

The hundred flowers of *quinua* which I planted at the summit bubble their colors in the Sun; the black wings of the condor and of the tiny birds are now in flower.

It is noon; I am close to the lord-mountains, the ancestor-peaks; their snow now yellow flecked, now with red patches, is shining in the Sun. . . .

Don't run away from me, doctor, come close! Take a good look at me, recognize me. How long must I wait for you?

Come close to me; lift me to the cabin of your helicopter. I will toast you with a drink of a thousand different flowers, the life of a thousand crops I grew in centuries, from the foot of the snows to the forests of the wild bears.

I will cure your weariness, which clouds you; I will divert you with the light of a hundred *quinua* flowers, with the sight of their dance as the winds blow; with the slight heart of the calendar lark which mirrors the whole world;

I will refresh you with the singing water which I will draw out of the black canyon's walls. . . .

Did I work for centuries of months and years in order that someone I do not know and does not know me, cut off my head with a small blade?

No, brother mine. Don't sharpen that blade; come close, let me know you; look at my face, my veins; the winds blowing from us to you, we all breathe them; the earth on which you count your books, your machines, your flowers, it comes down from mine, improved, no longer angry, a tamed earth. . . .

We know that they want to misshape our face with clay; exhibit us, deformed, before our sons.

We don't know what will happen. Let death walk towards us, let these unknown people come.

We will await them; we are the sons of the father of all the lord mountains; sons of the father of all the rivers. . . . □

"Rosaura"

Published in 1922, the brilliant short story "Rosaura" by the Argentine master Ricardo Güiraldes (1886-1927) serves as a kind of counterpoint to Domingo F. Sarmiento's thesis of civilization and barbarism. If Sarmiento proclaimed in 1845 the birth of the future, Güiraldes chronicles the death of a past.

For both intellectuals, the railroad serves as the symbol of change, progress, and an imported European civilization. For both, the train, an instrument of the city, penetrates the countryside, considered by Sarmiento as the citadel of barbarism but by Güiraldes in a more nationalistic vein as the stronghold of *argentinidad*, the being and soul of Argentina. Whatever the interpretation of the symbols, the expansion of the railroad ordained a clash of cultures. For good or for bad, modernization extracted its toll. Whether the benefits outweigh the

costs remains unresolved. Questioning modernization, or the civilization of Sarmiento, Güiraldes helped to propel a debate, which still continues, over how much "civilization" should be borrowed from abroad and how much should be nurtured from within.

Through the eyes of Güiraldes, the reader of this tightly constructed short story glimpses life in an Argentine provincial town in the early twentieth century. The impact of the railroad, what it brings and what it takes, becomes quickly apparent. The ending, with its broad symbolic meaning, arouses emotions that rivet the story to the mind. Among the broadest questions this tale raises is whether the type of modernization (progress or development) imposed by Latin American leaders served the best interests of the majority.

I

LOBOS IS A TRANQUIL TOWN, in the middle of the pampa.

An indifferent boredom drifts through its tree-fringed streets.

Few passersby sound on its pavements, steps tell-tale as hoof-beats, and except at the train-hour or during the summer promenades on the plaza, fresh with evening quiet, nothing stirs the sober siesta which a spinster conscience seems to impose on the town's friendliness.

Like all our towns, Lobos possesses a plaza whose blunt brick enclosure, exposed by a recent sacrifice of old vines, stretches across from the Church, and daily flaunts an artificial sleekness renewed by the long and flexible nozzle of a hose.

The Church is colonial style, its great courtyard of red flags rimmed with a single zig-zag marble parquet. In front, the plaza between, is the police station with its coat-of-arms and its chief in view, while his orderly takes the air to the count of *mates* prepared by an ex-felon policeman, who trades retad in pardons.

A two-story branch of the Banco de la Nación overlooks one of the corners of the square. On the second corner, counting by display, the gastronomic windows of the *Jardin* confectionery, known by residents familiarly as "the Basque's," spread out an invitation for the afternoon. And while on the third, the store smiles percaline brightness, on the fourth the pharmacy reminds that there are ills in this world.

Here is all the community needs: justice, money, clothing, self-indulgence, and ideals, in moderate doses.

The main artery of the town's life, one of the streets opening into the plaza, is called *Calle Real* and is cobblestoned. Ornate souvenirs of some Louis nth on its houses are tempered by massive old elms in danger of being felled by a progressive administration which might not consider them fine trees.

In a row, monopolizing the privilege of the pavement noisy under wheels and hoofs, stand the Hotel de Paris, the Club Social, the *Globo* jewelry, the clothing store, and the *Modelo* shoe-shop.

Five or six blocks from this center, the squares of monotonous colourless structures built adjoining are brightened here and there by a bush or a tree whose

Source: Waldo Frank (ed.), *Tales from the Argentine* (Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1970), pp. 181-235.

e crown looks out over the dusty bricks of the walls, flat and angular as a e of cards. The façades begin to glow yellows, greens, and sky-blues, ing-paper tones. Doors and windows are framed in deeper hues. Through oorways a glimpse of vines is caught reflected in polished tile floors.

On the fringe, the grocery store, once the headquarters for the alley, sleeps ted, despite the mildly domestic air lent by a sorry team of hacks (one grey, ther dappled) dozing harnessed to a spring-wagon.

Villas scatter the town into a vast horizon of ranches, to which summer rs bring the only glitter of wealth in the district.

The soul of Lobos was simple and primitive as a red bloom. Lobos thought, , lived, in its own way. Then came the parallel infinities of swift rails; and rain, marching armoured to indifference from horizon to horizon, from ger to stranger, brushed its passing plume over the settlement.

Lobos fell ill of that poison.

car of the National Railways that afternoon rode a young man dressed in ean style, irreproachably: collar and tie, soft hat, and country-suit that, h worn, retained in the lining of an inner pocket the label and date of ry from Poole. His legs were encased almost to the knee in boots impecca- rved. Beside him balanced a suit-case from a great London house, color- patched with stickers that recorded stays at fashionable hotels and beaches. at hung from the clumsy rack. And the thick-seamed gloves lay like a pair putated Indian hands on the dusty table in the middle of which a litre of danced spherically within a round-bellied jug of long and pretentious neck. The youth's clothing proclaimed an education abroad. His dark skin, / laid either side of a lean nose, his high cheek-bones and rigidly correct g, revealed Castilian descent; something silent and searching in his pupils everal generations of watchful pampa life; and the native zest of a new race d his easy laughter.

The inspector called him Don Carlos when he asked for the tickets. His age have been gauged roughly as somewhere between twenty-five and thirty. leisure, he glanced through a daily, at the cattle-market quotations.

The cars jarred abruptly, the asthmatic gasps of the locomotive died down, w lantern illegibly flashed past, the earth-level rose to a platform outlined ow of banana trees; the train stopped in front of the lighted corridor of ation that shut out the night.

as"

s descended, people ascended. The boiler hissed like a deflating balloon. izz of a beehive rose from the crowd: politicians out campaigning, fashion- ouths in gray felts and light shoes, personages displaying their official per- ties, sheiks with straw hats about to slide off their greasy foreheads and y pomaded skulls, coachmen waiting for fares, *peons* for mail or on er- while like perfume-blossoms in the jungle, the exuberant girls of Lobos und went, shyly discreet or laughing excessively, nervous—who knows why.

Three went, arm in arm, slowly: one in sky-blue, another in pink, another in yellow. Toward Carlos' window they glanced with such bold curiosity that he was annoyed, squared his shoulders, breathed high, and flushed aggressively and violently as a turkey. In defense he fixed his eyes upon one of them, thinking to intimidate, but instead the girl held that gaze as wood does a plug.

They passed. Two or three times they promenaded the station from end to end, walking with the careless ease of coquettes. Carlos, no longer offended, took the play and gazed after the swaying little figure retreating as if in anger, or bored with his eyes into the pupils that became penetrable and docile.

And she with surprise felt her eyes opened like that, as if they had been careless windows, and her body overcome by a strange wave of languor.

But it was all play and when the train jerked out after a blazon of whistle and bell, as the elegant youth half bowed, they laughed openly, correcting that rudeness with a bare and almost involuntary dip of the head to the shoulder.

The car passed quickly, striking from the station windows a vibrant echo.

III

Her name was Rosaura Torres and she was the daughter of old man Crescencio, owner of the wealthiest livery-stables in town, an estate which counted no less than five cabs drawn by horses splendid for work, God willing.

It was large, half a block, this place of brick and unwhitewashed clay.

The hallway, dining room, kitchen and bedrooms faced front. Inside they were backed by a porch from the eaves of which hung, like slim and long sensual boas, intricate vines embracing hungrily. A tiny orchard containing one flower-tree, three fruit-bearers, and four small cottonwoods, flourished either side of a grape-arbor.

Enclosing this quiet ensemble, where the women trailed their skirts as they went about their homely tasks, a wire fence upheld the subtle rustle of honey-suckles and climbing roses.

The corral was nearly open field, with its light zinc roof to protect the vehi- cles, harness and fodder, its little yard with stalls for the horses, its chicken-coop which used up the trough-waste, and its adopted cur, not so harmless, despite the whimperings and snugglings of the little fellow.

Her name was Rosaura Torres and she was pretty. Her slippers slapped at her heels indolently like oriental sandals; her hands were skilled, her laughter eager, her dreams simple; life waited curious within her inviolate lips.

For her, every waking was gay, to live a daily boon, all flowers beautiful, the afternoons smiling and tranquil with something that cradled and soothed.

Rosaura was pretty and waiting to plunge her skilled hands into life, as into her morning basket of flowers.

IV

She had two blocks to go along the narrow sidewalk a meter above the dusty road, to reach the main street.

Rosaura walked out about five-thirty in her yellow dress, generously pow-

dered, enjoying to the full all the usual incidents of her pilgrimage to the station, where she waited like the others for the six-thirty-five express.

At five-thirty Rosaura would leave, unaware of the miracle of youth that went with her. She crossed the end of the street, careful not to make a misstep in her Louis XV heels, and not to smudge with sandy soil the mirror perfection of her shoes. Half a block down she exchanged a good afternoon with old Petrona, who always stood on the threshold of her white house, her arms pillowed on the soft mound of her stomach, shaken with deep laughter.

"Hello, Doña Petrona."

"God bless you, child . . . why, you're a regular doll . . . poor boys! . . ."

Rosaura never heard the end, always crude banter, and she hurried the swift patter of her bright little shoes, knowing that at the corner masculine eyes would manage better to convey those flattering, but repellent, thoughts.

She was on the main street. Fashionable Lobos promenaded between station and plaza, its greetings and laughter ruffling the earlier silence of the streets.

The minutes flicked by spent in chatter, salvaged by charming or important ends. Words cloaked the feelings of the men and women who brushed each other—the women with the air of jewels on display, the men like wary customers concealing their tastes.

The afternoon would be winding itself out in dark corners, when the promenade, aimless heretofore, turned toward the station. Planks creaked in the floor of the waiting-room, through which the platform was gradually invaded.

And it was always the same, from the Bois de Boulogne with its tide of coughing motors to the modest echo of village heels, there in this last corner of the world, where tiny hopes waver up in a piteously simple society.

The station is to Lobos what Hyde Park is to London, the Retiro to Madrid, the Sweet Waters of Asia to Constantinople. If a slight, unknown guilt exists, it does not fall there.

But the first train is in. It is six o'clock, highest pitch of excitement till six-thirty-five, when the really important one, dealer of emotions from Buenos Aires, is due.

People passed, people criticized, and a web of romanticism entangled the youth of the town.

The minutes scrambled down the restless clock.

Rosaura saw that fashionable young man many times. Her friends teased her because of the insistent glances that they perhaps wished for themselves, and the girl felt something agreeably clouding her reason, when Carlos looked at her smiling, watching for recognition.

An emotion, greater than the little breast in the yellow dress, welled in Rosaura.

Through the restless days that speed too, the hours come again and again, and among them the moment when the express is due. The initials of an idyll can be traced on the dusty haunch of the cars, and Rosaura wrote her name on the diner, in which travelled the fashionable youth of the glance.

Oh, evil influence of the indifferent locomotive to whose monster eye the

horizon presents no ideal! Pitiless train that passed on, abandoning to the monotonous boredom of the village those fanciful dreams of the sentimental Rosaura who wrote her fate on its cars!

But the enamoured child was too much a part of today's amazement to ease the disharmony between stable people and the great forces that pass. And one afternoon, when Carlos got down, ostensibly for a walk, and passed beside her very near, she felt she would fall, strangely drawn as if by the slight breath in his wake.

Little garden with your arbour, your odorous jasmine, your white and cold laurel and sexual carnations, something stirs there to fill you so tenderly. In Rosaura the simple provincial of pastoral soul, blooms the miracle of a great love.

Rosaura lives closing her eyes to possess more completely her intense emotion. Her coquetry is wasted no longer: for him her arms drop in consent; for him her pupils suffer this concentrated feeling; for him her body yields unknown surrender, when she walks wrapped in disturbing day-dreams; and for him too, her breast fills to the size of an entire world.

How enormous is this unsuspected world! At times Rosaura thinks and fears: What will be of her life now? Is this love? Does that incredibly elegant and distinguished youth love her too? She thinks and fears and leaves unsolved those impossible elusive problems.

Rosaura closes her eyes to possess more completely her intense emotion.

The days are no longer monotonous nor the hours leaden in that tiny unsuspected garden, there in the pampa that sings its endless song of the unending spaces.

And the spring that is not illusion brings the lilacs to bloom, clinging twined in clustered embraces, falling splendid in violet sprays; and in the vines that drooped from the eaves like slim and sensual boas, timid gleams of white jasmine appear. The honeysuckle too breathes a hint of the tropics, vibrant as a ringing bell; and the potted carnations burst into pride.

The soul of Rosaura wells an odour of troubled love like the perfumed wave of the honeysuckles. Her cheeks are like jasmine, her eyes become pooled to a sheen of grape, and her blood ripens her mouth so that she strangely needs to bite her lips.

The soul of Rosaura slowly is inhaled by her body.

VI

Restlessly wandering about, Rosaura awaits the unrealized idyll of those glances. Will he come? Won't he come?

She pictures beforehand, in the square of light framed by the car window, that fine profile hastily looking up from the paper to seek her alone, among all the girls of the crowded platform.

Always it is his tense eyes that pierce her, fixed on her black locks, on her shoulders, on her walk which suddenly shifts with mysterious languor.

To look into his face is a physical shock and just to think of his face flushes

her cheeks, and makes her mind grow dangerously wild. She fears then she may talk crookedly, may fall absurdly on account of a misstep, or because of that moment's blindness may run blankly into someone who would guess her disturbance.

Carrying these painfully intense visions, Rosaura walks arm in arm with her friends, and plunges into dreadfully flat talk to hide and disguise them.

But the green tranquil light becomes a red, color of blood and passion. Two meters above the rails the monster eye of the locomotive runs flaming brighter, and then passes beyond, as the steely forehead of the engine turns to the horizon. There is the shock of yielding metal. Rosaura suffers, arm in arm with her friends differently lost in Sunday laughter.

And one afternoon—strange!—when she sought in the frame of the window that profile which had been to her an intangible, fugitive ideal calling forth ecstasies, and no more, she saw the man descend with his great suitcase; stride across the crowd on the platform, and take a cab of old Torres, with the gesture of a landlord returning to his estate.

Rosaura felt her soul pierced by the anguish of a virgin possessed.

She was displeased by the active, direct, now justified teasing of her friends. She left them with scant caresses to flutter the streets with their stale and flat chatter, and fled home in amazement, fearful and dazzled as a quail.

I

Rosaura slept badly all that night, pursued by a vague event whose influence would definitely change her life.

Already roused she heard her father in the kitchen, splitting wood for the morning *mate*.

She joined the old man, surprising him with that unnecessary rising.

"Where will the sun come up?"

"It's you, daddy, that woke me."

"Well, go on out to the hen-coop and bring in some kindling."

Dawn lighted the yard when Rosaura in quest of the chips saw Lucio's back ready to leave.

"I'm going to the hotel, *niña*, to get a stranger who's come to look at *ciendas*."

"And why the extra harness?"

"Seems we're goin' to go far . . . maybe till tonight."

Lucio twisted his half-open mouth and clapped his tongue on his palate, checking the horses to start: the uneven team disappeared through the gate, the coach seemed to drop in a hole, conical and shameless as a street wench.

"Good-bye, *niña*!"

The coachman had exaggerated; when Rosaura went down toward the main street that afternoon, after speaking to Doña Petrona, she was struck with surprise upon seeing Carlos seated at a small table in front of the hotel, accompanied by the political leader Barrios, the cattle-auctioneer Gonzalez, the representative *trio* and other gentlemen of the hour.

Naturally Carlos bowed to her like the rest and Rosaura answered courteously

though she felt naked in her blushes. How hard to maintain a natural walk and how awful to linger like that before ten staring men!

Rosaura's pride suffered and the susceptible little creole, hurt by that supposedly betraying blush, hated the stranger violently. Why couldn't things remain as they were, easy?

She was overcome by a fear of having to talk to Carlos in public. She believed her platform flirtation so flagrant. . . .

Oh, indeed! she would make him pay for that humiliation doubtless already glossed by the clumsy words of that shameless crowd in front of the Hotel de Paris; nobody should have a peg on which to hang a tale about *her* favours.

And that afternoon at the glory hour of Lobos, Rosaura, wounded in the privacy of her romantic passion, became singularly talkative and attentive to the chatter of her friends, returned their shafts charmingly, and cruelly, suicidally ridiculed the elegant youth, who followed her with his eyes fixed steadily as the headlights of an automobile on the road.

When Rosaura went home she was exhausted and convinced that she had been uselessly a coward; she threw herself on the bed and, pathetically dishevelled, wept great sobs of pain for her blighted passion.

VIII

Fortunately that state of affairs did not last. Rosaura would have died of grief. It was not possible to weep so, days and days, accusing herself bitterly.

Carlos had left on the morning following that, to him, incomprehensible afternoon.

No actions proved, and no words even, that the saucy flirtation of the girl on the platform meant anything more than a few moments' diversion. Hurt by the impudence of the staring little child in the yellow dress, he thought no more of the matter, unaware that he left a great passion tortured into a sorrow, as the train jerked from the station in the biting chill of that windy morning.

In the garden that smelled of jasmine, honeysuckle and carnations, little Rosaura wilted like a flower bruised by some casual humming-bird which flitted on, once it had sucked the savor.

Ended for ever, the gay starts every afternoon at five; the hellos to Doña Petrona; the coquettishly careful crossings; the fastidious resentment at the brutal stares of the loungers in front of the Hotel de Paris, the meetings with her friends and the glorified walks on the platform, before those eyes that kindled her and pierced her.

There was nothing left but to weep, weep forever, for these memories of her broken life.

Rosaura would have died had she thought that the fashionable youth of the dining car would never come back, or would pass in the train as indifferent to her as the monster eye of the locomotive to the ideal of the horizon.

It was five. Rosaura recalled even the slightest movements of her habit of years and years. Impatience pulled her to the dressing-table, but a presentiment of martyrdom dropped her on her knees before the niche adorned with palms

sed ovally, where her little blue madonna spangled with gold prayed, in mystance, through the centuries.

Oh, that he might be returned to her with a smile of forgiveness; that she might receive only two affectionate lines so as not to die strangled by this thing much bigger than herself!

Three dry little knocks of somebody's knuckles on the door announced a real visitor. Rosaura hurriedly arranged her pitifully disordered self, and in came Carmen, the friend of the pink dress who had been deserted so long, in the dress of that wrecked loved. And as Rosaura's arms passionately convulsive at her were a confession, Carmen, charmingly comforting, spoke openly:

"Holy Mother, be still! . . . why, I've a piece of news that will just make laugh!"

Rosaura, turned to the wall to hide her tears, quivered from head to foot her shoulders shook with deep, painful sobs.

"Don't cry like that. . . . You'd do better to start making a peach of a dress for the dance that the Club is giving next week. . . . Or don't you care?"

"Don't joke with me, Carmen."

"Joke? Sit down and listen to real information. . . . I know who he is, I know he thinks of you, what he came for and a lot of other things."

"And who told you all that?"

"Gonzalez, who showed him the cows for Lorenzo Ramallo."

"And what's he got to do with Ramallo?"

"Nothing much, he's his son, that's all."

Far from being overcome by that name known far and wide as one of the most powerful of landholders, Rosaura's passion rose with this new impossibility. So long as Carlos passed through on the train, so long as he came now and then to the little village of Lobos, so long as he looked at her as he had, her love would seek more impulses to grow.

"What else did he say?" she murmured tremblingly.

"That you're a marvel and that he's coming to the dance at the Club to see you. Now cry if you want!"

Rosaura did not weep but she paled unbelievably. She suffered a torment of despair and that fulfillment was as painful as a pregnancy.

More than ever the rings deepened under her eyes, beneath her drooped lids; and while Carmen ran merrily on, a smile rose to her lips from the calm of her love in contemplation.

It was a tranquil time to the Torres place. The little garden sprouted under the shade of the sun. The orchard bore amply either side of the arbour'd vine. The gnarled ceibo tree scattered fine glints in the shimmering air. The dog chased playfully around the edges of feminine skirts, balancing the silver notes of its whimper like a tune rehearsed in a nightingale's nest.

On the porch enclosed by the fresh bloom of its vines, Rosaura sewed lean-back in her chair. Patches of sunlight dropped on the dress through the vines the leaves overhead; and when with an indolent foot she would start the

chair rocking, those imperceptible wavelets of warmth ran carelessly over her body.

At her right a bent-legged sewing-basket spread out like a split nut, its contents brimming, and on the left a little table unevenly set on the flags, threatened to drop a fashion review lent by a friend on one of the estates for the occasion of the Club dance.

Happy, the lovely Rosaura, absorbed in her work, threaded promises of her love on the porch shaded by the quiet garden stirred in the spring.

Rosaura had chosen from among the models a pattern of muslin embroidered with buds and sprays of fern fine as cobwebs. It opened a bare timid triangle at the neck and a great sash with a bow on one side fluffed like a full rose.

How much she knew now of the Carlos heretofore so mysterious and so untold! Carlos had been educated in Europe. On his return Don Lorenzo, his father, had given him the place at General Alvear to manage, which, however, did not hinder later travels into countries fabulous to Rosaura.

What a new wreath of glory all of this laid upon him, in the heart of the romantic little provincial!

She would go with him as in the fairy-tales, to enchanting and beautiful lands where everything is as easy as dreaming and where to love is to fulfill the most sacred duty. Her hand would be held in his and he would tell her about everything, knowing everything. Then they would return to the little garden, and would live in the neighborhood that reminded them of other days.

Rosaura ran the needle into her finger. One of the buds on the muslin blushed deeper, and she, annoyed at this stupid break in her rhythmic trance, pressed the tip of the hurt finger, making a tiny crimson source.

The dress was finished on time.

X

The greyish façade of the Club Social occupied twenty yards of the cobble-stoned street; from its windows streamed a blaze of festive light, promising gaiety.

At nine that night the hearts of the Lobos girls beat fast, this being the hour to put the last touches on the frocks that would mean scorn or envy. Only Rosaura, pale as a bride, shivers running over her body in its spring-time festoon of sprays and buds, remained indifferent to such petty social successes.

She had arrayed herself with the delicate care of a miniaturist, drawing on the long stiff silk hose, finished off by the bright patent-leather pumps; her skin had quivered at the touch of the fine white undergarment spangled with yellow bows, fitted snugly to her torso by the girdle, rose-faint as a blush. And she had called her mother to gaze as she slipped into the rustling folds of the frock.

It was time. She walked toward the mirror tasting, at the measured swing of her step, the barely tangible subtlety of her airy garments; she walked profiled, light as an apparition; smiled faintly, lifting in quick amazement her mobile eyebrows; and she thought she might please because of that shade of docility in her eyes, messengers of miracles.

It was time and she was ready, pure and vibrant as a crystal shivered by the distant note of a bronze bell. She swooned almost, with virginal ripeness of sacri-

she, sensing herself worshipped by the intact garments, adorned with the solemn endowments of an offering. "Oh, yes, all his." And a momentary loss of consciousness sent her swaying for support to the bureau, where her hand, limp and dead, lay like marble on the red glamour of the mahogany.

"Come on, come on! . . ." The door opened filling the room with brief mourning. The Gomez girls had arrived to fetch her, as agreed, and Rosaura folded on herself, like a sensitive plant.

In the dance-hall of the Club Social, revealed inconsiderately by the hard, blinding lights, the reception committee, self-conscious and solemn, fenced opportunistically.

Carlos, acquainted with the gloved punctiliousness of such parties, had been early, to settle himself comfortably in a private corner.

An air of naïve cordiality already reigned, and they had all become more used to the gala dress, when the auctioneer Gonzalez, waving a hand from left to right, spoke their names softly:

"Señor Carlos Ramallo, Señorita Rosaura Torres."

To Rosaura, that coupling of their names attained the significance of a revelation before the altar.

"Very pleased, señor," she said, and she thought this was everything.

He gave her his arm properly.

"As to me I confess it was almost absolutely necessary to speak to you, because I look upon you as an old friend."

Rosaura blushed:

"It is true, we have seen each other so often."

Oh, the melodious enchantment of walking thus, arm in arm, with their heads moving close to confession!

And all Lobos looking on!

"Shall we sit down?"

"If you like."

They went out through the corridor, toward a bench glimpsed in the patio, proudly glorified by the luminous glitter of stars, in a sky framed by the naïve cornice.

"This is nice."

They sat down, relieved of pretense; night knows nothing of etiquette and is everywhere, naturally.

They were silent. Rosaura, quiet, looking at the button of her glove and in a comradely tone that the night required, queried:

"Tell me about yourself. Would you mind? I have lived so alone here."

Carlos did not reply. To tell the child, simple as a red bloom, of his intricate and honorable adventures would be the irreverent action of a cheap Don Juan.

"Please believe my amusements don't amount to anything."

"But—and all you have travelled in this wide world?"

"I have some pleasant memories."

And carried away in the mood of Rosaura, who intently waited for wondrous tales, he seemed to have just discovered the true charm of things past.

He was surprised to hear himself saying sincerely:

"Those journeys are saddening when one makes them alone."

With what further absurdities would he continue?

But Rosaura, surmising an indirect allusion, toyed more intently with her glove, purchased for the ball.

Scenting a new fad, other couples followed Carlos and Rosaura toward the patio, and the night, its silence broken, was dethroned. Carlos recalled other scenes thrilled too with laughter and dizzied with perfumes.

"Will you dance?"

But another youth claimed that polka from Rosaura. Carlos found himself alone and near his friend the auctioneer, so he begged to be presented to other girls, saying to himself that thus he would mask his reason for coming to the dance.

The daughter of Barrios was a lovely wench of excited voice, from whose pouter-pigeon bosom gushed a tangle of the most astonishing speeches.

What a relief, what a pleasure, when he found himself again with the simple Rosaura, love entire, on a bench in the patio now emptied by the greed that free refreshments awakened!

"Oh, señorita, how your friends weary me!"

"Don't call me señorita."

"Thank you, Rosaura, how all these little Sunday girls bore me. If I couldn't feel myself a friend of yours, I would dash out at a gallop. Stay with me awhile, as long or as short as you please, and I shall be grateful."

"You see how quickly we understand each other," laughed Rosaura. "But unfortunately I would have to hear tales if I stayed as long as I'd like."

"Would it be very long?"

Rosaura turned again to the button of her glove, and they were silent, overcome by discoveries mutually guessed.

One must, when one cannot speak from the soul, touch on simple things to hear undisturbed the song within.

"Are you always bored, Rosaura?"

"Not before. I had enough with my work and my walks to the station or to the plaza, where I met my friends and we would amuse ourselves with our jokes and our foolishness. Now I want more. The town seems so dreary, and I think of how you travel so much, have seen so many things. . . ."

"And yet you see I come here."

To say something, terrified by the consequences of her own words, Rosaura murmured:

"You must have a reason."

"Don't you know it?"

"Why should I know it?"

Rosaura was suffering now. Carlos' eyebrows were drawn tightly together, hardening his expression. Something vaguely in his smile prophesied who knows what dreadful phrase.

"Please, Carlos, be still."

The eyebrows were calmed, the forced smile disappeared:

"We do not need to say much."

It was true, and as the fraternally begun conversation had turned difficult, Carlos again told stories of his restless life to the little provincial so childishly attuned with her trustful eyes.

This intimate chat bridged a long time easily, and then Carlos with the air of a guardian said:

"Well, go and dance now with your friends, or they'll be saying that we are sweethearts."

"Oh, heavens!"

"Anyhow we are good friends."

"Yes, . . . but now, who knows when you'll come back."

"You'll see. . . I have it arranged so that it won't be so seldom."

Rosaura went back to the hall, leaving Carlos without thinking to ask him to explain.

And thus ended the first meeting of the provincial girl with the elegant youth of the diner, now a cordial friend: which is not little for an ideal that passes, rousing great dreams that can never come true.

KI

From then on, after that night so brimful of lover's portent, the six-thirty-five express no longer carried an intangible ideal, the youth of the diner in his frame of light. Carlos had found a better solution and sacrificing the sluggishness of a bad sleeper, took the train at five in the morning to spend the day in Lobos.

The pretexts, though weak, would suffice: To see his friend the auctioneer Gonzalez, to go uselessly to his sales, or simply to shorten the six monotonous hours of the usual journey.

But what are pretexts when two lives are drawn to each other?

The sun was high when Carlos descended hampered by his London suitcase heckerled with hotel labels.

Scarcely anybody stood on the platform, so crowded in the half-hour between the two express-trains, the six o'clock and the six-thirty-five. One of old 'orres' cabs took him to the Hotel de Paris where he "made the morning" with Gonzalez, Iturri, and other personages of the hour. He lunched with the appetite of a traveller and slept a restful siesta till four, when he took tea facing the cobble-stoned street which fluttered already in prospect of the daily promenade.

And all this just for the little half hour in the afternoon, in the teeming confusion of the crowded platform: politicians out on campaign, young men in ray felts and light shoes, personages displaying their official personalities, sheiks with straw hats about to slide off their greasy foreheads and stickily pomaded kulls, coachmen waiting for fares, peons for mail or on errands. While like romantic blooms in a virgin forest, the Lobos girls passed flirtatious and rocking.

From end to end of the platform, flanked by her friends, the one in pink and the one in sky-blue, Rosaura walked with the tread of a coquette, returning re glances of Carlos, her affectionate friend, with smiles that opened like flowers.

And Carlos filled his eyes with that dainty loved figure which retreated as

if in anger, or gazed into those docile pupils open and penetrable as windows wide to a tryst.

But the cars of the express clanked unevenly in. The asthmatic gasps of the locomotive died down.

The blazing train drew up in front of the covered station and shut out the night.

People ascended, people descended, the minutes scrambled down the restless clock; on the dusty haunch of the diner, while speaking her last shy words of farewell, Rosaura traced the initials of an idyll. And suddenly, tearing a great wound through the soul of the little enamoured provincial, a brutal screech announced the departure. The cars flew apart like the vertebrae of a reptile in flight; the iron of joints and bumpers clanged from locomotive to caboose. Carlos bowed, quickly smaller at a sudden distance. The caboose passed rapidly, striking from the station windows a vibrant near echo.

And before Rosaura rose the deep indifference of the spangled night, painfully stifling the fugitive blare of the train which flies with the blind gaze of its monster eye toward the horizon whose attraction it does not comprehend.

Poor little Rosaura, abandoned thus to that passion too large for herself, in the deadly boredom of the village lost in a pampa that ignores the way of romance in its children.

XII

Nevertheless, except for the disconsolate parting that wounded as if it were forever, Rosaura's life overflowed happiness.

In her garden now heightened beyond springtime budding, the lilac dropped great fragrant sprays and the fresh porch flourished green, spattered with morning-glories, jasmines and honeysuckle.

Yielding to the soft breath of summer, Rosaura dreamed warmly through the stream of hours.

Seated in her rocking-chair, bathed in the odour of flowers, she works without ceasing, the needle quick in her skilled hands.

At her right, the sewing-basket on its bent legs spreads open like a split nut, its contents brimming. To her left, a little table unevenly set on the flags holds scattered colourful fashion books borrowed from that friend who had sent her the first for the dance at the Club Social.

Happy beyond explanation, the little Rosaura intent on her work lives with memories of meetings with her beloved Carlos so worthy of all the passions.

Rosaura had many patterns because she had quickly found herself deplorably provincial in her country clothing. And what feminine delight to devote all her days thus to sheathing herself in chaste caressing undergarments. Oh, the bows and the weaves white as holy wafers around her virgin body, all an offering to the mysterious rites of adoration! Gentle murmurs of future bliss steal into her dreams. She would be worthy of him, simple and naïve but still passionate and tender in the radiant fire of a love all immolation.

Elusively identical the days passed in the little garden of the Torres stables, idealized by the intense soul of Rosaura, always certain that her Carlos would

come tomorrow, day after tomorrow, or next week, to tell her with his eyes that he loved her, put in her hand a nosegay of strange country blossoms, and in the afternoon to take a departure as painful as if forever, but to return because that was fate.

XIII

Night knowing something of sorcery transformed the insipid plaza of the town. Night, the blue, the stars; reducing the visible world to a few pools of light wept by the lamps, immobile, isolate and sad, condemned to stay forever, although they aspire desperately to be stars: a desire aroused by the springtime infinity of the depthless sky.

The people, limited to their bodies, tread the slavery of the plaza paths made to walk on, and cannot escape in perishable desires.

And so their souls fling themselves into mad impossible futures and migrate from love to love, as does light from star to star, drilling through the spaces that bar the victory of matter.

But it is the same plaza. The bushes and hedges clipped like thick manes shape greenish-black geometric figures curiously similar to human forms. The paths curve, lacking space in which to be true roads that know where they are going. A few trees, newly green, have become thus tender in response to the benison of spring, on time as always.

The groups of girls are like displays under glass of souls that will love, and the men long impossible to clasp a bunch of them with feverish hands.

Carlos comes when he can to this holiday parade on the plaza stretched out under the stars, beneath the holy watch of the colonial bell-tower, where with infinite forgiveness God blesses his straying sentimental lambs.

In that luminous scene of fans, skirts and blouses, the most beautiful is Rosaura and also the farthest from herself; for she is carried off by great dreams of a heroine of romance, pining for the hero who has appeared from an unbelievable land, with a halo of the glamorous unknown.

Oh! . . . To be thus chosen among all!

Night, that knows something of sorcery, filters its temptation into the hearts of those people, who, God be thanked, have their morals; that is why this ale does not end here, with the most natural of love's solutions.

XIV

Thus Rosaura reached the height of her glory. Carlos' intervals of absence were brief, in which to savour every word, every gesture; and their meetings were fulfillments whose intuitive comprehensions made vows superfluous; rapture loated around them, as if exhaled by their emotions.

But that state of their souls perhaps called disaster upon them, as lightning is drawn by the crosses that pray on cupolas.

Carlos, pretending to take the matter lightly, told her he was leaving shortly for Europe:

" . . . Oh! For a very short time; three or four months at the most . . .

through the summer . . . I can't avoid it; my father would be very much surprised and he might even be angry. . . "

Rosaura, mortally wounded, listened with anguish.

"Tell me, Carlos. Isn't Señor Ramallo sending you away?"

"What an idea, child! And why should he?"

"Don't know . . . maybe they've told him that you're wasting your time in some little village."

"No, Rosaura, what a notion!"

Carlos explained again. Who would know and if they did, who would think anything bad of his visits to Lobos? But it meant much to his father for him to make this trip to England, where he would learn a great deal studying the best-known model farms under a competent person.

"Three or four months . . . it seems so long, Carlos!"

He answered her, for the first time with a plain meaning:

"Rosaura, believe me, even if I were gone six, they would be too few to erase certain things."

"Sure?"

"Very sure."

Life sprang again in the little village girl. Carlos spoke with so much assurance that his absence seemed more bearable, and the especially tender pitch of that beloved voice was deceptive balm to her sensitive soul. Furthermore, Rosaura possessed the greatness of noble trust, and an extraordinary feminine delight in sacrificing herself to the will of her idol. In her eyes Carlos could do nothing wrong. And that poor night they parted; their hands more than ever revealed their love, despite all human obstacles.

XV

It was summer, and of Carlos nothing remained in Lobos except the increasing passion of his Rosaura and a brief note of farewell in her hands.

Life went on as usual in the Torres household, except for the lengthened burdensome days, the greater fatigue of the horses and the always perspiring peons, the sleepy inertia of the throbbing siesta hour, and the sadness of the poor girl, drooping now like a flower prostrated by the full blaze of the sun.

Nevertheless, her faith firm in her Carlos, Rosaura laboured to embellish herself. Her provincial wardrobe disappeared totally and no one, by her clothing, could have distinguished the former showy little country girl in yellow from a fashionable urban young lady.

This clothing that wove its knowing charms around her was born of the wish to seem elegant to him, and its contact filled, though imperfectly, the void left by the want of other caresses.

How daring dreams are; and how, by sheer familiarity with her more and more definite visions of what might happen, Rosaura grew to feel that she had been incredibly timid.

She did not know how, but she was certain that on Carlos' return their love would take a more natural course, and this prodded her anxious count of the long days.

But time passed with all its apparent slowness, while Rosaura worked to make herself beautiful, cared for her person as for an idol that belonged to someone else, and for whose pricelessness she was responsible. At this stage she never doubted the love of her Carlos.

XVI

An incurable sadness floated in the little garden of the Torres place, breathed off by the approaching winter that blighted the flowers so merrily brought by the spring.

The autumn petals were seared by the cold, the last stunted peaches dropped from their boughs, the arbour was stripped of its grapes and the little garden so piteously rifled bore a seal of arid harshness.

A mild patch of sunlight filtered on the porch, overhung by once matted vines, gilding the withered leaves. Rosaura, pale with her first woman's sorrow, had lost her youthful jasmine smoothness and her honeysuckle lushness; and abetted by sleepless outpourings of tears, the violet rings under her eyes triumphantly deepened to the transparent sheen of grapes.

Poor little Rosaura, tender aimless fancy; the fragrance of whose love was worthy of immortalizing a whole town's prosaic staleness.

Poor little Rosaura, victim of a moment of fateful evolution; incurable longing of simple things for the meshes of splendor; on her simple faith in the promise of a beyond, turned all her disaster.

Her fate was to suffer and no other, because thus says a homely proverb: "Who looks too far upward may break his neck."

Her grief was as fatal as the race of melting snow downward.

Immensely sad is the little garden of the Torres place. From the soul of its small mistress disconsolate dreams ebb, while autumn falls like a shroud upon that corner of the world, lost in the middle of the changeless pampa that knows nothing of romantic loves.

XVII

A nervous anxiety aroused Rosaura from the dejection in which she lived. Carlos might come any moment.

The daughter of Crescencio Torres returned to her old habits and except for Carmen or whoever in the village possessed the gift of divination, Lobos ignored the change in the spirit of its lovely child.

About five-thirty Rosaura went out in an airy blouse, cut triangularly at the neck, dark blue skirt, and calf pumps, though bareheaded so as not to be too conspicuous among her friends. Half a block down she stopped to speak to old Petrona unweariedly standing on the threshold of her white house, her arms pillowed on the soft mound of her stomach shaken with deep laughter.

"Hello, Doña Petrona."

"God bless you, child. . . . My, the poor boys, you're a regular poster! . . . Holy Mary! why you're right up to the minute! . . ."

But Rosaura would not hear.

On the main street, fashionable Lobos promenaded, fluttering with chatter the paths shaded by hoary elms.

Afternoon would be winding itself out in the corners when they gradually invaded the crowded platform.

What an unbearable emotion, this waiting; what torment and overcoming reminder arose in Rosaura at the gleam of the headlight of the locomotive on the rails!

Yes, he will come this afternoon. She will spy him in his window, meeting her with brilliant joy in his eyes. Her soul will divine his presence and all her old delight will burst forth like a radiant dawn.

"Oh, to fall in his arms!"

But in the glaring frame of that window which once gave life, no face appeared.

XVIII

The leaves fell, the first chill crept out, and Rosaura suffered like the red autumn blooms that freeze in the flight of the sun.

Was all that romance an illusion?

The poor girl almost believed so, with the daily disappointment of the vacant space in the window of the diner.

But it was not an illusion, because one afternoon when her heart was breaking, Carmen took her by the arm and trembling at the enormity of her announcement said:

"Come here, child, come, I've seen him in another car."

Oh, Rosaura! How to keep a scream from escaping? Her legs refused to advance, though her friend dragged her by the arm. It was true, he was there.

Carlos! . . . Oh, to fall on his beloved breast and to tell him that she never doubted his return, and then so many, many things more! She recognized him through a dim window. Nearly swooning, and almost stretching out her arms, there before them all, her upper-lip rose smiling faintly; and he bowed merely, as if there had never existed between them anything beyond a passing word.

XIX

Rosaura fell into a coma of intense pain. Everybody in the house knew that something unusual had happened to her and the mother learned of the drama on the delirious night that followed the incident unperceived by others.

The love of Rosaura, rooted in her like an organism inseparable from her own, was killing her with its death.

Carmen, the friend who had once brought the first-fruits of her love, brought her the gravestone as well:

"Listen, child . . . it isn't worth while, suffering for that wicked man."

"Please, Carmen, let's not speak of it any more."

"It's that I wanted to tell you . . . if you want to notice next time he passes, you'll see that he is with another woman, all dressed up in those things that you like."

"For God's sake be still, Carmen."

So she swallowed the details which her friend brought to be close to her; livid, her lips quivering childishly but with her eyes dry, she burst into sobs long and painful as if her very bowels were being dragged from her slowly.

XX

Rosaura has come to the station, in her frock of flowered muslin, reminder of that unforgettable night in the Club Social. She has tucked the brief note, the only one from Carlos, in her bosom, the note of farewell, and her convulsive hands crumble to dust the dry petals of the flowers she had kept because he had given them to her.

Rosaura must be a little mad to come dressed like that to the platform. But what does she care what they say?

Carmen is with her, caring for her like a nurse, troubled by those strange fancies, and dressed as always in pink, not having suffered, like her friend, the intense influence of outside things.

Suddenly, Rosaura's hand sinks into the soft flesh of her friend's arm.

"Come on, Carmen, come on for God's sake, I can't stand any more."

Thus together they walked to the end of the platform. Carlos (oh, horrible unconsciousness!) rides in a compartment with the unknown woman and Rosaura does not want to see him.

"Oh, I can't bear any more, I can't bear any more . . . and leave me now, I beg you for the sake of what you love most . . . leave me and go back with the rest, I'm going home."

"But, child, you don't want me to leave you, and you in that state and crying like a lost soul?"

"Yes, for the sake of what you love most, leave me."

What powerful influence made Carmen obey?

The shrill locomotive announces departure. Carmen goes back to the station.

There is a shock of steel, the locomotive snorts its great poisonous crests out upon Lobos, gasping a strenuous start. The train will continue its journey from unknown to unknown, from horizon to horizon.

Then the little Rosaura, overcome by a terrible madness, screams, grinding incomprehensible phrases between her teeth that clamp convulsively with pain. And like a springtime butterfly she flashes out, running between the parallel infinities of the rails, her arms forward in useless offering, calling the name of Carlos, for whom it is passionate joy to die, on the road that takes him away, far from her forever.

"Carlos! . . . Carlos! . . ."

The steely din nears her. The swift victory of the train knows nothing of the cries of a passion that knew how to die.

"Carlos! . . ."

And like a snowy feather, the dainty figure in flowered muslin yields to the march of the gigantic locomotive, for whose monster eye the horizon holds no ideal. □

7

The Revolutionary Option

Despite dramatic changes during the twentieth century, Latin America failed to develop economically. Many advocated institutional reforms to induce development gradually. Favorable periods in the histories of Chile, Costa Rica, Uruguay, and Venezuela seemed to fulfill some expectations from reform. But reform both tantalized and eluded most of Latin America. Frustrations rose. Mixed with hope, these frustrations prompted some Latin Americans to advocate revolution, the sudden, often violent, substitution of new institutions for old and discredited ones.

During the twentieth century, Latin America experienced five significant revolutions: Mexico, 1910-1940; Guatemala, 1944-1954; Bolivia, 1952-1964; Cuba, 1959 and continuing; and Nicaragua, 1979-1990. Highly nationalistic in tone and objective, these revolutions hoped to reduce dependency and induce development. They tried to involve the majority of the citizenry in the modification or eradication of institutions that thwarted development. For the benefit of the majority, they succeeded in opening doors of access to land, education, and health care. The Cuban Revolution has attempted and achieved the most profound changes.

For a variety of reasons, not least of which was overt and covert U.S. intervention, those revolutions struggled against formidable odds to meet expectations. With the possible exception of Cuba, the revolutions, like the reforms, seem incapable of bringing about meaningful long-term change. At the end of the twentieth century, most Latin Americans still seek a means by which to develop economically in order to improve the quality of life of the majority of the people.