

# "Roberto de las Carreras's 'Al lector': Anxiety of Influence and Interest in Disinterestedness."

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Roberto de las Carreras García de Zúñiga was born an illegitimate child in Montevideo, Uruguay, in 1875. He belonged to a wealthy family and worked as a diplomat for the Uruguayan government in La Plata (Argentina), Asunción (Paraguay), and Paranaguá and Curutyba (Brasil). In 1913 he began to suffer a severe neurosis that kept him from writing until his death in 1963. This essay explores what Harold Bloom termed the "anxiety of influence" in this poet's work; in particular, it focuses on the influence of Charles Baudelaire's life and work on the Uruguayan. It also considers the possible reasons behind De las Carreras's extravagant demeanor and the topics of his writing, from the perspective of the theories elaborated by Pierre Bourdieu in *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (1993). If we follow this last study, it becomes clear that, through his excentric writing, the Uruguayan poet was fighting for a position of prestige among his contemporary peers. In search for symbolic capital (as well as the celebrity and recognition that come with it) and hoping to displace the consecrated Uruguayan and Latin American poets of the previous generation, he presents himself as a rebel who disregards the social mores of his country and his time. As a challenger and with this pose of poète maudite, he hopes to take over the position occupied by consecrated poets in the structure of the regional literary field. His provocations, therefore, are nothing but an attempt to attain literary prestige in what Bourdieu calls the "autonomous principle of hierarchization" (i.e., recognition among his literary peers; 38), concomitantly disregarding the economic and/or political success characteristic of the "heteronomous principle of hierarchization (38). In

this sense, the market and book sales are not a priority for the poet. As an autonomous producer, he is writing for other producers of literature (the autonomous and self-sufficient world of art for art's sake). His art for art's sake, his poetry for poets mocks "bourgeois literature" and turns his back to material gratification. Thus De las Carreras conceives of his own presumed disinterested values (his "interest in disinterestedness," pace Bourdieu) as his path to "literary legitimacy" (Bourdieu 42) and as a way to accumulate symbolic and cultural capital.

Reception theory can also be a useful tool to interpret some of the works of this writer, who, according to Ricardo Goldaracena, introduced Modernismo in Uruguay (30).<sup>1</sup> Wolfgang Iser argues that, instead of considering the "meaning" of the text, it is more appropriate to study the "effect" that it has on the readers. In Ángel Rama's introduction to De las Carreras's book *Psalmos a Venus Cavalieri y otras prosas* (1967), we can read Horacio Quiroga's reaction to the prose poem "Reto a Venus Cavalieri": "Lo anacrónico que ya resultaba su estilo y la pose discursiva, exaltatoria del autor, se define por un juicio lapidario de Horacio Quiroga en una carta privada: „Le he ojeado y resulta absolutamente estúpido“" (40). Similarly, Carlos María Domínguez offers testimony of other readings: "Calificado de poeta menor, los intelectuales del 45 lo relegaron a la letra chica y no hallaron en él otro valor que el de la curiosidad de su vida libertina. A lo sumo le reconocieron una influencia circunstancial sobre Julio Herrera y Reissig, otro „niño terrible“ que gustaba „jugar travesuras“" (458). Domínguez also states that De las Carreras's main critics—Emir Rodríguez Monegal, Ángel Rama and Alberto Zum Felde—coincide in passing moral judgments on the poet's life as well as on that of her mother. They indicate that his madness was inherited from his family. 2

Fernandez Ríos quotes a more favorable opinion from De las Carreras's friend and modernist poet Julio Herrera y Reissig: "Soberbio es su estilo; la frase acerada; el período es redondo, musical, lleno, marmóreo, estatuario" [...] "Desde las primeras líneas aparece el yo. Roberto de las Carreras ha querido aplaudirse antes que lo censuren. Es el viejo procedimiento romántico: el que exalta será exaltado" (De las Carreras; Epístolas 14). Finally, we have another sample of a reader's reaction in 1898, in the six corrections made with pen by the owner of a beautiful

fifty-six-page first edition of *Al lector* (1894).<sup>3</sup> Evidently, the successive use of apostrophes as well as the colloquial style used by the poet made the reading process uncomfortable for his contemporary reader, who suddenly stopped correcting the style (and probably stopped reading as well).

Through his notion of the “implied reader,” Wolfgang Iser states that the text itself creates a sort of fictional reader. Indeed, the works of Uruguayan author Roberto de las Carreras project a fictional reader or at least, a system of structures that invites a response from readers and predispose them to read in a certain manner. In the first of the twelve sections of *Al lector*, written in alexandrines and verses of seven syllables, the young poet initiates the condescending and informal tone as well as the constant provocation, which will follow each apostrophe in the book: “Mas como tú, lector, severo y noble juez,/ Eres sin duda una bestia, un clásico tal vez,/ Si diera en emplear sutiles ironías,/ Lo puedo asegurar, no me comprenderías” (I; vv. 15-8). After De las Carreras uses part of the money he has inherited to travel to Barcelona, Geneva, Trapani, Tunis, Madrid, Paris, and other cities, his perception of his native Montevideo as an unsophisticated place intensifies. Within the framework of Iser’s theory, the text continues to progressively create a fictional male reader, characterized by his conventionality and lack of sophistication. It describes the fictional receptor by sarcastically assuming some of his traits: “Pues ¡qué diablo! lector, tú eres un hombre serio!” (II; v. 29). Roberto de las Carreras tries to criticize the Catholic morals of his countrymen and what he considers a hypocritical sexual behavior. At times, the fictional creation of the author and the reader is intertwined in the same semantic unit: “Lector, bien lo comprendo. ¡Es horrible! yo he hablado/ De la mujer, empleando una descortesía/ Tan grande, que confieso, es mucha mi osadía./ Tu tienes una esposa, una hermana... [...]” (IV; vv. 189-92). It seems that every idea leads to an attempt to offend the reader’s sensitivity: immediately after mentioning the most influential authors in his work, De las Carreras implies his superior literary knowledge in comparison to the reader’s: “[...] Yo no sé si sabrás quienes son/ Esos señores... Mas, dejemos la cuestión” (VII; vv. 30-31).

J. L. Austin’s concepts of “illocutionary” and “perlocutionary acts” are also helpful for the study of Roberto de las Carreras’s writings.

According to Austin, "performative" linguistic utterances produce changes within a situational context and actions that can be measured against the standards of success or failure. Known for his turn-of-the-century decadent dandyism, De las Carreras adopts an arrogant and provocative attitude that seeks what Austin terms a "perlocutionary act," that is, "what we bring about or achieve, by saying something, such as convincing, persuading, deterring, and even, say, surprising or misleading" (Iser 362). Thus in the third subdivision of *Al lector*, the poetic voice tests the reader's tolerance by declaring: "Que no sé cómo aún me puedes soportar./ Yo te ofendo, te insulto y canso tu paciencia" (III; vv. 23-4). From this perspective, the poet's mental image of his reader is clearly that of a bourgeois and provincial Uruguayan male: "Pues sin duda, lector, tú nunca has precisado/ Ni bitter ni vermouth. Has comido, has amado,/ Perfectamente bien, siempre a la misma hora" (IV; vv. 222-4).

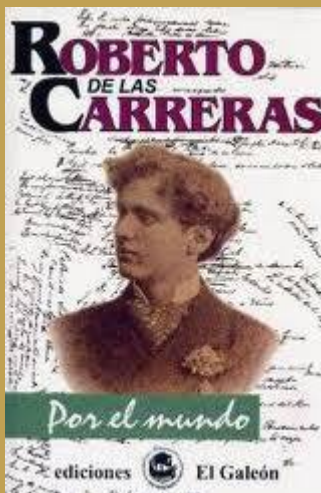
In contrast, despite his aristocratic origins, De las Carreras presents himself as an anarchist who refuses to comply with social rules of urbanity. The central piece of his political agenda is his support of divorce and free love. The poet undertakes the construction of a transgressive "implicit author," who is, more than the author himself, the actual image that he tries to portray of himself in his writings: he explains his drinking habits ("Ha sido mi costumbre, y cuando estoy borracho" [III; v. 33]) as well as other aspects of his personality: "Otros vicios, lector, me dominan también:/ El juego, la mujer... Confieso sin rubor/ que en ella la mitad se va de mi vigor" (IV; vv. 114-7); "Pero yo soy sin duda un gran impertinente,/ Del todo inaguantable [...]" (IV; 156-7).

Although the poet admits to having suffered a lot in his life, he adopts this arrogant eccentricity as a vehicle to *épater le bourgeois*. His disdain for social conventions also serves as an uninhibited self-justification for his often careless and colloquial writing style: "Yo, que, como ya he dicho, uso poca atención/ Y esmero al escribir, cosa que no me pesa:/ Mi Musa no ha tenido institutriz inglesa" (III; vv. 13-5); "[...] A ti te espanta un ripio,/ Yo aquí habré puesto cien... [...]" (V; vv. 54-5). Nonchalantly, he also boasts about the banality of the topics of his writing: "Me propuse escribir, así, sin decir nada" (VI; v. 22); "[...] pero cuanto aquí he dicho/ Solo es falsa modestia, es puro capricho" (VI; vv. 25-26). The humorous and sarcastic tone of *Al lector*, however, is

occasionally balanced by references to his health problems and past sufferings. Thus section XI adopts an existential tone in order to deal with the topics of life and death. The poetic voice thinks that death has become too vulgar as, unlike the glorious times of the Roman gladiators, now there are no spectators.<sup>4</sup> Soon, the poem returns to the patronizing couplets in which he negotiates his radical differences with the reader; this time, religion is the source of conflict:

Empiezas tú por ser un ferviente católico  
Romano y apostólico,  
Y yo soy un malvado, un eterno burlón,  
Que todo satirizo, hasta la religión  
A mí nada me impone y nada me gobierna,  
Y tú crees lector en la moral eterna..." (V; vv. 47-52).

His next battlefield is the topic of patriotism, which he simply considers another conventional social value. In order to make sure that the "ignorant" reader understands his message, he repeats the same idea about conventionality three different times in only ten verses (IX, v. 37; IX, v. 42; IX, v. 46). In the same line of thought, in the tenth section, the object of his attacks are art, literature and, more specifically, poetry.<sup>5</sup>



Another poignant aspect of the poet's implicit personality is his concern about how he is perceived by other fellow citizens. In his poem "En viaje," he comments on the attitude people usually have towards him: "(La gente a mi respecto es muy curiosa,/ Y a casi todos mi persona inspira/ Una especie de burla cariñosa)" (vv. 65-6). In this same poem, his own sense of importance is undeniable: he explains the

comments in local newspapers about his trip to Europe and the disbelief that the news created in town. Roberto de las Carreras is again careful to differentiate himself from the crowd: "Yo siempre represento la excepción!" (v. 40); "¿Dónde están los sirenas, las ondinas?/ Mis aficiones, demasiado finas,/ Quieren alguna cosa sorprendente" (vv. 103-04).

In a different poem, "Mi herencia," he proudly tells the world that, because he is "a bastard," the Civil Code is depriving him from his inheritance: "Es mi crimen, lector, no haber nacido/ en toda regla... Y quedo sin herencia!..." (vv. 29-30). It is not difficult to imagine that it must not have been easy to cope with the stigma of being an illegitimate child and having a mother of "questionable reputation." In fact, De las Carreras's critics have extensively studied Clara Carcía de Zúñiga's life and have considered its influence on the life and poetry of her son. Yet instead of showing self-pity, in most of his works the poet does not waste any opportunity to enlarge his fictional decadent image: "Más, yo, lleno de sueños y lirismo,/ Soy un holgazán... Siempre lo fui" (vv. 49-50); "La austera sociedad me ha condenado,/ Pues al fin represento un atentado/ A las buenas costumbres. Esto es grave!" (vv. 142-4). Perhaps the similarities with Charles Baudelaire's life and that of other French dandies meant a refuge for the Uruguayan writer. In any case, he continued to see himself as the self-made protagonist of a modern living drama comparable to that of his French models: "Mi nacimiento es muy decadentista/ Y viene bien a un hombre que no anhela/ Nada más que ser nuevo y ser artista,/ A un poeta sin reglas, sin escuela.../ A más, puedo ser héroe de novela/ Romántica... y también naturalista" (vv 150-6). He is determined to escape all the arbitrary rules created by his society, at least on the paper. In fact, after all his criticism of matrimony he would eventually get married. Moreover, despite his advocacy of free love, he became extremely jealous when he found his wife in bed with another man, and even published this information to humiliate her. Notwithstanding these anecdotes, his defiant artistic pose as well as the caustic sense of humor that he uses to overcome any difficulty in the face of adversity not always sound sincere: "Con mi estilo. Ese modo de nacer/ Es muy mío. Lo encuentro personal!" (vv. 167-8). His source of inspiration comes from tracing all aspects of his background that can separate himself from the respectable crowd. The poet is on a mission to agitate the petit-

bourgeois mentality of his town with the objective of establishing himself as a decadent poet. In "Poema sentimental," he even declares that his attraction for married women comes from being the fruit of adultery. Yet this humorous tone tends to be counterproductive: sometimes it creates a sense of immaturity and a juvenile need for stridence; others, it simply reveals a poorly hidden existential angst, which eventually developed into insanity.

Only when Roberto de las Carreras takes off this ludicrous mask of arrogance can we see certain signs of a great poet. In "Desolación," the poetic voice abandons the contrived effort to sound decadent, thus elevating the aesthetic quality of his poetry. Although this poem could be yet another mask, here his words somehow sound less affected, more genuine. They unveil a manifest need for affection and communication as well as a complete feeling of failure: "Siento como una ruina... ¡Un hundimiento!/ ¡La ilusión de la gloria y el talento./ También otra quimera y otro olvido!/ Todo eso me ha mentado, me ha engañado!" (vv. 145-8). As the title of the poem foretells, the poet admits his desperation and confesses—this time without stridence—that his past joy has been ephemeral: "¡Yo soy un pobre niño miserable/ Que está viendo una fiesta!" (vv. 53-4). An anonymous unrequited love is hurting him deeply.

Harold Bloom's essay *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973) could explain some of the ideas expressed by De las Carreras in the sixth section of *Al lector*: "Para mí siempre ha sido un difícil problema/ La cuestión de escribir, por la falta de tema,/ Original, se entiende [...]" (VI; vv. 1-3). According to Bloom, literary works are born as a response to previous "defensive" acts of reading and interpretation, that he calls "poetic misprision" (7). The great work that a new writer elaborates is the "anxiety." In this context, De las Carreras insists: "[...] puesto que plagiaría/ A Alfredo de Musset, quien ha venido al menos/ A tiempo de decirlo... [...]" (VI; vv. 9-11); and later: "[...] volviendo a decir que he venido/ Bastante tarde al mundo, y por tanto, después/ De mis modelos; que esto es lo que he perdido" (VI; vv. 38-40). His admiration for French literature reaches other authors such as Hugo, who becomes a blinding sun and a yoke that overwhelms him with all his weight: "Me encontraba, lector, bajo un terrible yugo./ Toda una insolación tomé de Victor Hugo" (VIII; vv. 7-8). Despite mentioning Dante, Musset, Hugo,

Poe, Caylli, and others, it seems evident that the “strong poet” (in Bloom’s terms) who causes De las Carreras’s distress is mainly Charles Baudelaire. Thus the intertextuality of the verses “Un amigo, lector, me había comparado/ A un pájaro caudal, grande, aunque mutilado,/ De ala y media no más [...]” (VII; vv. 11-3) with the last stanza of the fourth poem of Baudelaire’s *Les fleurs du mal*, entitled “L’Albatros” (“The Albatross”), is undeniable:

Le Poète est semblable au prince des nuées  
Qui hante la tempête et se rit de l’archer;  
Exilé sur le sol au milieu des huées,  
Ses ailes de géant l’empêchent de marcher (vv 13-16).<sup>6</sup>

Similarly, while Baudelaire, in his poem “Au Lecteur” (“To the Reader”), included in *Les fleurs du mal* but initially published on June 1, 1855, in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* (Review of the Two Worlds), mentions “Satan” (v. 9), “le Diable” (the Devil; v.13), “l’Enfer” (Hell; v.15), and “Démon” (v.18), De las Carreras closes his *Al lector* with a brief mention to Dante’s *Inferno* and Satan as well.

Yet De las Carreras’s apparent vanity—which he has no intention of hiding as we can read in his verse “[...] es mi grande, inmensa vanidad” (IX; v. 59)—leads him to affirm: “Pues si por un azar hubiera yo llegado/ Antes, no hay que dudar, me hubieran imitado/ Los poetas a mí...” (VI; vv. 41-3). He goes as far as to confess his former attempt to plagiarize ideas from other poets, telling the reader that when he started writing, influenced by Romanticism, he tried to create a poem about the Devil that would have been entitled “El Problema de Todo,” and which came from a secret source: “Empresa tan genial tenía una parienta,/ Pues era mi proyecto/ Bastante parecido al que Dupont le cuenta/ A Durand [...]” (VII; vv. 27-30). De las Carreras chooses the role of a decadent poet, probably attempting to emulate Baudelaire when he talks in “Au lecteur” about “[...] la ménagerie infâme de nos vices”<sup>7</sup> (v. 32) or states: “C’est le Diable qui tient les fils qui nous remuent!/ Aux objets répugnants nous trouvons des appas;/ Chaque jour vers l’Enfer nous descendons d’un pas,/ Sans horreur, à travers des ténèbres qui puent”<sup>8</sup> (vv. 13-6).



The portrayal of an indomitable self is further elaborated in his poem "En un album de confesiones" (1896), composed by twenty-three distichs, most of them responding to the formula question-answer. In it, De las Carreras proclaims his literary preferences: "¿Cuáles son sus autores favoritos, en prosa y verso?/ - Edgard Poe y Carlos Baudelaire" (vv. 25-6). Ángel Rama has pointed out the intertextualities with Charles Baudelaire's works:

Del mismo modo que Baudelaire abre sus flores malditas con la apelación al "hypocrite lecteur," o sea al espectador de su aventura cuyo ojo enemigo se hace indispensable para cobrar autoexistencia—sólo se representa para alguien, para un otro, así también Roberto de las Carreras escribe a los veintiún años su libro titulado *Al lector* donde se ofrece a esa mirada que él define como hostil con las primeras, improvisadas escenas de su personaje dandy pero a su vez con su desvalimiento cálido y juvenil. (Psalmo 9)

Indeed, Baudelaire calls his reader "hypocrite" in the last stanza of the second poem of *Les fleurs du mal*: "C'est l'Ennui!—l'oeil chargé d'un pleur involontaire,/ Il rêve d'échafauds en fumant son houka./ Tu le connais, lecteur, ce monstre délicat,/ —Hypocrite lecteur,—mon semblable,—mon frère!"<sup>9</sup> (vv. 37-40). Moreover, in his prose "Le chien et le flacon" ("The Dog and the Perfume Bottle") Baudelaire compares his readers to a dog that is horrified by a delicate perfume but would consider excrement to be a delicacy. Correspondingly, De las Carreras calls him "beast" in his book with the same title *Al lector*; he even replaces the worst of human vices—according to Baudelaire's poem—the "ennui," by the English version of the word, "spleen"<sup>10</sup> (V; v. 63), a term which is also reminiscent of the first subdivision in the book *Les fleurs du mal* entitled "Spleen et Idéal." Apparently, being only twenty-one years old when he wrote *Al lector* did not prevent him from imitating Baudelaire's confrontational stance.

The development of this irritating poetic persona with a superiority complex prevalent in "Al lector" is based on the recurrent appearance of these attacks which, in fact, become the leitmotiv of the poem: "Tú me habrás de leer... Mas, comprendo que en vano/ Me he de reír de tí: tienes menos ingenio/ Del que se necesita... Eres un hombre sano./ Sumamente incapaz de comprender la mofa,/ El talento, el spirit de una

burlona estrofa" (VIII; vv. 103-7). This is also the way in which he chooses to close the poem by insisting on his certainty about the reader's inability to understand his message. Years before, Baudelaire had done exactly the same thing in the additional poem that opened the third edition *Les fleurs du mal*, "Épigraphe pour un livre condamné" ("Epigraph for a Condemned Book"): "Lecteur paisible et bucolique,/ Sobre et naïf homme de bien,/ Jette ce livre saturnien,/ Orgiaque et mélancolique./ Si tu n'as fait ta rhétorique/ Chez Satan, le rusé doyen,/ Jette! tu n'y comprendrais rien"<sup>11</sup> (vv. 1-7). In the last verses of *Al lector*, yet another sardonic idea taken from Baudelaire corroborates his pessimism: "Que la más provechosa y mejor cualidad/ Que existe en la mujer, es la esterilidad" (XI; vv. 43-4). Baudelaire finished his sonnet "Avec ses vêtements ondoyants et nacrés"<sup>12</sup> with the verse "La froide majesté de la femme stérile"<sup>13</sup> (v. 14).

Probably imitating Baudelaire's mockery of religiosity in his poem "Les aveugles" ("The Blind"), included in "Les tableaux parisiens" ("Parisian Scenes"), De las Carreras adopts an insolent stance aimed at shocking and proving his lack of respect for his reader's values: "Y yo no sé qué hacer, de veras, ya no acudo/ A Dios, pues sé muy bien que Dios es sordo-mudo" (IX; vv. 28-9); "El mismo Dios, tal vez, no sabe ciertamente/ lo que hay en sus estrellas" (IX-vv. 83). Other times, he explores or hints at alternative beliefs, such as reincarnation, which had also been considered by Baudelaire in his poem "La vie antérieure" ("A Former Life"), included in the section "Spleen et Idéal." Thus, in section X, after depicting himself in a self-deprecating manner as a mistake of nature, De las Carreras claims:

La gran Naturaleza hará de otra manera  
Más perfecta y dichosa, en mejores momentos,  
Algún ser superior, mejor organizado,  
Volviendo a combinar y a unir los elementos,  
De una combinación en la cual ha fallado. (X; vv. 119-23)

In his poem "Bénédiction," included in the same section, Baudelaire had masterfully used religious topics to provoke the bourgeois mind of his reader. Like his French model, De las Carreras presents nature as a negative element: "Mas yo miro, tal vez, desde un punto de vista/ Algo malo a la tierra. Acaso sea más hermosa/ De lo que yo la pinto" (X; vv.

87-90). In another coincidental topic, in the poem "En un album de confesiones," written after his mother's death, the poetic voice insists on his obsessive necrophiliac impulses and on his will to die. Again, Baudelaire had previously expressed the same desire in other poems of this section, such as "Une charogne" ("The Carcass") and "Le Léthé" ("Lethe") ("Je veux dormir! dormir plutôt que vivre!"<sup>14</sup> [v. 9]), and especially in his poem "Au lecteur": "Dans nos cerveaux ribote un peuple de Démons,/ Et, quand nous respirons, la Mort dans nos poumons/ Descend, fleuve invisible, avec de sourdes plaintes"<sup>15</sup> (vv. 22-24).

To escape from these oppressive and unavoidable influences, De las Carreras thinks of switching his focus towards drama. For that purpose, he decides to turn his own life into a modern living drama in which he will be the protagonist: "El drama agrada mucho, aquí, en Montevideo,/ A él, pues, dedicaría esta existencia artista/ Tratando de abordar el género realista" (VII; vv. 20-2). Ángel Rama explains this decision:

Tenía veintiún años cuando descubrió este nuevo sesgo del comportamiento del artista que cincuenta años antes habían comenzado a ejercitar Gautier y Baudelaire y que progresivamente fuera dominando el mundo europeo hasta imponerse como el ideal de la década amarilla: el poeta debe transformar su vida en un espectáculo fabuloso, tenazmente original y disonante, para ofrecerlo agresivamente a sus contemporáneos; el poeta será el actor de sí mismo. (Psalms 9)

Likewise, in "Poema sentimental," the verses "Sin opio, ni ingredientes conocidos/ Tengo también mi cielo artificial" (vv. 162-3) echo Baudelaire's prose "Les paradis artificiels. Opium et Haschisch" (The Artificial Paradises. Opium and Hashish). The coincidences are not restricted to their works, but also reach their own private lives. Like Baudelaire, De las Carreras inherited a large amount of money and he also failed to properly administrate his finances.



Therefore, if we consider Baudelaire's shadow, it is easier to understand the, otherwise, somehow laughable and juvenile ideas of some of his writings. His failed attempt to create a poetic life is expressed in the following verses of *Al lector*: "De una obra tan notable era yo el principal/ Personaje, y no hacía/ Siempre, más que pensar en el dichoso día/ En que me aplaudiría una gran sala llena,/ Mirándome a mí mismo andar sobre la escena" (VII; vv. 28-32). These verses explain the premeditated and progressive creation of the implicit author throughout his work. De las Carreras's artistic pose responds to a strategy to become a Uruguayan "poète maudit," just as Charles Baudelaire, Théophile Gautier, Paul Verlaine, and Arthur Rimbaud were seen in France. De las Carreras proceeds to describe the way in which the first act of his planned drama would have been performed: he would have appeared inebriated, alongside Carlos Vaz Ferreira (to whom he dedicates the book) and another friend; then, ignoring his friends' advises, he would have continued to drink until he rolled down under table. Now in the second act, he would have announced his decision to commit suicide. As a reaction, some incredulous spectators would have made bets... but he decided not to conclude his personal drama, as the plot seems too simple.

Perhaps, however, De las Carreras goes beyond the dandy sensibility of his idol, Baudelaire. The disdain and snobbish tedium felt by the dandy, turn into the "campy" attraction for vulgarity and bad taste in the case of Roberto de las Carreras. As Susan Sontag explains in her chapter "Notes on „Camp“" included in her book *Against Interpretation*:

The old-style dandy hated vulgarity. The new-style dandy, the lover of Camp, appreciates vulgarity. Where the dandy would be continually offended or bored, the connoisseur of Camp is continuously amused, delighted. The dandy held a perfumed handkerchief to his nostrils and was liable to swoon; the connoisseur of Camp sniffs the stink and prides himself on his strong nerves. (291)

This can explain his malice and his proud use of unpolished and unrefined metaphors, images, and verses. With his insistence on hedonism and on not being serious, De las Carreras moves towards an early Camp style as a response toward the tedium caused by his affluent life-style and his despise for the provincial attitude of his fellow citizens. As Susan Sontag states: "Camp is a solvent of morality. It neutralizes moral indignation, sponsors playfulness" (292).

Be it as it may be, with his *poète maudite* and his imitation of Baudelaire, De las Carreras was more conventional than he would have liked to admit: his was a veiled search for literary prestige, recognition from his peers, and symbolic capital that proclaimed to despise bourgeois values while at the same time hoping to gain their appreciation in the near future.

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## Notes

1 Among his main works are *Poesía* (1892); the chronicles of his trip to Europe, such as "En viaje" (1895), published in the newspaper *El día*; *Al lector* (1894); "Mi herencia" (1894); "Poema sentimental"; "Desolación" (1895); "En un álbum de confesiones" (1896); "Una mujer"; "Mi italiana"; "Sueño de

Oriente" (1899); "Amor Libre" (1902); "Interview político con Roberto de las Carreras"; "Parisianas" (1904); "La tragedia del prado. La crisis del matrimonio. El amor libre. Oración pagana"; "Salmo a Venus Cavalieri" (1905); "Reto a Venus Cavalieri"; "En Onda azul" (1905); "Yo no soy culpable" (1905); "El amor libre y el divorcio" (1905); "Diadema fúnebre" (1906); "Oración pagana" (1906); "Don Juan (Balmaceda)" (1907); "La visión del arcángel" (1908); "La Venus celeste" (1909); "El cáliz" (1909); "Suspiro de una palmera" (1914).

2 *Sexo y poesía en el 900* (Montevideo: Alfa, 1969), by Emir Rodríguez Monegal; prologue to *Salmo a Venus Cavalieri y otras prosas* (Montevideo: Arca, 1967), by Ángel Rama.

3 First edition from the University of California Southern Regional Facility with hand-written corrections by Vicente Ule Arrió. In the second section: "Se me ocurre, lector" > "Se me presenta aquí"; in the third section: "lector, tú pierdes" > "Sin duda, tú pierdes"; "Y como tú, lector" > "De manera que tú"; "Sin embargo, lector" > "Y reflexiono aquí"; "No has de tener en mí" > "Que en mí no has de tener"; in the fourth section: "Sin embargo, lector, tratando de adoptar un aire protector" > "Sin embargo, adoptando un aire superior."

4 In his poem "En viaje" he rejects again this mondain death: "Yo no puedo morir de una manera/ Tan simple: ¡porque un buque se vaya a pique!" (vv. 29-30).

5 "[...] es que los pensadores/ Nos dicen hoy que el verso ha muerto en

general" (vv. 17-8); "[...] Es ridículo/ Esto de hablar así, con ritmo, con cadencia" (vv. 21-2); "[...] Hoy declara el Progreso/ Que la poesía es necia [...]" (vv. 25-6); "Hoy el mundo habla en prosa" (v. 28); "Pues este mundo, al fin, se ha de curar del arte,/ Del arte en general, de esa inmensa neurosis" (X; vv. 72-3).

6 "The Albatross" is a poem in the section "Spleen et Idéal" ("Spleen and the Ideal") included in his book *The Flowers of Evil*, "The Poet is a brother of this prince of clouds/ Familiar of the storm, he laughs at bows and slings./ But exiled on the earth among the hooting crowds,/ He finds his walk is hobbled by his giant wings."

7 "Our menagerie of vices."

8 "However we may move, the Devil tugs the string!/ We find alluring charm in loathsome bagatelle,/ And each day we descend one steep step nearer Hell;/ We walk, unhorrorified, through smoke and smut that stink."

9 "It is the Ennui! —within his eye false teardrops gather,/ While dreams of scaffolds crowd his hookah's smoke and smell./ Reader, you know this fastidious monster well,/ —Hypocrite reader, —My duplicate,— My brother!"

10 He also uses this term in his poem "En viaje."

11 "Dear reader, peaceful and bucolic,/ Pleasant, sane, a little dense,/ Chuck this gloomy book at once,/ So orgiastic, melancholic./ If you've not been to Satan's school/ To learn his moral sleight of hand/ Chuck it, you won't understand."

12 "The swaying of her skirts of pearl."

13 "Feckless woman that you are."

14 "I long to sleep! To sleep more than to live!"

15 "A mob of drunken Demons riots in our brains,/ And, even as we breathe, a silent Death profanes/ Our lungs with tiny streams of undetected germs."

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