BORINQUEN

An Anthology of Puerto Rican Literature

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CONTENTS

XVIII. INDEPENDENCE: "A REVOLUTION OF OUR PEOPLE"

XIX. THE POETIC REVIVAL

XX. THE PASSION OF HISTORY

XXI. THE ORDINARY LIFE

XXII. THE CROSSROAD AND THE PROTEST

XXIII. SONGS OF ROY BROWN

XXIV. THE ODYSSEY OF A JÍBARO

XXV. PUERTO RICAN PARADISE

INTRODUCTION: THE PATH AND THE VOICE

by María Teresa Babín

"The Good of the Good We Lost"
—AGÜEYBANA'S SPEECH IN CASTELLANOS' ELEGY

The call of the wild, mingled with the sea breezes and the aroma emanating from the hillside flowers, signaled the path through the *yucayeques*. The turbulent crest of the watching hurricane and the tremor of hearts and limbs in the primitive *areyto* enlivened the verses entwined with the voices of warriors and sages of the Antilles, weaving in song and dance the tapestry of our myths with dreams of love. The historical destiny of the Greater Antilles was at this early time a vague expectation chanted and danced in the unwritten poetry of movement and color, sounds and rhythms, the ancient language of the wisdom of the people who inhabited the land. The Renaissance and the aborigines of the Caribbean were discovering their own mystery. Mortality versus the immortal soul. Diego de Salcedo was the experiment beyond any doubts . . . and the blood and suffering of conquest and resistance made the land somber until the dawn of a new day in which the surviving forces of man and nature gave rise to the first generation born on our soil, the offspring of the Spanish, the Taino, and the African. Their unifying language became the Castilian, their baptism in the Catholic faith made them Christians, and the ances-

On the isles of the Caribbean, the Admiral Christopher Columbus was welcomed, in 1496, by a "gentle and loving" people. "They exhibit great love toward others in preference to themselves," said the astounded Columbus. Seeing his ships, these Indians yelled in greeting, *"Taino! Taino!"*; it meant "Good! Good!" And so, the Spaniards called them the Tainos, as the Indians of Puerto Rico are called to this day. It was not, and is not, their name; for they clearly told the Spaniards they were the people of Borinquen, the Borinqueños, which they pronounced *Borican* and which the Spaniards mispronounced and misspelled.

In one generation the Conquistadores took their lands and enslaved their men and children. By 1511 the Borinqueños had revolted, so successfully that the Spanish Empire and Catholic Church policy toward the Indians of the Americas was changed forever. The Borinqueños' tribal memory of that revolt is retold by a *jíbaro* in the hills ("Let Me Tell You the Story," *The Islands: The Worlds of the Puerto Ricans*, by Stan Steiner, New York, Harper & Row, 1974) while the Spaniards' imaginative version was told by the poet, Juan de Castellanos (1522–1607), in his *Elegies of Illustrious Men of the Indies*, the longest epic poem in the Spanish language. The selection from the Sixth Elegy, dedicated to Ponce de León, is excerpted from the translation by Muna Lee ("Revolt of the Borinqueños"), as it appears in Babín's edition of the Elegy, *La Gesta de Puerto Rico*, 1967.

LET ME TELL YOU THE STORY

by a Jíbaro

Let me tell you the story of the *cacique* Guarionex. It is not historically recognized. But, it is what I have gathered out of the stories of the old people of this land, where I was born, and where my forebearers have been born, for five, six, or more generations. . . .

All this land of Utuado, Adjuntas, Jayuya and Lares (town in the Central Highlands, ed.) were known as the lands of Otoao, in the beginning, when the Spaniards came. The story goes that it was the name of an Indian chief, Otoao. In the Indian language *otoao* means a "Valley Between Mountains." But appealing to technology it means Otoao was the ruler of the "Valley Between Mountains." So, Otoao happens to be the name of the Indian chief in the land known as Otoao, itself.

In the beginning, as I said, Otoao was the ruler. So take it that way.

Our Indians were very hospitable. They were people of peace. And they were not skeptical of the Spaniards. But, the Spaniards came to conquer. In fact, they came after riches. The Indians did not think about it that way. So they made friends with the Spaniards.

Among the Indians there was a sacrament that we call *compadrazgo,* in Spanish. In the Catholic way. In the Indian way, it was named *guaitiao.* By the way of *compadrazgo* two people become related by a church sacrament. By way of *guaitiao* two people become related by blood. They make a small cut in the wrists, under the wrists, and they cross both wrists, so the blood of one mixes with the blood of the other.

In that way, by the sacrament of the *guaitiao,* they become *guaitiaos.* That means "brothers of blood."

The Indians believed in this. But the Spaniards looked at it as a way to gain control of the Indians, morally and spiritually. In that way Otoao became the *guaitiao* of Ponce de León [the first Spanish Governor of Puerto Rico]. He changed his faith to the Catholic faith. He changed his name to the Christian name of Don Alfonso.

And the Indians became skeptical of the Spaniards. They had been mistreated. They had been robbed of their land. They had been abused of their friendship. They had been made to work in the mines as slaves. But, more than that, their women had been abused by the Spaniards.

So, the *cacique* Otoao fell in the estimation of the Indians by changing his name and his religion.

It was then that the Indians had a new leader by the name of Guarionex. He had come to Borinquen from Santo Domingo, where he had experience fighting against the Spaniards. He had to flee there. So, he came and established himself in the land of Otoao, where Caguana is, actually. The *yucayeque* (village) of Guarionex has never been discovered. But, if you study the geography of Caguana you have to concede this was the place the old people talked about. Anyway, Guarionex became the chieftain of the whole land that had been the domain of Otoao. That was how Guarionex was accepted as the leader of the Indians

and was recognized by the Spaniards as their true foe.

Guarionex was the one who led the Indians in their battle against the town of Sotomayor (in 1511). They burned the town.

But he did not die in warfare in Puerto Rico. As a matter of fact there is no tale of Guarionex being killed in battle. He was captured and taken on a ship to Spain, to show to the King that the rebellion had been finished. While the ship in which he was being taken to Spain was anchored outside the port of the Ozama River in Santo Domingo, a hurricane blew it out. The ship was wrecked in the hurricane. All the crew and passengers drowned, except Guarionex and two Indian chieftains from Borinquen, prisoners like him, who escaped. They swam to safety. They gained the shore. They escaped.

They escaped to the Virgin Islands and escaped capture. And that's about all that can be known about the great *cacique* Guarionex.

All these stories I heard from old people. Who are already dead. Who have died. My grandfathers. I recall them. As a little boy, I heard some of them. As a grown man, I heard some. The old people used to tell legends and stories I recall. From these things the old people told me, I gathered these stories about our history.

REVOLT OF THE BORINQUEÑOS

by Juan de Castellanos

Juan Ponce having readied men and store,
Under the powers given to his hand,
Made the journey without delaying more,

With interpreters from Haiti in his command
And since on St. John's Day he went ashore,
San Juan de Puerto Rico he called the land.
The men that he brought with him on that day
Stepped forth on sandy beaches of a bay.

Salcedo

As the Chief was pondering how best to play
His game ensuring the success he planned,
Diego de Salcedo passed that way,
Unaccompanied by any of his band;
Whereat Urayoan, hospitable and gay,
Giving no hint of what he had in hand,
Every attention to Salcedo showed,
And sent men to companion him on the road.
He set out with those Indians and their scheme,
He who wotted not what might betide.
And most courteously when they neared a stream,
They offered to bear him to the other side
Upon their shoulders; best way it would seem,
To keep his clothes dry from the river's tide.
He should have known such promises not to keep.
They flung him in where the water runs most deep.

Watching him flounder as the waters rose
Above where two or three had let him lour,
All the Indians beset him now with blows,
And kept him under water a full hour,
Till seeing him still dead, at last each knows
He had been mortal, with but a mortal's power.
Yet even then remained with them a dread
Lest 'spite all seeming, he be not wholly dead.

And so they waited there till the third day,
Fearful of what that drowned corpse yet might do.
Begging its pardon, they would softly say
How their ill action toward him they must rue,
Until the corpse was putrefying in such way
That by its look and smell at last they knew
Truth could no longer be doubted nor denied:
Here was no feigning: this man indeed had died . . .
I am not shocked by this, their show of might,
Nor by the evil deeds they had in mind;
For they had seen their pleasures vanish quite,
Nor security nor any hope could find.
Their wives and children, each unhappy wight
Knew a life-long servitude would bind.
They had all seen those precious freedoms fly
Which no amount of money can ever buy.

Agüeybana

When in one place they were at last aligned,
In a town-meeting there, as you might say,
Agüeybana, who has the master mind
And planned in everything to have his way,
Addressed that gathering in a speech designed
To give his eloquent argument full sway.
His words not many, but he chose them well,
This, more or less, is what he had to tell:

"If extremes of frenzy cease at long last,
If thinking man feels thought begin to fail,
If you can still remember the good past:
Then no man here can check an anguished wail
For abject wretchedness that holds us fast

In this fell present where all woes assail.
How much we suffer, how bitter is our bread,
How many of us are failing, fleeing—dead!

"While suffering such evils night and day,
We serve these foreigners in our land of birth;
And this our only freedom is: we may
Work their mines and till for them the earth.
Our fields, our plains, our coastlands—and it is they
Who possess all, and leave us to our dearth
Here in the land that always was our own,
Where we were born and wherein we have grown.

"Each of us to a master now belongs,
And must render him complete obedience;
Useless it is to tell you of your wrongs,
Who make no effort in your own defense.
So meekly now do you endure your thongs
It seems that suffering has benumbed your sense.
You let your master as he will enjoy
Your wife, your child, as past-time or as toy.

"Before the shame and evil that they do,
We like vile cowards have only given way,
I have no knowledge any one of you
Is planning aught such injuries to withstay.
Men who no more than cowed endurance show
When suffering or disgraced, what breed are they
If not ourselves, for whom shame has no sting,
We who it seems put up with anything!

"Speak up, forgetful dwellers in this land,
Snoring at ease, who not e'en in sleep complain.
Were you not born with weapons in your hand?

Rather than headlong flight across the plain
Were it not better in the hills to stand?
Speaking of war, must I speak to you in vain?
How is it we have not in all our host
One voice to tell the good of the good we lost?

"The Caribs in their fierce and wild estate
—The man that daunts them never casts a shade—
Whose cruelties are so many and so great
That even recounting them makes men afraid,
At a high value do your friendship rate,
And tremble when Borinquen's name is said.
And we, shall we in our turn tremble then
Before two hundred worn-out, crippled, starving men?

"My grandmother, that old bestial crone,
And my uncle, dull and slow of wit,
Gave us to believe a fiction all their own,
Which I held monstrous, always doubting it.
By now at last the simple truth is shown
By our own river, the Gurabo. This is it:
Christians are not immortal. Understand
At last that they can meet death by your hand!"

II. MYTHS AND TRUTHS OF BORINQUEN

For so small an island, Borinquen was surprisingly rich in natural beauty and wealth. And the people gave to the Spanish and English languages a remarkable lexicon of words for things that came to symbolize the Americas: *maiz* (maize, or corn), *tabaco* (tobacco), *yuca* (yucca), *cacique* (chieftain), *canoa* (canoe), *hamaca* (hammock), *sabana* (savanna), *cayo* (key), *huracán* (hurricane). All of these were Borinqueño Indian words. Less well known, but as rich, is the heritage of legends and myths of these people. One of the distinguished historians of the folk legends and tribal history of the island was Cayetano Coll y Toste (1850–1930), the poet and politician, who edited *Boletín Historico de Puerto Rico* (*Historical Bulletin of Puerto Rico*), and whose masterwork, *Leyendas Puertorriqueñas* (*Puerto Rican Legends*), from which the story "Guanina" is taken, was a pioneering book of cultural rediscovery in 1925. The work of Coll y Toste has inspired many writers. In recent times the anthropologist Ricardo E. Alegría (1921–), director of the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture in San Juan, has written numerous books about the history and culture of the Indians, blacks, and *jíbaros* of the island, as told in their folk tales. Some of these were influenced by European and African folk tales, some by the religious morality tales of Catholicism, and some remain uniquely and indigenously Indian. ("The Renegades," by Ricardo E. Alegría, from *The Island Times*, November 8, 1963.)

THE RENEGADES

A story based on Puerto Rican folklore by Ricardo E. Alegría

This happened many years ago, at a time, so they say, when God walked upon the earth.

The Maker had just created animals of every kind and he delighted in contemplating them all: in the air the ones that flew; on the land those that crept, ran and leaped; in the water, those that swam. But His happiness did not last long. Some animals were not satisfied with the form He had given them. The differences with which the Maker had endowed them to distinguish them from their fellows had begotten envy and dissatisfaction. This happened here, on the land.

One family of animals was envious of those that flew and wished to become like them. So they met with their fellows and expressed their intention of asking the Creator to change their form so that they could fly like the birds. But their fellows, who were proud to remain such as their Maker had wished them to be, refused to join in this petition. The ones who did not wish to be such as their Creator had made them were left alone and then, full of hate and rage because their fellows would not join them, they decided to take their case to God.

The Maker, saddened by what He already knew, ex-

pressed deep sorrow for the envy that led them to desire to change the form He had given them. And it was then, when the Creator refused to change their form, that they disowned their being, their fellows, and their Maker. That was the day when God, full of sorrow, left the Earth, and the Evil One, the Enemy, decided to use the passions of envy and covetousness to his own end.

The Evil One appeared before the Renegades and offered to grant them their wish, granting them what the Creator had refused. The Renegades, who in their envy and rage had forgotten that only God can create, accepted the Evil One's offer to give them wings to fly like the birds. But the Evil One could not create feathers such as the birds had. He could only stretch their skin to make wings, and, believing himself a Creator, change their body in his image.

The Renegades soon realized that their wish had been granted and that, thanks to the way the Enemy had changed their bodies, they could at last fly like birds. Full of hate, their first impulse was to go find their fellows, who had refused to change their form, and proudly display what they, with the help of the Enemy, had achieved. Great was their surprise on seeing that the others, their fellows, now fled in panic on seeing them in their new shape. No longer were they recognized as brothers and the new form with which they had been endowed by the Evil One caused only horror and disgust . . . as if the rest of the animals feared that they too might suffer such a change! At first, the Renegades were surprised at the behavior of those who had formerly been their fellows. But their arrogance, and the pride they felt in their new form, made them believe that now they were superior to the others and they decided to leave their former fellows forever and go live with the birds whom they so admired. So they took to the air. When the

birds saw those featherless creatures that flew and who were made in the image of the Evil One, they forbade them to approach and refused to have anything to do with them.

Only then did truth dawn on the Renegades. They understood that they belonged to no family: that every animal, every single one, whether he ran or flew, despised and avoided them. They realized that in trying to undo, with the aid of the Evil One, what the Creator had made, they had only achieved a monstrosity from which all fled in horror.

They had gained their end but they had not fulfilled their ambition. Everyone knew of their treason and now they were ashamed and afraid. Perpetually fearful and humiliated, they hide from everyone.

That is why, even now, they only dare leave their hiding places when the sun sets and night falls; when the other animals are asleep; when darkness hides their shape, the outward sign of their treason to God and to their fellows.

Today, in our language, we call them . . . bats . . .

GUANINA

by Cayetano Coll y Toste

Afternoon fell, enveloped in a radiant red glow. Don Cristóbal de Sotomayor,[1] seated on a stool in the large room that he had had constructed in the Indian village of Agüeybana,[2] drowsily breathed in the amorous exhalations that the afternoon breeze brought to him from the immediate grove, as he thought melancholically of the Court in Valladolid and the Countess of Camiña, his dear mother, when with hurried step a beautiful Indian girl with bronze skin, expressive eyes, raised breast, soft contours, and

abundant hair, half-gathered in braids in the old Castilian style, entered the room.

"What is the matter, Guanina, my dear, for you seem frightened and your large, beautiful eyes, always so lovely, are now filled with tears?"

"Flee, sir! Flee, my love! Your death has been decided upon by all the Borinquen chiefs. I know the most secret caves in our island and I will hide you carefully in one of them."

"You are delirious, Guanina! Your people have humbled themselves not to grow proud again," replied Don Cristóbal, drawing toward himself the graceful Indian, kissing her on the forehead and trying to calm her.

"Do not believe, master, that my people are defeated. My good uncle Agüeybana's advice caused the Borinqueños to receive you with pleasure and in peace, and they entertained you well. They thought you were real *guaitiao*,[3] but the facts have come to prove, unfortunately, that you are not such friends and confederates, but that you aspire to be masters. Besides, some of your men have inconsiderately abused native generosity. And finally, the hard labor in the mines, in compact gangs, seeking those so-desired pieces of gold, that you value so highly, has driven them to despair, for, as you know, many kill themselves so they do not have to wash that wretched sand."

"I see you are also a rebel, Guanina," said Don Cristóbal, seating her at his side, and kissing her tenderly.

"I say what I feel, my love. And since your death is set by the chiefs, I want to save you. I come to warn you, because I do not want them to kill you," Guanina again exclaimed, with her eyes full of tears and tightly hugging the young nobleman, who held her in his arms with pleasure.

2

Suddenly Juan González,[4] the interpreter, entered the room, imprudently interrupting the amorous conversation of the young lovers.

"Don Cristóbal, there is no time to lose. The native rebellion will begin and it will be awesome. I have just witnessed an *areyto*, in which your own assistants, in singing and dancing, have sworn your death and that of all of us."

"You, too, good Juan, are easily impressed. I see with sorrow that these Indians' fears are beginning to stick to you. They are just servants giving vent to their feelings and nothing more."

Shrewd Juan replied: "For nights I have been seeing lights burning, and I have heard, in the silence of the night, the cry of alarm of the snail shell in the mountain, with the insistent call to arms. No doubt these are signs of courage, decision, already concerted. Soon the island will burn in terrible holocaust against us. Let us escape, sir, let us flee! I know all the shortcuts and paths that lead to Villa de Caparra. There is still time, Don Cristóbal."

"Me, Juan Cristóbal, flee!" he declared emphatically, with contained anger, rising furiously from the stool and letting go of the arms of Guanina, who laid her gentle head on the brave youth's shoulders; and he repeated:

"Me, Juan Cristóbal, flee! Do you not know that I am a Sotomayor, and that none of my family ever turned away from the enemy? I will leave here in the morning, in full sunlight, my visor high, my banner unfurled, followed by my friends and with my baggage on the shoulders of that rabble, who presently thunder in the *batey* with their clamor, and whom we shall soon punish. No more. Leave now."

While this dialogue took place between the two Christians, Guanina had withdrawn to the ledge of the window, and with sad eyes contemplated the darkness of the woods, as though seeking to peer into its secrets with her stare, the penetrating one of a wild creature; and machinelike, she finished braiding her abundant black hair, in the Spanish style, according to the lessons given her by the young Spanish nobleman, in his transports of love with the slender native girl.

"Come, Guanina, sit at my side. I am angry with your people, but not with you. Your love fills my soul. Kiss me, to make me forget with your caresses the sorrow that weighs upon me."

And the beautiful Indian embraced the young man's neck with her arms, and smiling, she kissed him, showing as she laughed her ivorylike teeth, which seemed like a row of fine pearls.

3

The morning was luminous, glowing. Quite early, good Juan González, the astute interpreter, called quietly at Don Cristóbal's door.

"Sir, sir, it is me, Juan González."

"Enter. What is the matter?"

"All night long we have been standing guard over your sleep. Let us leave, Don Cristóbal, let us leave."

"Call Guaybana, my assistant chieftain."

"I already called him, sir. He is below, at the door, awaiting your orders."

"Tell him to come in."

Juan González obeyed his captain's orders. And Guaybana, the main chieftain of Borinquen, entered the room.

Coldly he greeted Don Cristóbal, raising his right hand to his forehead, but maintaining his wrinkled brow. Guaybana was a robust, free and easy, proud youth. He had inherited the title from his uncle Agüeybana, and he hated the invaders with all his heart, to the death.

"I need you, Guaybana, to name a gang of your *naborias*, to take my luggage to Villa de Caparra. I am going on a trip and I want to leave immediately."

Juan González, the intermediary, interpreted for his captain.

"You will be obeyed," the chieftain answered dryly, withdrawing from the room without saluting, and with his brow wrinkled, as when he entered.

"Don Cristóbal, sir! What have you done? Why have you told Guaybana the route we are to follow?" exclaimed the interpreter, fearful of the imprudent frankness of Sotomayor, who gave little importance to the Borinqueños' rebellious movements.

"Juan, my good Juan, it's necessary for those scoundrels to know that we are not fleeing from them. Do not be apprehensive, my friend, for the God of victories is with us. No one can humble the Spanish flag. Ah, González, let us prepare for the trip!"

And the intrepid youth took down from the wall his Toledo sword, helmet, and buckler, placing them on the bed. Guanina, seeing what her love was doing, drew near him and whispered in his ear:

"Take me with you, my love! I do not want to remain here without your company. Take me! . . ."

"It is not possible now, Guanina. As soon as we leave this area, there will be a fierce *guasábara*, and I do not want an arrow to strike you or even wound or kill you. The slightest scratch to your skin would break my heart in two. I will come back for you, very soon. I promise you."

And embracing her in his arms he kissed her on the mouth with youthful ardor. Guanina began to weep sadly, the sobs welling up from her breast unable to change the arrogant noble youth's resolution.

The *naborias,* Indian servants, started to enter Don Cristóbal's room and divide up the baggage. The natives looked askance, with ill-disguised anger, at beautiful Guanina, whose eyelids were puffed from so much crying.

The procession was in the *batey,* awaiting the last orders. Don Cristóbal decided Juan González was to remain in the rear, with the baggage, and that his five friends would go with him at the front, on guard, to avoid any ambush. The leader, a good guide, would walk out in the open. As they were traveling on foot, they could not wear all their armor and hence only put on cotton breastplates, to deflect the blow of any arrow shot.

Once he put on his helmet of burnished steel, girded his sword, and took his buckler, Don Cristóbal hurriedly climbed the steps of the country house to kiss his beloved Guanina for the last time. They did not exchange a single word. They embraced and kissed again feverishly. As he came down the stairs, Don Cristóbal brought the pinky of his left hand to his cheek, to wipe away furtively two beautiful pearls that had sprung from his ardent eyes and that the brave youth did not want to be observed by his comrades at arms. It was the just tribute to the amorous reciprocity of the proud paladin to the enchanting native girl who had sacrificed, in the name of love, the sentiments of native patriotism, race, and family.

4

Don Cristóbal de Sotomayor's procession, taking advantage of the fresh air of the tropical morning, set out on the road

that went toward Villa de Caparra. Soon the small party was lost from view. Then Guaybana gathered together three hundred Indians, his best warriors, and announced to them:

"My friends, the hour of vengeance has sounded. Many moons have surprised me bewailing our misfortune. We have to destroy now all invaders or die for our country in the attempt. All our brothers from the other parts of the land are already prepared for the fight. The Cemi protector commands us to die killing. Today's sun will be favorable for us with its light. So it is necessary for you not to be inferior in valor to those brave warriors that Guarionex and Mabodomaca led. Fix your arrows' aim and fasten your club straps to your wrists. Forward! Forward!"

Guaybana displayed his multicolored plume of feathers, wearing around his neck the distinctive gold *guanín* of the chieftain and brandishing in his right hand the terrible quartz hatchet with which he struck down forests of cedar and combretaceous trees.

The resolute chieftain was followed by three hundred Indians, well armed, with their quivers on their shoulders and filled with arrows, bows in their left hands, and clubs in their right hands. They wore their hair gathered at the back of their heads with a cord of the century plant and their bodies daubed in stripes of the paste of the yellow annatto and the black juice of the inaja palm.

The Indians marched without order or formation along the road that shortly before Don Cristóbal had taken, and in whose pursuit they were advancing. All spoke or shouted, producing a devilish racket. They had lost completely their fear of foreigners.

5

The first one who felt the Borinqueños draw near, in a hostile manner, was the interpreter Juan González, who was bringing up the rear. The astute translator immediately gave the order to the *naborias* to stop, in order to investigate what that noise was. And as he realized that what he with his good sense presumed to be was true, several Indians leaped upon him. He received two blows from their clubs, which broke his skull and splattered him with blood. Fortunately he did not lose consciousness; and kneeling before the proud chieftain Guaybana, whom he had just bespied, asked him to spare his life and offered to serve him forever.

"Leave that scoundrel alone, do not kill him!" Guaybana shouted, and turning arrogantly toward his followers, declared:

"Advance in search of Don Cristóbal and his party!"

The armed Indian host obeyed and ran along the shortcut, giving out furious war cries. The *naborias* sacked the baggage, which shortly before they had carried on their shoulders, and then scattered in different directions.

As Juan González saw himself alone, he thanked God for saving his life, attended as well as he could his head wounds, and climbed a luxuriant tree to wait for nightfall to be able to flee toward Caparra with greater certainty of salvation. The good translator preferred to be more a good Sancho than a Don Quixote, saving his humble skin at the cost of honor. In spite of his misfortune, he deeply regretted not being able to warn his master what the avalanche of enemies going to meet him was like.

6

Don Cristóbal and his five friends walked with great caution, on the constant alert. From time to time the breeze brought to them dissonant voices and strange sounds, coming from the woods. They crossed paths with utmost care. A puff of wind carried more intelligible words to them. They were native cries. Soon they realized the Indians were drawing near in hostile fashion, and that there would be a *guasábara*, a fight.

The leader, in spite of his being at the vanguard, stopped and gave the cry of alarm. Don Cristóbal shouted to halt, and all turned toward the dissonant voices, their bucklers well in hand, and their swords drawn. Soon the flow of arrows warned them that the enemy was numerous and that the fight would be fierce and bloody.

"My friends," declared noble Don Cristóbal, "prepare to stab well. Though we are few, we will triumph. We must not separate for an instant. Keep your eyes open, your feet firm, and your arms always on guard, and let your blows fall right so that they are fatal. Keep your dagger in your left hand. And may God protect us."

"Saint James and Sotomayor," his friends cried.

"Saint James and Sotomayor," they repeated.

Like an overflowing torrent that surges forth, fed by constant rains, so fell the horde of Indians on the small Castilian party. The first natives who drew near died immediately. They rushed so against the Christians that they were unable to use their bows and arrows, for they were fighting man to man. Human blood stained everything with its reddish color. Sharp, angry cries shattered the air. Don Cristóbal and his friends in turn shouted stentorian cries of encouragement to counterarrest those of their

enemy, and with each sure thrust went a violent curse. The small force turned agilely, right and left. The natives attacked the Castilians on all flanks with terrible clubbing. Clubs, split in two by swooping sword thrusts flew through the air. Little by little the confused cries of battle fell silent and the breathing grew heavier. The ground was covered with bodies everywhere. The natives were able to replace their fallen numbers, but not the Spaniards. The last of them to fall was the noble and valiant Don Cristóbal, with his helmet smashed and his sword broken, but still facing his adversaries. He tried in vain to reach proud Guaybana, for when he finally saw him and ran toward the native, to run him through with his sword, he tripped on a bush rope, at the same time receiving a clout on the head, which deprived him of life, and likewise another formidable, glancing blow which broke his sword.

Guaybana and his warriors withdrew to a nearby hill to rest from the fatigue of combat, bury their dead, and orient themselves in the campaign they were going to undertake against the Christians. The first to speak was the proud chief of Guaynía.

"Great Zemí is with us! For in truth, my *guaitiao* Don Cristóbal was a valiant man. He did not take one step backward. If we had been Caribe Indians, we would have drunk his blood to infuse his great valor in us. We must pay him the honors of a great warrior and bury him with the pomp corresponding to his category of a Spanish chief. You, Naiboa, go to Guacarí, the head *bohique* and let my orders be carried out."

When the *nitayno,* or lieutenant Naiboa, went with twenty Indians to get the cadaver of the unfortunate son of the Countess of Camiña, they found Guanina, washing her love's face, and in her insane delirium, trying to give him back life with her passionate kisses. The native procession

returned, bearing the sad news to Guaybana that his sister Guanina had not let them touch Don Cristóbal's body.

"All right, Naiboa. The guardian Zemí would have wanted it that way. Respect Guanina's sorrow, my friends. Tomorrow she will be sacrificed on her lover's tomb in order to accompany him in the other life."

And the triumphant chieftain added, in a doleful voice:

"You, Guacarí, the *bohique,* you will lead the bloody rite."

The witch doctor stood up and marched with the acolytes in pursuit of the disconsolate victim and the body of the Christian captain, with the purpose of preparing the funeral ceremony for the following day.

When they reached the site of the tragedy, they found Guanina dead, her head resting on the embloodied chest of the Spanish nobleman.

7

The bodies of Don Cristóbal and Guanina were buried together at the foot of a giant silk-cotton tree. And upon this humble tomb, red wild poppies and sweet-smelling white lilies sprouted spontaneously—Nature herself offering on the altar of simple love, soul of the world, mysterious breeze, divine breath and eternal joy of pure souls.

When at eventide the purple light reddens the west, as though bathing it in blood, and the shadow of the giant silk-cotton tree, ancient and worm-eaten, covers a great extense of land, neighborhood farmers believe they hear on that hill sweet songs of love, with the soft murmuring of the leaves. Aware of the tradition that valiant Don Cristóbal de Sotomayor and the beautiful maiden Guanina were buried there, they believe that it is the souls of the young lovers,

faithful to their intense love, who leave the tomb to contemplate the evening star and to kiss each other in the moonlight.

Notes

1. Don Cristóbal de Sotomayor, native of Galicia, the son of the Count and Countess of Camiña, came to Puerto Rico, accompanied by his cousin Don Luis, "with the seal of vicinity for San Juan for both of them and an order to Ponce (Don Juan Ponce de León, governor of the island) to share with each of them one chieftain with the respective number of slaves." He was a Spanish noble of quality, who, according to the chronicler Ovando, had been secretary to King Philip the Fair. Proof of it is the distinction with which Ferdinand the Catholic king mentions him in the royal cedulas sent to the Governor of San Juan, where it was recommended to him "to help and maintain Don Cristóbal in the graces granted to him as well as to his brother Diego's son, who accompanied him." He was named principal justice by Ponce de León, having in his charge administration of justice in the colony.

Don Cristóbal de Sotomayor, with the authorization of Ponce de León, established a town in the neighborhood of the port of Guánica, and he was the initiator of horse breeding on our island. He carried out searches for gold throughout the region, toward present-day Mayagüez, whose plains were called Yagüeca. The residents of Guánica being plagued by the mosquitos emanating from the lagoon, Don Cristóbal de Sotomayor moved the town to the port of Aguada and gave it his name, that is, Sotomayor. Don Cristóbal de Sotomayor, along with Ponce de León, had well-deserved influence, he being the one who recommended imprisoning Juan Cerón and Miguel Díaz when they were named by Diego Columbus governor and chief justice, respectively, of the island, and came forth to take possession of their charges.

The event that the legend relates is rigorously historical. The

chieftain Guaybana, in agreement with the other leaders of the island, initiated a general uprising against the Spaniards with the killing of Don Cristóbal de Sotomayor.

2. Name of the main chieftain of Puerto Rico, when Juan Ponce de León visited the island in 1508. The historian, Friar Iñigo Abbad, erroneously calls him "Agüeynaba." He was the uncle of another chieftain, Guaybana, named in the legend as Guanina's brother. The historians Oviedo and Herrera call these two chieftains brothers; and the famous Puerto Rican historian Don Salvador Brau calls them both by the name of Guaybana, an error that Dr. Cayetano Coll y Toste, author of the *Legends*, rectifies on page 100 of Volume IX of the *Historical Bulletin of Puerto Rico.*

3. In Indo-Antillean language this word means "friend" or "confederate."

4. This Spaniard, who served as interpreter for Don Cristóbal de Sotomayor, had familiarized himself with native life to the extreme that he painted himself as they did and partook in their festivities. He heard the plan for rebellion discussed and approved in a public assembly of the Indians, as well as the recommendation to Guarionex as chieftain of the Otoao (whence the present-day Utuado), with the phalanx of escapees that wandered through the northwest mountain range, to attack the town. In accordance with the story line of the legend, Salvador Brau recounts in his *History of the Colonization of Puerto Rico*, that when González, scurrying through the woods, took the path back to the farm, desirous of communicating to his chief the terrible news, the Indians had already reached the height of epileptic frenzy in the war dance with which they celebrated these functions.

III. THE EARTHLY PARADISE

"I am convinced this is the spot of the earthly paradise," Columbus wrote of the Caribbean. Of all the islands Borinquen "surpassed all others in beauty," thought the ship physician, Dr. Chanca, when the second expedition landed there, in 1493. Coming from the arid and stark hills of Spain, the lush greenery, flowering trees, and azure beaches seemed indeed a tropical paradise. For four centuries—the sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth—the realistic fantasy beguiled priest, soldier, and poet alike, as these Romantic writings attest. Fray Damián López de Haro (1581–1648) was a bishop of Puerto Rico; his "Sonnet," in a letter to his friend Juan Díaz de la Calle, revealed another theme of fascination to the Spaniards—the easy and good-humored pace of life, so sweetly tropical. A soldier of fortune and adventurer, Juan Rodríguez Calderón (1775–1839), was exiled to the island, after deserting from the Spanish Army; his "To the Beautiful and Felicitous Island of San Juan de Puerto Rico" began a tradition of nature poetry—"Puerto Rico is eternal spring." The poet Santiago Vidarte (1827–1848), one of the early Romanticists of the nineteenth century, evolved these pastoral themes into patriotic ones, in his poems, included in *The Puerto Rican Album* and *The Song Book of Borinquen*, from which "Insomnio" has been taken. Luis Lloréns Torres (1878–1944), the bard of Modernism, revives the earthly paradise in his poetry, from which "Vida Criolla" is a selection. (Translated by José Nieto.)

SONNET

by Damián López de Haro
(Dedicated to a lady from Santo Domingo who wanted to know about San Juan)

My Lady, this is a little island
lacking supplies and money,
the Blacks go about naked, as over there
and there are more people in the jail at Seville;

here are the scutcheons of Castille
in few houses, many cavaliers,
all dealers in ginger and hides,
the Mendozas, Guzmanes, and Padillas.

There is water in the cisterns if it has rained,
the Cathedral, few clergymen,
beautiful ladies lacking grace;

ambition and envy have been born here,
great heat and shade of the coconut trees,
and a little breeze is best of all.

TO THE BEAUTIFUL AND FELICITOUS ISLAND OF SAN JUAN de PUERTO RICO

by Juan Rodríguez Calderón

(Selection)

The most select coffee,
sugar, tobacco, and woods
of the most perfect texture,
the thrashing-floor always filled
with the most tasty rice,
the most beautiful corn,
this country offers the merchant
a well-known profit,
and the inhabitant enjoys
the reward of the work he has done.

Puerto Rico is
eternal spring, the climate you dispense;
and of the fierce season,
those dense snows—
those frigid ices—
that the heavens heap
on the land near the poles,
never were seen in You,
and thus your fields alone
deserved and merit
fame and glory.

In your land one sees no
fatal, death-bearing reptiles
whose poison contains
the saddest ills;

that on the continent
are the most imminent
danger to the peaceful ploughman,
who in all seasons
be it winter or summer
never can be wary enough.

All your inhabitants
that joy never abandons,
for the means and the ways
are daily more than enough
to make it never end;
they are of a mild temperament,
honorable and peaceful; inclined
to treat the foreigner well;
in them the defects
that cause such harm are not visible.

INSOMNIO

by Santiago Vidarte

(Selection)

Awake now, my love, time advances,
and as the sun's gold disk rises
you will see emerging in the distance
a green giant full of metals—

You will see a fantasy of flowers
at its base, prideful with blooms,
where rich with light, love, and life
April exhibits its beauties.

And you will see, when our boat
fleeting, draws near,
a whitish proud rock
dozing in the arms of the sea.

Ah, what pleasure we shall enjoy there!
Desire kills me; each hour is a century,
how long that sun delays! my beloved, let us row,
for the glimmer of dawn already dims.

Let us row, yes, how beautiful dawn is!
How beautiful, is the sea
with its limpid blue, oh! inspired
I sing a song to the Americas.

But, no, be still, . . . do you see the distant
yellow light, the burning globe,
rising from the sea in a thousand mirrors?
For . . . it is he that rises in the Orient.

It is he, yes, yes: that's it, my dove,
it is the Sun. Don't you see that shining giant
who luminously rises from the water?
That giant's name is—*Luquillo!*

And do you see there, beside its shadowy base
that fantastic garden rich in flora,
where April lives, my beloved siren?
For the garden is named—*Puerto Rico!*

The port is near. Do you see that rock
resting in the arms of the sea,
draped in castles, rich and beautiful? . . .
It is . . . Power of God, I am just dreaming! . . .

VIDA CRIOLLA

by Luis Lloréns Torres

Oh, how pretty looks my hovel
and how joyful my palm forest
how fresh the banana plants
on the little river brink.

How exquisite to feel cool
and to smoke a good cigar;
what happiness not to know
about letters and the stars,
and how delightful my woman
when she allows to be loved!

IV. THE JÍBARO

In the mid-nineteenth century a cohesive national consciousness developed in the colony, which led to revolts and demands for independence from Spain. The *jíbaro,* the rural villager and country man, who was neither a peasant in the feudal sense nor landless in the modern sense, symbolized the emergence of "the most intimate, resistant and pure of Puerto Rican nationality," noted a contemporary writer. Pedreira, the critic, has said that the word *jíbaro* appeared in print for the first time in 1814. Then, in 1849, Manuel A. Alonso (1822–1889), born in San Juan, published, while a medical student in Barcelona, his book of sketches, *El Jíbaro,* "the first major effort by a Puerto Rican" (Wagenheim) to depict that national character. His poems "The Puerto Rican" and "A *Jíbaro* Wedding" reflect the "free and arrogant" nature of the *jíbaro,* "yearning for illusions," while remaining at the same time a realistic man of the earth.

THE PUERTO RICAN

by Manuel A. Alonso
(Sonnet—dedicated to my dear friend Don Pablo Sáez)

Dark in color, the forehead clear,
the glance languid, proud and penetrating,
the beard black, the face pale,
lean and austere, the nose well-proportioned,

medium build, rhythmic step,
the soul yearning for illusions,
sharp wit, free and arrogant,
preoccupied thought, fiery mind,

human, affable, just, generous,
in matters of love always variable,
ever seeking after glory and pleasure,

and in love for his country insuperable:
this is, without a doubt, a faithful portrait
to depict a good Puerto Rican.

A JÍBARO WEDDING

by Manuel A. Alonso

1

The gray kingbird was singing
in the top of a silk-cotton tree,
when some thirty persons
all of them dressed for the occasion
came out of a house,
or rather, from under it.
All went on horseback
(or at least on an old mare).
The men wearing shoes
and almost all with jackets,
some wearing a handkerchief
tied on their heads,
and a hat of black nap,
woven cloth or braided palm leaves,
starched shirts,
taffeta trousers;
the women wore bonnets
of nap with black plumes,
gloves of woven cotton,
and some, silk shirts;
shoes of Morocco leather
and stunning finger rings,
those worth a few coppers
that shine like stones;

Small and large kerchiefs
of all sizes and shapes,

and little finger rings and earrings,
and gold necklaces and chains.
Every one to the last man
his animal well saddled,
some with silver bits
and bridles of different colors,
others with halters, and others
with their reins of leather straps.
Saddle-clothes, cushions,
harnesses, and baskets
were spanking new
and made for that fiesta,
which was the wedding of Pedro,
son of Guajón Iglesias,
to Gilia, the very well-kept
daughter of Tonio Rivera,
and on that day they were getting married
with the greatest of love.
The bride from time to time
saw the bridegroom in such wise
she said to him clearly:
Pedro, this jewel is yours.
And he let out a roar
of pleasure on seeing his woman,
for he would not have changed places
with the Sursum Corda even if such was
requested;
the sun was already a yard
off the ground in the sky,
when through the midst of Barrero
they headed toward the church;

Having already dismounted
at the house of a relative.

They arrived, and the priest, who
was waiting for them at the door,
married them and said Mass,
altogether in a hurry;
but on leaving they found
the clothing shops and groceries
and taverns and huts all open,
and the lads, cigar smokers,
and youths and the old women.
The whole town waiting
for the newlyweds to come out.
Good God! What a hubbub
when they came out,
of wooden rattles and horns,
and with sticks and rocks
striking on the shop counters
or hitting the doors!
One cried out: "Get on,
ox, turn around and mosey on";
another: "Look, catch
that wild heifer."
And so quite harassed
they went to get the mounts
and left Barrero
on the road to Aguabuena.

2

There the guests
were more than sixty,
and the musicians, who as soon as
the newcomers had arrived
without waiting for formalities

and gifts to be exchanged,
grabbing their instruments
played some dances, called *caenas*
and the dancing lasted, hot
and furious, till lunchtime.
The in-laws and the godparents
sat down with the newlyweds
at the table; the rest of them
as best they could
squatting or in the hammocks.
Standing, and on the stairs.
The meat and rice dishes were not lacking.
With coconut and good milk,
nor were lacking yam crullers
nor candied orange preserve
nor rum and anisette,
nor wine and gin.
After filling their gizzards
the legs began to move again
till the hour for supper;
and once the supper was finished
with more desire than before
everyone danced and danced.
The sun found them dancing
without anyone giving up:
then they said good-bye
and here's where the fiesta ended.
Of what happened afterward
the newlyweds will give account.

V. EUGENIO MARÍA de HOSTOS: "CITIZEN OF AMERICA"

As a colony, Puerto Rico suffered two burdens of the declining Spanish Empire. It was the refuge for the monarchists and slave owners fleeing the armies of Bolívar, in the 1820s, and it was tortured by a succession of brutal and corrupt military governors, from Spain, who subjected the island to a century of repression, from the *Bando Negro* (Black Edict) to the *Ley de la Libreta* (Passbook Law). Eugenio María de Hostos (1839–1903) cajoled, lectured, and fought for half a century against these colonial regimes, and the slavery and repression they enforced. He was a philosopher and teacher, lawyer and writer, a man with "the face of an ascetic—sunken cheeks, swarthy skin, unfathomable gaze and Biblical beard," who toured America seeking to enlist the support of nations and heads of state, for Puerto Rico's independence. In exile, where he lived most of his adult life, he wrote endlessly on sociological and political themes. The Chekhovian essay, "On a Paper Boat," has the loving and haunting quality of patriotism he evoked, and which has endeared his writings to generations of Puerto Ricans, as is reflected in Margot Arce de Vázquez's (1904–) tribute to him, "Hostos, Exemplary Patriot" (*Impressions*, San Juan, 1950).

ON A PAPER BOAT

by Eugenio María de Hostos
(To Angela Rosa Silva, in repayment of an article of hers that I inadvertently tore up)

1

On entering my house, to rest from my daily labor, I heard with a somewhat negligent ear they were recommending I read a literary article, "very well written," which they had expressly left on my reading table.

I had just sat down at it when the youngest victim of my fatherly extremities opened the door to my sitting room, sat on my lap, bribed me with a kiss, and asked for a paper boat.

I extended my arm, took the first printed paper I had at my reach, tore off a piece, took out a pair of scissors that, for this and other indulgent father's tasks, I always carry in my small pocket, and cut out as best I could a little square. I first folded it in a straight line; then at angles; then in very symmetrical borders; then the center to the edge; then from inside out; and taking it gloriously and showing it victoriously to the very attractive briber: "There," I declared, "a kiss or no boat!" She gave me the kiss, I gave her the boat.

2

And, what a boat! When we cast it into the sea in the washbasin filled with water and made waves with our fingers, you should have seen how the boat tossed: it luffed and sailed by; and now with the wind from our breath astern, now with a furious sea astern, which we produced by agitating the water, it rocked gallantly, or shook from stem to stern, or threatened to sink on us.

3

Not being enough to simulate so many things at the same time, winds from the four directions, shakings, waverings, oars, sails, captain, helmsman, and crew, we went out into the breeze on the balcony, which it occurred to her to open up, and set ourselves at a distance to view from afar our embarcation, bringing about the agreement of reality and fantasy (ah! the poor things . . . ! They live so disconnected in the world. . . .), the boat seen being reality, the tender farewells we directed to the imaginary crew the fantasy.

4

Already, without knowing it, we were many for the moment of farewell: first of all, the inseparable companion in roguery; then, hugging in continued embrace mother and favorite daughter; behind, pushing to get ahead, the two most devilish hot-livered individuals that the Antillean sea had injected into the hearts and minds of children. Only one

person was missing: one who is on the road to the future, which is a very bitter road, very much uphill, without horizon, lightless especially in South America. And we sighed.

5

And there the boat sailed through the washbasin sea buffeted by the balcony winds, disappearing no doubt on the high sea because we hardly saw a part of it. A fixed point that is viewed is a magnet that is put at attention, sentiment, or desire. We hung from that point in such wise, that in effect we were witnessing the ever-growing distance of the boat.

"And where will it go?" there rose a voice.

"And what will it be called?" rose another.

"I want it to be called what it seems."

"And what is that?"

"A sea gull."

"Well, I want it to be called *Cuba Libre* (*Free Cuba*)."

"Silence! . . . The name of the victim is not uttered in the accomplices' house."

"True! 'Cuba Libre' sounds like 'Crete' in northern Europe."

It was already decided: it was called *The Seagull*, and it was sailing toward free Cuba.

There then arose a loud cry of joy that ended in a revel of enthusiasm. Everyone wanted to embark for Cuba.

The truth of the matter is that, in the distance as it was, and from the dark shadow, closed sky, icy atmosphere, desert solitude, from where we were watching it, the shining ship, completely bathed in sunlight, upheld on an open sea, sailing toward the light, was a temptation.

We were already almost on board when a slam of the door destroyed the sea, the boat, and our intentions of embarking.

Once, walking along one of those coasts, from afar we had seen something like a black skeleton abandoned on the shore of the sea. On drawing near, what a sad thing! We all felt sorry; it was the skeleton of a ship, it was the witness of a shipwreck.

The sadness of imagining the dire straits of the shipwrecked victims was no more intimate than that felt now, on seeing the wreck of the paper boat.

The first who arrived on the scene of the catastrophe read aloud *The Seagull.*

"What's that? It had the name on the gunwale, like real schooners?"

"I think not, because this seems, by the folds, that it was on the keel."

"Let's see! . . ."

And carefully placing the wet paper on the table, the speaker read, as though to herself: " 'The Seagull,' by Fer—"

And raising her head, concerned, she asked the little girl: "Where did you take this paper from?"

To which, shunning responsibility, the threatened girl replied: "It was Daddy."

And I, confused and frightened at the little one's fear, stammered an excuse: "I found it here."

"A fine thing you've done!"

And with a peal of laughter on seeing my face of an honorable delinquent, she exclaimed: "But, father, this was the literary article I recommended to you . . ."

" *'Et voilà comme/une femme abîme un homme,'* " I murmured, caressing my briber's hair, recalling a boulevard chanson in those times when Paris smiled at me.

"And what are we going to do?"

"What are we to do! Continue the trip," I declared with my honorable conviction, and defending the right that my accomplice had to continue the game.

"But if there is no more schooner . . ."

"But here is paper . . ."

Boy, was there a shout! I had no alternative but to drop the paper I had picked up, when I heard:

"No! No! That's the piece remaining of R's article!"

"Well, then."

And I found myself face to face with that intimate fool we all find in the first fold of our second frontal circumvolution each time we do not know what we are to do.

Against the disoriented one . . . (What is man but an intimate fool who goes around disoriented by the world?)

I was saying that against the sublime, the disoriented person there is nothing like the only oriented one in this world, the child, who always knows what she wants to do, and who, then, wanting a new boat, was looking at me with sparks in her eyes . . . (because it was she and he, the little ones). At a hundred sparks per eye, that was four hundred electric sparks, which would have been able to put into motion the whole East, let alone a disoriented man.

And when, the paper torn and another boat made and another sea emptied, we again sailed in the washbasin with our imagination, and the girl friend of the lady who wrote the article asked me: "And what are we going to do?"

"Tell her," I replied, "that just as there is no return to the homeland as that which is taken in an imaginary boat, in a paper boat, in a dream of people awake, with the sails of desire, with the steam of imagination, with the pumping of the heart, through the sea of hope, under the sky of charity, under the wing of innocence, thus there is no literary article or poetical composition or work of art that is not worth

more in the region of the intangible than in the miserable region of the concrete."

HOSTOS, EXEMPLARY PATRIOT

by Margot Arce de Vázquez

The Atheneum of Puerto Rico tonight renders homage to Eugenio María de Hostos. In the series of acts organized with the motive of the centenary of the life of this patrician, spontaneous and free collaboration with youth has been lacking. But this absence is remedied today. In no moment has it seemed to me that the University Atheneum realized with greater fruition the goals for which it was created than in this moment of exaltation and respect for Hostos; on no occasion are students more worthy of bearing this name than on those occasions when they bow before the moral and intellectual superiority of a Puerto Rican patriot.

Don Fernando de los Ríos used to say that "one is not a student by the mere act of registering, nor by the act of attending a classroom, but by something more serious, more profound, and more personal: by a way of conduct before life." A way of conduct supposes, we add, an ideal; it supposes consciousness of one's own being, science, and responsibility. But no student, no man can reach this integration of his personality if he gets out of touch completely with his historical circumstances. One does not live on air; nor can one live, like Narcissus, feeding on his own image in an action that does not transcend the limits of the individual. Christian culture, which has formed all of us, is based on charity. Charity is first the love of God and then of mankind.

Each of us moves within historical circumstances to

which he is forced to pay attention. And the nearest and most demanding nucleus of each one's historical circumstances is the word. Before striking out toward the conquest of that which is international, universal, man must leave that piece of land where his life takes spacial and temporal reality. Charity begins at home, according to precise folk knowledge. Our first obligation is the knowledge and service of the homeland. But, first it is necessary to define what we understand by homeland. The word has been handled with much frivolity sometimes, with censurable bad intention other times, in unscrupulous oratory of party interests. The homeland is not an exclusively material object; nor is the sentiment of the homeland, that mawkish imitation which our blandness protests against when it is taken out of its daily routine, the comfortable posture of that which is familiar and known being forced to fit in a hostile atmosphere. If the homeland and the sentiment of the homeland were only that, it would be beneficial for the spirit to change homeland and shake up its indolence.

But the homeland is something more than the piece of land where one is born, and much more than the visible and tangible things that surround us from birth. The homeland is past, that is, tradition, patrimonial culture. The homeland is present, a work in evolution, a particular creation and collaboration of all its sons, rectification of the errors of the past, loving care of the received inheritance, active and constant enrichment of that heritage with the efforts of today. The homeland is also, and above all, future, aspiration toward a greater abundance, will power to transmit and perpetuate the inherited wealth, having increased it in the measure of our strength. Memories, traditions, experience, and customs of a human group, within a limited space of land, constitute the tangible wealth of a homeland. Its spiritual wealth is composed of the virtues that have

characterized the social group as a tonic key of its collective moral conscience. The true homeland is above all this corpus of lasting values. We who think of it, feeling it, as an inescapable reality only desire that it persist adorned with those qualities. And when virtues are sullied or disappear, we deem it a categorical duty to work for its restoration or purification. No patriot would truly be one if he accepted a blemished homeland, if he remained indifferent before its degradation. The homeland, like a mother, must be loved pure, immaculate.

It is not enough to be a good patriot by following the law strictly, nor by establishing a family and procuring its spiritual and physical welfare. One must do more: one has to maintain those virtues alive, full of meaning; one must practice them and sharpen them with more and more delicate and exemplary shades of meaning. In every homeland, fortunately, there always live half a dozen men in whom those virtues are incarnate and produce rich fruit. These men become an example by their superior sensitivity and are recognized as guides and stimuli of action for their compatriots. These men are living symbols of the profound and eternal meaning of the homeland. It is the duty of the young, and especially of that perfect student, who according to Fernando de los Ríos, must possess a way of conduct before life, know, perpetuate, and emulate those moral heroes. Let his homage not be limited to words; let it be "an offering of labors and hopes," a hymn of love and work. In order to extol Don Fernando de los Ríos, the serious poet Antonio Machado commanded: "Sound, anvils; be still, bells; live, life goes on." And that continuity of fruitful life will always be the most beautiful crown on the tomb of a patriot.

Eugenio María de Hostos was a patriot, and also a symbol of the moral meaning of our homeland. Its most prominent

virtues were incarnate in him, and in bringing them together he enriched them with his spiritual action and illuminated them with purer shades of light. Like a cutter, he knew how to cut the diamond's facets in order to achieve the greatest luminosity. The sentiment of the homeland was always the basis on which his acts were founded, acts that are, truly, love along with good reasons. In order to serve the homeland he formed himself in a severe discipline of science and conscience. And he devoted himself completely to the work of the moral expansion of Puerto Rico. This man, and so much a man, so conscious of human dignity, a man as strong as one of our ceibas, silk-cotton trees, as firm and passionate as the tropical winds, knew that the homeland, like men, can only be fulfilled in the tonic air of liberty. He lived and suffered calvary for the liberty of Puerto Rico. In no moment a vile consideration, a weakness of the flesh, a temptation of power and glory, separated him from his goal or weakened the intensity of his desires. On many occasions he went far from the homeland because they put obstacles before his actions or because he considered that he could carry them out more efficiently from afar. When he returned from forced or self-exile, faith in the reason of his yearning shone and cut like a sword. Constant sacrifice and self-abnegation lend austerity and genuine nobility to his moral figure. The name of Hostos is an emotion; it has the magic of shaking our spirit to its roots; his thought in constant creative acts, his deeds burning and clean as a mirror, his love for others, and his confidence in spiritual values constitute a valuable heritage for us Puerto Ricans.

Let Hostos be an example and mentor for university youth. The homeland was never so in need of the love of its sons, never were its virtues and its dignity more sullied. Let this youth rush to prompt remedy; let it imitate Hostos; let

it devote itself like him to an impassioned labor; let it save Puerto Rico with deeds, without wasting itself on empty words; let it love liberty and exercise it with the dignity proper of men. Then and only then will it be worthy of pronouncing, without besmirching it, the prominent name of Eugenio María de Hostos.

VI. LA VIRGEN de BORINQUEN

Dr. Ramón Emeterio Betances was the "Apostle of Puerto Rican Independence." He was the inspiration and foremost planner of the revolution of 1868 against Spain, at El Grito de Lares (The Cry of Lares), where the Republic of Puerto Rico was proclaimed. Betances was born in the rural town of Cabo Rojo, in 1827. He studied medicine in Toulouse and Paris, becoming one of the circle of Symbolist poets and bohemians that included Verlaine and Rimbaud. On returning to the island he became a national hero because of his selfless battle against the cholera epidemic of 1855. But he was exiled, soon after, because of his antislavery and nationalist ideas, and he died in exile in 1898.

While in Paris he became engaged to his young niece, María del Carmen Henri, daughter of his sister, Clara. One month before their wedding, on Good Friday, April 24, 1859, his beloved died in his arms, of typhus. *La Virgen de Borinquen* was his eulogy, not only to his love, but to his exiled self. In the hallucinations of this gothic romance, Betances was both "the doctor" and "the madman." (*La Virgen de Borinquen*, translated by Miquel Angel Santana, director of the French Department of the University of Puerto Rico, from the original French into Spanish; and translated from Spanish into English by Magali Soto and Stan Steiner.)

LA VIRGEN de BORINQUEN

by Ramón Emeterio Betances

We went then into a room where some men were sitting around a long table. Some rested their elbows on it and hid their foreheads and eyes behind their hands and their fingers twitched in their hair; others, looking at them, smiled mockingly; still others turned their backs to the table and mumbled between their teeth, without moving their lips, incomprehensible words. One of them, who was seated in the center of the assembly, suddenly got up. He was the true Christ figure with long hair. And extending his hands majestically, he said:

"This is my blood: Take it and drink it!"

"One of the most interesting of men is this man," said the doctor. "You will see, my countryman. If you question him skillfully he himself will tell you his story. Once I was his friend, but now he does not recognize me. At the same time he treats me with contempt, believing me incapable of helping him in his plans."

In one of the corners of the room, seated on the end of a bench, could be seen a thin man, tall, dark and austere, whose sunken eyes would just as soon flash a sinister glare, as reveal the most painful melancholy. Sometimes the end

of his breathing was intertwined with a tearing sigh. He listened to himself as if hearing a strange voice. With his left hand, he convulsively squeezed his right arm above the wrist so strongly that, in spite of his bronzed skin, a white and red mark became easily visible on the squeezed flesh. He glanced about, and then fixed his sight on the floor.

When we approached him, he was sitting in this position. He stood up, abruptly, and facing me, stared into my eyes and began to question me, in an offhand manner.

"Are you Egyptian?"

"No," I answered, "but like yourself, I am a foreigner. What do you wish?"

"But surely you must come of the Egyptian race! What do you have to show me?"

"I come from the Antilles."

"Oh!" he exclaimed, taking a sweet and sad tone, "you undoubtedly have met her."

"Perhaps I will say yes, if you will be so kind as to describe her to me."

"Describe her to you? She had a good nature! . . . She was a gay young woman, loving and gentle, all bathed in modesty and ardent love, beautiful as the star and simple as the flower, sometimes thoughtful and serious. Cherished by infancy, loved by age, she possessed the joys of innocence and gave advice as if she were a wise person. Her words were treasures of an infinite goodness, and her deep, dazzling eyes revealed the thoughts of a great intelligence. Do you recognize her? Have you seen her?"

"She was," I answered respectfully, "Pure Reason and Reverent Love!"

"Yes," said the poor madman, deeply grieved.

"He was a sad and silent dreamer. He searched ardently, without rest, for her happiness. And he desired that the will

of his betrothed be confused with his own; but he sought it too far from the country where love saw the light. He called her and she came to him smiling, in the lands where thick mists envelope the infinite splendors, and before he had ceased to call her 'Virgen de Borinquen.' One night, they found themselves together. As in a tomb!"

So poignantly did the madman say these melancholy words that I felt my eyes fill with tears. I turned my face. Until now he had spoken, always squeezing his right arm with his left hand, as if the hand and the arm had belonged to two separate bodies. At his last words, the hand and arm separated without any trembling. Then the man exclaimed:

"I have seen her cold like the water in the river! Green like the leaves on the edge! I felt the sigh of death! I lost my sad beloved virgin!"

At this moment he lifted his right hand to the sky. I saw the doctor grow pale, looking at his friend, without being able to understand what fear terrified him. Suddenly the madman stared at his hand; he saw it free, and smiling he hit the side of his heart and fell to the floor as if injured by lightning.

"He believes he has a dagger that strikes him irresistibly each time he frees it," the doctor said, his compassionate voice trembling. "I dread these strikes on his breast very much and would prefer that his right hand would waste away under the continuous pressure of his left hand."

At that moment he returned his hand to its habitual position. The madman, coming to, got up saying: "It is true! My work is not yet finished!"

"Listen," whispered the doctor; "he went mad after this."

"It is true," continued the madman, talking directly to me, undoubtedly amazed by my Creole appearance; "if it is

true that you are Egyptian, you will understand this story of desolation and darkness and you will dedicate yourself as I have to the study of the sciences that reveal the worlds beyond."

An old woman with mummylike face had slipped into the room and she sat before the madman. She laughed in a burst of diabolic disbelief, then was instantly silent, glanced at the Creole, impervious, and became immobile, as if nailed to the spot, and her tiny eyes, denuded of lashes, gazed on him, stilled.

"I found myself," he said, "in a room that measured thirteen feet in all its dimensions. There were thirteen walls, without any exits. And I found myself locked in this room by that spirit—evil, blind, and destructive—who had killed my betrothed with an evil eye and who was taking her to a place where my thoughts were unable to reach. In that room all was deep darkness, impenetrable and dismal night, to the top of my longest hairs; gone was all bright light, resplendent, luminous. In my prison of night, I was blinded by the luminous atmosphere. Soaring birds, bats and crows, dark like my prison, hovered over me; while on the white ceiling horrible tarantulas pursued the black spiders, and snakes, with round, immobile glassy eyes, and irresistibly attracted the heavy and blind moles around which they curled, and which hung down above me, with their infernal hissing heads. In the darkness I could not see any part of my body and if I lifted my hand to the light, the darkness rose like a wave and covered even the tips of my extended fingers. My efforts to escape this condition were in vain. Later I felt the extension of my fingers shrivel, and they sank into my hand and my hand vanished into my shortened arm. In horror I turned my eyes away from these repugnant things that I saw and turned my thoughts toward myself, and looked inside of myself. Suddenly I felt myself seized by

an unyielding fear, a limitless cold took hold of me; my hairs curled on my head and waved as if they were in soapy water; I felt myself go backwards; and as I was sinking, the cold penetrated my body to a deeper and deeper degree; I suffocated it when it reached my heart. Oh, what anxiety! Then it rose toward my brain, which froze. So it was that I saw my skull bone unskinned; the vault of my cranium opened and closed with a loud noise, and the wind blew frighteningly, followed by the sound of dry leaves dragging their bodies on the dry earth. The wind blew upward and I saw an infinity of squares of white paper irregularly cut, each carrying an inscription, flutter among the frightening bats and crows. All my ideas had escaped from my brain, like birds from their nests! Each one of them was inscribed on one of the sheets of flying paper. I was stunned. . . . Little by little all became silent again and the white papers were saturated with strong vapors emitted by the darkness and again fell to the floor of my room. Then, the vertigo possessed me. I wished to gather up and bring together my ideas. As soon as each paper fell, I ran toward it; I searched for it groping on the floor, and if I found it I would take it between my hands, and my middle finger made the light. I wanted to reach each thought. The dark atmosphere enveloped my whole body, but the paper surpassed it and remained in the light. Once again I was about to take possession of my lost ideas, when a bat, passing, gave a sharp cry, touched the paper with its wing and made it fall. I went to pick it up, but a crow charged toward it with a tremendous croak and grabbed it from me with its beak. While a spider attached by an invisible thread fell as fast as a stone, and quickly ran over the dark floor, and took the paper, and ascending, tangled and wrinkled it between its legs, while a snake attached to the ceiling with the three points of its tongue, hung and balanced its body and twisted

in the air, whipping its tail so terribly that the paper was stuck to it; and when, sometimes, the snake would touch my hand, I was left shivering from the cold. And yet I insistently went about my interminable task. My persistence in no way diminished the anger of my enemies. Their faces cold, insensitive, immutable, began to affect me. I felt myself bathed in cold sweat. My heart beat so quickly that I could not count its palpitations. I fell to the floor exhausted.

"The darkness and the day became one; the birds and the snakes threw themselves voraciously on the insects and moles and devoured them; then, throwing themselves against one another, they mangled each other, and from their wounds poured all their blood, and it was night; and as soon as the blood fell from them, drop by drop, it was transformed into the vapor of darkness, and vanished before my eyes; and my ideas were left in this chaos. So that, passing my hand before my eyes, I could distinguish nothing but a small, luminous spot and a still body, and I found myself beside the sacred corpse of my betrothed and a holy candle burned at the head of the Virgin of Borinquen.

"And it was she who had liberated me, and after my liberation, with her divine face hidden beneath a veil of tears, she disappeared . . . and I . . . I was left alone! Alone forever!"

I had listened to this account with all the interest inspired by a very deeply felt grief. The misfortune of the betrothed young woman about to enjoy so much love, and she herself loving with a sublime devotion; the emotion of the lover telling his dream, the death of these two spirits, were strong enough motives to arouse emotion in a sensitive heart. Along with this, there came another scene that left me in the deepest sadness.

"And now," the madman went on, tensely, "do you have something to teach me? This dagger that you see in my hand

is ready. I would let it go, but I still have to find the world that She inhabits. If I let go of this hand, I will die without seeing the Spirit I seek, and to profoundly study these sciences that I cannot allow to remain chained. And so I ask all who pass: Do you have something to teach me? Let me drown in all your wisdom!

"And it has been said," he went on, "that other men have discovered impenetrable worlds and have communicated with powers possessed by all life and all science. I will do the same for her!" he said, as a proud lover.

"Lis-ten! Lis-ten!" murmured the old woman, pointing to the Creole as she withdrew. "Oh! Oh! Oh! Not everyone is permitted to go to Corinth."

The young man's eyes became fiery and he was imprisoned by a convulsive trembling and exclaimed: "Sibyl of desperation, be damned!" And he fell dead suddenly.

The Christ came to kneel near him, and praying, murmured: "It has come to pass because they loved each other greatly."

VII. THE CRY OF LARES

Lares is the *santuario de la patria* (sanctuary of the nation). It is, like the Bastille and Bunker Hill, a symbol of the fight for liberty—perhaps more intensely so, certainly more poignantly so, for it is the symbol of a revolution that was defeated. So, in each generation the poets and politicians have revived that symbol, using it to express their own ideas and hopes. Luis Lloréns Torres (1878–1944), essayist and poet, did so in his historical drama, *El Grito de Lares* (*The Cry of Lares*) (1914), evoking not only the revolutionaries' dreams, but his own concept of an Antillean Federation, "the union of America for the freedom of America." In political defeat, Lares lives forever as literature.

In his poem to Bolívar, the Liberator is exalted by Lloréns Torres as a symbol of the Latin American revolutions represented by the Lares uprising in the history of Puerto Rico. (The poem *Bolívar* has been translated by José Nieto.)

THE CRY OF LARES

by Luis Lloréns Torres

Scene VII

DON CHEO *and* DON AURELIO *are both sitting down.*

DON CHEO: So, once more.

DON AURELIO: Again. And what's new? How are things?

DON CHEO: Vegetating. We only vegetate. Before, at least, one conspired. . . . Today one emotion, tomorrow another. Now, the most unbearable monotony.

DON AURELIO: Are there no longer secret societies? Nothing is plotted?

DON CHEO: If there are, I'm not aware. You already know you never had full confidence in me. Who doesn't see that! My relationship with Frasquito. . . . And less now that he's married to Carmela. Haven't you seen any of those from the rebellion around here?

DON AURELIO: I did see Mediavilla and Camuñas.

DON CHEO: They're still together. Mediavilla thinks he's

still the mayor, and Camuñas hasn't been able to forget the secretary's office.

DON AURELIO: They had a good fright that night.

DON CHEO: Of course, since you had them for a few hours in the stocks.

DON AURELIO: I myself in person was the one who set them free the next day. Not only them; all the Spaniards who were captives. No one can deny we behaved well. Of course, there was the tumult and the damages that always happen when the wave crest rises; but lives and property were respected. . . .

DON CHEO: That was what was most influential afterwards for the pardon.

DON AURELIO: I heard something there in Santo Domingo.

DON CHEO: And to what secret society did you belong?

DON AURELIO: The one in Pezuela district. The chief was the Venezuelan Don Manuel Rojas.

DON CHEO: The one who led the uprising.

DON AURELIO: It was in his place that we met to fall upon the town from there. There were many secret societies conspiring on the whole island. And the plan was the general uprising on the twenty-ninth of September. I tell you that if things hadn't gone awry on us, the island would now be free.

DON CHEO: I'm aware of almost everything, but continue, tell me; there's nobody better informed than you.

DON AURELIO: On account of the jailing of one of the conspirators we thought that everything had been discovered; and on the twenty-second a meeting was held in the house of the Yankee, Mr. Brookman.

DON CHEO: Yes. . . . That Yankee!

DON AURELIO: At his farm it was decided to push things up, and from there many left who met at Rojas' farm on the twenty-third. The rest you already know as well as I. The rebellion failed after the Pepino skirmish.

DON CHEO: It failed for lack of organization.

DON AURELIO: More than that, the failure was due to the lack of response from the rest of the towns.

DON CHEO: That has to be understood, since the twenty-ninth had been decided upon . . .

DON AURELIO: In Ponce and Humacao, for example, they finally caught on when everything was already suffocated.

DON CHEO: It is useless. When things are going to turn out bad, there's no one who can straighten them out.

DON AURELIO: And what became of the Yankee? I read something about the rest of them in the papers regarding the trial.

DON CHEO: Don't recall the trial. It scares one. They brought court clerks from as far as Ponce. You only have to think of the numbers. More than five hundred persons indicted, and the transcripts more than ten thousand pages. Suffice it to say that they named the Biscayan Navascués chief judge. I've never seen a stupider lawyer. He mixed up and confused everything. A lunatic who saw a river where there was a mountain, and vice versa.

DON AURELIO: He probably confused everything.

DON CHEO: Even the government was finally convinced that he is slow-witted, and he is over there in

Spain, cast off in heaven knows what little town.

DON AURELIO: In what I read in the Santo Domingo papers no mention whatsoever was made of the leader Parrilla or of Mr. Brookman.

DON CHEO: You don't know what happened?

DON AURELIO: Not at all. That's why I'm asking.

DON CHEO: Once the rebellion failed and the leaders were discovered, the latter's only road open was to go into the woods, forming small bands that were dissolved little by little, pursued by the Spanish army. Only a picket of soldiers found Parrilla, and shouting at him to surrender, he answered them, "Parrilla isn't a man to surrender," and he died right there fighting against all of them. The Yankee Mr. Brookman was also very brave. He was sleeping one night in a shack, accompanied by the Dominican Baldomero Bauren, when they were surprised by the troops. Neither did they surrender. Both of them, the Yankee and the Dominican, grabbed their arms and alone fought against the picket of soldiers. And both died there. I could mention several other Puerto Ricans like them, who died in the same manner.

DON AURELIO: There's no doubt there were people with push at the head of that rebellion.

DON CHEO: The examples seen later confirmed it. They all behaved like brave patriots. The directors from the capital were the ones who gave no signs of life anywhere.

DON AURELIO: Hence their insistence on minimizing the importance of and even on ridiculing the patriotism of those men. "It was ridiculous,"

they declare. And they broadcast it so much that I fear those poor martyrs, the first and perhaps the last of our country, are going to pass into history as a bunch of fools. They, who gave all, the tranquility of their homes, the worldly wealth they possessed, and even their lives for the freedom of this land. They failed? What does failure matter?

DON CHEO: You speak like a patriot. The fact itself of having taken up arms to free the country, exposing themselves to what they did, shows that they loved this land above all else. And perhaps, as you think, the future will not do them justice. Always, in all epochs, there will be men incapable of doing what they did.

DON AURELIO: And to justify themselves they will say that they were lunatics. Heaven knows what will be said of them! There are martyrs who are martyrs even after death!

DON CHEO: All that means that we have no fatherland. The island, small; the peasant, ignorant. Patriot, but ignorant. Even more, innocent. And the men from above, the illustrious, the directors will always be what they are today: a group of shouters, clamorers, but not patriots. They'll grab hold of anything, this or that reform, any second-class ideal, to feign that they're doing something. But the essential, fundamental thing, trying to make a fatherland, like those from Lares tried to do, that . . . they'll never do. It's sad and discouraging; but it's the truth. There is no redemption! There will never be!

DON AURELIO: There's no redemption. That is the sentence. Look here now, Manolo el Leñero, that

boy who waved a flag for the first time in our land and with his bloody arm continued waving it and crying "Long live liberty," who remembers that hero now? Perhaps some town rhymester. And isn't it sad that a man gives everything to his people, and that his people aren't even aware, because there are no patriots to erect his statue, nor historians to reveal his feat, nor poets to sing of his heroism? Where is this so-called Puerto Rican patriotism? for I do not find it.

DON CHEO: And the sad fact is, Don Aurelio, that so much misfortune does not depend nor will ever depend on us Puerto Ricans. If it were in our hands, don't you think there would be thousands of Puerto Ricans ready to forge the fatherland? Believe it. The same as you and I, Puerto Ricans think and feel; but neither we, nor anyone, do anything, nor will anything ever be done. Because we are convinced that it is all impossible. What a tragedy! To be strong and generous and brave, like the Cubans, Dominicans and Venezuelans; love our fatherland, as they love theirs; desire like them to have a homeland to defend and make it great . . . and being unable! Not being able! We have, like all men of the earth, a brain to think and a heart to love. But the rest of the men of the earth have a homeland; we Puerto Ricans do not have one, we'll never have one. . . . Don't you think this cruel impotence? . . . Don Aurelio, let's speak no more, for it's the only thing that moves me in life. Life! A clown, yes, but a clown who at times has grimaces and somersaults of tragedy.

DON AURELIO: And are you not consoled in thinking that the leaders of that movement were not only Puerto Ricans? A Venezuelan, a Yankee, and a Dominican died there, too.

DON CHEO: That may mean, perhaps, a lot more in the future.

DON AURELIO: It may symbolize, in the future, the union of America for the freedom of America.

DON CHEO: Such a symbol may console us. Because Puerto Rico is small; but . . . America is big.

DON AURELIO: And apart from that idea, the plan of the Puerto Rican rebels, Puerto Ricans, in accord with the Cubans and Dominicans, was the confederation of the three Antilles.

DON CHEO: Which would be one of the first-rate republics of America.

BOLÍVAR

by Luis Lloréns Torres

Politician, soldier, hero, orator, and poet.
Great in everything. Like the lands liberated by him.
By him, that was not born the son of any fatherland,
But many fatherlands were daughters born to him.

He had the courage of a sword bearer
He had the courtesy of a flower bearer
And entering the palaces, he threw away the sword,
And entering the battle, he threw away the flower.

The peaks of the Andes, in his eyes, were nothing more
than exclamation marks of his audacity.
He was a soldier-poet. A poet-soldier.
And each liberated country
Was a heroic feat by the poet
And a poem by the soldier.

And he was crucified.

VIII. LA BORINQUEÑA

It was fitting that the revolutionary lyrics of the national anthem of Puerto Rico, *La Borinqueña*, be written by Lola Rodríguez de Tió (1843–1924). Ever since the days of the Indians, when a woman, Loísa, was *cacique* of the village that now bears her name, women have been among the leaders of most literary and political movements. Lola Rodríguez de Tió was a poetic and political revolutionary; a friend of Hostos, she, too, spent much of her life exiled from the island. Living in New York, she was honorary president of the political club Ruis Rivera, where she worked with José Martí in helping plan the Cuban revolution of 1895. Her books, *My Songs, Clarities and Mists, My Book of Cuba,* and *Return to My Hills,* from which poems like "The Song of Borinquen," and "To Blanca María" and the often quoted "Cuba and Puerto Rico" (translated by José Nieto) are taken, caused Rubén Darío to call her "Daughter of the Isles."

THE SONG OF BORINQUEN

by Lola Rodríguez de Tió

Awake, Borinqueños,
for they've given the signal!

Awake from your sleep
for it's time to fight!

Come! The sound of cannon
will be dear to us.

At that patriotic clamor
doesn't your heart burn?

Look! The Cuban will soon be free,
the machete will give him freedom.

The drum of war announces in its beating
that the thicket is the place, the meeting place!

Most beautiful Borinquen, we have to follow Cuba;
you have brave sons who want to fight!

Let us no more seem fearful!
Let us no more, timid, permit our enslavement!

We want to be free already
and our machete is well sharpened!

Why should we, then, remain so asleep
and deaf, asleep and deaf to that signal?

There's no need to fear, Ricans, the sound of cannon,
for saving the homeland is the duty of the heart!

We want no more despots! Let the tyrant fall!
Women, likewise wild, will know how to fight!

We want freedom and our machete will give it to us!

Let's go, Puerto Ricans, let's go already,
for LIBERTY is waiting, ever so anxious!

TO BLANCA MARÍA

by Lola Rodríguez de Tió

Do you know, Blanca María,
why we have no homeland,
and there are only sad memories
in our land in mourning?

Do you know why Borinquen
the new slave Poland
bends her head and hides
the deep pain that distresses her?

And why instead of inscriptions
of smiling hopes
she only displays epitaphs
and whited sepulchers?

Can you not guess? Well, listen
to what I write in this page
without dreaming like the poet
of stars and flames;

of banners that sustain
imaginary battles,
and continents and worlds
that neither begin nor end.

How is a country to be born
or a race to be raised
where hearts to give their sap
and blood are lacking?

How is the ideal of the homeland
to arise with life
on breathing the atmosphere
of an enslaved land?

Seeing her wandering children
resisting becoming outcasts,
watering with tears the road
of an unending exile!

You know now, Blanca María,
why we do not have a homeland
and why we called ourselves captives
of a hopeless pain.

Ay, the sad souls who dream,
after so long an exile,
of the river and the hills
where their childhood was spent!

Poor outcasts! In vain
they want to hang up their harps,
if the promised land
lies in the depths of the soul!

CUBA AND PUERTO RICO

by Lola Rodríguez de Tió

Cuba and Puerto Rico are
the two wings of a bird,
they receive flowers and bullets
on the very same heart.
What a lot if in the illusion
that glows red in a thousand tones,
Lola's muse dreams
with fervent fantasy
of making one single homeland
of this land and of mine.

THE HYMN OF PUERTO RICO

Notes by María Teresa Babín

The history of *La Borinqueña* is one of the most significant aspects of the transformation that has taken place in the inner life of Puerto Rican culture. Although, according to

the study published by Monserrate Deliz on the Puerto Rican anthem (*The Hymn of Puerto Rico*, Madrid, Grafispania, 1957), it is related to other songs of a similar rhythm in Peru, Brazil, Bolivia, Mexico, Cuba, and Haiti, *La Borinqueña* has always expressed the love for the homeland with a strong patriotic feeling. The melody of *La Bellísima Peruana* (*The Beautiful Peruvian*) and the Cuban song *Mi Amor* (*My Love*) are considered models for the Puerto Rican original version. The first lyrics, attributed to the Spanish tenor Félix Astol (1813–1901) and a guitarist, Francisco Ramírez (1844–1900), from the town of San Germán, were heard during the Christmas celebrations of the year 1867. These notable bohemian musicians popularized the first known version, called *La Almojábana:*

Beautiful brunette,
image of candor,
from the Borinquen garden,
pure and fragrant flower.

Your presence enraptures
every man who sees
your gentle, friendly grace,
your tiny and pretty foot.

When you appear on your balcony
the sunlight itself is eclipsed,
the sunlight itself is eclipsed.

Because your black eyes
are two rays,
and he who looks at them, beloved,
feels his heart inflamed.

The birth of the song as national anthem came not long after. Lola Rodríguez de Tió wrote the poem for it, which became a cry for liberty in 1868 at the time of the revolution known in the history of Puerto Rico as the *Grito de Lares* (Cry of Lares) (see above, *The Song of Borinquen*, by Lola Rodríguez de Tió):

Awake, Borinqueños,
for they've given the signal!

Awake from your sleep
for it's time to fight!

. . . . .

Thus the song of love became gradually a romantic chant to liberty and a symbol of patriotism. At a crucial moment of change, which came at the turn of the century—between 1898 and 1904—a third stage of the development of the lyrics was marked by a subtle, sentimental hymn written by Manuel Fernández Juncos (1846–1928). It has been perpetuated as *La Borinqueña*, known by all Puerto Ricans:

La tierra de Borinquen
donde he nacido yo
es un jardín florido
de mágico primor.

Un cielo siempre nítido
le sirve de dosel
y dan arrullos plácidos
las olas a sus pies.

Cuando a sus playas llegó Colón
exclamó lleno de admiración:
¡Oh! ¡Oh! ¡Oh!

The land of Borinquen,
where I was born,
is a garden full of flowers
with magic charm.

A sky always blue
is the canopy over it,
and sweet lullabies
sing the waves at its feet.

When on its shores Columbus arrived,
he cried, seized with admiration:
Oh! Oh! Oh!

Esta es la linda tierra
que busco yo;
es Borinquen la hija,
la hija del mar y el sol,
del mar y el sol.

This is the pretty land
I'm looking for;
Borinquen is the daughter,
born from the sea and the sun,
the sea and the sun.

Poets and musicians have been inspired by the words and the rhythm of the original love song, and the voices of millions have been raised to honor the land of its birth with respect and devotion whenever *La Borinqueña*—considered a *danza* in traditional popular music—is played at public gatherings and official ceremonies. There are other lyrics of diverse character written by famous poets such as Luis Lloréns Torres and José de Diego. Francisco Amy (1837–1912), the author of *Bilingual Muse*, offered the following version in English, a very free interpretation of the same Fernández Juncos lyrics which had been included in the *Canciones Escolares* (*School Songs*; 1904):

How beautiful Borinquen,
my peerless native land,
thy verdant hills and valleys,
and palm encircled strand.

On thy fair bosom lovingly
the sun its radiance pours,
while murmuring waves with tenderness
caress thy sailing shore.

When thy rare beauty he first described,
with wonder thrilling, Columbus cried:
Oh! Oh! Oh!
No land like thee, Borinquen,
the world does know;

I shall meet with no other,
no other wherever I go!

A melodic version by Ramón Collado, a "song without words," was adopted in 1952 as the official hymn of the "Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico," known in English as the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. Nevertheless, the persistence of patriotic sentiment attached to the other versions, and the popularity of the lyrics adopted at the beginning of the twentieth century, constitute the essence of the historical Puerto Rican national anthem.

IX. THE ROMANTIC POETS