The Two Faces of Pedro Prado

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The painter don Carlos Dolhuiu once remarked that his longtime friend, the Chilean writer Pedro Prado, «tuvo dos caras en una: un ojo de tristeza y otro de humora». This observation by the author of a series of portraits of Prado takes on particular interest if one sees the two faces which he mentions as a physical manifestation of an interior condition. Ever since the beginning of his literary career, Prado revealed two opposing strains: one metaphysical or introspective, the other oriented toward the world at hand. To the extent that these tendencies reflect the literary heritage of modernismo and another, more realist vein revealing traces of criollismo and psychologically-oriented or humanitarian poetry and prose, this conflict is characteristic of many Latin American writers of the period. Prado’s case is special, however, in that these disparate and often contrary styles correspond with unusual fidelity to two different sides of his own character. His early writing mirrors a fundamental tension between a genuine feeling for an everyday Chilean landscape populated by members of the lower classes, and an indelibly aristocratic sense of Art as a religion and the artist as a privileged being.

Born in 1888, the year that Rubén Darío’s Azul first appeared in Valparaíso, Prado was the first Chilean writer to publish a book of free verse. Leader of the literary circle and journal called «Los Diez», he authored sixteen books of poetry and prose. Considered «el plexo solar de nuestra vida literaria al fijar el año 14», by Gabriela Mistral, he served as a guide to important younger authors, helping the then-unknown Pablo Neruda to bring out his first book of poems in 1921. Prado’s place in Chilean letters owes much to his role in introducing not only essentially twentieth-century forms such as free verse and prose poems, but also a thoroughly modern concern for the concrete and human—his own «reino de la Tierra»—upon which other writers would later expand.

Prado, however, offers his readers numerous contradictions. Insisting on the huaso element in his own personality, he described the Chilean countryside and campesino without ever becoming a full-fledged criollista. Scornfully rejecting the Modernists’ Ivory Tower, he periodically withdrew into his own brick tower for weeks on end. An aristocrat with a certain social conscience, he supported specific reforms in the social system he saw teetering about him, but had difficulty identifying with either the workers or the new urban middle class to which his children would belong. Vehemently opposed to what he considered the constraints of Modernist poetics, this early enemy of meter would write nothing but sonnets in his later years. In reality, Pedro Prado saw the world with two eyes: one focused on the far horizon, the other fixed upon the earth and his fellow men. If this interior conflict often made life difficult for him, it also explains much of the power and contemporary interest of the first two decades of his work. I would like here to suggest the nature of this opposition by looking at both sides of Prado’s writing as a particularly clear case of the conflicts characterizing this period of Chilean literature. While the author was a complex, often contradictory individual who cannot be split like a prisa or enormous peach into two halves of equal value, this two-pronged approach is useful in highlighting the ambivalence which marks the early Prado and postmodernism per se.

THE WRITER AND HIS CONTEXT

Like his contemporaries Banchs, Guiraldes and Fernández Moreno in neighboring Argentina, this first and only son of Absalón Prado and Laura Calvo Mackenna was born into the traditional landowning oligarchy. Influential in both Chile and Perú from colonial times onward, the poet’s family had long held a proud place in an aristocracy open only to native bluebloods and the most successful businessmen of non-Spanish blood. Although foodstuffs had provided the basis for the Chilean economy at the time of Independence, by 1881 the nitrate and copper industries primarily controlled by foreignants accounted for the bulk of exports. It is therefore not surprising to find members of the traditional elite such as Prado’s father, a well-known doctor, entering the professions in order to supplement their income from agricultural properties. Despite considerable holdings in and around Santiago, the elder Prado encouraged his son to study architecture. His lack of confidence in the future appeared justified as the family estate eroded, then disappeared during the following decades as the traditional oligarchy which he represented yielded to an urban entrepreneurial class.

The years of Prado’s youth saw a series of social and economic crises to which Latin American writers, as well as politicians, were forced to respond. In Chile, as elsewhere, the traditionally progressive Liberal party proved unable to solve pressing problems associated with immigration, urbanization and increasing foreign control of key industries. While the landed oligarchs continued to champion laissez-faire economic policies cushioned by paternalistic relief measures in the countryside, the population of Chile’s cities doubled and trebled, creating a restless urban proletariat. Pedro Prado’s first work in prose «Cuadro de estilo: el inválido» appeared in 1905, the year that Santiago street demonstrations against a new protective meat tariff threatened to erupt into a general strike. The writer’s election as president of the Students’ Union of the University of Chile occurred during the same period in which Luis Emilio Recabarren, later founder of the Socialist Workers’ Party was elected to, then summarily ejected from Parliament. The wholesale massacre of dissident nitrate miners and their families in Iquique took place in 1907, a year before the publication of Prado’s initial book. Although the author never mentions these events directly, his work mirrors the turmoil surrounding him from birth.

During the early years in which Prado briefly ventured south «as a muledriver», then worked as hacendado, architect, director of the National Museum of Fine Arts and country judge, the social climate within Chile remained tense. As North American companies such as Bethlehem Steel, Anaconda and Kennecott moved to monopolize the mining industry, economic changes brought on by World...
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War I intensified existing labor discontent. Between 1911 and 1920, workers struck 293 times, and the Chilean Workers' Federation (FOCH) organized as a simple mutual aid society in 1909 began to become increasingly militant. Prado then began publishing his journal Los Diez in order to provide a new kind of Chilean writing, on the eve of what he, like many others, believed to be a new, more just society. The triumph of reformist president Arturo Alessandri in 1920 was made possible by a coalition of "workers and miners who labored under terrible conditions; members of the middle sectors who feared their savings as well as their livelihood might be wiped out because of economic depression following the end of hostilities in Europe; reformers who saw the Chilean political regime as anachronistic; and even young aristocrats who rebelled against national leadership by superannuated oligarchs." Prado, a staunch supporter of the new president, clearly falls into this last category.

Before the military's second coup against the Lion of Tarapacá in 1922, Prado had published two more books of poems, a poetic drama and a pamphlet entitled Bases para un nuevo gobierno y un nuevo parlemento (1934), which suggested the reforms such as the institution of a government agency surprisingly like the CORFO (Corporación de Fomento de la Producción) later created in 1949. Nevertheless, when Alessandri fell in 1925, the author consorted to represent the ensuing dictator Carlos Ibáñez on a diplomatic mission to Colombia, serving as consul there for eighteen months. While Prado was in Bogotá, Ibáñez proceeded to exile labor leaders, outlaw various labor organizations and disband the new Chilean Communist Party. Realizing that a modern state could not rely exclusively upon its haciendas, he also financed a program of accelerated industrialization through extensive foreign loans. Unfortunately, the worldwide depression of 1929 generated rampant inflation and a drastic fall in exports which hurt landowners like Prado as well as urban laborers. Discontent among oligarchs and workers alike triggered the proclamation of a twelve-day Socialist Republic under Colonel Marmaduke Grove before Alessandri returned once more to power in 1932. Alessandri's second term saw a resurgence of various reform movements, and renewed interest in the common worker's plight. For instance, the magazine Zig-Zag sent Prado and nine other writers to the northern mining region in 1933 to write about the harsh landscape and its inhabitants for a growing audience back home. The election of Popular Front candidates in 1938 (Pedro Aguirre Cerda) and 1946 (Gabriel González Videla) shows the extent to which the working and growing middle classes had weakened the traditional oligarchy's hold upon the government. At the time of Prado's death in 1952, an election year in which Salvador Allende would be among the presidential candidates, newly deteriorating economic conditions were provoking a new wave of strikes. In short, the writer's lifetime was characterized by a series of upheavals representing a serious challenge to the Liberal tradition which he as a well-born landowner represented, but with which in his early years he did not always agree. This conflict between old and new, individual and community appears muted but constant in the first decades of his work. 5

EL OJO DE HUMOR

Because the later Modernist writer tended to replace an exaggerated "artistic" language with a simpler treatment of domestic themes, it is difficult to label specific features of Prado's work strictly Modernist or Realist. We have, however, already identified two or more or less separate currents in virtually all the author's poetry and prose, which, though they sometimes fuse, also frequently diverge. Prado's "graves cosas pueden revelar los hechos pequeños," the artist has no business ignoring wildflowers and crumbling ruins in favor of lotus blossoms and alabaster palaces. Instead, he must seek inspiration in the familiar and the potentially banal. The holistic vision proposed here by Prado does not allow the writer to exclude ordinary subjects as "unpoéticas," but instead demands intense respect for the commonplace objects and occurrences which earlier poets had avoided or disdained. "Todo el mundo es belleza," says the author in 1915, a year before the death of Dario, "lo que está en nosotros y lo que está fuera de nosotros; la alegría, el amor, el dolor y la muerte; el aspecto fácil de las cosas y su aspecto oculto. Nada es ruin y despreciable: algo que hierne nuestra vista puede regalar a nuestro corazón." 6
To the extent that Prado is true to his own theory, Flores de cardo and three other initial books of free verse and prose poems (La casa abandonada, El llamado del mundo, Los pájaros errantes, all published before the end of World War I) celebrate the physical universe peopled by real human beings. While lacking the overt sensuality of much Modernist poetry, with its lush perfumes, colors and texture, these poems are by and large true to the spirit of openness to actual persons, places and things suggested by the title «El llamado del mundo». The initial Flores de cardo poems are full of references to the near-at-hand: drowsy flies, fleshy laurel leaves, delicate blue veins. Sections suggestively labelled «Pláticos amargos», «Humanas», «Los dolores», «Conmigo» and «Intimas» testify to the book’s immediate, low-key appeal. Here the poet is no longer bard and prophet but a man speaking in normal tones to friends about the joys, sorrows and simple pleasures of everyday life.

Prado’s poetry is not, to be sure, a self-contained system. Almost invariably, the quotidian becomes a symbol for a higher plane of reality, as in his «Pan y flores» where the wheat and rose plants are equated to two different breeds of men. Although the poet insists that «todos frutos dan» and are therefore both important, it is clear that he considers himself and other artists kinsmen to the rose. While the images tend to take on a life of their own, as happens often in Prado’s verse, this distinction still remains the subject of the poem.

And yet, despite this ever-present tendency toward abstraction, Prado’s early poetry bears witness to his acute appreciation of day-to-day events: a child savoring a flower’s nectar, a woman peeling and eating an orange, an evocation of hands which are not compared to lilies but to busy emiguitas which do not tire in common tasks. There is something decidedly «elemental» in Prado’s observation of the thick petals of the orange rind or small snailshells of a woman’s ears. If the poet does not fail to muse upon death, time and eternity, neither does he overlook the «blancas tazas de café» from which a comforting steam arises or the fragments of bread crumbled by a pensive father listening to his son. While some descriptions are hardly original (e., the comparison of the loved one’s soul to a garden), even these may take an unexpected turn as when expected roses yield to «silvestres florecillas» which «nacen espontáneas». Often, the threat of sentimentality is allayed by a simple yet powerful image as when the calm surrounding a dead woman is compared to «el silencio que reina en el bosque vencido por el huracán». The snowballing enumeration of immediate, ominously physical details, a hallmark of Prado’s early poetry, will be later echoed by writers such as Rohka, Huidobro and Neruda, who will «interpret the poet’s sometime cry against «la indítil puréza» in a more consistent and wider vise»

It is safe to say, however, that the focus on the landscape characteristic of so much twentieth-century Chilean prose and poetry grows out of an attention to the material world. Prado, who early introduces native birds and vegetation (duchas, raras, peumos, literas) into his poetry, is also one of the first to create a specifically national context for his prose. The author who prides himself on knowing Chile «como el hortelano los rincones de su heredad» bases his first novel La Reina de Rapu-Nui (1914) on facts taken piecemeal from the Anuario Hidrográfico. Although Prado devotes considerable attention to «marces incandescentes» and «nubes amarilluntas», he also describes huts patched with yellowing newspapers, fat hens and quick small lizards. The narrator, a writer for the Valparaiso Herald, begins his account with a detailed poetic meditation on Chile’s ubiquitous sea. The account that follows relies on a play-off between the factual and fantastic later repeated in a far more complex and accomplished manner in Aliso (1920), the story of a young campesino whose hunched back sprouts wings. While Prado does not attempt to capture the peasants’ language word for word, as did some criollistas, he does create the sense of country people in a part of Chile where children scurry about after blackberries and birds’ nests and woodcutters greet each other warmly upon meeting in the solitary fields.

This attention to native themes and settings most commonly known as munitingbaydio, is deepened by a certain social consciousness which serves to counterbalance the more fantastic or strictly metaphoric moments in Prado’s prose. The heroine of La Reina de Rapu-Nui, Coemata Etu, does not understand the concept of private property and expresses her disbelief in terms reflecting Prado’s doubts about his own society:

— Me ha dicho, comenzó la reina con voz armoniosa, que en tu país se castiga el robo. Y yo he comprendido que se castiga porque son muchos los que, no queriendo robar, no desean que otros se apoderen de sus cosas. En Rapu-Nui, en cambio, todos roban a todos; de esta manera nadie hace daño a nadie. ¿Por qué no robas tú también? (p. 71).

Although Aliso is first and foremost an allegory, it does not shy away from pressing problems generated by grinding poverty. The «pueblo bosco y misérrimo» with its «ranchos negruzcos y ruinosos» and «callejuelas torcidas y desiertas» (p. 1), traversed only by pigs, hens and donkeys is hardly an idyllic evocation of the Central Valley countryside. A similar vein of realism runs through Un jueves rural (1924), in which the protagonist Esteban Solaeuren forswears his post as country judge. The reason for his decision, an inability or unwillingness to decide the fate of others, is particularly interesting because it reflects on a social plane the argument against esthetic hierarchies which Prado had already posed in his Ensayo sobre la poesía. In this his last novel, the writer questions the concept of the individual «como una realidad que se basta a sí misma», going on to condemn the prevailing system of justice because of its refusal to see interrelationships between individuals and events. By stressing the principal of relativity in social life as well as art, he defies the notion that certain human beings are inherently immoral. Above all, he stresses the importance of the community, comparing each person to a leaf upon a single tree:

La justicia tiene para nosotros un carácter que creemos nos permite aplicarla aislada y únicamente sobre determinados individuos. Separamos y diferenciamos fácilmente el culpable de los inocentes. El concepto corriente de justicia posee una adaptación apropiada a la de la idea del individuo. Dejando a un lado toda discusión sobre determinismo o libre albedrío, creemos que cada ser es un todo aislado e independiente.

Nada más lejos por lo demás de lo que, en verdad, sucede. Los hombres aparecen y desaparecen como las hojas en un árbol que perdura. Cuando alguien muere sin descendencia, representa el extremo de una rama. Cuando deja descendientes, se puede decir que es sólo un punto de otra rama que sigue creciendo...”

Much of the humor in Prado’s writing reflects this sort of social awareness, frequently prompted by a misplaced sense of superiority. The reader cannot fail
The greedy Dane Adams in *La Reina de Rapa-Nui* looks equally silly when he takes the notion of private property so seriously that he reveals himself as a hopelessly bad thief and «muy tonto para mentir» (p. 73). Similarly, Prado makes mischievous pleasure in defiling his own propensity toward elevated language through unexpected or inelegant turns. He describes the melancholy Aliso’s hump as «un huevo empollándolo» (p. 36) and has the narrator of *La Reina de Rapa-Nui* refuse to thade his sombrero for a «sumptuous fan of jet-black feathers because possess a un abanico en un día de viento tenía poco atractivo» (p. 42).

This sort of humor, which looks for inspiration to daily life and human foibles, corresponds to a very real side of Prado’s multi-faced personality. His friend Ernest Montevecchio defines these traits as «el estocismo del pueblo, su despro- pación por mañana, su generosidad con otros más desvalidos, lo sufrido de su ánimo frente a las privaciones y calamidades de su existencia, la malicia socar- rana» 11. Time and again, Prado exclaimed to those who knew him, «Tengo un poco del huaso chileno, puedo pelear a bofettadas con la gente en el campo, no soy estricto...» 19. The same man who prided himself on his «solo con lo divino» denied his existence as «luz y aire» 20. The writer who could muse for pages on eternity could also cut off these dark reflections with an ecstatic reference to the size and quality of a bumper potato crop 21.

Prado prided himself on being a man of the people. He fought to install native Chilean trees along the Alameda and delighted in pranks, practical jokes and irre- verent puns. Invited to address a distinguished gathering in Valparaíso, he arrived with a «speech» consisting of a great bunch of bananas swaddled in newspaper. As his country’s consul to Colombia, he insisted on having his picture taken while on muleback, sporting an absurdly large sombrero beneath an open umbrella. When his close friend the painter Juan Francisco González threatened suicide, he handed him a key from his colonial artifacts collection and exclaiming «Aprenta, es la llave de San Pedro», sailed out of the room. Annoyed by an imaginary insult to a friend, he punched the amazed offender in the middle of Santiago’s El Lucero Restaurant. Finding the front door closed, he put his fist right through it before glumly stomping out. Although one might argue that these actions reflect an authoritarian rather than «popular» disposition, and serve as prime examples of the intra-class jest or *titico*, Prado himself regarded them as proof of his *rato blood**

His self-consciously «barbaric» behavior stands in direct contrast to the hushed, spiritual nature of his later poems. The writer’s delight in the *buta* and his insis- tence on brute force simply do not mesh with his much-heralded «intuición, pureza y ternura casi femenina» 23. Neither does his anguished consciousness of injustice born of daily observation nor his great delight (sometimes against his better judgement) in the world of men and things. «La verdad no se compone de hojarascas de palabras, de sombras de pensamientos, de razones insaciables», he asserts in *Alasino*. «Saber es poder probar a otros, ni aun a sí mismo. Saber es convivir» (p. 287).

Despite his own insistence on the elevated aspect of his nature reflecting a concern with the world about him, Prado consistently reveals another, more intro- verted strain. «La soledad, el escaso metafísico, la angustia existencial, la futilidad y el pesimismo, que permearon y contaminaron gran parte de la producción mo- dernista y contemporánea de nuestro país» 23. Although, as already pointed out, Prado does not always heed his own dictums, as time goes on he speaks increasingly of art as a religion and of the artist as a worshipper of the eternal ideal. An air of mystery and melancholy, a pronounced sense of solitude and an acute concern with eternal essentials go along with this concern for the more spiritual aspects of literature.

Interestingly if not surprisingly, the protagonists of all three of Prado’s novels reveal «artistic temperaments» and are closely related to the author himself. The friend of the narrator in *La Reina de Rapa-Nui* (pp. 11-25), offers a particularly succinct picture of Prado’s concept of the creative personality. Having led «una vida aventurera en la juventud y de aislamiento y soledad en los últimos años» this individual, who lives alone with an unsympathetic sister, is agreeably bohe- mian. Concerned with essences («el jugo último de las cosas») rather than facts or details, he has retired to an appealingly decrepit house «cuibera de palomas, y un pequeño campanario», in the countryside. The friend, who «reads to think rather than to learn», evinces a horror of both «el moderno afán de las paradojas» and the growing tendency toward specialization which, for him, «tiene algo de monstruoso». Wise in an intuitive rather than rational manner, the old man pokes fun at his young companion’s penchant to paint and talk, occasionally reveling in «un placer melancólico, propicio a las disertaciones sobre el amor». When the older man, who remains racked by a nameless longing dies, his death is scarcely heeded by his thick-skinned neighbors. «Sólo le habrían robado», observes the narrator and the old man, now alone «en plena soledad del campo», goes unmour- ned by all but his young friend who finds a manuscript about Easter Island (Rapa- Nui) among the dead artist’s few belongings and proceeds to launch into his own tale.

Although some aspects of this portrait may be somewhat exaggerated, it remains remarkably true to the vision of the creative individual held both by Prado and a number of fellow artists who met for weekly discussion in the tower attached to the author’s house. This group, known as *Los Diez*, represents a twentieth-century outgrowth of the salon tradition originating in colonial Latin America. In Chile, the Romantic atenuchum associated with José Victorino Lastarria was to find twentieth-century descendants in this and slightly earlier gatherings such as Samuel Lillo’s Ateneo de Santiago and the Brook Farm-like Colonia Tolstoyana of Augusto D’Halmar 23. Although the group’s membership was fluid, its nucleus in- cluded writers (Manuel Magallanes Moure, Alberto Ried, Armando Donoso, Er- nesto Guzmán, Eduardo Barrios, Augusto D’Halmar and Prado), painters (Juan Francisco González, Julio Bertrand), and musicians (Acario Cotapos, Alberto Garcia Guerrero, Alfonso Leng). Although the journal *Los Diez* lived through only a dozen issues (September 1916 to August 1917), it successfully stimulated artistic production as «un portavoz completo, serio y digno, de todos los que en Chile se dedican, por imperiosa necesidad de espíritu y con nobili-za artística, a producir obras de calidad» 25.

The essential prerequisite for membership in *Los Diez* was proof of *paloma*, *(adovenza)* or *un espíritu puro y libre* much like that revealed by the central figures in Prado’s books 27. The multi-arts nature of the group as well as the diver-
as poems, he often favors twilight scenes where rosy clouds and gleaming waves may be offset by a grove of frankly Chilean boldo trees. Scarlet skies and crystalline waters as well as dunes and thistle flowers are present in each stage of Prado’s career.

An acute sense of solitude heightened by an anguished perception of individual limitations is also apparent in all of the author’s work. While his verse dwells on lonely roads down which the speaker trudges «solitario en edades inciertas», his prose makes constant reference to the plight of the isolated soul. In Alisino, for example, Prado symbolizes seemingly impossible human aspirations in the figure of a small boy, «novicio en soledad», whose greatest wish is to fly. In the poetic drama Androvar, Christ grants the protagonist’s wish to fuse with another consciousness as a result of his spirited protest against the boundaries circumscribing the individual soul («estrecha es la vida, y grande la soledad en la que cada cual vive...»), p. 34). Prado’s horror and disgust at the finite is expressed in particularly moving terms by the Nun in this poetic drama who prefers the night to a day which «limitado, estrecho, empobrecido» weighs upon her spirit «como una habitación donde el aire faltó», perturbed by the inconsistencies of the «sombra cambiante» projected by objects during the sunlit hours, she compares herself to «un pájaro nocturno que al vular en el día choque contra todas las cosas» (pp. 101-102). In reality, she is but a mouthpiece for the Prado who will describe himself time and again as «prisionero en esta tragedia de límites».

The writer’s gained awareness of the boundaries imposed by time and space upon the individual results in a dogged if obsessive insistence on eternity. The repeated references in his sonnets to «un mundo invisible» in which «la carne es sólo cántico y el aire es pensamiento» have roots in the earliest poems where the speaker evokes a future in which «mi vida con la muerte irían confundidas». Already in the poems of El llamado del mundo he had called for a fusion of el mar del espacio and el cielo del tiempo into a single hue «donde todo se funde, donde nunca sabremos de nada». Prado’s deep concern with unchanging verities makes him particularly sensitive to essences which surface in his prose and poems as flores puras y diámanes, ondas transparentes, trees like «convidados eternos» and moments prolonged into eterna quietud. Alone in a mysteriously harmonious world swept by soft breezes the solitary souls of lovers can unite in those privileged moments in which «pase que nada nos separa / un paso apenas de mi vida / a la vida universal». Alisino’s ansia de estar en toda casa (p. 289) thus remains a constant of the author’s work from beginning to end.

While author and man are not necessarily one and the same person, there are unmistakable parallels between the ojo triste in Prado’s writing and his actions in everyday life. Certainly, the author’s concept of the artist as a special being reflects at least in part his personal history.

The death of the writer’s mother when he was two years old, for instance, created an intense and lasting sense of solitude in the young boy. Prado’s relationship with his stern, distinguished father who taught him to «emplear y ampliar, desde niño, el registro de nuestra pobre y limitada conciencia humana»; predisposed the lonely child toward the supernatural. Attracted like many of his contemporaries to hypnosis, Tarot cards and Oriental religions, the author was intensely proud of his tercer ojo de la época el Espíritu Santo, and delighted in foretelling future events. (His daughter claims that he predicted an accident which befell his son and namesake, and told the family hours beforehand of the death of his friend Magallanes Mour). By all accounts, Prado went to
great lengths to cultivate his sense of solitude and sadness, delighting in it «como
de una semiluz interior» 46.

Furthermore, Prado's genuine nativism was countered by a definite taste for
the relatively bohemian. While still a student, the writer met his future wife, Adriana Jaramillo Bruce, during a Sunday paseo through Santiago's
Plaza de Armas. Sure that she must be Nordic, he was bitterly disappointed at
her Spanish surname, although somewhat consoled by the fact that her Scottish
grandmother, abandoned by a sailor husband in Valparaíso, had once served as
reader to the daughter of Queen Victoria. Kissing the young woman in public (a
daring act for a young man of his social standing at that time) Prado soon sent
her a matchbox containing a diamond engagement ring. After making plans for
a honeymoon in Europe, Prado lent the money for the voyage to a friend who
managed to disappear on the eve of the wedding, leaving the young couple to
spend their first days together on one of the family's country estates. Seized at
this time by one of the poetic «attacks» which the author described as «una
especie de trance», Prado spent his entire honeymoon filling pages with verse 47.

Later, father of nine children and involved in various professional associations,
he nevertheless continued to cultivate such creative seizures, turning over practical
details and the family purse strings to his wife.

In the realm of personal relationships, Prado remained a traditional aristocrat.46
Encomended in his mansion on the Avenida Mapocho with its «patio de
indolencia» full of mulberry trees and a series of artificial waterfalls especially
constructed for their rhythmic splashing, the writer sought to maintain an atmosphe-
re of patronic tranquility. The house's ample grounds included «una especie
de zoolóxico» full of cows, goats and birds shipped up from Punta Arenas for
the benefit of Prado's sons and daughters. His children were expected to behave
in a manner befitting their station, treating their elders with respect and avoiding
slang terms such as «re» or «macanudo». Prado refused to tolerate cigarette
smokers and sent a married daughter home to change her clothes when she
showed up for a visit in blue jeans. When his wife expressed her approval of
free love in 42, Prado was stunned and forbade her to express such ideas in
the family table. Well-liked by the gardener, the baker, and the hired hand, his
ideas at the dealings with these individuals reflected the genuine concern for
the well-being of his charges displayed by the traditional patron. Pridng himself
on his sensitivity to unusual spiritual states, Pedro Prado «nunca tuvo un dolor
de cabeza sino una palpitación extraña en los senos». His «nunca tuvo un dolor
tánea a preferir la contemplación ideal a las satisfacciones reales» made him
prefer letters which the rain had blotted to those in which the writer's sentiments
were clear and matters by a variety of women, his relations with them appear to
have been platonic, for as he asserted on more than one occasion «más vale el
perfume de una rosa que la flor».

Perhaps the single best illustration of Prado's sense of his own identity is
provided by his relationship with Pablo Neruda, whose Crepusculario was pre-
faced with a woodcut by Prado. The older writer also lavished praise upon the
young poet in a book review where he declared his pleasure in «asistir al naci-
miento de un verdadero valor literario...» 42. Neruda, for his part, acknowledged
a sizeable debt to his onetime mentor several decades later 43. Nevertheless, despite
their mutual admiration, differing world views clearly linked to social class
created a growing tension between the two after World War I. As an adolescent,
for instance, Neruda occasionally dropped in upon Prado and Los Díez, and he
tells of one time in which he found them mumbling incantations over a «philoso-
pher's stone». However, one of the original members of the group, Alfonso

Leng, asserts that this was merely a hoax designed to ruffle the young poet and
that this «sacred rock» had been yanked out the mud by one of Prado's children
only moments before. According to him, Neruda could not have been accepted
as a member of Los Díez because «era necesario querer más que nada hacer el
arte más libre y puro; no era posible ese deseo de avanzar otra cosa sino la lucha
contra los límites» 44. Leng also says that Prado seemed uneasy about Neruda's
attentions to his onet daughters, going so far as to call him a «roto» upon one
occasion, asking him to leave the house.

Clearly, Prado and Neruda represent distinct sectors of Chilean society. Al-
though more than one member of Los Díez depended on Prado to bail him out of
recurring financial difficulties, all subscribed to the essentially patrician values
outlined earlier. While Prado speaks of writing as his true vocation, he was not a
professional artist, and never succeeded upon his prose and poetry for a
livelihood, thus remaining comfortably immune to public opinion. One critic
calls Prado «nuevo artista máximo, acaso el único que ha vivido siempre dedi-
cado al cultivo del arte y de su propio espíritu; no ha necesitado avulsar su
obra, y por eso ella es un recinto reservado a pocos» 45. While the members of
Los Díez could afford and indeed needed to accept the notion of the artist as a
being apart from society in general, Neruda's relatively humble birth gave him
an interest in the masses that both ideological and material reasons would sharpen
over time.

THE TWO FACES OF PEDRO PRADO

If an aristocratic attitude toward art as well as a fondness for solitude and
hunger for the external reappear throughout Prado's prose and poetry, one may
ask what, if anything, besides their metric form distinguishes the sonnets from
his earlier work. The later poems offer nothing new: however, something old
and very important is lacking: Prado's emphasis upon real men and places, the
crude and clear-limb hands that has all but disappeared. While many of the same ima-
ges and themes crop up in both the initial and later writing, these are seen from
a radically different perspective by a poet who has closed one eye. Prado's rejec-
tion of the force verse which he initially championed reflects a more profound
denial of a world peopled by ordinary men and women and an ever more prof-
dound retreat into solitude.

The author's later work differs from the novels, free verse, short stories and
prose poems in its high level of abstraction. Here Prado's meditations on eternity
no longer involve immediate, concrete images which sometimes deflect the author
from his upward course. Instead, the firm white fingers of a woman in a poem
from Flores de cardo yield to a hand «como el sueño» which rests light or
light upon the poet's clouded brow. The loved one whose ears the speaker once
compared to shells is now evoked as a ghostly figure «hecha de luz y pensa-
miento». The humble but persistent wildflowers which bedeck much of Prado's
early writings give way to diadems of blossoms crowned by a single «rosa inacan-
zable». «Tardes inmortales» full of «nubes sin ruido» outlined by «un fuego que
no quema» replace unmistakably Chilean landscapes of great rocks, speckled
pebbles and stray bits of straw. The cast of characters which once included
peasants, petty bureaucrats, island queens and greedy foreigners narrows here to
a focus on the poet and a somewhat hazy woman symbolizing divine more than
human love. The young poet who declared that «sólo sufriré porque mi canto no
tiene caballos que poder acariciar, ni ojos que poder besar, ni cuerpo que prote-
jer entre mis brazos» is clearly no longer. Prado’s early ambivalence toward the everyday world with its myriad problems is resolved here by an outright rejection of earthly appearances in favor of solitary «vuelos hacia la altura» which allow the individual to leave behind a bitter, thoroughly muddy earth 46.

This rejection of his earlier material side has several explanations. In his art as well as life, Prado was an aristocrat whose unusual sensitivity to the world about him made him call for changes be these in the Chilean parliament or traditional literary forms. The author was, however, a reformer rather than a revolutionary. When faced by the logical extension of his own social and artistic innovations, he retreated into sonnets and withdrew from the political arena, expressing disillusionment with all forms of change.

This is not to deny Prado’s decided complexity or very real contributions to his country’s literary evolution, but simply to suggest those limits imposed upon a gifted individual by his social identity and particular time. While genuinely concerned with Chile and Chileans, Prado continued to celebrate an already largely vanished rural nation, not the growing city or changing countryside. Though recognizing the worth of a new breed of young writers bound by sentiment and/or experience to the growing urban work force, he still could not embrace their wholehearted celebration of the material universe and common man, ironically triggered by his own early work. Set apart from others by his superior social status, he threw increasingly upon his own loneliness, exacerbating the dimensions of his sadness until it became a kind of cult. «Soy un ser de otro tiempo» he remarks in a letter to his wife not long after the publication of Flores de cardo, as if seeing into a future in which he would find himself forced to retreat from more broadly social into clearly personal concerns 47.

A series of disfiguring strokes, financial and familial problems, and a frustrated love affair with a much younger woman appear to have brought the mystical abstract aspect present in Prado’s work to the fore, causing the writer to suppress his other, more down-to-earth and socially conscious side. And yet, although Prado did ultimately withdraw into almost purely metaphysical speculation, one cannot fail to appreciate his long insistence on facing an often contradictory world with two clear eyes. The significance of the first twenty years of his prose and poetry lies in that creative tension between two deeply felt, if often opposing world views. These in turn reflect a strong sense of traditionalism born of personal and class concerns, together with an equally strong non-conformity with various aspects of the status quo. In an early essay on José Enrique Rodó, Prado remarks that «para vivir en la vida o en la muerte se requiere un cambio incesante: sólo los que pueden seguir la rápida marcha que imprimen nuevas anías, eternamente cambiantes, son guías fieles y capaces en la jornada infinita» 49. Just as the coupling here of life and death in a «jornada infinita» is typical of Prado, so is the concern with a fecund restlessness. If the older writer showed signs of tiring in the rapid march he once described so aptly, the first two decades of his work reflect a constant straining to keep both eyes wide open and to faithfully translate conflicting vision into words.

NOTES
1 Carlos Doriath in an interview 13 November 1971. «Pedro era triste y alegre, pasivo y vehemente, conversamos mucho, aunque generalmente fue una conversación pasiva.»


8. Although the pamphlet was published under the collective authorship of Los Díez, it is acknowledged to be the work of Prado alone.


10. For a general discussion of the later stage of Modernism in Chile see John M. Fein, Modernism in Chilean Literature: The Second Period (Durham: Duke University, 1965). El Modernismo, ed. Lily Litvak (Madrid: Taurus Edicio-
Neruda describes these rites in *Discursos*, but appears to have taken seriously what other members saw as a fraternity-style hoax. Both Leng and Eduardo Montero Moore, a younger associate of the group (interview 13 Jan. 1972) claim that the sheets and philosopher's stones were primarily means of amusing the Prado children and shocking credulous visitors.

30 See Prado's, «Somera iniciación al 'Jelse'» («Jelse» was the group's «poetic bible»), in *Los Diez*, 1, 1 (Sept. 1916), 5-12.

31 See Contreras' preface to Raúl (Santiago, 1902), reprinted in Fein's *Modernismo in Chilean Literature*, Appendix A. Contreras equates «arte libre» with «arte sincero» here, arguing that the true spirit of modern writing and painting is its desire to «reproducir con sinceridad estados de alma realmente sentidos».


33 The phrase «La vanagloria de la sinceridad» appears in *Clарidad*, II, 07. He speaks of writing as «un acto solitario» on several occasions, but it occurs for the first time in print in a poem «Primer paseo» from *El llamado del mundo*:

Amada mía: / ¡el acto de pensar es un acto solitario, / quien medita vaga por / un parque abandonado / del que se cree dueño / sintiendo que todo se le ofrece / y que el alma del mundo pertenece / a su espíritu!


35 Prado, p. 13.

36 Prado, p. 32.

37 Julia Prado de Edwards (interview 3 Dec. 1971) recounts how her father foretold the death of Manuel Magallanes Moure as well as an accident in which her brother Pedro was involved. Juan Guzmán de Crucchaga (interview 19 Oct. 1971) tells of a time in which Prado, lost in a terrain near the outskirts of Santiago, declared the land to be that of his forefathers, and consulting with them to find the right direction.

38 This description comes from Valentin Brandau's *Elogio de Pedro Prado* where the author speaks at length of Prado's' «culto del recuerdo y su horror del olvido, su conformidad a la tristeza y el dolor moral, su animosidad permanente contra las limitaciones inevitables de los seres y las cosas del mundo» (página 38).


40 The ensuing description of the Prado mansion is based on comments by Julia Prado de Edwards, who had the kindness to walk with me through the old house, where we found various personal belongings, such as a photograph of the seven Prado daughters, still scattered about. Part of the grounds had been turned into a high schools plastered with posters of Salvador Allende and Fidel Castro, who was making a tour of Chile at that time.

41 Nina Anguita de Rodríguez, interview 10 Sept. 1971.


43 Neruda, *Discursos*, pp. 49-91.

44 Alfonso Leng, interview, 12 Nov. 1971.


46 The sentiment expressed in «Ausencia» (*No más que una rosa*) is typical of this later period:

Isla o nube remota, toda de lejanía, / la belleza es mi reino, y por bella fue mía. / La tierra es el lodo, y el hombre, la amargura, / todo lo arrebataba en vuelo hacia su altura.