English translation of the Spanish novel Industrias y andanzas de Alfanhui [The projects and wanderings of Alfanhui] with a critical introduction by Ruth M. Danald

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An English Translation of the Spanish Novel

INDUSTRIAS Y ANDANZAS DE ALFANHUI

by Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio

with a Critical Introduction

by

Ruth M. Danald

B.A. Douglass College, Rutgers University, 1942

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[Signatures]

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INTRODUCTION

Rafael Sanchez Ferlosio

Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio was born in Rome on December 4, 1927.
Although the author is reluctant to give biographical data in personal correspondence, it is known that his father Señor Sánchez Mazas was a Spanish journalist in Italy at the time, and that his mother was Italian. In 1954 Don Rafael married Carmen Martín Gaite, herself a well known writer.

In 1951 he introduced himself to the reading public with *Industrias y andanzas de Alfanhui*. He has the distinction of having won in 1955, with his *El Jarama*, the twelfth Nadal prize, the first to be awarded by unanimous decision of the judges. The following year this same novel was awarded the Premio de la Crítica, an honor which carries with it no financial value but considerable prestige, as the winning novel is chosen by a panel of outstanding Spanish literary critics, from among works published the preceding year.


3The Nadal Prize was first awarded in 1944 for the purpose of stimulating writers and is the most important literary prize in Spain. The first winner was Carmen Laforet with *Nada*. Other important winners have been Gironella's *Un hombre*, Delibes' *La sombra del ciprés es alargada*, Quiroga's *Viento del norte*, Medio's *Nosotros los Rivero*, and Matute's *Primera memoria*.
In 1961 there appeared a new edition of Alfanhui which included two short stories: Y el corazón caliente and Dientes, pólvora y febrero. Since that time, Señor Ferlosio writes, he has abandoned literature to devote himself to the study of language theory and, apart from a few articles, has published only El huésped de las nieves, a truly delightful, short, children’s story, in 1963. The author presently is living in Madrid.

Señor Ferlosio’s reluctance to reveal personal data, one feels, arises partly out of native modesty, but more important perhaps, from an expressed desire not to encourage the type of literary criticism that seeks in an author’s past experiences the interpretation of his works.

4 Letter from Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio dated January 17, 1964, Madrid, Spain.
Concerning El Jarama, Ferlosio's second novel, which attracted wide and favorable attention, perhaps the most important thing to be said is that it is a radical departure from the style and technique of Alfonso, in that it paints a reality minutely and accurately observed. The Lexicon der Weltliteratur im 20. Jahrhundert says that with this work of art Ferlosio approached the avant-garde novels that do not employ explanation but, with sharp observation and representative scenes, compose a contemporary film in words. The writer of the article sees in this work a resemblance to our own Dos Passos and to Sanchez' countryman Camilo Jose Cela, in the use of objective presentation with the help of dialogue and realistic actions, omitting description by the author which would inject his own personality. The Enciclopedia universal tells us that El Jarama had already (1957) been translated into various languages and that it belongs to "La nueva escuela novelística española dominada por el objetivismo y el realismo. . . . Lo importante . . . es . . . la captación del ambiente y del lenguaje colloquial." It is described as a social document concerning a part of Madrid youth in post-war years.

Sainz de Robles describes both of Ferlosio's novels as being "sin hilo conductor, disquisiciones, episodios, descripciones, imágenes."
If this is so, does this quality not enhance the realism of *El Jarama*?

The novel, which bears an epigraph from Leonardo da Vinci saying that the water you touch in a river is the last of what has passed and the first of that to come, opens with the complete, detailed geography along the route of the river Jarama, its course through the countryside, past convents and under bridges, as it joins and is joined by other rivers, until it reaches a point some sixteen kilometers from Madrid, where the tale of a typical Sunday in early summer is laid. The usual group of men gather slowly at the inn. Ordinary, inconsequential conversation takes place. The innkeeper and his wife argue over whether their daughter should be allowed to go into Madrid for a movie with her boyfriend, or whether she must be made to stay home to help wait on tables because of the crowd expected from the city on this first hot day of summer. The eight-forty-five train whistle is heard. The iceman delivers the ice.

Then, heralded by sounds of a motorcycle, a young couple Paulina and Sebastian arrive. They were here last year, and mutual, cordial greetings are exchanged. Other young people arrive from the city and, after making arrangements for lunch, they all go down to the river and undress in the bushes. Their costumes and repartee are given in complete and accurate detail. Slowly, through the dialogue, glimpses of character emerge. Dani is quiet, almost surly. Mely is flighty and has a chip on her shoulder.

On the beach is a family whose children play with a large beach ball, while the mother bends over a smoky fire, cooking dinner. It smells delicious. A fat, Buddha-bellied man calls his dog to stop him from bothering strangers. The peanut vendor cries his wares.
After a tiff in the water among three of the young folk, and another one, over who will go back up to the inn for beverages, lunch pails are opened and the food enjoyed. Luci, always the peacemaker, shy and timid, tries to see that everyone has enough to eat and is eager to share her lunch with anyone who would like to try some of it.

It is all typical of any Sunday waterside-cutting, anywhere, anytime. And through it all, underneath it all, is the current of the Jarama. As background to laughter and movement and lazy stillness, flows the Jarama. And the heat, the heavy, oppressive, almost stupefying heat, hangs languid and enervating over these typical people leading ordinary lives. Shop-girls and factory workers whose amusements are dancing, emulating movie stars, and wearing the latest fads in clothes and lipstick, have come to the country for a day of fun—and please, don't mention having to go back to work tomorrow!

The scene constantly shifts from the fun of the young people on the river bank to the older country folk who gather at the inn for their customary Sunday recreation. The lifelike quality of the narrative is subtly reinforced by the device of presenting the characters as they would be met in real life. A person enters the inn, he speaks and makes gestures. Then he is addressed by name and we know who he is. Often his profession comes out in the conversation. As the day wears on, the man whom we know only as "el hombre de los zapatos blancos" becomes, more familiarly, "él de los z.b." The men discuss their various occupations and the ups and downs of their economic status. Homely country philosophy evolves from the discussions. Each man is a distinct type of the kind one finds in the country suburbs of Madrid. These men obviously prefer their country ways and the "good old days."
Their life is serene, comfortable, relatively stable. The strongest element of misfortune is embodied in Coca Cola, who is confined to a wheelchair, and whom all treat with a gentle, matter-of-fact consideration. His own good humor about his handicap endears him to us, for when some children, fascinated by his mechanical contrivance on wheels, let it run away from them, he laughs and is glad the symbol of his infirmity can be the instrument of fun to someone.

The scene at the inn is enlivened by the arrival from Madrid of a family who are friends of the innkeeper. These adult characters are more completely drawn than the young city folk. This, of course, is logical—and if intentional, an extremely subtle and clever device for bringing breathing, lifelike quality to the work—for the older people, being mature, naturally have more character. The wife and mother, for instance, can never see any situation in a completely favorable light but must find at least one thing to complain about. She over-disciplines her children. And she is married to a man who sees children as children—who must run and play and get dirty and cause a little mischief.

The day wears on. The sun grows hotter and finally sends its slanting rays over river and inn. The family from Madrid takes its leave with affectionate thanks and warm urgings to return the visit. Some of the young people stroll away from the river in the late afternoon shadows. The rest go up to the inn to drink wine and dance to music on a phonograph. There they join another group of Sunday picnickers whom they chance to meet. One of the girls drinks a little too much, behaves with too much abandon, and then becomes sick in the bushes lining one side of the inn's garden. The reader feels a little
uncomfortable and ashamed for the young people who haven’t enough discretion to retain their innate dignity.

In the twilight everyone is brought together, young and old, city dwellers and country folk, and even a beggar passes by on the railroad track. Until this time the scene has shifted from group to group, the narrative being divided only by an asterisk in the center of the page. Now, however, the narrative runs together, treating both groups in the same paragraphs. With the soft approach of evening shadows, animal similes come out and the cat "andaba a los acechos por los rincones del jardín."

Three of the couples who did not come up to the inn to dance have gone for a walk and lain on the sand. Lucía is uncomfortable with the sand clinging to her moist skin, so Sebas suggests a moonlight dip. Pauli thinks he is not "bien de la cabeza" but Lucía decides it will be more fun at this unusual time. She is very lively and excited about the rather daring venture, out of character for her to the point that Pauli says: "Chica, ¿qué mosca te ha picado ahora? Te desconozco!" (258) And off they go to the river.

For some twelve pages the scene shifts back to the inn where the men smoke and discuss the shepherd’s economic affairs. Then we return to the young people who find the river "la mar de apetitosa. ... sentían correr el rio por la piel de sus cuerpos, como un fluido y enorme y silencioso animal acariciante" (271). They hear the sound of

8 Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio, El Jarama (5th ed.; Madrid: Ediciones Destino, 1961), p. 217. (Subsequently, page numbers in parentheses will follow a quotation.)
the dam downstream beside the lights of the picnickers. Paulina asks Lucita what she is doing off there by herself and tells her to come back. Pauli calls her again. "Calló en un sobresalto repentino. . . . Se oía un débil debatirse en el agua, . . . y un hipo angosto, como un grito estrangulado, en medio de un jadear sofocado en burbujas." (272) And Lucita is gone. Pauli shouts. People from the bank hurl themselves into the river. The body is found and it is too late for help.

The last quarter of the book is taken up with the young people's sad wait for the authorities from Alcalá, the viewing of the body, the slow, solemn arrangements about calling home to say they will be late. Finally the police official, who has been called away from a lively theater-dinner party, arrives; depositions are taken; Luci's few, almost pathetic, belongings are gathered up; and the body is taken to the next town. Now the moon is "como una gran cara muerta," (276) and "Sucesivas mesetas de caliza y margas, blanco de hueso, se destacaban sobre los valles, como los omoplatos fósiles de la tierra." (329) Death similes in the landscape subtly reinforce the sombre emotional atmosphere.

Here one encounters the one element of suspense in the book. Will we be present when Luci's mother is told? The young people finally bring up the question of who will disclose the tragic news, and it is decided the only possible way is for all to go to her together. The reader, however, is spared this scene.

Back in the inn, quiet sorrow is expressed over the sad event, such a young innocent person cut off so suddenly from life.
—El río este lo que es muy traicionero. Todos los años se lleva alguno por delante.
—Todos— dijo el pastor. El alcarreño:
—Y siempre de Madrid. La cosa: tienen que ser de Madrid; los otros no le gustan. Parece como que la tuviera con los madrileños
—Ya—comentaba Macario. 'A los de aquí se ve que los conoce y no se mete con ellos.
—Más bien que lo conozcan ellos a él, y saben cómo se las gasta. (320)

They comment then on the ferocity of the river in winter when it is full. Before the drowning they had commented upon the great destruction the river could wreak and how it had done so upon distant and infrequent occasions; and that now the villagers regard it, although benign, with true respect. The villagers remark that more madrileños die from fiesta accidents than die at work. "Quieren coger el cielo con las manos, de tanto y tanto como ansían de divertirse, y a menudo se caen y se estrellan. Da la impresión de que estuvieran locos, con esas ansias y ese desenfreno; gente desesperada de la vida es lo que parecen, que no la calma ya nada más que el desarreglo y que la baranda." (357)

The villagers slowly go home to their dinners. Lucio, the first to have appeared in the morning, is the last to leave. On his way home he hears the noise of the water below in the dam. The description of geography is resumed where it broke off in the beginning, down the winding route of the river's path. "Ya en las vegas de Aranjuez entrega sus aguas al Tajo, que se las lleva hacia Occidente, a Portugal y al Océano Atlántico." (365) With which words the novel ends.

This is a novel that has no plot, in the conventional sense. The small amount of character development exists neither for its
own sake nor to further the story, but to enhance, through concrete
detail, the realism of the picture. No conflict develops and
only the most tenuous thread of a story is followed. This is a
book that gives, simply, a complete picture of a particular day
in the life of humanity. It could be any Sunday, anywhere, in any
year. This typical day could happen, does happen, in the lives
of any number of people. Everything is ordinary in the extreme.
A representative variety of city folk is seen in contrast to a re­
presentative variety of villagers. No event is outstanding, no
person is outstanding. No opinion or philosophy is outstanding.

The Spanish critic, Eugenio de Nora, describes El Jarama in
the following terms:

Una plasmación novelesca . . . sometida a una
disciplina inflexible: la limitación estricta
a un tiempo . . . y a un espacio . . .
en los cuales se insertan a su vez unos cuantos
seres absolutamente anodinos . . . y, ante
todo, sobre estos límites de realidad concreta,
la sumisión consciente a una técnica literaria
. . . rigurosamente estremada: ver, oír y
dejar que las cosas pasen, sin permitirse la
más leve intromisión, interpretación o juicio
acerca del valor o sentido de los actos y palabras
registrados . . . .

He believes that Ferlosio’s selective vision is his technique, that
he chose “tan abismática nulidad” to show what society does to people
under the capitalistic system. He affirms that doubtless the purpose
of the author is moral and slightly critical. Nora, however, does
not uphold the opinion he ascribes to the author, believing rather
that any class of people on a similar excursion would appear equally

trivial. He makes the interesting point that the tragedy of Luci nearly humanizes everyone in the novel.

Luis Alborg sees in Ferlosio's technique the traditional Castilian realism, but a photographic realism not equalled by any other Spanish writer. He also refers to "la trágica insignificancia de su tejido humano." But Alborg centers his criticism on the city people and appears to regard the local people as an intervention. In the same vein, he sees the drowning of Luci as a concession made by the author to popular taste, so that it may be said his book has a plot, so that there will be some high point of interest. I differ strongly with his last two points.

I believe Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio is saying two things, albeit saying them softly and, perhaps, even inadvertently. I believe his primary purpose is to write a realistic novel, to show life as it simply and merely is. In his selection of locale, characters, and events an author has already stated something, willy-nilly. I believe Ferlosio has said, in true Castilian tradition, "Así es la vida." And he has said it about people he believes typical of Spain today. In order to do this he has presented life as it is--a series of contrasts. We see city folk and country folk, young people and adults, those in their own ambient, those away from their daily occupations, day and evening, fun and tragedy, life and death. This is life. Death is an integral part of life. And through all the activity and idleness, the mounting and waning of the sun's

intense heat, flows the river, quietly, impersonally, just as the world and time go impassively on their way, taking their toll of humanity, but taking it impersonally, as a matter of course.

El Jarama may indeed be a social document. It may belong to that group of novels without plot and without a protagonist. It may be an experimental genre. But reading it is a moving experience. The book is sensitively written, with an atmosphere bordering at times on the intense. One is made to feel the heat physically, to see the blinding light of the pitiless sun, and to hear, feel and see the Jarama: "... corría el agua rojiza, anaranjada, trenzando y destrenzando las hebras de corriente como los largos músculos del río." (28) Little gestures, looks, questions of the children have been minutely observed and accurately reported. Some of the descriptions of groups of people are like flashbulb photographs, so vivid are they, and so graphic that they can be seen almost all at once.

Throughout the book, the physical atmosphere reinforces the emotional tone of the moment. In addition to the animal and death similes already mentioned, there is for instance, the following. While the judge is having the police make a list of Lucía's possessions, one of the picnickers on the bank cleans up the remains of the day's fiesta, and the scraps, swept into the river, disappear "en la oscura vorágine de la compuerta," (352) just as matter-of-factly as did the life of Lucita.

This same characteristic of ascribing animal qualities to inanimate objects and vice versa is frequently encountered in Alfanhui.
This reader could not escape the observation that here in the form of the river is the Spaniard’s traditional stoicism. The impersonal Jarama, like life, flows along, touching persons of all conditions; it gives, it takes, it is impassive, indifferent. And this unchanging, unchangeable, undeflectable current of the river is the enduring attitude of countless generations of stoic Spaniards toward life that is capricious, unpredictable and unmanageable.

El Jarama may be thoroughly Spanish in its stoicism, in its traditional realism—one integral ingredient of which is the completely idiomatic quality of its dialogue; and even eloquent of its era in avoidance of political or social problems. But it is far more than that. It is true art in the beauty of its language, the poetry of its similes and metaphors, the deft creation of atmosphere. The world of this novel completely encircles all of the reader’s senses. The author makes no judgments, states no philosophic truths, poses no problems. El Jarama is a true work of art in that the reader, if he finds himself interested enough to continue reading the book, participates in the creative experience. Whatever this novel is must be determined and stated by each reader.
Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio's literary output includes three short stories. Two were published in the 1961 edition of *Alfanhuï*, and the third appeared in the periodical *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos* in November of 1963. The first two consist of some 2,500 words each and the last, although divided into four chapters, comprises only some 3,300 words.

*Y el corazón caliente* deals with a man's strange behavior when subjected to extremes of nature. The story is written in such a way as to make the reader feel he is observing reality. Yet it is surrounded by an aura of the intangible.

It has been extremely cold lately along the coastal highway from Barcelona to Tortosa. Fruit trees and flowers have been ruined by the frost. In a bar between Vendrell and Tarragona a truck driver from Aragon is discussing the phenomenon, and considers the loss of the flowers a trifle. Fruit trees are important, he says, but flowers are a whim, a caprice. A second man differs with this opinion, pointing out that the flowers mean a living for some people; and their destruction, aside from the loss of beauty, is a serious economic factor. A third, unnamed man thinks it would not be unusual to find people with inappropriate reactions because of the extreme cold, in itself so out of the ordinary. He finds himself, for example, breaking into laughter for no reason.

The men continue around the warm stove discussing whether or not the loss of the flowers is important. Finally the one from Aragon
drinks his swallow of gin after his coffee, bundles up warmly, and prepares to leave. The cold slams into him as he steps onto the threshold and he faces the others in the room with a grin, as if to say: It's a caprice also to be traveling on a day like this.

A couple of hours later two men on horseback pass an overturned truck beside the highway between Reus and Tortosa. Looking around for its driver, they find him huddled under a kind of shelter, over a tiny fire. He refuses all offers of help, at first not even answering his would-be benefactors, and not very politely advises them to be on their way; what happened had to happen and that's that. Realizing they cannot make the man listen to reason, they leave, deciding to send someone back to help him. Soon they meet another truck which they stop, whose occupants believe they know the unfortunate driver. They promise to go immediately to his aid, and believe because he knows them, he will accept their help.

Upon reaching him, they find that an expensive Citroen with two occupants has also stopped. The cordially kind occupants offer whiskey, cookies and helpful advice. But the Aragonese brusquely observes that since there is nothing wrong with their car, they had better get on. He's not going to freeze even though it is nine below zero. Plants may freeze and flowers may freeze and trees may freeze but man is not going to freeze; if he does who is going to bear this punishment of extreme cold? He's not going to freeze like a vegetable, that's what he has warm blood for, so that he may be aware of things and suffer them and be purified by it. With this observation he becomes less offensive, giving them his address and
asking them to stop in any time. He assures them he is perfectly
fine; they must not worry about him. They prepare to leave.

His well-meaning friends are no more successful. He neither
raises his glance nor answers their "How did it happen?" They want
to place him bodily in the cab of their truck; they cannot leave
him there and go away with that on their consciences. But the victim
harshly tells them to go. They don't have to suffer that punishment,
and he is not going to freeze, because his blood is working and he
has plenty of fortitude.

As they of the Citroen are about to leave, two Highway Police
approach. They are no-nonsense fellows; they declare that this is
no day for fooling around and let's get out of here. He'll go in the
other truck and they will send a crane back for his truck. Still
our unlucky friend refuses to budge. He is not going to move
one step from the place where he received his punishment. The police,
however, pick him up willy-nilly, and into the cab between the other
two truck drivers he goes. There, finally, he ceases struggling
against them and sits, shrunken within himself, nearly ill with cold.

Back at the original bar, he is seated near the stove, given
coffee with cognac. The police kindly urge him to drink it while
it's hot and see how much better he'll feel. The story ends with
the unfortunate man pushing away the drink with his elbow, burying
his face in his folded arms and weeping.

No explanation is given. No conjecture is offered. No judgment
is passed. Is the sufferer right or wrong in persisting in his
seemingly irrational behavior? Is he crazy or sane? What's the matter
with him? The overturning of a truck is a fairly commonplace event.
But this realistic event is linked to a mystical concept. Nature affects all of her creatures—human and vegetable. Extremes in nature affect all of nature. There is a strong undercurrent of that Oriental doctrine which promulgates the unity of all life.

It seems likely, in view of the author's remarks in his letter, that he would wish this story to be taken at face value and would not wish his readers to endow it with meaning or content not explicitly stated. However, if literary criticism consists in reading what the author put into his work, and if we are to regard Ferlosio as an accomplished writer, we must assume that no detail is insignificant and that, therefore, the opinions expressed by the men in the beginning of the story have a bearing on the events that unfold throughout the story, and that the title also has some direct relationship to the story's raison d'etre. The apparently irrational behavior of the truckdriver exemplifies the opinion of the man who believes that this very unusual cold weather makes people unbalanced. The driver, when refusing all aid, says that he is not going to freeze like a cauliflower; that's what he has warm blood for: to prevent his freezing; and to make him aware of things and able to suffer them, atone for them, and continue living. However, the title refers to a warm heart, and it is this quality, one which separates the human from the vegetable kingdom, the warmheartedness of his fellow men, that prevents him from suffering in the cold and that returns him to the warmth of the tavern.

This work partakes of the techniques of both Alfanhus and El Jarama. Emotional and intellectual elements are firmly tied to reality by minutely recorded, homely details. Yet no character in
the story has a name, so that we are led to think in terms of abstractions, of ideas, and of people as opposed to individuals. As in El Jarama, the dialogue is extremely colloquial. However, it differs from both novels in that the entire story is told in the manner with which a man sitting in a bar might tell it to another; the "he said's" and the "they said's" are omitted and several speeches are combined in one paragraph, the speakers being identified only by the content of their remarks.

Dientes, pólvora, febrero recounts a few hours in a February day when the men of a village of La Mancha set out to hunt a marauding she-wolf who has been pillaging the countryside. The scene opens as the men, scattered through the brush, converge on the dying wolf and her slayer. The mayor, who limps, comes up and congratulates the marksman. The latter modestly remarks that it was mostly luck. A shepherd approaches, joyful to see the wolf dead at last. She is still in the death throes, and rather than waste another shot and 2.25 pesetas' worth of gunpowder on her, he calls up his dogs who dispatch the animal. As an expression of gratitude and to celebrate their victory and his good fortune, the shepherd invites the hunters to his hut for a meal of young goat.

The men approach his hut and while away the time till the meal is ready by drinking and discussing their exploit. The women come to look at the rather gory scene but only to see that it is really the wolf. The children, on the other hand, touch it and are greatly interested. One man, well in his cups, gives a disquisition on wolf hunting and how lucky, brave, and skillful their village is. The mayor makes a little speech of gratitude to the shepherd for his
gracious hospitality. He says that other people who think wolf-hunts are organized just as a pastime should take a lesson from the shepherd. The shepherd discounts the mayor's gratitude, saying his hospitality is no more than the men deserve for having killed the wolf before she did any more harm to his flock.

By this time the meal is ready and the shepherd attentively serves his guests. Four women, one old, one young, and two inbetween, have done the cooking. The meal and dessert over, the mayor wishes to leave the shepherd's wife some money as a tip for all her trouble, but he cannot figure out which one is the wife. In an attempt to find out, he engages the shepherd in a conversation about his family and all he finds out is: his oldest boy is out on the mountain with the flocks; wait till you see the youngest—just four months old!—and the two inbetween are playing over there.

Meanwhile the men climb into the truck to return to town. One of them, the one that breeds mares, has prepared the wolf's hide and it is hanging from a liveoak tree where it will stay until it dries completely.

This story is told in the same conversational, matter of fact tone as El corazón. The story does not build up to a climax. It is just one piece of the patchwork quilt that is life. It is a vignette of contemporary Spain. Its simplicity and apparent lack of meaning make one wonder if there is something so Spanish in the setting or in the action that its intrinsic value escapes the foreigner.

On the other hand, there is no mistaking the loveliness and simple charm of El huésped de las nieves. Here I am in complete

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agreement with Señor Sánchez who says that this is a children's story. It is written in the long tradition of children's stories the world over.

In the mountains near Toledo there lived a family who had two burros. One night when the father had gone into the village it began to snow so heavily that the father sent word he would spend the night in town. The snow continued the next day. On the morning of the second day the oldest of the boys burst into the house all excited, saying the stable had been broken into, the catch on the door had been forced, and the hay spilled about. Who could have been there? When the father came home they told him about the strange incident and asked him to answer the question.

Father immediately visited the stable and saw the broken catch, but he also saw a footprint in the mud and identified it as that of a deer. All day the son could do little more than look out the window. Finally he remarked that perhaps the deer would return that night, now that he knew the way. Then the grandfather told the boy how one may determine the age of a deer by counting its points. With this new information the boy could not sleep, but begged to stay up that night and watch for the deer and see how old he was. And so they decided to wait up and see if the animal paid them a return visit.

Sure enough, as Nicolas dozed in the warmth of the barn and its cozy odor, he and his father heard the approach of the stag. The animal pushed open the door. As he entered and approached the manger, he saw the man and boy and caught their smell. In his confused fright he could not find the door immediately and dashed about catching on his horns the lantern the little boy had been holding. He ran
out, jumped the corral fence and was lost in the night. Nicolas remembered that he had not even had the presence of mind to count his prongs, so now he would never know how old his beautiful night-visitor had been. The next morning they found the lantern so broken that it was not worth trying to repair. In town no one believed the story of a deer who would come right down into the barns and eat as if he were a burro. This was what bothered Nicolas more than anything.

Winter passed, and spring; everyone had forgotten the incident. One afternoon when the father was in his favorite tavern, in came a shepherd who showed them a beautiful set of antlers shed by some deer in the mountains. And he showed them a little, rusty, twisted ring on one of the prongs that might well be a ring off a lantern. "And I'll be hanged if it isn't!" said Nicolas' father. Borrowing the tavernkeeper's horse, he dashed home and brought back Nicolas with the remains of the lantern to prove that his story was true, and so that the boy himself could at last count the prongs. Not only did Nicolas see his story proved true in the presence of the incredulous onlookers but he counted the deer's prongs to his heart's content, and they were fourteen, exactly Nicolas' own age at that very time.

*El huesped de las nieves* is a story to delight the heart of any child and its tender simplicity can touch the heart of an adult. There is no make-believe, no fairy tale magic, no stretching of facts to make a miracle. Ferlosio has taken a plausible event and woven it into a warm and captivating story.
Industrias y andanzas de Alfanhui

Industrias y andanzas de Alfanhui, to an even greater degree than El Jarama, lends itself to individual interpretation. The author wants his book taken at face value. He wishes it to be regarded as self-sufficient work of art, the unlikely things contained in it to be taken as fantasy. "Una novela es algo para leer, no para descifrar," he states in his letter. He explains by saying that just as in poetry rhymes are inoperative if they are not apparent to the ear but must be sought by learned critics, "hay que considerar literariamente inexistente en una obra todo lo que no tenga consecuencias perceptivas en la imaginación de los lectores. Lo que estos leen, y no lo que no alcanzan a leer, es lo que el crítico literario ha de tener por objeto de su estudio." Therefore this book may be as many things as it has readers, if the author's objective is accomplished, for no two people will ever read exactly the same thing in some 190 pages of highly metaphoric and poetic prose.

Alfanhui may be taken, as I believe its author wishes, as a series of impressions, a journey into fantasy reasonably controlled by the use of concrete, realistic detail. It may even have been the author's conscious intent to write in El Jarama, his second novel, one as different from Alfanhui as possible. Given the nature of the author's present studies, which he describes as the theory of language, this seems a valid conjecture, since he has demonstrated what can be done with language at the two extremes of realism and fantasy. It is a highly notable achievement in creating masterpieces at both extremes.

Although Sanchez Ferlosio rejects attempts at "interpretation"
It is a highly notable achievement that he succeeded in creating masterpieces at both extremes.

Although Sánchez Ferlosio rejects attempts at "interpretation" of Alfahuf, saying in his letter "tampoco me parece una actitud adecuada a la naturaleza de una obra literaria la de colocarse frente a ella como ante un telegrama cifrado del Pentágono, . . . ." even a first reading of the book will leave many questions in the reader's mind. Nora states that predecessors are to be found only in works like Peter Pan and Alice in Wonderland, (p. 302) but it seems to me that Ferlosio's novel is much more than a children's book. The use of a Biblical quotation as an epigraph lends to the work a serious, even didactic or moralistic note which, in my opinion, removes the book from the nursery. Also the description of death in Chapter VII, and of the drummer in Chapter IX, both of Part Three, confirm this opinion.

In contrast to Nora, Alborg, although agreeing that Ferlosio "no tiene equivalente en nuestras letras," states that "solo podría encontrársele un precedente fuera de ellas en ciertos surrealistas de Supervielle o en algunos fantásticos pasajes de las leyendas chinas." (p. 309) The works of Supervielle, while highly imaginative, are not children's literature and, in fact, are not intended primarily as entertainment.

Both critics agree that this is a book of complete fantasy. Alborg pays the work high compliments: "Es un libro a la vez extraño y delicioso . . . y sin posibles descendientes, según creo; no es un libro-formula, sino un libro-excepción." (p. 306) He refers to Ferlosio as "el mas fantástico poeta, creador de imposibles."
inventor de "industrias" asombrosas y de seres químicos—un mundo intemporal, donde reina a sus anchas la diosa Fantasía." (p. 306)

For this Spanish critic, "capacidad de invención como lo que aquí derrocha Ferlosio no tiene equivalente en nuestras letras." (p. 309)

Alborg's high praise springs from his opinion that: "No se trata tan sólo de una gracia de estilo, de una dicción poética o de una perfección o belleza de lenguaje. . . . Lo que en el libro de Ferlosio nos admira es el don de invención, la capacidad para crear un mundo nuevo donde las cosas y las formas son inéditas, distinta la luz y el ritmo de los seres e insospechados sus caminos para transformarse y actuar." Quoting Cela's La Geografía de Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio, Alborg continues: "Sanchez Ferlosio acaba de publicar un libro extraño, un libro singular, un libro sin edad." (p. 310) The italics are Alborg's and I include the quotation for the sake of establishing the importance of the work here translated. Alborg himself calls it "una poética ficción incádicable." (p. 311)

Sherman Eoff, in The Modern Spanish Novel, points out that the contemporary literary artist merges science and religion because he cannot categorize his response to life into the tangible and the abstract. For this reason Eoff sees the artist as endeavoring to solve through his art, problems which the philosopher attacks through reason. Many of Dr. Eoff's judgments about contemporary Spanish novels are exemplified in Alfanuñ. Eoff sees in those novels a new concept of God as a "synthesis of all matter and all life."12

and a strong current of the Oriental doctrines that teach the return of the individual soul to a cosmic entity. This concept, I believe, is conveyed through the episode of the master's death in Part One, when the master states three times that he is going to the kingdom of whiteness where all things are united, where all colors are made one.

Dr. Eoff discusses the Spanish novel from the point of view that its themes concern "man's preoccupation with his place in the cosmic order." (p. 19) This theme is implicit in Alfanhui. Alfanhui is seldom far from nature and it is close to nature that he learns about life: about creating it—in the master's atelier; about understanding it—in the herbalist's workshop; and it is in contact with the earth that he is healed after having left the city in his blindness. I believe the implicit philosophy is that man's place is in close communion with nature, since he is one more of its varied manifestations.

Eoff refers to the "mystic stream of consciousness" which the twentieth century inherited from the nineteenth. In this concept the individual is merely a fragment rising from the mass, like a drop of water that eventually returns to its source; and immortality is found in the union of the individual with the whole, "with a Life Force unconscious and absolute in its nullification of individual personality." (p. 256) The relative lack of personality traits in the characters and the absence of the names of Alfanhui, his master and other significant figures, such as the beggar, the one-eyed giant, and the drummer (if, indeed, the drummer is a person) bear testimony to Ferlosio's perhaps unconscious depersonalized attitude.
Eoff finds what he refers to as three motives in the modern Spanish novel that stand out like demands waiting to be fulfilled. These are love, biological creativeness, and a degree of subjectivity, which, although first clearly seen in Flaubert, Zola, and Sartre, respectively, are to be clearly found also in Ferlosio’s compatriots Galdós and Unamuno. The first demand, love, pervades a large part of Alfanhui as the emotional tone of certain of the characters: the tenderness of the master toward Alfanhui and his general air of gentleness, the generosity of the beggar with the veined stone, the warm friendliness of the one-eyed giant, the solicitude of the mountain folk for the ill and homeless Alfanhui.

Biological creativeness of course is evident in the experiments performed by Alfanhui and his master with the many-colored leaves of the chestnut tree (p. 45) and the new, unique birds (p. 51).

Subjectivity Eoff explains in part as the demand of Spanish writers that the individual be the expression of a principle, an ideal, now, that he be the enactment of something. By his act of demolishing Don Zana, the chief element of external conflict in the novel, Alfanhui has become the embodiment of an active ideal. The quiet, imaginative boy who is capable of bringing forth new beauty from nature, who understands the stories of the fire, and to whom Dona Tere feels free to reveal her father’s strange experience, makes his one violent move in ridding the world of the mocking, heartless, self-seeking, wooden man Don Zana.

If Unamuno and Ortego wished, as Eoff believes, to “restore life and spontaneity to reason;” and found “reality . . . a constantly changing essence,” (p. 262) they have a good disciple in Sánchez xxviii
Ferlosio. In the experiments performed by Alfanhui and his master with the tree and the birds, there is a unique blend of scientific curiosity and unfettered imagination. Grafting the contents of birds' eggs into the bark of a tree seems beyond the realm of scientific reasoning, but it is alive with individuality. The fact that these experiments yield a new type of living creature gives a new essence to reality, an essence that partakes simultaneously of animal and vegetable natures.

Eoff also finds dominant in twentieth century Spanish writers a sense of being "elevated to partnership with an Intelligence engaged in endless creation." (p. 267) The reader whose mind is attuned to this type of fantasy might well be struck with the question of whether the master is a God figure and whether Alfanhui is partaking of his God-like nature as they share in the projects that create new life. Although the master has consulted books on the generation of life, as is stated when Alfanhui finds a book in the abandoned house, much of Alfanhui's understanding seems to spring from within himself. The strange creations do not startle him but he seems to take them as a matter of course. I find in this attitude, in his reaction to the spider in the cave, and in his innate knowledge of the nature of plants, what Eoff regards as Unamuno's belief that "knowledge is intuitive." (p. 172)

These philosophical points are mentioned for the purpose of fixing Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio where I firmly believe he belongs, in the mainstream of important contemporary Spanish writers. His thought and content are mature and serious and of immediate as well as universal significance.
As for his artistry, perhaps Ferlosio's outstanding trait is his poetic imagery, the quality of which strongly recalls that of André Gide and of Wallace Stevens. Ullman, in his study *The Image in the Modern French Novel*, speaking of Gide says: "The time honoured parallel between a bird and the human soul is fully exploited." This symbol supplies one of the keys to an integrated interpretation of the symbolism in *Alfanhui*. Alfanhui, who is given that name because he has the yellow eyes of a bittern and this is the cry bitterns use to call each other, may be seen as a symbol for the human soul, or more specifically, as a symbol for the incipient artist.

Further, Ullman discusses at length the fact that many of Gide's images "are refreshingly original and unconventional . . . and play a dynamic part in conveying the story's meaning and deepening its artistic effect." (p. 23). Here is a point at which Ferlosio shares the characteristics of both Gide and Stevens. It has been stated that Stevens' "poetry gets part of its loftiness from . . . daring images." It is this very quality that makes poetry of the prose that Ferlosio has written. A few of the more striking images are: the deep red of the sunset which is a beneficent blood poured over the land to ripen things (p. 5); the robber who could make his

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whistling bend so that it was heard around corners (p. 26); ashy and cobalt days that lie on the ground, dirty, like a suicide's jackets (p. 121).

I also find a strong similarity between Ferlosio and Stevens in that in Stevens "there are no explicit answers. Everything is implied; if anything is stated, it is stated in terms of something else."\(^{15}\) I believe my interpretation of Alfanhui is only one of several possibilities. The meanings, the answers, even the questions in Alfanhui are not overtly stated but remain to be extracted by each reader in accordance with the background and frame of mind he brings to its reading. This many-faceted quality is inherent in the nature of the symbol. A symbol may have more than one meaning, indeed may change its meaning as the story progresses. This fact makes any explicit statement in a symbolic work, such as I believe Alfanhui to be, unlikely if not actually impossible to its inherent nature.

It seems to me the similarity between Stevens and Ferlosio extends beyond the original and unique imagery. There is, to a point, a similarity of thought, perhaps better expressed as "feeling," between these two contemporary poetic writers. I find a strong relationship between Stevens' conception of his task to make of man himself the instrument of knowledge and the medium of universal value\(^{16}\) and Alfanhui's own self-appointed apprenticeships to the master and to the herbalist. In the course of these apprenticeships Alfanhui

\(^{15}\)Ibid.

is seen, first, as discovering the knowledge of how to create new forms of life. In addition to merely participating in the experiments under the guidance of a master, it is Alfanhui himself who must descend to the cave and reveal to the master what he finds there. The master is unable to make the descent into the well, which symbolically may be taken to mean hidden secrets of nature. In the workshop of the herbalist, Alfanhui penetrates the secrets of the nature of green things and of how these secrets must be learned. He learns how to know things in both life and death. Alfanhui learns from his master that death is merely going to the kingdom where all colors—human attributes, emotions, memories—unite to become white. This fact of importance to all mankind Alfanhui reveals for our consolation, just as in "Sunday Morning" Stevens writes: "Death is the mother of beauty." The master's death quickly recalls this similarity to the mind of the reader familiar with Stevens' poetry.

I have endeavored to point out wherein Ferlosio forms an integral part of his country's literary tradition and also to demonstrate the marked similarities he shows to both a French and an American contemporary. However, while Ferlosio is far from provincial, he is deeply Spanish. An absorbing and voluminous study might be made of the traditional symbols used by Don Rafael. Some of his metaphors, similes, and animal figures occur, for instance, in the poetry of García Lorca, who, it is generally conceded, drew heavily on his native folklore. In addition, the Spanish landscape makes its

17 For example: "El lagarto viejo;" "caña de sus manos suave ceniza" from "Suicidio;" "qué merte blanca" from "Casida del herido por el agua;" on pp. 2, 54, and 170 respectively in Francisco García Lorca and Donald M. Allen (eds.), Selected Poems of Federico García Lorca (New York: New Directions, 1961).
presence strongly felt in Alfanhui. Clusters of hills resemble flocks of sheep, streets are often paved with great blocks worn uneven by the tread of countless generations, and tawny and honey-colored walls frequently appear in the story. These very descriptions are to be found not only in other Spanish writers, but in the works of her captivated tourists. 18

It may also be argued that the andanzas of Alfanhui follow the Spanish picaresque tradition. Had this book been written outside of Spain, such a judgment might never be made. But Spain having been the birthplace of the pícaro, any Spanish book about a youth who travels during the period of a few years is likely to be classified as picaresque. Indeed it is true that Alfanhui has certain characteristics of the picaresque novel in that the protagonist is a young boy who leaves home and travels, serves a series of "masters," hears the stories of various people, and, in the process, matures. But the resemblance to a picaresque novel resides only in the external mechanics of plot structure. Alfanhui's parents do not come from a morally degenerate segment of society, nor does their neglect force him out into the world. Alfanhui never learns the cynicism and the materialistic preoccupations of the true pícaro. He does not learn to lie, cheat, and steal in the service of his masters, but rather to transform reality into a beauty hitherto unseen. The coarseness and crudeness of the picaresque novel are supplanted by poetic images and provocativeimaginings.

18 See, for example, Havelock Ellis' The Soul of Spain; W. Somerset Maugham's Don Fernando; Henry D. Sedgwick's Spain: A Short History; Richard Ford's Handbook for Travellers in Spain, and others.
We might better and with more reason argue for Alfanhuí's being a myth. C. S. Lewis defines a myth by its effect on the reader or hearer; what, therefore, may be a myth to one person may not be so to another. The six essential ingredients of a myth for Lewis are: (1) The story has a value in itself independent of its literary merit. (2) Its pleasure does not depend on narrative qualities of suspense or surprise. (3) "Human sympathy is at a minimum. We do not project ourselves at all strongly into the characters" but feel that their actions have a relevance to our own and to those of all men; what emotion we feel is for all men and not for the protagonist per se. (4) The story is fantastic in that it "deals with preternaturals." (5) It "may be sad or joyful but it is always grave." (6) It is awe inspiring. Myths and archetypes have a strong relationship, archetypes being formed to the degree to which images and symbols derive full meaning from some perennial aspect of the human mind. In Alfanhuí the symbolism concerns the evolution of the artist, his experience of achieving artistic maturity.

Sánchez Ferlosio may deny that his work is a symbolic one and may, indeed, truly believe it not to be. But the world has gone on looking for the "meaning" of the Quijote even though, as Ortega said, "no existe libro alguno en que hallemos menos anticipaciones, menos indicios para su propia interpretación." A writer injects symbolism into his work whether he will or no, and

19 C. S. Lewis, An Experiment in Criticism (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1961), pp. 43 44.

if looking for symbols in the Quijote was a justifiable literary activity for José Ortega y Gasset, it seems not reprehensible in relation to Alfanhuí. Keeping in mind the fact that this is a first book, and writers not uncommonly feel the need to explain themselves to their potential public in their first works, the interpretation that follows seemed not at all unlikely to me.

To explain the integrated symbolism in Alfanhuí it is logical to start with the meaning of the protagonist’s name. When we accept the interpretation already given, that the boy represents the human soul, the next significant point to consider is the boy’s actions. He makes ink and writes with a strange alphabet that is instinctive with him, and which no one understands. Although he is forbidden to continue this activity, he does continue in it. Here is a picture of the young writer just beginning to come into self-realization.

The weathercock stands in the position of the boy’s first teacher and opens his eyes to the magic of living color. He introduces the boy to a realm of sensory experiences unknown to ordinary people. The birth of the perfectly formed, beautifully colored colt represents to Alfanhuí the fact that it is time for his birth as an artist. Upon returning home, the boy wants to become a taxidermist and they have to send him to a teacher. The relation of taxidermy to the arts is found in the fact that the taxidermist attempts to fix a figure permanently in a life-like form, yet to represent that figure at its most attractive. He immobilizes one moment in life for the contemplation of other men. Once the young boy, set off from others who do not understand his means of communication, has seen the many-colored reflection of XXXV
truth in the powerful colors of the sunset mist, and realizes his responsibility to mature quickly, he recognizes his need for guidance. He seeks the person who knows how to immobilize life, to capture it and reconstruct its representation, real and lifelike, perhaps eliminating some of its defects.

But the creative also involves selection and arrangement detail. Alfanhui learns to do this as he works in the cave with the roots of the chestnut tree. The cave, as mentioned above, may represent hidden knowledge which the boy finds in nature and uses in his creative activities. He and his master create new forms of art, and as often happens to artists who depart from the traditional, they are nearly destroyed by an indignant public who do not understand the new creations. Upon his death, the master passes into the spiritual realm where truth is revealed perfect and whole, the realm where the many-colored reflections of truth are joined to reflect only white. The experience of death and its consequent suffering were necessary ingredients for the soul of a true artist. When Alfanhui revelled in the snow his grief over the master's death was driven away. It was necessary for him to experience in nature something like the whiteness of the realm into which the master had gone. He found in nature, frequently regarded as a beneficent, healing force, that influence which enabled him to integrate his first harsh experience harmoniously into his whole being.

Part One, then, presents a naturally gifted youth who is awakened to the existence of art and is made to realize that he must accept early maturity. It describes his period of study with a master,
the beginnings of his own creative endeavors and his first experience with death. All this takes place close to nature.

Part Two takes him to the city. Here he meets various kinds of people: people with useless occupations, strangely mature children, pathetic gypsy bands. The city is a place of pointless fads and silly customs. The pension he lives in is a strangely turned-around place. Things are neither logical nor what they seem. He meets a wooden man who has no feeling for his fellow beings; indeed he is hardly one of them, since he lacks emotions and sensitivity. Finally in the culmination of an instinctive enmity, the artist exterminates this unfeeling creature. But he has done a moral wrong—the artist is not his own lawmaker—and he is punished by a fate appropriate to an observer of life—blindness, blindness the very color of his victim's blood. After long and painful suffering, inability to orient himself physically (a symbol for moral confusion), after making a firm though painful decision, and making his way laboriously away from the city "by the high road" (symbolic of high moral purpose), in contact with the earth again, Alfanhui recovers his sight. He had rid the world of what is for the artist its worst type of man—an unfeeling, insensitive person.

But it was in Madrid also that Alfanhui found the store of honey in the abandoned house. The house was hidden beneath a bower of entangled vines. The honey is referred to as hidden gold. Here again Alfanhui reached sources untouched by other men. It was in the abandoned house that he realized how ancient he looked, a symbol of the timelessness of the artist's soul. Previously, in his master's house he had met two thieves, hidden in the attic, who gave him a gold
The hidden gold and the gold coin can be taken as symbols of the precious stuff of which art is made—insight. And does not the artist find his material in strange places, places where other people never look? In Madrid also he saw the firemen and admired their colorful equipment, their devotion to their profession and the fact that they abided by its rules. Thus in Part Two the young artist meets the world of men, men in groups in their cities, finds hidden treasure and defines his soul in a harsh act of rejection and destruction.

Part Three finds Alfanhui alone in the mountains. Not uncommonly heights represent spiritual isolation. The harshness of the storm and of the rugged mountains represents Alfanhui's spiritual turmoil after his violent act. After enduring physical hardships, he descends to the plains—symbolic of regained spiritual tranquility. The first person he meets is the giant in the red forest. This man among men by virtue of his size has, like Alfanhui, perpetrated violence on a fellow being. The result of his punishment causes him to take up an occupation which leaves him with "a single eye." The weathercock, Alfanhui's first teacher, also had "a single eye." The giant's eye is filled with light and kindness. He tells Alfanhui the meaning of a true treasure and they understand each other's hearts.

After the refreshing experience of this reassuring and wholesome figure, Alfanhui goes to his grandmother's. Having created composite forms of life, having seen and come to terms with both natural and violent death, Alfanhui now lives intimately with the Mother Earth principle. Although she has secrets he may not know, and although he never learns the contents of the chests over which she performs
her strange dance of life, Alfanhui is nevertheless able to extract
from her, through his knowledge of the powers in nature, the stories
she has to tell. There, close to Mother Nature herself, the young
artist also experiences the majestic dignity and poignant sweetness
of natural death. Through his association with the hunters and fisher-
men, Alfanhui learns about other kinds of death also. His final
knowledge is gained at the herbalist's. There he examines with minute
care the various natures of growing things and learns to extract their
true essence. In order to do this he withdraws from the world of
men and isolates himself in his own thoughts and intuitions.
Having learned the true nature of the objects of his study, Alfanhui
leaves the herbalist and goes to an isolated spot where he is joined
by the bitterns for whom he has been named. These kindred spirits
recognize him as one of them and then leave him alone where he looks
up and sees that perfect work of art, the rainbow, which may also
be taken symbolically as the many-colored reflection of truth.

With this interpretation of Alfanhui, the story fulfills Lewis'
six requirements for a myth. It is the qualities delineated by
Lewis which are found in Alfanhui, together with Ferlosio's vivid
and novel imagination, and his poetic expression that give to the
novel what I believe to be its greatness.
The prose of Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio offers certain interesting and challenging problems to the translator. First, not only is *Alfanhu* a highly imagistic work, but the images themselves are often conveyed in the most unusual terms. Ferlosio not uncommonly joins a word associated with one sense impression to another that makes its appeal to a different sense. For instance, on page 139, the author describes the light in the forest as falling in *rachas*, literally "gusts," a word usually associated with wind and the tactile sense, as opposed to the visual sense with which we experience light.

Secondly, as will occur in any work to be translated, a word used in the original may convey a definite and logical meaning, while in the second language there is no exact equivalent, or the exact literal equivalent does not have the same connotations in the second language as it does in the original.

In the third place, distinctly idiomatic expressions may not be meaningful when translated literally; they may have no similar idiomatic equivalent in the second language; or they may be almost unintelligible in the original, as idioms may be used either very locally or very fleetingly.

Therefore, the translator must attempt to strike a happy balance, conveying the author's thought and meaning as exactly as possible while at the same time endeavoring to retain the original style insofar as is consonant with good English.
It was desired in this translation to convey as much as possible of Ferlosio's rather unusual style. The reader will therefore encounter incomplete sentences, unusual similes, and, at times, ambiguities. The Spanish language lends itself to ambiguities, especially in the matter of subjects and objects of verbs, even more readily than English. When this occurred in Alfonso and the ambiguity defied clarification, the same ambiguity was retained in English. It was felt that any attempt to make the style more smooth, or to eliminate vagueness, would destroy part of the unreal quality the author wished to impart to his work. A desire, therefore, to stay as close as possible to the original style seemed sufficient justification for rendering a nearly literal translation rather than assuming what the author wished to say and attempting to convey his meaning in more polished English.

As will be noted in reading the translation presented here, a few of the Spanish words could not be found in any of the three Spanish-English dictionaries consulted (Cassell, 1960; Cuyás, 1961; Williams, 1962) nor in the Nuevo pequeño Larousse, the dictionary of the Real Academia Española, or the three-volume Diccionario enciclopedico de la lengua castellana. When this occurred, in order to avoid breaks in continuity by retaining an unknown Spanish word, the translator made as logical an assumption as possible and acknowledged the fact in a footnote.

21Edited by Claudio Santa Gonzalez, published in Paris by Casa Editorial Garnier Hermanos.
I sowed wild grain on the banks of the Henares.

These strange fancies that wandered through my head and that are so fittingly set in Castile are sown for thee. This Castilian story full of true lies is written for thee.

The light of the body is the eye. If your eye is clean, all your body will be filled with light.

Matt. 6:22
PART ONE

I. ABOUT A WEATHEROCK THAT HUNTED SOME LIZARDS AND WHAT A BOY DID WITH THEM

The weathercock, cut from a sheet of iron, that veers to the wind without getting any place, and has a single eye that is visible from both sides but is a single eye, got down from the house one night and went to the cobblestones to hunt lizards. There was moonlight, and with sharp picks of his iron beak he killed them. He hung them in staggered rows on many nails in the white wall to the east that has no windows. He put the largest ones high up and the smaller ones lower down. When the lizards were still newly killed they felt shame, although dead, because the little gland had not yet dried that secretes the blush, which in lizards is called "yellowness" as they have a yellow and cold shame.

But as time went on they gradually dried in the sun and turned a blackish brown, and their skin shrank and became wrinkled. Their tails curled toward the south because that part had shrunk more in the sun than the part toward the north, where the sun never reaches. And thus the lizards took on the form of scorpions, all curved toward the same side, and as they had lost their colors and the polish of their skin they no longer suffered shame. And, still more time passing, there came the season of rain that set about beating the wall where they were hanging, and it soaked them thoroughly and faded from their skins
a juice, like greenish black rust, that trickled down the wall to the ground. A boy put a jar at the foot of each tricklet and when the rains ceased he had filled the jars with that juice and he gathered it all in a basin to dry it.

Now the lizards had rendered all their color, and when the sunny days returned there were seen on the wall only some little white skeletons with a fine transparent film, like the shirts of snakes, that were hardly distinguishable against the whitewash.

But the boy was more a brother to the lizards than to the weathercock, and one day when there was no wind and the cock could not defend himself, he climbed up to the roof and snatched him away and threw him into the forge and began to work the bellows. The cock hissed in the coals like the wind and turned first red, then yellow, then white. When he saw that he was beginning to melt, he bent over and with his remaining strength seized a large coal so as not to be completely lost. The boy stopped the bellows and threw a bucket of water on the fire, which went out, hissing like a cat, and the weathercock remained forever joined to the piece of charcoal.

The boy returned to his basin and saw how there remained in the bottom a grayish brown sediment like fine silt. In the course of days all the water had gone because of the heat, and only dust remained. The boy gathered it up and put the little heap on a white handkerchief in order to see its color. And he saw that the fine dust was made of four colors: black, green, blue, and gold. Then he took a piece of silk and separated the gold, which was the finest; with a piece of linen he separated the blue; with a sieve, the green; and the black remained.
Of the four dusts he used the first, which was the golden, to
gild door latches; with the second, which was the blue, he made an
hourglass; the third, which was the green, he gave to his mother to
dye window curtains; and with the black, ink to learn to write.

His mother became very happy at seeing the enterprise of her
son and as a reward sent him to school. All his companions there
envied him his ink for its prettiness and brilliance, because it yielded
a sepia hue such as had never before been seen. But the boy learned
a strange alphabet that no one understood, and he had to leave school
because the teacher said he set a bad example. His mother shut him
up in a room with a pen, an inkwell and paper and told him that he
could not come out until he wrote like the rest. But the boy, when
he found himself alone, took out the inkwell and set himself to writing
his strange alphabet on a scrap of white shirt which he had found
hanging from a tree.
II. WHEREIN IS TOLD HOW THE BOY ESCAPED
FROM HIS ROOM AND THE ADVENTURE
WHICH HE HAD

That room was the ugliest room of the house, and there also had come to rest the weathercock, fired to his piece of coal. One day the boy began to talk with him and the poor rooster, with his twisted mouth, told him that he knew many things, and that if he would free him, he would teach them to him. Then they made their peace, and the boy removed the coal and straightened him out. And they spent the day and the night talking, and the rooster, who was older, taught, and the boy wrote down everything on the scrap of shirt. When his mother came, the rooster hid himself because he did not want her to know that a weathercock talked.

From the top of the house the rooster had learned that the red of the sunsets was a blood that was poured over the horizon at that hour to ripen the fruit, especially apples, honeydew melons, and almonds. This was what pleased the boy most of all the things the rooster taught him, and he thought about how he could get some of that blood and what it could be used for.

On a day which seemed good to the rooster, the boy took the sheets from his bed and three copper pots and escaped with the rooster out of the window to the horizon.

Little by little they saw a pink cloud approach; then a reddish fog, with an acid smell like iodine and lemons, enveloped them. Finally the fog became completely red and nothing could be seen but that very
dense light between carmine and scarlet. From time to time a lighter ray shone through, green or gold color. The fog became increasingly red, thick, and heavy and impeded the light, until they found themselves in a scarlet colored night. Then the fog began to release a dew and a very fine, light, spray like drizzle of blood that soaked and reddened everything. The boy took the sheets and began to shake them in the air until they became red all over. Then he wrung them out into the copper jars and returned them to the air so that they might become saturated anew. Thus he continued until the three jars were full.

Now the fog had taken on a reddish black color and was veined with blue. The acrid musky odor was gradually transformed into another lighter odor, as of animal violets. The light increased again and the fog took on a purple hue, livid, because the blue veins had been fused with the rest. The humidity decreased and the fog became lighter and lighter. The odor of animal violets became more subtle and changed to vegetable-like. The fog cleared taking on a bluish pink color, lighter and lighter, until it opened again and everything was visible once more. The sky was white and clean and the air had a perfume of linden and white roses. Below was seen the sun departing with its scarlet and carmine clouds. It was growing dark. The three jars were full of an extremely dense, red, almost black, blood. It boiled gently in large slow bubbles that broke noiselessly like kisses from a round mouth.

That night they slept in a cave and the following morning they washed the sheets in a river. The water of that river became stained and went along ripening, even rotting, everything. A pregnant mare drank and turned all white and transparent, because her blood and her
colors went from her to the fetus that could be seen very much alive in her belly as if inside a lantern. The mare stretched out on the grass and aborted. Then she got up again and slowly walked away. She seemed made entirely of glass, with a white skeleton. The aborted creature deposited on the sparse grass had the most intense colors and was enveloped in a sack of water, with small red and green veins that ended in a livid cord through whose end the liquid was slowly pouring. The little horse was completely formed. He had reddish brown skin and a large head, with eyes protruding from their sockets and sprouting eyelashes; a swollen belly and very delicate legs that ended in hooves of cartilage, still soft; his mane and tail floated rippling in the viscous liquid of the sack, that was like sugar syrup. The little horse was there as if in an aquarium and he moved vaguely. The weathercock tore the sack with his beak and all the water spilled out onto the grass. The colt, which was about the size of a cat, awakened little by little as if coming out of a lethargy, and got up. His colors were dense and vivid such as had never before been seen; all the color of the mare had been gathered into that tiny body. The colt broke into a frightened run and went in search of his mother. The mare stretched out to nurse him. Milk whitened in her crystal udders.

The boy and the weathercock turned toward home. They brought the copper jars and entered through a window. Later they poured the blood into a vat and dried it. The mother pardoned her son; but the boy said that he wanted to be a taxidermist and they had to send him as apprentice to a master of this craft.
III. OF HOW THE BOY WENT TO GUADALAJARA
AND WAS CALLED ALFANHUI, AND THE
THINGS AND PEOPLE THAT WERE
IN THE MASTER'S HOUSE

In Guadalajara lived the master taxidermist. The boy went
to Guadalajara and sought his house. He lived in an arched passageway
without windows, lighted by oil lamps that hung on the walls. There
was a large worktable that ran the length of the passageway and on the
table an endless number of tools of iron, wood, and brass. The passage
had two low doors and ended in an octagonal room, rather small, that
received its light from a green skylight in the ceiling.

The master looked the boy up and down with very serious eyes
and said:

"You? You have yellow eyes like the bitterns; I will call you
Alfanhui because this is the name with which the bitterns call to
each other. Do you know about colors?"

"Yes."

"What do you?"

The boy related what he had done with the rust from the lizards
but said nothing about the blood because the cock had advised him to
keep it secret, since he was the first who had obtained it.

"It seems good to me," said the master.

The master opened one of the doors. There appeared a small room
with a tiny window at the back composed of colored panes of unequal
sizes, soldered with tin. The walls were shingled half way up with
darkened walnut paneling. The bed, high and narrow, had four golden balls at the corners. On each ball, a bird; guarding the head were a sparrow and a bee-eater, at the right and left; at the foot, a swamp bird and a wading bird. All the room was full of birds and above them all a heron.

"Here you will sleep," said the master.

In the house there also lived a servant, darkly dressed, who had no name because she was deaf and dumb. She moved on a platform with four wooden wheels and she was stuffed, but she smiled from time to time.

The house also had a pretty little garden in front and on one side. It opened onto the street through a low wooden fence painted green.

The master told stories at night. When he began to talk the servant lit the fire. The servant knew all the stories and renewed the fire when the story grew. When it became monotonous, she let it languish; in moments of excitement she threw more wood on the fire again, until the story ended and she let it go out.

One night the wood was used up before the story was finished and the master could not continue.

"Pardon me, Alfanhui," he said and went off to bed. He never told stories except at the fireside and hardly talked during the day.
Underneath the house there was a square damp storeroom. From its four walls hung disconnected parts of animals: feet, heads, wings, beaks, tails, horns, hooves, etc., as if they were remnants that had been left over from the work. And there was nothing else.

One night a white cat got into the house and stole into the storeroom. It began to walk around in the darkness and could not find the exit. It began to climb the walls and bumped against the first scrap. On feeling the touch of feathers, it let out a meow and a snort that woke the master and Alfanhui. Both went down to the storeroom with a lantern and found the cat, that had in its mouth a swan's neck with head and all. The swan's neck twisted as if it were alive and pecked the forehead of the cat because the cat was clutching it by the tendons, and as the cat was afraid it did not know how to let go. The cat threw itself with great leaps against the walls and made yellow sparks as its claws scraped the stones. The master signaled to the servant that she should catch the cat. He brought her down in his arms because with her wheels she could not come down alone. The servant caught the cat without hesitation and the cat let go of the swan's neck and bit the servant on the wrist. Her wrist sounded like parchment and she didn't alter her expression. The master took her again in his arms and carried her upstairs. All returned to bed and the servant lay down without letting go of the cat, which struggled all night long.
The next morning the servant was completely mangled. The skin of her arms, her chest and her neck was scratched and torn to shreds and her stuffing was coming out.

From the cat they made cords for clock weights; with its claws a currycomb for hides; with its skeleton a little cage for mice; and with its skin they made a little drum and healed the servant. The master put the cotton back in and sewed some patches on her from the still fresh skin of the cat. Then he tanned the patches right on the body of the servant. They mounted only the head of the cat and exhibited it in the showcase.

The patches quickly dried on the servant and she became well again. But another day they left her in the rain and she became soft. She recovered from this also but she grew drier and more shrunken. Some time later she fell ill with jaundice and turned all green.

Thus the servant went from illness to illness until one day she died. Alfanhui and his master buried her in the garden with a stone engraved with vinegar that said:

SELF DENYING AND SILENT.
V. OF HOW ALFANHUI CAME TO LIGHT THE
FIRE AND THE LONG STORY THAT
THE MASTER TOLD HIM

After the death of the servant the fire was not lit again. The master stayed sad, and Alfanhui did not dare to say anything. But one day he saw that his master looked cold and he asked:

"Do you want me to light a fire for you, master?"

The master was surprised for a moment and then he said yes. Alfanhui knew firewood well. He knew the wood that gave sad flames and which gave happy flames; which made hearthfires strong and dark; which light and dancing flames; which left feminine embers to warm the sleep of cats; which left virile embers for the rest of hunting dogs. Alfanhui had learned to know firewood in his mother's house, where fire was also lit, and he learned that the fire of his master was like the fire of his maternal uncles, of the travelers who came dressed in gray. So Alfanhui came with an armful of carefully selected firewood and began to light the fire. The master watched him from his chair. He saw him bent close to the fireplace, intent on his work, he looked at his tranquil, cold bittern eyes; he saw, finally, Alfanhui's first flame burn lively and cheerful, and it made his eyes glisten and a smile came to his lips. Then he said:

"I never thought, Alfanhui, that you would come to keep me company. For your first fire, Alfanhui, I will tell you my first story."

And he liked very much to repeat Alfanhui's name because he had given it to him. Then he began the story.
"When I was a boy, Alfarhui, my father made oil lamps. He worked all day, and he made iron lanterns for cottages and gilded brass lamps for palaces. He made thousands and thousands of different kinds of lamps. He also had the best books that had been written about lamps. One of them talked about the 'veined stone.' This was a stone that was said to be very hard, but porous like a sponge, and it was the size of an egg and the shape of an almond. This stone had the power of drinking seven vats of oil. They left it in a vat and the following morning all the oil had disappeared and the stone was the same size. When it had drunk seven vats, it didn't want any more. Then all that had to be done was to light it for it to give off a milk white flame, that lasted eternally. The flame could also be put out when desired. But if you wanted to recover the oil, only an owl knew how to do it, even to leaving the stone as dry as before. My father always talked of this stone and he wanted nothing in the world so much as to have it. My father used to send me along the roads to learn the colors of things, and I spent many days before returning.

"One day I went out on one of my trips. I carried a stick on my shoulder, and on the end of the stick, a kerchief with my lunch. I went along a chalky road between grassless hills of dust with only a few dry trees in which magpies perched. Also beside the road there were holes and rags and broken earthen jars, and wheels and parts of wagons and endless other scraps, because everything that was broken was continually thrown in that place. Almost nobody was going along the road because it was a very sunny day and the sun was very hot there, although summer had not yet arrived.

"In the distance I saw a figure seated on a stone beside the road. Upon arriving I saw that it was a beggar, and he said to me:
'Give me some of your lunch.'

He made a place for me on the stone and we began to eat. Then I saw what he was like. He wore dark trousers that came to the middle of his calf, and a dark gray vest from which emerged his bare shoulders and arms. But his flesh was like the soil of the field. It had that form and color. Instead of hair, he grew a thick mat of moss, and on the crown of his head he had a lark's nest with two chicks. The mother flew around his head. On his face grew a beard of miniature grass full of daisies, tiny as pinheads. The backs of his hands were also flower covered. His feet were meadows and tiny morning glories grew there, that climbed up his legs as if they were tree trunks. Hung from his shoulder he carried a strange flute.

He was a strong and happy beggar and he told me that his flesh germinated from so much walking along the roads, from receiving so much sun and rain and from not ever having a house. He told me that in the winter he grew moss all over his body and other plants that gave much shelter, as well as on his head, but when spring came that moss dried and those plants fell away so that the grass and daisies should grow. Then he explained to me about the flute. He said that it was the opposite of other flutes and that it had to be played in the midst of a great uproar, because instead of being like other flutes with silence for the background and sound the tone, for this one noise made the background and its silence gave the melody. He played it during great storms, in the midst of thunder and downpours, and from it came notes of silence, thin and light like threads of fog. And he was never afraid of anything.

I spent the afternoon talking with him and night came upon us.
The beggar invited me to sleep in his hollow tree. We walked a while and came to it. It was a large tree and inside there were many things that were not clearly visible. The hollow of the trunk was very high, it rose up in the shape of a cone and the wood made angles, arches that curved toward the center, like the folds of a mushroom. Up above, night shone blue and starry.

"The beggar lit a lamp and I saw a small white, luminous flame. It was the veined stone. Then I told him how my father had always coveted that stone, and the beggar, who was generous, gave it to me. I could hardly sleep that night, and the following morning I took the return road. I arrived home shouting: 'Father, father!'"

"But on entering my father's room I saw that he had died. Everyone was around him, still and quiet. They didn't even look when I entered. My father was lying on a table, wrapped in a white cloth and only his face could be seen. He had his mouth open like an old fish and the light from four oil lamps shone in the glassy slit of his half open eyes. I looked no more and I went to cry with my face buried in a purple curtain that was in my house, that was the curtain where I always cried."

The master raised his eyes and looked at the fire that Alfanhui had lit for him. Then he continued:

"A few days after they had buried him I chose the prettiest lamp that I could find and prepared a lantern with the veined stone to take to the cemetery.

"My father slept in a cave, underground, in a crystal urn. Without anyone seeing me I went in there and hung the lamp on the wall, at his head. Then I lit it with the one I brought and I looked at
the face of my father in the light of the small white flame."

The master fell silent and looked at Alfanhui seated on the floor close to the fireplace. The fire was hardly an ember. The master got up from his chair and went to bed. Alfanhui remained thoughtful close to the hearth, stirring the ashes with a small stick.
VI. OF THE THINGS THAT THERE WERE IN THE
GARDEN OF THE MOON, WHERE ALMOST
EVERYTHING WAS LIKE SILVER

The garden of the house had two parts; that of the sun and that of
the moon. The former was at the front of the house, to the south.
The other at the east side onto which opened Alfanhui's little window.
Alfanhui liked the part of the moon better, because his skin was
white like its light. On moonlit nights he sat by the windowsill and
looked at the garden.

The garden had a chestnut tree and silvery olive with its muscular
trunk in which lived two white rodents that had eyes of light and were
always hiding like squirrels. At night one could see their little
eyes appearing and disappearing. It was like the electric signs
of the cities: first a small light; then two, three, four. Three, two,
one and gone. Then the four little lights at once in another part
of the olive tree. And thus all night long, without a sound being
heard. Alfanhui used to stay there contemplating the garden and the
game of the rodents until the moon went down.

There was also in the garden a white stone hitching post with a
ring and a black chain that dragged on the ground. In the middle there
was a small round pool with a fountain whose little shaft of water
rose up and fluttered only on dry, hot stormy nights, and it killed
the dragonflies and the insects that the wind brought from the rivers
and lakes that it had dried up. And as the surface of the pool was
agitated in little waves, the light of the silvery sands that lay in
the bottom blossomed out. Also, the servant was buried in a corner
of that garden. At the back there was a high wall and a flower hothouse that was abandoned and had its windows covered with dust. Inside the hothouse weeds grew and a silver snake lived there, who came out to take the moon in a clearing in the garden. Alfanhui liked this snake very much and wished to capture her.

Alfanhui knew that silver and gold are two married things, like oranges and lemons, and it occurred to him to prepare three small golden rings, a little larger than the belly of the snake. He tied a long cord to each ring and waited for the full moon.

One day, at dusk, he placed the rings: the first, by the hole through which the snake came out; the second, a little further off; and the third, in the middle of the clearing where the snake used to lie in the moonlight. Alfanhui took his place cautiously inside his room, close to the window, with the three pieces of twine in his hand, and waited. Over the horizon rose a large red moon that paled as it rose. Alfanhui was motionless. When the moon became entirely white the snake showed her head and threaded the first ring. Then she continued emerging little by little, looking everywhere, with her little head high and hissing with her two-pointed tongue. Alfanhui remained motionless. At first she slid through the ring and didn't move it, but when she made the first S-curve through it with her body, she carried it off clinging to her belly. Alfanhui didn't breathe. On the next curve the snake threaded the second ring and took it with her like the first. She threaded the third finally. Alfanhui watched motionless and held the three strings from the window. The snake stopped and the three rings, threaded on its body, were joined at the center of its belly. When they came together they tightened and clasped her, as
if embracing her around the waist, and the snake was caught. Alfanhui slowly pulled the three strings and dragged her toward the window. The silver snake dozed sensually within the embrace of the three little golden rings. Alfanhui curled her up in a round glass box without removing the three rings and the snake remained in a lethargy, stiff and brilliant like metallic silver. Her body was all miniature scales that rang when Alfanhui drew his fingernail over them:

"Drinn... Drinn..."

Alfanhuui untied the three silken threads and closed the crystal box. The moon that came in through the half-opened window fell on Alfanhui's face. He looked at the silver snake in his hands and smiled. Then he put the box away in the dark and went to bed.
VII. OF A WIND THAT CAME INTO ALFANHUI'S
ROOM ONE NIGHT AND THE
VISIONS THAT HE HAD

One rainy night there descended upon the garden a distant wind. Alfanhui had his window open and the wind began to stir the flame of his lamp. On the walls the shadows of the birds trembled. At first they moved indecisively and vaguely as if awakening unexpectedly. From his bed Alfanhui saw on the walls and the ceiling the movement of those shadows, that bent at the corners of the room and crossed each other. It seemed to him that his little room grew larger and larger until it became an immense hall. The shadows of the birds grew also and multiplied in the movement of the small flame from his oil lamp. The wind came in stronger and stronger through the window and brought a sound like a music from forgotten rivers and forests.

The flame made the birds' shadows dance in time with the music. Like bird phantoms or marionettes they began to dance arcane dances, primitive dances of their species, drawing on the high ceiling of the room a huge wheel of wings and beaks. A changing wheel, luminous and swift, that turned and turned and made the former colors of the birds return to their dead shadows. The heron with Chinese eyes danced in the center and moved his beak with a haughty rhythm, marking the time of the dance for all the birds, and the wind seemed to throw lashes of rain against its eyes. Now the stuffed birds had disappeared from their pedestals, as if the rain had returned their life to them, and they had flown to join their shadows that danced on the ceiling of the room.
The mist of silence and solitude was broken, and forgotten visions awakened as the music of the wind and the rain met the dead colors of the birds. In the center of the wheel of birds, there seemed to open a circle on the ceiling where all the primitive colors returned. The thousand greens of the selvas, the white of the cataracts; and from the land of the wading birds, the pink and ash of the swamps with a red sun flush with the water, trembling on the muddy and bloody surface. At the foot of the purple and yellow reed fields shone the black mud of the banks matted with small serpentine roots among a thousand footprints of different birds. The white salt pits of the estuaries returned, and the salt birds that dove into the marshes with their long beaks. And the nautical sun of the seagulls and the albatross, beating on a desert waste of sand and snails. The blue of the earth cities returned, and the swallows, threading the arches of towers, sewing belfry to belfry with the threads of their flight. The wind also opened a book of dried plants and began to turn its pages. The flowers became damp and revived, climbing the walls of the room, invading it everywhere, forming a thick flower-covered bower full of nests from which came birds that flew toward the luminous circle on the ceiling.

Alfanhui couldn't have said if there was in his eyes a dark solitude and in his ears an unfathomable silence, because that music and those colors came from another place, whence never comes knowledge of things; transposed the first day behind the last wall of memory, where the other memory is born: the immense memory of unknown things.

The birds danced and danced the primitive dances of their species and the flocks interwove again toward the sacred rivers. To the Euphrates,
to the Nile, to the Ganges, to the rivers of China with their names of colors. All the emigrant and multicolored geography of the birds, the light of ancient lands, returned.

Then the luminous circle of visions disappeared and there returned to the walls the dance of the shadows, dark and agitated this time, like a witch dance to the dull throbs of an indistinct drum; like a dance of rigid phantoms with long, ungainly legs. Quickly and more quickly the room was closing in and shrinking again toward Alphanhui's forehead. The dance and shadows became small, small, around the flame of the lamp. The shadows returned like gray butterflies to burn their dust in the flame. It was the dust that the wind had raised from the dry feathers of the birds, and their infinitesimal motes became for a moment incandescent and they repeated as they burned each vivid and distant color of the visions, to be lost again in the simple, small light of the lamp. Everything came into itself again. The wind had ceased. The shadows died again, quiet, on the gray walls; the birds died in the empty brilliance of their glass eyes and the last oil rose up to the flame, attenuated, drowning itself in the threads of the wick. The flame diminished hissing with the last motes of dust, and soon was only a smoking ember that scarcely glowed, only in the gilded brass of the lamp. On the air remained the dying, dark smell of the burned-out oil, and everything was extinguished. Now there was light silence as if for a clear and solitary voice, for a dawn-song or the steps of hunters.
VIII. WHEREIN IS TOLD WHAT THERE WAS IN
THE ATTIC AND HOW ALFANHUI
FELL ASLEEP

You went up to the attic by a short winding stairway. Laminated light came in through the dust-covered glass of the skylight. It was a diagonal shaft, starred with tiny dustmotes that wandered through the air. The shadowy zone was very warm and the stretching of the over-heated roof tiles could be heard. The attic smelled of being closed up and was full of sleep. Alfanhui felt upon his eyelashes a rain of dust that fell like an invisible snowfall. On the wood floor was seen a dried-up puddle made by a leak. It was like a lake-bed in summer, with a reddish mud of tile-dust that the leak had slowly eroded from the roof and that had accumulated there like a very fine miniature alluvial deposit. The little puddle had dried up under the shaft from the skylight, and on its undulating banks were stair-like rings that the edge of the water had left in years of little or much rain. In the center of the puddle there was a chair with its four feet slightly sunk in the mud. It was a cherry wood chair polished by hand, with its red liquid color like the wine of Bordeaux. Its four feet had put out roots into the alluvial soil from the tiles and the roots were spread over the entire bottom of the lake, interweaving with each other like a spiderweb, greedy to sip the little water that fell there. Greedy, also, for the shaft from the skylight was the chair with its face to the little window, and the sun trembled in its veins, as if living threads of blood ran the length of its bars. All the chair
had a sleepy and abandoned air, as if from hearing no other voice than the faint chirping outside of a bird perched behind the dusty panes. Its silhouette could be seen in the attic, diffused by the splashes of rain that were written on the window; but no one ever saw from the roof what was in the attic. Only there sprouted from the two ends of the chair's back some little green branches with leaves and cherries. The cherries were ripe and covered with dust, but they mirrored in miniature the entire garret on their convex surface. There were four pairs of small, dark cherries that rested happily upon the green leaves.

Alfanhui sat in the chair, and it happened that he put his head between the two branches of the cherry tree, that encircled his temples like a crown, and the cherries seemed to hang from his ears like dark ruby earrings next to his chestnut hair. Alfanhui saw the sky and the golden siesta sun through the skylight. He closed his eyes and saw projected upon the translucid screen of his eyelids the play of light with insistent spots that the sun had left in the depths of his pupils. But the dustsnow continued falling and falling on his eyelashes, and Alfanhui fell asleep.
IX. OF SOME MEN WHO WERE IN THE STRAWLOFT

When Alfanhui awoke it was already night. The moon had not yet risen in the skylight and everything was very dark. Alfanhui looked around him and saw on the floor, close to the wall, a small slit of tenuous and golden light. It was the door of the strawloft that he had not seen before. A soft murmuring came from there. Alfanhui rose quietly from the chair and opened the little door. The strawloft was an elongated granary full of straw that reached up to the ceiling and left only a narrow passageway between the two heaps. At the back was seen, in the angle formed by two slopes of the roof, an ugly window, through which bats came and went. But the light was on the floor. It came from a small lantern with four panes that shone, very golden, against the straw. There were two men close to the lantern, seated on the floor, bent over a white handkerchief as if they were playing cards. Alfanhui stayed a while close to the door, watching everything. The men talked softly and it seemed as if they were counting money. Alfanhui went along the passageway and stopped close to them. They were two very dark unshaven men. One wore a striped beret and the other a black hat with a soft felt crown, conical and pointed. They had some gold coins on the handkerchief and others in their hands and they took others out of their pockets. They were throwing the coins on the handkerchief and one of them was counting: "One hundred twenty-three, one hundred twenty-four..."

When Alfanhui approached them, the one with the hat said to him almost without raising his head:
"Go away from here; you don't have to see us." And he continued counting. Alfanhui said:

"Who are you?"

"Go away from here; you don't have to see us."

"I am a friend."

"If you're a friend, go away; no one should see us because we're thieves."

"I'm also a friend of thieves."

"Not even friends should see thieves when they're in their hideout."

"Tell me what you're doing; I won't tell anyone."

"We're wheat thieves; we're counting gold coins; we're always counting; we haven't robbed for many years; for many years we haven't left here; this is our hideout."

"If you're wheat thieves, why are you counting gold coins?"

"Wheat is exchanged for gold and gold for wheat."

"And why are you here?"

"We like this place a lot because there is straw, and straw is like gold and wheat; in the daytime we stop counting and sleep."

"Why don't you rob any more?"

"We already have enough; we robbed when we were young and now we don't want any more and we count it every night."

"What are your names?"

"My name is Bato and I am the captain; this is Faulo and he is dumb, but he hears from far away and sees at night, like owls. Besides he knows how to whistle so the sound bends and turns corners and can be heard from the next street."

"And how many coins do you have?"
"There's an odd number, and the one that's left over is mine because I am the captain. Faulo envies me for that, but he obeys me."

Faulo made a place for Alfanhui on the black cape on which he was seated and said:

"Sit down here."

Alfanhui sat down and looked at Faulo. He had small lively eyes and he seemed to whistle with them. He glanced mischievously from one place to another. The captain had a serious expression and a long, lean face. He had a furtive look and from time to time he turned his eyes sideways, as if paying attention to some invisible thing.

A bat struck against a beam and fell on the handkerchief. Faulo with a quick movement, passed his hand under the bat and snatched a gold coin. Bato said to him:

"Faulo, return the coin to me."

Faulo took it out of his pocket and gave it to him. Bato turned toward Alfanhui:

"Every night he robs me, but I'm always aware of it. Then he returns it to me and laughs."

The two thieves continued counting the coins during a long silence, in which were heard only the numbers, spoken in a low voice, and the whirling of the bats that descended right to the lantern.

Then came the hour of the mice. Alfanhui saw a mouse that came close to the light and, surprised at Alfanhui's presence, stopped, looking at Bato and at Faulo. Then more and more came, one at a time, right up close to them, and stayed behind the first one who appeared to be their king because none came so far forward. Bato said:

"They are afraid because you have come."
Alfanhui withdrew and the mice came a little closer, to the very feet of Bato. Then the king climbed up on one of his knees and the captain took out some grains of wheat from the folds of his trousers and gave them to him to eat from his hand. When the king had finished, Bato threw more grains of wheat on the floor for the other mice, who began to gnaw very contentedly. Faulo did the same for another little group of mice that had come toward him. There must have been some thirty in all. When they finished eating they scattered through the strawloft and returned to their holes. The two thieves resumed their count and Alfanhui watched them silently. Finally, he got up and said to them:

"Friends, I'm going now."

Bato looked him up and down and smiled:

"You're a friend of thieves? The thieves are also your friends. What's your name?"

"Alfanhui."

"Good bye, Alfanhui."

"Good bye."

Alfanhui turned his back and walked toward the little door. When he went to open it he heard Bato call him again:

"Wait. Come here again."

Alfanhui returned and the captain held out to him a gold coin.

"Here; now there's an even number."

Alfanhui took the coin and thanked him. Then he went toward the door and left the strawloft. The moon came in through the skylight and shone on the cherry wood chair, on the cherries and on their little leaves.
Alfanhui went down by the winding stairway and looked for his master for dinner. The bell struck ten o'clock at night.
X. OF THE THINGS THAT WERE IN THE GARDEN
OF THE SUN AND OF HOW ALFANHUI WENT
DOWN INTO THE WELL AND FOUND
THERE MANY STRANGE THINGS

The garden of the sun had, close to the fence, an almond tree
that sent its roots toward the street. In the summer a cicada
lived in the bark of this almond tree and sang all through the siesta.
The air crushed down upon that song and no one could move at all until
the katydid was quiet, so heavy was everything. The katydid was of
the leaden sultry times when the watermelons become poisonous.

There was also in the garden of the sun a millwheel, leaning
sunken into the earth. Around this stone the grass grew thicker,
as it did through the hole in the center. It was warmed greatly by
the sun and for that reason the little lizards like it. On that stone
the master honed his knives and tools because it was very smooth.

There was also an old railing leaning against the wall of the
bower and it had many wasps' nests stuck to the iron. At the foot of
the façade was a row of flowerpots with geraniums and carnations that
the master took care to water. The wall had a yellowish plaster in
which were a number of rusty spikes. From some of them hung a blanket
or a useless key, or a wicker cage for decoys that was empty. The
show window was square, and in place of glass had a metal screen and
a projecting roof so that the rain could not get in, painted with
the same pale green as the fence and the blinds, with boards warped
by time.
But the most important thing in the garden of the sun was the well. It had a curb of green stone and a wrought iron arch for the pulley. The pulley was wooden and it squeaked like a swallow. The bucket was also wooden, held together like casks with iron hoops, and was heavy. The well was very deep and had very clear water. Halfway down could be seen a dark arch that opened into a gallery. Alfanhui was very curious about that, and one day he took off his shoes and descended into the well. He put his feet into the bucket and let himself down, playing out the rope little by little until he reached the depth of the gallery. He put one foot on the threshold and saw that the water came half way up his calf because the gallery was shallower than the well. Then he let go of the rope and lit an oil lamp that he was carrying. He advanced through the darkness. Beneath the water he felt under his feet a mossy and slippery bottom with some pebbles. Thin streams of water descended the walls, that were covered with soggy moss through which ran some animals like starfish, very flat and the size of a hand. A drop of water fell on the lamp and Alfanhui was in darkness. At the end of the gallery he could see a very narrow opening with a vague greenish light. He continued advancing and the water became more and more shallow, until he stepped on dryness. Finally he arrived at the opening. He could hardly fit through there. He entered a kind of cave in the form of a bell whose walls were lined with thick roots. He understood that that was the base of the chestnut tree. The cave was not very large and had in the middle a sort of little lake of greenish water, in which was fishing a column of very long, slender roots that hung from the ceiling, like strands of hair. Around the little puddle there was a very narrow
sandy beach that sloped upward toward the wall, touching the thick roots that held back the earth and which closed into an arch upward, like a cupola. Alfanhui did not understand from whence came that greenish light that lit up the cave. Finally he saw a large spider, the size of a plate, with strong legs and a body luminous as a lantern, dozing on the sand. This spider must have been blind because it had its legs equally spaced around its body and you couldn't tell which was the front or which was the back, nor could you see eyes or antennae of any kind. It was the same on all sides and its body, like a flattened ball, gave off that green light.

Alfanhui saw that the fibers that came down from the roof were of two kinds. Through some the green water of the little puddle ascended and through others light descended. But he could see no more because the spider awoke and advanced across the little circular beach, turning round and round, until it hit against Alfanhui's feet and bit him. When it bit him it lost a little of its luminosity and sank into the water like a crab. Alfanhui understood that the spider absorbed the light of the slender descending fibers. But the bite hurt him and he left. He walked through the gallery to the wall, and went up again as he had descended. Then he went in search of the master to tell everything to him and so that he might look at that bite. His foot had become phosphorescent and his bones could be seen through the greenish flesh. In a few days it lost that light and became dark again and was as good as ever.

But the master and Alfanhui thought they could do great things with that discovery.
Alfanhui and his master talked a lot those nights. The master told how he had once eaten a cherry from the chair. It tasted like nuts, like an extinguished brazier and sperm candles, which is the flavor of interiors and of the tedium of houses. The master had seen in dreams all the history of that cherry tree the night in which he had eaten its fruit. The former owner of the house, who was a cabinet maker, had planted it in the garden. Some time later this man had married a young and very handsome woman and had cut down the cherry tree to make her a chair. The woman sat there every afternoon with her handwork in her lap. But the cherry tree had been cut in full youth and made into a chair and shut up in that interior, and it was sick with loathing. The cherry tree hated four things in the house and they were always there in front of it: a quilt of purple silk with many flounces that was on the couple’s bed; the sewing-basket made of wicker and ribbons; a Moorish pillow with four tassels at the corners; and especially a cardboard calendar with repoussé work decorated with a cloud the color of valladolid-pink and a drawing of swan and gardens in the center, like the last number of a game of oca, and a

\[1\] the Spanish Royal Academy Dictionary describes oca as a game played on a cardboard painted with 63 squares. Every ninth one represents a goose or other domestic animal, a river or a well. The others represent penalties or hazards. The dice determine how far a player shall move.
The cherrywood chair had become ill with disgust and it remembered its good times when it flowered in the garden. And it sought to avenge itself on the cabinet maker. Little by little it contaminated with its sickness the woman who sat in it to do her mending. The woman became ill also and for this reason didn't have children and she became like wax all over and the light went out of her eyes. Until one day she died of disgust, as if she disintegrated. From then on the chair was in the attic because the cabinet maker had put it up there in order not to see it any more.

This story the master had dreamed upon eating the cherry. The master had bought the house after the death of the cabinet maker and found the chair in the attic, just exactly as it was now.

Alfanhui realized that his master also had been ill with tedium. But the weariness that others call "indoor sickness" or "pale tedium" is not, in men, mortal as it is in women, nor is it damaging to the health; rather it strengthens them and, instead of making them like wax, it toughens their skin and it is to their flesh like alcohol to precious woods. This Alfanhui recognized in the figure of the master. In his face and in his hands, carved like walnut, like those of a Saint Jerome in a choir stall; in his serene look, in his grave and reserved voice; in his erect, though slow and feeble, walk.
On the following nights Alfanhui and his master studied the question of the well and of the chestnut tree. The master could not go down to explore it and Alfanhui told him how each thing was. They discovered that the little roots that hung down from the ceiling were veins that came from the leaves and each one of them went to a leaf and the green water rose up to give it color. Those that descended were returning veins that sipped the light of the sun through the green leaves and sent it down to the little lake. Thus, each leaf had two of those threads. If Alfanhui took one of the ascending veins out of the water, soon the leaf to which it belonged lost its color and turned white. The spider was a parasite of the chestnut tree, and sucked the light from the little descending veins with a round fringed mouth that it had in its belly. It would put itself face-up under the hair-like roots, and clutching them with its feet would suck the light from each one underneath the water. This was clearly seen because when the spider submerged itself all the bottom was lighted. The thick roots that formed the walls of the cave belonged to the branches of the chestnut, and by them it clung and took strength.

The master prepared several liquids of vegetable colors made from flower petals or from fruit juices so that they were subtle and harmless and should not have germinating force, neither would they be sterile or alienated from the origin of life. Then he sent Alfanhui with a net to capture the spider and tether it to the walls of the cave. Once this was done, Alfanhui stretched several wires half way up as if to hang clothes. And he selected from the hair roots all the ascending ones and let them hang from the wires so that they did not reach the
water. He divided them into six equal tresses because the master had prepared that number of colors.

That night they let the chestnut rest and the following morning all the leaves had turned white and slack. The master and Alfanhui were very happy and got ready to make the experiment.

In the cave Alfanhui prepared a kind of scaffold or platform like a wide mantlepiece half way up the wall around the cave. He carried down one at a time six wooden vats and placed them on the ledge as the master had told him. Then he dipped into each vat the ends of each handful of roots. Then he took down to the cave the six jars of colored liquids and poured one into each vat.

Alfanhui went up to join his master and both sat down in the garden looking at the chestnut. A little time passed and they saw how some of the leaves were beginning to be tinged with orange, while the others remained white. They understood that the juice of the orange was the most fluid of all the hues and for that reason it was revealed first. Later the violet juice arose into the leaves. Now there were two colors. Later one by one the blue, the red, the yellow and the black gradually rose up. Within two hours all the leaves were dyed and the chestnut was like a marvelous vegetal harlequin. Alfanhui and his master had a party that day and festooned the house with branches and garlands of colors.
XII. OF OTHER PROJECTS THAT WERE DONE
WITH THE CHESTNUT TREE

In a few days Alfanhui went down into the cave again and found the spider almost extinguished and dying because he was tied and could not feed himself. Through the small descending veins lights of six colors were coming down, spilling through the pool and forming iridescent halos on the green liquid, which had turned dark. Alfanhui untied the spider so that it could plunge itself into the water and reanimate itself by drinking from the little veins. The spider fed himself on colors other than the green and drank mixed lights and revived. Then Alfanhui grouped in handfuls the descending threads, joining those of each color, and put five of them into the vats. Each one into the corresponding vat. The orange, which was the least costly to obtain, he left as food for the spider.

And the light worked continually, and the liquids rose up to the leaves and came down again laden with light, and the vats did not become empty, except the one which contained the orange juice, because it went into the lake and the spider drank it up. During the night the liquids would turn dark again and they were very sensitive to light changes. When the sky was cloudy they would become turbid and milky. At the end of the day the vats would be very brilliant and would illuminate the cave with colored lights like circus displays. The orange was renewed from time to time and the spider gave off an odor of orange blossoms that perfumed the cave.
In the following months, Alfanhui and his master dedicated themselves to perfecting the project of the chestnut tree and as soon as they would leave their work they would set themselves to studying and to contriving new things and putting them into practice. The master prepared new colored waters and the vats in the cave increased until the platform was filled and the chestnut came to have up to thirty distinct colors of all shades and hues. They took care also to arrange the colors with taste, so that no leaf should have the same color repeated in two of its seven parts. This was very laborious because it was necessary to trace the seven ascending threads and the seven descending threads of each one of the leaves, of which there were more than three thousand. The spider was fed successively on all the colors and with each feeding he took on not only a color but also a different form. His legs became long, or thick, or would be covered with hair, and his body would turn oval at times, or cylindrical like a cheese, or his skin would become wrinkled. He assumed, in short, the most varied forms according to the development and the secret of each color. Alfanhui and his master noted in their book of experiments all the spider’s forms and the colors to which they corresponded.

They also achieved waters of lights. For that, Alfanhui would go down to the cave and separate a thread and pass his fingers along it from top to bottom, squeezing as if he were milking it; and he would put the end of the tiny root into a small flask. And this he did with four or five, until it was full. Then he would carry up the little flask and the master would make a vacuum in it so that the air should not eat the light, and they sealed it with wax. Thus they gathered on the mantle more than thirty small luminous flasks of different colors.
that were seen in the dark. Another day, it occurred to them to inject eye-buds into the bark of the small branches. The bud of the eye is a small lump of flesh from which tears come and it is that which engenders the entire eye. So when chestnut time came, several fruit had a colored eye in their breasts, although from the outside they seemed the same as those which enclosed chestnuts. They would put these eyes in lime water for a long time and they would become petrified and served for the stuffed animals, and they had vivacity and expression, something which the glass eyes did not have. If these eyes were left without being calcified they dried up like fruit and they did not rot or give off a bad smell.

It also occurred to them to graft white feathers onto leaf stalks. It was necessary to take these feathers before they should be developed, while they still had liquid in the quills, because if the quills were dry, they did not make the right contact with the sap of the plant. Thus Alfanhui and his master secured feathers of all colors to replace those that were damaged in their work. It occurred to Alfanhui also to make an imaginary bird with those feathers, arranging them like a mosaic on a framework of fabric and wire.

At night he discussed with his master all these things, and they would spend long and good hours beside the hearth.

Alfanhui and his master made various decorative birds with unusual colors; but their customers were scandalized and did not want to buy them.
XIII. OF HOW ALFANHUI CAME TO BE AN OFFICIAL TAXIDERMIST AND THE MARVELOUS EXPERIMENT WHICH IS NARRATED BELOW

One day the master summoned Alfanhui to bestow upon him his official title. That day he told him his most valuable secrets. Alfanhui related, in turn, how he had obtained the blood of the sunset when he was living with his mother. The master gave him his hand and made him a gift of a green bronze lizard.

Some time later they contrived a new experiment. They extracted the life-principle from the ovaries of some birds and injected it into the chestnut. They implanted the germs of several birds of different species and again awaited the season of the chestnuts.

When that time came Alfanhui and his master joyfully awaited the surprise. They harvested the nuts and set themselves to opening them one by one because they didn’t know which had been injected, and from the outside they were all the same. They continued opening nut after nut and threw them into a sack. Finally an injected nut appeared. Alfanhui opened it carefully and found a soft green egg. The shell was like fabric, like the coatings of goose barnacles, and something could be felt inside, like a wrinkled handkerchief. The master thought that it was necessary to incubate that egg so that the animal should have life, and they put it in the sun on the millwheel. They found more than twenty injected fruit of several colors and did the same with all of them.
At the end of a few days the eggs began to move, like men inside a sack. Alfahui and his master decided to open them. They slit the skin of the first and there appeared a thing of colors, like a handful of slack and wrinkled leaves. They saw that that thing was unfolding and opening like a handkerchief, and soon they had before their eyes a strange bird. All the shapes of its body were flat like paper and it had leaf-feathers. Instead of having two wings it had five, asymmetrically arranged. It had three feet and two flattened heads, like all the rest of its body. Alfahui and his master understood that that bird had been born with vegetal symmetry and therefore neither the number nor the order of each part of its body was fixed, as in a tree the number and the order of the branches are not fixed. But they realized that it had been born from the embryo of a heron because the individual parts reproduced those of that bird, although without volume, as if drawn on paper. It had very lively colors and chirped very softly as when one whistles between his teeth. The master took it and tossed it into the air. The bird unfolded its five wings and began to fly on the wind in spurts like a colored rag, swinging like a dry leaf and without a fixed destination, coming and going through the air like a butterfly. Alfahui and his master became enthusiastic and opened the other eggs.

The sky above the garden was filled with those colored birds, smaller and larger, that made their first flight and did not go far away. It seemed as if there had been thrown into the air carnival masks of a bird-fiesta or that imitation birds had been flung from a window.
It was a weightless and marvelous flock that moved in large patches across the sky, in harmonious confusion. Never had there been seen such a flock, so irregular and happy, so lively and so absurd.

Alfanhui and his master recognized in each vegetal bird the animal species from which it descended and they stood charmed, watching that strange flight through the garden and listening to that silent and varied chirping, like a rubbing of leather or a sharpening of knives.

After a while, all at one time, the birds settled in the chestnut tree because they had been born there, their affection was there. Some time later the vegetal birds became used to flying over the field; but every night they would return to sleep among the leaves of the chestnut. Alfanhui and his master were enraptured with their multicolored and multiformed vegetal flock and they were careful to count the birds every evening when they returned to sleep in the chestnut. One day they missed a bird and, because they had grown fond of them, they became very sad. But the bird had been killed by a hunter, and through all Guadalajara there already ran a voice of fear and scandal.
XIV. OF THE SAD EVENT THAT
OCCURRED ONE NIGHT

At twelve o'clock at night Alfanhui and his master were awakened by the murmur of angry men who came in a troop up the street. The commotion drew near, increasing like a storm. Alfanhui went to the peephole of the door and saw in the night a group of men with clubs, guns, and torches, who were shouting:

"Get the wizard, get the wizard!"

And they spoke a lot of bad words. The men reached the door and began to beat on it increasing their cries and their insults.

The master went toward the entrance in his nightshirt and with an oil lamp in his hand; he opened the door, stood on the threshold, and said serenely:

"What do you want?"

The men did not answer and, increasing their shouts and insults, knocked him to the floor and passed over him, trampling him violently. Then they invaded the entire house and went through breaking everything with their clubs or gun-butts. Alfanhui watched all that sadly, standing quietly close to the wall, and the men passed by his side without paying any attention to him. When they had destroyed everything they went out to the street again and seemed to go away.

Alfanhui went toward the master, who lay stunned on the floor, bloody and in pain. He brought water and with cloths staunched his wounds. The master revived a little. But a few moments later they realized that the house was burning on all four sides. The men had
thrown torches inside the house, and through the doors of the rooms were coming smoke and the brilliance of flames, which were increasing and catching the furniture and the wooden floor.

Alfanhui and his master prepared themselves for flight. They dressed quickly; but they realized that they could no longer leave through the door. Alfanhui grabbed the gold coin that the thieves had given him and that he had hidden along with the silver snake and the lizard that the master had presented to him. Then he broke the crystal box and freed the snake from the three rings and said to her:

"Save yourself!"

The snake awoke from her lethargy and jumped over the flames. Then she came and coiled herself around the wrist of Alfanhui, like a bracelet.

Alfanhui took the bronze lizard and ran toward his master, who grasped him by the hand and took him to the rear window of the house, that gave onto the open field.

They went out through that window and began to run through the fields; having crossed an arroyo they climbed up a hill in the middle of the night. The brilliance of the fire lighted them from behind and shone very red on their backs. Before crossing the hill they stopped and turned their faces to the house as if looking at it for the last time. There rose up extremely high, multicolored flames that shone a great distance. The flames had also caught the crown of the chestnut, and the scorching of the vegetal birds could be heard, as they hissed like green shrubs. Within the house were heard shatterings and the breaking of jugs and glass objects. The fire caught the garrets and the straw and an immense red and yellow burst of flames shot up
while the shrieks of the burned mice were heard. Alfanhui remembered the two thieves and looked around him. He saw their shadows as they fled with their backs to the fire over another higher and barer hill, toward the road to the Molina moors.

Alfanhui and his master contemplated the fire a long while without saying a word. Suddenly the house fell in with a great roar and a column of soot and sparks rose up and obscured the flames. The flames sank down and the noises lessened, and it seemed like a field of fires scattered over the ground, a field of rubble where formerly the house had stood.

Alfanhui and his master turned their backs on the fire and crossed the hill after casting one last look at the house, and went on into the darkness of the night.
In the country of Guadalajara the hawthorne is yellowish. The flower of the hawthorne alternates with the scarlet of the thyme. A tender green vanishes amid the black soil and the harsh shrubs. In the country of Guadalajara, there appear at daybreak small dark larks with pink breasts and soft beaks. The roads go through the plains of the high limestone mesas that are cut into talus down the declining valleys. Once a year will be seen in the distance the tricorns of the civil guards who ride horseback over these roads. But they are roads of foxes and thieves, and the civil guards are in the casino in the city playing dominoes with a shopkeeper who sells imported goods, who has his thumbs in the armholes of his vest. The thieves sleep in the underground passages of the castles that crown the rugged hills and little old women dressed in black, sisters of the home fires and the frying pans, gossip together in the green meadows. The little old women have wire bones and die after the men and after the poplars. They drown in the fords of the Henares and the current carries them away, floating like black rags. Sometimes they get caught on the reeds or on the buckthorns, that grow close to the cutwaters of the bridges, and tangle the hooks of the fishermen. The little old women of Guadalajara always go about together and they flee when one of them is drowned and they don't tell anyone about it.

The fishermen of Guadalajara always go alone and have lunch beside the black poplars. The Henares is a muddy river that descends
through the dark lands and comes from the dark mountains. It is made up of the remains of the clouds forgotten along the rough pathless places of the sierra. The mountain is speckled with snow because the land is very black and the snow never succeeds in covering it completely. What a shadow the mountain makes, over all the country of Guadalajara! It seems that the sun never reaches there with its light.

For three days Alfanhui and his master had been traveling. The wheat was growing green in the plowed fields and the master seemed to cling more and more to the earthy clods. Close to the bed of a hare, he stretched out. He lay face up, carefully placed, with his head supported on a clump of wheat sprouts.

"I am dying, Alfanhui!"

The master was speaking very slowly. Alfanhui's lips and eyelids trembled. He felt rain within his head and he knelt down close to the master. He was not able to speak.

"I am dying, Alfanhui!"

Alfanhui felt the huge tears and the thread of the sob and of the voice that were trying to find a way out.

"I am dying, Alfanhui!"

Alfanhui broke into tears for the first time in his life, as if he would shatter into bits.

"Do not die, master; do not die! Do not die, my master! Get up, get up off the ground!"

And he caught him by the arms to raise him, but he could not do it because the master had lost all strength.

"Get up! Get up!"
On seeing that he could not lift his master, Alfanhui's voice failed again and he hid his face to cry.

"Alfanhui, my son, I am going to the kingdom of whiteness."

Again the master fell silent and only the desolate sobbing of Alfanhui was heard.

"I am going to the kingdom of white, where the colors of all things are united, Alfanhui."

"Do not go, master."

"Look, I have left you all I had; if you return this way, the land and the little that remains are yours."

"Master, my master! Are you not going to get up any more? Sit up at least, sit up! Do not leave me alone. I have never seen dying."

"Be a good boy, Alfanhui, my son; go back to your mother."

"No! I love you. I want you to live, master."

"I am dying, Alfanhui! I will speak no longer; I am going to the kingdom where all colors are made one."

This time the master grew rigid and his gaze was gradually extinguished. Alfanhui put his face against the master's chest and cried. A long time passed thus until Alfanhui felt on his neck the caress of a twitching hand that was slowly closing. The fist closed with great force, grasping a lock of Alfanhui's hair. The master stopped breathing and Alfanhui cried no more. He raised his troubled face and as he loosened his hair from the master's hand a few strands were pulled out and remained clasped between the knotty, purple fingers of the dead man.
Alfanhui covered his master with a bit of earth and pulled up green wheat plants by their roots and covered him up entirely. Then he started to walk, as if bewildered, through the country. At some ten steps a hare rose up and he saw it run until it was lost to sight. All day Alfanhui wandered aimlessly through the land. At night he came to an oak forest and lay down to sleep in the shelter of the fallen leaves.

A beautiful moon came out that shone on the trunks of the oak grove. The silver snake stretched slowly and uncoiled herself from Alfanhui's wrist to take the moonlight. Alfanhui had in one pocket the bronze lizard and in the other the gold coin. He slept with his body covered by dry leaves, with the moon on his face, sheltered from the cold of the night in the country of Guadalajara.
XVI. OF HOW ALFANHUI RETURNED TO THE
HOME OF HIS MOTHER, WHO WAS
CLEANING LENTILS

The early morning train! All the ground of the oak grove trembled. The black machine passed, breathing violently, shoving aside the dry leaves that had piled over the road bed. The cool morning air chattered its teeth on the train windows. The train passed five meters from Alfanhui and the hundred impassive and unknown profiles of its windows crossed his sleepy eyes. The last car left behind it a whirlwind of dust and dry leaves. It was the sudden waking up with a fright in that long, swift drumroll that had left the air trembling with emptiness. The silence broken in two by that thunderous passing of the train; the solitude of the tawny oak grove crossed by a hundred profiles of sleep.

Alfanhui touched himself and he was warm, as if recently come from a bath of clean, clear tears. He sought the snake, the gold coin, and the bronze lizard, and everything came back to his memory. The snake was again twined around his wrist.

Alfanhui started along the tracks toward the south. And he came at night to a long plain, beaten by moonlight. The plain was a dark mirror, white and green. Halos of mist wandered over the ground.

On the third night Alfanhui arrived at his mother's home. The house slept breathing silently among the dark eucalyptus trees close to the millstream. The webs and the wood-borers were tangled in the eaves, and around the top of the chimney danced the false fairy of the embers.

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Alfanhui stole in through the window and lit a lamp. He found his little hourglass on the small table of his room. The fine blue sand was sleeping in the lower cone, like the sand of an abandoned river basin. Alfanhui turned the clock, and the sand woke up again and began to pour out its thin stream. Alfanhui saw the movement of the fine blue sand again and the small light of time past returned to his eyes. Then he got into bed and put out the light.

In a short while he heard a noise that came from another room. He rose from bed and saw a lighted door at the end of the passage. He went there and found his mother, who was cleaning lentils. Without her being aware of him, Alfanhui stood on the threshold a while, looking. Then he approached the table.

"Son! When did you come?"

"Hello, mother!"

Alfanhui sat down close to his mother and began to play with the stems, seeds and small pieces that his mother was taking from the lentils. He had his elbow on the marble and his head resting on his hand.

While he told his story, he would make pictures with the little seeds and then scatter them again. Then he made his name and said:

"Mother, call me Alfanhui."

Alfanhui had been gone from his mother's house a long time. He recognised the creaking of the beams of the kitchen, the anthills among the tiles, the chipped marble, the outline of the timbers, the dripping of the bronze faucet, the pots, and the casserolels with their dents, and all the other little secrets of the kitchen. On a shelf were the little jars of spices, with their labels: RED PEPPER, SAFFRON, BLACK PEPPER, ANISE, CUMIN, CINNAMON, NUTMEG, etc.
Alfanhui remembered the monotonous odor of his mother's cookery. He saw the earthenware milk jug with its layer of cream, thick and yellowish. And the pinewood chairs, white from so much rubbing with the scrub brush. The cats dozed with half-open eyes, purring on the warm tiles close to the fire. An earwig ran over the frying pans hung on the walls of the hearthplace. And all the noises of the kitchen compounded like a stirring of wood-borers that climbed the paneling toward the dark ceiling.

Alfanhui returned to bed and he felt sad, as if he had a black crow's nest in his breast. He remained thinking, with his hands under his head, and he did not see new pictures in the darkness, and he found the shadows heavy and empty as if his eyes were bandaged with a black cloth.

He only imagined he heard in the hourglass clock the imperceptible falling of the fine, blue sand of time past. And only that blue returned to his eyes like the fine sand of a long solitary beach; of a diminutive beach with a single color and a single path among the blue grasshoppers, blue wheat and blue snails.
When the time of harvest came, Alfanhui went down with the men to the fields. He went on a little young burro behind the troop of harvesters. They would go down the orchard road flanked by walls, over which hung the branches of fruit trees. Alfanhui always went last, quiet and thoughtful, on top of the heap of saddlebags, with the scythes and lunches.

During the harvesting, Alfanhui tied sheaves or watched the harvesters' mounts. One day they told him to prepare the gazpacho because the one who always made it had not come down that morning. Alfanhui chopped this and that in the large earthenware bowl: tomatoes, bread, melon, red peppers, green peppers, cucumbers, onions, etc., and he tossed in everything to float on the water and oil. Then he half closed his eyes and judged from the color how it was coming along, so that he could put in more of this or of that in order to make what seemed to him a better dish. When the men came to eat, Alfanhui had the gazpacho already prepared. He had made it so cleverly and it pleased them all so much that from then on it was always he who made it. Alfanhui answered the praises of the men with a half-smile on his lips, timid and light over his sadness.

Everyone said to him "do this" or "do that," "take this" or "Give me that," and Alfanhui always did the right thing. But no one ever dared to say anything to him or to ask him a single thing except
what had to do with the necessities of the harvest. His mother sent him with the men in order not to see him languish that way, and Alfanhui was always alert to all that they said to him. At night, he would return home, have dinner, and go to sleep, thoughtful as always, but with his eyes dulled, as if he had seen nothing. Thus harvest time passed and in the same way also threshing time.

His eyes seemed to shine with happiness only when he was mounted on the thresher and made the horses move to the cracks of the whip. Sometimes he would make it go so fast that it would leave the threshing floor and the prongs would scrape over the earth and the stones of the pavement and veer outward but immediately he would return, shouting at the horses like a madman with his child's voice, thin and shrill. He seemed so happy on the thresher that the men used to let him get up on it often and they let him run all he wished so they could see him so erect and lively, urging on the beasts and flourishing the whip in the air, as if the summer were too short for him and he wished to run faster than the day and quicker than the wind, mounted on that golden wheel as if on a merry-go-round.

September also came and the wheat was stored in the silos and the granaries. The mill that was close to Alfanhui's house began to work and the water sounded all the day long. Alfanhui sat down on a little bridge over the basin millrace, with his feet hanging in the water and looked at himself in the current and he would spend hours and hours looking at the coming and going of the waterbugs that float on top of the water on the tips of their feet. And small water worms, black as tiny balls of brilliant enamel, that swam through the water too, leaving zig-zag wakes.
But Alfanhui had thrown a veil over his eyes and had dulled the edge of his glance and he saw all these things like a dolt, as if no project wished to come to his mind now.

Sometimes a eucalyptus leaf fell on the water and it would go folded like a ship, toward the paddles of the millwheel. Sometimes also dragonflies of all colors would come down and circle first over the water around Alfanhui's feet. Alfanhui saw algae and white and green pebbles in the depth of the basin. The pebbles rolled around from time to time, impelled by the current. And the algae would wave on the bottom, very well combed like locks of hair in the wind. All things called to Alfanhui and seemed to come to tempt him and to awaken him. But Alfanhui, alien to all purposeful thought, continued pensive and absent, in the single memory of his master, of his house and of Guadalajara.
When winter came, Alfanhui clung close to the fire in the fire place; he sat on a chopping-block to the left of the hearth, under the chimney hood. He set himself to watching the fire and said nothing. The fire looked at him with its face. Eyes and mouth had the fire. Its mouth of splinter-teeth crackled, spoke. Above the eyes of the fire, the face of his master. The fire spoke with its ancient teeth, it made tassels of grain and threshed them. Each tassel a story, each story a smile. Like handfuls of wheat spilled over the stone the stories returned from the fire. The echo of stories sleeps in the chimneys. The wind wants to scatter them. The fire awakens them. The fire awakened the face of the master from the depths of Alfanhui's glance. Bright face. Alfanhui listened to the repeated stories, he gathered the wheat with his hands, he recognized the voice. He recognized also, among the wheat, his old smiles. Entire nights. The stories came in through the fire by mouthfuls, they filled the kitchen. Now the fire grew alone, diminished alone, alone it grew again and alone it put itself out. Alfanhui watched and heard. He stopped watching, and now he no longer heard.

One cold night everyone was in bed. Alfanhui close to the fire. The air of the kitchen was warm, laden and spongy like oil full of clots, and was trying to get out through the cracks. The ominous cloud of the kitchen forced things into a disturbed and stubborn sleep. And everything moved restlessly, full of heat and suffocation. The spiders,
the cats, the woodborers, the ants began to stir as if with displeasure, to scratch, coming and going, seeking breath in the knife-edges of cold air from the cracks. The cats walked from one place to another, they climbed up on the chairs, the tables, the windows; they walked all around the room close to the walls and meowed softly, disquietingly. Alfanhui looked at the room, lit by a large lamp. It was all gray, gray cats, gray fire, the color of a dense oily ash. The air shone only in the cracks through which forcibly came the knives of cold, as if trying to cut that thick, blind maze. But they were dulled and dissipated not far from their crevices, wrapped in the heat, folded and softened like wax. Alfanhui rose from the fire and put his ear close to a crack. It was a thin slit between the boards of a window. He felt a sweet, silent breath, soft, constant and slippery, like the touch of a cold sheet.

Alfanhui opened the door of the house. The light of the kitchen went out to the field and the kitchen sipped the night like a mouth that breathes, inhaling a long time, filling its lungs. One could hear it breathing very deeply, filling itself with coolness. Alfanhui stood on the threshold. Outside there was snow.

Into the light of the kitchen came a hare from the field and stopped one long step from the door, facing Alfanhui. Alfanhui felt a spasm in his muscles and began to run through the snow. The hare went jumping ahead of him, making silent, nimble leaps over the snow. Toward a treeless hill they ran. Everything white. The clouds had gone and the moon shone. Alfanhui ran, he breathed his fill. Below the kitchen door looked like a stove door opened onto the field. Alfanhui went toward a small forest of bare black poplars that latticed the moon
with their twigs. The forest descended a very steep hillside. Among the close-set trees Alfanhui and the hare began to play, weaving among the poplars, weaving their footsteps over the snowy ground. Then they ran further, they crossed the millstream, they arrived at the mill, from the mill to another hill, from the hill to another little forest, circling the house down below there. Now they were behind it and the light could not be seen; but the moon shone brightly. Thus they ran and ran until Alfanhui was satiated with breathing and filling his lungs with the snow air.

Alfanhui gathered an armful of new wood, green and damp, and went down to the house. With the embers he lit that wood, which hissed and snorted, spitting water and smoke as if refusing to burn, and ended by giving a cold metallic flame with a clear, young light that danced, lively and happily, lighting all the kitchen. The cats, the spiders, the woodborers, and the ants fled. Alfanhui, standing close to the fireplace, looked out of the wide-open door and saw that morning was breaking over the snowy field.
PART TWO

I. WHEREIN THE READER IS INTRODUCED

TO THE PERSON OF DON ZANA

Madrid. It was in that time, the story of Don Zana "The Marionette," he with the hair of cream-colored string, he with the large and empty laugh like a slice of watermelon, the one of the Tra-kay, tra-kay, tra-kay,

tra-kay, tra-kay, tra

on the tables, on the coffins. It was when there were geraniums on the balconies, tobacco shops in the Moncloa, herds of yearling sheep in the vacant lots of the Guindalera. They were dragging their heavy wool, eating the grass among the rubbish, bleating to the neighborhood. Sometimes they stole into the patios, they ate up the parsley; a little green sprig of parsley, in the summer, in the watered shade of the patios, in the cool windows of the basements at foot level. Or they stepped on the spread-out sheets, undershirts or pink chemises clinging to the ground like the gay shadow of a handsome young girl. Then, then was the story of Don Zana "The Marionette."

Don Zana was a good looking, smiling man, thin, with wide angular shoulders. His chest was a trapezoid. He wore a white shirt, a jacket of green flannel, a bow tie, light trousers and shoes of corinthian red on his little, dancing feet. This was Don Zana "the Marionette," the one who used to dance on the tables and the coffins. He awoke one morning, hanging in the dusty storeroom of a theater, next to a lady of the eighteenth century, with many white ringlets and a cornucopia of a face.
Although the lady had danced with him in the theaters of Paris, she did not wake up because she had less temperament. Through a small window onto the roof went Don Zana and he walked for several days, dancing over the tiles, frightening the people who lived in the garrets and the attics.

Don Zana broke the flower pots with his hand and he laughed at everything. He had a disagreeable voice, like the breaking of dry reeds; he talked more than anyone, and he got drunk at the little tables in the taverns. He would throw the cards into the air when he lost, and he didn't stoop over to pick them up. Many felt his dry wooden slap; many listened to his odious songs, and all saw him dance on the tables. He liked to argue, to go visiting in houses. He would dance in the elevators and on the landings, spill ink wells, beat on pianos with his rigid, little, gloved hands.

The fruitseller's daughter fell in love with him and gave him apricots and plums. Don Zana kept the pits to make her believe he loved her. The girl cried when days passed without Don Zana's going by her street. One day he took her out for a walk. The fruitseller's daughter, with her quince-lips, still bloodless, ingenuously kissed that slice-of-watermelon laugh. She returned home crying and, without saying anything to anyone, died of bitterness.

Don Zana used to walk through the outskirts of Madrid and catch small, dirty fish in the Manzanares. Then he would light a fire of dry leaves and fry them. He slept in a pension where no one else stayed. Every morning he would put on his bright red shoes and have them cleaned. He would breakfast on a large cup of chocolate and he would not return until night or dawn.
Don Zana worked in a chocolate factory, and no one had better hands than he for beating the paste. His were like wooden truncheons and had rigid, extended fingers stuck together, hardly sketched out. He worked with marvelous rapidity; he would take the paste, beat it, and toss it in the air like no one else. He stirred like a juggler, as if he were in the circus, and he gave a rhythm to the strokes of his hands that seemed to keep the work of the whole factory moving. The boss had never had such a good worker, and the chocolate beaten by Don Zana was known from all the rest. So much so that they launched on the market a bulk type of pound loaf that was called "Donzana Loaf," so homogenous and tightly packed that it separated like licorice, with a conchoid fracture, and won a gold medal at the World Exposition in Barcelona. With this, LA SABROSA, INCORPORATED, reached an apogee that its humble director general never would have suspected; he enlarged his workshops, his profits multiplied by hundreds. It was at the best moment that Don Zana decided to leave, pretending that his hands were splintering from beating the chocolate. Useless were the pleas of the director general and of the administrative Council, to which Don Zana himself had come to belong. He got up on the table and, to the horror of the other members did his dance:

Tra-kay, tra-kay, tra-kay,
tra-kay, tra-kay, tra

then, without anyone's being able to stop him, he walked out on them.

For some months the Company, with great difficulty, maintained its prestige, falsifying the "Donzana Loaves;" but the public did not let itself be deceived, and in a short time LA SABROSA, INCORPORATED went bankrupt, the shops were closed and the Corporation dissolved.
Don Zana now walked free through the streets, at the whim of his bright red shoes, with no one and nothing to stop him. Many other things, none of them good to remember, were done by Don Zana "the Marionette," unhappily famous in Madrid in the time in which there were geraniums on the balconies, tobacco shops in the Moncloa, herds of yearling sheep in the vacant lots of the Guindalera.
II. OF THE ENTRANCE THAT ALFANHUI MADE INTO THE CITY AND ASPECTS OF THE SAME

Alfanhui was wearing a yellow shirt and a dark suit with short pants. When, with yet half an hour of sun, a woman said to him:

"From the corner of that wall now you can see Madrid," he took off his alpargatas and put on the white socks and patent leather shoes that he was carrying in a sack. The wall was very high; over it showed cypresses. At the corner he looked: a highway with small trees went down to the river. At the other side of the river, the city.

The city was purple. It fled in a background of gray smoke. Stretched on the ground against a low sky it was an immense skin, its back bristling with cube-shaped scales, with red glass sequins that vibrated, mirroring the sunset, like delicate thin sheets of beaten copper. It lay stretched out and breathing. A smooth dark sky, like a plain turned upside down, covered the city with its vivid flagstone. The city was purple, but pink could also be seen.

The city was pink and was smiling sweetly. All the houses had their eyes turned toward the twilight. Their faces were untouched, without paint or make up. The eaves blinked. They rested their chins one on the shoulders of the other, going up like steps. Some shut their eyes to sleep. And there it was with the light on its face and a smile blooming on its lips. The sun set. The birds brought in their beaks an immense gray veil. Undulating, it came to rest over the city.
The sunset had left the air like distilled alcohol. The profiles wounded the sight as if they were glass. The smoke, the veil, were like a blot on the lens that changed the colors but did not blur the outlines. The distilled alcohol had left everything bright, clean, transparent. In that air Alfanhui saw four watercolor façades. Lemon-green, orange, aquamarine, and pink. Four high façades without houses and without eaves, stuck one against the other with the outline crumbled away and the windows looking crazily from side to side. The doors were new and it seemed that someone had been careful to close them. The four façades had a continuous outside staircase, strangely clean like everything else. They were at the foot of a hill, and a new highway, not yet used, ran past them. Facing the poplar grove, parallel to the river, those four façades had happiness and solitude. The grove was lower and was not of poplars but of banana trees and acacias. The ground was dusty. A low parapet faced the channeled river. The river was small, with tiny isles, alluvial deposits of black sand with a bit of grass and dirty things and cats with swollen stomachs, blackened and hairless, stranded at the water level. These islands had a sort of comb of small sticks beside the current, that held in its prongs all these sad things. A small bridge of rusty iron crossed there. Some sections of the railing were missing and the spikes were bent like branches toward the river. On the other side there were also banana trees and acacias. Farther on could be seen some orchards, structures, and embankments. There was no order there and nothing was finished, everything begun. The streets were outlined in view as one raised his eyes toward the city. Aflanhui was still alone. On a small house
in an orchard he saw a sign:

LANE OF THE MELANCHOLY

The lane was a sketch drawn with slag from the railroad, the color of red cabbage, that lost itself in the confusion of terraces. At the end was seen a small railroad car on its line of narrow rails. Alongside the lane grew some brambles and matted shrubs that separated it from the orchard. The orchard was sunken, about a meter and a half, and in the dirty water there grew in neat order cabbages and lettuce, green as emeralds. In the middle of the lane there were also five old large, black poplars with broken branches, where many birds slept. Beside one ruin there was a low inn.

THE GRANGE

WIDOW OF BUENAMENTE

Wines and lunches read the sign on the wall. The R of "Grange" was painted, so as not to interrupt the sign, over the gutterspout. The inn had a yard. Alfanhui stood on tip-toe and looked through the palings. The yard had a few small trees and the ground, smooth and dusty, had been watered by hand from a bucket. There were a few folding tables, each one with its four folding chairs painted a dull green. The boards of the tables were warped, the nails coming out. In a corner of the yard were some wires supporting an arbor of honeysuckles. It was growing dark. Alfanhui got down from the wall and stopped to listen. From the tavern came a song.
III. OF HOW, NIGHT HAVING FALLEN, DON ZANA AND ALFANHUI CAME TO KNOW EACH OTHER

Now, at night, Madrid had many red lights that rose up vapor-like toward the navy-blue sky. But in the depths of the Manzanares the red and the blue were mingled. Beneath the black water Alfanhui saw on the river bed an amethyst of a thousand facets. Madrid was also an amethyst in his patent leather shoes. In the nearest facet he could see the poplar grove. The trees were face down and had purple leaves in the light of an electric bulb high on a bare post.

In Madrid patent leather shoes were worn. There were also many cockroaches on the wooden floors. The Manzanares was like that; it ran like a cockroach, with its amethyst on its back, reflected inside. Stepping on its little islands of mud and sticks would have sounded like cockroaches crushed underfoot. The girls of Madrid do not like cockroaches. All the newspapers carried advertisements for insecticides. It was the obsession. Beside the insecticide ads they advertised shoe polish. They didn't advertise anything else. The patent leather shoes shone, but the cockroaches didn't die. They invaded the kitchens and there was one underneath each casserole. When patent leather shoes went out of style, the fear of cockroaches was also lost. No one remembered any longer. The newspapers advertised other products.

Alfanhui saw a fire being lit in that facet of the amethyst. By the light of the fire the trees recovered their true green. Alfanhui raised his eyes from the river and looked toward the poplar grove.
Five boys were around the fire, standing with their hands in their pockets. He approached them and, as it was a custom in Guadalajara, threw a stick into the flames for the right to share the fire. Alfanhui thought they were going to greet him, but they only made a place for him and continued talking of strange things. Alfanhui did not understand what they were saying. He understood the sentences but he did not know what they were talking about. They spoke rapidly, one after the other, and didn't interrupt each other. They used many abbreviations and all the words had two syllables. Finally they showed him a set of ball bearings. Alfanhui understood that they were talking about that. He had never seen one and they explained to him how it worked. He learned that the ones that had balls were better than those that had rollers but the ones with the balls had the disadvantage of burning up from time to time. Then they talked of making a car. They also told him how it was done and how good it was to go down hill in those cars with low wheels that Alfanhui had never seen. But what he likes best was that part about the balls burning up and not working any longer.

The fire went out and the boys started homeward. One was carrying a handful of saltwort.

"You coming?" they said to him.

"No. I'm staying," Alfanhui answered.

"So long, kid!"

"So long!"

They had not asked him his name and none wore short pants like his.

A little light was coming through the cracks in the inn. A dog trotted across the bridge. He was a thin dog with crazy eyes and
when he saw anyone he made a wide circle. Then he slackened his pace and sniffed a while under the street lamp. Finally, he gave a lazy growl and lay down on a newspaper at the foot of the post. Alfanhui went to the inn and entered. Everyone looked toward the door. Don Zana was also there, seated on a stool.

"Good evening."

Mr. Buenamente's widow looked at him:

"Hello, handsome."

There were four other men there, three at the table with Don Zana, one at the counter; each one with his glass of wine. Don Zana got up and approached Alfanhui impudently.

"What are you doing here, pale boy?"

He looked at him, putting his head on one side and then the other, and Alfanhui did not answer him.

"What's your name?"

"Alfanhui."

"And what else?"

"Only Alfanhui."

"You look like a provincial. Got a trade?"

"Licensed taxidermist."

Don Zana became upset. Alfanhui was looking at him like a bird. Don Zana was shorter than he.

"I had a trade too and I got tired. Two, three, four trades. Orthopedist in Espos y Mina, chocolate-maker, dancer. It is better to be an amateur dancer than a professional of anything else. That's what I do best. Life is a laugh, kid. You look sad. What are you so serious about?"
A monkey that was in one corner, fastened with a little chain, chorused the phrases of Don Zana with shrieks of forced laughter, pretending to roll on the floor with laughter, moving around a great deal, with exaggerated amusement. Then it would be very quiet, awaiting another sentence to laugh at.

"But I like you. What are you looking for?"

"A boarding house."

"Mine. You'll see how good it is. I'll take you. Give me your hand, pale boy, we're going to be friends."

Don Zana put out his hand. Alfanhui, upon taking it, was surprised:

"But where is your hand? This isn't a hand."

Don Zana was embarrassed again, painfully. The monkey let out a short laugh like a shout and turned toward everyone, showing its little grotesque hands, dirty and wrinkled. Everyone smiled behind their hands without Don Zana noticing it, but he reacted also, this time, saying:

"Now you'll see whether it is."

And he went toward the monkey that had laughed in his face. The monkey crouched, scared to death, and Don Zana let it have a horrible blow. The monkey gave a cry and broke into tears. Don Zana had drawn blood. Then he returned to the center of the room and said to Alfanhui:

"In a little while we'll go up. Want a glass of wine?"

"No."
Alfanhui opened the window of his room. A clean morning on the balconies of Madrid. It was a holiday. Alfanhui looked upward. The eaves were close to his window. The ends of the beams showed, painted a faded maroon, like split pegs of wood. Above were seen the boards that supported the tiles, warped by the rain. With time, they had lost all their knots and there were crevices between them, nests for geckoes. Alfanhui remembered the geckoes of his home that gave their little cries at nightfall and came out to hunt flies, scrambling over the walls, so lively and frightening. Much prettier than the lizards, he thought, in spite of their dirty gray and their warts; with their little owl eyes that looked in different directions, always wide open; with their wide humorous heads, with their little hands of tiny discs, like sequins strung together. Lovers of darkness, they come out at the twilight hour, lazy, as if rubbing their little eyes after sleep. Soon they wake up and they are the most agile, the best climbers, companions of the spiders with whom they share the quota of flies each summer. Their best nests are the bulges in the plaster between the lime and the bricks of poorly made houses. No one knows that their colors are marvelous. Because they have taken the habit of the hermit monks when they are covered with the dust of the attics. But the day of their death, if they rot in the sun, there ooze from their tiny bellies tremendous greenish yellow iridescences and an odor of hay, figs and musk, like the odor of sanctity. When they are born, they are white and trembling like pigeons. Then their metamorphosis is like that of the little dear or wild boar and they dress
in dark spots until they take the habit of their religion and go to live in caves at a mature age. How many geckoes there were in the master’s house, how many at home in his mother’s? Eternal companions of the tertulia, when at sunset the chill of the night settles.

Alfanhui locked at the house opposite. On the tiles there was a little rag teddybear, dead, with its muzzle sunk in the gutter, as if it had died of thirst in the last summer drought seeking a drop of water on the red desert of the tiles, wandering through their hot, impassible dunes. But it had a wound in its side and its sawdust was coming out.

Alfanhui lowered his glance to the façade opposite and caught sight of a painted window. But this was not like the other false windows, that at least for one hour of the day seem real, when their painted shadows coincide with those which the sun casts on the real windows. This one never seemed real because it had contradictory shadows. Its colors were green and maroon, and the frame was painted with all the trimmings just like those of its happy companions. Only the rain had gradually faded them and they trailed languidly down the wall.

They had painted a lady leaning her arms on the sill of this window. This lady was awaiting her husband. Her flesh was slack and she was some forty-five years old. Perhaps she had been waiting since she was fifteen. A rose and mauve lady that had not yet gathered her flesh and her beauty into dark clothes and still waited, like a leafless rose, with her faded colors and her artificial smile, bitter as a grimace.

Her breasts had been slowly sliding down the wall as the rain fell and now they appeared sad and pendant, several inches from their proper
place. Through the gap between two high houses she looked toward the south, toward Pinto and its seared fields, over the Toledo railroad. Toward the yellow, ripened wheat fields and the white railroad platforms, beneath the sun of happiness, where eighteen-year-old girls are married. She was dreaming of palaces of Aranjuez, their gardens and groves, and the Tagus, like an austere lord, and the splendid irrigation ditch and the violent and merry water, leaping, falling over itself in the sluices. And the vigorous orchard workers turning with crowbars the immense screw of the sluice gates. And the fertile and orderly lowlands.

Waiting, waiting, while the rain eradicated her face and her knitted blue wool mantilla. While time went sliding like a bright shadow over her figure, melting it into, confusing it with the window, with the wall, with the wind. Ah, time, time! It was changing her into a vague phantom, immobile on her wall, withering her like a despairing flower, while coarse women in the street screamed at their troops of children and with rude slaps restored them to good sense. While garlic, leeks, onions, and carrots were sold, that later filled the street with the heavy odor of meals. While the cyclists whistled through the narrow streets, separating the office workers and the plump, pinchable servant girls with their shopping baskets on their arms. While everyone shouted and moved about with solid and commonplace life, full of gossip and guffaws.

Ah, if that window had been real! There would have arrived the lively Toledan, dressed in black, with his gold chain on his jacket, with his white shirt, his buttoned collar and his spruce hat. Ah, if that window had not had contradictory shadows!
The painted lady, mauve and pink, with her knitted blue wool mantilla went on looking toward Pinto, its seared fields above the line of the railroad toward Toledo. She went on watching, waiting, with her artificial smile. She was called Flora. Miss Flora. What melancholy!
V. OF THE CURIOUS PENSION OF DONA TERESA
AND MORE DETAILS

The pension consisted of one small apartment that opened onto an inside patio, dark and completely filled with small iceboxes full of little holes. From window to window, on each floor of the building, stretched wires for hanging clothes. And when it happened that all the neighbors hung their sheets out at the same time, the patio was full of sheets from the ground to the sky, like a puff pastry. Then indeed the light reached the very bottom, because the highest sheets took it from the sun as it came sliding off the tile roof and passed its reflection to those one story below; these in turn gave it to the next lower ones. And thus the light would tumble from sheet to sheet, in a very complicated fashion, softly but not effortlessly, all the way to the bottom of the patio. How the light let itself be deceived by the sheets! Having entered at the top, it could not escape from the slide and down and down it tumbled as if through a trapdoor, to the bottom, so much against its will, through that dirty, narrow, gray patio! But the prettiest thing was when the patio door from the vestibule was opened and there came from the street a wind that filled the patio and went up through it like a waterspout, dragging the sheets, that would begin to flame upward like a flight of geese and seemed to be trying to leap free from the wires. They never succeeded in escaping, those sheets, the few times that those cyclones occurred. But it certainly happened that, without anyone's knowing how, all the sheets changed places in the midst of that confusion, as if, when the
wind stopped, each one took the first place that it found free, like children at school when the teacher suddenly comes in. And then all the neighbors had to go looking for and recognizing their own sheets and undoing that mess, so that not a few disputes were started because there were good sheets, poor ones, and those inbetween.

The house was triangular and its ground floor had the shape of a drafting triangle. What a strange thing! And from the street that corner, so high and so sharp, looked like a knife. The largest side of the triangle was the part in back, a brick wall without windows, solid up to the top. The smaller sides did have windows and the right angle coincided with the corner of two streets. Inside there was a pine staircase, with its balustrade of iron and the railing of wood. Coming to the attic, the last section of the railing was topped with a glass ball. The door of the pension was oblique because the landing slanted a little toward the opening in the wall were the stairs began. When it began to tilt, the original door didn’t fit very well into the twisted and warped frame. But when they made the new door they gave it the form of a rhomboid so that it should close as it ought to. This didn’t fail to have its complications either, because when opened, the lower edge would rub the floor until it reached a point where it could go no farther. And it was necessary to give a little hitch to the hinges so that the door would rise a bit upon opening, and to plane the floor of the landing a little. Between one thing and another the door worked well, not without its being necessary first to lower with the plane the inside part of the threshold, so that when the door was raised it wouldn’t catch there also. All this was done by a carpenter from Atocha, called Andres Garcia.
The door had a little round peephole of gilded brass that looked like a slice of lemon. And when it was open it looked like a maltese cross because four panels were movable while the other four remained fixed. You looked through the four movable ones. The peephole worked like the damper on stoves.

The door also had an enameled sign which said:

PENSION TERESA
Permanent, transient

In the middle of the house was the principal room, with a square table covered by a brownish velvet cloth with outlines of plants in relief. In the middle of this table the oil-vinegar cruet always stood, as if it were the most important thing in the house. It was one of those that looked like two crossed retorts, joined at the base with two huge drops of glass. The one on the right pointed toward the left and the one on the left toward the right. So much so that Don Zana was always confused and when he wanted to pour vinegar, he poured oil, and he would get angrier when he poured vinegar for oil than when oil for vinegar. And he would say that they had made it wrong, that he was used to the oil being on the right and the vinegar on the left, or vice versa, as the case might be, according to which way you looked at it. Some days Don Zana would say one thing, other days the other, and the owner used to answer:

"The alpargate doesn't have any sides, it fits the right foot as well as the left."

In this room there was also a glass-doored sideboard for the glass and dinnerware. But since it had a broken pane it was never opened and everything was taken out through the hole. There was also a low,
bell-shaped lamp with a fringe of red threads and another of glass tubes that were always dancing and swaying and made shepherds' music, because they sounded like a flock of sheep with their tiny bells. Their shadows came and went on the wall as if all the room were swaying. On top of the sideboard was a tin box, on which was painted Velázquez' "The Drunkards." It had once contained dried quince but now it was used for buttons. It caused many frights to strangers because after it was closed it would make a sharp noise when the lid straightened itself out and sprang back to its original position.

Other rooms worthy of mention were the bath and the servant's room. This last was situated in the corner of the acute angle. The servant was a woman of some forty years, tall and thin, and she always wore curlpapers in her hair except on Sundays when she went out. She had very little hair and she always got up at midnight in her nightgown with a small candlestick to look at herself in the mirror. And as she always saw herself so ugly she reached out her arms and scratched it. Then she would return to bed and sleep blissfully with a smile on her lips. Her name was Silvestra, and they called her "Silve," because in Madrid they never used a word of more than two syllables.

The bathroom was a garden. The tub was filled with soil almost to the top and three cabbages grew in it. The irrigation was very well planned, with ditches to distribute the water, and you didn't have to do anything but turn on the faucet. The three cabbages were white because very little light came in, and plants, as you know, need sun to become green. But as they didn't lack water they would grow very quickly; one was pulled up each week and was replaced immediately. It didn't matter whether it was winter or summer, autumn or spring.
Also in the bathroom was a goat tied to the door latch. This goat was always rigid, with its feet stretched out and its body leaning forward, pulling on the cord with all its might, looking at the cabbages without taking its eyes off them. When anyone entered the bath, the door would suddenly open and the goat would become very happy because it got close to the cabbages and thought it was going to reach them, and it would wag its tail like a puppy. With the door open it stayed in the same posture only a little further ahead. To close the door didn't take much effort because the floor was very smooth, and when you pulled the doorknob the goat would skate back, motionless, to her original position. This goat was called "Print" because she had the appearance of an engraving, and she gave a pretty tasteless milk.
Dona Tere was a very tiny lady with a few gray hairs. She had great consideration for her guests and she was very congenial. One night when Don Zana did not return, Alfanhui spent a long time talking to her. She was a widow; her husband had been a teacher. The only book left in the house had been her husband’s. A book with orange-colored covers that had on the title page a picture of a girl blowing on a pinwheel. The pinwheel blew apart into bits of floating thistledown. The book was called *Petit Larousse Illustré*. Alfanhui entertained himself a great deal looking at the pictures.

The landlady also told the story of her father. They were from Cuenca. There she had met her husband. Her father was a farmer and he had some land. One afternoon he fell asleep plowing with the oxen. And as he didn’t turn the plow, the oxen went straight ahead and left the field. The man continued walking with his hands on the plow handle. They went toward the west. They didn’t stop at night either. They waded fords and crossed mountains without the man’s waking up. They traveled the whole road of the Tagus and arrived in Portugal. The man didn’t wake up. Some people saw this man pass who was plowing with his oxen in a single furrow, long, straight, along the mountains, across rivers. Nobody dared to waken him. One morning he came to the sea. He crossed the beach; the oxen went into the sea. The waves broke on their chests. The man felt the water on his stomach and woke up.
He halted the oxen and stopped plowing. In a nearby town he asked where he was and sold his oxen and plow. Then he took the money and, by the same furrow that he had made, returned to his own land. That very day he made his will and died, surrounded by all his family.

Dona Tere had come to Madrid with her husband and they rented that house. After his death, she opened the pension. Alfanhui liked to listen to these stories of people’s lives. He watched Dona Tere move her mouth and her eyes, serenely expounding her memories, and in the time that her words lasted Alfanhui conceived the time that those events had lasted. Alfanhui felt affection for Dona Tere, who so sweetly showed him her memory, her life, as if it were another room in the house, with the same cordial expression as if she were saying: "It is at your disposal, for whatever you may command."

Then they spoke of Don Zana. Dona Tere said that Alfanhui should be careful of him:

"He’s the wrong type for you."

Dona Tere served spiced hake every night. But the spiced hake there were more spicy than anywhere else. Silve would fry them, singing a tango by Carlos Gardel. Always the same tango that began:

\[ \text{Adiós pájaro lindo...} \]

Silve was always in good humor, but sometimes she was saucy. Dona Tere, instead of getting angry at her, found her amusing and laughingly pacified her with kind words. Alfanhui found out that the goat and the vegetable garden were Silve’s institutions. The goat she had brought

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\(^2\) The adjective used is *rabiosa* which apparently has no other formal meaning than "very angry" or "excited." Since this does not seem logical, it appeared from the context that the idea of spicy was not out of place.
from her village and from time to time she threw the fact in the landlady's face, as if that saved the pension from ruin. And, indeed, she thought so, and Dona Tere let her think it.

"Alfanhui, pale kid!" Don Zana used to say to him, "people are foolish and ridiculous. I'm fond of you because you're like me."

Some days they would go out for a walk. Don Zana showed him Madrid. One day they went to a station to see the train leave. An hour before, people began to arrive with suitcases, with wicker baskets. Men, women, children. The women wore kerchiefs on their heads and had expressions of concern, intent on catching the train. They couldn't attend to another thing and they exaggerated their worry. They arranged everything beforehand.

"You'll get on first; you hand the suitcases to him through the window; you carry the baby for me; you get the seats; you. . . ."

There were no more children.

They were like little ants, those women. And soon the train would be filling up and the ones who had come to say good-bye would be left on the platform. Then there were great collective kisses, and someone would cry. The train whistled and the farewell-sayers waved their handkerchiefs until it disappeared.

Another day they went along a street in the outskirts and saw an enormous lot below the street-level, all full of rusty iron: there were water tanks, mudguards from cars, locomotive boilers, tubing, twisted beams, cables, chairs, night-tables and an infinity of other things, all skeleton-like. In one corner there was a mountain of bottles, Civil Guard-color, covered with dust. Below was the watchman's
small house. He was an old man who worried a cigar, seated on a chair in the doorway of his house. Don Zana asked him:

"What are you guarding, my good man?"

The guard opened his mouth to answer and stopped, looking with his very sad eyes at all the dark field of old iron, of rust covered scrap. Up the street they saw some gypsies coming with their tambourines. The bear, the camel, the monkey, the goat. The children came running.

A gypsy of some fifty years, with an enormous moustache, made the bear dance. He sang a song to him, low, monotonous, and simple. The song didn't have words, or had lost them. The gypsy said only: "Ohooh, ohooh, ooohooh." It was a Tartar or Magyar song, like his voice, like his moustache. Then the gypsy said to the bear:

"Play drunk, Nicolaaas?"

And the bear rolled on the ground. The children laughed. With rough tugs on the chain the gypsy made the bear get up again and took him away. Then the monkey, the camel, and the goat worked, and the little girls danced, dirty and uncombed, with carnations in their hair. Some people threw pennies in the hat that they passed around, others threw them from the balconies, but almost no one stopped because everyone had seen it a thousand times and it was a sad and boring spectacle. A gypsy girl approached Don Zana and Alfanhui and held out her tambourine. Don Zana said to her:

"You don't pay for art, kid."
The abandoned house was in a very old and run-down district, on a street of highly projecting paving stones, as if chewed up by the passage of wagons. Before reaching it, you would see a high tawny wall, stretching for a short distance above the street, with an enormous rickety door that opened on to a patio. The patio was surrounded by tall dark sheds on three sides. Inside the sheds were old cars, parts of cars, loose wheels and axles and tires, a carpenter's table surrounded by yellow wood shavings, and an anvil and small forge. The beams were full of spiderwebs. In the center of the open space there were also signs of fire. On a heap of rags a small dog was nursing her puppies, licking and re-licking them.

At the end of the wall there was a tenement house with many voices and many colored tiles. Just beyond this house was an iron gate. It gave onto a narrow passageway, about a meter and a half wide, between the apartment house and the abandoned house. The latter had its back to the street. Its door opened onto the garden that was at the end of the passage. The garden didn't have trees but it did have many flowers growing in jam jars and old wooden pails close to the wall. In the middle there were some enclosures formed by bricks half sunk into the ground, where shrubs with white flowers grew. Someone still came there to care for the garden. Leaning against the wall was a rake and beside it, a green watering can. In the middle
of all this there was an oversized marble summerhouse, surrounded by four stone benches and a very high and shady old cypress.

The house was of red brick and of only one story, with large windows and green wooden shutters. The door was hidden by an immense vine that covered the front steps and the marquee and climbed up onto the roof, forming a huge ball. It seemed as if the house had covered its face with that enormous thicket of honeysuckle, ivy, and other vines. Alfanhui went up close to look: the thick shoots embraced the railing and the iron palings of the marquee, entwining themselves, forming one body with them. They twisted, they interwove, they clutched with all their strength whatever they could find. The glass of the marquee had gradually been broken, giving room for the growth of the vines, so that they could clutch its iron supports. On the ground were little pieces of green and blue glass, covered with dust, among the dry leaves. The door was entirely hidden behind the dark mat.

Alfanhui climbed up the strongest shoots and penetrated the vine. Then he saw that underneath it there were only branches and more branches and a black emptiness. There the plant had eaten all the wall above the door, and the eaves and a piece of the roof, as if it had taken a large bite out of the house. Alfanhui thought he could enter the house by climbing down the branches. The matting was extremely dense; it supported him firmly and seemed never to end. Alfanhui went deeper, separating the branches and the leaves with hands and feet. Some moments it seemed to him that the shoots were closing in, trying to squeeze him and strangle him in their jungle. Finally he felt emptiness beneath his foot; the last fibres of the vine reached down, like cords, inside the house. Alfanhui slid down them and reached the floor in one jump.
The sound reverberated through the darkness. He heard a fleeing of rats. Alfanhui stood still a moment. There was a great darkness and only a vague spot of light on the floor could be seen. Alfanhui drew near and saw that it came from a fireplace. In the spot of light were visible the shadows of two birds perched up on the roof, on the edge of the chimney. They chirped distantly and their shadows moved on the floor. Alfanhui lit a match. A room the size of a salon appeared, but it didn’t have a single piece of furniture. The doors were white with gold borders. The fireplace was of marble. Everything was white and dark. With another match he went into another larger room that also had a fireplace. Over the fireplace were a mirror and two bronze candelabra. He lit all the candles. The mirror frame was also white, with gold trimmings. He looked at himself in it. The mirror held a deep yellow light. “How old I am?” he said to himself, and smiled. Then he drew away from the mirror as far as he could and looked at himself again, there in its depths. From there he waved at himself:

“Alfanhui, how ancient you are?” he said again jokingly. He smiled again very cheerfully and took one of the candelabra to light his way. When he went toward the door his feet struck against something in the center of the room. It was the skeleton of an angora cat. The neat bones could be seen, with a pile of white fur around them. As he passed, some hairs had risen in the current of air caused by his foot and had come to rest on his socks.

In another room he found on the floor a broken turquoise-colored vase with a withered rose by its side. On the mantelpiece there
was a wormeaten book. He opened it; on the title page it said:

Abbe’ Lázaro Spallanzani

Experiences pour servir à l'histoire de la
generation des animaux et des plantes. Genève 1786

He turned the first page. If Alfanhui had known French he would have
understood the first line to say: "I call the frog, of which I am going
to speak, green...," and he would have kept the book. Neither did
Alfanhui know that all the books by that same abbot had been bequeathed
to him by his master and had burned in the house in Guadalajara.

Alfanhui went on to another salon. There a strange buzzing
was heard. Close to the crack of light from a window there was a clavi­
chord. White, with gold trimmings. The humming sound came from there.
Alfanhui drew near and touched a key. The key sank slowly and after
a pause, a slow note sounded, sweet, drawn out, mited. He opened the
lid of the clavichord. The humming sounded ever so much louder. He
looked in. The clavichord was a beehive. It seemed to be all of gold.
The combs were constructed on the harp, along the strings. The bees
were working; some lit on Alfanhui’s hands, some were going out through
the crack of light, others were coming in. Underneath the harp there
was an enormous deposit of honey that covered all the sound-box of the
clavichord and was about four fingers deep. This honey was coming out
through the cracks in the wood and dripping onto the floor outside
the clavichord. It hung in threads, like the fringe of a shawl.

Alfanhui stayed a long time contemplating the work of the bees
and all that hidden gold that he had discovered. Outside it was growing
dark. Finally, he re-closed the beehive and went toward the exit after
leaving in its place the bronze candelabrum. He climbed back through
the matted vines and came out into the garden. The afternoon light bewildered him, as if he had forgotten its existence.

In the middle of the garden was a little girl, some seven years old. She had several colored tin molds. She was filling them with damp earth and turning them over. There was also, thrown on the ground, a storybook. When the girl saw Alfanhui come out of the vine she stood up and looked at him from head to toe, surprised. Then she asked graciously:

"Are you the knight Zarambel?"
VIII. OF THE FIREMEN OF MADRID

One day Alfanhui and Don Zana saw a fire. A woman on a balcony was screaming with earsplitting shrieks. Smoke was coming out through the cracks of the house. People gathered around the house. In the distance the little bell of the fire truck began to be heard. Then they arrived from the end of the street, resplendent with their scarlet-red truck and their little gilded bell and their golden helmets, clean and shining. The firemen brought a holiday gaiety.

There were in those times, in Madrid, many boys who wanted to be firemen. It was a peaceful era and heroic children had no other dream. Because the fireman was the best hero of all heroes, the one who had no enemies, the most beneficent of men. The firemen were kindly and respectful, behind their large moustaches, with their uniforms of civic heroes, with their helmets like the Greeks and Trojans, but even tempered and courteous, fat and benevolent. Honor to the firemen!

From another point of view, they were fire's great friends. You had only to see the merriment with which they would arrive, the enthusiasm of their performance, the joyousness of their red trucks. They would break with their axes much more than needed to be broken. Tired of their endless quiet, the alarm intoxicated them, excited them, and they arrived euphoric at the fire. They put to work their system of pure activity and pure haste. They conquered the fire only because they showed it greater activity and greater speed. And the fire, humbled, withdrew to its caverns. They knew this secret, the only thing effective against the flames. They conquered the fire in
that realm in which it thought itself greatest: in movement and spectac-
cularness. They humiliated it. All eyes turned toward them; the fire, no one looked at any longer.

They ran less than a normal person, but they ran according to regulations and gymnastically: chest out, fists at chest, head up, lifting their feet very high off the ground, knees out, and they never bumped into each other. For that reason everyone said:

"How well they run!"

They never brought anyone out through the door, although they could have; they always did it through the windows and the balconies, because the important thing for conquering was spectacularness.

There was a fireman once, who, in his zeal, carried a young lady from the first floor up to the fifth to rescue her from there.

In each apartment house there was always a young lady. All the rest of the neighbors left the building before the arrival of the firemen. But young ladies had to wait to be rescued. This was the sacred offering that the people made to their heroes, because there is no hero without a lady. When the time of a fire came, all the young girls knew their duty. While the rest fled hurriedly with their belongings, they would get up slowly and tragically, giving the flames time, they would take off their make-up and cosmetics, they would let down their long hair, they would undress and put on a white nightgown. Finally they went out, solemn and magnificent, to shout and wave their arms on the balconies.

It was thus when Alfanhui saw it that day; it always happened that way when there was a fire. The same thing always happened because it was a time of order and respect and of good customs.
IX. OF THE DAY AND NIGHT OF CARNIVAL
AND OF THE BITTER END TO A HIDDEN
QUARREL THAT WAS GROWING BETWEEN
ALFANHUI AND DON ZANA

Finally there dawned a violent and slanting day with a hard sky of steel and a falcon wind. Thin white clouds ran in the distance along the eastern horizon. It was a sky full of skirmishes, like a battle. The city crouched quietly in the midst of the fields, like a huge timorous hare. Black tin chimney pipes creaked in the wind, empty of smoke. The city was defenseless beneath the sky; the birds did not guard its air, nor the smoke its roofs. It was quiet and hunched its back to the wind, like a terrified animal. And the cold north wind beat the streets and invaded them as if seeking vengeance. The hanging clothes whipped in the patios and backyards that open onto the vacant lots. And the sun threw itself heedlessly onto the city, with the even light of the plains. The city lay bare and uncovered, spread out on the field, empty of the dream that protected it. With its eyes wide open, it was afraid of its solitude and it looked around as if saying: "I am nothing upon the fields."

It was a day for the pale and forsaken, who went up to the rooftops to look with dark-circled eyes at the mountain and to feel themselves strong, for once, with their faces to the wind.

But behind the dark windows, women's eyes looked fearfully at the day and the wind and said with a shiver: "This Carnival is coming in bad!"
Thus the whole day passed without the north wind ceasing to beat, with hardly anyone going out into the street. And at sunset, all illusion was swept away, the city was nude. Alfanhui and Don Zana did not see each other. Alfanhui had spent the day in the streets, walking slowly with his hands in his jacket pockets and his head high, as if smelling the air, alert and cold.

As night fell, Alfanhui and Don Zana found themselves in the two opposite ends of the city. Don Zana at the south, Alfanhui in the north, on the side of the wind.

Finally the norther ceased and the hour struck. Don Zana began to look for masks. He went up to the houses and chose the saddest person to put on a mask and go back down to the street to laugh and to sing. No one stopped him. And thus he gathered several dozen masks and went with them toward the center of the city. From the other point, alone and resolute, Alfanhui was advancing.

From far off the troop of masks began to be heard, playing instruments, singing, dancing, and stopping from time to time to add another to their number. In front of them all went Don Zana, forcing them to laugh, never letting them rest. Some wore the face of a pig or a gorilla, others, that of a clown, or a big nose. Their voices were deformed by the cardboard masks and came out as grunts. Some were crying inside, and the colors of the masks were running and fading. But Don Zana did not give them any rest. They sometimes bumped against walls or against the streetlamps, and they went on, bent over, dragging their feet, stumbling and tripping in their long, colored cloaks. The dark confused troop was going at the mercy of his laughter, as if bereft of will, under an immense weight. And it sang and howled and grunted.
as if dragged along in a collective epilepsy. The agility of Don Zana, nimble knight, contrasted with those large, clumsy, bent bodies, laden down with clothing.

Finally Don Zana stopped. All the retinue formed into little groups behind him like a shapeless hulk that hummed and swayed slightly toward both sides with a deadened, nasal murmur. Don Zana stood motionless, looking toward the end of the street. A delicate white face stood out from the darkness; a face half lit by the moon, the other half in shadow.

Alfanhui and Don Zana looked at each other a moment. Then Alfanhui began to walk. The troop of masks dissolved silently and each one fled down a street and disappeared into the night, leaving masks and garments scattered on the ground.

Alfanhui and Don Zana advanced toward each other. Now Don Zana would have liked to flee, but Alfanhui's look held him nailed.

Near the dark of a corner they met. In Alfanhui's yellow eyes there was anger. He grabbed Don Zana by the feet, lifted him up into the air and began to beat him against the stone corner. The round, large head came off, and the painted laugh of Don Zana went to pieces, rolling against the tiles. It sounded and bounced like wood. Alfanhui beat with fury and Don Zana was broken into splinters. Finally there remained in Alfanhui's hands only the scarlet shoes. He threw them on the heap of splinters and breathed deeply, leaning against the wall.

A night watchman came running and shouted:

"Hey! What's this ruckus?"

Alfanhui only said:

"Nothing, me."
The nightwatchman saw the remains of Don Zana scattered over the ground.

"What's that?"

"You can see. Splinters and rags," said Alfanhui while he pushed them, as if absentmindedly, toward the mouth of the storm-sewer.
X. OF ALFANHUI'S BLINDNESS AND
HIS PAINFUL FLIGHT

With a sharp and painful stinging Alfanhui opened his eyes on blindness. At first it was red, pepper-red or scarlet like Don Zana's shoes.

"I didn't think Don Zana had blood in him."

He touched himself, a fever was ascending his body and burning in his temples. Fever sharpened his hands and ached in the tips of his fingers. It seemed to him that they were growing terribly sharp and long. And when he touched anything they hurt him, on touching the walls, the sidewalks, and the street lamps. And he pictured everything to himself in his blindness. He pictured it fleetingly and vaguely, at the phantasmagoric whim of the darkness. The street-lights were strips of sealing wax, burning and spitting flaming drops. The walls were match-scratchers that tried to kindle the tips of his long fingers, swollen with fever. He brought them to his mouth to extinguish them and they tasted like blood. He walked slowly in order to wound his hands as little as possible, but he did not find an exit in those streets which turned themselves crosswise, producing all the thunder of the carts that had passed over them, as if they were rolling on wooden wheels. And the eaves came down to wound his temples and forehead. He tried to rest and laid his hands on the ground, but the touch of rat's fur rubbed against his fingertips. If he held them up in the air he felt the tiny bites of bats.

"I didn't think Don Zana had blood in him."
Again the streets rolled with the noise of clumsy carts and again they became quiet. Periodically, insistently, red and gray returned and alternated. The red of the scarlet shoes, the gray of the rat fur. His eyes swelled and shrank as if they were breathing, and a warm sweat bathed his face. His hands also tangled themselves in the branches of the acacias and his tender fingers split open. The acacias were black, thorny brambles that stirred and clutched each other.

From time to time he scratched the glass of a window. Even the air hurt his fingers now, and it seemed as if the entire street was full of gray flannel blankets hung from side to side like curtains. His hands now were his senses and they had become large and sensitive. As sensitive as was his desire to flee and to orient himself, to change his surroundings, not to stay where he had killed Don Zana.

"I won't see Dona Tere any more."

He stopped a moment. He was not confused, in spite of his blindness and so much pain, and he thought serenely.

"I will look for the river, and on the other side of the river is the open country. I won't see Dona Tere any more. It is necessary that it be like this."

And again he stretched out his fingers in front of him in order to go on, and the more he sought to orient himself, the more they hurt him.

"I could rest; I could resign myself to not fleeing, and my hands would be like they were before. But it is necessary to leave."

And he started forward again and learned to seek the way out and to bear all the pain and rawness of his fingers. Now the fever
had diminished and he felt damp and warm, with the shudder of caves and the disgust of waterworms.

But the city was interminable and he never succeeded in reaching the river. He thought of going up to the rooftops to breathe. It was not difficult for him to climb up with his sharp, long hands and soon he felt himself on top. There everything became lighter and more bearable.

"Now I'll go in a straight line, from rooftop to rooftop."

He saw the eyes of cats that penetrated into his blindness and he went along jumping over railings, skylights, and chimneys; going up and down little iron stairways, stumbling over wires and more wires; crossing the streets by cords and cables, from block to block.

The rooftops gradually became more level and less confusing, and Alfanhui bumped into fewer and fewer obstacles. Now he needed less sensitivity in his hands and it seemed to him that they were growing a little smaller and did not hurt him so much. The rooftops became large and flat and there was hardly any division between them.

Alfanhui began to see vaguely. It was still night but the rooftops had become long and grooved. Alfanhui bent over to touch the ground and gathered earth into his hands. They were no longer rooftops but cultivated fields. He had left the city by the high road.

Alfanhui stopped, and began to see. It was dawn. He looked at his hands. They were scratched and covered with blood from so much groping in the dark. He also found on his hands another blood of scarlet color. It was the dye of Don Zana's shoes that had blinded him when he rubbed his eyes. He stretched out face downward on the earth and rested.
PART THREE

I. OF THE HARSH AND GREAT EVENTS ON THE MOUNTAIN

Over the dry earth toward the mountain the ancient bird sings. Above the slate walls, along the white highway, she caws, she waves her tail. She steals bread from the cartdriver and soils his wagon. She screams at the grain when it ripens. With her voice, she dries the fields for the reaping. The other birds go away, but the magpies always remain, ancient birds of the plateau. They denounce nefarious crimes and demand vengeance for the violated. They recognize men and know much about geography. They know all that happens in the villages and on the roads. They say the names of the dead and they remember them without grief. They tell the stories of the dead, one to another. They see them pass on their way to the cemetery, and they sit on a rock, telling among themselves all they have seen. Men live and grow old, the magpies talk and watch. Magpies, without grief, do not believe in hope; they only tell stories and repeat the names of the dead. The dead go along the mountain road. They go, like rainless clouds, to cross the dark peaks. Their names remain on the voices of the birds.

The mountain is silent and resonant. Her belly is like the belly of the she-wolf, shy and maternal. She hides her fountains in the woods, like the wolf her nipples in her fur. The mountain lies
tamely stretched out, nursing the plain. Only at times does she rise up hard and disdainful and tear the lips of the fields.

From above the forests comes the bare talus with its stony paths and its steep slopes, where the sand of the rivers is born. The mountain scratches its breast and throws avalanches of angular stones. The mountain has sandy places in the rivers of the plains and its springs doze among the sands of the quiet pools.

Where the sliderock ends, all of a sudden, vertically, the forehead of the mountain breaks out. The great grotesque faces appear like a shock, old hideous masks of stone that look toward the south. They have a projecting lower lip and there the vultures perch. From their nostrils seep water and moss and on the rims of their eyes, like rheum, the tarantulas nest. They look at the plain with sleepy eyes. The mountains have their faces toward the south; travelers know them from this side. The names of the mountains are written on their sunny sides and from the shady side no one can recognize them. To the north their dark and unknown rumps bend to the north wind. There men get lost in the treeless hills because they do not recognize the mountains from the back. There the sierra does not drop off suddenly, it extends undulantly in dark reaches where people are lost.

The great grotesque faces were hiding their crests in the clouds; in the black dense clouds. Below, in the ravine a little day was left. On the forehead of the mountain it was already night. A night of clouds that came from the north. The stretching of immense horses was heard. The horses of the storm that gallop among the peaks and make lightning with their hooves. The thunderbolts shatter the eyebrows of the grotesque faces. But their gaze remains impassive. Their
whitish-green faces light up in the night, serene and frightening, immense and close, as if saying:

"Here are the watchers."

Down below, through the ravine, the herds of sheep were coming. Their little bells and whistles were heard. The little flocks travelled during the sad and fearsome day. The shepherds hurried them on and looked timidly at the stern peaks: "Before night and the storm come upon us like the vulture and crush us on the mountain." Behind the sheep came the horsemen and the women on their mules and the copper pots and the sheepfolds and the horn oil bottles and the saddlebags and the blankets and the tripods and the frying pans. The colts whinnied and the copper pots, sensitive to the lightning, were tinged with menacing reflections. And night and gloom were lowering fearfully over the valley.

Soon the udders of the cloud were torn open and the first thunder resounded and the ravine was filled for a moment with blue light. The sheep were filled with terror. Then the man who rode in front jerked on the bit of his mare, like a battle order. And he turned toward the flocks and shouted to the shepherds to press against the sheep and crowd them together in the middle of the ravine. He rode from one place to another, giving orders like the captain of a ship. Immediately it began to rain and the lightning and the thunder became more frequent. Between the thunderclaps were heard the voices and the whistles of the shepherds and the whinnying of the horses. It was already night and the storm was very fierce. One flock broke up and tumbled down the hillside. Two men hastened to the foot of the gorge and by the
light of an oil lantern and the glare of the lightning they looked for the sheep to kill them, and they skinned them as quickly as possible and loaded the skins on a mule. The swift knives shone in the night as they went to and fro peeling the slender legs, skirting the convulsed tendons, seeking the tender part of the cartilage between the small bones of the joints. And the smell of blood mingled with the sulfurous smell of the storm. The women hid themselves under blankets and hugged their little ones.

Alfanhui, from the heights at the foot of the huge grotesque faces, heard more and more faintly the voices of the nomads losing themselves down the mountainside. But Alfanhui did not wish to retrace his road and he turned grudgingly toward the west, bordering the forehead of the mountain, taking refuge when the storm grew worse in the crevices of the craggy heights. He arrived finally at a high pass which cut the crest. It was a narrow alley of wind through which the gale from the north goes down to the sunny side. He went along, guided by flashes of lightning, clinging to the walls, and crossed the pass toward the north.

As if by a charm, there was no storm there. The moon silvered the dark rumps of the hills, wrapped in their capes. On the ground grew only some dark plants that resembled furze but were stronger and lower, thicker and rounder. They were so round that they seemed like trimmed shrubs in a garden and they were flattened and shrunken under the cold. That was a wilderness of mountains and more mountains, brownish gray and populated with that dark solitary furze.

Alfanhui was cold. For the first time the cruel and desolate cold of the high plateau.
II. WHEREIN ALFANHUI RECUPERATES AND
CONTINUES HIS JOURNEY

February ended finding Alfanhui without clothes, stiff with cold on the mountain. And March found him close to a fireplace where he stayed, on charity, fifteen days. They found him in such a bad state that they gave him shelter in a hut. Those had been his worst days, when he walked as a beggar, fleeing over the mountain. But in the hut he got over the cold and his sufferings and he told long stories to the mountain folk. When the day came for him to leave, Alfanhui got up very early. The daughter of the mountain dweller, who must have been about ten years old, was lighting the fire and blowing on it. She had a kerchief on her head, heavy stockings, and a red apron over her black dress. Alfanhui went to the door to look at the day. The girl came to his side. On the threshold Alfanhui heard her voice for the first time, because she had said not a word in all those days:

"Listen, I know your stories very well. When no one else remembers, I alone will remember them and I will not tell them to anyone."

Alfanhui looked at her a moment and asked:

"What is your name?"

"Urraca."

"Neither will I forget your name."

The girl broke into tears and covered her face with her hands and went running out, running toward the orchard that was on a rise behind the house, and that had a spring and an oak tree. She had a weak voice, mournful and small, like the mountain sheep.
Alfanhui bid good bye to the mountain folk, who gave him blankets and sandals to continue on his way.

"And where are you going?"

"To Moraleja."

"Are you from there?"

"No. My grandmother lives in Moraleja."

He waved his hand and set out.

In the afternoon the road entered a snow covered field. Alfanhui came upon two stone posts almost covered with snow, facing each other on either side of the road. He removed the snow and read:

THE NUN SUSANA

And on the other:

THE WITCH EDELMIRA

They were two long granite stones, covered with moss. Of an old woman who was coming along on a small burro, he asked about them.

It was an old story: the nun Susana was a very beautiful prioress of a convent that no longer existed, and there had been for many years a bitter quarrel, on that very site they met one day and killed each other, the nun fell face upward and the witch face downward, and that's why it was written like that. Giddap, burro!

And the old woman went on her way, leaving little burro-footprints in the snow.

Still for some time Alfanhui walked westward and finally began to descend the sierra toward the south. He went into beautiful woods of oak and chestnut and, now close to the plain, he found a village. It had stone houses and steep streets. It had some thermal sulfur springs that bubbled up very hot, In front of the springs there was
a park with an immense round elm. They told him that that elm
captured the winds in its top and held them prisoner for seven days and
seven nights. When, in the summer, some cool wind went by, the elm
captured it and held it a week turning it round and round in its crown
without its being able to find a way out. The people of the village
sat down under the elm and enjoyed the coolness of that wind which
murmured continually and swayed the leaves, as if it were spring.
And all the birds gathered there and brightened the afternoons, chirping
and flying in spirals among the branches of the elm, without going
out. At the end of the seven days and the seven nights, the wind
was warmed and lost its force, and the elm let it escape out the bottom,
seasick and not knowing which way to blow. And that elm did not stir
with the other winds. Only when they were not blowing anywhere else,
it caught a breeze that was wandering, lost, so that all the trees
of the neighborhood being still and languid, it alone moved and rustled
gaily in the middle of the park.

This was the last village on the mountainside. Alfanhui saw
the plain opening in the distance, under the winter sun, white and
as yet barely warm.
III. OF THE GIANT OF THE RED FOREST

The plain seemed bright and gay, dotted at intervals with sparse groves. The earth was tawny and damp with dew. In the brambles the roses were already whitening with their dots of color, and you could see the threads of the yellow spider that catch you around the waist. Alfanhui saw in the distance the face of a forest. It was a red forest. The trunks were thick, of a cherry red, and the crowns of a dark and brilliant green. The trees were not tall. The background of red trunks gave to the forest thicket a cheerful and strange light. The earth was very smooth and had short grass and many large pools of the clearest water, hardly two fingers deep. On the edge of these pools the grass grew thicker and there were sometimes gray cranes asleep on one leg, and white stones. Thus with the red of the trunks and the green of the crowns and the lighter green of the grass sprouts and the gray of the cranes and the white of the stones and the shining of the puddles with the light blue of the sky, there was composed such a joyousness of colors in the middle of the morning as Alfanhui had never known in other springs. He travelled through the forest with so much pleasure that he could have wished it would never end.

He saw a dark figure in the distance. A large man whose head reached to the tree tops. Alfanhui approached him. He was tall and robust, almost a giant. He had his back turned and had not seen Alfanhui. The latter asked him:

"Say! Is it much further to Moraleja?"

The huge man turned, surprised.
"No. Two leagues, this way."

He was one-eyed, but that eye was filled with light and with kindness. You could see he was somewhat timid.

"What are you doing?" Alfanhui asked him.

"I was cutting some branches for my fire. I live in that large cabin you can see over there." The man motioned toward a place where the terrain rose gently, free from puddles.

"Do you live alone?"

"Yes."

"Then, if you like, I will stay with you today to keep you company."

The man was very happy that Alfanhui would stay with him and that day they both told each other their stories. The man was called Heraclio and he had been born near there, but his parents were from another land. He had always lived in a nearby village and he was a cooper. But he no longer had that trade. Once he had struck someone of the village and, as he was so large, everyone was indignant at him and they condemned him to death. Three times they had tried to execute him, but something always happened that prevented it. Then it seemed to everyone a sign that Heraclio did not deserve to die and they exiled him to that forest, where he was a stonecutter. His eye he had lost one day because of a stone chip. Heraclio had a treasure that his parents had given him; it was two large ivory tusks and two ivory balls the size of watermelons. "No one knew what that signified. But it was a true treasure, because it couldn't be sold. People believe that whatever is worth a lot is a treasure, but true treasure is that which cannot be sold. A treasure is that which is worth so much that it is worth nothing. Yes, he could sell his treasure for its weight
of ivory, but the treasure would be lost, only the ivory would be sold. True treasure is worth more than life because one dies without selling it. It is no help in saving life. Treasure is worth much and is worth nothing. That is what being a treasure consists of—in that it cannot be sold."

When the man said these things, Alfanhui smiled at him. The large man stopped talking and fixed his eye on the distance. He saw the agate mountains, brown, white, and blue. The sun was going down in the west. The nearby red, vigorous and gay, mingled with a distant melancholy brightness. And between the pupil and the horizon there crossed slowly, like a dream, the grave deer. Weightless, silent and graceful, among the red trunks, toward the water.

When night came Alfanhui and the giant made a fire. The giant had already cut enough firewood for himself, when Alfanhui met him in the morning. Upon learning that Alfanhui was to be his guest, he went out again in search of firewood. So that there were two armfuls in the cabin, one for the man and the other for Alfanhui. With the two armfuls they made a single heap and set fire to it. And they talked and were glad while dinner was cooking. And they ate and talked after dinner and they slept.

In the morning Alfanhui pressed the giant's hand and they looked at each other from their hearts. Alfanhui started walking and when he was about to lose himself among the trunks, he stopped a moment, turned his head, and looked for the last time at Heraclio, who, standing close by the cabin, was still looking at him. Alfanhui left the red forest, on his way to Moraleja.
IV. ABOUT HIS GRANDMOTHER

Alfanhui's grandmother lived in a third-floor apartment which one entered by way of a patio. The patio was separated from the street by a wall and a large door, and surrounded by houses on the other three sides. To the right there was a narrow, stone stairway that had an iron railing and an arbor of muscatel grapes. At the end of the stairway there was a long landing, like a balcony, also covered by the grapevine. At the right a little low door opened and there lived his grandmother.

The room had a low roof; its whitewash was very old and covered with lichen. Opposite the door was a tiny window. His grandmother's bed was of dark wood, wide and long. The head was against the left wall. Above it was an olive branch. His grandmother had a rocking-chair beside the window. The rocker had two very squashed cushions, one for the back and the other for the seat. In the middle of the room there was: a cot and seven chests stood along the walls. The chests were all different and of different sizes. In one corner there was a broom and in the other a washstand basin and support. Opposite the olive branch there was a black shotgun on the wall and a great pocket-watch hanging from a chain. The floor was of white and black tiles.

Alfanhui's grandmother incubated baby birds in her lap. A fever used to come to her that lasted twenty one days. She would sit in the rocking chair, and cover the eggs with her hands. From time to time she would turn them around and she didn't stir from the rocker, either by day or night, until the eggs hatched out. Then the fever would
leave her and a terrible chill would come over her and she would go to bed. Little by little the cold would go away and she would get up again and sit by the fireplace. That fever came to her ten times a year. When spring came all the children would bring her the eggs they found in the fields. His grandmother used to get angry because it seemed to her undignified to incubate birds among the chicken eggs. But the boys and girls came with pink eggs and blue eggs and brown eggs and green eggs and speckled eggs. "This one to see what bird it's from," "these because I want to raise two turtledoves," "this one because its mother hated it," "these because they were on my roof," "these because I want to see what creature comes out," "this one because I want to have a little bird." The fact is that besides the fifteen chicken eggs or duck eggs that his grandmother used to incubate, there were sometimes up to fifty of those multicolored, spring eggs gathered on her black lap:

"Nuisances, nuisances! That's what you bring," grandmother would shout.

But the real fuss began at the end of the twenty one days. By eleven o'clock in the morning the stairs and the landing would be full of boys and girls waiting for his grandmother to open the door and give each one his bird. The grandmother made them wait a long time and the children would play and shout all over the patio and on the stairs. And there would be false alarms each time they heard the grandmother move around inside her room. "Now she's opening the door! She's opening the door!" and the waiting was never over. Finally, toward noon, grandmother would open the door. All would crowd into the entrance and clamor to be first. Grandmother would remember each
one's egg and she never made a mistake. The children would stay on the threshold and grandmother would begin to hand out the birds:

"Here are your turtledoves," "yours was from a cuckoo," "yours a sparrow," "snakes have come out of yours," And the child put out his hands and took the five little black snakes. Because, too bad for the one who was not satisfied with what had hatched! He had to take it whatever it was. There was nothing that so incensed the grandmother as whims.

"It makes you sick to touch them? Well, stand it, because I've had them twenty one days giving them my warmth." And she continued: "yours, thrush;" "yours, linnet;" "lizards in yours." Soon with what each had received a sort of exchange bureau would be formed. And if a child wanted a lark and had not gotten it, he looked for someone who had one and proposed an exchange. Quarrels and spats would start. And grandmother would get angry again and shout at them:

"That's enough, don't start your swapping here. Go to the plaza!"

But it was useless.

"Yours didn't have anything, it was empty!" she would say perhaps to a girl with a big white bow in her hair, and the girl would go away crying disconsolately with her empty little basket. But the grandmother didn't soften. At the end, she would get angry again; after having incubated them for twenty-one days with such patience, his grandmother would become indignant:

"And don't come back any more! Never any more! Every year it's the same story! And then you never remember grandmother, you never bring her a sweet or come to see her. Get out, get out! Next year you'll see!"
But "next year" in the spring, his grandmother was very happy to be still alive. And the same story was repeated.

Grandmother was tall and thin. She had white hair and she never combed it. Grandmother dressed in black and she had a woodborer in the calf of her leg. The woodborer was gradually eating her bone and it squeaked during the night. But grandmother had such a hard, dry tibia that the woodborer never got through the bone. She salved the shinbone with a little cloth dampened in a preparation of thyme and cypress and the woodborer slept. For that reason, grandmother's calf was entirely green. Grandmother never went out but everybody came to visit her. The downstairs floor was hers also and she had it rented. Those neighbors fixed her meals and took care of her.

This was the life that she lived all year round, the paternal grandmother of Alfanhui, she who incubated chicks in her lap and had a grapevine of muscatels and never died.
Alfanhui arrived at Moraleja. The village was in a plain, on the bank of a river. It had houses of mace color, orange color, dark blue color. The door and window frames, the corners, had a stripe of whitewash. Some houses had colored tiles or picture-tiles from the ground up to the height of a man. The tiles were diamond shaped, placed vertically. But on other, older houses, they were in irregular bands, in haphazard patches: here four, there ten, there one, like a disease. The story of the houses was written on the walls in anecdotes of colored tiles. It was a mute and hieroglyphic story. Each name in the family had its tile there, occupying a place, composing a figure. When anyone dies, perhaps his tile falls down and breaks into a thousand pieces against the stones of the street. On the wall the recent hole is left, harsh, still shocking. Then time wears it away, softens it. Perhaps the tile is replaced, perhaps its hole whitewashed, years later. And if someone should come to think then: "That is strange, when So-and-so died, this tile fell out," that person would have the key to the hieroglyphic. But no one discovers the coincidence, and the wall continues being for everyone something without meaning. Something empty, casual, not even mysterious. Nevertheless time has written their stories there.

The streets were full of people. They went, they came, they took the sun. In Moraleja everyone was very talkative. Out into the
streets they took their chairs and their wash-basins. In the lower windows there were generally, on the outside sill, a comb and a cake of perfumed soap. Sometimes even a mirror, hung from the grillwork, and shaving equipment. A small, barefaced mirror that looked at the passers by with its white glare, insultingly. The people of Moraleja washed themselves with cloudy water and therefore they had muddy faces and blurred features.

When they became angry or happy, their expression changed vaguely as clouds change their shapes. They spoke and it seemed they were looking somewhere else, that even they themselves did not know where they were looking. They walked about absentmindedly and at loose ends, as if they had no purpose.

The dogs of Moraleja, thin and sickly all year, formed a lively, capricious community. They went in groups to all the scratching places; by turns they rubbed their emaciated ribs. They fought among themselves, they showed their teeth to people. Thin and sickly all year, they went down after figs in September. Four, six, eight under a fig tree. Until their stomachs became hard as a bladder. And then to lick themselves and sleep the siesta in the shadow of the walls. The harvest of figs lasted a month; the dogs did it, in Moraleja. White figs, purple figs, walnut-colored figs and green figs.

Moraleja ended at the bank of the river. Along the bank was the last street, which had only one sidewalk of houses; on the other side there was a parapet, five meters above the water, which sometimes

²The original reads zure which did not appear in any of the dictionaries consulted, nor did it appear to be a variant of any other word. The word "purple" seemed logical, given the other colors mentioned and the appearance of fresh figs.
was lower. All the houses looked at themselves in the river. A high, black wall guarded the drop. From there the city went out by a narrow bridge with an iron railing. Below was the deep river, close to the wall on the side of the city. Across the river, on the other hand, it had a beach of round pebbles that sloped gently up to the grove. From the bridge one could see a water-mill down river, and in the summer nude boys on the wall of the dike. The shouting and the noise of the splashing came up to the bridge. From the bridge you could also see clothes and sheets laid out in the sun on the clean stones or on the buckthorns. On the other side of the bridge, the grove. There were elms, eucalyptus, and an inn that sold wine and fish, with its vine arbor and its table. The table was a great slate slab with a heavy foot of stonework. Around the table were four long, blue benches also of slab. It was an inn frequented by beggars and gardeners, fishermen and cart-drivers. The chickens pecked among their feet. The innkeeper and his wife had, besides the house, a cat, two goats, a boat, and a primer-type shotgun.

Alfanhui turned from the bridge and sought his grandmother's house. Alfanhui and his grandmother did not know each other. He asked at the ground floor apartment. A young girl went up shouting to let her know:

"Your grandson's come, Aunt Ramona! The one from Alcalá de Henares, the one who lives with his mother near the mill, the son of Gabriel, may he rest in peace!"

"Why are you giving me all that explanation when I don't have any other? Get along, don't make a fuss, and let him wait."
The grandmother locked the door. She took out a blouse and a sash, a mantilla and a handkerchief. It was all of black fabric and had the damp, clean, and ancient odor of the chests. From top to bottom the blouse had a row of many buttons, very close together and small. The sleeves were wide and hugged the wrists. Over her bony and extremely thin wrists, the grandmother buttoned the cuffs. She hooked the black wire hooks of the sash over her almond-tree waist. She arranged the drape of the sash, that fell in vertical folds from the bones of her hips. Over her white and uncombed hair she threw the black handkerchief and on her shoulders, the mantilla. Thus arrayed she went out to the landing, with her hands clasped together, and looked at Alfanhui while the latter came up the stairs. When he reached the top, grandmother stepped aside and said to him:

"Go in."

Then she entered and closed the door after her. She sat down in the rocker and began to talk. Alfanhui, standing close to her, looked at her.

"Did you want me to die without seeing you? Thankless boy, you never came. Stand in the light so I can see you... You're pale and healthy like your grandfather.

"At night I would always say to myself: 'My grandson, what must he be like? That bird that never comes by here; I am going to die just as if I were not a grandmother.' And in August and September when there were almonds and hazelnuts, and in October when there were chestnuts and walnuts, and I couldn't eat them, I remembered you and I thought: 'My grandson, he could gnaw them.' Every year I kept them
until they shrunk so and became so dry they had to be thrown out. Some good handfuls were thrown out without anyone to eat them."

"Grandmother, now I'll stay with you if you wish, a long time. I can sleep downstairs."

"Of course you'll stay! It would be a fine thing if you went away now! And you'll sleep here with me, in my bed; I take up less room than a broom."

It was growing dark. Grandmother told Alfanhui to close the window and light a lamp that was hanging from the ceiling over the little bed. Then, without getting up, she turned the rocking chair and drew it close to the fire.

"Take that bench and come close."

"Grandmother, I'll have to work if I stay more than a year, and make myself useful here."

"What do you know how to do?"

"I'm a master taxidermist."

"No. Here there's none of that pottering about. That won't do. Here those who work get a lot of sun and a lot of cold and get soaked and are out in the bad weather. That other is foolishness of capricious people who want to have dead animals around the house."

"Here, no. But I'll find a job for you. Don't worry. Are you cold?"

"No, grandmother."

His grandmother went on with her story:

"And I was always talking with the neighbors: 'My grandson this; my grandson that!' And at times they would ask me what you were like, and I would get very sad and I would be ashamed to have to tell them that I didn't know you. And it seemed everyone doubted that you existed."
And I wanted very much to be able to say to them: "Here he is."

Because in this village all the grandmothers have at least ten or twelve. Come here, come closer so I can touch you. You have good legs, and hard! You're a good hiker, you surely could have come sooner."

The grandmother was quiet a moment and Alfanhui looked all around the room and asked:

"Grandmother, what do you keep in those chests?"

The grandmother looked at him and said dryly:

"That's none of your business."
Soon grandmother found work for Alfanhui. She didn't ask him if he agreed, she simply said to him:

"Tomorrow you'll go down with the oxen to the pasture."

And Alfanhui, who accepted one thing as well as another, received this work gladly.

Moraleja, like the ancient city that it was, had its ten or fifteen ancient oxen. "The village oxen," they said, because although when they were young, they had said this one's or that one's, now since they no longer were yoked nor worked nor pulled carts, no one claimed them for his own. Old pensioned oxen they were, black or red, with large eyes and deep pupils, with long rhythmical jaws, slow step, invariable and monotonous haunts.

"You always take the goad and keep the point sharpened, but respect the oxen, don't ever touch them or threaten them, because they know the road well and they know where the pasture is in each season, and as for danger, they know more than you and me."

This the old oxherd said, and Alfanhui didn't question why, then, if they knew so much, it was necessary to accompany the oxen and carry the goad and sharpen its point. He had understood that noble custom that the oxen who no longer plowed, should live, that their old age should be respected, their servitude continued. The oxen useless, the oxherd useless, the goad useless; neither the oxen to plow, nor
Alfanhui became the oxherd in Moraleja, for twelve reales a day. The oxen were twelve also and the oldest was called "Caronglo." He was large and black as a cavern and, like a cavern, he had in his belly a mysterious resonance of dark waters. He had large, sweet eyes and a clean tear in each eye. And his muzzle cold and moist. From the edges of his lip slow threads of drool dripped. His skin made folds over his eyes and on his thick knees and in the axillae of his wide, strong chest. He had old, warm horns, and where they grew out of his head there was a fringe, polished and bright from the straps, and the nape of his neck bare and calloused from the yoke. He had, especially, a white vapor when he breathed, like the thin, winter fog that melted the frost or hung, damp and odorless, on the thorns. He had a large, prominent footprint like a swamp animal, that was distinguishable from all the rest. Pinzon was his companion, less dark of skin and with a thread of snow on his back. The next pair was bright red: Marrero and Charrian, with devil eyes. The next two pairs were black: Ariza and Turino, small and brave; Almadran and Retana, who plowed stony fields. Jason and Almeira red, dark and short like young bulls, that a Portuguese had brought. And the last ones, black: Gago and Sonsoles, cart-oxen.

Alfanhui went in the morning with the oxen to the pasture ground and ate his lunch in the field, or went up to eat with his grandmother if the old oxherd came down to take a turn. In the afternoon he went up, half an hour before sunset, and left the oxen in an enclosed place of slate that had a large shed on one side, forming a shelter where there
were mangers dug out of a liveoak trunk. There the oxen sheltered when it was raining. Alfanhui quickly learned to know them and the oxen him, and in the morning when they saw his head appear behind the wall they all walked toward the little gate⁴ so that he should open it for them. And they greeted him with a quiet lowing from their deep nostrils. Alfanhui would scratch their foreheads or caress their horns. The last one to leave was always Caronglo, who would come to put his damp muzzle between his hands and sniff him.

Alfanhui sometimes went skipping in front of the oxen or behind them all, at the side of Caronglo. When they had to pass bogs or ford the river, Caronglo would wait for him on the bank and Alfanhui would climb on top of him. But later Alfanhui came to like that trick, and he wanted only to go on the ox so he could be high, and ride, rocked by that slow undulating step. And, always when they came and went, Caronglo would not start to walk until Alfanhui was on his back. Alfanhui carried the goad over his shoulder, and his thin white legs hardly hung down the black flanks of the ox.

In summer when the oxen went down to drink and to eat the grass on the river bank, Alfanhui would go bathing. He would go into the river naked and would begin to swim. He would dive down and bring up red, white, and blue pebbles, green or mottled pebbles. Sometimes he would dive from the bank and kiss, underneath the water, the black muzzles of the oxen that were drinking. Or he would call

⁴The Spanish word hangarilla was not in any of the six dictionaries consulted, neither did it appear to be a diminutive form of another word, nor a word to which an "h" was inadvertently added. In the absence of any authority the word "gate" was selected as seeming the most logical.
them from the middle of the river and submerge his head when they turned: "Gago!" "Retana!" "Pinzon!" Then he would bring his head out again and his laughter would sound very clear over the surface of the river.
There was in Moraleja a man who had seen the sea. Alfanhui met him one day on which he passed in front of his little house. This was in a grove close to the river in the fishermen's district. The man was called Pablo and he made fishing nets. Beside the sea, he had made deep-sea nets and now, old, he had returned to Moraleja. He was also a ferryman and he had a raft for high waters. That man lived alone and the light of his lantern was seen at night, from the other shore, shining among the trees through the open door that looked toward the river. That man told his story.

In the ports there befell days of ash and cobalt, dirty, on the ground, like suicides' jackets. From the lighters rose up the black song of the stevedores who invoke the octopus and crabs of the bay. The carpenter crabs that scratch the old piles of the port and run side-wise over the bellies of the barges. The sailors hear them from inside with a slit of a shiver, sudden and zig-zag. Death works, splitting souls and names. A red branch rises up to the bloody tree of the pupil. That tree of the eyes, melancholy like a Japanese plum tree. Pablo talked about a bitter death unknown to the men of the plains. And everyone listened to him morbidly, with a strange attentive ness. In the inland country death is brighter; it travels with a white garment over the crystal plains.

Alfanhui saw the shuttle go and come, making stitches, between the man's hands. And Pablo would continue saying things from time to time, slowly, as if he were talking to himself. He had a restless,
dark fire, as of blue flames. There was an earthenware paella-kettle beside the fire with a thick maroon stew cooking that had a penetrating odor. It was a snail stew. Pablo always ate snails when there were any. He would catch them after the rain on an old wall covered with matted vines. The snails would dance in the stewpot as the sauce boiled and they would knock against each other.

Outside, in the night, there sounded a long whistle that came from the river. Pablo left his work, got up, and lit his cylindrical golden lamp. Then he went to the threshold of the door and from there, with his arm extended toward the river, he lifted the lantern in the air three times. Another whistle answered him from the night. Pablo came in again, hung the light close to the fire and took up his work again as before:

"It was the fishermen who are going out now in the boat."

There were many fishermen in Moraleja, three leagues down the river. They had some primitive rafts in the form of rhomboids. They fished barbel, dace, and eel. There were also some rod fishermen, and they raised tench in the lakes. Small green lakes, with bottoms of algae, watering places for cattle. There were breeding-lakes and fattening-lakes. The lake where the tench were bred was not used for fattening them. They took the young out at the end of spring and carried them to the fattening lake. From there they were fished in September, all at one time, and were sold in the booths and water stalls at the fairs. They cut them in three and cooked them with a lot of salt so that you would ask for wine.

Also, on summer nights, there were some who caught frogs with a carbide lamp.
Alfanhui liked to go with the fishermen better than with the hunters. But for talking, he preferred the hunters. There were two, very cheerful and widely known, who were called Luquinas and Galan. Galan was an indiano and had worked in Buenos Aires as a mason. With the money that he brought back he had already opened a casino in Moraleja with gaming tables, American billiards, and two slot machines, of the kind that have little oranges and lemons. Galan was fifty-two years old, still very erect and lighthearted. He talked a lot and fast, with his hoarse, sonorous voice, and with his winks and his peals of laughter he filled the casino with customers. Galan took his old trade very seriously and terrified the young bricklayers, because whenever he passed a construction job he inspected everything insolently and began to take exception to everything and to take the tools in his hand, saying: "This isn't done this way; you do it like this and this and this. Give me the level! Give me the plumb! Plaster!" And in ten minutes he took everything apart and put it back together while the masons watched him and listened to him timidly. Then, he would put his hat back on and go away. The masons tried to make excuses.

"None of that, none of that, you're a bunch of clumsy blacksmiths."

Luquinas must have been about thirty-five years old; he was short and squat; he had very sparse, red hair and pink flesh. Lucas was also merry and full of jokes and alternated his wisecracks with Galan. Luquinas' laughter was muffled and insistent like a cough and it was born without vowels in his palate "js, js, js, js..." so that

5Indiano is a word that came into Spanish with the discovery of the New World. It is used to refer to a Spaniard who goes to the Americas and returns home wealthy.
it made a perfect duet with the full and sonorous laughter of Galan. They used to go out to hunt anywhere with a great feeling of wellbeing, and although not even a tail was to be seen on the land, they left their wives convinced that they would bring back, at the very least, twenty-five hares. Such was the big show they put on. Then in the woods they would drink wine and fire off shots to the left and right and frighten what little game there might have been because they talked continuously, and Galan would burst out laughing over anything at all, making the country echo with his guffaws. At about four o'clock they would get tired of shooting and, in any house in the woods, they would take out a deck of cards, roll cigarettes from broomweed and drink wine with the guards. Galan, at the height of his joy, liked to tilt back his chair and his hat and sing in a deep throasy voice:

"Caresses, to fight with kisses...!"

The song stopped there, but since Galan had such richness of voice and lifted his glass with that song, he evoked for everyone a distant land across the sea, full of pleasures and marvels. Luquinas, meanwhile, was violently discussing municipal politics. He argued with the air because no one contradicted him. But he got excited and kept strengthening his argument. And thus it went till the sun set and it grew dark. At nine o'clock, they would reach Moraleja singing, without remembering hares or partridges.

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The word *engolar* is used which was not in any of the dictionaries consulted. Since *gola* means "throat" it was thought perhaps in this instance *engolar* was used to indicate the action of placing the voice deep in the throat to produce a more melodious tone.
Galan would lay away his gun and his hat and would begin serving his customers.

"And the hares, Galan?"

"Look what this fellow's coming out with now?"

Meanwhile Luquinas, at a table, would continue discussing local politics.
VIII. OF THE FIRE, THE GRANDMOTHER'S STORIES AND HER CHESTS, AND OF HOW ALFANHUI WANTED SOME BOOTS

His grandmother's hearth was the brazier. She went out to light it very early in the morning on the landing of the stairway, and she would stand a while fanning it with a rush fan. Then she would cover it with the ashes of the day before, that she had placed on the edge, while she lit the new charcoal. Thus his grandmother put one day on top of another and had them all strung together on a thread of ash.

It was a charcoal brazier that smelled of cold air and sometimes of incense. She never used a fire shovel and when the coals were dying out and gave little heat, without lifting her skirts or looking, she made a cross in them with her slipper. So quietly that Alfanhui was surprised upon feeling the new heat, because his grandmother's movements could not be noticed from above, and she would continue talking as if nothing were going on.

When Alfanhui knew his grandmother's fire he wanted to extract its stories, and he schemed a little trick to do it. From the country he brought some little leaves of rosemary and put them secretly in the charcoal. Soon their fresh, toasted aroma rose up, and his grandmother, without realizing it, began to tell stories.

She spoke of her youthful days, of when she dressed in white and green. Alfanhui would become interested in the stories and would forget to put on more rosemary, and his grandmother would grow gradually quiet. Alfanhui would make ready again and throw on more little leaves.
His grandmother would be stimulated again and continue telling stories. But Alfanhui didn't want to abuse the rosemary, because one shouldn't tell a lot in one day, since the stories lose their strength. When the bitter-sweet odor stopped, grandmother would cut herself off:

"All right, all right, that's enough now; you want to know everything. Enough, enough, let's go to bed."

And Alfanhui, the big story-thief, would smile covertly and maliciously.

Then they would put out the light and go to bed. The bed was wide but Alfanhui's foot would touch his grandmother's at times, which was so cold that it almost gave him chills to touch it.

Some nights his grandmother would be restless in bed. She used to stir as if something were going through her mind that wouldn't let her sleep. Then she would get up in her nightgown and, without lighting a light, she would go toward the chests. The keys that she carried, hung from her waist underneath her nightgown, would clink. Alfanhui could make her out in the darkness. His grandmother would take out her handful of keys and put one in its chest. The lock would click. His grandmother would uncover the chest and the hinges would squeak. His grandmother would take out something and place it in another chest. This something made a sound and so did the second lock. From each chest there came a vague light, soft and phosphorescent, a greenish color, or blue or pink or white. Thus the grandmother would begin to go from chest to chest, taking out and putting in, opening and closing. Sometimes you could hear the noise of silks or of silver or of papers or of crystal or of leather, and the things could be seen shining faintly in the darkness. Alfanhui tried to recognize each thing by
its light and by the noise it gave off but his grandmother didn't
give him time with that dance she was performing. It was a changing
dance of tenuous lights in the dark, and a concert of keys, of hinges,
of locks, of the sounds of lids, of the jingling of objects, of the
rubbing of fabrics and of papers, and each chest had its distinct
light and note. So much so that in many nights of putting-in and taking-
out Alfanhui learned to recognize everything by its sound and its
glimmer, although he never found out what things they were, and he
would say to himself in the darkness, when his grandmother would take
out something:

"That was in the third chest, and now she's put it in the seventh."

And he would remember for the next time, and he followed the
path of each thing but never found out what it was. After that the
grandmother would come to bed again, dying with cold. But sometimes
she wouldn't stay calm and it would seem to her that something was
wrong, and she would get up again to change everything. There were
nights in which the poor grandmother got up more than two and more
than four times, and there was no peace in the bed with those worries,
and she didn't finish till almost cockcrow. Alfanhui never asked about
those rearrangements and puttings-in and takings-out of his grandmother,
and neither did she ever speak of them.

When winter came, Alfanhui suffered much cold with his alpargatas,
and his feet would get drenched when it rained. One night, in bed,
he spoke of it.

"Grandmother."

"What do you want?"

"I have to buy some boots."
"Why?"

"Because the ground is very cold and my feet get drenched."

"That's what you're young for, and that's what the fire's for."

"Yes, but I don't get to the fire until night and, by day, although I rub them, they don't get warm."

"Boots are bad; the foot doesn't breathe and besides they cause calluses."

"Grandmother, my feet breathe at night. In the day what they do is try to get blood in them and with the cold the blood doesn't reach them, and they stay white."

"Aren't you white? Wasn't your grandfather white? Well, that's the healthy color of feet."

"Grandfather wore boots."

"Grandfather...? And what do you know about it?"

"My father wore them too and he was young."

"Your father was a busybody. He went up to the roof one day and filled the house with leaks."

"He had two pairs."

"No. No boots! Go to sleep!"

In the morning Alfanhui went out to the country resigned to the fact that his feet would stay like ice. But at night when he returned grandmother had changed her mind. When Alfanhui sat down, his grandmother, without saying a word, put in front of him a pair of large, old boots. They were the black boots of his grandfather. They were closed in front and had elastic at the sides. They fit Alfanhui like boats but he did not dare to say so and he rubbed them with butter and wore them all winter very happily. It was the first thing that came out of the chests.
And the winter also passed, during which Alfanhui went with his oxen to the place where furze grew. It was not so cold there because the furze tempered the wind, that was broken up, whistling among the stalks. With the coming of spring the drummer of La Garganta also came down through the evergreen oaks. The thread of his whistling entwined itself among the green oaks and the drum vibrated in the earth and woke the lizards. The drummer entered the furze patch. Alfanhui, seated on a stone, made him out from afar and heard his music that drew nearer. The drummer went weaving through the furze with his whistling notes, tramping the earth with his drum beats. At intervals the whistle was alone and was lost like a long, ancient wound of the wind. At times the drum broke out, like a dead man who rises up with excited joy, and rolled up again all the loose and lost thread of the whistle, like the thread of life. The whistle and drum played at anger and sadness; at losing and finding one another; they played at forgetfulness and memory; at living and reviving. Now close, now far; now going up, then coming down; going, returning; and taking the measure of all the country and of all the roads. The drummer passed by without stopping. Now the tone was far away again; with the last notes, Alfanhui saw the drummer's rump disappear among the furze.

The oxen left the furze that day and changed pastures. Now they went to a treeless field that was at the end of the plain where the arid land began. One afternoon, when it was time to go back, Alfanhui
didn't see Caronglo. The other oxen started toward Moraleja: Caronglo did not appear. Alfanhui returned to look for him. It was almost night when he found him, stretched on the ground in a secluded place where there was a spring. In his nostrils Caronglo had the noisy breathing of death. Alfanhui sat down close to his head and took him by the horns. Caronglo leaned his head against his chest and sniffed him as he always did. Caronglo's breathing became more and more slow and deep and broken. Alfanhui felt his horns grow cold. Finally Caronglo opened his eyes very wide, they became blank, he blinked a moment and, closing his eyes, collapsed heavily over Alfanhui's knees.

In the night Alfanhui looked at the head and the body of the dead ox, black against the earth, and it seemed larger than ever. Alfanhui remained pensive a long time, caressing the forehead of Caronglo with the sweet, almost happy sadness of natural death. Suddenly he raised his head and saw that the other oxen had returned and were surrounding them. They formed an orderly circle about them. Pinzon began to low with a quiet, deep voice. Then all the oxen answered him. Pinzon lowed alone again. At the third time, a shadow in the shape of an ox, the shadow that Caronglo left on the ground when he was living, rose and got to its feet. Alfanhui withdrew. The shadow of Caronglo began to walk, surrounded by all the oxen singing his funeral dirge, monotonous as a psalmody. They all went toward the river and Alfanhui followed them. They went slowly in time with the long lowing. Pinzon went first, ahead of the shadow, and the others at both sides and behind. Finally they reached the riverbank and stopped. They were quiet a moment and then they began the chanting again in another tone. Then Pinzon stood to one side and the shadow of Caronglo went toward the water.
The oxen stayed on the bank while Caronglo slowly entered the river. The water rose to his knees, to his belly, to his chest. The shadow of Caronglo moved forward and immersed itself in the river. The current began to carry it away. The oxen continued their psalmody from the river bank. Finally Caronglo's neck and back sank from sight, then his head, and at last the horns, whose points the waves covered. The oxen sang a moment longer and left upon the waters a long and final low. Then, slowly, they turned about and went up to Moraleja.
In March and April grandmother began anew with her fevers and her chores, and in May grandfather's boots returned to the chest. Alfanhui shod himself in alpargatas for traveling and shared his money with his grandmother.

"Goodbye, grandmother Ramona!"

Alfanhui now had the summer and the road before his eyes, and he crossed the mountains toward the north to Castile again. The roads were peopled with birds and travelers. With the first harvesters who were coming down from the north for the early barley, with ox- or mule-carts that stopped at the highway inns with their loads of green-oak or cork-charcoal. And this a song already told about:

Salamanca the white,
Who keeps you?
Four little charcoal vendors
Who come and go.

The charcoal-sellers were timid, and short with their answers, and from being so much with something black, and because no one robbed them of their merchandise, they felt themselves to be less than any man. In the inns they formed their dark group in a corner, or if there were other travelers, they went out into the night air to smoke and to look at the moon over the road. The innkeepers' wives poured their wine with scorn, because in summer all the poor folk walked loose on the roads. Neither did they think very much of the harvesters,
although they came from farther away. They were all hard people that asked only for wine and paid the exact amount and came prepared not to ask for beds or niceties. Alfanhui often came upon those troops that traveled with at most two small burros for four people. They were lean, small men who carried their scythes tied to their saddlebags, and wore dark clothes and white and cheerful shirts. Alfanhui had never seen anything so free or so clean as the harvesters' white shirts, with their collars open like poverty, with their sleeves blown out by the wind over their fuzzy, lean arms. Those white shirts and the sad and patient look of those who reap no one's fields? They were the servants and the lords of the wide summer.

All roads pass through Medina del Campo. She is an ample lady seated in the middle of the plateau; she spreads her skirts over the plain. On the rich fabric the fields and the roads are drawn, the cities are embroidered. Medina del Campo has four skirts: one gray, one white, one green, and one of gold. Medina del Campo washes her skirts in the river and changes them four times a year. She gathers them up slowly, and in her begin and end the four seasons. When summer arrives she extends her skirt of gold.

"Listen! poor folk, go out onto the roads!"

From Medina del Campo northward Alfanhui still walked many days under the sun and the moon. Under the large and luminous moon of summer that walks sidewise like an owl on a string and covers the plain with sparkles. The guideposts dance like phantoms with a rhythm of white flames, and their shadows dance on the ground. In the shadow of the posts sometimes a devil sits down to count men's sins on his fingers.
Finally Alfanhui arrived at a land of paramos. One after the other the paramos rose up like white, round drums. They had a talus of some forty meters and above, a smooth, white slab entirely of limestone, on which grew only a few sickly brambles, and there was carrion of hares and of greyhounds. Between paramo and paramo there were open valleys through which wound the river, bound by dense, tall groves. There were trees only along the river and the rest of the valley land was cultivated in small parcels. Each parcel had a stone with a name. Alfanhui read one that marked only a few pecks of land:

FIELD OF ROQUE SILVA

Roque Silva was there, contemplating his grain:

"How well it has turned out, eh, how well? Just look at it! Tomorrow morning I'll bring up the scythe and get to work; this will be finished soon. In all Cerrato not a field has turned out like mine; too bad it's so small! But I may even get a covey of partridges out of it because I hear nothing but chirping and chirping..."

And Roque Silva laughed while Alfanhui looked at him. Roque spoke again:

"Are you going to Palencia? Go up to that paramo and from the other side you'll soon see it. A year ago a guy from there wearing glasses brought a lawsuit against me and tried to take the field away from me and make me poor as a churchmouse. But I won it; and without hanging on to anyone, you can be sure. No one's going to let them rob him blind! O.K., O.K. You must be in a hurry."

"Goodbye, Roque Silva, and thanks."

"Goodbye, friend, good luck."

And Roque Silva turned again to look at his harvest.
XI. OF THE CITY OF PALENCIA AND THE
HERBARIHM OF DON DIEGO MARCOS

Palencia was bright and open. On every side the entrance was free and gay and was divided like a loaf of bread. The main street had arcades of white stone and let the sun in. The towers were also white, low and strong, and the river, mature and full.

On the other side of the river was the lowland covered with vineyards, vegetable gardens and fruit trees, furrowed by canals. Along the canals went barges drawn by mules that pulled the cables from the bank and their hooves slipped in the mud. At sunset the water of the canals took on a languid and fecund whitish-blue with green or red reflections.

The herbarium of Don Diego Marcos was on the main street, with its glass or porcelain jars like pharmacies. Above, it had a black board with bright red letters:

MEDICINAL HERBARIHM OF DIEGO MARCOS

The Licentiate of Natural Sciences Diego Marcos was tall, heavy, and petulant. He wore gold eye-glasses and a faded ochre duster. His wife also stood behind the counter and was fat and no less presumptuous. Working around the shop was a sort of clerk, about twenty-five years old, consumptive and beardless. The shop was dark, full of wooden shelves, varnished brown, almost black. In the showcase there were jars and plates with herbs, each one with its sign, where you could read:

MARJORAM, COUNTRY PINE, SANDWORT, LUNGWORT, BEAR'S EAR, BLACKGRASS,
MONTAYO CAMOMILE, PEPPERMINT, PENNYROYAL, BELLADONNA, TONICS, MARSHMALLOW, etc., etc.

Alfanhuei went to serve in that house as something less than a clerk. At the beck and call of the owner and his wife at all hours, Alfanhuei kept silent and learned. He ate with the clerk, who was rude and scornful to him, and slept behind the shop among the mysterious jars that kept in their breasts all the smells of the forest. There were, also hung on the walls, with a black stick in each end to roll them up by, sheets of shiny paper that had colored drawings of plants with their leaves and the flowers shown separately, and cross-sections of the stem and roots to show their characteristics in detail, and to study the vessels and tissues. Underneath, there were letters saying "Monocotyledonous" and things like that and, in smaller letters, "Ilosent Pictures, Barcelona." In the middle there was a large marble table with a balance screwed to the top. In one corner, under a hexagonal clock, was Alfanhuei's cot. On the floor were folded-down sacks with the more frequently used herbs that would not be spoiled by the air.

Alfanhuei knew something of all that, and he knew many herbs with their names and their virtues. But now he sought to improve his knowledge and he stayed with his eyes glued to the glass and took out the jars and smelled them and pulverized the herbs in his hand and prepared infusions and strange potions when no one saw him. He also thought about the names of the herbs and repeated them over and over again as if seeking in them the sound of old stories, and that which each plant had said in the lives and hearts of men, which they learned through their eyes. Because the name that is said is not the intimate
name of the herbs hidden in the seed, ineffable to the voice, but has been given for something that the eyes and the heart have known, and has at times a true echo of that other name that no one can say.

Over and over again Alfanhui repeated the names, and there were better ones and worse ones. There were foolish names that didn't say anything, and there were mysterious ones in which all the forest sounded.

The licentiate used to send him to the country with the task of bringing back this or that herb that was used up, and he would indicate to him approximately the places where it grew. There were more abundant ones, and ones scarcer and more difficult to find. But Alfanhui, from only having seen and smelled the herb in its jar and knowing its name, already imagined the spot where it could grow, and then he had great skill in finding it, although he had never seen it in the field. And he went up to the heights and looked at all the different colors of the earth and what was sandy or chalky, and where there was more or less water, and where the different winds beat hardest and what was on the leeward, and the sunny and shady places, and the slopes and infinite other conditions that made the earth varied and difficult. But Alfanhui half closed his eyes to see all this, because he had greater skill through grace and instinct than by setting himself to thinking. Sometimes he had to go very far and spend the night out. But he always returned with his sack of herbs on his shoulder and some new and rare plant that he had chosen for himself.
XII. ABOUT THE STRANGE AND FINAL WISDOM
THAT CAME TO ALFANHUI THROUGH HIS EYES

With the herbs Alfanhui became silent and solitary. He drew over his eyes an absent and vegetal look, as if a very leaf, diminutive and strange, were drawn a thousand times in the width and depth of his pupil. Alfanhui had placed in his eyes, in front of his memory, something green and vegetal that hid him from men, so much so that all who looked at him thought him mute and forgetful.

His eyes were now like bright, dense forests, monotonous and solitary, where all things are lost. And the light fell slantingly and became silent and calm under the translucence of the leaves, or it fell to rest in gusts on the clearings of the forest, giving to the selva, with its varied succession of planes, a deep, unending perspective. And from the depths of that changeable silence, Alfanhui matured a new and multigreen wisdom.

Immersed in such a subject, Alfanhui set himself to work day and night, with his eyes open and closed. By day he would stay looking at the herbs of the herbarium in death, or in life in the forest. And he would stretch out on the ground with his elbows sunk in the earth and his head between his hands observing the tiny shoots for a long time. Or at night he would set himself patiently to analyzing them in the dark, because he saw them there represented in his memory, as large as he needed, and he could study their details and rearrange their colors as he wished in order to know them better.
Thus Alfanhui gradually discovered the four principal ways in which green things reveal their nature: that of water, that of dried ones, that of shadow and light, that of moon and sun. And thus every subtlety could be known, because there were greens that seemed the same and nevertheless, when they were dampened, water brought out of them a hidden brilliance and revealed them as different. And these were the ones called "rain greens" because only under the rain did they let themselves be known, and they were careful to keep in their tones the memory of all that had happened on rainy days, and the rest of the time they were hidden and said nothing. Because the same things have, on different days, different ways of happening, and what happened under the rain can only under the rain be told and remembered.

Thus by the way they reveal their nature, greens are grouped in different classes. This occurred, naturally, with only three of the methods since that of the dried ones applied to everything green, since it was not founded on circumstance but on the life and death of that which is vegetal. There were then "rain greens" and "greens of no rain;" "shade greens" and "greens of light;" "sun greens" and "moon greens." Among these classes there were yet many subdivisions and parallels between class and class. Thus it happened, for example, with the greenoak and the olive, with the dark poplar and the cypress. The green of the greenoak was "sun green;" and that of the olive, its complement among the "moon greens." The "olive green" had, in turn, a contrary among those of its class: the "furze green." Because they were born under two opposite moons. That of the olive was born when the moon went high and slow and described a peaceful arc through the dark sky. That of the furze, on the other hand, when the moon went
wounded and lewd like a she-wolf in heat through the low sky on bright nights, and howled, spilling a bitter odor and veiling herself at times with swift clouds. The face of the leaves was also revealed on the underside. Thus the green of the dark poplars that was born in spring, full of sun and brightness, had on its underside the memory of snows.

But where the greens were best known was in their dried states. No one can say that he knows the green of a plant if he has never seen it dried. And for this, Alfanhui took advantage of the herbarium. Because it was really to know greens, the way death had left them. Beneath each living green there is a dry one, and when the former vanishes, the latter is revealed. And Alfanhui compared one thing with another, and there were greens different in the live state that were the same in the dry that underlay them. And there were greens that grew dark in death and greens that became lighter, and others that changed into brown, red, or yellow. And there were even those so subtle and ephemeral that dying left them transparent, like tiny sheets of crystal. Some there were that upon being dried presented different natures from sample to sample, because they had been sensitive to all that took place around them. Thus sometimes they produced capricious patterns of black lines, revealing themselves witnesses of unconfessable deeds. At times they were sad drawings like a lament, or angry drawings that begged for vengeance.

In the jars of the shop Alfanhui continued seeking the mortal mirror of all that lives in order to know it better.

All these things and many, many more Alfanhui learned, during the time in which he stayed in the house of the Licentiate Diego
Marcos. But all that he came to know is left unsaid in this story, because only Alfanhui himself could have written it.

And when he had finished with all this, that strange vegetal look left him and there flowered again in his eyes all his memory.

He said goodbye to his masters and left Palencia, because already memory strongly called him to the new and very lovely adventure with which this book ends.
Along the highway, toward the north, the paramos ended and the earth became golden and undulant. Alfanhui saw a luminous land with field after field of treeless stubble in the sun, and a clean, blue sky. He saw the face of a dark, liveoak grove halfway across the yellow plain, stretched out like an army arranged for battle. He saw the ruins of a convent with its white, stone belfry, without bells, in whose crazy and abandoned arches wild pigeons nested. He saw an ancient, whitewashed village that had on its outskirts a castle of golden, earthy stone. In the cracks grew harsh greenish black bramble bushes. The castle was on a high place and dominated the river and the plain. There was an embankment of light-colored earth that dropped off from the foot of the castle to the river bank. On the river bank were very tall, black poplars that reached higher than the embankment. The river formed isles and sandbars, and up river the mountains were seen. Through the sky over the river, very high, flew sparrow hawks from the tower.

Alfanhui went down to the bank. The water had the color of green golds. He walked upstream along the bank. A light mist covered the river. Alfanhui saw a large island in the middle of the river, where willows and buckthorns were growing. It was drizzling. Alfanhui took off his shoes and began to ford the river. The water was very cold and the branch of the river was wide. In the middle the current pressed hard and pushed round stones against his feet. Alfanhui stepped up.
That land was far from everywhere. The island must have been about a kilometer long by a hundred meters wide. A flock of birds rose up into flight, a few at a time, and began to fly over the island close to the ground with a sweet, repeated cry. They were the bitterns. Now they were flying around Alfanhui, at about five meters from him, circling his waist:

"Al-fan-hui, al-fan-hui, al-fan-hui."

They were calling him. Now nothing could be seen but the island, and the fog continued drizzling. It was a warm, light rain that hardly seemed moist. Alfanhui sat down on a stone. The bitterns lit, one by one, and rose up again:

"Al-fan-hui, al-fan-hui, al-fan-hui."

Alfanhui remembered his master: "You have yellow eyes like the bitterns." The bitterns repeated his name. Alfanhui wept. "I will call you Alfanhui, because this is the name with which the bitterns call to each other." The drizzle hid the weeping of Alfanhui, who turned his troubled eyes to the sweet and simple flight of the bitterns. All was silence; no sound but:

"Al-fan-hui, al-fan-hui, al-fan-hui."

The clouds began to open. The drizzle was tinged by the sun and became iridescent. The bitterns still flew a little, beneath the rainy sun. When the rain stopped they went behind the fog. They went little by little, lighting and rising up, making ever larger circles. The sky became clearer and clearer. Alfanhui saw the bitterns disappear and his name also faded and remained silently on the air. The clouds broke apart and through the opening the sun came out.

Alfanhui saw being painted over his head the great arch of colors.
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