OBSERVATORIO
de la lengua española y las culturas hispánicas en los Estados Unidos

Instituto Cervantes

TRANSLATORS' CORNER
RINCÓN de TRADUCTORES

Five Galician Songs

by Emilio Cao

translated by
Robert Lima

RT/TC 021 (2021)
ISSN: 2694-2801

Instituto Cervantes at Harvard University (FAS)
Observatorio de la lengua española y las culturas hispánicas en los Estados Unidos / Observatory of the Spanish Language and Hispanic Cultures in the United States
2 Arrow Street 4th fl., Faculty of Arts and Sciences - Harvard University. Cambridge, MA 02138 – USA
http://cervantesobservatory.fas.harvard.edu
info-observatory@fas.harvard.edu

Introduction

Musician and composer **Emilio Cao Losada** (1953 -) was born in millenial Santiago de Compostela in Galicia, the northwesternmost sector of the Iberian Peninsula which has been the goal of pilgrims since the Middle Ages, pilgrims who sought to visit the shrine of the Apostle James. The pilgrimage continues to this day.

It was from the Celtic kingdom of Galicia that Ith and Bile, the sons of King Breogan, after sighting a distant green land, set off to what would be Eire. There, they defeated the fierce Firbolg and came to an arrangement with the magical Tethe Da Danan, the people of the goddess Danan, who thereafter inhabited the lower world. Ith and Bile, who became known as the Milesians, divided the upper land between them. That story is narrated in the *Lebor Gabala Erin*, the Book of the Taking of Ireland.

Both the legends of Santiago and the Celtic traditions of Galicia form an important base for the compositions of Emilio Cao, who introduced the Celtic harp into the music of his native land. His discography, which begins in 1977 with *Fonte do Arano*, continues with the 1979 *Lenda da pedra do destino*, and the 1982 *No manto da auga*, and is subsequently enhanced with *Amiga Alba e Delgada*, *Cartas Marinas*, and *Sinbad en Galicia*, all reissued in 1998. Upon the release of his first album, Cao began an association with musicians of like ilk, among them Elsie Thomas of Swansea and Alan Stivell of Bretagne, as well as Portuguese musicians of the group Cantores de abril. He has a commitment to authors of Galicia, writing music set to the poetry of famed poets of his region, especially Rosalia de Castro, and contemporary writers. His compositions have extended to the theatre, writing and performing music for contemporary plays by Galician writers.

A man of many talents, a poet in music, Emilio Cao stands as one of the lights of the Galician and the broader Celtic world. The lyrics to five of his songs from the album ***No manto da auga*** (available here) are presented here in English translation. The original lyrics have only appeared in written form in the album notes, and they are translated here as poems to be read.

© Robert Lima
Rincón de Traductores/Translators' Corner 021 (2021)
ISSN: 2694-2801

© *Instituto Cervantes at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences of Harvard University*

About the translator

Robert Lima is a Cuban born (1935) prize-winning American poet, internationally known literary critic, bibliographer, playwright and translator. He was twice knighted in Spain. His poems have appeared throughout the U.S. and abroad in periodicals, anthologies, broadsides, the Internet, and in his poetry collections *Fathoms* (1981), *The Olde Ground* (1985), *Mayaland* (1992), *Sardinia / Sardegna* (2000), *Tracking the Minotaur* (2003), *The Pointing Bone* (2008*), The Rites of Stone* (2010), *Self* (2012), *Por caminos errantes* (2014), *CELESTIALS (2015), Cancionería Cubana* (2017), *Ikons of the Past. Poetry of the Hispanic Americas* (2018), *Writers on My Watch* (2020), and *ODYSSEY* (2021). His critical studies include works on Lorca, Valle-Inclán, Borges, Surrealism, esoterica, folklore, and comparative drama. This is the second time that Lima contributes to the Translators' Corner; his first translation, published in February 2021, was "Christmas Eve in the Hills of Jaruco."

rxl2@psu.edu

© Robert Lima
Rincón de Traductores/Translators' Corner 021 (2021)
ISSN: 2694-2801

© *Instituto Cervantes at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences of Harvard University*

BLUE COMET

After a night,
One of those nights
When wind is halted by a glance

After a silence
So deep and so distant
Lost in the first flight of dawn

Oh, Sarina, make me a garment of wind!
Oh, Sarina, make me a garment of wind!

Make me rise like the blue comet
Which existed long ago.
A silver thread set free
Will join me to you,
To you

After a silence
On one of those nights
When wind is halted with a glance
After a night
So deep and so distant
Lost in the first flight of dawn

Oh, Sarina, make me a garment of wind!
Oh, Sarina, make me a garment of wind!

Make me rise like the blue comet

[Etc.]

© Robert Lima
Rincón de Traductores/Translators' Corner 021 (2021)
ISSN: 2694-2801

© *Instituto Cervantes at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences of Harvard University*

IN THE SHAWL OF THE SEA

And the color of algae was changed
And water dried up in the sea.
And you ran down to the depths
Yesterday, one more time,
Running among the great fishes,
Which, dying, saw you pass by
Shouting many names of men
Who were movers of the world.
Yet not one descends
On a night when our sea becomes dry.

Only at the chasm of depths
Can one find the pearls,
Finding pearls and coral in the dark of night,
Now that the waters
Have slowly lifted their shawl.
We will now leave our marks on dead oceans
And know the way we must go
On a night when our sea might go dry.

© Robert Lima
Rincón de Traductores/Translators' Corner 021 (2021)
ISSN: 2694-2801

© *Instituto Cervantes at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences of Harvard University*

SARA

Bid farewell to the seas of Ireland.
Bid farewell to the gulls of the south.
Our journeys were long ones,
A brief stay in ports.

In our hearts we held on to
Our smiles, a fine strong wind
And Sara, Sara,
Who setting sail entered the sea
With a dream and within us
Sara

We would anchor at farthest reaches,
Making no-man's-land our abode.
Never again did I have such a Spring
When we held in our hearts
Our smiles, a fine strong wind
And Sara, Sara,
Who setting sail entered the sea
With a dream and with us within
Sara.

© Robert Lima
Rincón de Traductores/Translators' Corner 021 (2021)
ISSN: 2694-2801

© *Instituto Cervantes at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences of Harvard University*

Within the blue eyes of time,
A child encountered a chest
With the ancient maps of the sky,
With earthly trails to the Sun
And placed it in our hands,
Never forget it, in our hands,
While Sara, Sara,
Setting sail entered the sea
With a dream and with us within
Sara.

© Robert Lima
Rincón de Traductores/Translators' Corner 021 (2021)
ISSN: 2694-2801

© *Instituto Cervantes at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences of Harvard University*

SHE RAISED HER HANDS TO THE WIND

She raised her hands to the wind
Making a cross in the air, alone.
Above her, the whole firmament's
Saying that the time has come
To fly.

Last night they cleaned up the streets
And the gate to the city lies open.
Above her, the whole firmament's
Saying that the time has come
To fly.

My lad, make no more promises,
This is not the moment, at this moment of quiet,
For above us the whole firmament's
Saying that the time has come
To fly.

© Robert Lima
Rincón de Traductores/Translators' Corner 021 (2021)
ISSN: 2694-2801

© *Instituto Cervantes at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences of Harvard University*

STAR OF THE NORTH

I set out to sea
On an April dawn
And close to the shore,
Near crags, I could see
That a dory was coming
Out of the darkest night
And off came a man
With the Star of the North.

From that day on, I seek
The place where the North Star is
For it opened my April eyes, Ana,
And left me a lucky dream.

© Robert Lima
Rincón de Traductores/Translators' Corner 021 (2021)
ISSN: 2694-2801

© *Instituto Cervantes at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences of Harvard University*

Rincón de Traductores/Translators' Corner

Disponibles en/available at: http://cervantesobservatorio.fas.harvard.edu/en/translation-corner

1. RT/TC 001 (2019). "A Letter of Federico García Lorca to his Parents, 1935". Author: Federico García Lorca (Spain); Translator: Christopher Maurer; Genre: Letter.

2. RT/TC 002 (2019). "Like a Night with Legs Wide Open". Author: José Alcántara Almánzar (Dominican Republic); Translator: Luis Guzmán Valerio; Genre: Short Story.

3. RT/TC 003 (2019). "In the Parks, at Dusk" and "I Only Think of You". Author: Marina Mayoral (Spain); Translator: María Socorro Suárez Lafuente; Genre: Short Story.

4. RT/TC 004 (2020). "The Guide through Death" and "The Fat Lady". Author: Guadalupe Dueñas (Mexico); Translator: Josie Hough; Genre: Short Story.

5. RT/TC 005 (2020). "The Case of the Unfaithful Translator". Author: José María Merino (Spain); Translator: Erin Goodman; Genre: Short Story.

6. RT/TC 006 (2020). "The Guerrilla Fighter" and "May as Well Call it Quits". Author: Albalucía Ángel Marulanda (Colombia); Translator: Daniel Steele Rodríguez; Genre: Short Story.

7. RT/TC 007 (2020). "Miguel Hernández' Speech to His Companions in the Ocaña Jail". Author: Miguel Hernández (Spain); Translator: Constance Marina; Genre: Speech.

8. RT/TC 008 (2020). "On the Road to Houmt Souk". Author: Soledad Puértolas (Spain); Translator: Francisca González Arias; Genre: Short Story.

9. RT/TC 009 (2020). *Rincón de Traductores / Translators' Corner – Volume 1: Compilation 2019-2020*. Various Authors; Various Translators.

10. RT/TC 010 (2020). *Waiting for the Revolution: Cuba, the Unfinished Journey* (excerpt). Author: Gustavo Gac-Artigas (Chile); Translator: Andrea G. Labinger; Genre: Chronicle.

© Robert Lima
Rincón de Traductores/Translators' Corner 021 (2021)
ISSN: 2694-2801

© *Instituto Cervantes at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences of Harvard University*

11. RT/TC 011 (2020). "A Bad Girl". Author: Montserrat Ordóñez (Colombia); Translator: Clara Eugenia Ronderos; Genre: Short Story.

12. RT/TC 012 (2020). "Claudia and the Cats". Author: Ivanna Chapeta (Guatemala); Translator: Lindsay Romanoff Bartlett; Genre: Short Story.

13. RT/TC 013 (2021). *Song of Being and Nonbeing*. Author: Santiago Alba Rico (Spain); Translator: Carolina Finley Hampson; Genre: Poetry.

14. RT/TC 014 (2021). "Christmas Eve in the Hills of Jaruco". Author: Robert F. Lima Rovira and Robert Lima (Cuba/USA); Translator: Robert lima; Genre: Chronicle.

15. RT/TC 015 (2021). *Three Poems*. Author: José Luis García Martín (Spain); Translator: Claudia Quevedo-Webb; Genre: Poetry.

16. RT/TC 016 (2021). *A Manifesto for reading* (excerpt). Author: Irene Vallejo (Spain); Translator: Erin Goodman; Genre: Essay.

17. RT/TC 017 (2021). *Parallel 35* (three excerpts) and "The Dead Woman". Author: Carmen Laforet (Spain); Translator: Roberta Johnson; Genre: Chronicle/Short Story.

18. RT/TC 018 (2021). "Torn Lace" and "Native Plant". Author: Emilia Pardo Bazán (Spain); Translator: Francisca González Arias; Genre: Short Story.

19. RT/TC 019 (2020). *Rincón de Traductores / Translators' Corner – Volume 2: Compilation 2020-2021*. Various Authors; Various Translators.

20. RT/TC 020 (2021). *Three Poems*. Author: Julia Barella (Spain); Translator: Sarah Glenski; Genre: Poetry.

© Robert Lima
Rincón de Traductores/Translators' Corner 021 (2021)
ISSN: 2694-2801

© *Instituto Cervantes at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences of Harvard University*