

Julio Herrera y Reissig (1875-1910)

El despertar¹ / Awakening

Alisia y Cloris² abren de par en par la puerta
y torpes, con el dorso de la mano haragana,
retrégandose los húmedos ojos de lumbre incierta,
por donde huyen los últimos sueños de la mañana ...

La inocencia del día se lava en la fontana,
el arado en el surco vagaroso despierta,
y en torno de la casa rectoral, la sotana
del cura se pasea gravemente en la huerta ...

Todo suspira y ríe. La placidez remota
de la montaña sueña celestiales rutinas.
El esquilón repite siempre su misma nota

de grillo de las candidas églogas matutinas.
Y hacia la aurora sesgan agudas golondrinas
como flechas perdidas de la noche en derrota.

Alisia and Cloris push the door completely open
and awkwardly, with the back side of their still languid hands,
rubbing the uncertain light in their eyes moistened with tears,
from whence are fleeing their last sleepy dreams of the morning ...

The innocence of the day is washing in the fountain,
the dull plow is waking up in the wandering furrow
and around about the house of the rector, the cassock
of the grave priest is taking a slow stroll in the garden ...

Everything is breathing and laughing. The rural peacefulness
of the mountain is dreaming of celestial routines.
The little handbell repeats again and again the same

chirping notes of the crickets' innocent morning eclogues.
And as dawn is breaking swift swallows are cutting sharp swaths
like arrows lost in the night in retreat and full defeat.

(Diciembre de 1820)

(December 1820)

Julio Herrera y Reissif, *Poesías completas*.
from *Los éxtasis de la montaña* (1904)
Madrid: Aguilar, 1961.

Translation by William Little©, 2010

¹ This is a *modernista* sonnet that uses a prosody similar to the sonnets in this online text by Rubén Darío and de Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda. In other words this sonnet follows the classical Spanish (i.e., Petrarchan) sonnet with fourteen lines in two quartets and two tercets with rich end rhyme, but it differs in that, rather than use hendecasyllabic (11 syllables) lines, it uses fourteen-syllable lines with caesura (division or pause) making two hemistiques (half lines) in each line. If you know Spanish, see if you can find the caesura and determine the sense of the division in each line in terms of rhythm and meaning. The translator has respected the editorial conventions used in the 1961 Aguilar edition by Roberto Bula Piriz, and the translator has worked to give basic line rhythm without rhyme but also with fourteen feet with caesura in each line. This is the first poem in the first section of *Los éxtasis de la montaña* (1904), which is called "*Églogánimas*," a nonce blend word composed of two parts: eclogue and souls; hence the poems in this section of the book are kind of *modernista* spiritual poems.

² Alisia and Cloris are women's names typical of pastoral poetry, of which this sonnet is an *églogánima*. The name Alisia, like Alice, means noble or exalted. In Greek mythology Cloris was the goddess of flowers and therefore the name means "blooming."