THE REFABRICATION OF LITERARY PERSONAE IN THE POETRY OF GILBERTO OWEN

After the tumultuous years of the Mexican Revolution there was a literary resurgence. A group of the most prominent national writers participated in the renewal and development of the literary life of post-revolutionary Mexico. Taking their name from the literary review, the *Contemporáneos* contributed significantly to the formation of modern Mexican letters. Among the young and precocious writers known as the *Contemporáneous*, according to several critics, Jorge Cuesta, José Gorostiza and Gilberto Owen were the hermetic poets of the group. Gilberto Owen is considered by such scholars as Celestino Gorostiza and Frank Dauster as one of the group's superior poets. At the same time, they point out that the complexity of Owen's work requires an in-depth exploration of it. The objective of this paper is to consider the representation of four key literary figures, Sindbad, Boaz, Jacob, and Perseus, in Owen's work as a means of gaining greater insight into the involved discourse of the difficult poet.

Before examining Owen's incorporation of the aforementioned personae in his writing, it is necessary to mention some facts about his life and work that are relevant to his personalized treatment of these characters. A brief biographical sketch and overview of his poetry are helpful.

Gilberto Owen was born in 1905 in the mining community of El Rosario, Sinaloa. In 1914, during the Revolution, his family moved to Toluca where Owen wrote his first verses, *Los primeros versos*, that remained unpublished until 1957. These early poems reflect the security of life in the province for the poet as well as a sense of disorientation typical of the revolutionary period. In 1923, Owen accepted an invitation from Alvaro Obregón to travel with him. This experience of accompanying the political leader afforded the young man a broader perspective of life than his provincial viewpoint. During the years when the *Contemporáneous* were most active, 1928-1931, Owen was not in Mexico, but in New York and South America where he held diplomatic positions. In letters that the poet wrote while in the diplomatic service, he confessed how unhappy he had been since leaving Mexico. In 1945, after a failed marriage, he returned to Mexico. Close friends, such as Elías Nandino, noted that Owen, who had always been happy and outgoing, had become disturbingly somber. Depressed, apparently because of his unfortunate personal life, he had begun to drink excessively. Mexican leaders, skeptical about giving him a responsible assignment, sent him to Philadelphia to fill a minor diplomatic post. His life became inordinately bleak and lonely. Only months before his death, he expressed his intense longing to return to Mexico: "No estaré tranquilo sino cuando me encuentre con Xavier (Villaurrutia) en el cielo y tiene que ser en el cielo

de Mexico."[1] (I will not be at peace until I meet Xavier in the sky, and it has to be in Mexico's sky.) Owen, who often referred to himself as the Prodigal Son, did not return to his homeland in the last years of his life. Alone, and almost blind, he died in a Philadelphia hospital in 1952. Alcohol, which for many years had been his means of escape, finally took its toll.

Looking at Owen's life subjectively, two periods, as borne out in his poetry, are easily discernible: the meaningful years he lived in Mexico and the shallow ones he spent outside his native country. After leaving Mexico, his optimistic outlook was shattered and his life followed a downhill path marked by disillusionment, depression, and despair. Owen depicts his life as a spiritual wasteland and alludes to himself as "el muerto que canta," (the singing deadman). Neither life nor his craft ever satisfied him.

Central to understanding Owen's poetry and the existential desolation voiced in it are his twofold nature, his yearning for wholeness, and his intense desire to live life fully. This dichotomy and expressed wish for total fulfillment are manifest in his embryonic verses. In the poem "Romance," when asked "¿Qué prefieres, el pan o el vino?,"[2] (Which do you prefer, bread or wine) the confident, young poet replied: "Yo prefiero el vino y el pan,/y ser a la vez yo y mi sombra..."[3] (I prefer wine and bread,/and to be at the same time me and my shadow...).

Owen's disinclination to make choices altered the course of his life. Often caught between antithetical poles, his disharmony, as well as the dishevelled state of the world about him, deeply troubled him. His life became, in his own words, "una sucesión de naufragios,"[4] (a series of shipwreckings), failures that ravaged him. Thwarted endeavors and losses are recurrent topics in Owen's poems. Notwithstanding, his quest for synthesis, a oneness that he believed to be attainable only through the artistic and amatory experiences, is the major theme of his work. All other concepts in Owen's poetry revolve around his aborted attempts to capture the illusive truth that he believed women and poetry held and thus achieve the full realization he sought.

With this overall view of Owen's life and work in mind, the poet's representation of fictional personae in his limited body of work, virtually all of it included in *Poesía y prosa* (1953), can now be taken into consideration. As a point of departure, it should be noted that the following pattern is evidenced in Owen's versions of the narratives of major characters: when the poet compares himself with a fictional persona, he emphasizes all the negative aspects and conditions of the character's reality. On the other hand, he minimizes or completely disregards posi-

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1. Based on a correspondence between the poet and Elías Nandino.
2. "Romance," *Poesía y Prosa* (Mexico: Imprenta Universitaria, 1953), p. 12. (All references to the work of Gilberto Owen, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from this book. All translations in this essay are my own.
3. Ibid.
4. "Yo no vi nada," p. 83.

tive circumstances and factors since they are inconsistent with his life experience. Finally, the pessimistic writer unfailingly reverses the outcome of the accounts. Although the characters in the source texts may have triumphed, in Owen's transmutations, they are invariably defeated. This system becomes clearer when specific cases in which it was applied are looked at.

Sindbad is certainly the literary figure with whom Owen identified that has attracted the most attention from readers and critics. Dauster, commenting on why Owen chose the *Arabian Nights*[5] character to be the protagonist of his most favorably received poem, "Sindbad el varado" (Sindbad the shipwrecked) suggests that: "Escoge intencionadamente la romántica figura legendaria del marinero para contrastarla (vida de Sindbad) con la suya carente de romanticismos y aventuras."[6] (He intentionately chooses the legendary romantic figure of the sailor to contrast the seaman's life with his own lacking in romanticism and adventures)

Owen's life was not, as Dauster gives one the impression, so void of interesting ventures. He traveled extensively and shared with the *Arabian Nights* protagonist a passion for adventure and a curiosity to see new things. Neither the sailor nor the poet was able to resist the alluring sirens of life. Both experienced a number of hardships and likewise each attributed his misfortune to his imprudent decision to leave his homeland. The sympathetic words spoken to the mariner, "Unfortunate wretch, shoulds't thou not stayed at home and enjoyed the fruits of thy labor?"[7] were equally applicable to Owen.

The similarity between Owen and Sindbad is obviously one which can be discussed only in psychological and literary terms. Furthermore, any attempt to parallel the *Arabian Nights* narrative and Owen's poem in detail is futile. The *Seven Voyages of Sindbad* are chronicles of the exciting and fantastic adventures of a citizen of Bagdad. Their tone is positive, for despite the fact that the seafarer has to contend with what appear to be invincible forces, one feels confident that he will overcome them. "Sindbad el varado," as Jesús Arellano points out, is "un diario intemporal en que nos va dando una serie de matices de la vida interior de un hombre en intensa inquietud."[8] (a timeless diary that affords us a series of shades of the inner self of a man in intense turmoil). Unlike the *Seven Voyages*, the outlook of the poem is negative and Owen sets this tone from the onset by entitling his poem, "Sindbad el varado." By describing the sailor as shipwrecked, Owen immediately focuses on an adverse condition and from then on stresses the dismal aspects of the seaman's life.

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5. Frank Dauster, "El recinto inviolable," *Ensayos sobre poesía mexicana*, p. 114.
6. All references to the *Arabian Nights* are based on the Ernest Rhys edition (New York & London, 1907), pp. 74-120.
7. *Arabian Nights*, p. 97.
8. Jesús Arellano, "Las obras de Gilberto Owen," *Nivel*, Num. 40 (April 25, 1962), p. 7.

In "Sindbad el varado," there are few direct references to scenes from the *Seven Voyages*. The allusions included, however, are important in that they demonstrate the method used by the poet when he compared himself with literary personae. Owen's technique of highlighting the unpleasant and contrary conditions of a character's life is well exemplified in "Llagado de su sueño": (Wounded by your dream)

> Al lado de la vida, equidistante
> de las hambres que no saciamos nunca
> y las que nunca saciaremos,
> pueril peso en el pico de la pájara pinta
> o viajero al acaso en la pata de rokh,
> hongo marciano, pensador y tácito
> niño en los brazos de la yerma.[9]
>
> (Next to life, at an equal distance
> from those longings that we never satisfy.
> And those that we will never satisfy,
> puerile weight in the beak of the speckled bird
> or traveler by chance on the roc's foot,
> martian fungus, pensative and tacit,
> child in the arms of the desert.)

"Viajero al acaso en la pata de rokh" is a reference to events that take place during Sindbad's second journey. Along with his fellow crewman, the sailor goes ashore on a deserted island. He strays from the others, falls asleep, and the ship leaves without him. Upon realizing what has happened, he begins to figure out how he can get away from this uninhabited land. He escapes by tying himself to the foot of a monstrous bird call a roc.

"Pueril peso en el pico de la pájara pinta" is more than likely an allusion to the concluding part of the story of Sindbad and the roc. When the giant bird landed in a deep valley surrounded by mountains, the sailor freed himself, but soon found out that his situation had not improved. As alone and forsaken as he had been on the island, he again looks for a way out of his predicament. The sailor noticed that from time to time pieces of meat were cast into the valley. He later learned that some merchants threw the meat into the valley trying to retrieve some diamonds that covered the floor of the valley. These enterprising men knew that the diamonds that stuck to the pieces of meat would be carried by the eagles to feed their young in their mountain top nests. The merchants simply waited until the eagles had eaten and then collected the jewels left behind. Sindbad attached a piece of meat to his back and was flown out of the valley in the beak of an eagle. The symbolical meaning of this episode, upon consideration, is a revealing commentary on the poet's perception of himself and his life.

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9. "Llagado de su sueño," pp. 71-72.

Clearly, in the stanza, Owen is paralleling his plight in life with the strait in which Sindbad found himself. Whereas the seaman is physically bereft and in danger, Owen is spiritually estranged and thirsting, "al lado de la vida, equidistante de las hambres que nunca saciaremos," as he lyrically expresses his destitution and desperation. In the line, "pueril peso en el pico de la pájara pinta," Owen alludes to his feeling of insignificance in life. As he sees it, he is an inconsequential peg caught up in a game of forfeits. In the following line, "...viajero al acaso en la pata de rokh," the poet continues his negative exposition of his state of being and circumstances. He is a "viajero al acaso," a wanderer exposed to all life's hazards and capriciousness helplessly at bay in the clutches of "la pata de rokh," in the world's destructive, mammoth claws. The final line, "niño en los brazos de la yerma" refers specifically to the poet's resignation and yielding to the embrace of an existence and world without any real meaning.

Broadening the analysis of the figurative meaning of this stanza, it should be noted that Owen has selected two of several incidents in the *Arabian Nights* main character's ventures when his fate was pendent: when he was suspended in the air from the eagle's beak and when he was dangling in the sky fastened to the roc's foot. These fantastic events are applicable to the poet's lot in life. They serve to demonstrate that he wavered between a profound state of being and what he termed,"la yerma," an intrinsically hollow one.

At times, as he does in "El patriotero," Owen disregards the content of the world-renown text. In this poem, the poet simply acknowledges that his desire to return to Mexico was unrealistic, an impossible course of action because virtually everything had drastically changed. When he turned to the past and thought of going back to Mexico, as he puts it, he was confronted with "Una Bagdad olvidadiza en la que ya no encontraré mi calle."[10] (An oblivious Bagdad where I will no longer find my street). That the poet believed that going home was not an option for him and that, in fact, he did not return, is not at all comparable to the fictional character's situation. Sindbad was never forgotten in Bagdad by his friends and associates. In fact, the legendary sailor's homecomings were joyous occasions. After one such return, Sindbad wrote: "I arrived safely at Bagdad and employed myself wholly in enjoying the society of my kindred and friends and in making merry with them."[11] Obviously, Owen makes no mention of Sindbad's homecomings since he could not look forward to any like reception and gala affairs.

That Owen adhered to the pattern of reversing the outcome of the original story is also exemplified in "El patriotero" in the poet's definitive statement that his Sindbad "conquistó siete poemas pero la octava vez vuelve sin nada." (conquered seven poems but the eighth time he comes back emptyhanded.) The *Arabian Nights* hero never came home prizeless, but always went back to Bagdad richer that he had

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10. "El patriotero," p. 74.
11. *Arabian Nights*, pp. 98-99.

been before leaving. He was ultimately victorious and prosperous as is apparent in Sindbad's remarks after his last outing. The contented sailor matter of factly says: "All my fatigues ended at last and I came safe to Bagdad. I retired very well satisfied with the honors and presents I received."[12]

In stark contrast with the well-being and sense of accomplishment that the mariner experiences at the end of his travels are the emptiness and defeat the poet feels and articulates in the line "es el marinero que conquistó siete poemas pero la octava vez vuelve sin nada." Even though the first part of the statement might seem to indicate that Owen did not believe that he had been altogether unsuccessful, the verb, "conquistó," can be misleading unless what the poet says he conquered is considered. The poet admittedly wrote poems, but as Owen himself acknowledges, the poem was often merely the receptacle for vain words, tangible proof of his failure to grasp poetry. The phrase, "pero la octava vez vuelve sin nada" is Owen's coming to terms with the fact that he believed that eventually he would have nothing to show for his efforts to seize the essence of truth. At that point, his ruin would be absolute. He recognizes the futility of his efforts and concedes defeat in the lines, "sueño sin tregua, delirio sin cuartel,/amor a muerte fueron, y perdí."[13] (persistent dream, shelterless delirium, courtship of death, they were, and I lost.) Notably, this disparaging conclusion is consistent with the ending of all Owen's refabrications in which the poet unfailingly loses.

In a letter written to the essayist José Vasconcelos in 1949, Owen shared with the Mexican writer what he felt was most important about the Judeo-Christian story of Ruth and Boaz. In that same correspondence he also related that thinking about the ancient love tale in relation to his own life prompted him to write his "libro de Ruth:"

> El Libro de Ruth ha sido muy calumniado por nosotros los católicos que lo tomamos como un simple registro genealógico que partiera de David a Nuestro Señor como si ello fuese necesario.
>
> Naturalmente es, sobre todo, un libro de amor. Y mi propia experiencia me obligó a escribir un poema que publicaron luego en México. Este 'Libro de Ruth' mío ha tenido suerte muy mediocre...[14]
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> (We Catholics have greatly defamed the Book of Ruth treating it as a simple genealogical register that goes from David to Our Lord—as if that were necessary. Naturally it is, above all a book of love. And my own experience obliged me to write a poem that was published later in Mexico. My Book of Ruth has had very ordinary luck.)

One might think that Owen's poem would relate a personal love affair approximating the biblical narrative. Owen does begin his poem with a scripture from the

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12. Ibid., p. 120.
13. "Semifinal," p. 84.
14. Based on correspondence between Owen and José Vasconcelos, "A José Vasconcelos," *Poesía y Prosa*, p. 288.

Book of Ruth: "y aconteció que a la media noche, se estremeció aquel hombre, y palpó: y he aquí la mujer, que estaba acostada a sus pies."[15] (and it came to pass at midnight that the man was afraid, and turned himself: and, behold, a woman lay at his feet.) The love story of Ruth and Boaz, among the most beautiful and sacred in all literature, is perhaps one which the reader hardly expects to be altered. Nonetheless, when its content and Owen's long poem are compared, it is clear that the two have very little in common. A recounting of the familiar story is useful in discerning how Owen's "Libro de Ruth" differs from the ancient chronicle.

Ruth, a Moabite woman, married a Hebrew who died shortly after their marriage. She then accompanied her mother-in-law, Naomi, to Judea. There Boaz, Naomi's relative and a man of wealth, saw the strange woman gathering grain on his land. After being told that the unknown woman was the widow of his kinsman and that she had been loyal to her mother-in-law, Boaz gave her permission to labor in his field. Following Naomi's advice, Ruth went to Boaz's tent during the night and slept at the elderly man's feet. When the prosperous landowner awoke at midnight, he found the Moabitess at his side. Subsequently, Boaz took Ruth as his wife.

Owen's "Libro de Ruth" consists of five poems. In the first of these,"Booz se impacienta," Boaz anxiously awaits Ruth's arrival. He is extremely disquieted because he is dying and only Ruth can save him. If she does not come by midnight, time will have run out and death will claim him. In desperation, he dejectedly concludes that "Más allá de las doce no se puede ver nada."[16] (After midnight, nothing can be seen).

In "Booz encuentra a Ruth," the second poem, Owen contrasts the natures of both lovers. The woman is presented as pure and sublime or as she was in her primordial state. The Boaz-Owen composite, to the contrary, is depicted as vile and unclean. Believing that he will contaminate his companion, Booz warns her, 'Huye de me que soy elvientoeldiablo que te arrastra."[17] (Flee from me because I am the winddevil that will drag you down.)

The third composition, "Booz canta su amor" is an elaboration upon Boaz's fear of defiling Ruth. Notwithstanding, when the young woman comes to his tent, the aging landowner, overcome by Ruth's innocence and beauty, cannot resist the possibility of fulfillment that she offers him; "pero cómo negarte," Owen's Booz deliberates, "mis espigas,/si las alzabas con tan puro gesto;/ cómo temer tus años, si me dabas toda mi juventud en mi deseo."[18] (But how can I deny you my stalks, if you gather them with such pure gesture, how can I fear your years, if you would give me all my youth in my yearning.)

As Dauster sees it, "Booz ve dormir a Ruth" is "meditación post-facto." Gazing upon the woman's nude body, Booz, the poet, realizes that he has not deci-

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15. Ruth 3:8.
16. "Booz se impacienta," p. 103.
17. "Booz encuentra a Ruth," p. 104.
18. "Booz canta su amor," p. 105.

phered the enigma beyond the flesh. Her essence remains inaccessible and untouched, "un mar que siempre está en trance de primera comunión."[19] (a sea that always stays in the trance of the first communion.)

"Celos y muerte de Booz," the concluding poem, presents an alienated couple who, in the end, separate, recognizing the failure of their intimacy, "las aguas del Mar Rojo de nuestros cuerpos mal fundidos."[20] (The waters of the Red Sea of our bodies badly fused.) After their sterile affair, the lovers are left with "el Mar Rojo," the pain and suffering of their imprudent union. With no other choice, they separate their "cuerpos mal fundidos" acknowledging their otherness and estrangement.

In summary, Owen's very personal "Libro de Ruth" portrays his attempt to seize love as a metaphysics of being. His failure to do so, however, is resonant throughout the poems that comprise the Book. Specifically, the poet underscores the absence of any fulfilling relationship in his life, of a Ruth in his life, in the line, "Mis pies están helándose."[21] (My feet are freezing.) In the post-sexual moment, the poet's dispiritedness and aloneness are in stark contrast with Boaz's sense of fulfillment and communion. He calls attention to his abysmal solitude in a somber declaration: "Mi noche es alta y mía."[22] (My night is supreme and mine.)

Owen's attempts to capture the essence of poetry are summed up in his adaptation of another biblical story: the well-known incident in the life of Jacob when the ancient Hebrew wrestles with an angel. A brief retelling of this episode is necessary before looking at Owen's transformation of this account. After an absence of many years, Jacob decided to go back home. To do so, he had to go by way of the land of his elder brother Esau, whose birthright he had stolen. The night before he was to meet Esau, he wrestled with an unknown antagonist who turned out to be an emissary from the Lord.

Other writers, as Owen did, have seen a parallel between Jacob's struggle with the angel and that of the poet to make poetry a reality. In his definition of art, "Jacob o idea de la poesía" (Jacob or the idea of poetry), Alfonso Reyes, whose work Owen praised, mentions this analogy:

> El arte es una continua victoria de la conciencia sobre el caos de las realidades exteriores. Lucha con lo inefable, 'combate de Jacob con el ángel' lo hemos llamado.[23]
>
> (Art is a continuous victory of consciousness over the chaos of external realities. Struggle with the ineffable. Jacob's battle with the angel, we have called it).

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19. "Booz ve dormir a Ruth," p. 106.
20. "Celos y muerte de Booz," p. 108.
21. "Booz se impacienta," p. 104.
22. "Celos y muerte de Booz," p. 109.
23. Alfonso Reyes, "Jacob o idea de la poesía," *La experiencia literaria* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, 1924), p. 96.

In the same essay, Reyes also comments on what is poetry's objective and what must be done to achieve that end:

> Lo que quiere expresar el poeta son emociones imprecisas como que la poesía misma nace del afán de sugerir lo que no tiene nombre hecho. ... El poeta debe ser preciso en las expresiones de lo impreciso.[24]

What the poet wants to express are indefinite, vague emotions since poetry itself is born out of the desire to suggest that which doesn't have a given name. The poet should be precise in the expression of the imprecise.

Unlike Alfonso Reyes, critic, scholar, and poet, Owen does not concern himself with describing the creative process. Nevertheless, he spent a lifetime trying to communicate nebulous truths in concrete terms.

How far the correlation between Jacob and poets can be carried is debatable. In Owen's case, in such poems as "Llagado de su poesía," (Wounded by your poetry),"Rescoldos de cantar," (Embers from singing), and "Jacob y el mar," (Jacob and the sea), it is clear that Owen identified with Jacob only when the biblical figure was in a disadvantageous position, when he had been overcome and was injured.

The critic Rojas Garcidueñas rightfully notes that Owen, "como el Jacob bíblico quedará lesionado, saldrá de la lucha irremisiblemente lisiado."[25] (Like the Biblical Jacob, he will be wounded, he will come out of the struggle permanently maimed.) That both Jacob and Owen sustain injuries in their contention with the divine is true, but the parallism ends there. The outcome of Jacob's battle in no way corresponds to that of Owen's struggle with poetry. According to the Book of Genesis, Jacob continued to fight, but as day was breaking, his rival asked him to release him. Jacob, however, refused to do so until the angel consented to bless him. The angel did bless him saying:"Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel, for as a prince, hast thou power with God and men, and hast prevailed."[26] Owen's struggle with he expressionless was never-ending. He relentlessly attempted to transcend, in Reyes' words, "la imprecisión anterior a la poética,"[27] (the impreciseness preceding poetics.) As the poet saw it, he never prevailed.

Owen turned to classical mythology in order to express his barren relationship with both poetry and Woman. One day he saw a statue of Medusa, the gorgon who had serpents for hair and who turned to stone anyone who dared to look at her. According to legend, Perseus, a son of Zeus, accomplished the miraculous feat of decapitating the gorgon. In keeping with his personal perception and interpretations, it occurred to the poet that Medusa could be likened to Woman and poetry, both of whom had kept him spellbound for a lifetime. Although Perseus conquered

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24. Ibid.
25. José Rojas Garcidueñas, "Gilberto Owen y su obra," Cuadrante, Num. 1 (July, 1954), 13.
26. Genesis 32:28.
27. Reyes, "Jacob o idea de la poesía," *La experiencia literaria*, p. 96.

Medusa, Owen remained submissive to the mystical nature of Woman and poetry, which he was never able to unveil. The title of Owen's last book, *Perseo Vencido* (Perseus conquered) speaks for itself. Likewise, in the first poem in the text, "Madrigal por Medusa," (Madrigal for Medusa), the poet comes to terms with his total failure: "la cabeza que no corté, en la mano/la espada sin honor, perdido todo..."[28] (the head that I did not sever, in my hand, the honorless sword, everything lost.)

This paper has not touched upon other significant components of Owen's poetic arsenal such as the symbolical usage of water, the mirror, night, sand and the horizon. Nor has it examined the wide-ranging literary and personal references which are bothersome and ambiguous to anyone who does not share Owen's erudition, a literary sophistication that even amazed the *Contemporáneos*. Yet, this examination of Owen's singular treatment of personae has attempted to show the level of sensitivity and hard work required of the reader to appreciate Owen's poetry. It has likewise endeavored to support the positive assessment of the merit of this virtually unknown writer's work by a few critics who unwaveringly have praised it. To the favorable appraisal of Owen's work by Gorostiza, Dauster and Rojas-Garcidueñas can be added the commentary of the English writer, Edna Worthley Underwood, as a final statement on the substance and worth of Owen's verses. His poetry, the critic points out:

> is filled with subtleties, fleet, unstable shading; It possesses a kind of extra-territoriality of sense and supersense perceptions ... Its meaning is in the space that lies beyond the printed word's horizon... but it has quality—this mind and body sensation shadowing of his,—worth playing with, and out of the ordinary; rare; and so unwisely wise.[29]

Although Underwood's commentary may seem flaccid when compared with that of such critics as García Terrés, Moretta, and Segóvia who have worked extensively on Owen, in this writer's opinion, anyone who does look closely at the work of this obscure Mexican poet, who in his own words, fought "contra el mar toda la noche,"[30] (fought against the sea all night) will agree that it does indeed more than merit Underwood's appraisal that "it has quality..." Owen was a poet's poet and did not try to reach a wider audience. Thus, even after a careful study of his references and symbols, one is left with many doubts and uncertainties. Notwithstanding, Owen does not fail to compellingly communicate one man's anguished attempt to live life fully and authentically.

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28. "Madrigal por Medusa," p. 61.
29. Edna Worthley Underwood, *Anthology of Mexican Poets: From the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (Portland: Moscher Press, 1932), p. 210.
30. "El Naufragio," p. 63.

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