

The Slave Ship. Tragedy at the sea

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We are in the middle of the sea... the moon
Plays merrily in the space- golden butterfly;
And the waves run towards her... haggard
As a frenzied mob of children.

We are in the middle of the sea... from the firmament
The stars pop like gold foam
The sea, in response, lights up its phosphorescence
-Constellations of liquid treasure

We are in the middle of the sea... two infinities
Entwine in an insane embrace.
Blue, golden, placid, sublime...
Which one is the sky? Which one the ocean?

We are in the middle of the sea...unfurling the sails
To the hot gasp of the maritime breeze,
The brig skims the sea
Just like swallows brush the waves

Where does she come from? Where is she going? Of wandering ships,
Who knows their destination if this space is so big?
In this Sahara the steeds raise dust behind them
They gallop, but leave no track.

Very happy the one who can, at this moment,
Feel the majesty of this landscape!
Below, the sea; above, the firmament
In the sea, and in the sky- the immensity!
O! What a sweet harmony brings the breeze!
What a gentle music is ringing now !
My God! How sublime the burning chant
Of the infinite waves floating aimlessly!

Men of the sea, O tough mariners,
Tanned by the sun of the four worlds!
Children lulled to sleep by the storm,
In the cradle of these deep slopes!

Wait! Wait! Let me drink
This wild, free poetry!
Orchestra- it's the sea, that roars by the bow
And the wind, that whistles by the ropes...

.....
.....
Why do you run away like this, swift vessel?
Why do you run away from the fearful poet?
O, If I could just go along your wake

That resembles the sea- mad comet!

Albatross! Albatross! Eagle of the ocean.
You, who sleep, wrapped in gauze, among the clouds.
Shake off your woes, Leviathan of the space,
Albatross! Albatross! Give me your wings.

II

What matters the sailor's cradle?
Whose son is he? Where is his home?
He loves the cadence of the verse
That he learns from the old sea!
Sing because death is divine!
The brig slides windward
As a swift dolphin
Imprisoned in the gaff-rigged sail,
The melancholic flag bids farewell
To the waves that are left behind.

The little songs of the Spaniard,
Trilling with languor,
Bring back memories of the dark maidens
The blooming Andalucians!

The sluggish son of Italy
Sings to the sleepy Venice
-Land of love and treason,
Or due to the gulf at his lap,
He remembers the verses of Tasso,
By the lava of the Vulcano

The English- cold mariner,
Who at birth to the sea was brought
(because England is a vessel,
That God anchored in the Channel)
Sings rigidly his national glories
Remembering, proud, the stories
Of Nelson and Aboukir
The French- predestined-
Sings the past triumphs
And the triumphs to come...

The Hellenic mariners,
Who were bred by the Ionic wave,
Beautiful brown-skinned pirates
From the sea that Ulysses sailed
Men once sculpted by Phidias,
They are singing in the clear night
Verses that Homer groaned...
Navigators of all places,
You know how to find in the tides
The melodies from Heaven!

III

Descend from the immense space, O ocean eagle!
Descend more...even more... the human sight can't
Submerge like you do in the fleeting brig!
But, what do I see?... What a sorrowful scene!
It's a funeral song... What a bundle of gloomy figures!

What an infamous and vile scene...My God! My God! What a horror!

IV

It was a Dantesque dream...The deck
That paints the light red with its lanterns,
Will be drenched in blood.
Tolling of iron... crack of whip
Legion of men black as night,
Dancing hideously

Black women, holding to their tits
Emaciated children whose black mouths
Are watered by the blood of their mothers:
Other young women, but naked and frightened,
Crawl in the whirlwind of specters
In futile yearning and pain!

And the orchestra laughs ironically, raucously
And in the fantastic circle the serpent
Makes frisky spirals...
If an old man gets tired, or if he slips over the floor,
Shouts are heard... and the whip cracks
And they move quicker and quicker...

Ensnared by the links of the same chain,
The hungry crowd wobbles
And cries, and dances there
One raves with anger, another loses his mind,
Another, stupefied by the torments
Sings, moans and laughs!

Meanwhile the captain orders the maneuver
And after staring at the sky that spreads
So purely over the sea
He says from the dense fog:
"Brandish the whip, mariners
Let's make them dance more!"

And the orchestra laughs ironically, raucously
And in the fantastic circle the serpent
Makes frisky spirals...
As in a Dantesque dream, the shadows fly!
Screams, laments, cursings, and prayers resonate
And Satan laughs!

V

Lord God of the wretched!
Lord God! Tell me
If this is madness... or if so much horror
Before the heavens is real!
O sea, why don't you erase
With the sponge of your waves
This taint from your mantle?
Stars! Nights! Storms!
Come down from above the immensities!
Sweep the seas, typhoon!

Who are these wretched
That find nothing in you

But the calm laughter of the mob?
What excites the wrath of the tormenter?
Who are they? If the star remains silent,
If the wave passes by quickly
As a fleeting accomplice,
Before the confusing night...
Tell me, severe Muse
You, the freest Muse, tell me!

They are the sons of the desert
Where the land marries the light
Where the tribe of naked men
Lives on an open field
They are the daring warriors
That, in solitude,
Fight the flecked tigers
Yesterday, simple, strong, ferocious
Today, miserable slaves
Lightless, airless, reasonless

They are wretched women,
As Hagar was too,
Women that, thirsty and weak,
From afar, from very afar, come...
They bring, with feeble steps,
Sons and shackles in their arms,
 And within their souls; gall and sadness...
As Hagar, they suffer so much,
That not even the milk of weeping
They can offer to Ishmael.

There, in the infinite sands
From the palm-trees of the country
Beautiful girls will be born...
Graceful maidens will live...
One day, a caravan will pass by
While the virgin in the cabin
Distrusts the night that covers us...
...Adieu, Oh hut of the mountain!
...Adieu, palms of the fountain!
...Adieu, loves, adieu!

Then, the extensive sands
Then, the ocean of dust
Then, in the immense horizon
Deserts...just deserts
And hunger, fatigue and thirst
Alas. How many a wretched gives up
And falls to the ground to rise no more
Another slot in the chain becomes empty,
But the jackal on the sand
Always finds a corpse to chew

Yesterday, Sierra Leone,
The war, the lion hunting,
The careless slumber
Over the ample tents
Today... the dark, deep hold
Foul, crowded, filthy,

Where the pest, instead of the jaguar, abounds...
And the sleep is always interrupted
By the withdrawal of a deceased
And the noise of a body plunking down the sea

Yesterday, absolute freedom
Will of power
Today, a host of evilness,
They are not even free to die
Fastened by the same chain
-Fierce, lugubrious snake-
To the spirals of slavery
And mocking death in that way
The lugubrious company dances
In the crack of the whip... mockery!

Lord God of the wretched!
Lord God! Tell me
Is it a delirium?... is so much horror
Before the heavens real?
O sea, why don't you erase
With the sponge of your waves
This taint from your mantle?
Stars! Nights! Storms!
Come down from above the immensities!
Sweep the seas, typhoon!

VI
There is a nation that lends its flag
To cover such infamy and cowardice!...
And lets it turn into this party;
Into this cold bacchante's impure mantle!...
My God! My God, but, what is this flag,
That shamelessly over the topsail gloats over?
Silence, Muse... cry, and cry so much
That the ensign cleanses with you tears!

Green-yellow banner of my land,
That the wind of Brazil kisses and makes wave
Banner that encloses the sunlight
And the divine promises of hope...
You that, in the freedom after the war,
Were hoisted as a spear by the heroes in arms,
They would have rather torn you apart amid the battle,
Instead of using you as the shroud of a nation!

Atrocious fatality that haunts the mind!
Wipe out at this very moment the filthy brig,
The track that Columbus traced amid the waves,
As a rainbow in the deep abyss!
But this is too much infamy. From the ethereal land
Rise, heroes of the New World!
Adrada! Rip that flag from the air!
Columbus! Close the doors of your seas!