

Classic Poetry Series

Jose Asuncion Silva
- poems -

Publication Date:

2004

Publisher:

Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

Jose Asuncion Silva(1865 - 1896)

Jose Asuncion Silva along with Jose Marti, Julian del Casal, Salvador Diaz Miron, and Manuel Gutierrez Najera first wrote poetry in the modernist vein or Modernismo (Modernist poetry that often created an exotic tapestry and in some of its aspects it represented, like contemporary movements in other literatures, a rejection of the materialist world of the day).

His poems are supposed to be some of the most beautiful in the Spanish language. They are marked by technical innovations, haunting musical tones, and a brooding spirit of pessimism. Reflecting the spirit of European symbolism, they had great influence on Ruben Dario and other modernistas. The best known are Nocturno III, an elegy for his sister, Crepusculo, and Dia de difuntos (Day of the Dead). Silva also wrote a novel, De Sobremesa, notable for its rejection of realist conventions and its intense, lyrical focus on emotional experience.

Unfortunately the life of this gifted poet was shadowed by the loss of a crucial manuscript, family debt, and the death of a beloved sister, and he committed suicide in 1896, leaving behind a debt of \$210,000.

Fernando Vallejo in his book *Almas en pena, chapolas negras*, tries to unravel the mystery of Silva's financial setbacks and suicide.

A Ti (Silva)

Jose Asuncion Silva

A Un Pesimista

Jose Asuncion Silva

A Veces

Jose Asuncion Silva

Adriana

Jose Asuncion Silva

Al Oído Del Lector

Jose Asuncion Silva

Armonías

Jose Asuncion Silva

Ars

Jose Asuncion Silva

Butterflies

In a fragile vase
In your chamber are
Preserved butterflies
That when touched by
A brilliant sun ray
Turn to mother-of-pearl,
Pieces of iridescent
Evening sky
Or opaline glimmer
Of velvety wings;
There the azure
Daughters of the air,
Mercurial wings
Now fixed forever,
Wings that traversed
Unexplored valleys
That like the desires
Of your enamored soul
Seem, at dawn,
To be revived
When you unlatch
Your windows and sun
Explodes in your eyes
And in crystalline panes.

Jose Asuncion Silva

Cápsulas

Jose Asuncion Silva

Childhood

These recollections with the scent of ferns
Are the idyll of early years
(Gregorio Gutierrez González)

Accompanying the hazy memories
Time so generously glorifies,
Returning to a welcoming heart
And flocking like white butterflies,
Come fantasies of happy childhood days.

Blue Beard, Little Red Ridinghood,
Lilliputians and the giant Gulliver,
All of you, floating in the mist of dreams,
Spread your wings, fly,
So I, the happy journeyer
Through storybooks, may summon you
To join with other, beloved characters.

O blessed youth! Eyes aglimmer
With dawning discovery
Follow the weary teacher's hand
Across the big red figures
In the tattered primer,
Where traces of vague recognition,
Rewarding periods of youthful despondency,
Beneath indifferent shadows
Begin forming letters into words

On a dewy, white,
Luminous, restless August morning,
Helping a blazing sun rise
On wings of the breeze
Toward skies dotted with drifting clouds;
Listening to a grandmother's
Exemplary fairy tales;
Skipping school
To organize a clamorous battle
In which rocks rattle like bullets
And a rumpled kerchief becomes a flag.

Constructing a manger scene
Of materials gathered from the woods,
Then, after the long, rowdy outing
Arranging the grasses,
Coral twigs, and treasured mosses,
And on strange and alien landscapes,
Perspectives never seen or dreamed,
Creating roads of golden sand
And waterfalls of gleaming tinsel.

Positioning the Wise Men on the hill
And overhead
The star that led them from afar;
In the crib, the laughing Baby Jesus
In his bed of
Softest mosses and leafy ferns.

Pristine soul, blush-pink cheeks,
Skin like ermine on the snow,
Flaxen curls,
Sparkling yet peaceful eyes, how fair
In memory the innocent babe!

Childhood, hallowed valley
Of blessed calm and coolness,
Where rays that will later blast our days
So softly shine,
How saintly your pure innocence,
How fleeting your brief happiness,
How sweet in hours of bitterness
To turn back to the past
And call upon those memories!

Jose Asuncion Silva

Chrysalises

The little girl, though very ill,
Went out one morning
To wander, with faltering footsteps,
The nearby hill.
She brought back mountain flowers
In which she hid
A chrysalis and, unknowing, set it
Close beside her bed.

A few days later, at the moment
She lay dying,
We all gathered round, our eyes
Red with crying,
And at the instant she departed
The whisper of wings
Was heard, and through the window,
Taking flight, escaping
Into the waiting garden, wafted
A golden butterfly.

Hurriedly, I searched for the insect's
Now empty prison,
Then turned my gaze to the dead child's
Pallid brow.
If the winged butterfly, I thought, leaves
Its confining cell
To find light and space and the immensity
Of golden fields,
What shall the newly freed soul find when
It bursts its shell?

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Crepusculo 3

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Crepúsculo1

Jose Asuncion Silva

Crisalidas

Jose Asuncion Silva

Día De Difuntos

Jose Asuncion Silva

Diego Fallón

Jose Asuncion Silva

Dusk

The lamp that stands beside the crib
Is not yet lighted to warm the gloom
Of the blueish, opaque light falling
Through the curtains of late afternoon.

From outside come unfamiliar sounds
And weary children interrupt their play
While in every corner of the house
Fairies awaken at the end of day.

Shadows gathering among the drapes
Rustle and murmur to childish ears,
And from the pages of their storybooks
Come all their favorite characters.

First, industrious Rin Rin Renacuajo,
And Mouse Pérez, scurrying to survive,
Then, casting even deeper shadows,
Blue Beard, who killed his seven wives.

Given life in darkest corners,
Somewhere in a distant wood
Puss-in-Boots strides through the meadows
And the Wolf stalks Little Red Ridinghood.

In a deep dark forest echoing
With chilling howls, the handsome Prince,
On his white charger, rides toward
Sleeping Beauty, who awaits his kiss.

The children's voices, silver and pure,
Form a chorus that speaks as one:
"Then they went to the ball and left
Poor Cinderella all alone.

"She wiped away her flowing tears
And scrubbed the kitchen pots and bowls
Watching the dance leaping among
Somber shadows and glowing coals.

“But her fairy godmother soon appeared
With a beauteous gown and, in a thrice,
From a pumpkin produced a golden coach
With prancing steeds, once six white mice.

“She gave Cinderella a lush bouquet
And a glass slipper she quickly donned,
She turned ashes to flashing jewels
With one wave of her magic wand.”

Abandoned dolls tossed on the carpet,
The listening girls sit in thrall,
The light grows pale and dark creeps in
As lowering evening shadows fall.

Wondrous stories of fairies and sprites
Are alive with ideas and fantasies,
They open to childish imaginations
A whole world of possibilities!

Stories born of times long gone,
Wing through the dark of ages,
From powerful, early Aryan tribes
To diminished future races.

These stories are told by nannies
When children can't get to sleep,
The essence of poetic dream
Is the mystery they keep.

These stories have proved more lasting
Than tomes of the philosophers
And with every generation
Have entertained our ancestors.

O tales of elves and ghosts and fairies
That people the dreams all children have,
Time buries you forever in our soul
And man evokes you with his love.

Edenia

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Egalité

Jose Asuncion Silva

El Mal Del Siglo

Jose Asuncion Silva

Enfermedades De La Ninez

Jose Asuncion Silva

Estrellas Fijas

Jose Asuncion Silva

Filosofías (Silva)

Jose Asuncion Silva

For The Reader's Ear

No, that was not passion,
It was the vague tenderness
Inspired by a sickly child,
Lang syne, and moon pale nights.

The spirit sings only
When the heart is moved,
When, shaken by love's power, it trembles,
Broods, draws back, says not a word.

True passion might in fact
Have been...these pages,
That were they written in happier times
Would have appeared as tears, not verses.

Jose Asuncion Silva

Gutierrez Najera

Jose Asuncion Silva

Humo

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Idilio - 1

Jose Asuncion Silva

Idilio 2

Jose Asuncion Silva

Infancia

Jose Asuncion Silva

Juntos Los Dos

Jose Asuncion Silva

La Calavera

Jose Asuncion Silva

La Noches Del Holgar

Jose Asuncion Silva

La Respuesta De La Tierra

Jose Asuncion Silva

La Ventana

Jose Asuncion Silva

La Voz De Las Cosas

Jose Asuncion Silva

Las Ondinas

Jose Asuncion Silva

Las Voces Silenciosas

Jose Asuncion Silva

Los Maderos De San Juan

Jose Asuncion Silva

Luz De Luna

Jose Asuncion Silva

Madrigal

Jose Asuncion Silva

Melancolía (Silva)

Jose Asuncion Silva

Midnight Dreams

Jose Asuncion Silva

Muertos

Jose Asuncion Silva

Nocturne Iii

One night

one night all full of murmurings, of perfumes and music of wings;

one night

in which fantastic fireflies burnt in the humid nuptial shadows,

slowly by my side, pressed altogether close, silent and pale,

as if a presentiment of infinite bitternesses

agitated you unto the most hidden fibers of your being,

along the flowering path which crosses the plain

you walked;

and the full moon

in the infinite and profound blue heavens scattered its white light;

and your shadow,

fine and languid,

and my shadow

projected by the rays of the moon,

upon the sorrowful sands

of the path, joined together;

and they became one,

and they became one,

and they became only one long shadow,

and they became only one long shadow,

and they became only one long shadow....

Tonight

alone; my soul

full of the infinite bitternesses and agonies of your death,

separated from you by time, by the tomb and by distance,

by the infinite blackness

where our voice cannot reach,

silent and alone

along the path I walked ...

And the barking of dogs at the moon could be heard,

at the pale moon,

and the chirping

of the frogs ...

I felt cold. It was the coldness that in your alcove

your cheeks and your temples and your adoréd hands possessed

within the snowy whiteness

of the mortuary sheets.

It was the coldness of the sepulcher, it was the ice of death,
it was the coldness of oblivion.
And my shadow,
projected by the rays of the moon,
walked alone,
walked alone,
walked alone along the solitary plain;
and your shadow, svelte and agile,
fine and languid,
as in that warm night of springtime death,
as in that night full of murmurings, of perfumes and music of wings,
approached and walked with mine,
approached and walked with mine,
approached and walked with mine ... Oh, the shadows intertwined!
Oh, the corporeal shadows united with the shadows of the souls!
Oh, the seeking shadows in those nights of sorrows and of tears!

Jose Asuncion Silva

Nocturno (Silva)

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Nocturno 1 (Silva)

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Notas Perdidas

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Poeta, Di Paso

Jose Asuncion Silva

Realidad (Silva)

Jose Asuncion Silva

Serenata (José Asunción Silva)

Jose Asuncion Silva

Sinfonia Color De Fresa Con Leche

Jose Asuncion Silva

Sub-Umbra

Jose Asuncion Silva

Suspiro (Yearning)

Si en tus recuerdos ves algún día
entre la niebla de lo pasado
surgir la triste memoria mía
medio borrada ya por los años,

piensa que fuiste siempre mi anhelo
y si el recuerdo de amor tan santo
mueve tu pecho; nubla tu cielo,
llena de lágrimas tus ojos garzos;

¡ah! ¡no me busques aquí en la tierra
donde he vivido, donde he luchado,
sino en el reino de los sepulcros
donde se encuentran paz y descanso!

Yearning

If in your memories some day you see
Amidst the fog of times past
The sad remembrance of me appear
Half-erased now by the years,

Think that you were always my yearning
And if the memory of love so sacred
Moves your heart; clouds your sky,
Fills with tears your pretty eyes;

Ah! don't search for me here on earth
Where I've lived, where I've struggled,
Instead seek me out in the kingdom of the dead
Where peace and rest can be found!

Jose Asuncion Silva

The Woodsmen Of San Juan

Until sunset!
From the dawn!
See the woodsmen of San Juan,
They want bread before it's gone!
Those from Roque,
Feeling rocky,
Those from Rique,
Feeling tricky,
Those from Trique,
Sawing on!

Straddling his grandmother's firm knees,
Jogging rhythmically, the boy rides horsey
Till both tremble, filled with exaltation;
The granny smiles with motherly affection,
But then a premonition flashes through
Her mind: fear for the grief and anguish
The coming days hold for her grandson.

See the woodsmen of San Juan,
They want bread before it's gone.
Sss-sss-sawing,
Sawing on!

Those deep furrows tell the story
Of long suffering and unvoiced sorrows,
On her head time has left its snow,
On her brow, pain few have known;
Her eyes, clouded by the years,
Are turbid mirrors that oft retain
Images from lives forever gone.

Those from Roque, feeling rocky,
Sss-sss-sawing, sawing on!

Tomorrow, when the beloved grandmother
Sleeps deep beneath the earth, where others,
Too, dwell in the dark shadows
Of memory, sweetly will come,

Across eternity, in somber cadences,
Sad poems of childhood remembrances:
Her voice singing the old song!

Those from Rique, feeling tricky,
Sss-sss-sawing, sawing on!

Then, astride his grandmother's weary knees,
Jogging rhythmically, the boy rides horsey
Till both tremble, filled with exaltation;
The granny smiles with motherly affection,
But then a premonition flashes through
Her mind: fear of the grief and anguish
The coming days hold for her grandson.

Until sunset!
From the dawn!
See the woodsmen of San Juan,
They want bread before it's gone,
Those from Roque,
Feeling rocky,
Those from Rique,
Feeling tricky.
Sss-sss-sawing, sawing on!
Sss-sss-sawing, sawing on!

Jose Asuncion Silva

Triste (Silva)

Jose Asuncion Silva

Un Poema

Jose Asuncion Silva

Vejeces

Jose Asuncion Silva

Víctor Hugo (Silva)

Jose Asuncion Silva