



RINCÓN DE
TRADUCTORES

TRANSLATORS'
CORNER

TRANSLATORS'
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TRADUCTORES



Volume 3
Compilation 2021-2022

Edited by
Marta Mateo and Juan Manuel Arias

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Presentation

The *Observatory of the Spanish Language and Hispanic Cultures in the United States* is pleased to present the third compilation volume of its *Rincón de Traductores/Translators' Corner*, which—with both a digital and a printed edition—puts together the translations published online throughout the academic year 2021-2022. The *Rincón de Traductores/Translators' Corner*, a section of the Observatory's web, welcomes and promotes the English translation of brief works, from diverse genres and originally produced and published in Spanish by authors from any country or period. By presenting these works in translation, the *Observatorio* (as the center is commonly referred to) aims to help the literary and intellectual production of the Hispanic world reach those readers in the US—or in other English-speaking contexts—who cannot access them in their original form.

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Indeed, translation enables literature, knowledge, and ideas to travel beyond their contexts of origin, breaking through language and cultural barriers and so connecting cultures—hence adding to them too. Both systems involved in a process of translation are actually enriched: the target context, receiving works from foreign lands which may bring in new ideas, forms, even genres; and the original context, seeing how the works it produces become known beyond its borders, gaining new readers and therefore new interpretations, new forms in other languages. The works themselves may benefit considerably from the process since translation provides them with that new existence and it is through it that “works ... now exist where otherwise there would be silence,” as Peter Bush has put it. We may also recall Walter Benjamin's connection between a translation and the original's ‘afterlife’.¹

Translators make this supplementary existence possible—as Bush himself also highlights (p. 130)—and enable different literary cultures to converge through their bilingual and bicultural abilities, expertise, even inclination: “I was born with a translator's disposition, in that my overriding desire was to connect disparate worlds,” in the Indian American writer Jhumpa Lahiri's words.² This

¹ See Walter Benjamin, “The Task of the Translator. An Introduction to the translation of Baudelaire's *Tableaux Parisiens*,” in Lawrence Venuti (ed.), *The Translation Studies Reader*, London & New York: Routledge, 2000, p. 16; and Peter Bush, “Literary translation, practices,” in Mona Baker (ed.) *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, London & New York: Routledge, 2001 [1998], p. 127.

² Quoted by Benjamin Moser in “Found in Translation,” *The New York Times*, “Book Review,” Sunday June 12, 2022, p. 10.

is why they hold a central position in the Observatorio's *Translators' Corner*, not just becoming 'visible' in its name but being invited to make their own selection of the original works to be translated, to introduce the text themselves for the reader of their English version—with a brief description of the work, the author, and of their own translation—and to include their contact and a short bio note at the end of the introduction.

This implies that the compilation volume of each year has its own 'character'. The texts included in it will be the choice of different translators, who may vary in their preference for genres, Hispanic literary systems, authors and/or periods. Besides, these English versions are also the result of the translators' subjective textual choices, creative effort, and experience: "based on personal readings, research and creativity [... the] new creation [...] is the fruit of thousands of decisions, large and small, and of creative activity on the part of the translator," to quote Peter Bush once more (p. 128).

This 2021-2022 compilation includes translations of texts mostly from Spain, together with one from Ecuador and another one from Colombia—thus showing less geographical diversity than previous volumes. Conversely, the time range covered by the different source texts is rather remarkable: from the early 17th century to works by young authors writing in the 21st. The genres represented by the various translations are also less diverse than in previous volumes, as there's a clear predominance of poetry this year. What is interesting about this textual homogeneity, however, is that it may allow readers to make connections between the different texts present in this 'poetry sample', while the poems themselves may also establish a sort of dialogue.

There are nevertheless text types which had not featured in our publication before, like an essay-chronicle, a diary, and song lyrics. There is also one short-story, a very popular genre among the translators contributing to our Corner. A very special text this year is George Greenia's translation of a travel journal from a pilgrim to Santiago de Compostela, who visited the Galician city in 1610 following orders by King Felipe III of Spain. We are very grateful to George Greenia for this valuable and interesting contribution, as well as to the people and institutions who generously granted permission and/or collaborated with him in the research phase to make it possible (see note 6, on p. 58). Another novelty was the source language of the song lyrics, Galician, which made us reconsider the boundaries of the versions published in the *Translators' Corner*.

The contributions have been made by translators from a variety of places, all of them in the target context—the United States—as can probably be expected: Connecticut, Texas, Pennsylvania, New York, Virginia, and Massachusetts. The volume includes, however, two examples in which the line separating the source context from the target context becomes blurred. In the multilingual and multicultural setting of the United States, source texts and authors may coexist with their translators and translations, as is illustrated here by Melanie Márquez-Emily Hunsberger and Clara Ronderos-Mary G. Berg. The translators also come from various backgrounds: some of them are academics, some professional translators; some are experienced professionals, others are just starting their careers. Interestingly, this is the second time a compilation volume of the *Translators' Corner* features a

work by Colombian Clara Ronderos: the first time she appeared as a translator, while she is now presented as a writer, so it is her own work that is translated. This also is the second time we have a contribution by the Cuban-American translator Robert Lima, who sadly passed away a few months after submitting his translation. We would therefore like to pay tribute to this fine, sensitive, and distinguished translator, who was also a professor of Hispanic Literatures and Comparative Literature at Penn State University, a poet, playwright and literary critic, a member of the Academia Norteamericana de la Lengua Española, and holder of the Orden de Isabel la Católica, awarded to him by King Juan Carlos of Spain.

We sincerely thank all translators featuring in this volume for their generous and most interesting contributions and for their flexible attitude in the revision process. Our deepest gratitude also goes to the original authors or their estates and publishers for granting their permission to have their works published in English in the Observatorio's *Translators' Corner*. I would also like to publicly appreciate the efficient and conscientious work done by Juan Manuel Arias, graduate student from Harvard University and Research Assistant at the Observatorio, who collaborated with me on the revision and edition of all the translations published throughout the year as well as on this volume.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to invite experienced or novel translators to send us their work, enabling this 'Corner' to gradually achieve a truly diverse representation of Hispanic literature in terms of geographical origin, genres, styles, or periods in English translation.

I cannot but conclude this presentation by recalling some words of the late Javier Marías, who was not only one of the greatest writers of contemporary Spain but also an excellent translator. Marías frequently reflected on the important act of translating, which he once defined in the following way: "El traductor, al encararse con su tarea, siente el texto original como una ausencia. Lo que cuenta para él y para su labor es la ausencia de ese texto en su lengua [...] El traductor no reproduce, no copia, no calca [...] Plasma siempre por vez primera una experiencia única, irrepetible e intransferible."³

Prof. Marta Mateo

Executive Director

Observatory of the Spanish Language and Hispanic Cultures in the United States

Instituto Cervantes at Harvard University

³ Javier Marías. *Los enamoramientos*. Madrid: Alfaguara, 2011, p. 378.

Three Poems

by **Julia Barella**

translated by **Sarah Glenski**

9

INTRODUCTION

Julia Barella is a Spanish poet, professor, and literary critic. Her first collection of poems, *CCJ en las ciudades*, appeared in 2002. Barella has since published four books of poetry: *Hacia Esmeralda* (2004), *Esmeralda* (2005), *Aguas profundas* (2008), and *Praderas de Posidonia* (2013). Originally from León, she currently serves as Professor of Spanish Literature and Director of the School of Writing at the University of Alcalá. In addition to her research, which has focused on the Baroque period, as well as modern literature, she has published two books on the practice of creative writing. Barella has served on the jury for several literary awards, including the Premio Nacional de Poesía given by Spain's Ministry of Culture.

Here, I present three poems from *Praderas de Posidonia* [Meadows of the Mediterranean Sea] (Huerga & Fierro, 2013). I was drawn to them for the unique ways in which they dialogue with each other. The poems offer multiple, nuanced meditations on the themes of woman, creation, and

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space, all of which are central to the collection and to Barella’s poetic production in general. In “La arquitecta” —translated here as “Architect”—, woman is synonymous with the act of creation. Her memories and thoughts take up space: they have a physical presence. Even the rhythm of the verses conveys a heaviness. Letting the weight of the past go allows her to continue creating. The reader wonders: What is she constructing? In “El jardín” —“Garden”—, a mythical, primal quality permeates. The question of how one’s being relates to both natural and man-made spaces is key. The seemingly symbolic becomes very tangible with the allusion to how social and gendered barriers serve to limit women. In the final poem, “Turismo y ruinas” —“Tourism and Ruins”—, woman is again a creative force. An affinity exists between the woman and the space she inhabits. She projects her inner light, and the hotel lights shine upon the sea. For its labyrinth-like quality, her hair mirrors the knots of ruins that run along the Mediterranean Sea. Her memories and the ruins are one and the same. The poem comes full circle, having moved from the image of a woman with a vivid imagination to the memory of a lifeless mother.

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Sarah Glenski holds a Ph.D. in Spanish literature from Yale University, where she works as a Lecturer of Spanish. She specializes in the literatures and cultures of Spain, and more broadly of the Iberian Peninsula, during the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries. These are her first published translations.

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ARCHITECT

A woman lives off her imagination.
Each night her memories fade
lightening the load
of the day to day.
We see her at dawn
training her control
of every muscle of the brain,
not wasting an ounce of energy.
A woman constructs
by letting go,
she knows her mission,
the future is still possible.

11

GARDEN

In garden, boat

and tree,

a home,

a cave to inhabit.

Garden is the stage

where philosophy finds refuge,

where speaking with nature

readies us to withstand the next swarm

of numb, rational beings.

Men insist:

borders are just a human creation,

but we women see the limits

imposed by language.

12

TOURISM AND RUINS

For Eduardo Blázquez

I

The woman at the window
projects her inner light,
contemplative,
she keeps fertile grounds for dreaming.

How tiring the ruins!
blue, Mediterranean stretches
illuminated from the terrace balcony of a hotel.
What passion for contemplation!
mirror and frame,
the heroine's coiffed labyrinth of hair,
a fruited landscape,
a still life of red brambles
of burning hawthorn, timid azaleas or violets,
a garden with its roses and cypresses,
the light,
the grotto,
the heat of summer afternoons.

13

II

For those of us who had a childhood garden,
today a painful memory
of a lifeless mother gazing out the window,
ruins with their rancid tang
are knots of vivid reds and blues,
whose color has faded with time.
Ruins wear us down,
they remind us that there is no time to love
and that those we love have gone.

Five Galician Songs

by **Emilio Cao**

translated by **Robert Lima**

15

INTRODUCTION

Musician and composer Emilio Cao Losada (1953 -) was born in millennial 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.

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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 Rosalía 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 at <https://youtu.be/c6dzo1ju3v4>) 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.

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."

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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.]

IN THE SHAWL OF THE SEA

18

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.

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.

19

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.

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.

21

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.

22

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.

The KIO Towers

by José Luis Castillo Puche

translated by Douglas Edward LaPrade

23

INTRODUCTION

José Luis Castillo Puche (1919-2004) was a novelist and journalist from Yecla (Murcia), in Spain. After the Spanish Civil War, he studied at the Jesuit seminary in Comillas, Cantabria (in Northern Spain), but he abandoned the clerical vocation to become a writer. He wrote a novel criticizing the seminary entitled *Sin camino* (1956), which was censored by Franco and later published in Argentina upon the recommendation of writer Pío Baroja. Franco's censors also eliminated some passages from another novel by Castillo Puche entitled *Paralelo 40* (1963), about the presence of the U.S. Air Force in Spain after the establishment of the air base in Torrejón near Madrid, but the novel was allowed to be published in Spain. Castillo Puche won Spain's Premio Nacional de Literatura Miguel de Cervantes in 1958, and the Premio Nacional de Novela y Narrativa in 1982. In his novels about the repercussions of the Spanish Civil War, the writer refers to his hometown of Yecla by the fictional name of Hécula—the Fundación José Luis Castillo Puche publishes a journal entitled *Hécula*. The Spanish novelist and journalist lived in New York from 1967 to 1971, when he served as foreign

correspondent for the newspaper *Informaciones*. He also collaborated with the newspaper *Pueblo*, and taught journalism at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid. Having met Ernest Hemingway and written a book about their friendship and travels, Castillo Puche sponsored a journalism prize named for Hemingway that was awarded to Spanish journalists.

“Las Torres de KIO,” the poem presented here in English translation as “The KIO Towers,” is about the construction of the twin leaning towers on the Paseo de la Castellana at the Plaza de Castilla in Madrid, the KIO Towers, which were built between 1989 and 1996. They stand twenty-six stories high and are tilted toward each other at an angle of fifteen degrees, suggesting an incomplete arch over the Paseo de la Castellana. Their name refers to the Kuwait Investment Office, which commissioned the structures. José Luis Castillo Puche composed the original Spanish version of his poem in 1994 while construction was still in progress. The poem was published in 2014 in *Hécula: Revista de la Fundación Castillo-Puche* (Number 3). The twin KIO Towers also are known as the Gate of Europe because they symbolize Spain’s Transition and entry into the European Union. In his satirical poem, José Luis Castillo Puche interprets the towers as symbols of fiscal fraud and political corruption. The poem concludes with a grotesque allusion to the Pillars of Hercules on Spain’s coat of arms.

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Douglas Edward LaPrade is professor of American literature at The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. He spent two Fulbright grants in Spain, where he met José Luis Castillo Puche, Ernest Hemingway’s friend and biographer. LaPrade has published books in Spain about Hemingway. He is a member of the board of the Fundación José Luis Castillo Puche.

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THE KIO TOWERS

From the highest angelic cornices
of the Seventh Heaven
to the dark basement of pure hellishness
an ancient or reborn Tobias
in the glassen,
garish,
lavish,
pseudo-romantic attics
of the well-defined and unconsciously warlike
avenue of the Castellana,
contemplates,
laments,
admires,
is amazed and frightened by,
that display of cement and glass,
urban larceny of old devastated areas,
corrupt bureaucracy
and rentier fauna,
he takes pleasure in the polychromatic reflections,
absurd stained glass window of a lay cathedral,
while featherless pigeons
crash, screech,
within the pointed beak of gnawing vultures,
and even distracted angels
seek some invisible star

25

in the bleached white,
 detergent,
 midday light, molten whiteness,
 oh, vision without smoke or purple wind,
 there, over there, in the background,
 immobile
 wedges toward the sky,
 visible skeletons and macabre models
 of financial fraud,
 the KIO Towers,
 twins,
 fortified before they were born,
 not parallel,
 leaning,
 unbalanced,
 pleading,
 vestiges of an arrogant future
 —Gate of Europe—
 open and fluctuating Gate,
 Incomplete,
 Uncertain,
 threatening,
 unfinished symphony of an aberrant urban development,
 magnetized as astral lures,
 unfinished dream,
 lame syllogism,
 truncated, shortened towers,
 unstable parallelograms,
 laughable verticality,
 vacuous horns of false plenty

and the risky, illegal, fraudulent
 business deals;
 hideous irons
 interwoven by grotesque railings,
 specious and farcical stage set
 for a future with no present;
 urban Babel,
 comic,
 monumental architecture,
 audacious,
 deceptive, defeated,
 engineering prank
 —oh, I’m falling—
 for simpletons and naïve citizens.
 To climb up? How?
 up, down, sideways,
 to dive fatally into the steps
 to end up in a kind of basement-chapel-toilet.
 To the right or to the left?
 That depends on your standpoint
 and that’s why the security guards are there,
 surrounding troops, without uniforms,
 or with dirty green or traditional bluish jumpsuits
 although sometimes also
 a man in formal attire appears
 with a top hat and the torch of a sinister executioner
 who guards the future
 of the bold construction,
 and tells us “stop,” “pass” or “continue”
 and he doubtlessly prepares the inauguration
 of the tilted millennium,

uncertain,
 indecipherable,
 with an abundance of undersecretaries
 stuffed in gray suits
 and shiny black shoes,
 as shiny
 as the old three-cornered hats worn by the Guardia Civil
 on solemn, ceremonial days.
 Grounded,
 the KIO Towers remain inaccessible,
 gutted
 like a failed,
 frustrated project,
 acrobatics with no impetus
 sipping the breeze from the Sierra
 and at their feet the sad psalmody
 of the municipal police
 —centuries of ash—
 singing the miserere,
 a horrifying dissonance of raspy vinous voices,
 dismal uniforms
 with buttons of dog bones
 or bones of malnourished children;
 barracks
 of soldiers useful for all service,
 undreamed palaces
 renovated and
 repaired;
 bureaucrats who come and go
 after the workday
 with nausea up their ass;

office workers who fall asleep
 leaning in street corners
 while they wait for the bus,
 and criminal politicians
 who lock themselves inside their cars with bulletproof glass;
 working men and women,
 leaving the maggots' nest
 so they don't miss the buses to Tres Cantos,
 to Colmenar, to Torrelaguna,
 to San Sebastián de los Reyes¹,
 distorted,
 scurrying,
 and even mad nuns
 who seek incense in the slime of the sewer;
 oh, la, la,
 the face of happiness
 of the dead in the diminished peace of the morgue
 while highway M-30 roars beneath,
 in this Madrid of mud and glass,
 of cracked stone and frozen lime.
 It is forbidden to lean out,
 there are no windows at all,
 the Towers are uninhabitable
 but are rather office lairs populated by bald executives
 —Gate of Europe—
 scaffolding toward Europe,
 unfinished, ruinous,
 deplorable and clamorous,
 hypothetical nexus,
 gigantic link,

¹ Translator's note: Suburbs of Madrid

geometrically possible,
 unreal in one's imagination,
 unstable construction punished by the mountain winds,
 fluctuating
 like a flagpole with a white flag.
 The airplanes whistle in the night sky
 and in a small patio
 illuminated by a streetlight
 some indifferent police officers
 with their batons at rest
 play cards
 among the interminable coming and going of
 red,
 white, black,
 metallic green,
 yellow
 cars
 murmuring like a nest of maggots
 and Madrid was a long, crowded maggots' nest,
 enormous rump full of copulating maggots
 yellowish maggots,
 soft,
 whitish,
 big beautiful maggots
 mounting the vortex of the urban sex.
 And Madrid, from above,
 was also
 like a chaotic row of grand pianos,
 decorated with silver candelabra
 and ivory embedded in a brown bear fur;
 a very long lizard
 surrounded by starving dogs without collars,
 by laborers without jobs,
 with no lunchbox nor party membership card;

indifferent diplomats who cover their noses
and the distressing procession of prostitutes
always so devout, long-suffering and maternal,
and the sirens of firefighters
and of the ambulances;
the smoothness
of the Arabs' weapons
and their kind gestures,
and the Jews' jaundice,
the contrite weeping of the tearful Christians,
a line of bishops with slot-machine miters,
bright advertisements
of the Planetarium,
of the Congress,
of the Senate,
of Madrid's Bullring,
of Almudena Cathedral,
of the buses that come and go,
trains that arrive and depart;
labor unions at a protest,
metal union,
construction union,
union of naked aristocrats,
union of police with open zippers,
union of bishops,
television union,
union of the national circus;
the temptation to look down is always greater
than that of looking up,
at the sky,
even if the sky seems very close,

31

a dark sky,
 cloudy,
 mysterious,
 and everything is a mystery,
 Kyrie eleison
 Kyrie eleison.
 Ambulances
 driven by archangels,
 hearses
 driven by clowns,
 bold airplanes of the starways
 above the endless caravan
 of hearses,
 along the Castellana,
 from Cibeles to La Vaguada,
 from Chamartín station to Tres Cantos and Colmenar,
 from Nuevos Ministerios to El Escorial.²
 Temptation of the heights
 from a hypothetical one hundredth floor,
 supreme temptation
 to touch the curve of the unfinished apex,
 to reach the pinnacle
 between searchlights and red lights
 —finis coronat opus
 say the Latin teachers,
 almost always priests who don't know Latin—,

² Translator's note: The Cibeles Fountain is an 18th-century monument in central Madrid depicting mythological figures; La Vaguada is a modern shopping center in a newer part of Madrid. Commuters depart from Madrid's train stations at Chamartín and Nuevos Ministerios for the suburbs.

and the unforeseen was the crowd
 that started to appear between cranes and scaffolds
 in slow ceremony:
 expeditious managers,
 arrogant architects,
 weary foremen,
 servile construction technicians,
 agile elevator mechanics,
 haggard construction workers,
 glossy firefighters,
 nervous electricians,
 plumbers, metal workers and mechanics,
 in a confusing racket
 until other solemn people
 stood out,
 perhaps representatives of the big corporations,
 maybe the owners or partial owners of the towers,
 people wearing a turban and a djellaba,
 with infinite sadness in their eyes,
 and easy reverence;
 also brand-new bankers made of plastic
 with cigars in their mouths,
 and marchionesses and duchesses
 with high ornamental hair combs
 and at their sides were stationed guards with big mustaches,
 feathers in their helmets and white gloves.
 Flashes from the innumerable
 photographers
 and music and folding screens and Persian rugs;
 the KIO towers were having a dazzling triumphal celebration
 in the dark night,

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fireflies in the distance,
 giant worms on the Telefónica building
 And above the “Piruli”
 television tower³.
 “Glory to God in the highest”
 And on earth corrupt politicians,
 right reverend bishops and archbishops
 incorrupt,
 circumflex
 and periphrastic;
 decorated generals,
 perhaps defeated yet vibrant
 and suddenly there began to proceed
 in orderly fashion,
 disciplined, submissive and obliging
 waiters in mourning
 carrying little trays
 with pieces of traditional tortilla
 and canapés of Murcian caviar,
 when there appeared a timid and gaunt Hercules
 who placed the sole of each foot
 on the rectangular roof
 of each of the towers
 —Gate of Europe—
 and his trembling and decadent thighs
 straddling the two twin towers
 formed an obscene and ridiculous arch
 over the Plaza de Castilla

³ Translator’s note: “Piruli” is the nickname of Torrespaña, or Spain Tower, which was built to facilitate television broadcasts of the 1982 World Cup of soccer in Spain. This technological structure is another symbol of Spain’s Transition following the Franco era.

and then
the dreamt of, unpresentable Hercules
urinated copiously on the city
and beneath the black vault of the dark night
Hercules' organ
was left with its little mouth open
like a thirsty fish
from the dry terrigenous plain.

One Hundred Cornfields of Solitude

by **Melanie Márquez Adams**

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translated by **Emily Hunsberger**

INTRODUCTION

Melanie Márquez Adams is an Ecuadorian American writer who has made her home near Nashville, Tennessee. She holds an MFA in Spanish Creative Writing from the University of Iowa where she was an Iowa Arts Fellow. While she does occasionally write in English, she chooses to write principally in Spanish as a way of resisting not just discrimination against Spanish speakers and immigrants in general but also the pressure on authors to shirk ‘bilingual’ or ‘Spanish-language author’ as an identity—since they are pushed to write only in English by the relative lack of opportunities (publications, presses, conferences, readings, media exposure) for literature in Spanish in the US. Márquez Adams is the author of *Querencia: crónicas de una latinoamericana en USA* (Katakana,

2020), *El país de las maravillas: crónicas de mi sueño americano* (César Chávez Institute, 2021), and *Mariposas negras: cuentos* (Eskeletra, 2017). Her most recent fiction and nonfiction can be found in journals such as *Puerto del Sol*, *Laurel Review*, *Spanglish Voces*, *Huellas Magazine*, among others. She served as editor of *Imaginar Países: Entrevistas a escritoras latinoamericanas en Estados Unidos* (Hypermedia, 2021), *Ellas cuentan: Crime Fiction por latinoamericanas en EE. UU.* (Sudaquia, 2019), and *Del sur al norte: Narrativa y poesía de autores andinos* (winner of a 2018 International Latino Book Award). Márquez Adams is also the founder and editor-in-chief of *Anfibias Literarias*, as well as the Spanish Content Editor at *Latino Book Review*. She teaches creative writing at Hugo House, Seattle Escribe, and The Porch, and is a tireless advocate of Spanish-language writers in the US.

“El maíz de la soledad,” the text presented here in English translation as “One Hundred Cornfields of Solitude,” is from *Querencia: crónicas de una latinoamericana en USA*, a collection of Spanish-language essays drawn from her life as an immigrant, a Latina, and a writer living in the South. The *crónica* is a nonfiction form with a long tradition in Latin America, a blend of travel writing, journalism, and personal essay. Márquez Adams’ take on *crónicas* is laced with dark humor, social commentary, rebellion, and optimism. In this piece, she addresses the fear and isolation that seem to follow women around the world, no matter where they go. Written in the second person, it invites the reader to step into the shoes of a woman—who is already facing the dynamics and discrimination of being an immigrant in the US—that arrives full of optimism to a small town in the Midwest. There her illusions of comfort, safety, and support are swiftly crushed.

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Emily Hunsberger is a bilingual writer, translator, and podcast producer. She has published original poetry, reporting, criticism, and research in English and Spanish in *Bello Collective*, *Spanglish Voces*, *Latino Book Review*, and *Estudios del Observatorio/Observatorio Studies*. She translates fiction, nonfiction, and poetry into English, with work featured in *Latin American Literature Today*, *The Southern Review*, *Spanglish Voces*, *Anfibias Literarias*, *Orden de Traslado*, *Translators Aloud*, and forthcoming in *PRISM*. Since 2017, Hunsberger has produced *Tertulia*, an independent podcast *en español* that tells stories about how Spanish is used by real people in the US to build community, transmit culture, reclaim identity, and exercise rights. She has also worked in the fields of community-based economic development, international sustainable development, education, and immigrant rights. By choosing to translate Márquez Adams' work into English, Hunsberger attempts to offer a pathway for English-language readers to hear the author's voice without forcing her to write in English or to self-translate. Furthermore, it is an opportunity for the translator to declare, together with the author, that the United States is a Spanish-speaking country with its own Spanish-language literature.

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ONE HUNDRED CORNFIELDS OF SOLITUDE

When you're from one of the most dangerous cities in Latin America, your safety mode gets activated every time you go back to visit. As if you could keep danger away simply by staying alert: a sort of personal defense state of zen.

Back in your little mountain town in Tennessee—even though a tiny voice inside you reminds you that danger is always lurking for a woman, no matter where she is—you allow yourself to let down your guard a little.

You relax.

You feel safe again.

Then the universe offers you a new zip code. The opportunity of a lifetime: an MFA in creative writing at a famous university in a small town in the Midwest, among the cornfields.

You let your guard down even more. The City of Literature. A mecca for anyone with literary ambitions in this country. A paradise filled with writers.

Nothing bad could happen in a place like that.

Right?

But shortly after arriving, you encounter a world ruled by slumlords that no one warned you about. A place where the façades parade as houses—complete with porches and flowerbeds—but behind their doors they conceal small, sad apartments owned by corporations headquartered in some metropolis far beyond the cornfields.

You discover that your life and your safety are of no concern to these corporate entities, who subcontract maintenance services to other companies who then, in turn, subcontract the work to men who answer to no one. This absolves all parties of responsibility. No one is accountable. Are you given any assurances about the men that have access to where you live? Absolutely not.

A few weeks after classes begin, you ask the corporate entity to replace the broken toilet in the studio apartment that they've leased to you. They send a stalker to your door: a man who accuses you of stealing the money that, according to him, he accidentally dropped in your postage stamp-sized bathroom.

A stalker who pounded on your door several times throughout the day.
A stalker that you find later that evening... circling the parking lot... waiting for you.
A stalker that makes you feel trapped in your own car and prompts you to call the police for the first time in your life.
A stalker who completely obliterates your safety mode.
But the story doesn't end here.
You discover that your life is of no concern to the police, either. The officer that they send 25 minutes after you call 9-1-1 files your case under the one that he finds more pressing: the stalker's lost property report. You wait in vain for some sign that the danger has passed, but all the officer gives you is his business card. In case you find the stalker's money.
And, no, it doesn't end here with this other man, the officer.

Having taken shelter at a hotel a few hours after the incident with the stalker and the police officer, the first person that you contact is the director of your program. The hours crawl by at a snail's pace as you wait for her to respond to your email recounting everything you've just experienced. You tell her you don't know what to do. That you're afraid. You just arrived, and you don't know anyone else here.

You imagine comforting words, compassion, support. Maybe even empathy. You cling to this hope, a glimmer of light in the middle of one of your darkest days.

But instead of light, the program director offers you links. *She* is out of the country and won't return until the end of the semester. She copies the department chair and washes her hands of the situation. She also suggests that you reach out to other women in your program. She never contacts you again after that.

The department chair immediately sends you more links and phone numbers. You won't hear from *her* again until several weeks later, after you've moved to a new apartment on the other side of town. Her unhurried and half-hearted attempt at appearing supportive is like salt in the wound.

You meet with one of the women in your program at a pub. Before you can finish telling her what happened to you, *she* interrupts you to tell you that something else must be going on here. That some repressed memory from your past is making you feel this way.

No one raped you.

No one touched you.

What happened to you wasn't all that serious.

Then she takes a last sip of her IPA, gets up from the barstool, and leaves.

The only thing that anyone you contact at the university does is flood your inbox with more links and phone numbers. Every time you ask someone for help, links. At the end of every appointment, phone numbers. No one offers you a way out of this giant corn maze of numbers and links, and for a time you feel trapped in a cruel web designed solely to follow protocols and avoid liabilities for the university.

As if those links could replace comforting words and actual support. As if those numbers could protect you and offer you the one thing you desperately need: a place to feel safe.

After surviving a series of dismissive responses and finding your own way out of that godforsaken corn maze, you make a promise to yourself.

You will never be dismissive when a woman tells you that she is afraid.

You'll demand action by her side and on her behalf, over and over again, until it's impossible for them to go on ignoring your voices. Until the day comes when every woman reaches her hand out to another woman in danger. Until all women learn to take care of one another. Until no woman feels alone—whether she finds herself surrounded by cornfields or in one of the most dangerous cities in the world.

Dare to imagine it: no woman alone, ever again.

Eight Poems

by **Luis Alberto de Cuenca**

translated by **Gustavo Pérez Firmat**

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INTRODUCTION

Luis Alberto de Cuenca was born in Madrid on September 29, 1950. He holds a doctorate in Classic Philology from the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. Currently he is research professor at the Centro Superior de Investigaciones Científicas. From 1996 to 2000 he was the director of Spain's Biblioteca Nacional. He has won many prizes for both his scholarly and his creative work, among them the Premio Nacional de Traducción (1989), the Premio Nacional de Poesía (2015), and the Premio Internacional de Poesía Federico García Lorca (2021). Cuenca's first book of poetry, *Los retratos*, was published in 1971. Since then, he has published more than thirty other poetry collections. He has gathered his complete poems under the title *El mundo y los días*, whose most recent edition dates from 2019. In addition, he has written lyrics for the Spanish singer Loquillo and the rock group Orquesta Mondragón.

Initially embracing the “culturalista” aesthetics of the 1970s, with its reliance on allusiveness and experimentation, Cuenca’s poetry has evolved toward greater and greater simplicity. He describes his mature poetry as “poesía de línea clara.” His poems, elegant yet devious, explore the expressive resources of the conversational register by making use of a variety of materials: classical antiquity, comic books, cartoons, Hollywood movies, slang, urban culture. Perhaps more than any of his contemporaries, he has been a major influence on younger Spanish poets.

The eight poems included in this selection are taken from two of the collections that Cuenca has published during the last few years. “La brisa de la calle” (presented here in English translation as “The Breeze Outside”), “Plegaria de la buena muerte” (“Prayer for a Good Death”), “Campo florido” (“Field in Flower”), “Amor y psique” (“Eros and Psyche”), and “Vuelve Guillermo de Aquitania” (“William of Aquitaine Returns”) appeared in *Cuaderno de vacaciones* (2014). “Tristeza verdadera” (“True misery”), “*In Illo Tempore*” (“*In illo tempore*”), and “Sobre un tema de Julio Martínez Mesanza” (“On a Theme by Julio Martínez Mesanza”) appeared in *Volveremos a vernos* (2018).

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Gustavo Pérez Firmat has published several books of poetry in Spanish and English, among them *Bilingual Blues* (1995) and *Sin lengua, deslenguado* (2017). His books of cultural criticism include *Life on the Hyphen* (1994-2012) and *Tongue Ties* (2003). He teaches at Columbia University, where he is the David Feinson Professor in the Humanities.

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THE BREEZE OUTSIDE

You're sitting in your favorite easy chair
before a crackling fire, thinking about
what lies beyond the bolt on your door
and your books. Does anything exist,
really, beyond the walls of your house?
You've always been drawn to the fantastic.
You've always viewed life through
the eyes of literature. But you've never known,
too little interest or not enough courage,
what it's like outside (or if there *is* an outside).
It's time you found out. Unbolt the door,
open the windows. You'll see the life out there:
fabulous creatures, monsters
not even Machen could have imagined
in his darkest deranged nightmares,
heroines blonder than those in your books,
heroes more generous toward the weak
than those in your comics, villains more cruel
than those in the movies. Let the light
of the real enter your life, let the breeze
of truth that blows in the streets caress you.

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TRUE MISERY

When I was young
I didn't know what
misery was. My poems
wallowed in fake despair,
fictitious distress,
spectacular melancholy.
Now that I'm old
and truly miserable,
I can't find the words
for the griefs
that devour me.
I can only write:
"It's dark," "it's cold."
The sort of rubbish
that means nothing.

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PRAYER FOR A GOOD DEATH

Now that death is not so far away
(in truth it was always nearby),
and keeps making passes at me,
I remember —because it’s thundering—
to ask the Gods of my childhood,
the Gods of my ancestors, for a good death.
I remember, above all, the One
who is three (like Mike Moorcock’s Corum):
the cantankerous Old Man
who presided over the Old Testament,
the handsome Young Man crucified
in the New, and the *Pneuma* or Holy Spirit
who merges and gathers them in the Dove
that crowns the Old Man’s forehead.
God of my childhood, even if you don’t exist
(do I?) I want to ask you formally
and in writing (I’m having this notarized)
to make my terrifying transit to the icy stars
(or to scalding Tartarus) peaceful and painless.
I’m asking to pass on to the light (or the darkness)
without hysterics, without making a nuisance of myself,
after making peace with you and my loved ones.
I understand that many things enter into how one dies,
that it’s generally unpleasant (an agony, as you well know).
I also understand that you can’t give every guy
off the street a serene and blessed death.

Further, I confess I'm not a good Christian.
I have no empathy toward the sick or the destitute.
I have no right to ask but still I'm asking, shielded
by the faith of my elders, by my legendary nerve,
and by the unfathomable depths of your mercy.
Grant me a good death, Lord,
be kind to me in my last moments, I beg you.

FIELD IN FLOWER

On this Field one fights for glory,
assuming such a thing exists.
On this Field ploughshares turn into swords,
cavalieri say goodbye to their ladies
forever, burn their memories in the bonfire
of endless combat. This is the Field
from which no one returns, where no one
has a name, a family, a lineage,
where the only relation is war.
Forget your past. Come to the fire
of naked leaves, broken lances, riderless horses.
Come to the constant fire of unknown heroes,
to the meadow of myths that don't explain
anything. Don't delay, hurry,
come before the Field in Flower sinks
into the shadows of a fading dream.

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IN ILLO TEMPORE

Your parents had gone somewhere
and we had the house to ourselves,
just like the abandoned convent
in that poem by Jaime Gil de Biedma.

With the music going full blast,
you mixed us an explosive cocktail
while I, sweetly, took off your shirt.

You filled two glasses to the brim.

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We drank up. We began to giggle.

Our eyes shone with the ardor of youth,
and we kissed like they do in movies,
and we loved like they do in songs.

When our days met our desires
and our kingdom was not of this world.

WILLIAM OF AQUITAINE RETURNS

I'm going to make a poem out of nothing.
You and I will be the protagonists.
Our emptiness, our loneliness,
the deadly boredom, the daily defeats:
all these things will go into the poem,
which is bound to be short, since they
fit in a few lines, maybe as few as seven,
or perhaps eight, if this last line counts.

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EROS AND PSYCHE

You have no idea how it came to this.
You wake up in the morning
to discover that your furniture is gone,
that your books have disappeared,
that there's no light anywhere,
and that even the faintest trace
of the marvelous body that slept with you
last night has vanished into thin air.

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ON A THEME BY JULIO MARTÍNEZ MESANZA

I don't want to be happy. I'm sick
of so much happiness. It angers me
that people love me, that the gods protect me.
I refuse to be the life of the party.
I renounce the power of family and wealth.
I don't want to see you by my side,
in my car, glowing and cheerful,
anticipating my hidden desires.
I'm no longer amused when my friends
praise the whiteness of your hands.
I detest success, and flights of fancy,
and the spark of genius, and love,
and the gardens of the cheerful.
I long for darkness, for the sadness
that wounds. I need to despair.
So much joy is killing me.

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Pilgrimage to Santiago (1610)

by **Diego de Guzmán**

translated by **George D. Greenia**

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INTRODUCTION

Like many well-heeled pilgrims who trekked to Santiago de Compostela and the tomb of Saint James over the centuries, Bishop Diego de Guzmán (1566-1631) was blending honest piety with earnest business. A distinguished prelate in the royal entourage, he held the titles of *Capellán Mayor* (senior court chaplain) and *Limosnero* (dispenser of alms). The higher the social class of the traveler, the more likely the merger of missions, and Diego's pious journey was probably overshadowed by the royal commissions he executed during this trip.

Guzmán was ordered by King Felipe III (ruled 1598-1621) to visit Compostela in fulfillment of the monarchs' observance of the 1610 Jacobean Holy Year when the saint's feast day fell on a Sunday. In his capacity of royal emissary bearing official gifts to honor Spain's patron saint,¹ Guzmán

¹ Teresa of Ávila and her Carmelite foundations were growing in popularity in the early sixteenth century. She was declared co-patroness of Spain from 1627 until 1630 when Saint James resumed title of sole national patron. Erin Kathleen Rowe traces the intertwined history of double patronage in *Saint and Nation. Santiago, Teresa of Avila* (2011).

set out with numerous companions from Valladolid on September 20 and concluded his journey at the Escorial royal palace on October 26, 1610. The travel journal he kept of his progress and personal experiences along the way was framed with an eye to producing an appropriate account for their majesties on his return to the court. The 1610 manuscript should be viewed as a rough performance script full of run-on sentences adaptable for oral delivery on multiple occasions but especially before their majesties who apparently expected a prompt debriefing.

That manuscript was rediscovered by Julio Vázquez Castro in the Real Academia de la Historia in Madrid and published in 2014 as *La peregrinación a Santiago de Diego de Guzmán*. The travel notes from 1610 provided the narrative armature for one of the internal episodes of a much longer memorial published as *Reyna Católica. Vida y muerte de D. Margarita de Austria. Reyna de España* in 1617 after Margarita's death in 1611 at twenty-six years of age. The *Vida y muerte* has been known for some time and left a trail of later citations, never receiving the annotated critical edition it deserved until Vázquez Castro's edition of the pilgrimage portion.

Ordinary travelers who produced accounts of their journeys in the Middle Ages and Early Modern period were routinely long-distance merchants and explorers not bent on authoring anything, or pilgrims who had few writing tools in their possession. Many sacred travelers report disasters and thefts which left them stripped bare. What notes they took were utilitarian, noting distances, measurements of shrines, amounts exacted for tolls, and lag time spent at sea or on shore stymied by adverse weather or merciless captors. Some sort of document pouch however was common. Especially in hostile territory, letters of validation or safe passage were vital.²

Guzmán needed no protective documents to allow his safe passage from the royal court to Compostela. Royal emissaries were couriers of news and negotiation, especially chaplains and others trained in diplomacy and already part of national and international webs of political and social networking. In his account Guzmán mentions various pieces of correspondence received from or sent back to the court including letters to and from the queen while Guzmán was away. He carried missives to be transmitted to the authorities along his route and in Compostela and probably ferried other correspondence between stopping points as a courtesy to his successive hosts. He had the advantage of being accustomed to generating administrative reports and in the company of attendants who could write for him as assigned. Guzmán delivered and collected both transactional documents and private letters and could restock writing supplies as needed.

² Spanish Muslims traveling from Castile to the Islamic shrines in the Holy Land, for instance, were grateful for letters of accreditation given by a Franciscan friar who was a sympathetic fellow Spaniard (Roza Candás 8).

As in most pilgrimage reports, the more distant the locale, the greater detail: closer destinations need no descriptions because there is enough traffic to provide a reliable oral information stream. Guzmán is exceptional in detailing every stop on his round trip and deliberately taking a distinct return route to report on additional swaths of the kingdom, their local roadways and noble power brokers, even the number of buildings and inhabitants, village-by-village, gazetteer style.

Guzmán's account of his Holy Year pilgrimage emerged as a byproduct of the strenuous literate culture that surrounded it. With his queen Margarita of Austria, Felipe had bulletins printed and distributed throughout his realm encouraging cathedrals and religious houses to send Holy Year delegates to the shrine to Saint James and had entertained making the trip in person.³ Print culture represented different sorts of public communication. Those flyers were in themselves a devotional gesture. They also put whole territories on high alert that a royal entourage might be coming through.⁴ Some of the lavish receptions that Guzmán enjoyed had been prepared for the monarchs' visit if it took place, and the welcome extended to their majesties' proxy would be assuredly reported back to the court.⁵

Guzmán's most public mission was the delivery of magnificently embroidered Florentine textiles, today still in the possession of the cathedral of Santiago, and the promise of extravagant silver standing candelabras with painted royal coats of arms delivered July of 1612. These gestures of piety were lavish, chosen for their visual impact. A master tailor traveled with the party to trim and assemble the massive bolts of Italian cloth woven with a dazzling quantity of gold and silver metallic thread. Years later, after the cloth supports were too stretched and worn to use as wall hangings, large sections were unraveled to detach and melt down the precious metals for bullion. After 400 years, the surviving panels are still stunning examples of Baroque craftsmanship.

Guzmán includes an unsettling and quite unique report about the grand cathedral censer or *botafumeiro*, still today the most dramatic and crowd-pleasing bit of theatrics performed at the end of a pilgrims' Mass. The thurible is the largest in Christendom, some 60 pounds of silver-plated tin

³ In the version of 1617 Guzmán explains how he dissuaded the monarchs from undertaking such an arduous and risky journey over bad roads. Perhaps more pressing were the facts that the prince and heir was running a fever and queen Margarita gave birth to a daughter, also Margarita, on May 24. Of the queen's eight children several died in infancy and the queen herself at age 26.

⁴ The Spanish court was highly mobile and might have taken any number of routes to arrive in Compostela, just as Guzmán took a completely different route for his outbound and homebound journeys. I have not located surviving copies of those royal flyers promoting the 1610 Holy Year pilgrimage to Compostela and its Saint.

⁵ The version set down for the 1617 print edition makes careful note of hosts and special marks of hospitality shown during this trip, all drawn from personal memory and perhaps reflecting enduring alliances.

bearing a large pan of burning coals and issuing clouds of fragrant incense as the great organ blares out a hymn for Saint James. The censer is suspended from iron struts and wooden pulleys operated by eight attendants pulling on cables in a rhythmic performance. Guzmán writes that he saw the *botafumeiro* crashing against the ceiling of the cathedral. This may have been due to a wildly enthusiastic performance in honor of the royal emissary, or simply the clatter of the censer basin and lid bouncing at the top of its arc caused by a slack rope which would also explain the shower of embers described in Guzmán's account. The censer in use today is mounted on old but sturdy iron struts with barrel pulley and ropes, all carefully monitored by engineers at the city's university.

The 1610 field report delivered on the senior chaplain's return forms the core of the 1617 print publication, expanded in detail but barely upgraded in rhetoric. By the time the published version appeared, Diego de Guzmán had risen considerably in his fortunes, adding to his titles and benefices further emoluments as Archbishop of Sevilla, titular Archbishop of Tyre in the Holy Land, and Patriarch of the Indies. Never an exceptionally learned man, Guzmán writes in a relaxed first-person voice without citing other published sources or adding more than the most routine of pious inflections. A secretary may have transcribed his earlier account to tidy up spelling and mechanics. The voice and simple style are certifiably those of Guzmán.

This translation of the 1610 manuscript notes occasional changes introduced in the 1617 revision when the sense is completed or altered. I modernize proper names with only occasional notes on historical context. One of the temptations of the translator of a fairly flat text is to spruce it up with more colorful vocabulary and better sentence structure, something I yielded to only to make Guzmán's utilitarian travel notes more readable.⁶

⁶ I wish to acknowledge the excellent guidance of Julio Vázquez Castro, editor of my source edition, and consultants Xosé M. Sánchez Sánchez of Santiago's Cathedral Archives, Miguel Taín Guzmán, Director of the Chair of the Camino de Santiago at the University of Santiago, José Suárez Otero, archeologist at the University of Santiago, Luis Gordo-Peláez, art historian at California State Univ.-Fresno, and Maryjane Dunn, Henderson State University.

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

George D. Greenia is Professor Emeritus of Modern Languages at William & Mary and founder of its Institute of Pilgrimage Studies. Former Editor of the journal *La corónica, A Journal of Medieval Spanish, Language, Literature, Linguistics and Cultural Studies*, he has published widely in those fields and in research on world pilgrimage, medieval and modern. For his scholarly work and promotion of the Camino de Santiago he received a Lifetime Achievement award from American Pilgrims on the Camino and the Encomienda de la Orden de Isabel la Católica from the nation of Spain.

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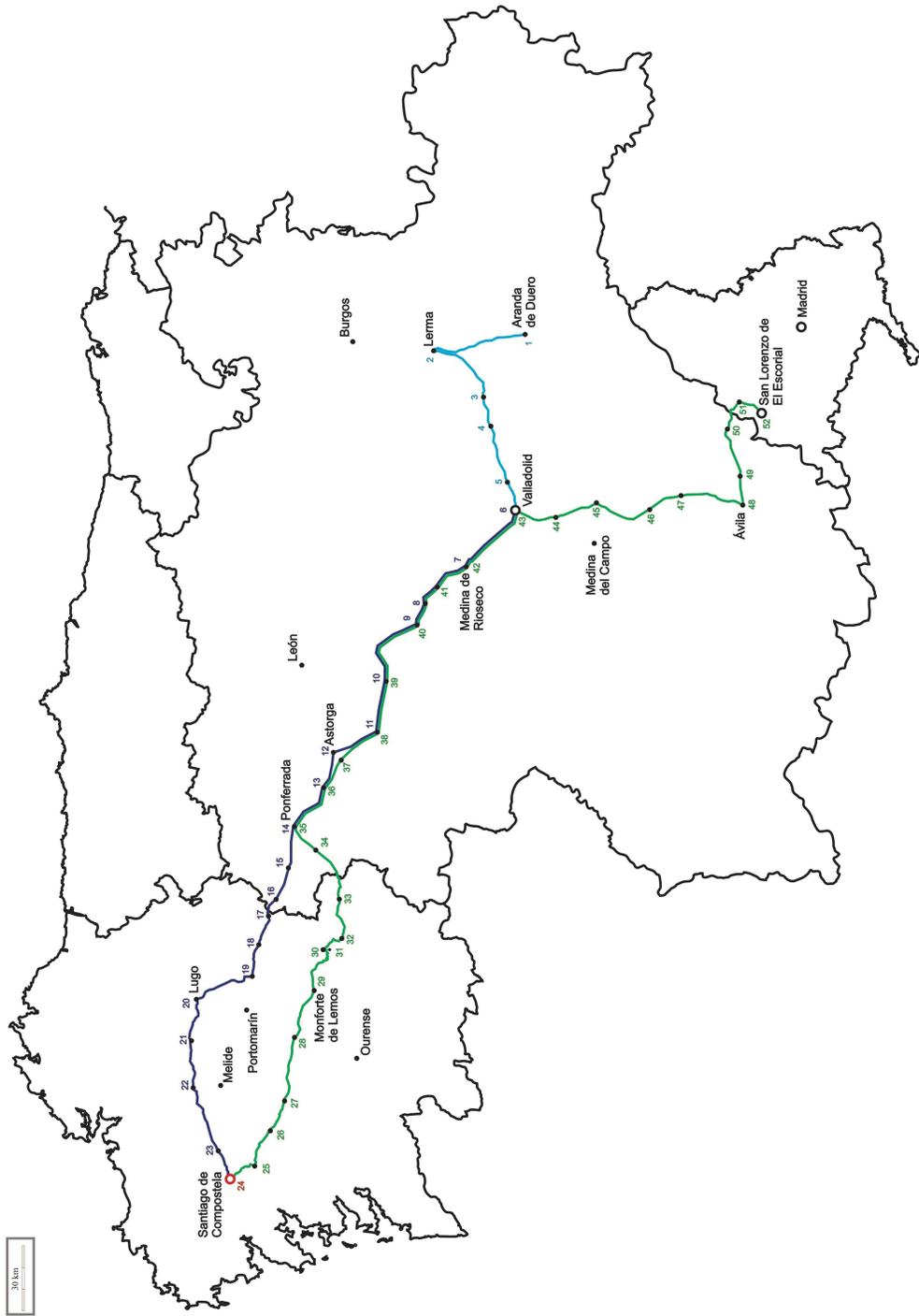


Fig. 1. Map of Diego de Guzmán's pilgrimage 1610. Courtesy of Julio Vázquez Castro.

**THE JOURNEY OF DON DIEGO DE GUZMÁN,
ALMONER AND SENIOR CHAPLAIN OF THEIR MAJESTIES,
UNDERTAKEN IN THEIR NAMES TO THE HOLY CHURCH⁷
OF SIR SAINT JAMES⁸ OF GALICIA TO VISIT HIS HOLY REMAINS
AND EARN THE JUBILEE INDULGENCE**

Sunday, September 19. The Queen, our lady, took communion and then their majesties heard Mass together.⁹ They granted audience to the Count of Benavente who came from Naples where he had been Viceroy. In the afternoon their majesties left for the Monastery of Sacramena in Vernardos [Segovia] five leagues¹⁰ away. I took my leave of their majesties in order to go to Sir Saint James¹¹ of Galicia where they had commanded me to go in their name. Her ladyship princess Doña Ana¹² and her ladyship princess Doña Margarita also departed with their majesties and made straight away for the Escorial.¹³

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Monday, September 20. Having kissed the hand of our lord the prince¹⁴ who remained in Aranda recovering from his illness, I left with the Licentiate Tribaldos and Don Diego Bela, chaplains to his majesty, for Lerma where the queen, our lady, had sent some very fine cloths to the countess of Lemos, her senior chamberlain, who was there, so that she [the queen] might have wall hangings,

⁷ Guzmán routinely uses *Iglesia* to refer to the apostle's shrine rather than its status as a 'cathedral' which is the see of a bishop. His official dealings were more directly with the canons of the Chapter to whom the royal gifts were directed while the bishop was his personal host. I capitalize Church for the great Romanesque structure in Compostela, the city, lower case 'church' for lesser places.

⁸ Guzmán often uses the honorific *Señor Santiago* still in common use in Spanish at the cathedral. I opted for 'Sir Saint James' to distinguish from 'lord' as a noble title or 'Lord' as God.

⁹ The narrative begins in Aranda del Duero, Burgos.

¹⁰ Leagues are roughly 5.5 kilometers or 3.4 miles. A determined traveler, Guzmán averaged about eight leagues per day or about 27 miles.

¹¹ To avoid confusion, I sometimes use 'Compostela' as the place name even when Guzmán uses 'Santiago' indiscriminately for the place, shrine, its corporate body, the person, or the cult of Saint James.

¹² Ana María Mauricia de Austria (1601-1666), the eldest of Felipe III and Margarita's eight children, later wife of Louis XIII and Queen Consort of France.

¹³ Major royal palace north of Madrid in a vast complex with monastery, library, grammar school, basilica, and pantheon of royal tombs.

¹⁴ The future Felipe IV (1605-1665), five years old at the time.

a canopy and [an altar] frontal made so that I could take them in the name of her majesty to said Church of Santiago, and so the aforementioned countess did and arranged so that the chamberlain of her majesty left for Compostela with the cloths.¹⁵

Tuesday, September 21st. I was in Lerma.¹⁶

Wednesday, September 22nd. I left Lerma and went to spend the night in Tórtoles, a village of 200¹⁷ which belongs to Benedictine nuns in the same town, a very ancient village and it has a parish church dedicated to San Esteban with a very pretty retablo.

Thursday, September 23rd. The three of us said Mass in the said church of San Esteban. We left at six in the morning and we went to eat at midday¹⁸ in Castroverde, a town dependent on the Marqués of Avilafuente six leagues from Tórtoles. From there we went to Villa Armenteros five leagues away where we slept.¹⁹

Friday, September 24th. We said Mass in this town of Armenteros and at six we left for Valladolid where we arrived at ten where Fr. Pedro de Guzmán²⁰, of the Company of Jesus,²¹ the canon [Pedro] Sanz del Castillo, a canon of Santiago and administrator, came out to receive us. I went to dismount in the house of Don Gregorio de Tovar, *oidor*²² of Valladolid; the bishops of Palencia and Valladolid; the Marqués of Vélez; Gabriel Núñez, the Corregidor²³; church [officials]; inquisitors and knights; and the father superior of the Company [of Jesus] came out to see me.

¹⁵ Apparently, the gift of rich textiles was being held by the Countess and transferred to Guzmán's care.

¹⁶ Vázquez Castro (2014) provides a detailed map of the journey and extensive notes [See Fig. 1].

¹⁷ Guzmán relays numbers of residents (*vecinos*) or houses (*casas*) either of which may be households tallied for tax purposes.

¹⁸ Guzmán calculates his stopping points where food for his party has been prearranged, so *comer* indicates the midday meal, rendezvous and rest stop and *cenar* an evening repast.

¹⁹ The travelers kept up a vigorous pace of five-to-eleven leagues per day, averaging about eight depending on weather and terrain.

²⁰ This Pedro is first cousin to the author Diego de Guzmán, not be confused with Diego's father or brother with the same name.

²¹ Formal name for the religious Order commonly known as Jesuits.

²² The *oidor* was a magistrate of first appeal who literally 'heard' complaints which might result in further legal action.

²³ The *corregidor* functioned at a regional or municipal level on behalf of the monarch.

Saturday, September 25th. I said Mass at the [chapel of] the Company of Jesus and I went along to the Discalced Franciscans²⁴ to see the works our lady the queen is doing there.²⁵ I saw all the work in progress and its layout, I spoke with the abbess and nuns about them and it was agreed that there should not be a bench next to the choir grille because it would impede services, just as there isn't one at the Descalzas Reales [in Madrid]. In the evening I wrote to our lady the queen.

Sunday, September 26th. I said Mass in the [chapel of] the Company [of Jesus], in the afternoon I visited certain persons who had invited me, and I went to the churches of Our Lady of San Llorente and the Well. I made arrangements for the trip and servants arrived from Madrid with a litter to carry me.²⁶

Monday, September 27th. The five of us priests said Mass in the [chapel of] the Company [of Jesus], and we set out in the name of the Lord and of their majesties on this pilgrimage to Sir Saint James. We left Valladolid at ten in the carriage of Don Gregorio de Tovar, the pack animals carrying the hangings that our lady the queen was sending going on ahead to the Holy Church of Sir Saint James. A bailiff assigned by the [royal] chancery went on ahead charged with arranging for lodging and beds for those making this journey with me which were twenty-one.²⁷ We came to Medina de Rioseco at nightfall and the Corregidor and town [councilmen] came and they sent a gift of sweets.

Tuesday, September 28th. We left Medina at six. At eleven we arrived at Valdunquillo, a town of 200 residents which has two parishes and answers to Doña Francisca Osorio, widow of Don Pedro de Guzmán who was on the royal Council. We said Mass there and left at one for Valderas three leagues away. Antonio Alfonso de Benavides, secretary to the Adelantamiento,²⁸ came out to receive us with other noblemen of the town. We took lodging at his home.

²⁴ Some religious Orders, most famously Carmelites, are divided between 'calced' (shod, wearing shoes), and 'discalced' (barefoot, usually more strictly observant). The Discalced Franciscan nuns are more commonly known as Poor Clares, in Spanish *Clarisas*.

²⁵ Inspecting and giving specifications for the new Franciscan convent of Valladolid according to the directions of the queen.

²⁶ Litters (*litteras, palanquines*) of the period were the showy, luxury transport of the noble class, commonly a light cabin slung on flanking poles between two horses or surefooted mules in front and behind. Guzmán probably only used it on open, smooth stretches. [See Fig. 2 and Fig. 3]

²⁷ Guzmán's party varied in number at different stages of the journey.

²⁸ Regional administrative body by this point handling mostly matters of the judiciary.

Wednesday, September 29th. We all said Mass in Valderas and at eight we departed. This town is under the Marqués of Astorga, has 600 residents, although it does not owe levies [to the crown] because it is free of them on account of the great service they performed in the time of Count [Duke] of Lancaster.²⁹ We arrived at Laguna de Negrillos which is four leagues from Valderas. We ate there and the Corregidor came to visit us in the name of the Count of Luna to whom the city pertains. We left at one and we arrived at dusk at La Bañeza which is three long leagues from Laguna. This place [La Bañeza] has 400 residents and belongs to the Duke of Peñaranda, there is a famous Saturday market. It has a monastery of Discalced Carmelite nuns and two parish churches.

Thursday, September 30th. At six in the morning we left for the city of Astorga. I dismounted in San Francisco just inside the gates of the city, where I said Mass with Fr. [Pedro] Guzmán. The Marqués sent a message asking me to come to his house and so I did, and I dined with him. In the afternoon we went to the cathedral which is a fine building and has a retablo made by Becerra, a great sculptor who also made the retablo at the Convent of the Discalced Nuns of the Princess.³⁰ I saw the relics and the other notable things in the church. The Dean and many other canons were at the entrance to receive us; having first sent word of his [promised] visit, the bishop wasn't in Astorga but out tending to his bishopric yesterday, so the adjudicator³¹ came later. Astorga is a very ancient city, very well walled, with 600 residents. The Church has 80 prebends. There are four monasteries and some parishes. It is under the Marqués who has a very fine house or castle in the highest part of the city. I slept in it and in the morning we left for Foncebadón.

October

Friday, October 1st. At seven in the morning we left Astorga and went to eat at Foncebadón five leagues away, and we slept at Ponferrada, another four.³² This city pertains to his majesty, has 600 residents, there is in it a monastery of Augustinian monks and two parishes.

²⁹ John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, laid siege to the town in 1387. The residents resisted heroically.

³⁰ *Descalzas Reales*, Madrid.

³¹ The *provisor* of a diocese manages disputes on behalf of the bishop and may function in his absence.

³² This is over 60 kilometers during less than eleven hours of daylight that time of year. Some of the party without ceremonial obligations probably rode ahead with their own escorts and guards. It goes unmentioned but replacement mounts may have been available as a courtesy.

Saturday, October 2nd. We said Mass in the monastery of the Augustinians, we went to eat in Villafranca [del Bierzo] which pertains to Don Pedro of Toledo. It has 500 residents and a collegial church, it has an abbot and canons and the support of the entire place is provided by the said Marqués.³³ A monastery of Franciscan friars that was founded in the time of Saint Francis is very well built. In the main chapel is buried Doña Beatriz Osorio [de Castro], lady of Villafranca, Ponferrada, Monforte and Caldelas, who was married to Don Pedro Osorio, Count of Lemos and of Cabrera and of Ribera; and a son is also buried there, and each of them with a recumbent sculpture. At either side of the church in chapels are buried Don Gonzalo Osorio, Archbishop of Sevilla, and on the left-hand side a princess of Castile, of the house of La Cerda, who died there on her way back from Sir Saint James. There are two other monasteries of Saint Francis, one of Discalced nuns and another of Calced. The Discalced convent is under the patronage of Doña María of Toledo, daughter of the aforementioned Marqués of Villafranca.

Sunday, October 3rd. We said Mass in the monastery of San Francisco and left for La Faba five leagues away for a midday meal and for O Cebreiro for dinner two leagues away. There is a monastery of Benedictine monks which has a priory there with a prior and another friar. They are the lords³⁴ of this town and other surrounding towns. The said priory has a shelter where they lodge pilgrims going to Sir Saint James in Galicia. There is a relic in the tabernacle of the Most Holy Sacrament which is said to date back more than three hundred years, the story being that there was a priest in said church and a farmer arrived when the priest had already elevated the [consecrated] host. The farmer told the priest that he greatly regretted not having seen the elevation and the priest told him not to regret seeing it because it was just some bread and wine, and immediately the bread became flesh and the wine blood and today they are kept in two glass vials set in silver and through the same glass can be seen the color of the flesh and blood and shown with them are the chalice and

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³³ A *colegiata* church is not a cathedral but has a Chapter of canons as its governing body. It may be under diocesan authority or that of a religious Order in which case it could have an abbot.

³⁴ Guzmán notes repeatedly who are the legal administrators of a settlement using 'lord' for secular or religious dependency.

paten with which this miracle took place.³⁵ At the same place is another relic which is part of the True Cross which is arranged in the form of a cross. They say that Pope Calixtus³⁶ left it while on his pilgrimage to Sir Saint James. The place is rough terrain because it is the summit of the pass.

Monday, October 4th. We said Mass in said church and went to Triacastela, five leagues away with fifty residents and under the bishop of Lugo while subject to the Count of Lemos, for a midday meal. I ate there and continued on to sleep at Sarria, three leagues away, a town of a hundred residents under the Count of Lemos, where he has a very large and strong fortress. It has an Augustinian monastery where they also lodge pilgrims heading toward Compostela in Galicia; there is another hospice founded by Don Dionis de Castro where they shelter pilgrims coming back from Saint James;³⁷ there are two parishes in the bishopric of Lugo.

Tuesday, October 5th. We left Sarria at ten in the morning having said Mass in the said monastery and eaten in the said fortress and we came to the city of Lugo five leagues away, over a good road, against a strong wind.³⁸ We arrived at said city at nightfall where the adjudicator, dean and some of the prebendaries of said Church came out to receive us. We entered the city after dark and because the bishop was not in town the adjudicator took us to his house where he lodged us. In this city there is a fine old cathedral church; the bishopric has an income of six-to-eight thousand ducats; the current bishop, Don Juan García, born in Cassar near Alcalá de Henares, was away visiting his diocese and those to be confirmed. The canonships of the said Church are worth two hundred

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³⁵ The miracle of the visible transformation of the bread and wine into flesh and blood is well known, often dated to around 1300. The first documented report is in a papal bull of Innocent VIII in 1487. The chalice and paten reportedly used by the priest is still on display in O Cebreiro, and the two vials supposedly containing remnants of the flesh and a blood-soaked cloth.

³⁶ Born Guy of Burgundy, he was brother to Raymond of Burgundy, husband of Queen Urraca, and uncle to Alfonso VII of León. Under the name of Calixtus II he ruled as pope from 1119-1124.

³⁷ This is an odd instance where there are two pilgrim shelters, one for outbound aspiring pilgrims and another for homebound accomplished ones.

³⁸ Heading north to Lugo lengthens the journey but allows Guzmán to confer with an important bishop.

[ducats] and the dignitaries³⁹ four hundred.⁴⁰ They always have the Most Holy Sacrament [consecrated host] exposed on the main altar⁴¹ because this city was never reconquered from the Moors but was always preserved in faith in Christ Our Lord, and has the following monasteries....⁴²

Wednesday, October 6th. I said Mass on the high altar and the others in the side chapels. We left at eight for Villafriol four leagues away to eat at midday at the house of a former estate of the Losada family which is now in the possession of the Hernández de Losada. After eating we left for Our Lady of Sobrado five leagues away where there is a monastery of Saint Bernard [Cistercians], very ancient and large buildings with a cloister and lodgings, a very fine ancient church and on the Gospel [north] side of the church under arches are burials under the arms of the Counts of Lemos although they are not the founders of the church or chapel because they say that the Order established the foundation. It has more than eight thousand ducats in income, there are sixty monks. We arrived at the monastery at nightfall, went straight to the church and from there to the sacristy which has some of the finest embellishments there are in Spain. We slept at this monastery and at seven in the morning after hearing Mass we left for our midday meal five leagues away. At this point Francisco Suárez de Ocampo arrived, secretary to the Illustrious Bishop of Santiago and canon of that Church. He came from Melide where he had waited the day before to host us, that being the most direct route from Sarria to Compostela and having understood that I was coming along there. The Archbishop [of Santiago] sent him to host me, so we set off together as noted five leagues away from Sobrado to a place of ten dwellings where we ate under a chestnut tree.

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³⁹ The *dignidades* of a cathedral were canons with specific duties and titles, such as dean, cantor, treasurer, archdeacons, etc. These positions also brought higher salaries as benefices. The term is also used simply to express someone worthy of or with accumulated public honors.

⁴⁰ Guzmán continually reports back to the court on the finances of individuals and institutions he meets up with. He does not report the population of the city of Compostela, but two years later Bernardo José de Aldrete reports it as about 1500 inhabitants (Gan Giménez 405). Visiting in late February 1612, Aldrete is thoroughly impressed with the Florentine hangings; the massive candle stands would not arrive for a few months yet.

⁴¹ The perpetual exposition of the Blessed Sacrament above the main altar is the most unique ritual of the cathedral of Lugo dating to perhaps 1400. The tradition is still observed relying on a magnificent mechanical golden shield which covers the monstrance with host during Mass, then moves aside again.

⁴² A blank follows without naming the monasteries.

Thursday, October 7th. After having eaten at that place, we left for Santiago which was four leagues from there. We came within sight of Compostela at sunset and seeing the dome of the Glorious Apostle⁴³ we did as pilgrims do, which is praying and offering an invocation to Sir Saint James, and when we came down the hillside a little ahead of us near a stream some of the cardinals⁴⁴ and canons appeared, prebendaries of the Holy Church of Sir Saint James, and with them almost the entire family of the Archbishop and other knights of the city and friar Fr. Antonio de Acuña, superior of the [monastery of] Saint Francis, all of whom came out to honor us and guide us in, and they gave to me one message delivered by a cardinal on behalf of the Chapter⁴⁵ and another cardinal on behalf of the Archbishop. I got down from my litter and mounted a mule and so we entered the city by night our way lit by torches. From the gate of the city we went straight to the Church where we prayed before the sanctuary, embraced the Glorious Apostle⁴⁶ and after we prayed we went to the residences of the lord Archbishop where he came out to receive me in the entry rooms, showing me much grace and welcome, then we entered alone in his chamber to speak of several matters. He took me to where he was lodging me, and it was agreed that at ten the next day his illustrious Chapter would come down to where I could enter and speak and give the message that I brought from their majesties.

Friday, October 8th. We went to say Mass in the main sanctuary of Sir Saint James and after having said it I returned to the home of the Archbishop, where at nine in the morning four of the canons came to offer me a welcome, and at ten I went with the Archbishop to the entrance to the cathedral where the entire Chapter was waiting and they went accompanying the Archbishop to the Chapter room⁴⁷ and there they all sat in their seats, the Archbishop in the middle, the dean at his right and me at his left, that is the one who was acting dean after the death of Don Francisco Manuel. When the

⁴³ At this time, before the construction of the present towers, the most visible first sighting of the cathedral itself was of the Gothic dome of 1424 over the crossing, rebuilt in the 1650s and 1660s. The highest points of the cathedral are now the towers of the Obradoiro façade completed in 1747.

⁴⁴ Exceptionally and with permission of Rome since the time of Archbishop Diego Gelmírez in the early eleventh century, the shrine of Saint James was allowed to title some of its canons as ‘cardinals’. The practice was discontinued by the nineteenth century.

⁴⁵ The Chapter is formed by the canons who are the permanent corporate stewards of a church or cathedral and therefore the hosts of bishops who come and go.

⁴⁶ Pilgrims still ascend steps behind the main altar to embrace a life-size statue of Saint James from behind.

⁴⁷ The Chapter room, sometimes house, is normally a space reserved for reading a daily chapter of the governing rule of the community of canons and for conducting all business.

door was closed and all were seated I said what their majesties had commanded be done in their name on this holy pilgrimage, the desire they had for making it [themselves] and knowing the need that Holy Church had of some candle stands and hangings they intended to honor the Glorious Apostle with them. The candelabras were not brought because they were not finished as they were making four of them in silver which were worth ten thousand ducats. I showed the material for the hangings right there, cloths woven with silver and shimmering with gold and colored flowers,⁴⁸ three hundred and thirty-some yards which came as bolts, and so it was ordered that six hanging panels of five yards were made, each intended for the whole main sanctuary, plus a canopy, and a frontal for the high altar of the Glorious Apostle, and another panel for behind the [statue of] the Saint. All this was cut in my presence this day⁴⁹ after having said many other observations about the resolve with which his majesty made this offering and the devotion he had for the Glorious Apostle and with which I had desired to come and had appreciated the favor his majesty had shown me in commanding me to perform this pilgrimage. His lordship the Archbishop answered me with great feeling how much he valued the favor that their majesties had shown in all manner of ways toward that Holy Church and how much they had wanted to see their royal personages in it. And with that the Chapter session was concluded. In the afternoon I was in the house [of the Archbishop] receiving visitors. The Archbishop hosted us all in his home, having it very well equipped and treating us lavishly, having twelve or fourteen at table every day, during which he invited all the prebendaries of the Church and others.

Saturday, October 9th. We said Mass in the Church, gained the jubilee indulgence and I gave communion to all the servants, and at eleven with the senior sacristan of the Church guiding us we walked all the stations, which are many,⁵⁰ until we entered in the church, which is underground,⁵¹ all this ended around twelve. After a midday meal I went to visit the monastery of San Francisco which

⁴⁸ Guzmán writes “shimmering with gold and *primavera* [spring]” which likely alludes to delicate spring flowers in soft colors. Remnants of the textiles are still among the treasures of the Cathedral in Santiago.

⁴⁹ A royal tailor apparently was assigned to the party so that the hangings could be prepared immediately for mounting. The 1617 account elaborates that “these were among the finest textiles that had come to Spain, woven in Florence, sent by her serene excellency the sister of the queen our majesty; the adornments of the canopy were so extravagant that in tassels and fringes alone there were ten pounds of gold.”

⁵⁰ These are not stations of the cross but more likely the twelve gilded and painted consecration crosses set high on the walls. They are arguably the finest in Christendom and became at times a sort of pilgrimage circuit within the cathedral.

⁵¹ The crypt chapel directly below the Pórtico de la Gloria and at the level of the Plaza de Obradoiro.

is very ancient, and the glorious Saint Francis had it built telling a coal porter to construct it.⁵² He is buried at the entrance in a nook in the stone foundations. From there I went to the Royal Hospital which the Catholic Monarchs founded, a very noble structure, all of stone, it has four very handsome patios, two churches, four infirmaries, there all illnesses are treated for women and men, pilgrims are lodged, a friar of the Order of Santiago⁵³ is the administrator, it has a revenue stream of eight thousand ducats each year, the kings of Spain are the patrons of this hospital and so they provide the administrator. There is also a monastery of monks of the Order of Saint Benedict called San Martín [Pinario], a very large and very ancient house and a very fine building, it has an income of twenty thousand ducats. There is a monastery of Dominican friars outside the city,⁵⁴ it has an income of two thousand ducats and the Counts of Altamira are the patrons of the main church. I was also in the monastery of the Company of Jesus, a school with twenty religious that was founded by Archbishop Blanco, Archbishop of Santiago and he is buried in the same church on the Gospel side. There are also two monasteries of nuns, one called San Payo of Benedictine nuns,⁵⁵ who have six thousand ducats of income. The other is of the Order of Saint Clare, more recent and with less income.⁵⁶ There is also a university where they read canon law, theology, arts and grammar, the rector is a canon of the Church.⁵⁷ There is a college of sixteen students who go about dressed in dark capes and red bands like those in Valladolid.⁵⁸ There is also [an office of the] Inquisition in which there are two officials who are inquisitors.

Sunday, October 10th. After having said Mass in said Church, the Archbishop came there dressed in his pontifical cape, and emerged in procession from the sacristy. It was a solemn procession with mitered cardinals and dignitaries and the lord Archbishop garbed in his pontifical raiment. They carried in procession the [reliquary with the] head of Sir Saint James the Lesser⁵⁹ on a silver platform

⁵² The apparently legendary Cotolay who was commissioned to build the first Franciscan house in Santiago after Saint Francis's supposed pilgrimage to the city.

⁵³ A religious military Order like the Knights Templars or Knights of Malta.

⁵⁴ Santo Dominigo de Bonval, now an ethnographic museum for the Galician people.

⁵⁵ San Paio [Pelayo] de Antealtares, still a working convent of Benedictine nuns.

⁵⁶ Convento de Santa Clara de Santiago de Compostela, founded in 1260.

⁵⁷ The University of Santiago, founded in 1495.

⁵⁸ Not a hood but a band of cloth like a stole. Colegio Mayor de Fonseca or de Santiago Alfeo, subsumed into the present university.

⁵⁹ In the early twelfth century a skull relic was given to the Cathedral of Santiago as if to complete the bones of Saint James the Greater. Diplomatically, the recipients in Compostela ascribed the head as that of the other apostle, Saint James son of Alphaeus, Santiago Alfeo. The elaborate reliquary bust of a life size head crafted in 1322 is still carried in procession on the patronal feasts of the double namesake Santiago.

and made its way through all the aisles.⁶⁰ The censer in the middle of the crossing was swung as is customary on high feast days, very full of lit coals and striking the high ceilings, an ancient practice in that Church which brightens feast days. We walked in procession behind the bishop and once the procession was over we entered in the choir⁶¹ to hear Mass which was celebrated with great solemnity as a votive Mass for Sir Saint James with a proclamation⁶² in his honor, all on behalf of the health and happy outcome of the affairs of their majesties and giving thanks for the gifts they offered that day. Two panels of the textiles were hung that day and the frontal for the altar. There is in this Holy Church of Santiago an Archbishop who is [titular] Senior Chaplain for his majesty and the office is worth seventy thousand ducats.⁶³ There are eight dignitaries in the Church, four of which are more ancient and outrank those of the cardinals. There are six cardinals and a senior cardinal.

They have very good music because they have five thousand ducats for it, without the prebends, and the choirmaster is a canon and has seniority and a vote in the Chapter. The canonries are worth a thousand two-hundred ducats each year, and the cardinalates the same, only they have more on account of the sung Masses that they say on the high altar, two hundred ducats, and on the high altar one cannot say Mass unless a cardinal. The Church is a very ancient structure, with many chapels, and one that the king of France founded. There is an image they call Our Lady Great with Child, fondly venerated, behind the choir of the high altar. The relic chapel has many relics and two bodies of saints. The choir is very large and fine. This Sunday in the afternoon I took care of some audiences and in the evening two emissaries of the Chapter came to tell me how they had committed themselves and taken a resolution, for themselves and their successors, that every year they would celebrate two solemn feasts with vespers and Mass for their majesties, may God preserve them. One would be on the feast day of Saint Phillip and the other on that of Saint Margaret and that they wrote

⁶⁰ The account of 1617 reports that the cathedral was packed with people of every estate, religious and secular, all seeking the Holy Year indulgence and propelled by the encouragements that had come from the royal court. Priests were hearing confessions from pilgrims of every nation. Amusingly, in 1617 Guzmán marvels in retrospect that for as much as it rains in Galicia he hardly ran into any, something he credited to the intervention of the Apostle himself.

⁶¹ An enclosed choir open toward the main altar full of carved wooded stalls for the canons and clergy once occupied the front of the central nave, completed in 1606 and still new when Guzmán visited in 1610. It was removed in the mid-1940s and was re-installed in the nearby Saint Martín Pinario church.

⁶² The *ofrenda* is literally an offering. Formerly a monetary gift collected as a tribute authorized and collected by the crown for the benefit of the shrine of Saint James, it morphed in early modern times into a proclamation of devotion. It is proclaimed in endlessly recreated forms by representatives of visiting troops of pilgrims and on the high feast day of July 25 by the reigning monarch of Spain or his (usually political) delegate.

⁶³ Guzmán, of course, was the true senior chaplain to their majesties along with his assistant chaplains.

it in a letter to their majesties which they gave me. I thanked them greatly for it and the graces they had shown me and we bid farewell.

Monday, October 11th. We said Mass in said Church and at nine we left to eat at La Vega, three leagues from Compostela, in an orchard of the Chapter where the Archbishop had food for us, his chamberlain and head of staff came there. We went to eat at Chapa, another three leagues on, in the jurisdiction of said Archbishop, where he also had food arranged for us.

Tuesday, October 12th. We went to eat four leagues on to a village of the Count of Lemos, where the Corregidor of that district hosted us and afterward we went another four leagues from there to a priory of the Benedictine friars⁶⁴ at a place called Chantada which is a village under the Marqués of Astorga, and where there is a Monastery of Benedictines where they usually have three monks. They have their church and cloister and a nice house which is under the authority of Saint Benito el Real in Valladolid. We got there before there was a great downpour around midnight.

Wednesday, October 13th. We left Chantada after hearing Mass, we went over the bridge of Belasar, called such because a Roman captain called Belisarius built it.⁶⁵ It is a very arduous roadway and the gradient among the worst in Spain, it passes over the Miño River. We arrived for a meal four leagues from Chantada at Monforte de Lemos which is a village positioned on a height and entered from a plain below, it has a castle and stone buildings all walled-in and belongs to the Count of Lemos. It had a very ancient monastery of Benedictine monks within the town walls, another of Franciscan friars outside [the walls], a college of the Company [of Jesus], a notable edifice founded by Don Rodrigo de Castro, Archbishop of Sevilla, where they read theology, arts and grammar and teach reading and writing; they say it has an income of eight thousand ducats. I lodged in the palace of the Count and dined there.

⁶⁴ Guzmán can be careless calling Benedictines ‘friars’ (they are monks), or Franciscans and Dominicans ‘monks’ (they are friars). Spanish uses *convento* for houses of professed religious, both men and women, of any Order.

⁶⁵ Guzmán repeats uncritically some oral scrap about a “Roman” captain when the historical Belisarius was a Greek commander (ca. 490-565). This Roman-style bridge is now submerged due to a modern dam downstream.

Thursday, October 14th. We went to say Mass in the said College of the Company [of Jesus] where they did a dialogue and dance⁶⁶ and we ate. The bishop of Lugo was there who came to visit. We left at twelve for the Valle de Quiroga which was five leagues of bad roads and steep inclines, we arrived at nightfall to the houses of said Valle and there Don Alonso de Solís, abbot of San Clodio, came out to meet us, and on a boat carried us over to the houses of his abbey which are about an eighth of a league away and the river we crossed was the Sil. We slept in the residence of said abbey and at dawn we left.

Friday, October 15th. We crossed the said river by another boat and with the said abbot of San Clodio accompanying us we went to take midday meal four leagues from there at a village of his abbey called San Miguel de Montefurado. We saw the hillsides below which passes the River Sil through an opening twenty fathoms long which is all carved out by pickaxes because the stone is flint, they say it was the work of Romans, up above the hillsides are tilled fields and vineyards.⁶⁷ We ate in said place, we went to sleep four leagues on in a place called El Barco which pertains to the Count of Ribadavia and is on the banks of the river Sil.

Saturday, October 16th. We left at dawn and went to eat five leagues on, at a place called Las Borenas along the banks of the Sil, it belongs to the Marqués of Villafranca. From there we went to sleep in Ponferrada, three more leagues, we lodged in the monastery of San Agustín.

Sunday, October 17th. We left after having said Mass at Foncebadón, four leagues, where we ate and from there we went to sleep in the Valle de San Ramón, which is a town of a certain knight.

Monday, October 18th. The feast of Saint Luke. After Mass we left for La Bañeza four leagues away, where we ate and from there we went another four leagues to Laguna de Negrillos.

Tuesday, October 19th. After having said Mass we left for Valderas where, after having eaten, we went to sleep in Aguilar de Campos, three leagues away.

⁶⁶ The students at the Jesuit school performed a theatrical piece for Guzmán's enjoyment (Rivera 320).

⁶⁷ The tunnel of Montefurado is one of the marvels accomplished by Roman engineers. In the second century CE the Emperor Trajan authorized a perforation of the hillside next to the river Sil to channel the waters for mining gold. When Guzmán passed by, the channel was still at about 150 feet in length, 60 feet wide and nearly as high.

Wednesday, October 20th. I left for Medina de Ríoseco, three leagues, where we ate and from there we left for Valladolid where we arrived after night, I lodged in the house of Don Gregorio de Tobar as I did when heading out.

Thursday, October 21st. I was in Valladolid, I visited the Discalced Franciscans and the Duchess of Medina and I set in order some of the works for the Discalced just as the queen, our lady, had sent me to order done; I found letters from the queen [waiting for me] in Valladolid.

Friday, October 22nd. I left Valladolid in the morning, I went to eat at Valdestillas and to sleep in Olmedo.

Saturday, October 23rd. After having said Mass I left for Arévalo where I ate in the house of Don Juan Tello, knight commander, I went to sleep in Pajares [de Adaja].

Sunday, October 24th. After having said Mass we went to eat in Ávila, I ate in the monastery of Santa Ana, where my sister is.⁶⁸ I went to Santa Catalina by nightfall to visit lady Doña Luisa de Guzmán, my aunt, sister of my father. I slept in the houses of the Guzmán, which are in the street Pescadería, and today Don Pedro my brother has possession of them, and the pastures of Palenciana and Flor de Rosa which had belonged to Gil González de Ávila.⁶⁹

Monday, October 25th. After having said Mass in Santa Ana, I left for Urraca Miguel, three leagues away, a village of twenty residents, I ate there and afterward came to El Espinar, four leagues. I stopped in the residences of the bishop of Córdoba, the licentiate Laguna.

Tuesday, October 26th. After having said Mass in the main church, I left for Guardarrama, three leagues, where we ate and after eating left for the Escorial where we arrived at nightfall, I went to kiss the hands of their majesties and because the king our lord was out hunting I went first to kiss the hand of our lady the queen and the infanta Doña Ana who was with her majesty. I kissed her hand and gave an account of my entire pilgrimage, which her majesty heard with much pleasure and

⁶⁸ The sister could have been Juana, Margarita or Catalina, all siblings of Diego.

⁶⁹ Guzmán carefully embeds in this report his own noble family, naming specific relatives who supported the trip from beginning to end.

bestowed on me much favor and approval. I went then to kiss the hand of his majesty the king, and I gave him the same report of all that happened to me, and his majesty asked me about certain things that happened along the way and what happened in Compostela, and I told their majesties about the two feast days they [the canons of the Chapter] had decreed in perpetuity in the Church of Santiago for their health and elevation of the feast days of Saint Phillip [and Santiago]⁷⁰ and Saint Margaret, which they [their majesties] were very grateful for and I gave them the letters I brought for their majesties concerning that from the Archbishop and Chapter. And for the honor and glory of God, Our Lord, I will put down here what the queen, our lady, told me, that the same Saturday that we earned the Jubilee [indulgence] in Santiago, the king our lord had a fever and the following Sunday when they celebrated [in Santiago] a solemn feast for his health, the fever left him and he was completely well as he is now, thanks be to God, for this mercy and others that his majesty and the realm receive every day from Our Lord may be attributed to the merits of the glorious Apostle. I give him endless thanks because he brought me and all who traveled with me along this holy pilgrimage in good health. I hope to have managed to be of some service by it, and that it helps me to be of more service for the rest of my life.

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Here ends the journey to Sir Saint James.

⁷⁰ Error omitted in the retelling of 1617 which simply reports solemn rites on the monarchs' patronal saints' days: "two feast days for their [majesties'] health and success".



Fig. 2. Litter for Spanish nobles: Emperor Carlos V, 1552.⁷¹

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Fig. 3. Litter for Spanish nobles: The Duke of Alba leaving Brussels, 1573.

⁷¹ All illustrations from non-copyrighted sources.

Short stories from *Ábrete sésamo*

by **Clara Eugenia Ronderos**

translated by **Mary G. Berg**

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INTRODUCTION

Clara Eugenia Ronderos is a Colombian American poet, critic, and short story writer with a Ph.D. in Hispanic Literature from University of Massachusetts Amherst. She is a retired Professor of Spanish and Literature from Lesley University in Cambridge MA. Her publications include: *Raíz del silencio* (Bogotá, 2012); *The Poetry of Clara Eugenia Ronderos: Seasons of Exile*, a translation by Mary. G. Berg of her collection *Estaciones en Exilio* (2010), which was awarded the Carmen Conde Prize; her short story collections *Ábrete sésamo* (Madrid, 2016) and *Agua que no has de Beber* (Córdoba, Argentina, 2019); and two volumes of poetry: *De Reyes y Fuegos* and *Después de la Fábula* (Madrid, 2018). Her poetry collection in English, *Unfoldings*, a volume which is also in great part collaboration between Ronderos and Berg, appeared with Nixes Mate in Boston in 2022.

Ronderos's poems and short stories frequently talk about exile, otherness, women, and death. The four stories translated here –“Señal de tráfico,” “Julieta en el exilio,” “Divina enlutada de ojos que no ven,” and “¿A la hora que yo quiera te detengo?”– were originally published in *Ábrete sésamo* [Open Sesame] (Madrid: Editorial Torremozas, 2016), a collection of ten stories that investigate various narrative voices and look for metaphorical ways to explore moments of great change such as death, migration, maternity, divorce, and others. The book is framed by the short story “Open Sesame,”¹ about a young writer who is looking for a way to express “what she doesn't even know is hiding inside her.” Each story develops the itinerary of that search. Ronderos has resided in the U.S. for twenty-three years, but she also keeps a home in Colombia where she spends at least three months of the year. Her writing is fed by these two worlds. The four stories are presented here with the English titles “Cross Walk,” “Julieta in Exile,” “Divine Mourner with Sightless Eyes,” and “I will stop you whenever I want?”.

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Mary G. Berg has taught Latin American literature at the University of Colorado Boulder, UCLA, Caltech, and Harvard. She was a Resident Scholar at the Brandeis University Women's Studies Research Center where she wrote about Latin American writers, including Clorinda Matto de Turner, Juana Manuela Gorriti, Soledad Acosta de Samper, and contemporary Cubans. Her translations include three anthologies of recent Cuban fiction (*Open Your Eyes and Soar*, *Cuba on the Edge*, *New Cuban Fiction*). She and Dennis Maloney have translated twentieth-century Spanish poetry, including Antonio Machado's *There Is No Road* (2003), and *The Landscape of Castile* (bilingual, 2005). Other translations of poetry include work by Clara Eugenia Ronderos, and Carlota Caulfield. Among her latest translations are *A Talisman in the Darkness* (with Melanie Nicholson) by Olga Orozco, and *Bésame mucho and Other Stories* by Laidi Fernández de Juan.

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¹ Published in Mary G. Berg's translation by *Your Impossible Voice*, 21. Nov 2019.

CROSS WALK

Standing there, the two of them had fixed their eyes on the same spot: a sparrow, strutting along in little leaps, miraculously avoiding the heavy traffic along the avenue. From their own separate personal prisons, each one smiled at the unexpected and shameless freedom of that tiny being a thousand times smaller and more fragile than either of them. It reminded Rodrigo of his own childhood, when he'd jump over puddles and dig in the earth searching for a forgotten treasure left by some English pirate. For Teresa, it brought back memories of her mischievous little son, barely walking, sticking buttons in his mouth as if to defy death.

She knew perfectly well that she shouldn't have let him play with that ridiculous button, but it was all so fast and unthinkable: an unwanted pregnancy, followed by hope when she felt the movements of that anonymous being in her belly which almost made her forget her panic; a painful childbirth that rewarded her with that palpitating tiny bundle with eyes, nose and mouth, followed immediately by the interminable, sleepless nights trying to appease his hunger, his thirst, his shivering, perhaps—she felt sometimes—his fear of being on the planet Earth. There were also many nights she would wake up when she didn't hear him cry and she'd worry about his suffocating or sudden death or any of the other evils her mother warned her could happen any moment. Surprised, she watched him flip right over one sunny day when she'd set him down on the grass. Between surprise and desperation, she'd made it through the days of her adult-youth, of reality-as-game, until the boy took his first steps while a torrential rain tore through the garden and then... "Better not to think about it." She was watching the sparrow the very moment when, without making a sound, it smashed against the windshield of an enormous truck.

Rodrigo didn't want to believe that everything had to end this way: broken and blood-stained like his left leg that day he thought he could fly hanging from an umbrella and ended up on the floor, defeated and incredulous and with a puddle of blood around his knee. Ever after that, he refused to accept that all freedom leads to absolute submission. His flight had imprisoned him in the wheelchair where he spent over a year watching others play soccer and gazing through the railings of the hospital bed during the repeated operations on his fragmented bones: lengthened, soldered together, patched so that he could finally move around slowly with the help of a cane and cross that

avenue where yet again he had to confront the truth that he embodied and which he nevertheless persisted in methodically denying, as a mental exercise that enabled him to carry on with his life.

Freedom was destroyed there. The bird, with its broken wings, expelled from the air and condemned to fuse with the earth, like her baby son, Teresa was thinking, with that stupid button stuck in his throat. He had turned purple and finally black like the earth that swallowed him, black like the clothing her mother forced her to wear for a whole long year, like the black blood of that defeated bird on the pavement now.

The sign's green image of a little walking stick figure indicated to them that it was time to cross the street. Rodrigo saw her cross in the opposite direction from him, with her watery eyes and shaking a little as she walked, and he was amazed to see old age imprinted on her young face. Teresa hardly noticed the limping man who, with difficulty and seeming to be absorbed in the image of the dead bird, crossed her path to reach the other side of the avenue.

JULIETA IN EXILE

When we built Julieta's room, Gustavo and I thought that it would be something temporary. That after a bit, some Dutch scientist with bottle glass spectacles would find a cure for her illness. Like a frightened little caterpillar, Julieta would have to make herself comfortable in her stone crib. "The child has allergies," we'd been told by Dr. González, who came to see her the morning she had an attack, "to light, to heat, to softness, to smoothness." Cotton, wool, and linen should, according to his diagnosis, be eliminated whatever the cost. The very professional Doctor González examined her carefully and without any preamble, condemned her to that dark prison where we've kept her for more than ten years.

Gustavo designed that underground space where the child would be protected from all her phobias, thinking that it would be an exercise of sorts, a way to kill the time that separated Julieta from her quilted crib in the sunniest corner of the house. And it wasn't like Gustavo didn't put a sizable number of hours into designing a space that would allow Julieta to grow, if by any chance the confinement went on longer than expected. Next to the stone crib, he designed a spiral staircase that the child could climb when she got better. Until then, the door that opened onto the top step would remain bolted from the outside, so that from the house we could go in to look at her, but she could not escape.

The truth is, it's hard to make a place without light look inviting, even though Gustavo deployed his best architectural skills in the design of the underground room. Not even when he worked on that building for an important man and was paid a fortune, did I see him so engaged and lucid. But Julieta would need to make the change soon, since Dr. González feared that a second attack could have irreversible consequences. And so, Gustavo felt obliged to abbreviate his deliberations, and with the plans barely sketched, construction began.

It seemed extravagant and even unscrupulous to break through the ancient foundations of the house in order to dig a space for the vault. Construction workers were told that they were building a photo lab, but the nervous laughter and the tone of complicity with which they assured Gustavo: "don't worry about it, doctor, we'll do whatever we have to do" made it clear that they thought they could be very well building a secret place to hide illicit dollars or even, because this is how things are like in this country, a private prison.

They also seemed suspicious of the size of the chamber and the quality of its finishing touches. The curves and intricacies designed to guide Julieta's steps in the dark when she eventually learned to walk, as Dr. González assured us, seemed to be part of a strange plan to hide an important person for an indefinite time. We remained silent in the face of the veiled comments and the prying questions because we knew all too well that this version was the most logical for the majority of the people, fed daily by the sordid newspaper's reports and the nightmare images that dominated television news. Anyone could turn out to be a "narco" or a "guerillero," even that seemingly good guy, the architect Escalante. And so, we let them dream about how they were building, with their own hands, the setting for another Dantesque episode of our history, written always with violent blows.

The construction was completed with the speed and silence of a crime. The three trusted laborers finished their work by applying matt stucco with bluish-gray streaks. The house, a bit dusty and disrupted, had weathered their efforts well, and in less than three months, Julieta was installed in her provisional room, while in her original one, in the sunniest corner of the house, begun the process of an irreversible deterioration.

And I, who am terrified of darkness, could not accompany her down below. But Gustavo could. Against the doctor's advice, he hugged her close in his arms so that she could feel warmth for the last time, and he placed her, naked, on the cold bed. She didn't even complain, or at any rate that's what Gustavo told me, perhaps just to soothe me.

He goes down to see her every day, hoping it will be the last. I, hovering at the top of the stairs, not daring to look, wait for his livid face, his broken voice: "she's grown so much," he tells me, "and she looks at me as if to indicate that she feels well, that she isn't afraid, that she continues to trust us."

DIVINE MOURNER WITH SIGHTLESS EYES

*Señora la Muerte que estás meditando
en la noche negra, la mano en la sien...
Hace mucho tiempo te estoy esperando
divina enlutada de ojos que no ven.²*

Guillermo Torres Quintero

Two frightened girls wait behind a half-open door through which they hear recognizable moaning. It sounds like an echo of another rainy afternoon in the ice-cold city of their childhood. It's true that they recognize the moaning, but they don't hear the counterpoint of that other voice: one that in other times provided comfort or good advice, urging the sick person to get better quickly. The sobs and the rain echo now in that house, bigger and more desolate than before. Their father looks out every once in a while, his face transformed into a strange map of wrinkles.

The older sister could not imagine then that the little girl, of whom she'd been so jealous, would become her beloved sister until she died. That same little girl, many years later, after she turned into an old woman, survived her sister only by a few months. Even on the brink of death, she had continued to see her older sister, now dead, by her side. Her ghost urged her on to get up and walk like Lazarus, while the younger sister, feeling herself abandoned again, refused to come back to life.

In that morning of their childhood, as the two share their bewilderment, what is happening there has a face they have not seen before. Something is missing. When, in an earlier time, the moans had ceased, a small, loving person had gathered them to talk about heaven and other things they could barely imagine. Now, when their father emerges completely from the room they aren't allowed

² ["Lady Death, you who are meditating / in the darkest night, with a hand on your temple... / I've been waiting for you for a long time, / divine mourner with sightless eyes."]

to enter, his tearless eyes reveal something broken that cannot be fixed. Neither he nor anybody else seems to want to see them, talk to them, to explain to them what is going on. What emerges with him is an absence of light, a darkness that haunts them.

The girls are distracted for a moment. The older girl helps her little sister tie a shoelace that has come undone and threatens to trip her up. The younger one is happy with her sister's operation and then she runs along the hallway and goes on until she comes across a doll, sitting on a table at the back of the bedroom where she and her sister sleep. The older one, six years older than her little sister, cannot get completely distracted. She sees her run and wishes she too could run and run and never stop. She is aware that she has lost something. She knows that at any rate her father will no longer be the same. She hopes her mother, silent now, will come out of that mysterious room to clarify everything.

Stubborn, the others in the house call her. Everyone is bigger than she is, and they are men. She does not let that stop her. She insists when she needs to insist and yells if she must. She does not let her brothers humiliate her when she wants to know the meaning of a difficult word, or decides, two years later, to translate a novel by Jules Verne. She illustrates it abundantly and signs it with great pride—even if the others believe that a girl, only fourteen years old, should barely know the alphabet. She is expected to understand numbers well enough to guide the cook with the right amounts for a recipe—always a double recipe, enough for the seven men in the house, the little one and herself. The two of them barely eat since that day when she had to scream like crazy so that they let her enter the closed-door room, where everything that would define her from now on was happening.

But they lock the door. No matter how much she yells and kicks they won't let her see what took place inside. Her father wants her to calm down. He sits her on his knees, reads her a story while the little one dresses and undresses her doll, puts her to bed and awakens her to give her a breakfast with a tiny wooden spoon that the doll eats without making a peep.

Her brother, two years older, her playing companion, the one who taught her to climb trees and walk on the high walls in their backyard, doesn't want anything to do with her. He has been told something that has taken away his desire to skip over the tiles, pretending they are an ocean he must cross in his English pirate suit. He's also lost his desire to pull her hair and run away so she can't catch him. He looks like a deflated figure that wanders around without noticing the others and refuses to talk to her about what everyone, except the two little girls, already knows and is barely beginning to process.

When years later, that brother would die with a broken neck in a shadowy car accident she, as a grown woman, had to identify the body of the sibling she loved so much. Another two of the older brothers had died in absurd circumstances; one stabbed by the knife of a jealous lover, the other run over by an anonymous vehicle a few blocks from his house. It was understandable to her, when these deaths occurred, that their torn childhood had a lot to do with the way her brothers' lives ended: those men had never been able to recover from the blow and therefore never fully reached maturity. As if suspended in time they remained feeling and acting like hurt teenagers, terrified by the reality defining them since that fateful day, a reality they could not escape for it no longer depended on them.

After the story, the girl insists on opening the door again, on finding out what they are hiding. Many years later she will tell her grown daughters that she went to sleep that night hugging her little sister and with a strong premonition. Her brother, the poet, had died only a month before, after long nights of moaning with his mother at his side. Then, he had spent two nights in a coffin at the center of the living room surrounded by white candles. Even if they forbade her to look at him, she peeked at the edge to say goodbye to that brother whom, they told her, was going to heaven. She saw then an unrecognizable face that reminded her of the poem he had dedicated to Death a few months before. He had called her: "Lady Death, divine mourner with sightless eyes," and she wondered what those enigmatic words could mean. Maybe it had something to do with that purplish and expressionless face. Death had closed her brother's eyes forever. It was Death who would not let him open his eyes to look at his mother, broken with pain in a corner of the living room. Not even her little sister could lessen her mother's torn sobbing and cheer her up, as she usually did.

All of them knew it well. When their mother felt ill or sad, all they had to do was to send the little sister to give her a kiss or recite for her a nursery rhyme in such tangled baby talk that the mother could only understand because she had herself taught it to her. Then the mother would laugh, with that laughter they all adored, and she would tell them a story about the town where she was born or about her eccentric uncle who would bring the horse into the house so it would not get cold. In that moment, even if outside it rained as if the Great Flood was about to start again, they all felt the warmth of this small and fragile creature that was nevertheless the fortress upon which stood their life in their enormous, rumbling house. They all lived there feeling protected, not by economic wealth, since their father, the only son in a family of landowners, had lost everything in bad deals and feuds with cousins who were a lot savvier than he was. So, the wealth in their house was the books they read and talked about when they met at night for dinner. Then there were evening gatherings

with theatrical games and songs, when they would make up characters, compose poems or make fun of the current politicians with elaborate pantomimes until they burst out laughing.

And the mother, obliging with all of them, would let her military son carry her on his back like a sack of potatoes and take her in that manner up to her bed when it was time to sleep. But she would get up again to make sure the girls were tightly tucked in. Their bedroom would always get cold at night even if it was the warmest in the house and a coal burning brazier was kept red hot to warm it up before they went to sleep. The older girl already knew that this was her mother's routine, and she would wait for her, fighting against sleep after an active day. Then she would say in a whisper so as not to awaken her little sister "Good night mommy." That was the way she had learned to say it from a list of correct forms of greeting that she would later teach her own children: "Good night when it's night, good morning when it's morning, good evening when it's evening." An education always directed towards respect for others, with a linguistic formality that, rather than a mask, was the way to express a solid fondness without embellishments, had been her upbringing. Many years later it became her own "trade-mark" after she not only became responsible for her little sister but also turned into a mother with no other model on which to base her duty, than that scared little girl's memories, which never fully left her.

The girls wake up early next morning and they go directly into the kitchen, where a cup of hot chocolate and freshly baked bread waits for them, like every morning. The older one already goes to school and the little one stays by the door, at the end of the entrance hall, saying goodbye until she sees her turn the corner. But this morning, their father, looking haggard and with a smile that seems to come from the bottom of a bottomless cave, sits with them at the table. He tells the older girl: "Today you are not going to school. We already notified the nuns that this week you cannot go. One of your classmates will stop by in the afternoons to bring any assignments you have." He explains to her that a woman does not need so much learning, that on the contrary she needs to learn to manage the maids that cook and clean the house, and to help them with the most delicate tasks like the impeccable ironing of shirts, pants, and starched tablecloths. These are important things she might not grasp then, but they symbolize honor in a good family without means.

Until the end of her days, the older sister would remember that day in which she had to become the woman of the house. She was then able to understand better her dead brother's poem. Her mother, it was finally clear to her, was the "Divine mourner" with no eyes to see how her house was becoming this dark place where the girl had to walk carefully not to stumble with the past, forever closed as were her mother's eyes. Those eyes had stopped looking at her when "The Lady Death" had taken her mother to heaven, where the poet brother might be waiting for her.

I WILL STOP YOU WHENEVER I WANT?

*Te vas porque yo quiero que te vayas.
A la hora que yo quiera te detengo...³*

José Alfredo Jiménez

Blue shoes on both pairs of feet did not symbolize an aesthetic affinity or identification with one another. They showed, on the contrary, a desire for closeness. As if blue, the soft blue of the suede, could become a slippery light-blue universe where Juanita's vital energy and Sara's slow shyness could merge. Their history together was only eight days old and yet the elapsed time expanded like a willful chewing gum bubble skillfully blown to its limits. The blue continuity of their steps, chosen at a random "for sale" window display, sought to highlight the hope for a common path: a blue trace resonating in both futures.

Juanita, as well as Sara, knew the journey would be short because the end had already been a part of their beginning: a casual encounter in a Chinese restaurant where crowded tables forced them to share a corner, besieged by the swinging kitchen door. Juanita discovered it first and settled in the most comfortable seat spreading her books on the table in the hope of not being invaded. Sara arrived a few minutes later as if predestined, attracted by one or two words on the yellow cover of one of the books on the table. "Would you mind if I sit down?" she asked with a nearly inaudible voice and such a wretched articulation that Juanita, resigned, nodded at the murmur of the strange lady who clumsily and making a lot of noise settled across from her. They each took the menu and, after studying it, ordered the same thing: mixed rice and spring rolls. This traced their first link, an open smile at the coincidence. The yellow book, with the words: "love" and "cholera" in its title, traced the second connection. This one occurred not just by chance because for both of them loving and being choleric were two sides of the same coin.

³ ["You are leaving because I want you to leave / I will stop you whenever I want ..."]. From the famous Mexican *ranchera* "La media vuelta."

While Juanita had come to Madrid following her passion for art but also for Diego, which in recent times had become one and the same, Sara had been stumbling around Europe for three months. She was fleeing from an unhealthy relationship and blindly clinging to a bibliographic passion that had haunted her since childhood but seemed to vanish every time she fell in love. Her specific purpose for this trip to the Spanish capital was a search for an old edition of Quevedo's complete works that she had seen reviewed in a French literary journal.

García Márquez, the name under the title of the yellow book, traced between them the third link, the strongest in this sort of web that tangled them together from the first moment. Diego, Juanita's Diego, like Sara, was Colombian. And Juanita, also a foreigner in that land, with her Caribbean accent and maritime grace, felt right at home in the tropical paradise of the land of cholera as described by the Colombian writer.

The two women spent many days in conversations between coffee shops and avenues, as they visited art galleries and old booksellers' shops. The hours passed as a never-ending game of hide and seek, each struggling to see her image in the other and to hide what she did not see reflected there. Diego took part in the game but without joining either team. He seemed rather a silent and acquiescent referee who enjoyed the shifting complicity between the two. These were days of intimacy and confessions, of abrupt distancing and hostilities. There was a permanent mismatch between the closeness and ease of affection, and the fears of the true distance between them. A sister or best friend-like fondness that seemed to connect them forever was pierced at every turn by the strangeness of the restaurant table where they had met in the first place. Certainly, they would write to each other, they would try not to let distance interfere.

But, to tell the truth, Sara knew herself. She had lost relationships that had been especially precious to her for fear of reducing them to a page with some disjointed news every few months or an e-mail answered on the run and unable to say much in its few hurried lines; a message that seemed more like an excuse for not saying what she was thinking at the time and how much she resented the separation. She preferred to keep the intensity of her relationships intact in the distance. If she maintained a long-distance relationship, after a few years, she thought, the only thing she would have of the other is a few words on a cracked yellow piece of paper, or worse, in an email box that could be erased at any time due to a virus or the wrong command on the computer. In her memory, she had always told herself, everything would remain intact, like a tiny boat preserved inside a translucent bottle.

Juanita felt something similar for different reasons. Sara's *Bogotano* formality, her mania for constantly apologizing and giving thanks, exasperated the young woman. Juanita knew that it was something that had always bothered her about Diego, but in his case, the reason for her annoyance had not been so obvious. Sara, on the other hand, was like a magnifying glass of the same parsimonious and even pedantic behavior that reminded Juanita of Fernanda del Carpio, the only character of her favorite author that she could not tolerate. Sara radiated something that felt like suffocating gusts of politeness, and Juanita couldn't imagine being in Bogotá, an entire city inhabited by people like her. So for Juanita, exchanging letters might be possible, but seeing each other again, when Diego took her to see his country, seemed intolerable.

A month later, a little out of bounds and without a prologue, the Quevedo edition that put an end to Sara's literary search appeared in a most unlikely attic. Remaining in Madrid would have been like accepting another defeat of sentimentality over intellectual pursuit. Mexico promised, before her return to Colombia, to be a source of perhaps forgotten authors that, with a good nose and a lot of patience, she could unearth from a dusty provincial shelf and launch herself to acclaim with critics who are always eager for something new to write about.

A dinner was organized for the farewell in a small tavern, with lots of wine, all the tapas that Sara had not tried yet, and their intention to avoid a melodramatic scene of tears and belated declarations of friendship. The four blue shoes gleamed on the pavement of the terrace. Their voices broke despite efforts to keep them loud and unconcerned. Shortly after the second bottle of wine, Diego and Sara, forming a chorus, insisted on teaching Juanita a heartfelt Mexican *ranchera* that said, "you're leaving because I want you to leave." At the end of the night, the three of them, singing, embraced each other like "castaways on the last piece of a sinking ship," as Sara remembered it on the plane, laughing at herself, at her inevitable taste for melodrama.

Three postcards from Madrid and one from Rome had fueled the hope of a possible return. "See you soon" at the end of each one postponed an illusory meeting in Bogotá, where Diego would take Juanita to meet his parents. Nevertheless, the unanswered emails and the days without any kind of communication already foreshadowed the threat of a definitive silence.

Now that she was far away from them, Sara reconsidered. It seemed to her that writing letters or e-mails and being content with the brevity of the messages with which they responded, or the formulaic distance of letters and postcards was better than losing them. From a distance, that young couple in love had become something of an obsession with her. Those few days, so intense, so overloaded with minute trivialities, weighed on her life story like a feather added to lead to tip the balance definitively. It was true that she had abandoned, almost without a second thought, many

perhaps happier relationships. But Juanita and Diego—Juanita, whose reappearance in her life would depend on Diego—had found her at a time in her life when she was no longer so willing to lose. She had spoken with Diego’s family several times, learning more news about a delayed return to Colombia. They said little or nothing about Juanita and seemed to want to forget her existence. *Bogotano* prejudices, Sara thought.

Things finally began to clear up: all had ended between Juanita and Diego some time ago. Diego’s mother agreed to explain briefly over the phone what had happened when Sara insisted. Juanita had disappeared without a trace and a dejected Diego said he would never return to “his sad city of severed mountains.” His mother quoted him in a monotonous voice, solid as the pain that these words now awakened in Sara. She sensed it all: the fights after her departure, the same games that she knew Juanita played, painful for a young man as much in love as Diego; the yelling and recriminations, their dreams shattering as they attempted to salvage them. Sara was beginning to understand that this love of theirs, their easy intimacy without tensions that she had envied in the days they had shared, had allowed her to endure her defeated return to the Bogotá routine with a useless pile of old books. Imagining them together, finding happiness in the most mundane things, as she had experienced in those Madrid days, had made her believe that, while some fluke kept her in her isolation, happiness could indeed be part of her life.

Discarded and in disarray, as if rebelling against their fate, a pair of blue shoes contrasts with the lead gray of the carpet. She had wandered aimlessly along every street, from 1st to 50th; across every sky, from blue to the perforated black of night. But it had been useless; her rage had not been able to wear out the blue shoes until they were destroyed.

Tired, her feet swollen and blistered, Sara sits alone in the precise center of her empty bed. She drops her feet heavily onto the bedspread and curls into a long, stubborn fetal position. The arch of her back is taut and her knees across her chest pull her entire body, like anchors tying her to the world, reminding her that she is alive. She can’t cry, but her eyes, glued to a series of postcards poorly pasted on the wall, are filled with a solid moisture that doesn’t drip. Her mind fixates on a single instant that returns to her obsessively, like a horse on a merry-go-round. That scene appears again and again: the box wrapped in Manila paper with her name and address on one side, and her fear of opening it as she sensed its contents from the shape. Inside, the blue suede shoes that she and Juanita had bought together, with a note written in block letters without further explanation: “I will never go to the city of bell towers.”

Rincón de Traductores/Translators' Corner

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

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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.

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 (2021). *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.
21. RT/TC 021 (2021). *Five Galician Songs*. Author: Emilio Cao (Spain); Translator: Robert Lima; Genre: Poetry.
22. RT/TC 022 (2022). “The KIO Towers”. Author: José Luis Castillo Puche (Spain); Translator: Douglas Edward LaPrade; Genre: Poetry.

23. RT/TC 023 (2022). “One Hundred Cornfields of Solitude”. Author: Melanie Márquez Adams (Ecuador); Translator: Emily Hunsberger; Genre: Chronicle.
24. RT/TC 024 (2022). *Eight Poems*. Author: Luis Alberto de Cuenca (Spain); Translator: Gustavo Pérez Firmat; Genre: Poetry.
25. RT/TC 025 (2022). *Pilgrimage to Santiago (1610)*. Author: Diego de Guzmán (Spain); Translator: George D. Greenia; Genre: Chronicle.
26. RT/TC 026 (2022). *Short stories from Ábrete sésamo*. Author: Clara Eugenia Ronderos (Colombia); Translator: Mary G. Berg; Genre: Short Story.

