

Hinduism in *Animal de fondo*  
by Juan Ramón Jiménez

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Juan Ramón Jiménez appears to have directed his ecstatic and enigmatic *Animal de fondo* (1949) to the "inmensa minoría" who, like readers of *El Polifemo*, are willing to consult a prose paraphrase.<sup>1</sup> Antonio Sánchez-Barbudo has provided such explanatory commentary to facilitate comprehension of this hermetic and joyous recounting of a kind of mystical trance which Juan Ramón experienced during a sea voyage from New York to Buenos Aires in 1948.<sup>2</sup> The poet's communion with the divine clearly ties *Animal de fondo* to the tradition of mystic poetry, but not necessarily to that of Spain. Readers search for echoes of San Juan de la Cruz. Palau de Nemes has pointed out that the only Christian contemplatives by whom Juan Ramón is known to have been influenced are Thomas à Kempis and San Juan de la Cruz (29–31). Be that as it may, it is quite clear to the uninitiated reader that the God<sup>3</sup> with whom Juan Ramón is united in mystical embrace is not the orthodox God of Christianity:

No eres mi redentor, ni eres mi ejemplo,  
ni mi padre, ni mi hijo, ni mi hermano (62).

(You are not my redeemer, not my example,  
nor my father, nor my son, nor my brother.)<sup>4</sup>

The heterodox nature of Juan Ramón's God produced an extraordinarily negative response in one of *Animal de fondo*'s first commentators, whose review "Juan Dios Jiménez" in *Nueva Gaceta de Buenos Aires* found offensive Juan Ramón's creation of his own God, which has been variously identified as the god of beauty, the god of poetry, and the god of art.<sup>5</sup> The poet himself, an assiduous reader

of English visionary poet and illustrator William Blake (1757–1827), believed like Blake that the gods have their origin in the human breast.<sup>6</sup> Howard Young mentioned another unorthodox influence on Juan Ramón, who was “fascinated by the orient . . . because, in his Andalusian heart, he suspected somewhat vaguely that the answers to many mysteries could be found in that quadrant” (160). It is well known that between 1917 and 1920 Juan Ramón and Zenobia collaborated in translations of some 20 works by the Indian poet, novelist, short story writer and essayist Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) (Palau de Nemes 206). Juan Ramón was also fond of Kalidasa (fl. c. AD 400), Indian dramatist and poet, considered the greatest of all Sanskrit writers, who was renowned for his exquisite descriptions of nature and his skill in conveying the emotions experienced by lovers.<sup>7</sup> Further anecdotal evidence that Juan Ramón may have felt some admiration for Hinduism is found in a letter (dated May 30, 1961) from Ricardo Gullón to Saz-Orozco:

... You have probably noticed how strange, and at times, eccentric are some of Juan Ramón's notions about God and religion. They might even upset some people. Professor Da Cal told me about a visit he and Juan Ramón and Zenobia made to the Church of St. John the Divine in New York. When Juan Ramón was asked to sign the guest book for distinguished visitors, he thought for a moment and then said, “I'll write Buddhist, which is a religion I admire greatly.”

At first glance you might think he was being whimsical, but if you knew the poet, you would realize that Juan Ramón's response was very much in keeping with his admiration for the attitude toward life of certain Hindus of incontrovertible renown.<sup>8</sup>

This paper will focus on that “attitude toward life of certain Hindus of incontrovertible renown” and how it is diffused throughout *Animal de fondo*. Who those “Hindus of incontrovertible renown” were is less important than the “attitude toward life” they represent. Perhaps Professor Gullón was referring to Tagore and Kalidasa. Perhaps not. What is clear is that a Hindu attitude, perspective, or way of looking at the world permeates *Animal de fondo*.<sup>9</sup>

Juan Ramón's idiosyncratic interpretation of the Graeco-Roman myth of Narcissus is compatible with the Hindu tradition that does not

make a clear-cut division between the religious and the non-religious or between the world of nature and the divine:

When Narcissus leans over into the fountain, he is not looking for his image. Narcissus is the man who confronts nature. His is the great myth of the creator who wants to metamorphose himself into nature. . . . Narcissism is not looking at oneself in a mirror. The man Narcissus is the pantheist who wants to reintegrate himself into nature. He commits suicide with his human form but not with his soul, because he believes that the soul will unite with nature.<sup>10</sup>

The reader will see Juan Ramón's Narcissus again in the pantheistic interpenetration of the poet and the natural world in *Animal de fondo*, religious poetry written by a poet "sin credo absoluto" (170) who professed admiration for the intellectual tradition of Hinduism. The predominant religion of India, Hinduism evolved over thousands of years through complex interaction between invading nomadic Aryan tribes (2000–1500 BC), the highly developed Dravidians, and the aboriginal peoples of India. Many indigenous cults, deities and rituals were integrated into a broad and bewildering framework. With later accretions from Buddhism and Jainism, the Hindu religious tradition recognizes no single founder or group of founders, and, like the religion of Juan Ramón, it is not much concerned with doctrinal purity.<sup>11</sup> It would appear pointless to search for doctrinal analogies between Hinduism and the "oriental mysticism" of *Animal de fondo*, but a less rigoristic and less doctrinaire analysis of Hinduism in the poems might render them more accessible to readers.<sup>12</sup>

The initiate who successfully penetrates *Animal de fondo* becomes aware of the poet's identification of his *dios* and *conciencia*. In more than 30 separate verses, *conciencia* may belong to the *dios deseante y deseado*, to the poet himself, or to others. In the first poem of the collection, "La transparencia, dios, la transparencia," the reader encounters four *conciencias* successively enumerated which the poet joins together into a "forma suma de conciencia." He addresses his *dios*:

Tú, esencia, eres conciencia: mi conciencia  
y la de otro, la de todos,  
con forma suma de conciencia. . . . (64)

(You, essence, are conscience, my conscience  
and another's, and the conscience of all,  
in a sum total of all consciences. . .)

The poet's *dios* is perceived as a *conciencia* which is the same as the poet's *conciencia* and that of other human beings. The poet later proclaims himself "poseedor, en medio, ya, / de tu conciencia, dios" (100) (possessor, already in the midst / of your conscience, God). The sea voyage from New York to Buenos Aires in 1948 transfixed the poet, inducing in him an ecstatic union with the sea, the sun and sky, and his *dios* in the form of *conciencia*. The poem "Despierto a mediodía" describes the transcendental effect of the sea on the hypersensitive passenger:

El mar siempre despierto,  
el mar despierto ahora también a mediodía,  
cuando todos reposan menos yo y tú  
(o el que trabaja con la hora fija, fuera)  
me da mejor que nadie y nada tu conciencia,  
dios deseante y deseado,  
que surtes, desvelado  
vijilante del ocio suficiente,  
de la sombra y la luz, en pleamar fundida,  
fundido en pleamar.

Tus rayos reespedidos de ti son  
mensajes hacia el sol,  
fuentes de luminoso y blanco oro surtidor  
que refrescan la vida al todo blanco sol.

Y el pleno sol te llena, con su carbón dentro,  
como la luna anoche te llenaba,  
y cual eras la luna, el sol eres tú solo,  
solo pues eres todo.

Conciencia en pleamar y pleacielo,  
en pleadios, en éstasis obrante universal. (102-104)

(The sea awake always,  
the sea awake now and at noon

when everyone is asleep except you and me  
 [or the man who works on a regular schedule, outside]  
 gives me better than anyone or anything your conscience,  
 desiring and desired God,  
 who arise, sleepless  
 watching over sufficient leisure,  
 shade and light, united all in high tide.

Your rays emanating from you are  
 messages to the sun,  
 fountains of luminous white gold  
 that refresh the life of the all-white sun.  
 And the full sun fills you,  
 with its black coal inside,  
 like last night's moon filled you,  
 and just as you were the moon, you alone are the sun,  
 you alone are everything.

Conscience in high tide and high sky,  
 in high God, in universal extasis.)

*Pleamar* and the neologisms *pleacielo* and *pleadios* emphasize the interrelatedness that the poet senses with sea and sun and divine *conciencia*.<sup>13</sup> Saz-Orozco considers *conciencia* a key word which, although not precisely defined in *Animal de fondo*, nevertheless establishes the *postura subjetiva* of the poet vis-à-vis his God (161-75).

Juan Ramón in a later poem ("Esa órbita abierta") enjoys the tranquilizing swaying movement of the sea, which is identified as the *conciencia* of his *dios*:

. . . yo, dios, me mezcó en los embates  
 de ola y rama, viento y sol, espuma y lluvia  
 de tu conciencia mecedora bienandante. (120)

(. . . I, God, rock myself in the dashing  
 of wave and branch, wind and sun, foam and rain  
 of your joyful swaying conscience.)

Antonio Sánchez-Barbudo has considered the significance of these

lines cited above, wondering whether "ola y rama, viento y sol, espuma y lluvia" are merely metaphors that refer to attributes of Juan Ramón's divinity. But Sánchez-Barbudo sees more than metaphors in these lines:

Wave and wind, sun and rain, are actual elements in which God is manifested; they surround Him and in them God is rocked to and fro. Contemplating the sea, birds, clouds, sun, rain and wind, the poet is rocked to and fro, in God. He gives himself up to God. There is here, as in many other places in *Animal de fondo*, an identification of God and nature. (170)

It is precisely this pantheistic identification of God with nature that Saz-Orozco finds deficient, vague, amorphous, subjective. Juan Ramón's divinity "is out there floating in the vague universal consciousness experienced by the poet. It is an incomplete God. . . ."14

Classic Hindu religious tradition is based on the idea of revelation but in such a way that Juan Ramón's subjective God could be easily accommodated. The Vedas, the Brahmanas and the Upanishads are believed to contain revealed truths and are known as *Scruti*. But if Christ revealed the eternal truths of Christianity, the revealed truths of the Hindu tradition were received in a different process. Pratima Bowes in *The Hindu Intellectual Tradition* explains that

Revelation . . . took place when these truths were reflected in the hearts and minds of the Vedic sages (the term Veda being used to denote the whole of *Scruti*) who were searching for religious truth and who through the purity of their heart and intellect were able to capture it. (26)

The Vedic sages assigned primary importance to religious experience while relegating doctrine and dogma to a secondary position. With time, a variety of different religious systems developed, all claiming legitimacy based on *Scruti*. Polytheism, monism, monotheism and magical ritualism are all found in the Vedas and Upanishads and are considered genuine expressions of Hinduism. If Saz-Orozco's uneasiness with Juan Ramón's subjective pantheistic divinity is a reflection of traditional Roman Catholic preoccupation with doctrinal purity, no such compunction would concern a Hindu commentator of *Animal de fondo*.

The *conciencia* of Juan Ramón's *dios deseante y deseado*, the *conciencia absoluta* antithetical to Christianity's personal divinity, bears a resemblance to the religious reality termed Brahman described in the philosophical treatises known as the Upanishads. Pratima Bowes enumerates three types of statements about Brahman as found in the Upanishads:

1. Brahman is a suprapersonal divine principle that is beyond all characterization by attributes (*Nirguna Brahman*). The usual translation of Brahman as "impersonal absolute" is thus a mistake, since Brahman is definitely said to be beyond attributes, including those designated by such terms as "personal" and "impersonal". According to this trend of thinking Brahman is referred to by the neuter "it" or "that".
2. Brahman is the ultimate person, God or Lord, in respect of whom the personal "he" is used rather than the neuter "it" (*Saguna Brahman*).
3. Brahman is in everything as its innermost essence and we can best convey what this essence is by such terms as being (*sat*), consciousness (*cit*) and bliss (*ananda*).<sup>15</sup>

One might ask which of the three descriptions of Brahman could be most accurately applied to the *conciencia* of the *dios deseante y deseado*. The verse "Tú, esencia, eres conciencia . . ." (64), which has been cited previously, would seem most like the essence of the third statement defined as consciousness (*cit*). Yet the *dios deseante y deseado* is clearly a personal God: ". . . tú amas, deseante dios, como yo amo" (144) (. . . You love, desiring God, like I love).

And in another poem:

El amor más completo, amor, tú eres,  
con la sustancia toda  
(y con toda la esencia)  
en los sentidos todos de mi cuerpo  
(y en todos los sentidos de mi alma)  
que son los mismos en el gran saber  
de quien, como yo ahora, todo en luz, lo sabe. (76)

(Love, you are the most complete love,  
with my complete substance,

[and my complete essence]  
 in every sense of my body  
 [in every sense of my soul]  
 which are all the same, according to the great wisdom  
 of He who, like me, knows all in light.)

Juan Ramón's God loves both physically and spiritually, but is also cognizant, knowing, aware, "conscious" of everything.<sup>16</sup> The omniscience might suggest again the consciousness of Pratima Bowes's third statement. Perhaps "el amor más completo" would be the equivalent of bliss (*ananda*). Ultimately, these analytical efforts to fit Juan Ramón's divinity into one of the descriptions of Brahman will prove futile. No one description of Brahman is adequate, not the personal or the impersonal. Indeed, as Bowes mentions, the personal "he" and the impersonal "it" are used in the same Upanishad and even in the same verse (*Religious Tradition* 153). Any description at all would circumscribe Brahman excessively. Insisting on a personal "he" is as constricting as insisting on an impersonal "it." So Juan Ramón's *conciencia*, enigmatically personal yet amorphous, is still analogous to the Brahman of the classic Upanishads.

Other echoes of ancient Hindu religious tradition in *Animal de fondo* originate in the four Vedas, hymns addressed to gods by men who sing in praise of powerful natural phenomena, such as the sun, wind, lightning, fire, rivers, trees and mountains (Bowes, *Religious Traditions* 24). Although other themes appear, such as moral and physical laws, liberality, social customs, etc., it is the natural environment treated as sacred that is analogous to the sea, wind and sky of "Conciencia plena":

Tú me llevas, conciencia plena, deseante dios,  
 por todo el mundo.

    En este mar tercero.  
 casi oigo tu voz; tu voz del viento  
 ocupante total del movimiento;  
 de los colores, de las luces  
 eternos y marinos.

    Tu voz de fuego blanco  
 en la totalidad del agua, el barco, el cielo,  
 lineando las rutas con delicia. . . . (86)

(You carry me along, full conscience, desiring God,  
through the whole world.

In this third sea,  
I almost hear your voice, your voice in the wind  
occupying completely the movement  
of colors and lights  
both eternal and marine.

Your voice of white flame  
in the totality of water, ship, sky,  
lining the routes with delight.)

The Vedas do not suggest that God or a god actually appeared before a poet to reveal his (its) divine nature to him. In this respect we find another parallel with *Animal de fondo*. According to Bowes,

If these Vedic hymns contain anything about the nature of gods, it has very much the appearance of human conception about this supposed nature and not that of direct disclosure received from above. (*Religious Tradition* 24)

So Juan Ramón's creation of his own *dios* is not unlike Vedic poets' attempts at conceptualizing the ultimate mystery. Some of them address the gods as father, friend or protector, etc., while in other hymns the poets address divine reality as a suprapersonal conscious principle which creatively projects itself in multiplicity. This divine act of self expression, this act of creation, reflects human values, which are embodied in lesser gods or *devas*. The word *deva* is derived from the root "div," meaning "to shine." Thus a *deva* is a shining being and an embodiment of a human value. As Pratima Bowes explains,

Anything that is brilliant, especially powerful or potent in the scheme of human life, whether . . . a natural or a social fact, is called a god in the Rigveda. . . . (*Religious Tradition* 30-31)

Values such as success, wealth, long life, health, brilliance in disputation, and earthly happiness are incarnated in deities and may be worshipped. Rivers, trees, mountains and animals are also adored as sacred in the Vedas. Man may venerate the suprapersonal religious reality by first acknowledging the forces of nature embodied in

lesser divinities. Ushas, the goddess of dawn, is lovingly adored as she prepares men for their daily tasks:

The lovely Ushas rouses up the people  
 Makes the paths easy to tread, and goes forward.  
 She, great, all-impelling, rides her great chariot  
 And spreads the light before the day's beginning.<sup>17</sup>

Juan Ramón has a *dios* who/which is analogous to the Vedic goddess of dawn. In the poem "Que se ve ser," which Sánchez-Barbudo considers "fuera de serie" (out of series) because it does not describe a union between the poet and nature (166-168), a god of dawn, a brilliant being (a *deva*), is identified with the divine *conciencia*:

En la mañana oscura,  
 una luz que no sé de dónde viene,  
 que no se ve venir, que no se ve ser,  
 fuente total, invade lo completo.

Un ser de luz, que es todo y sólo luz,  
 luz vividora y luz vivificante;  
 un dios en ascua blanca,  
 que sustenta, que incita y que decide  
 en la mañana oscura. (110)

(In the grey morning,  
 a light that comes from some unknown place,  
 that comes unseen, that is not perceived  
 a complete source, invades everything.

A being of light, which is entirely light,  
 life giving and living light,  
 a crystalline consciousness of God,  
 a God in white hot coals  
 which sustains, incites and decides  
 in the grey morning.)

Sánchez-Barbudo believes that this is one of the few occasions when Juan Ramón seems to be searching for the Christian God, "endowed with will and power, and who is no longer simply light itself but the

final cause of it" (167). Reading the poem in the context of Juan Ramón's affinity for classic Hindu religious tradition yields a non-Christian god. The "ser de luz" is a "conciencia diamantina en dios," that is, a minor divinity that shares in the *conciencia* of the suprapersonal force manifested in the brilliant dawn. Like the Vedic poets, Juan Ramón exhibits an appreciation of the sacredness of nature as an expression of a religious reality.

Other readers of *Animal de fondo* have been struck by its apparent polytheism. There is "el dios de mi Moguer" (the God of my Moguer) (96); "el niño dios" (the child God) (114), who is the poet himself; the "dios en ascua blanca" (110), which has been identified as a God of dawn; finally, a "diosa . . . disfrutadora y disfrutada mía" (92), an enigmatic goddess of peace and effervescent delight. All of these divinities could be considered *devas* emanated from the cosmic *conciencia* with whom/which the poet feels united.

Since the Vedic poets regard as sacred man's interrelatedness with his natural environment, and since the natural environment also includes animals, it is clear why animals are treated as sacred. Gods, men and animals are interconnected in a universal cosmic *conciencia* (Bowes, *Religious Tradition* 113-14). Juan Ramón feels at one with the dog of "En igualdad segura de expresión" and the starry night:

El perro viene, y le acaricio;  
me acaricia, y me mira como un hombre,  
con la hermandad completa  
de la noche serena y señalada. (118)

(The dog comes and I caress him,  
he caresses me, and looks at me, man to man,  
in complete brotherhood  
with the serene starry night.)

The poet's "pájaro del alba" (bird of dawn) is identified with an omnipresent God in "De compañía y de hora" (162). "El albatros y la gaviota" (the albatross and the sea gull) are one with the sea of "Para que yo te oiga" (126) and the sea becomes one with the *conciencia* of the poet (126-28). In the final poem of the collection, "Soy animal de fondo," the deified poet identifies himself as an "animal de fondo de aire" (animal from the airy depths) where his *dios* existed "con la flor,

con la golondrina, el toro y el agua" (168) (with the flower, the swallow, the bull and the water) in yet another instance of the interpenetration of divinity and nature.

One last aspect of classic Hindu religious tradition that finds echo in *Animal de fondo* is the concept of *dharma*, the sacred law of society regulating moral order, the performance of duty, and the forms of conduct becoming to different classes or persons. "En amoroso llenar" offers a social note in an otherwise depopulated context:

Todos vamos, tranquilos, trabajando:  
 el maquinista, fogueando; el vigilante,  
 datando; el timonel, guiando;  
 el pintor, pintando; el radiotelegrafista,  
 escucheando; el carpintero, martillando;  
 el capitán, dictando; la mujer,  
 cuidando, suspirando, palpitando.

. . . Y yo, dios deseante, deseando;  
 yo que te estoy llenando, en amoroso  
 llenar, en última conciencia mía,  
 como el sol o la luna, dios,  
 de un mundo todo uno para todos. (124)

(We are all working peacefully,  
 the engineer, firing the engines; the watchman,  
 checking; the helmsman, steering;  
 the painter, painting; the wireless operator,  
 listening; the carpenter, hammering;  
 the captain, commanding; the woman,  
 worrying, sighing, trembling.

. . . And I, desiring God, desiring;  
 I am fulfilling You, in an amorous  
 embrace in my final consciousness,  
 like the sun or the moon, God,  
 of a world that is one and complete for all.)

In a splendid series of active participles in the first verse, all workers on the ship fulfill their professional obligations, thus maintaining order on board. And the poet also fulfills his obligations by striving to embrace his God, unite his *conciencia* with the natural world that is

“todo uno para todos” (124) (all one for all). In order to see the poet’s social obligation in a hierarchal relation to the social obligations of the “maquinista,” the “vijilante,” the “timonel,” etc., one might refer to the Hindu concept of *varna*, or social category. Within the ancient Aryan society of India, the principle of *varna* established a four-fold division of social functions: 1) religious and educational, 2) military and political, 3) economic, and 4) menial. The people who performed these functions were *brahman*, *kshatriya*, *vaishya* and *sudra* respectively. A passage from the Rigveda (II.9.2) will illustrate this concept of social categories based on functions:

Oh, Soma, not everyone does the same work, different people do different work, and our work is of many kinds. The carpenter saws wood, the physician prays for ill health, the sacrificer desires a priest. . . . See, I am a hymn-maker, my son is a physician, my daughter a grain crusher.<sup>18</sup>

In the Rigveda enumeration of social categories, the hymn-maker and physician are *brahman* and the grain crusher is *sudra*. In the *Animal de fondo* enumeration of social categories, the hymn-maker, the poet, is of the highest social ranking; the others one would suppose to be either *vaishya*, concerned with economic functions, or as in the case of the woman, *sudra*, concerned with menial obligations. The poet perceives himself as supreme in the social ranking. In “La forma que me queda” he is ecstatic about the obligation that he perceives as uniquely his:

¡qué dinamismo me levanta  
y me obliga a creer que esto que hago  
es lo que puedo, debo, quiero hacer;  
este trabajo tan gustoso de contarte,  
de contarme de todas las maneras, en la forma  
que me quedó de todas . . . ! (108)

(what dynamic energy gets me out of bed  
and makes me believe that what I am doing  
is what I can, should, want to do;  
this wonderful job of telling about You,  
of telling about myself in every way possible,  
in the best way possible . . . !)

Since the poetizing function is not only obligatory, but also pleasurable, Juan Ramón, the hymn-maker *brahman*, is jubilant as he tells about his God.

This essay has presented a series of analogies between classic Hindu religious tradition and the oriental mysticism of Juan Ramón Jiménez's *Animal de fondo*. The *conciencia* frequently used by Juan Ramón to express integration with the natural world is analogous to Brahman, the all-pervading reality which for the Vedic poets includes everything, from the life of man to sticks and stones. The apparent polytheism of *Animal de fondo* echoes Vedic hymns that deify many important social and natural elements. The Hindu concept of *dharma*, the sacred law of society regulating moral order, duties, and forms of conduct appropriate for different classes or persons, appears in poems where the poet exults in his poetizing function. Juan Ramón clearly assimilated elements of the relativist-pluralist Hindu tradition which relegated questions of dogma to secondary importance, and, like the Vedic hymn-makers, was able to capture religious reality that was reflected in his own heart and mind and affirm it joyously.

### Notes

1. Juan Ramón Jiménez, qtd. in Graciela Palau de Nemes, *Vida y obra de Juan Ramón Jiménez* (Madrid: Gredos, 1951) 21. The edition of *Animal de fondo* which will be used is the first edition. Juan Ramón Jiménez, *Animal de fondo*, con la versión francesa de Lysandro Z. D. Galtier, prólogo Angel Crespo (1949; Madrid: Taurus, 1981). References in this essay will be to the page numbers of the Crespo edition.
2. Juan Ramón Jiménez, *Dios deseado y deseante*, ed. Antonio Sánchez-Barbudo (Madrid: Gredos, 1951), 49-134. Howard T. Young, in *The Line in the Margin: Juan Ramón Jiménez and His Readings in Blake, Shelley, and Yeats* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980) 209, suggests that *Animal de fondo* was composed during the voyage to Buenos Aires. Sánchez-Barbudo contends that some of the poems were written after the return voyage to New York, in *La segunda época de Juan Ramón Jiménez: cincuenta poemas comentados* (Madrid: Gredos, 1963) 174-75.
3. I will follow Howard Young's convention of capitalizing the English word "God" when translating Juan Ramón's "dios."
4. This translation and all subsequent translations of Juan Ramón's poetry and all secondary texts are mine.
5. Laura Onetti, "Juan Dios Jiménez," *Nueva Gaceta de Buenos Aires* 1949, qtd. in Angel Crespo, prólogo *Animal de fondo* (Madrid: Taurus, 1981) 30-31.

6. During a rare public moment at one of his lectures in Buenos Aires, Juan Ramón defended the creation of his own God by referring to the myth of Narcissus, which for him did not underscore the moral of a solipsistic death, but demonstrated something about the process of creation of the gods:

If a scientist invents, and most people expect scientists to invent, why can't a poet invent a world or part of a world? That is what makes the poet divine, like the mythical Narcissus, as I have said on many occasions. The poet creates in an image and likeness. Every god is narcissistic. Is not the Catholic mystery of the Trinity a case of narcissism? God the Father contemplates himself in the person of the Son, his creation, as if in a mirror, and the Holy Spirit is the expression of love between the Father and the Son (*El trabajo gustoso* 93).

Thus Juan Ramón justifies the creation of his God by referring to orthodox Catholic theology, but he is clearly not in the mainstream of Catholic thought.

7. "Kalidasa," *Benet's Reader's Encyclopedia*, 3rd ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1987).

8. Ricardo Gullón, letter to Carlos del Saz-Orozco, 30 May 1961, qtd. in Saz-Orozco, *Desarrollo del concepto de dios en el pensamiento religioso de Juan Ramón Jiménez* (Madrid: Editorial Razón y Fe, 1966) 71. *Animal de fondo* describes an ecstatic encounter between the poet and his God. Buddhist nirvana, that which is the end of one's spiritual search, is conceived negatively, as the burning out of all passions and impulses which keep man chained to the conditioned realm of suffering. In Hindu thought the ultimate end is an unconditioned state of pure being, consciousness and bliss. Pratima Bowes, *The Hindu Intellectual Tradition* (New Delhi: Allied Publishers Limited, 1978) 81. It would seem that the negative perspective of Buddhism is inconsistent with the happiness of the poet who exclaims "Yo estoy alegre de alegría llena" (148) (I am happy with a full happiness).

9. Although this essay is concerned principally with deciphering and ordering the hermetic themes of *Animal de fondo*, this mature work can be viewed as the culmination of a lifelong intimate dialogue between the poet and his world, a dialogue so intimate that the easily accessible Juan Ramón of *Estío* (1915) already manifests the interpenetration of interior and exterior reality that pervades *Animal de fondo*. In the following poem the poet's soul and the fluttering bird and the falling leaf are identified as one:

Jugaba en el viento y era áureo.

Sobre la amena  
profusión de los rosales,  
lejana presión de sangre,

sus indefinibles alas  
 lo traían, lo llevaban . . .  
 Su mismo cantar divino  
 me enajenaba el sentido  
 — ¡Pájaro maravilloso!—

Venía, raudo, de oro,  
 a mis manos . . .

— ¡Alma mía!

¡Pájaro!

. . . ¡Hoja amarilla! (*Libros de poesía* 170)

(It played in the wind and was golden.

Over the pleasing profusion of  
 rose bushes, blood's prison,  
 its undefinable wings  
 brought it to and fro . . .  
 Its divine song  
 intoxicated me.

—Marvelous bird!—

It came fiery and golden  
 to my hands . . .

—My soul!—

Bird!

—Yellow leaf!)

10. Juan Ramón Jiménez, "Ideología," *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos* 52 (abril 1954): 3-8, qtd. in Isabel de Armas, "El narcisismo óptimo de JRJ," *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos* 376-78 (octubre-diciembre 1981): 441.

11. Some features common to all Hindu sects are as follows: 1) the caste system; 2) the sacred literature, comprising the four Vedas; ritual texts entitled the Brahmanas; several commentaries and interpretations of the Brahmanas; the philosophical treatises known as the Upanishads; a collection of legends entitled the Puranas; and two epics, the *Mahabharata* (which includes the interpolated *Bhagavadgita*) and the *Ramayana*; 3) belief in the eternal cycle of reincarnation or transmigration of souls (*samsara*); 4) four legitimate Ends of Man as recognized in sacred scriptures: *dharma* (righteousness), *artha* (political and economic well-being), *kama* (pleasure) and *moksa* (spiritual liberation). "Hinduism," *Benet's Reader's Encyclopedia*.

12. I do not mean to imply that the Hindu attitudes that I will point out are uniquely and exclusively Hindu; they may be found in other religious traditions which are less open than Hinduism to incorporate diverse beliefs and practices.
13. For an analysis of the "invenciones continuas [e] . . . inquieto vocabulario" of Juan Ramón's last period, see Raimundo Lida, "Palabras de Juan Ramón," *Nueva Revista de Filología* 3-4 (julio-diciembre 1961): 617-24.
14. The mature Juan Ramón reacted against the doctrinaire divinity of Christianity. Soz-Orozco (125) affirmed that for Juan Ramón:

everything that smacks of religious structure, of theology, was and should be replaced by the subjectivism of his own conscience, which unites with the cosmos, with God, in a more universal notion: "absolute conscience."

The term "absolute conscience" Soz-Orozco found in Juan Ramón Jiménez, "Poesía cerrada y poesía abierta," *La torre* 1,1 (1959): 25.

15. Pratima Bowes, *The Hindu Religious Tradition: A Philosophical Approach* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978) 152-53.
16. In the Upanishads the sexual act is considered sacred. For some commentators, the embrace of men and women in love is a symbol of the supreme unitary experience. (Bowes, *Religious Tradition* 253)
17. Rigveda V.80.2, trans. Abinash Chandra Bowes, *Vedas: Hymns from the Vedas* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1966) 271, qtd. in Pratima Bowes, *Religious Tradition* 90.
18. Bowes, *Intellectual Tradition* 94. *Soma* is a liquor or drug that helped to produce a state of transport. In *The Hindu Religious Tradition*, Bowes explains that the liquor *soma* is deified, personified as the god *Soma*, to whom the whole of the ninth book of the Rigveda is devoted. (101/122)

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