoms of ether vibrate, forming great whirlwinds. . . . Nebulae with inconceivable retinues of millions of stars navigate oceans of imponderable matter. . . . Suns spin dizzily, inundating space with surges of light, and draw innumerable planets to themselves. . . . Dying worlds roll sadly on, carrying in their wombs the remains of dead humanities. . . . New worlds surge into being with the violent collision of cold stars. . . . It is the triumphal march of the Universe toward the fathomless infinity of time and space.”

After a brief respite, he continued. “Listen now to the ‘Symphony of the Atoms.’ We penetrate into the world of the invisible, where the first waves of known life have their origin. Primordial substance, formed of ether, perpetuates endless vibrations. Each particle of ether vibrates at least 734 trillion times per second, forming an incredible range of frequencies. Heat, light, electricity, magnetism, chemical reactions—they all have their origin in the vibratory movements of ether. In each particle of mass, the universal spirit lies dormant. Ether particles unite, combine their vibrations, and form the atom, or the smallest part of ponderable matter. . . . And each atom is a universe of the infinitely small, a universe that comprehends uncountable worlds. . . . Atoms combine their movements and become molecules. . . . We arrive at the edge of the organic world, where the cell emerges triumphant. . . . The babble of organized life.”

He fell silent and stopped playing. I took advantage of the occasion to make a gesture of removing the headpiece, which was beginning to produce in me a sensation of discomfort, but Dorio detained me with an expression.
“Not yet,” he said. “Listen lastly to the ‘Song of the Worms.’ Pay attention. In underground and marble crypt rests the lifeless body of a prince. He was handsome, strong, and powerful. Today he is a disgusting mass of worms. The little worms move restlessly and eat, eat with the same eagerness as puppies suck the maternal teat. To death they owe life, and to death they sing a hymn of gratitude, praising it like a goddess. Now next to nothing remains of the fleshy tabernacle of the prince. His spirit, disintegrated into scattered atoms, animates in part these very worms, which are formed from the material and spiritual residues of the dead prince. And the worms, for their part, are no more than a transitory form in the eternal and universal evolution of beings.”

I did not want to hear any more. With an abrupt movement, I removed the cursed headpiece that produced a painful sense of ill-being in me, with its vague and mysterious noises.

“What are you doing?” asked Dorio, confused.

“I cannot handle your ‘spirit music.’”

“It is because you are still not ready to appreciate its beauties.”

“Yeah. That must be it.”

I took leave of my friend, having now the firm conviction that he was indeed crazy, but a kind crazy man who, I had the feeling, possessed that which had been withheld from saner men.

***

The vicissitudes of life carried me away from New York for a time. When I returned, my first meal was at the Italian restaurant, not so much to savor the delicious macaroni as to spend some time talking with my friend Dorio.

“Has Dorio been around?” I asked the owner.

“Poor Dorio,” he said, “he will come no more.”
“What! Did he go back to Italy? He didn’t die, did he?”

“E pazzo.”

“Crazy? Come on, that’s nothing new. He was crazy when I met him.”

“Yes, but lately his craziness has been showing and they had to put him away in Bellvue.”

I went the next day to the hospital, managing with little effort to see my friend. He recognized me immediately, and after shaking my hand began to speak to me of his spirit music.

“Your inaudible harmonium?” I interrupted, my curiosity piqued.

“I destroyed it. Men are not worthy of enjoying the wonders of my music.”

When I was about to say goodbye to him, he drew me to a corner of the room with much mystery, and after he had assured himself that we were alone, he quietly told me these last words: “Universal harmony is God, and souls are the notes that form the great harmony. Keep this revelation to yourself and do not divulge it, for others would not understand.”

26

The Spy

While visiting the home of a certain French communist in London, accompanied by a Russian political refugee, I met a woman whose style and history intrigued me. She had blue eyes, with an intense and tranquil gaze. Her abundant hair was strawberry blond. Her face was serenely beautiful, but troubled by a hint of sadness, accentuated by the fullness of her lips.

My Russian friend presented her to me, simply saying, “María Staroff, a tireless worker for the cause.”
Later, while we ate in a French restaurant on Chalotte Street, desirous to know more about the woman whose name I had forgotten, I said to my friend, “She is a very interesting woman.”

“Who?”

“The one you introduced me to this afternoon.”

“Oh, the spy.”

“What! I thought you said she worked for the cause?”

“Yes, but María Staroff, who is today a tried and true nihilist, was at one time a very capable spy for the Russian government who caused us a lot of trouble and was the ruin of an intelligent and noble comrade. That is why she is still known among her friends as the spy, a name which has become a matter of habit and no longer brings offense or expresses resentment. The poor thing has long paid her debt.”

“What you are telling me suggests a more involved story,” I said, trying to elicit a fuller explanation.

“This is true, and I will satisfy your curiosity by telling it to you, but be warned that I am in a hurry. I will not take any more time that what it requires me to smoke my pipe.” And saying so, he drank down his tea in one gulp and proceeded to fill his pipe.

“Fill it well,” I cried, laughing.

“No need to worry. There is time enough.”

He lit his pipe and, after drawing a few puffs of smoke, he began his tale. “Five years ago, María arrived in London, passing for a Russian student, a passionate defender of the cause. In reality, she was no more than a spy whom the Czar’s government had sent us to discover our plans and methods. Since she was smart and beautiful, she soon won the friendship and
confidence of the emigrant nihilists, particularly the young ones. Since the first moments, she showed a decided preference for one of our best comrades, Pedro Martini. Did you know Martini?”

“Only by name. I am aware that he was one of the most energetic and active revolutionaries and that his love for the cause cost him deportation to Siberia, where I believe he died.”

“Precisely. But perhaps you did not know the causes behind his deportation and death. But my tale will clear it all up for you. María managed to win Pedro’s friendship, and later his love. They established between them a relationship based on ideas and feelings that constituted the kind of love we nihilists share; only that this relationship, real on Pedro’s part, held the interest of and was only accepted as the means to an end on María’s part. She, obeying the orders of her superiors, desired above all to learn, and as far as possible to appropriate Martini’s correspondence, supposing that it would contain, if not essential, then at least important information that would reveal the revolutionary objectives.

“To accomplish a delicate mission from the Comité, Pedro was designated to go in cognito to Saint Petersburg. By a weakness of all who love (and this affirms my theory that the revolutionary must love the revolution alone), he told María of his journey, notwithstanding his withholding his true motives for going. The night before his departure, she went into Pedro’s room (they both lived in the same boarding-house) and, pretending horrible jealousy, tried to make him confess the purpose of his trip.

“‘Swear to me,’ she said, ‘that you are not going to Saint Petersburg for another woman.’

“‘I swear,’ he said.
“‘You have not convinced me,’ she replied, astutely. ‘At least tell me why you are going.’

“‘It is a secret I cannot reveal. It is enough to know that I go because the cause requires it.’

“She did not insist, realizing that it would be useless. But recognizing that the voluptuous caresses of the flesh can cloud the mind of the strongest of men and that a hot bed invites confidences, she did not hesitate to sacrifice her body to perhaps save the life of the Czar. Acting out her role as the lover despairing of the imminent departure of the one she adored, she wrapped her arms around Pedro’s neck and kissed him passionately on the mouth. Then . . .”

“Then, what?”

“She did not tell me what happened—and I am telling you that I heard all this from María herself—but you can figure it out. The case is, to be brief, (the pipe is burning out) that they spent that last night together, that she found out the reason for Pedro’s trip, which was directly related to a great revolutionary act, and that taking advantage of his sleep, she slipped away with important and compromising documents. The next morning Pedro left for Russia with a false passport, but as he crossed the border he was detained, thanks to the report María had made. After a sensational process in which he was accused of conspiring against the life of our dear father the Czar, he was condemned to forced labor in Siberia.”

My friend stopped talking to take half a dozen draws on his pipe and continued.

“Before and after the process, Pedro wrote several letters of ardent love to his idolized María, who he went on believing was good and worthy of being loved, remembering with tenderness the first and last night of love. By some psychological anomaly, which I have tried in vain to understand, the woman who had caused the ruin and loss of that excellent comrade later
realized that the love she had believed was feigned, had shot down deep roots in her soul. Those letters in which he put down all the desires of a sincere lover and all the bitterness of an unfortunate man awoke in her the passion that, without her knowing it, was lying dormant at the bottom of her soul. When she realized that she loved him, she chastised herself for having caused the misfortune of that noble heart, and an immense despair seized her breast. It was then that, needing consolation and counsel, she revealed to me her lamentable treachery.

“‘What should I do?’ she asked me, with tears in her eyes.

“‘You must go to him in Siberia, confess your disloyalty of yesterday, your love of today, and dedicate your entire life to him. Only thus will you remediate in some measure the evil you have done him.’

“‘Confess!’ she cried. ‘And if he rejects me . . .?’

“‘He will not reject you. There is in him too much love for you and sufficient goodness for his mistaken fellow for him to deny you forgiveness.’

“She went to Siberia. She confessed, and he forgave her. They lived together, loving each other, until the consumption snatched the final breath away from that beautiful soul called Pedro Martini.”

He fell silent, exhaling the last puffs of smoke from the pipe, raising his eyes to see them spiral upward and dissipate into space.

“And what about her?” I asked.

He shook the pipe and, looking distantly at the ceiling with very clear eyes, said, “Her? She lives, ever thinking about the man she betrayed and loved in the constant battle for the cause. The nihilist has purified the spy, and all through the work of love. Love! It is the weapon that
proffers the noblest victories. Only we men who engage in brutish struggles resort to the murderous weapon of hate.”

27

Spring Song

The place bade one to rest. What is the point of continuing on in search of lodging in the nearby town, exposed to the bothersome curiosity of strangers? Here there was grass to stretch out on, leafy trees to offer a protective roof, and a spring in whose waters one might quench his thirst and soothe his burning head.

The twilight slowly vanished, already powerless to hide the faint glimmer of the first stars. A welcome calm settled over the earth, happy to surrender to the night after a day of sapping solar caresses.

He sat upon the grass, leaning against an old tree not far from the natural spring of crystalline water that flowed without ceasing through a narrow channel in the rocks alongside the road.

The song of the solitary spring! It was monotonous, constant, without rest, without a breath. The eternal chatter of the water hurries restlessly on down mountains and across valleys, leaving behind nourishing particles of liquid, until it dissolves into an abundant river that in turn mixes with the immense sea.

In the waters that run, clear or turbulent, tame or agitated, constructive or destructive, there is movement and life. Stagnant and tranquil waters, sterile and diseased, only serve as a reflection to the clouds that pass by or an incubator for toxic vapors.

Restless and murmuring, waters tranquil and stagnant. Thus are the souls of men.
The spring sings in her melancholy monotony, in her caressing whisper, “I am the solitary spring of waters fresh and clear. I come from far away, from the unknown bowels of the mountain. Many, many years ago an unknown force drove me out from the crevice of rocks to bound happily down the mountain.

“I am an endless source, open to all who thirst. To the rich and poor, the noble and peasant, wise and ignorant, strong and weak, good and bad I offer my restorative waters equally. A beautiful princess, of royal lineage, moistened her shiny lips in my waters. After her, a beggar washed his blistered feet in my waters. When war devastated these lands, red and white disputing their dominion, one after another came to me to calm his thirst. Field workers returning home, their arduous tasks completed, stop to wet their dry throats. Pretty villagers, barefoot and wearing short skirts, come to fill their jugs and wash their clothes in my stream. Rambunctious young boys let my cool and caressing stream wash over their sun-blackened bodies. Tired travelers greet me with joyful cries and rest at my side after refreshing themselves and sending up praise. The little bird at the break of day abandons her nest and comes to wet her wings and take her happy morning flight. Fowl come to my brook and, dipping in their beaks, then raise them up to swallow the drops they have captured. In my overflowing reservoir that genteel lady and gallant knight water their noble steeds or the patient, yoked asses that that pull the heavy cart.

“I am the spring of love. The murmur of my song hushes lovers’ whispers, the sound of passionate kisses, the sighs of making love, and my cool waters moisten the lips and throats parched by passion.
“I am the vivifying spring that carries fertility to the lands through which my waters pass. The valley owes to me his field of golden wheat, his fragrant oranges, his colorful and intoxicating flowers.

“I am the solitary spring of waters pure and crystalline. I satisfy all. Of myself I give generously, without hope of recompense.”

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Thus sang the spring never ceasing, her voice the sound of restless and bubbling water, monotonous yet changing with the most varied harmonic combinations of thought. And the traveler listened closely, his soul touched by the sweet ecstasy of that singular song.

The spring went on. “I am happy in my solitary existence, neither envious nor envied, feeling pleasure in doing good for good’s sake. But oh, sometimes the fear of my impotence to save another from pain has saddened me.

“One time, there stopped before me a horrible figure—a man in rags and barefoot, his feet bleeding, his uncovered hair disheveled, covered in mud, dripping sweat, and his hands tied tightly behind his back. Two guards led him along, forcing him on with the barrels of their rifles. Was he a criminal? Was he innocent? It mattered not to me. For me, he was simply an unfortunate person. He approached and, leaning over as far as he could, dipped his face in the water and drank eagerly, then let my cooling waters run over his fevered head. How I lovingly poured my water over that pale face of sunken cheeks and tortured eyes that expressed an infinite suffering. Then he continued his journey, brutally driven by those who guarded him, but not without directing me a look of gratitude . . . the only one ever offered to me by a human being. Ay! If only I had been able to satisfy his yearnings for peace and freedom as I had his thirst!
“Another time, a woman with a pained countenance and two tender children with questioning eyes rested at my edge after drinking with eagerness.

“‘Mamá, I’m hungry,’ said the older child, after a while.

“‘I want bread, Mamá,’ said the younger one.

“The unhappy mother hugged them, crying, and to console them said, ‘Here there is no bread, my children. In the pueblo nearby, perhaps we will find someone to give us food.’

“And carrying the little one in her arms and the older child in tow, she continued her difficult march in search of a crumb of bread. Why, if there is enough water for all, should there not be enough bread for all?’

The spring continued her song, but the traveler no longer heard it, having turned his thoughts to his own memories.

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The man sighed. The spring, surprised, sped her flow of water and asked, “Who is there?”

“A traveler.”

“And what are you doing here?”

“I am listening to your song.”

“That is unusual. Few hear it, and even fewer understand it. Do you understand?”

“I have learned the mysterious language of Nature.”

“Who taught it to you?”

“Pain.”

“Great teacher, pain. But his lessons are costly. Sometimes one pays for them with bits of his soul.”
“Pain drove me away from others, and I have grown to prefer the quiet life. I love broad horizons and rejoice when the breeze brushes past me or the wind beats upon me. I am exalted by the view of the majestic sea or the rolling plains. I worship ancient trees and towering mountains, and I adore birds and flowers. The distant and enigmatic stars enthral me. Only I abhor the sight of man and prefer the cry of birds of prey or the howl of the hungry wolf.”

“Men have done you so much harm?”

“They have poisoned my soul with falsehood and selfishness.”

“Are you the only good one? Are you so much better?”

Ashamed, the man lowered his head without responding.

“You are all the same,” continued the spring. “You always see another’s imperfections, never your own. The worst of men do not believe themselves so bad, or at least reason and justify their evil. And there is never a lack of reason, because there is nothing in the world that does not have its fatal cause, only this is so remote or is so well hidden that it escapes attention. You are all formed of the same clay; you all have the same feelings and passions.”

“But there are differences of degree. Perversity and egotism dominate in certain men. In others goodness and generosity abound. The first are legion; the second, a scarce minority.”

“I agree, and I believe that you are counted among the second. But tell me, why do you wander alone, avoiding the contact of your brothers? Are you afraid to spend your goodness and your generosity? Stand up and go, go back to their midst and teach them to be better than they are.”

“How little you know men!”

“You deceive yourself. For centuries humanity has filed before me, men bearing enormous burdens on their backs and their pains, their worries, their ideals. I have seen pass by
armies victorious and armies defeated; magnificent retinues of kings and hordes of miserable beggars; merchant caravans and troupes of bandits; splendid trains of potentates and carts of starving circus performers; happy processions of baptisms and sad processions of burials; along the dusty way have passed men of all conditions, and I deal with them daily. Over so many years, do you doubt that I have come to know them? I know very well, by my own experience, that men are ungrateful, quick to ask a favor and slow to appreciate, if they appreciate it at all; easy to deceive if in deceit there is anything to gain, and even where there is not. Thousands have knelt to partake of my crystal waters and none have I denied. And do you know how many have thanked me for the gift? Only one, and that was the poor prisoner whose life I saved so that his fellows could strip him of it on gallows of disgrace.”

“You see? You yourself recognize the evil of humanity.”

“Yet I do not despair its improvement. In nature all is susceptible to change and perfection. Before my stream nourished the little valley nearby, his soil was barren, where only scattered weeds grew. My waters gave him abundant albeit wild vegetation, and later the effort of man completed the work, converting him into a beautiful garden. Humanity is also an uncultivated valley that the idea of perfection is only beginning to fertilize. But the constant effort of tireless workers who look to the future to bring the ideal to fruition is needed.”

“But what can I do—I, alone, isolated?”

“Unite your efforts with those of the good. What can a single drop of water accomplish? Nothing. Not even moisten the throat of a tiny bird. But together many drops can fill a glass, and you shall have sufficient to quench thirst. Add more drops and you have a stream with which to nourish a valley. Multiply many more and you will feed a rushing river that gives life to an entire region. How weak the humble drop that a touch of the sun evaporates! How strong the great river.
that majestically defies it! And the vast sea, with its incomparable power, with its overwhelming magnificence. What is it but a countless agglomeration of fragile drops? Separate individuals can do nothing; united individuals can do anything. There is no need to be absorbed into the masses. Let it suffice to unite yourself with them. The strong man always maintains his individuality.”

“I understand, I understand. I must go to men and not flee from them, pity rather than hate the wicked, help and love the good, contribute to life but with a noble and higher ideal.”

“If you understand. Go. Do not wait.”

“Not yet.”

“What are you waiting for?”

“For the light to guide me.”

***

Dawn is breaking. Roosters are singing their triumphant song, birds are chirping, the cool breeze whispers by, the high mountain peaks are turning to gold, and Helios is revealing his round and golden face from behind a distant hill.

The traveler awakes, looks at the spring in amazement, and continues his journey in thoughtful silence.

28

Guajiran Revenge

Along the highway that runs from Guanabacoa to Cojimar, rode Joseito, mounted on his pony, singing heartfelt folk songs whose melancholy cadences the breeze carried off until they melted into faint whispers among the palm trees.

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37 Guajiro [Cuban peasant]
38 Guanabacoa is a city east of Havana, and Cojimar is a coastal town about four miles to the north.
Despite the sentimentality of his song, José was happy. And why shouldn’t he be? He was thinking about the girl would be his wife the next day, about his adored Cheché, his idolized guajirita with black eyes and mane of jet-black hair, of olive skin, and the voice of an angel, the envy of all the women of the regions round about and admiration of every man who saw her. Born and raised in the Cuban fields, she bore their eternal freshness. The royal palm had lent her its slenderness, the cocuyo\textsuperscript{39} its phosphorescence, the cloudless blue sky its transparent purity.

Many had courted her. Still, not a few, when the pale moon rose above the dark horizon or hid behind the palms, went to the door of her hut and, accompanied by the plaintive guitar, sang to her their amorous woes in improvised décimas.\textsuperscript{40}

Of them all, the preferred had been Joseíto, and the choice could not have been more certain. A good youth, honorable, valiant and hardworking, he reduced his life to two great loves: Cheché, the woman to whom he promised a happy home, and his dappled pony, loyal companion of work and toil.

When he was high on the mountain, Joseíto stopped his horse and searched for the hut of his beloved. Then he cast his eyes about him, taking in the beauty of the scene. The view was magnificent. By the seaside, an immense, azure plain blended into the distant horizon. A double row of white houses ran down the foothills to the village by the shore bathed in peaceful waves. On the land side were green fields dominated by the royal palm. The ceiba trees, proud of their stoutness, distinguished themselves by their large branches. The yagruma displayed their silvery-green leaves, and the tall, strong canes bent dangerously with the wind, which also rustled the wide leaves of the bananas and whistled along the undulated surface of the reedbeds. A brook of

\textsuperscript{39} Cocuyo [firefly]
\textsuperscript{40} The décima is a style of poetry that is octosyllabic and has 10 lines. The rhyming scheme is \textit{ABBAACCDDC}. It is spoken, sung and written throughout Latin America with variations in different countries. It is often improvised. “Bradford” on http://forum.wordreference.com/showthread.php?t=520099.
tranquil serpentine waters reflected the pure blue of the sky in some places and the bushes that grew on its banks in others. The kestrel, the pitirre, the judío and other varieties of birds that filled the air with their songs flew about and lighted upon the trees. Wild flowers, among which overflowed the marigold, blanketed the fields and enlivened the view, at the same time they invited the light hum of prismatic wings, that the delicious honey of their calices be liberated. Scattered huts made from palms, surrounded by maizefields and banana plantations not far from a stand of mangos or coconut trees completed the view and gave it character.

Evening was drawing on, and from the pale, dying sun the landscape took on poetic hues with melancholy tones.

Jose turned to look at the solitary hut, which he could make out at some kilometers in the distance. And taking out of saddlebags a coral necklace and other inexpensive jewelry that he had bought in the city, he joyfully exclaimed, “My trigueña will be so happy when she sees what I have brought.”

Then he spurred on his horse and cried, “Fly, Morito, she will be already be waiting impatiently in the door of her hut.”

***

Cheché was sewing in a rocking chair, interrupting her work periodically to pause and think. What was she thinking about? About many things from the past and about the great event the next day would bring and change her life forever. The virgin trembled at her unknown future, but the enchanted girl smiled happily as she evoked the image her beloved who promised her charms and pleasures without end.

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41 Trigueña [This can refer to an olive- or dark-skinned person, dark blond or straw-colored hair, or dark or olive skin. Historically, it can also refer to a mulatto in a pejorative sense. Trigo is “wheat,” and so it may suggest its bronze color. In Spain, morena is often used as a term of endearment for an olive-skinned girl as well. In the absence of a close equivalent in English, I have opted to leave this as it appears in the original.]
The sound of hooves drew her from her reverie. Her heart leapt with joy. It must be him! She looked eagerly at the stretch of road that ran a little way from the hut. A horse stopped and a man dismounted, but the first was not Morito and the second was not Joseito. The man tied the reins to the fence and approached the hut. Then Cheché recognized him with a start. He was dressed in the typical attire of the Cuban guajiro: rough cotton trousers and striped, loose shirt; around his neck, a red silk bandana; and at his waste, a Collins machete with a long, wide blade. He wore yellow leather shoes, and a straw hat covered his head. His face, darkened by the sun, had hard angles, and anger shone in his brown eyes.

“Good afternoon, Cheché,” he said, from the threshold.

“Good afternoon, Juanín,” she answered, without as much as looking at him or quitting her work.

“Is Joseito here?”

“No.”

“And the old man?”

“Still working.”

“Then you are alone.”

“I was.”

“True. Now I am here. Am I disturbing you?”

“No. You will notice that I am still working.”

Juanín bit his lip at the spiteful indifference.

“May I come in?” he said, hesitating a moment.

“As you wish.”

He entered and sat in the rocking chair opposite Cheché.
For a long time they remained silent. She sewed without raising her head, and he stared at her.

“Are you waiting for Joseito?” he said, finally.

“Yes,” she said, dryly.

“They say you are going to marry him tomorrow.”

“You are not deceived.”

“You must really love him.”

“With all my soul.”

“So, why did you fall in love with him instead of me?”

“I fell in love with the one my heart chose.”

“And you believe you will be happy with him?”

“Very happy. Immensely happy.”

Vivid rage and jealousy washed over Juanin. Those words felt like a sharp knife in his breast.

“You will not,” he mumbled, between his teeth.

“What do you mean?” she said, looking at him in defiance.

“Nothing.”

Another stretch of painful silence followed. Cheché continued sewing, overcome by intense foreboding, because she sensed the stare of that cruel man.

Suddenly, Juanin stood and said, “Do you know why I have come?”

“I am not a fortuneteller.”

“I have come to tell you not to marry Joseito.”
“You think you can tell me what to do? I love José, you hear? I love him with all my soul. I will be his and nobody else’s.”

“No, you will not, because I will stop you.” And saying this, he gave her such a fierce look, his eyes full of hate and lust, that Cheché rose and ran for the door, screaming, “Father! Father!”

Juanín grabbed her roughly. “Do not scream, or I will kill you.”

Disgusted by the brutal contact of his touch, she struggled in vain to free herself from them. “Let go, brute. You’re hurting me.”

“Tell me you won’t marry him.”

“Let go.” She calmed down, panting.

“Say one word. Say no.”

“I am getting married. Yes. I will marry him because I love him as much as I hate you.”

Juanín took out his knife, which he carried hidden beneath his shirt, and plunged it into the sad girl’s breast, growling, “Before I see you love another, I will see you dead.”

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Along the way one could hear a happy song and the lively step of a horse. Stopping in front of the hut, the horseman dismounted and walked toward the door, calling, “Where is my trigüeña who is not waiting today at the edge of road? Fly to me, my darling. Come see what I have brought.”

As he crossed the threshold and saw the bloody body of his Cheché, his words died on his lips and he dropped the coral necklace, which scattered all around her. He could still hear those discolored lips, tight with pain.

“Juanín . . . He killed me because he did not want me to marry you.”
And so she died, her beautiful eyes staring at him. Joseito, without a tear, but with a look inflamed by fever, kissed his beloved on the mouth and said, “Rest, my love. I will avenge you.”

***

Two days later, in the environs of Bejucal, they found a man dead, his head split open by a machete. He turned out to be Juanín, reclaimed by justice for the presumed murder of the beautiful Cheché.

Joseito had fulfilled his promise.

29

A Childhood Adventure

There were three little Parisians—Pablo, Armando, and Agustina—of thirteen, twelve, and eleven years old, respectively. Together they went to school and together they played in their free time. There are many for whom life still presents itself without cares, as compensation for the troubles and struggles that the future holds in reserve for them.

At home, at school, in the street, they had heard that far away, in a certain place in the Orient, two peoples were at war, and their young imagination, exalted by war stories that they continually heard and by what they themselves had read in the papers and travel books and adventure stories, the conflict that the Russians and Japanese sought to resolve with weapons of war was depicted to them in dazzling and attractive colors.

One afternoon, on their way home from class, they spoke excitedly of the war, expressing their sympathies for Russia, the friend and ally of their beloved French homeland. Pablo, in an outburst of bellicose ardor, expressed his desire to go to fight the men of the yellow race and laid

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42 Bejucal is about 25 miles inland to the southwest from Cojimar.
out a detailed plan to achieve his objective. Armando and Agustina listened to him admiringly at first, but then, infected by the militant enthusiasm of their companion, they sanctioned his plan and agreed to help him carry it out.

“I,” said Pablo, “I will enlist in the artillery.”

“And I in the cavalry,” added Armando.

“Well, I,” declared Agustina, “will sign up for the Red Cross and will tend to your wounds.”

Their roles thus distributed, they said goodbye, agreeing to meet the next day in Trinidad Plaza. There the three of them met at the hour school was to begin, and in one accord, they hid their books beneath a bench and left, happy and excited, carrying with them only an Atlas to guide them to their desired destination.

***

They walked on in silence, tired, along the wide and well-groomed road, already far from Paris, far from the home in which they had impulsively left their dear parents, who in that moment must be looking for them, running desperately about the great city.

Night fell. The sun had set. The stillness and the mysterious shadows of the fading twilight settled over the solitary fields.

The three little adventurers had not eaten all day and now felt the pains of hunger and fatigue, which had helped to dampen their militant spirit, for the advancing night invaded their spirit with a certain vague restlessness that heightened the memory of their abandoned homes.

Agustina was the first to express her fears. With a trembling voice, she hinted, “If we went home . . . Mamá must be worried.”
“You’re right, Agustina,” added Armando. “We should return to Paris. There are no houses in sight, nor a single soul. Where are we going to sleep?”

“Let’s go back, Pablo.”

Pablo, who began to regret embarking on their adventure, but who, out of fear of what people will say, did not think it expedient to give in, answered, “So soon you faint. Don’t be cowards. We will find a place to eat and sleep.”


Armando cried as well. Even Pablo felt his courage fail him, and his eyes began to water.

“Come on, don’t cry,” he said, trying to console them. “We will go back to Paris. But it’s too late to start now. Look, to the right, there is a little light. It must be a house. Let’s go.”

Encouraged, they began their march toward the place from whence the light shone, which was the poor cabin of a woodsman. The door was open, and the three children gathered quietly in the threshold.

The woodsman, who at that moment was sitting down to his frugal meal, stared at them in surprise and amazement. “Hello, children. What can I do for you? You are surely lost. Come on in. Don’t be afraid.”

“Yes, sir, we’re lost. We’re from Paris—”

“What the devil—Well, it is not little distance you have covered. Do you know where you are? You are in Crisenoy. Nine kilometers from Melun.43 Why have you come so far?”

Pablo did not dare lie and recounted to the woodsman the motives that had induced them to leave Paris. The good man listened to the tale in astonishment. Then he sat them down to share

43 Crisenoy, France is some 30 miles southeast of Paris.
his meal. When he saw them settled and full, he spoke to them. “Why would you want to go to war, leaving behind your parents, who must be crying their eyes out with worry over you? Ah, empty heads, innocent souls! To go to war . . . Do you know what it is to go to war? It is a very bad thing. Very bad. It is the destruction of towns and homes. It is the curse of nations. Because of it, mothers are left without sons. Because of it, men who have never injured one another kill each other. Because of it, fields are left uncultivated, factories and mines deserted. Two sons I had, robust, healthy, happy. And war snatched them both away from me. Damned war!”

The good woodsman sat a moment in silence to contain his emotion. Then he continued, “You wanted to go to war and you behaved badly. Only men go to war, and even they should not go. If you are going to sacrifice your life, you should do it for something useful and beneficial to humanity and not to satisfy the brutal ambitions of domination. There is only one noble and just war, and this is that which supports oppressed peoples in gaining their freedom. Wars of conquest do not deserve the sacrifice of generous lives. Go back to your homes, dear children, and instead of thinking about war adventures, aspire only to learn, to educate yourselves, instruct yourselves, so that tomorrow, already grown, you will be useful to your parents, your fellow beings, and yourselves.”

The woodsman stopped talking, and with satisfaction he observed in the eyes of his little listeners tears of gratitude.

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The next day, along the way to Paris walked Pablo, Armando, and Agustina, accompanied by the woodsman, with no memory of the distant East and anxious only to get to the home they had regretfully left.
In the Hospital

It was dusk. The day was dying, sweetly enveloped in mists. The sun paled by the minute, its light passing through pale and reddish tones, reflecting on the time-darkened walls of the grandiose hospital, an old, rambling gothic house with high windows with pointed arches.

The faint rays of the setting sun, slipping obliquely between the panes of glass, lit up the hall, great and indifferent, tinting its walls bright yellow. Everything was white: the naked walls, the clean sheets that covered the little cots placed in a double row, the emaciated faces of the sick, the wimples of the sisters of charity. And such immaculate whiteness, bathed in the placid light of twilight, cast a hue of strange pallor that made one feel a vivid sensation of cold and loneliness, of vast and infinite sadness.

It was the mansion of pain, but unearthly and disgusting pain born of vice. It was the last refuge of unfortunate women whose bodies and souls the disgraceful luxury of men had converted to mud and filth. Though still young, some practically children, the faces of those unfortunate girls displayed such fatigue and deterioration that one could discern a premature aging that quickly consumed their exhausted bodies.

Seated on her bed, supporting her withered head on her pillow, lay one of the sick, with her bare arms on top of her sheets, which she pressed nervously with her thin fingers, and with a distant, lost stare fixed on a piece of blue sky framed by a window. In that moment the sun disappeared in the West among red and yellow flames. Its golden rays kissed the high peaks of the neighboring hills for the last time, and in the distance one could only see a pink line that grew fainter and broader until it became a wide, whitish fringe.
Once the fiery sun had disappeared, the patient felt her agony more intensely, her sadness more profoundly. The darkness of the night frightened her. She felt death approaching, and life was so beautiful at twenty-five years old despite its cruelty. The shadows, the cursed shadows, invaded her fevered brain, covering everything with its thick and impenetrable veil, behind which hid the unknown, gloomy and terrible. Fear, seizing upon her soul, filled her with dread, drenching her whole body in cold sweat and quickening the beat of her tired heart. Her eyes could barely make out stars of wavering light against the black backdrop of night, which to her seemed to be poor, suffering souls condemned to eternal solitude, searching in vain for other beloved souls.

And in the midst of the profound silence that reigned in the hall, interrupted periodically by stifled cries of pain, the patient’s acute hearing perceived the vague mutterings that follow twilight and grow with the stillness of the night. She heard the murmur of the living water that flowed in tiny streams from a stone fountain in the patio, the delicate whisper of the breeze, the hushed rustle of the green leaves, the sweet chirp of the goldfinches fluttering from branch to branch.

A long shiver ran through her poor body and, curling up as best she could with her tiny arms, she instinctively closed her eyes and spoke softly. “I’m cold.”

II

Marta had spent her childhood at her father’s side, a poor school teacher in a certain little village. She remembered her mother, who died when she was four, so vaguely that she had all but completely forgotten the lines of her face. When she wanted to evoke her memory, she could only imagine a young woman that lavished her with kisses and gave her a thousand hugs.
Even now her heart warmed when she remembered her life in the village. She had passed her only happy years there, in a little house painted white, through whose windows drifted the refreshing, delicious morning breeze. From there she listened to the shrill crow of the roosters and the fun-loving chatter of the birds while her gaze took in the broad and undulating plain of golden wheat and meadows of long, soft grass, bounded on the right by tall reedbeds, behind which ran a flowing river, and on the back side by a thick wood whose blackish color contrasted with the red soil of freshly tilled earth. And through those green meadows, gilded fields, and great forests she ran, rambling over the cool grass and the red earth, leaping over fences and brooks, picking flowers, chasing butterflies, sunburned, sweaty, always laughing and singing, with that frank and overflowing joy only a child can know.

She lost her father, that kind, old soul whom she had loved so much, when she was twelve. An attack of paralysis had prostrated him in bed several months, during which time Marta looked after him with great care, spending many nights awake, bestowing upon him a innumerable hugs that he repaid with only a mute gaze, full of tenderness and recognition. Those few months of hard work and suffering transformed the girl into a woman prematurely. Her face, adorned with youthful beauty, innocent and candid, lost its rosy hue, and her eyes lost their vivacity, replacing it with that calm, that sad and questioning look of unfortunate children.

One night Marta was sitting with her father, who was looking at her with the empty and undefinable expression of the dying. Suddenly, he found his daughter’s hands, looked at her more intently, moved his lips as if to utter a few words, and let his head fall upon his pillow.

“Papá! Papá!” cried Marta, terrified, holding his body and looking anxiously into his glassy eyes.

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The next morning, the neighbors found the poor orphan still hugging the body, already cold, and repeating in a barely audible voice, “Papá! Papá!”

III

A few days later, Marta left the little town for the city, to the house of her aunt, the sister of her deceased father. Without a house to shelter her, without means to support herself and alone in the world, the poor girl went in search of a place to stay and a little love.

Anxious, full of fear and curiosity, she arrived for the first time at the populated capital, which was for her a huge town that in another time she had so hoped to visit. Passing hastily through its streets, her frightened eyes roamed with certain distress over houses that were so tall they appeared to reach the sky, upscale shops in whose window displays she saw undreamed of riches, the rapid traffic of carriages of every kind, and over the continuous coming and going of strangers who passed her by without a glance. Some looked at her with curiosity, surprised at seeing the pale little girl with large, frightened eyes, walking awkwardly through the muddy, cobbled streets with a bundle of clothes, poorly dressed in a calico skirt, red wool stockings, and thick, laced-up boots, with an oversized scarf of multicolored plaid drawn about her shoulders.

After much running and not a little asking, her exhausted body stumbled upon the house of her aunt, a laundress by trade who, learning of her niece’s situation, cursed the memory of her older brother, who had had the gall to die and leave behind that rag doll of a daughter.

In that house, where vice united hunger and misery, Marta passed very sad and cruel days. There her poor body, fatigued by excessive labor, was forced to suffer the brutal beatings of her soulless aunt and the molestations of her cousin. He was an emaciated boy, pale face and suggestive look, without any occupation to speak of, who had made a meager living of his shamelessness. He passed the day sleeping and dedicated his nights to making a run of the
brothels, cafés, gambling houses, and dance halls, speaking rudely, always smoking and
drinking. He started fights, swindled whomever he could, cheated at play, and took advantage of
the poor prostitutes. And after those nightly escapades of lechery and degradation, he would
stumble home at dawn, completely incapacitated by the vapors of alcohol.

One night Marta awoke, startled by furious pounding at the stairwell door. It would be
her cousin returning without his key. She hurried from her bed and, quickly putting on an
underskirt, she walked barefoot to the door. She had not been deceived; there was the repugnant
figure of her cousin, revealing in his stupid and confused look the insanity of his inebriation. The
orphan had barely closed the door when she felt arms take a hold of her from behind and the
touch of his burning lips on her neck.

“Don’t touch me, you drunk!” she shouted, struggling in vain to free herself.

A brutal and savage fight ensued between them. Crazy, red with rage and emotion, with
her shirt torn, her throat and youthful breasts bared, she clawed her cousin’s face with her nails.
He squeezed her in his arms until she could not breathe and tried to trip her. Marta felt her
strength ebbing away, her eyes clouding over and, losing her footing, fell to the floor with her
cousin.

“Leave me alone!” screamed the unhappy girl, without strength to continue fighting.

“Shut up!” he roared, biting her neck with rage.

She tried to scream but could not. She felt in her neck the terrible sting of his ferocious
teeth as he sank them ever deeper into her flesh. She tried desperately to get up, but a terrible
weight, as if it were a slab of lead, pinned her to the floor, impeding any movement.

***
Since that fatal night, the poor girl became her cousin’s lover. Robbed of her virginity, unable to contend with that infamy, she abandoned herself with disdain to his brutal caresses, docile, cold, unfeeling, her body quivering without pleasure, without awakening her senses.

Then came the days of hunger. Her aunt, exhausted and sick from excessive work, had to give up laundering clothes. Bread ran out, and with hunger a new nightmare came for Marta. Her cousin, in agreement with her aunt, vilely commodified the orphan’s body. Thus she began her life as a whore. She worked the muddy streets of the city every night and smeared her face, still virginal, with cheap makeup. She accepted without protest this new genre of life, hardly aware of the abyss of deprivation into which they had thrown her. The years wore on until, traded as though she were some object, she went to a brothel.

IV

Poor Marta! Her life consisted of unending suffering and regrets. Miserable peddler of pleasure, of which she never enjoyed. She was an aromatic flower that withered prematurely before the impure breath of vice. They had prostituted her as a mere child because of the terrible necessity of existence, and her body, although worn out, had never experienced the sensation of pleasure.

Sad destiny was hers! To bear a flower of soft aroma and to sell it at despicable price. To have an exquisite sensibility only to suffer and to bastardize it, to corrupt it in the satisfaction of others’ desires. Her beautiful body, noble like a Greek statue, full of youth, of life and ardent blood, only served as a watering hole that they might satiate their thirst for lust in it. Her life was a never-ending sacrifice. She lived for others, never for herself.

During her life of prostitution, sometimes, when in moments of sad meditation, she saw the end of her existence in a grim hospital and in it an empty bed that awaited her sullied body.
The idea of redeeming herself came to mind, of becoming what the commoners call an honorable woman. Vain illusion! Women looked at her with repugnance, men with disgust. Society, the very society that had hurled her into the mud, withheld redemption from her. Honorable people could not admit her into their hearts. Once on the slope of degeneracy, she had to roll, roll on until the end.

The entire world speculated in her body: the government sold her patent as a whore, the madam gave her asylum in her brothel, her own family prostituted her and then sold her, and every man abused her body for money. She was treated like a piece of merchandise and as such she was traded. When young and beautiful, when her skin was still fresh and her black eyes bright, she brought a good price. But when by degrees she descended to the point of marring her beauty, she lost all value as a commodity and was discarded.

Soon the terrible illness of debauchery began to feed on her, rendering her unable to continue her disgraceful career. And then, without support from anyone, despised by all, her last refuge was a hospital, and to it she went accompanied only by the selfish compassion of her companions in misfortune.

And there, in that hall she lay forgotten by all and by all disavowed, with the physical suffering of her body and the desperation of her soul. The syphilis mined her body and pus corrupted her blood. The fever cracked her lips and sank her eyes, her eyebrows peeled off, and her black hair, once so shiny and abundant, fell out. Her body emitted foul odors. All was putrid, filthy refuse. Within that mess of human flesh beat an ardent, passionate heart, virgin to the sensations of pleasure, innocent of the impurities that surrounded her.

Amidst her delirium, her troubled imagination made her dream of impossibilities. She believed herself a woman of honor and loved by a man that only desired to make her happy. Her
lips opened timidly to return the first kiss of love, her breast beat with the anticipation of receiving, bashfully, the sweet caresses of her lover. Then she saw herself married and a mother, and in her senseless imagination, she rejoiced in creating a poem of domestic felicity. She felt on her face the gentle warmth and tickle of her little ones’ kisses, the fruit of her womb, and felt herself lulled to sleep by their voices that barely managed to pronounce the sweet name of mother. Then, the scene shifted and she saw herself as a child in that village where she passed her childhood in happiness, in that cherished little house that was her cradle, running and playing with other children, climbing the walls of the cemetery full of roses and crosses to steal apples from the priest. Her whole life as a little girl replayed itself in her mind, but oh! cruel reality soon melted away the spell, and her happy memories fled and her illusions disappeared. Only the sad memories of her fall, of her life as a prostitute, of that eternal Calvary full of spines and thorns that had torn at her soul and her flesh, and of the miserable death that awaited her in that tiny bed, without anyone to comfort her, without the touch of a caring being remained in her mind.

V

The pale light of the morning twilight swept away the shadows of the night. The sun showed its disc of fire in the East, and its first rays, still without strength or heat, passed through the large windows of the old hospital and fell across the bed where the still-warm corpse of the girl who in life was called Marta. Her shriveled face, caressed by the pale rays, resembled that of a martyr, and her eyes, still open, seemed to look at the bit of sky visible through a high window, illuminated by the white and pink tints of the nascent sun.

The End
BIBLIOGRAPHY


