

Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

TCLC 330

Volume 330

Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

**Criticism of the
Works of Novelists, Poets, Playwrights,
Short-Story Writers, and Other Creative Writers
Who Lived between 1900 and 1999,
from the First Published Critical
Appraisals to Current Evaluations**

Lawrence J. Trudeau
Editor

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Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

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Preface

Since its inception *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism* (TCLC) has been purchased and used by some 10,000 school, public, and college or university libraries. TCLC has covered more than 1000 authors, representing over 60 nationalities and nearly 50,000 titles. No other reference source has surveyed the critical response to twentieth-century authors and literature as thoroughly as TCLC. In the words of one reviewer, "there is nothing comparable available." TCLC "is a gold mine of information—dates, pseudonyms, biographical information, and criticism from books and periodicals—which many librarians would have difficulty assembling on their own."

Scope of the Series

TCLC is designed to serve as an introduction to authors who died between 1900 and 1999 and to the most significant interpretations of these author's works. The great poets, novelists, short-story writers, playwrights, and philosophers of the period are frequently studied in high school and college literature courses. In organizing and reprinting the vast amount of critical material written on these authors, TCLC helps students develop valuable insight into literary history, promotes a better understanding of the texts, and sparks ideas for papers and assignments. Each entry in TCLC presents a comprehensive survey of an author's career or an individual work of literature and provides the user with a multiplicity of interpretations and assessments. Such variety allows students to pursue their own interests; furthermore, it fosters an awareness that literature is dynamic and responsive to many different opinions.

Volumes 1 through 87 of TCLC featured authors who died between 1900 and 1959; beginning with Volume 88, the series expanded to include authors who died between 1900 and 1999. Beginning with Volume 26, every fourth volume of TCLC was devoted to literary topics. These topics widen the focus of the series from the individual authors to such broader subjects as literary movements, prominent themes in twentieth-century literature, literary reaction to political and historical events, significant eras in literary history, prominent literary anniversaries, and the literatures of cultures that are often overlooked by English-speaking readers. With TCLC 285, the series returned to a standard author approach, with some entries devoted to a single important work of world literature and others devoted to literary topics.

TCLC is part of the survey of criticism and world literature that is contained in Gale's *Contemporary Literary Criticism* (CLC), *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism* (NCLC), *Literature Criticism from 1400 to 1800* (LC), *Shakespearean Criticism* (SC), and *Classical and Medieval Literature Criticism* (CMLC).

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- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author, work, or topic that is the subject of the entry.
- The list of **Principal Works** is ordered chronologically by date of first publication and lists the most important works by the author. The genre and publication information of each work is given. In the case of works not published in English, a translation of the title is provided as an aid to the reader; the translation is a published translated title or a

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- Reprinted **Criticism** is arranged chronologically in each entry to provide a useful perspective on changes in critical evaluation over time. The critic's name and the date of composition or publication of the critical work are given at the beginning of each piece of criticism. Unsigned criticism is preceded by the title of the source in which it appeared. All titles by the author featured in the text are printed in boldface type. Footnotes are reprinted at the end of each essay or excerpt. In the case of excerpted criticism, only those footnotes that pertain to the excerpted texts are included. Criticism in topic entries is arranged chronologically under a variety of subheadings to facilitate the study of different aspects of the topic.
- A complete **Bibliographical Citation** of the original essay or book precedes each piece of criticism. Citations conform to recommendations set forth in the Modern Language Association of America's *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 7th ed. (2009).
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When citing criticism reprinted in the Literary Criticism Series, students should provide complete bibliographic information so that the cited essay can be located in the original print or electronic source. Students who quote directly from reprinted criticism may use any accepted bibliographic format, such as Modern Language Association (MLA) style or University of Chicago Press style. Both the MLA and the University of Chicago formats are acceptable and recognized as being the current standards for citations. It is important, however, to choose one format for all citations; do not mix the two formats within a list of citations.

The examples below follow recommendations for preparing a works cited list set forth in the Modern Language Association of America's *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 7th ed. (New York: MLA, 2009. Print); the first example pertains to material drawn from periodicals, the second to material reprinted from books:

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Kuester, Martin. "Myth and Postmodernist Turn in Canadian Short Fiction: Sheila Watson, 'Antigone' (1959)." *The Canadian Short Story: Interpretations*. Ed. Reginald M. Nischik. Rochester: Camden House, 2007. 163-74. Rpt. in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*. Ed. Thomas J. Schoenberg and Lawrence J. Trudeau. Vol. 206. Detroit: Gale, 2008. 227-32. Print.

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Delmira Agustini

1886-1914

(Born Delmira Agustini Murtfeldt; also wrote under the pseudonym Joujou) Uruguayan poet and journalist.

INTRODUCTION

Delmira Agustini is best known for her erotic verse, which elicited both shock and admiration from her contemporaries. She is widely considered the first major female poet of modern Latin America. Agustini is one of only a handful of women writers associated with *Modernismo*, a turn-of-the-century Latin American literary movement that blended elements of Spanish Romanticism, French Symbolism, and Parnassianism, a French poetic style that stressed objectivity, emotional restraint, and technical precision in reaction to the perceived excesses of Romanticism. Emphasizing the perfection of form and the musicality of language, the works of the *Modernistas* are characterized by their sensuous imagery and exoticism, rhythmic and structural innovation, pride in Latin American culture, and references to classical mythology, mysticism, and the occult.

Agustini's poetry has been occasionally overshadowed in criticism by the details of her biography, particularly the tragic circumstances of her death and the perceived tension between her sheltered, privileged upbringing and the liberated sexuality displayed in her most famous works. Many modern critics have sought to redirect this focus, studying her contributions to *Modernismo* and examining Agustini's unprecedented position as a successful female poet in the male-dominated Latin American literary world of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Delmira Agustini Murtfeldt was born on 24 October 1886 in Montevideo, Uruguay, the younger child and only daughter of a conservative bourgeois family. Her father, Santiago Agustini, was a successful merchant of French ancestry who had inherited a fortune, and her mother, María Murtfeldt, was an Argentinean of Spanish and German descent. A domineering and overprotective woman, María educated her daughter at home, with occasional help from tutors. In 1896, at the age of ten, Agustini began to compose poetry, a talent recognized and nurtured by both parents for the re-

mainder of her life. She was fifteen when she published her first poem, "¡Poesía!," in the 27 September 1902 issue of the magazine *Rojo y Blanco*. The same year, Agustini published the first of several poems to appear in the Uruguayan literary magazine *La Alborada*, which in 1903 commissioned her to write a column. In "Legión etérea," the seventeen-year-old columnist profiled women intellectuals and artists, writing under the pen name of Joujou, a French word that translates to "toy" or "plaything." Agustini's youth and ability drew considerable notice, eventually earning her the nickname "la Nena" (the Little Girl).

In 1907, Agustini's mother moved the family north to Sayago, on the outskirts of Montevideo. Just before her twenty-first birthday, Agustini published her first poetry collection, *El libro blanco (Frágil)* (1907; The White Book [Fragile]). Both *El libro blanco* and her second collection, *Cantos de la mañana* (1910; Songs of the Morning), were well received. In the latter work, Agustini began to incorporate the erotic themes that characterized her later verse.

In 1912, Agustini met her literary idol, Rubén Darío, the Nicaraguan poet widely credited as the founder of *Modernismo*, and began to correspond frequently with him. She chose an excerpt from a commentary by Darío on her work to form the prolog to what became her most admired book of poetry, *Los cálices vacíos* (1913; The Empty Chalices). Contemporary critics were taken aback by the work's unabashed portrayal of feminine sexuality, but they also praised Agustini's poems for their skillful employment and deliberate violation of the forms and conventions of *Modernismo*. In 1913, Agustini married Enrique Job Reyes, a horse trader to whom she had been engaged for five years. Biographers have attributed the unusually long engagement to Agustini's mother, who objected to the union and still exerted considerable influence over her daughter. Agustini filed for divorce several weeks after the wedding and returned to live in her parents' home. Nonetheless, she and Reyes continued to meet for clandestine encounters in a rented room in a Montevideo boardinghouse, which Reyes decorated with photographs of and paintings by Agustini.

On 6 July 1914, during one of the couple's trysts, Reyes shot and killed Agustini and then turned the gun on himself. Although many commentators believe the incident was a murder-suicide prompted by Reyes's obsessive

love for his ex-wife, some have speculated that the shooting was the result of a suicide pact. Proponents of the latter theory have pointed to a letter Agustini wrote to Reyes during their separation, in which she wrote, "If we are not going to be happy, it is preferable to die together." However, the evidence for either theory is inconclusive. A collection of Agustini's complete works, *Obras completas de Delmira Agustini* (1924; Complete Works of Delmira Agustini), was released on the tenth anniversary of her death. Prepared by Agustini's father in collaboration with the editor Maximino García, the compilation includes several previously unpublished poems.

MAJOR WORKS

El libro blanco (*Frágil*) comprises fifty-one poems, forty-four of which are collected under the heading "Frágil" (Fragile). The remaining poems appear in a small subsection at the volume's end titled "Orla rosa" (Pink Frame). Inspired by Darío and other *Modernistas*, as well as by the works of French Symbolists and Romantics, including Charles Baudelaire and Paul Verlaine, the poems of Agustini's debut collection are carefully constructed and replete with references to muses, swans, princesses, and nymphs. Swans were an icon of the contradictory and charged aesthetics of *Modernismo*. They recall classical myth in Romantic fashion, embody Parnassianist perfection of form and powerful Symbolist color, and evoke the exotic reverberations of Richard Wagner's "Swan Song" from his Romantic opera *Lohengrin* (1850).

The opening poem, "El poeta leva el ancla" ("The Poet Weighs the Anchor"), self-referentially describes the poet as she prepares to embark on a journey of artistic creation. The color white appears frequently throughout the volume, ostensibly representing the ideal feminine qualities of innocence and purity. The pieces collected under "Orla rosa," however, display a more suggestive concern with desire and sensuality, prefiguring the dominant themes of Agustini's later verse. In "Íntima" ("Intimate"), for example, the speaker promises her lover, "Like a nocturnal flower over there in the shadows / I will sweetly open for you." "El intruso" ("The Intruder") is overtly sexual, depicting a night of lovemaking using the metaphor of a lock and key: "Love, the night was tragic and sobbing / When your golden key sank in my lock; / Then, the open door upon the gelid shadow, / Your figure was a stain of light and whiteness."

Agustini began to explore more metaphysical and pessimistic themes in the twenty-two poems of her second collection, *Cantos de la mañana*. The volume includes one of

her most esteemed pieces, the sonnet "Lo inefable" ("The Ineffable"), which uses images of pain, death, and decapitation to illustrate the speaker's quest for transcendence: "Ah, it would not be greater / To hold in one's hands the head of God!" The eroticism of Agustini's poetry comes to maturity in *Los cálices vacíos*, the final collection of her work to appear in her lifetime. This compilation combines twenty-one new poems, including one written in French, with selections from her two earlier works, including the entirety of *Cantos de la mañana* and twenty-nine poems from *El libro blanco*, including "El intruso."

Eros, the Greek god of love and desire, figures prominently in the poems of *Los cálices vacíos*, as does the figure of the swan. The speaker of the poem "Nocturno" ("Nocturnal"), however, subverts the *Modernistas'* association of the swan with masculinity by identifying herself with a swan whose blood mars the otherwise pristine waters of a lake. Some critics have interpreted this as a reference to menstrual blood in an image that calls attention to Agustini's view of herself as a disrupter of the male-centered aestheticism of Darío and other prominent authors of *Modernismo*.

CRITICAL RECEPTION

Agustini garnered considerable recognition in her lifetime, but as many modern critics have observed, her contemporaries often focused less on the quality of her writing than on her curious role as "la Nena," the beautiful young poetess. The appearance of *El libro blanco* provoked astonishment in the literary establishment, but as Kate Peters (1997) noted, much of this surprise was attributable to the identity of the book's author. She cited as evidence a letter sent by Carlos Vaz Ferreira to Agustini upon the publication of her first collection, in which the influential Uruguayan author and critic wrote of the youthful, unmarried Agustini, "You should not be capable, not only of writing, but of understanding your book." As Sarah T. Moody (2014) emphasized, the minor and tenuous position of women in fin-de-siècle Latin American letters was even more precarious for those wishing to participate in the *Modernismo* movement. Darío, the movement's founder, had little faith himself in women's intellectual abilities. Although he praised Agustini's poetry in his prolog to *Los cálices vacíos*, Darío qualified his endorsement by situating her work specifically within the tradition of women's writing, and, as Moody noted, he further minimized her contribution to *Modernismo* by referring to her as a "delicious muse." Moody ascribed this marginalization to Darío's and other *Modernistas'* fetishization of the feminine as "emblems of beauty and of formal or poetic perfection," which left little place for real

women within the movement. Agustini was well aware of her relegation to the margins, Moody pointed out, and while her poetry draws extensively on the imagery, lexicon, and rhythms pioneered by Darío, she also actively sought to subvert his favored tropes and metrical conventions—particularly his predilection for the alexandrine verse form and his imagery of princesses and swans—in order to bring attention to her exclusion from *Modernismo* on the sole grounds of her sex.

In the same vein, Peters explained how Agustini's poem "El cisne" ("The Swan"), which first appeared in *Los cálices vacíos*, subverts the *Modernista* image of the swan as a symbol of male virility and power by positioning the female speaker as "an undeniable and equal threat." Peters also described her process of translating the poem into English, during which she gave special attention to its prosody (the organization of its rhythm and sounds) in an effort to create a version that does justice to the complexity and meaning of the original. Jonathan A. Allan (2014) argued for an interpretation of "The Intruder" that avoids the limitations of a heteronormative perspective. Whereas a heteronormative reading of the poem recognizes the lock and key as symbols of the vagina and penis, respectively, Allan pointed out that the fact that the poem gives no indication of the gender of either the speaker or the speaker's lover allows for the possibility that the lock represents the anus. This "rather utopian" reading of the poem results in a "new eroticism," Allan contended: since the anus is not restricted to one sex, the poem's sexual encounter can be read as contraheteronormative, neither explicitly heterosexual nor homosexual. "This reading of the poem does not, I believe, harm the poem, nor does it need to make the poem gay," Allan wrote. Instead, he argued, this interpretation "demonstrates the very reasons" for the poem's continued fame and popularity.

Amy Katherine Talcott

Academic Advisor: Patricia Varas,
Willamette University

PRINCIPAL WORKS

**El libro blanco (Frágil)* [The White Book (Fragile)]. Montevideo: Bertani, 1907. Print. (Poetry)

†*Cantos de la mañana* [Songs of the Morning]. Montevideo: Bertani, 1910. Print. (Poetry)

‡*Los cálices vacíos* [The Empty Chalices]. Montevideo: Bertani, 1913. Print. (Poetry)

Selección de poesías: Los cálices vacíos. El libro blanco. Cantos de la mañana [Selection of Poetry: The Empty

Chalices, The White Book, Songs of the Morning]. Santiago: Luz, 1923. Print. (Poetry)

Obras completas de Delmira Agustini [Complete Works of Delmira Agustini]. 2 vols. Montevideo: García, 1924. Print. (Poetry)

Por campos de ensueño [Through Dreamlike Fields]. Barcelona: Bauzá, 1927. Print. (Poetry)

Obras poéticas [Poetic Works]. Montevideo: Talleres Gráficos de Institutos Penales, 1940. Print. (Poetry)

Poesías [Poetry]. Ed. Ovidio Fernández Ríos. Montevideo: García, 1944. Print. (Poetry)

Poesías completas [Complete Poems]. Ed. Alberto Zum Felde. Buenos Aires: Losada, 1944. Print. (Poetry)

Antología [Anthology]. Ed. Esther de Cáceres. Montevideo: Ministerio de Instrucción Pública, 1950. Print. (Poetry)

Correspondencia íntima [Intimate Collected Letters]. Ed. Arturo Sergio Visca. Montevideo: Biblioteca Nacional, 1969. Print. (Letters)

Poesías completas [Complete Poems]. Ed. Manuel Alvar. Barcelona: Labor, 1971. Print. (Poetry)

§*Poesías completas* [Complete Poems]. Ed. Magdalena García Pinto. Madrid: Cátedra, 1993. Print. (Poetry)

Poesía y correspondencia [Poetry and Collected Letters]. Ed. Idea Vilariño. Montevideo: Banda Oriental, 1998. Print. (Letters and poetry)

Poesías completas [Complete Poems]. Ed. Alejandro Cáceres. Montevideo: Ediciones de la Plaza, 1999. Print. (Poetry)

Principal English Translation

||*Selected Poetry of Delmira Agustini: Poetics of Eros*. Trans. and ed. Alejandro Cáceres. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2003. Print.

*Includes the poems "El intruso" ["The Intruder"], "Íntima" ["Intimate"], "El poeta leva el ancla" ["The Poet Weighs the Anchor"], and "Por campos de ensueño" [Through Dreamlike Fields].

†Includes the poems "La barca milagrosa" [The Miraculous Boat] and "Lo inefable" ["The Ineffable"].

‡Includes the poems "El cisne" ["The Swan"], "Nocturno" ["Nocturnal"], and "Visión" ["Vision"].

§Includes "¡Poesía!", which first appeared in *Rojo y Blanco*, 27 September 1902.

||Includes the English translations "The Poet Weighs the Anchor," "Intimate," "The Intruder," "Vision," "Nocturnal," "The Swan," and "The Ineffable."

CRITICISM

Sidonia Carmen Rosenbaum (essay date 1945)

SOURCE: Rosenbaum, Sidonia Carmen "Delmira Agustini." *Modern Women Poets of Spanish America: The Precursors—Delmira Agustini, Gabriela Mistral, Alfonsina Storni, Juana de Ibarbourou*. New York: Hispanic Inst., 1945. 57-170. Print.

[In the following excerpt, Rosenbaum identifies and interprets the images Agustini favored to describe the three themes that most preoccupied her verse: "thoughts of love, of life and death."]

THEMES

Life, Death, Love—these are the cardinal themes of all poetry, for they are the thoughts that burn deepest into man's mind. But each poet has a thematic scale of his own, conditioned and determined by his personality. The study of a poet's main themes, therefore, is essential to the understanding, the interpretation, and the evaluation of his work as a whole; his particular manner of expressing them is what lends originality to his style.

Delmira Agustini's treatment of these three "vital" themes of Life, Death and Love is, in our opinion, highly original—indicative of an unusual conception and perception of the enigmas of life and death, and an absorbing and deep understanding of what to her is the life-giving passion of love. She rarely isolates in her poems one of these themes from the other two, for, with a marked gift for synthesis, which is apparent in all her work, she takes all threads and weaves them into an intricate pattern which, in almost every instance, blends several of the themes that form the framework of her poems. Thus, she invariably associates life with death ("De todos esos vasos donde bebí la *vida*, / de todos esos vasos donde la *muerte* bebo . . ." I, 26); love with life ("Si la *vida* es *amor*, bendita sea! / Quiero más *vida para amar*!" II, 80); love with death ("Los lechos negros logran la más fuerte / rosa de *amor*; arraigan en la *muerte*" I, 22). Often the three themes are fused ("Tu *amor*, esclavo, es como un sol muy fuerte: / jardinero de oro de la *vida*, / jardinero de fuego de la *muerte*" I, 28).

These primary themes—Life, Death, Love—and all the others that she elaborates, are not always seen in the bright light of reality. Most often they are clothed in the mantle of the unreal—dreams, visions ("magníficas visiones"), aspirations, which to this poetess are more poignant than reality itself. The fantasmagoric, the oneiric, then, consti-

tutes a fourth important and complex element in the poetry of Delmira Agustini.

Dreams enter her every phase of thought and emotion. They encompass her ideal of love:

Imagina el amor que habré soñado . . .

Más grande que la vida, más que el sueño . . .

(II, 78)

They alone can smooth the rough edges of life, for they hold in their cavernous depths the balm for life's wounds:

Las cavernas del sueño: decid, flores,
¿No serán . . . el oasis . . . de la vida?

(II, 56)

They evoke the image of death:

La intensa realidad de un sueño lúgubre
Puso en mis manos tu cabeza muerta

(II, 18)

Life, Death, Love, Dreams . . . The following two lines illustrate the admirable and apparently effortless blending of the four main themes which lend voice to her poetry. She is speaking of the *lover's* mouth:

Copa de *vida* donde quiero y *sueño*
Beber la *muerte* con fruición sombría

(I, 42)

LOVE

O rosario fecundo,
Collar vivo que encierra
La garganta del mundo . . .

Love is the most persistent theme in the poetry of Delmira Agustini. Like a *leitmotiv* it runs through her entire work. More than half of her poems deal wholly with that emotion which, as Byron's Julia said, is "woman's whole existence." And in one form or another—a thought, an expression, a figure of speech—it permeates almost every one of the rest.

But love to Delmira Agustini was not merely her whole existence. Love to her was life, yes—and life was love. But her ideal of love transcended that. It scaled the mystic wall that divides life from death, and time could allot no span to its infinity:

Mi alma es frente a tu alma como el mar frente al cielo:
 Pasarán frente a ellas tal la sombra de un vuelo
 La Tormenta y el Tiempo y la Vida y la Muerte!

(II, 83)

From her earliest poems one can sense the tremendousness of her ideal. She yearned for a love greater than life itself; a love which soared to heights to which dreams could not venture—a love which even she, in her idealism, regarded as “impossible,” as *superhuman*:

Imagina el amor que habré soñado
 En la tumba glacial de mi silencio!
 Más grande que la vida, más que el sueño ...

 Imagina mi amor, amor que quiere
 Vida imposible, vida sobrehumana

(II, 78)

El libro blanco defines in poems, strangely profound for one so young, her concept of that emotion which was to rule her life—and death. It might be called the *first phase* in that experience which was to bring such tragic consequences. Borrowing the vocabulary then in vogue, we might call it, variously, the “white” phase (for love, then, was pure), or the “blue” phase (for love, then, wore a halo of azure dreams), or the “rose” phase (for love, then, was colored with optimism).

In “*Intima*” she is filled with illusions and dreams of what love is, and may be, to her. She finds great happiness in her desire to share her dreams—her richest treasure—with the lover; in the comfort of letting him “bear her cross”:

Yo te diré los sueños de mi vida
 En lo más hondo de la noche azul ...
 Mi alma desnuda temblará en tus manos
 Sobre tus hombros pesará mi cruz

(II, 77)

She is confident that he alone can quench her thirst for that superhuman love (“más grande que la vida, más que el sueño”):

Muero de ensueños; beberé en tus fuentes
 Puras y frescas la verdad; yo sé
 Que está en el fondo magno de tu pecho
 El manantial que vencerá mi sed

(II, 77)

In “*Explosión*” she is in a joyous mood (“Mi vida toda canta, besa, ríe”). She has found love, and life is beautiful. If life is love, she hungrily wants more of it so that she may continue to love:

Si la vida es amor, bendita sea!
 Quiero más vida para amar!

(II, 80)

Love is still a new experience. She finds the need to define it in its complexity, and so she writes the poem aptly called “*Amor*” (II, 81):

Yo lo soñé impetuoso, formidable y ardiente;
 Hablaba el impreciso lenguaje del torrente;
 Era un mar desbordado de locura y de fuego,
 Rodando por la vida como un eterno río.

Luego soñélo triste, como un gran sol poniente
 Que dobla ante la noche la cabeza de fuego;
 Después rió, y en su boca tan tierna como un ruego,
 Sonaba sus cristales el alma de la fuente.

Y hoy sueño que es vibrante, y suave, y riente, y triste,
 Que todas las tinieblas y todo el iris viste;
 Que, frágil como un ídolo y eterno como Dios,

Sobre la vida toda su majestad levanta;
 Y el beso cae ardiendo a perfumar su planta
 En una flor de fuego deshojada por dos ...

She is grateful for the love that, with a golden key, entered her life to dispel the tragic night of melancholy that enveloped her:

Amor, la noche estaba trágica y sollozante
 Cuando tu llave de oro cantó en mi cerradura ...

(II, 82)

And so she feels the need to reflect the lover’s every mood:

Y hoy río si tú ríes, y canto si tú cantas;
 Y si tú duermes, duermo como un perro a tus plantas!

(II, 82)

When he is not beside her, her entire life weeps in sorrow; and his presence brings a smile to her lips, even in dreams:

¡Ah! Cuando tú estás lejos mi vida toda llora
 Y al rumor de tus pasos hasta en sueños sonrío

(II, 83)

It is first-love and she feels the immensity of it. She puts her fate in the lover’s hands. No gift of love could be greater!:

Un día, al encontramos tristes en el camino,
 Yo puse entre tus manos pálidas mi destino!
 ¡Y nada de más grande jamás han de ofrecerte!

(II, 83)

In *Cantos de la mañana*, written three years later, the poems of love, although sounding deeper and more somber depths, are still, essentially, of the *first phase*. She speaks grimly of the indissoluble union of their souls—even the Fates are powerless before it. Although the flesh, weak at

best, may give way, they are bound fast by an unyielding, "intricate" knot:

Y el Destino interpuso sus dos manos heladas ...
¡Ah! los cuerpos cedieron, mas las almas trenzadas
Son el más intrincado nudo que nunca fué ...
En lucha con sus locos enredos sobrehumanos
Las Furias de la vida se rompieron las manos
Y fatigó sus dedos supremos Ananké ...

(II, 29)

Her love has now something of the morbid in it. Strangely enough, it is the lover's *head*—either in dreams or in reality—that evokes thoughts that might have been premonitions:

La intensa realidad de un sueño lúgubre
Puso en mis manos tu *cabeza* muerta;
Yo la apresaba como hambriento buitre ...

(II, 18)

Engastada en mis manos fulguraba
Como extraña presea, tu *cabeza*;

¡Ah! tu *cabeza* me asustó ... Fluía
De ella una ignota vida ... Parecía
No sé qué mundo anónimo y nocturno ...

(II, 31)

A veil of sadness seems to cloud all past joy; sadness that only tears—bitter, disconsolate tears—can allay:

Tan triste que he llorado hasta quedar inerte ...

(I, 93)

Pobres lágrimas mías las que glisan
A la esponja sombría del Misterio

(I, 94)

Y así la lloro hasta agotar mi vida ...

(II, 18)

Her heart seems to have suffered a cruel blow:

Pobre mi corazón que se desangra
Como clepsidra trágica en silencio

(I, 94)

Melancholy has again spread its wings; once more she finds herself

Arropada en el manto
Pálido y torrencial de mi melancolía

(II, 28)

There must have been a parting—a severance of bonds once thought holy:

Hoy desde el gran camino, bajo el sol claro y fuerte,
Muda como una lágrima he mirado hacia atrás,

Y tu voz, de muy lejos, con un olor a muerte,
Vino a aullarme al oído un triste "Nunca más!"

(I, 93)

Several poems are written in a tone of sweet and wistful reminiscence:

Su idilio fué una larga sonrisa a cuatro labios ...
.....
En los palacios fúlgidos de las tardes en calma
Hablaban un lenguaje sentido como un lloro,
Y se besaban hondo hasta morderse el alma! ...
Las horas dehojábanse como flores de oro

(II, 29)

Hace tiempo, algún alma ya borrada fué mía ...
Se nutrió de mi sombra ... siempre que yo quería
El abanico de oro de su risa se abría,

O su llanto sangraba una corriente más;

Alma que yo ondulaba tal una cabellera
Derramada en mis manos ...

(II, 34)

But she warns that one must not talk of the past. It is a chapter closed irrevocably:

Los pasados se cierran como los ataúdes

(I, 93)

Los cálices vacíos unfolds a new panorama. She is now entering the second, or "red" phase. The dedication—to Eros—sets the tone for the entire book.

Love appears to have been seasoned with experience ("en sólo un beso nos hicimos viejos"). The lover has visibly descended from the ethereal plane of the ideal to be invested with a more tangible and palpable reality. His carnal presence is ardently felt:

Por tus manos indolentes
Mi cabello se desfloca;
Sufro vértigos ardientes
Por las dos tazas de moka

De tus pupilas calientes;
Me vuelvo peor que loca
Por la crema de tus dientes
En las fresas de tu boca;

En llamas me despedazo
Por engarzarme en tu abrazo ...

(I, 66)

Entire poems are dedicated to his mouth ("Tu boca"), his eyes ("En tus ojos"), his hands ("Para tus manos"). And the physical aspect of their union is repeatedly evoked: