

It is my fate to dream. The poet's role  
 Has been a coat-of-mail pressing its wall  
 Against my heart. And bloody thorns let fall  
 Red drops from my poor melancholy soul.  
 Sightless and mad I stumble as I go  
 Across this bitter world; the road is long,  
 But still not long enough to hold my song. . . .  
 And in this staggering of breath and pain  
 I bear a cross that I can scarce sustain.  
 Don't you hear drops that fall—my lifeblood's flow?

JOHN A. CROW

Ése es mi mal. Soñar. La poesía  
 es la camisa férrea de mil puntas cruentas  
 que llevo sobre el alma. Las espinas sangrientas  
 dejan caer las gotas de mi melancolía.

Y así voy, ciego y loco, por este mundo amargo;  
 a veces me parece que el camino es muy largo,  
 y a veces que es muy corto. . . .

Y en este titubeo de aliento y agonía,  
 cargo lleno de penas lo que apenas soporto.  
 ¿No oyes caer las gotas de mi melancolía?

## Julio Herrera y Reissig

Uruguay, 1875-1910

This gifted poet suffered throughout his life from severe cardiac disease, and he lived mostly in a world of books until his death at the age of thirty-five. He was the leader of a literary group that met at the Tower of the Panoramas, one of Latin America's best-known ivory towers, or refuges for poets. Herrera y Reissig read widely in contemporary French literature and was influenced particularly by Albert Samain and Jules LaForgue. He himself made frequent use of wild and abstruse poetic images and so represented modernism's most daring expression, which became a kind of ultramodernism, the forerunner of the movements in poetry soon to come.

### Heraldic Decoration

*Oh, lady, who art the object of my  
 attentions, I shall always love you  
 though you rebuff me.* Góngora

I dreamt you stood beside the icy wall  
 Where all existence ends, brilliant and tense,  
 Displaying as you walked your opulence  
 Of grieving velvet darkened like a pall.

Your foot, carved ivory, pure as a dove,  
 With pitiless Satanic vehemence  
 Wounded the patient souls of poor defence  
 Who gave themselves unto your perjured love.

My own sweet love, that followed as you spoke,  
 Like a blind lamb with sorrowful devotion,  
 The perfumed traces of your shadow's motion,

Sought out the torment of your regal yoke,  
 And then beneath your hangman's satin feet  
 I placed the carpet of my heart's defeat.

JOHN A. CROW

### Decoración heráldica

*Señora de mis pobres homenajes  
 débote amor aunque me ultrajes.*  
 Góngora

Soñé que te encontrabas junto al muro  
 glacial donde termina la existencia,  
 paseando tu magnífica opulencia  
 de doloroso terciopelo oscuro.

Tu pie, decoro del marfil más puro,  
 hería, con satánica inclemencia,  
 las pobres almas, llenas de paciencia,  
 que aún se brindaban a tu amor perjurado.

Mi dulce amor, que sigue sin sosiego,  
 igual que un triste corderito ciego,  
 la huella perfumada de tu sombra,

buscó el suplicio de tu regio yugo,  
 y bajo el raso de tu pie verdugo  
 puse mi esclavo corazón de alfombra.

## Delmira Agustini

Uruguay, 1886-1914

The daughter of an aristocratic Uruguayan family, Delmira Agustini was fascinated by the arts at a tender age, and she was writing poetry by the time she was ten. Her unique contribution to

Hispanic poetry is the intensity with which she extolled the erotic impulse and the all-consuming passion of love in a language of highly charged imagery. She married a man with whom she had absolutely nothing in common except physical attraction, and after a brief period, the marriage ended with the violent (suicidal-homicidal) death of both parties.

### The Miraculous Ship

Prepare me a ship like a great thought recklessly given . . .  
Some will call it "The Shadow," others "The Star."  
By no caprice of hand or wind let it be driven;  
I want it quickened, wild, lovely as roses are!

The rhythms of a God-sent heart will swell its sail  
And power it, and I shall feel on this sweet ship  
As safe and strong as in God's hands. In every gale  
Through roughest seas its flashing prow will slip.

When I have laden it with all my pain and cast away,  
I shall drive like the broken corolla of a lotus flower  
Over the liquid horizon of the sea's vast heaving . . .

Ship, Oh sister soul, toward what distant and unseen bay  
Of deepest revelations and unknown port's white tower  
Shall be our course? . . . I die of life, of dreams, and of  
believing . . .

JOHN A. CROW

### La barca milagrosa

Preparadme una barca como un gran pensamiento . . .  
La llamarán "La Sombra" unos; otros, "La Estrella."  
No ha de estar al capricho de una mano o de un viento;  
¡yo la quiero consciente indomable y bella!

La moverá el gran ritmo de un corazón sangriento  
de Vida sobrehumana; he de sentirme en ella  
fuerte como en los brazos de Dios. En todo viento,  
en todo mar templadme su prora de centella.

La cargaré de toda mi tristeza, y, sin rumbo,  
iré como la rota corola de un nelumbo,  
por sobre el horizonte líquido de la mar . . .

Barca, alma hermana: ¿hacia qué tierras nunca vistas,  
de hondas revelaciones, de cosas imprevistas  
iremos? . . . Yo ya muero de vivir y soñar . . .

## Amado Nervo

Mexico, 1870–1919

Nervo abandoned his studies for the priesthood to become a journalist and poet. In 1900 he met Darío and several contemporary French writers in Paris. With Jesús Valenzuela he established the famous modernist journal, *Revista Moderna*, in 1898; it continued until 1911. Nervo was subsidized by the Mexican government of Porfirio Díaz, which gave him diplomatic posts first in Madrid and then in South America. His poetry reflects his philosophical attitudes, which run the gamut from Christianity, to agnosticism, to a kind of Oriental pantheism. His best poems are simple, sincere statements of basic human emotions: love; the loss of love; the search for beauty, God, and, most of all, serenity.

### Expectation

I feel something strange coming into my life.  
Perhaps it is love? Perhaps it is death?  
My face grows more pallid . . . my soul is in strife,  
And my body is trembling with each solemn breath.

I feel some sublimity molding my clay,  
Some fire in this miserable carcass of mine.  
From the pebble celestial sparks seem to play,  
And the proud royal purple these rags render fine.

I feel something solemn approaching in state.  
With tremulous body and soul-fright I reel . . .  
Let the scroll by fulfilled, and let God read my fate,

### Expectación

Siento que algo solemne va a llegar en mi vida.  
¿Es acaso la muerte? ¿por ventura el amor?  
Palidece mi rostro . . . Mi alma está conmovida,  
y sacude mis miembros un sagrado temblor.

Siento que algo sublime va a encarnar en mi barro,  
en el misero barro de mi pobre existir.  
Una chispa celeste brotará del guijarro  
y la púrpura augusta va el harapo a teñir.

Siento que algo solemne se aproxima, y me hallo  
todo trémulo; mi alma de pavor llena está.  
Que se cumpla el destino, que Dios dicte su fallo.