

THE REAL AND THE SYMBOLIC IN TUTECOTZIMÍ:
DARÍO'S WELL-WROUGHT URN

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Outside of Central America, “Tutecotzimí” is not one of Rubén Darío’s best known poems. For one reason, most anthologies concentrate on the polished Parnassian-Symbolist works of *Prozas profanas* and *Cantos de vida y esperanza*, which link Nicaragua to the European metropolis in general and to France in particular. Parnassianisme emphasized the plastic ‘painterly’ qualities of late Romanticism, focusing on aesthetic beauty (Campbell 1966:91-99), while Symbolisme concentrated more on the nexus between feeling and intellect with the playful synaesthesia and musicality of symbolism, imbuing the symbol with an open-ended indeterminate quality that registered polyvalent reception (Balakian 1993:1256-1259).

This poem differs in theme, it is narrative, rather than descriptive, centering on the Mesoamerican past, rather than the Eurocentric present. It is well read in Central America due to its message, Isthmian scale and Indigenous roots. As such, it is an unstated homage to Francisco Gavidia, whose “Oda a Centroamérica” inventoried the region’s immense troubles. Its initial metaphysical musings tilt the poem closer to early Romanticism than Modernismo. The poem’s archaeological quality has obvious roots in John Keats’s “Ode on a Grecian Urn,” inspired by the Elgin Marbles and other Greek pieces, as ‘Tutecotzimí’ was inspired by Nawat polychrome ceramics. Like Keats’s ‘original’, Darío’s vase is also his own creation (note his countryman Salomón de la Selva’s essay “Rubén, el Keats hispánico” n.d.). Like Andrés Bello, beauty is found in the Hesiodic, rather than in the Homeric. As in José María de Heredia’s “En el Teocalli de Cholula,” there is a meditation when he comes face to face with his discovery. But whereas Heredia only finds ruins and melancholy as he attempts to face the Real, Darío’s epiphany led him to an alternative future.

Darío substituted the Lacanian Symbolic Order for the Lacanian Real, codifying and following the traces of the Event, rather than turning his back on the abyss. By abandoning his interrogation of the Real and picking up the tools necessary for dreaming and excavating it, he was able

to rediscover his native land. Ironically, only after learning his trade while traveling the world was he able to appreciate the treasures that had always lain beneath his feet. ‘Tutecotzimí,’ then, is the fruit of his nostos. Only then, could he exclaim:

Al cavar en el suelo de la ciudad antigua,
la metálica punta de la piqueta choca
con una joya de oro, una labrada, roca,
una flecha, un fetiche, un dios de forma ambigua,
o los muros enormes de un templo. Mi piqueta
trabaja en el terreno de la América ignota (versos 1-6).

On digging into the soil of the ancient city,
the metallic point of the pick clashes against
a gold jewel, a carving, rock,
an arrow, a fetiche, a god of ambiguous shape,
or the enormous walls of a temple. My pick
work the terrain of the unknown America.

Years later, the echo of these verses appears as a manifesto in Pablo Antonio Cuadra’s “El poema del momento extranjero en la selva”:

Tengo que hacer algo con el lodo de la historia,
cavar en el pantano y desenterrar la luna
de mis padres... (Cuadra 2003:123)

I have to do something with the mud of history.
dig in the swamp and unearth the moon
of my fathers...

Pablo Neruda says something very similar when speaking of “Las alturas de Macchu Picchu”:

Nosotros los americanos... hemos tenido que excavar para buscar debajo de
las cenizas imperiales los colosales fragmentos de los dioses perdidos
(Neruda 2000: n.p.);

We the Americans . . . have had to dig in order to find underneath the
imperial ashes the colossal fragments of the lost gods.

It appears as well in Salomón de la Selva’s *Netzahualcoyotl Acolmixtli*, and in Ernesto Cardenal’s *Homenaje a los indios americanos* and *Los ovnis de oro* (see “Salomón de la Selva” n.d.).

The appeal to anamnesis, by such Marxist poets as Neruda and de la Selva is surprising, since Marxism relies on empirical a posteriori, rather

than received a priori, knowledge. Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" established Classical Greece as the font of Modern European culture, deliberately limiting knowledge in its final two lines to its received dogma that "'Beauty is truth, truth beauty,' – that is all / Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know" (verses 49-50). Keats' injunction is rooted in a tautology, which may be seen as a regression to the 'mirror-stage' of the Lacanian Imaginary Order (in which the world is perceived as an image or projection of one's self) (Eagleton 2009:1-2 & 5) – in which case, the image on the urn should be seen more as a contemporary mirror, a freezing of time, rather than a view into the soul of the ancient Greeks. Neruda's appeal lay in an appeal for Latin Americans to explore their non-European roots and use them as material *prima* for their own liberation. The same is true of Cardenal and Salomón de la Selva, although the latter also sought to please his Mexican hosts while suffering exile from Nicaragua.

Anamnesis imbues such writing with an early Romanticist tone. While Modernismo also looked back at the past, it offered a museum-like gaze, in which pieces were framed and precisely sighted, taking into account parergonal issues. It was more about commodification and consumption of images rather than viewing them as received texts. As such, they vied with images of medieval princesses and exotic japoneries. "Tutecotzimí," however, offered a foundation myth – something every serious nation needed.

Darío filled the Central American landscape with a treasure of living jewels; although his understanding of Central American Indigenous history and culture was limited, presenting us a garbled version that mixes Pipiles, Aztecs and Mayans. One can surely argue, as does Luis Melgar Brizola (personal communication), that allusions to Ahuizotl, Motecuhzoma and Netzahualcoyotl raise this ode to the level of a codex, linking Central America through a common lineage to indigenous works of a Mexican metropolis. While the Pipiles have origins in Central Mexico, they developed a unique Central American culture. Then there is Votan, a Mayan Tzeltal and Tzotzil hero, seemingly having little to do with the Pipiles, but since Tutecotzimí could be construed as an Earth Deity name, as Votan seems to be in the form *wontonh*, where it serves as a day name among Mayan Chuj-speakers; corresponding to the Yucatecan day name Akbal 'darkness' (Nick Hopkins & Brian Stross, personal communication). The name seems to have originated in Gulf Coast Nawat *bhawitan* (vel sim) 'forest, wilderness' (Peralta Ramírez, ms. n.d.) As such, Votan seems to have been an Earth God (Nick Hopkins, personal communication). Memories of Votan may lie in the intermarriage of elites between ethnic groups.

Darío speaks of ‘soldados de Sakulen’ (recte Zaculeu < Mam zak ‘blanca’ + ulew ‘tierra’; (Nick Hopkins, personal communication), “de Nabaj (recte Nebaj) ... Ixiles de la sierra,” “Quelenes, zapotecas, tendales, katchikeles, / los mames ... [el] bélico kiché.” The Quelenes are Tzeltal and Tzotzil kelem or kerem ‘boy’, presumably young infantry. Their fascinating history began in Tula, like the Pipiles, and ended with their assimilation by the Tzeltal and Tzotzil (León García Garagarza, personal communication).

Darío’s sources included Francisco Antonio de Fuentes y Guzmán and Domingos Juarros, who mention having seen written Pipil codices. Robert Carmack speaks of a lost ‘Título Pipil’, incorporated into Fuentes y Guzmán (1973:74). There he probably found the names Cuauchimicín (Kwaw-tsin-mistun; Darío’s Cuaucmichin) and Tutecotzimí. The names are garbled but seem to be based on kwaw-mixtun, meaning “wildcat” (Darío’s Cuaucmichin is kwaw-k michin ‘orchid’ or, literally, ‘forest-like fish’; Tuteku-tsin, meaning ‘Our revered Lord’ or Tu-teku-Tsitsmi-t, meaning ‘Our Lord [Earth] Monster (i.e. Cipactli)’. Other names include Princess Oztotzskij, from wej-wetska, meaning ‘laughter’ or wej-wetska-ni, meaning ‘happy’; Tekij from tekiti, meaning ‘to work’ or possibly teki ‘to cut’; Tamagastad (from ta-maka-s-tuk, meaning ‘Provider of things’ vel sim.; the K’iche’ deity Hurakán (Hun Rakan ‘One Leg’; i.e. ‘Hurricane’).

The initial epiphany while gazing on the gathered treasure, raises profound questions. Faced with the (primal) Event, Darío can only follow symbolic traces – thus, the intended confrontation with the Lacanian Real becomes subject to the Symbolic Order upon codification due to the ineffable and horrible nature of the Real. The Symbolic Order is a doubled-edged blade that makes communication possible while dictating both the structure and content of communication in its role as Big Other/Super-Ego, thus blinding us to alternative ways of perception (note Wittgenstein’s maxim “Die Grenzen meiner Sprache bedeuten die Grenzen meiner Welt” (“The limits of my language mean the limits of my world”; Wittgenstein 1922: 5.6), but Wittgenstein does not mention that the limits of speech are constantly subject to change). This codification takes Darío beyond the infantile Imaginary Order. Here the narrator is imbued with desire, converted into Drive, by the objet petit a (the a priori object-cause of desire) – the search to fill the lacuna created by the impossibility of directly facing the Real (the insurmountable parallax gap) with some sort of substitute or simulacrum. This becomes part of “un proyecto de vertebrar una propuesta de identidad cultural nacional” (a project of structuring a proposal of national cultural identity). It is a route of origin and it is necessary to follow this path in order to recognize its depth (Alvarenga

2004:116). Upon excavating “oro, ópalos y ricas piedras finas, templos y estatuas rotas, (gold, opals and fine rich stones, temples and broken statues)” Darío emphasizes “la precisión de su verbo profético (the precision of its prophetic word),” poesis in its role of constructing national identity as “la búsqueda de la identidad [como] la fuente originaria de la auténtica poesía (the search for identity as the originating font of authentic poetry)” (Urtecho 1999 s.p.). Thanks to his mastery and inspiration, only the poet, as hieros, can interpret this past:

Y el misterioso jeroglífico adivina la Musa.
De la temporal bruma surge la vida extraña
de pueblos abolidos; la leyenda confusa
se ilumina; revela secretos la montaña
en que se alza la ruina (verses 10-15).

And the mysterious hieroglyph guesses the Muse.
From the Monsoon fog surges forth the strange life
of vanished peoples; the legend confuses
it illuminates; it reveals secrets -- the mountain
which elevates the ruin.

The poet, therefore, is a magician, a priest or scientist capable of transcending time, taking us where we can't go while presenting the Real in a language we can understand – ostensibly through the use of parallax view in which antinomies are synthesized, and through which the Real is perceived as a glance (Karatani 2003:3 & 6). Here, Darío prefigures T. S. Eliot's idea of the poet as high priest in a post-religious society (Enrico Mario Santí, personal communication). There are distinct Theosophical overtones in his claims and words, as seen below in “Delucidaciones,” the proemio of *El Canto Errante*:

El don del arte es un don superior que permite entrar en lo desconocido de antes y en lo ignorado de después, en el ambiente del ensueño o de la meditación (Darío. cited in Tünnermann-Bernheim 2007 s.p.).

The gift of art is a superior gift that lets us enter into the here-to-fore unknown and the there-after forgotten, into the environment of fantasy or meditation.

As Alvaro Urtecho points out:

El numen poético (la Musa) adivina, devela, revela, descifra el misterio de las escrituras antiguas, el misterio del pasado, el enigma de los orígenes. La poesía revela raíces: las desnuda, las expone y las actualiza según los signos y símbolos del tiempo que se vive. Darío, en su anhelo permanente de

infinito, quiere que esas raíces trasciendan convirtiéndose en espíritu absoluto (Urtecho 1999:s.p.).

The poetic numen (the Muse) divines, unveils, reveals, deciphers the mystery of ancient writings, the mystery of the past, the enigma of origins. Poetry reveals roots: it denudes them, exposes them and updates them according to the signs and symbols of the time in which one lives. Darío, in his permanent desire for the infinite, wanted those roots to transcend, to become absolute spirit.

Here, roots are updated in accordance with prevailing ideology (a facet of the Symbolic Order). Faced with the astonishing speed of social and technological change, many see the past as nostalgia, thereby denying the future as well as the present. Modernistas indeed tended to flee an uncertain present toward an imaginary past. In the same way, in spaces opened for marginalized nations and ethnic groups, the respect for distinct forms of self-expression functions in large part as compensation for the lack of economic and political power ("From Clubmen ... " 2000: n.p.). Certain practices of cultural and eco-studies take refuge in an edenic past that never existed. It is a pre-humanistic attitude of a time when the past served as the privileged seat of the hopes of humanity (Quijano 1993:142). Ashis Nandy, for example, limits choice to an oppressive metanarrative that promises a glorious future versus an irrational return to the past – a *saudade* rooted in fantasy (Nandy 2004:n.p.). The constitution of a new image of self for the individual in a world of change is necessary for the formation of new identities in the contemporary world. Instead of seeing the world with a desire for a better life, some seek roots, a national identity seething in selfish stench, protecting their few acres as the territory of lost ideals (Kofod Olsen 1999:n.p.). This pessimistic view only contrasts globalism with the intellectual construction of an imagined community, the irrational praise of national identity. Albert Béguin noted that absorption into the world of dreams, nostalgia for a golden age and for epic origins only makes sense within a framework that leads toward the harshest view of the real world (Grodén and Kreiswirth 1997:n.p.)

Darío recognized the risks of falling into nostalgia:

Somos malos, tenemos el ímpetu de nuestros abuelos indios, su fuego y su potencia terrígena; y de nuestros padres españoles, todo su fanatismo y sus pasiones (Darío *El Heraldo* (15 XI 1891) cit. Matamoro 2002: n.p.).

We are evil, we have the impetus of our Indian grandfathers, their fire and their telluric power; and of our Spanish fathers, all their fanaticism and their passions.

The art of memory substitutes for the loss of history. The knowledge of history and its significance for present constructions and the possibility of establishing new meanings and change is demanded by necessity. It is an attempt to suggest different possibilities for the present, of generating ideals in the present, constructed from the utopian ideals of the past, which lead toward the future (Kofod Olsen 1999:n.p.); and then surpassing outmoded utopias with new epiphanies. The distance created by time and/or space by utopia offers a field for examining the Real and the imaginary [here not the Lacanian Imaginary Order, which is an infantile mirror stage] (Csicsery-Ronay 1999. n.p.).

For Darío, in modernity, poetry had become a simulacrum for armed conflict, in which the poet is the most masculine of all. Only the poet, therefore, could impose peace where before there had been war, here triumphalism is the product of the pen (see Matamoro 2002:n.p.). In this sense, the inclusion of Netzahualcóyotl in the poem is key. The tlatoani of Texcoco was a poet-king, whose profession curiously paralleled Plato's philosopher king – who, as everyone knows, expelled poets from the polis. Here we enter the utopian with the Apollonian poet at the center of society, in contrast to the Dionysian *poète maudit* ("Salomón de la Selva": n.d.). In contrast with the idyllic, a world of individualist infantile pleasures, Utopia is the scene of collective harmony where work is the supreme source of happiness (Csicsery-Ronay 1999:n.p.). In accordance to this view of Utopia, Tekij, the hero's name, is derived from Nawat *tekiti*, meaning 'to work, make, construct' (see Central American Spanish *tequioso*, meaning '[hyper]active') with either an augmentative or diminutive suffix (i.e. *tekits*, *tekitsin*) (Calvo Pacheco 2002:n.p.), meaning 'maker; i.e. *fabbro*, *poiêtai*.' This identification with the utopian more with the day-to-day practical than a mythic-religious identity already expired in the past, makes the concept of a plural and infinitely progressive utopias possible (see Vidal Jiménez 2002:n.p.). Tekij, however, may also be derived from *teki*, meaning 'to cut', suggesting 'sacrifice' or 'agriculture' (which is rooted in sacrifice).

So, why a return to the past? There is a specter in the form of the spirit of time that can be used to subvert those who are easily dominated by liberalism (Brennan 1998:265); which threatened Central America over 100 years ago just as today. The conscious is a deceptive mask and an operative trace of events that organizes the present. A repressed past returns clandestinely to the present. The dead return to haunt the world of the living – in a *re-mord historique*. History is cannibalistic and memory is converted into the field of battle between oblivion and the mnemonic trace. It is the action of a past forced to disguise itself. Any autonomous order is

founded on what it eliminates, producing a residue condemned to oblivion. But the excluded reinfilters its point of origin to convert the permanence of the present into an illusion. Historiography sees the past on the side of the present – cause and effect, succession, disjunction (de Certeau 1989:3-4). When examining the past, one risks falling into pastiche, an imitation of dead styles as a casual cannibalism of the past – creating a nostalgia that blurs the present as a simulacrum (Jameson 1999:74 & 76). Limits, restrictions and repressions, or blank spaces, form the most interesting part of a utopian framework (i.e. as an analysis of the effects of the Symbolic Order via the Big Other/Superego). They attest to the manner in which a culture or system designs the most visionary mind and limits its movement toward transcendence (Jameson 1999:208).

In history, those who have the ability to change are the living (*los vivos*) – those who survive, those who create, those who escape the epic cycle through the dialectic, motivated by utopian dreams. The inability to change leads to war or extinction (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:230). Utopia is not an end but a process. The failure of utopia returns more intensively to reality. It is immanent because it is a failure that does not progress beyond the realm of thought (Buchanan 164-166). It uses repetition to begin the process of becoming. Something new can only emerge from repetition – that which not only repeats not only the past as it effectively was but its inherent virtuality betrayed by its prior manifestation. The arrival of the new not only retroactively changes the past but also the equilibrium between reality and the virtual in the past (Žižek 2004:12). Given that utopia occupies all space and time, if only for a fleeting moment, I see it as a chronotope, in the Baxtinian sense (schizophrenic in the Deleuzian sense), whose failure lies in attempts to freeze it into the Imaginary Order. On the other hand, there is, in my opinion, a countervailing ‘xibalban’ chronotope (i.e. from Xibalba ; paranoid in the Deleuzian sense), which attempts to stop time while occupying all space (one could add a PoMo chronotope that forms a pastiche by mixing time – or at least privileging style as a space-time wormhole). The dialectic dissolves nostalgia in favor of aura. Benjaminian aura grants the object with the power of gazing backward. The broken fragments of allegory represent a thing – a world of destructive forces that floods human autonomy, therefore, the objects of aura stand out as the landscape of a type of utopia in the present, an ephemeral plenitude of existence. This component of Walter Benjamin’s thought, nevertheless, only exist in a simpler cultural past (Jameson 1971:77).

In “Tutecotzimí,” the re-mord of the past shows a possible escape from the cycle of Central American civil wars, provoked as much by local dictators as by the great powers acting in the benefit of national and

commercial interests (Fox Lockert 1987:60). Darío appropriated this remord to offer history an alternative direction.

The Pipiles and Nicaraos arrived in Central America to fulfill their historical destiny. According to Torquemada in *Monarchia Indiana* (Tomo II:107):

En aquel tiempo vino sobre ellos un grande ejército de gente que se decían olmecas. Estos dicen que vinieron de ácia México y que antiguamente habían capitales enemigos de aquellos que estaban poblados en el despoblado que ahora es entre Xoconochco y Tehuantepec. Estos olmecas dieron guerra, vencieron y sujetaron a los naturales, y pusiéronles grandes tributos, teníanles tan avasallados que entre otras cosas les demandaban grande número de mugeres doncellas, para tomar por mugeres y para servir de ellos. Asimismo les demandaban cada día que se les diesen de cada pueblo, dos niños; no supieron declarar los indios, que dieron esta relación si querían éstos para sacrificar o para comer o para servicio. Avían también de darles cada día cien gallinas, y servíanse de ellos como esclavos. Y en recibiendo el menor descontentamiento del mundo, de su servicio, luego los flechaban (Torquemada cited in Mántica 29-30).

At that time they were overcome by a great army of people who were called Olmecs. They said they came from Mexico and that formerly there were enemy capitals of those people in the unpopulated area that is now between Xoconochco and Tehuantepec. These Olmecs attacked, conquered and enslaved the native people, and subjected them to large amount of tribute, making them such vassals that among other things they demanded from them a large number of young women, to take as their wives and to serve them. They also demanded from them everyday that they give them from each town, two children; the Indians never knew whether they gave this arrangement for them to be sacrificed or eaten or for service. They also had to give them one hundred chickens everyday, and serve them as slaves. And if they make the smallest complaint in the world, about their service, then they would shoot arrows at them.

Torquemada states they were led by their *alfaquies* ('Islamic religious judges' – a deliberate and insulting misprism (not a mistake) for Spaniards of the day:

Viéndose en tanta aflicción, y en tan grave servidumbre, los que antes estaban señores de aquella tierra y la poseían pacíficamente demandaron consejo a sus *alfaquies* que les diejesen qué debían hacer, que no podían sufrir tan tiranos tributos, y tantos trabajos y muertes. Entonces los *alfaquies* demandaron término de ocho días para responder y consultar a sus dioses, lo que debían hacer. Al término de los ocho días dijeron: Que se opericibiesen [sic] para que todos en un día, lo más secreto que pudiesen, levantasen sus mugeres y niños, y sus haciendas y se fuesen adelante, y dejasen aquella

tierra, mas ellos respondieron que tenían mui grande temor, que les acabarían de matar, viendo que se querían ir de aquella manera. Entonces los alfaquies les aseguraron que no tuviesen miedo porque sus dioses venían en su guarda tras de ellos, y con ellos, guardándolos y defendiéndolos: y esforzados en el consejo y prometimiento que sus alfaquies les prometían salieron de aquella tierra, que antes habían morado, con grande contentamiento y gusto (Torquemada cited in Mántica 2003:31).

Seeing them in such affliction, and in such dire servitude, those who were formerly lords of that land and [who] possessed it peacefully demanded counsel from thie judges who told them what to do, so they would not suffer such tyrannous tribute, and so much labor and death. Then the judges demanded a span of eight days, saying: 'Be ready so that everyone in one day, as secretly as possible, gather his women and children, and their belongings and set forth, and leave that land,' but they repoded that they were very afraid, that they would be killed off, when they saw that they wanted to leave that way. Then the judges assured them so they would not be afraid because their gods were coming to look after them, and [were] with them, guarding them and defending them; and strengthened in the counsel and promise that their fakirs promised them, they left that land, where they had dwelled before, with great contentment and glee.

Pipil history is confusing, with several waves of refugees arriving from Central Mexico after the fall of Teotihuacan until shortly before the Spanish conquest (Geoffroy Rivas 2004:83ff.; Nick Hopkins, personal communication; Kaufman 2001:4-6; Mántica 2003:26). The texts mention refugees from the Olmecs (actually Olmeca Xicallanca – Mixe-Zoque or Mayan speakers) from Cholula, from Tula with the fall of Ce Acatl Nacxítl Topiltzin Quetzalcoatl, and from the imperial expansion of Ahuizotl, Tlatoani of Tenochtitlan (Geoffroy Rivas 2004:83 ff.) – whose name survives in the Central American expression *ahuizoteado*; used to refer to someone who is scared to death. "Tutecotzimi" reveals this confusion by mentioning in the same space Aztecs, Zapotecs and Mayans. Darío presents the Pipiles as sons of Ahuizotl, which is incorrect.

After a fight for survival the Pipiles began a series of wars of conquest under their king and high priest Cuaucmichin ('Wildcat') (Calvo Pacheco 2002), associated with savage felines:

Mientras el puma hace crujir las hojas secas
 ... Cuaucmichin, el cacique sacerdotal y noble,
 viene de caza;

 Puesto que el tigre muestra las garras, sea, pues,

 ¿Por qué de los pipiles la sangre has derramado

como tigre del monte, Cuaucmichin, Cuaucmichin?

... ..

¡Flecheros, muerte al tigre! responde un indio fiero.

While the puma makes the dry leaves crackle
... Cuaucmichin, the priestly and noble chieftain,
goes hunting.

... ..

Since the tiger shows his claws, then,

... ..

Why has the blood of the Piples been spilled
like a tiger from the mountain. Cuaucmichin, Cuaucmichin?,

... ..

"Archers, death to the tiger!" responds a savage Indian.

In spite of his name and epithets, he is better identified with another animal, 'tu nahual maldice, serpiente-tacuazín! (Your nahual curses, snake-possum!).' In Central American Spanish *tacuacín* is a type of opossum (called *tacuache* in Mexican Spanish), whose Nawat-derived name is from *ta-kwa-tsin*, meaning 'little glutton' (from *ta* 'thing' + *kwa* 'eat' + *tsin* 'diminutive.' This is an obvious play on Nawat *tekwani* 'jaguar, puma, wildcat, man-eater, carnivore' < *te-kwa-ni* < *te* 'people' + *kwa* 'eat' + *ni* 'habitual' (Calvo Pacheco 2002). He is a vermin-like creature that aspires to glory. Here we see his true unrestrained nature, Deleuzianan schizophrenia taken to its extreme, unlimited desire. It is inhuman and possesses an evil nahual or spirit companion.

Otzotskij, Cuaucmichin's daughter, like most women in Darío's work, acts as mere window dressing (see Matamoro 2002: not p.);

De las cuadradas puertas en el quicio de roble,
de Otzotskij, su tierna hija, ve el flamante huepil

From the square doors in the oaken hinge,
of Otzotskij, his dear daughter, he sees the shining huipil.

Her name, based on *wetska*, meaning 'laugh' (Calvo Pacheco 2002), conforms to the low importance that Darío gives to women in his work (see Matamoro 2002).

Tekij is 'doer, maker', a divine title in the *Popol Vuh*. Finally, he is rewarded with the title *Tutecotzimí*, either from *tu-teku-tsin*, meaning 'Our revered Lord' or *tu-teku-tsimi-t*, meaning 'Our Lord [Earth] Monster' (Calvo Pacheco 2002). Although Earth Monsters or *Sisimites* are evil in Nawat lore, this reference may actually refer to the Crocodilian Earth Monster *Cipactli*, whose name was applied to the first day of the calendar.

Interestingly enough, even though the hero is Tekij, the majority of the 28 stanzas are dedicated to the bloody deeds of Cuaucmichin. But history begins with Tekij, since under Cuaucmichin, the Pipiles lived in epic time, a circular chronotope that did not admit progress. By sacrificing warriors and perverting the peaceful culture of the Pipiles, Cuaucmichin negated the future. Tekij, the

poeta litúrgico y valiente
que en su pupila tiene la luz de la visión

liturgical and brave poet
who possessed the light of vision in his eye

introduced linear time. ‘Liturgical’ is a key word that refers to the forward oriented time first proclaimed by Saint Augustine. Even though there are yearly cycles, they still lead ever upward in a spiral toward godly perfection.

The ode, whose repetitive rhythm and progression seeks an end, differs from the epic, which honors a past, un point de capiton – an instant of change, that will never return, although there will be echoes in the form of remord historique when similar problems occur. Alexandrine verse, with its legacy from les chansons des gestes, is associated with themes of glory and traitors brought to justice. It is also the form par excellence of Darío’s French models. The sextets, with their AABCCB rhyme scheme, offer a progressive dialectic through their alternations and occasional breakdowns; which also serve to slow down and highlight narrative. The poem may be read as a dialectic between Tekij and Cuaucmichin, which refers to the Pipiles in the most general terms: ‘el palacio, el campo, carcajes y huipiles (the palace, the field, quivers and huipiles);’ i.e. by residence and attire. Darío establishes a structure of power in those words, associating residence and attire with Bourdieusian champs.

Ruler:	palace
Male:	field, quivers
Female:	huipiles

Cuaucmichin usurped Pipil traditions – his tyranny indicates a paralysis of time –

El Rey murió; la muerte es reina de los reyes.
Nuestros padres formaron nuestras sagradas leyes;
hablaron con los dioses en lengua de verdad.
Y un día, en la floresta, Votan dijo a un anciano
que él no bebía sangre del sacrificio humano,

que sangre es chicha roja para Tamagastad.
 Por eso los pipiles jamás se la ofrecimos,
 del plátano fragante cortamos los racimos
 para ofrecérselos al dios sagrado y fiel.
 La sangre de las bestias el cuchillo derrame;
 más sangre de pipiles, ¡oh, Cuaucmichin infame;
 ayer has ofrecido en holocausto cruel.

The King died; death is the queen of kings.
 Our forefathers formed our sacred laws;
 they spoke with the gods in the language of truth.
 and one day, in the forest, Votan said to an elder
 that he did not drink the blood of human sacrifice.
 that blood is red chicha for Tamagastad.
 That is why we Pipiles never offer it,
 from the fragrant plaintain we cut the bunches,
 to offer them to the sacred and faithful god.
 Blood from beasts is cut by the knife;
 but blood of Pipiles, ¡oh, infamous Cuaucmichin;
 yesterday you offered in a cruel holocaust.

Tekij ended the false glory of Cuaucmichin; denying him a death worthy of a warrior. Arrows and lances were used for war, hunting and human sacrifice. The sacrifice of such a tyrant would have been an abomination. He was struck down like a rabid dog:

¡Es indigno de la flecha o la lanza!
 ¡La tierra se estremece para clamar venganza!
 ¡A las piedras, pipiles!

He is unworthy of the arrow or the lance!
 The earth stretches out to claim vengeance!
 To the stones, Pipiles!

The people, tired of war, named Tekij as their leader.

viose pasar un hombre cantando en alta voz
 un canto mexicano. Cantaba cielo y tierra,
 alababa a los dioses, maldecía la guerra.
 Llamáronle: “¿tú cantas paz y trabajo?” -”Sí.”
 el palacio, el campo, carcajes y huepiles;
 Celebra a nuestros dioses, dirige a los pipiles.
 Y así empezó el reinado de Tutecotzimí.

they saw a man pass by singing out loud
 a Mexican song. He sang of heaven and earth,

he was praising the gods, he was cursing war.
 They called out to him: "Do you sing of peace and work?" --"Yes."
 the palace, the field, quivers and huipiles;
 Honor our gods, lead the Pipiles.
 And thus began the reign of Tutecotzimí.

The poet, with his vision of the true interests of the people, is its savior (Fox Lockert 1987:60). Here we see a Kehre from Platonic recollection to Augustine repetition, pulling time from an epic framework to a modern template. The desire to replace war and blood sacrifice with peace and work represents a utopian landmark in Central American history – shattered with the arrival of the Spaniards. Yet, in this sense, the restoration of Pipil civilization reestablishes Central American nature:

Eran cinco pipiles; eran los Padres nuestros;
 eran cultivadores, agricultores, diestros
 en prácticas pacíficas; sembraban el añil,
 cocían argamasas, vendían pieles y aves;
 así fundaron, rústicos, espléndidos y suaves,
 los prístinos cimientos del pueblo del pipil.

There were five Pipiles, they were our Forefathers;
 they were cultivators, farmers, wise
 in peaceful practices; they sowed indigo,
 they baked clay, they sold fur and birds;
 that is how they founded, rustic, splendid and soft,
 the pristine foundations of the Pipil folk.

The five Pipiles mentioned represent, of course, the five historic republics of Central America. In historical terms, Cuaucmichin, in turn, was merely a non-dynast named to the kingship. He was replaced by Tutecotzimí, a member of the House of Kuskatan (meaning 'Among the Jewels' or 'Land of Buzzards'; Cuzcatlan in Nahuatl). Darío privileged chthonian deities such as Votan over sky lords such as Tamagastad (meaning 'Provider'; an avatar of Ketsalkuwat or Taluk, or Tlaloc, 'he who makes flow,' from taluwa 'to flow'). If Tutecotzimí is derived from Tsisimi-t, this links him to the gods of Miktan, the Underworld, but they, unlike Ketsalkuwat, demanded human sacrifice. Cuaucmichin, as 'Wildcat', is associated with the Underworld – in the Nahua iconography, eagles represented the Sun and Heaven, jaguars were associated with the Moon and the Underworld (Garibay 1979:21).

Darío sought another Tekij to eliminate the bloody Central American dictatorships. After more than 50 years of independence, democracy and rule of law still had not arrived. He had just returned from Argentina and Chile,

which he saw as peaceful and progressive models for Central America (Fox Lockert 1987:60-61). By emulating their success, Central America would enter into history in conformance with a Hispanic-American mold. This was the utopian epiphany the narrator wished to share. Although the utopian moment is nothing more than an instant in time – a landmark to be surpassed in the future, it is not rooted in homeostasis. The utopias of Plato, More, Bacon et alii never bore fruit precisely because they sought to freeze time. Darío, however, sought a morphogenetic model of mechanical assembly suitable for local realities (Bogard 2005:2 of 9). Unlike the kiss in Keats's Grecian urn, forever frozen in time, the inspiration of Darío's urn lives on. "Tutecotzimí" is but an example of Darío's concern for liberty and justice – for discussions of "A Roosevelt" and "Letanía de Nuestro Señor don Quijote" (see Mc Callister 2010).

Even if, as Arturo Torres Rioseco and Octavio Paz mention, Darío lacked Tekij's ample vision and valor (Torres Rioseco 1931:57; Paz 1967:267), his dream of peace and progress did not lack merit, but surely in 1891, local dictators would have received the idea of a poet overthrowing tyranny with sarcastic laughter. Darío's wait until long after the Conservative dictatorship had been overthrown by the progressive-thinking Zelaya was a prudent act. But, in the end, it was precisely the poets who incited and praised the martyrs who fought to establish democracy in present day Central America. Today, over 100 years after the publication of *El canto errante*, in spite of the threats of neo-liberalism, we find hope, as before, in a vibrant culture that inspires the search of home-grown alternatives and solutions for the region's problems. Nicaragua, in spite of its material needs, continues to be a cultural superpower.

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