



**Poet, Mystic, Modern Hero**  
**Fernando Rielo Pardal**

# Scripta Humanistica

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**Poet, Mystic, Modern Hero**

**Fernando Rielo Pardal**

**Zelda Irene Brooks**

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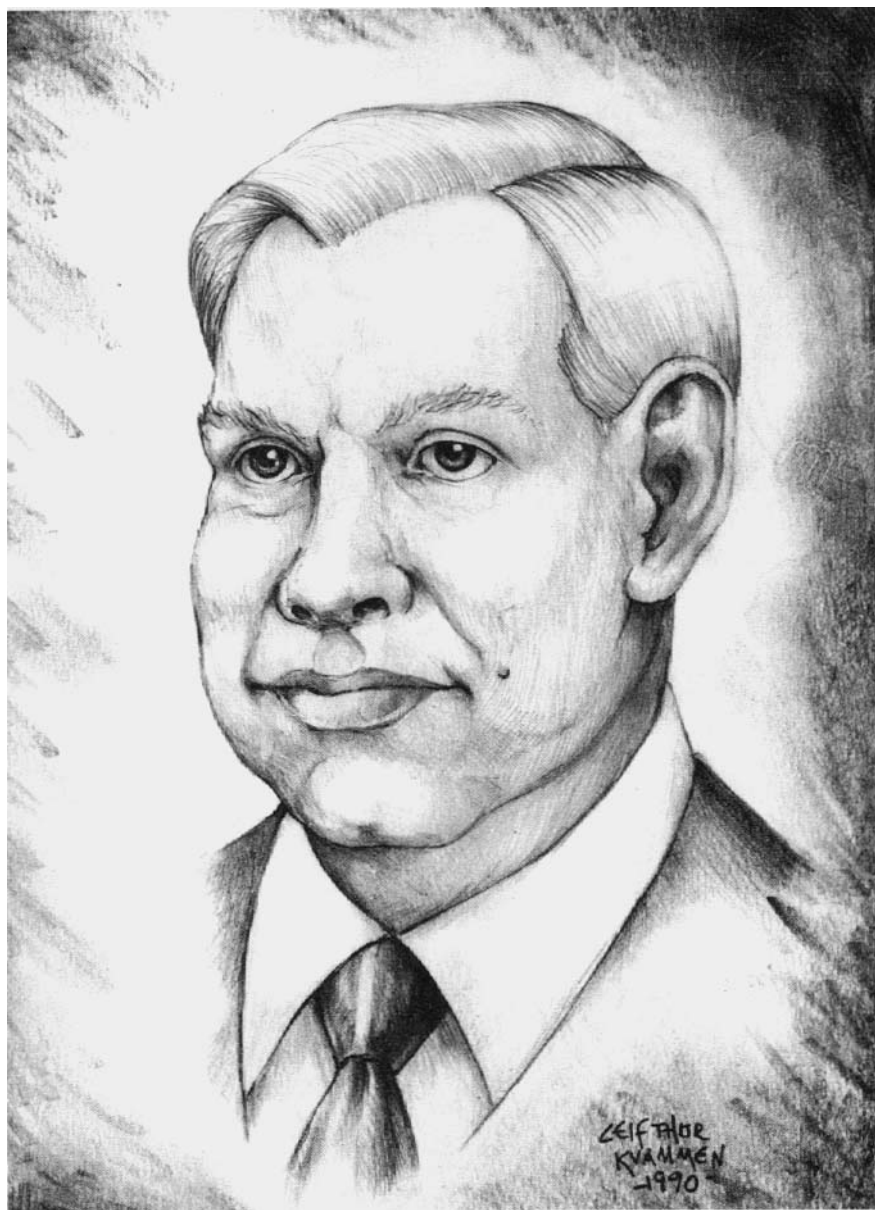
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*This Book is dedicated to my syster,  
Carol Suzanne Brooks*



**Fernando Rielo Pardal**  
**Drawing by Leif Kvammen**

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## **Note From The Author**

I have translated Fernando Rielo's exquisitely beautiful Spanish verse simply out of a desire to make available to those who do not read Spanish a fundamental sense of his poetry. I personally know many of his admirers who do not read Spanish and this has given me the courage to undertake this endeavor. Brackets represent the mark of my translations. Some quotes in prose from Spanish critics do not include the original Spanish. I have done all my own translations in order to present a consistent style. At times I felt intimidated, particularly when working with the poet's splendid sonnets where the English can only approach Rielo's mastery. Only their extraordinary lyric quality, the synthesis of symbol and theme, subdued my doubts and encouraged me to complete the project.

Eugene Nida, one of the foremost translators of the Bible, uses the term "dynamic equivalence" to define the tension inherent in a good translation. "Dynamic" favors the contextually appropriate target language, while "equivalent" stresses faithfulness to the original. Excess in the direction of dynamic renders only paraphrase, but excess towards equivalence can present an unnaturally literal, sometimes lifeless version. Translating mystical poetry from a language with a tradition of special symbols required more attention to equivalence. Because of the different system of values, as well as the different perspective of reality in the ancient words of Spanish mysticism, the translation is almost literal. And still, the original contains complex concepts, history and myth that cannot be fully rendered in English. Hopefully, the interpretative material of the text will make some of that clearer, but several volumes would have to be written to cover the breadth of language in this tradition.

Moreover, the power of the octasyllabic Spanish meter and the Spanish sonnet cannot be duplicated when translated into English. Equally elusive is Rielo's keen sense of the symbolic and psychological value in the interplay of "mystical words", a reinvention of language born of his genius. In spite of these limitations, I hope the pursuit of "dynamic equivalence" reflects my devotion to the poet and provides assistance to the English reader.

## Foreword

In ancient times, the term "Hero" referred to a man who watched over, a man who protected, a watchman. In the legends of mythology a hero was a man of great strength and courage, favored by the gods and in part descended from them. He was often regarded as a half-god and was worshipped after his death. Today a hero is simply a man admired for his courage, nobility, and achievements. (Webster)

Fernando Rielo is a modern hero and a living legend of the twentieth century. Few men in history have dedicated the whole of their energy, faith and devotion to the common good of mankind; Rielo is one of those men. His life's goal is a better world, a just and compassionate society, and his extraordinary strength and courage have enabled him to take important steps toward reaching that goal. He has established himself as an international civic and religious leader, having founded, to date (1990), centers and hospitals in eighteen nations in Latin America, North America, Europe, Africa, and the Middle East.

His efforts as a thinker and writer have produced masterpieces in various genres including philosophy, the essay, mystic poetry, proverbs, and literary criticism. His literary contributions have been highly praised by such respected critics and poets such as Dámaso Alonso, Jean Claude Renard, Zamora Vicente, Claude Couffon, García Nieto, Jaime Ferrán, Odón Betanzos, and Gazarian-Gautier.

Among the many titles of honor that belong to Fernando Rielo that of educator must be included. His philosophy, poetry, and other writings reveal the heart of a true educator who communicates with his readers on both cultural and personal levels and who challenges their

analytical skills. His insights open horizons onto new and expanded possibilities and values. Moral education and ethics assume their proper elevated position not only in his writings but also in the institutions that he has founded. Particularly important in this respect is the *Escuela Idente*, an international school that strives to teach young people to become citizens of the world, and to think clearly and thoroughly with deep understanding of the varied dimensions of moral and spiritual values. Drawing students and teachers together in a shared exploration of issues, Rielo's *Escuela Idente* engages in actual moral education, and develops in its students the characteristics of integrity, honesty, trustworthiness, courage, love, and the capacity to think for themselves. They are taught how to think, not what to think.

Fernando Rielo Pardal was born to Enrique and Pilar on the 28th of August in 1923 in Madrid, Spain. He spent his childhood in Madrid during difficult years of conflict and danger. His studies at the *Real Instituto de San Isidro* were interrupted by the Civil War. However, when the fighting was over he completed his studies there. He served for a brief period as a career officer, but a spiritual awakening changed his life abruptly and he began the studies in theology and philosophy which were to be his destiny. In 1957 he moved to Santa Cruz de Tenerife, the Spanish territory of the Canary Islands. In 1958 he published his first book of mystic poems called *Dios y árbol* [God and Tree].

In the preface to this first book of exquisite lyrical verse in the mystical tradition, Rielo explains to readers the fundamental meaning of his poetry:

Its meaning is that of a symbol, destiny, addressed to mankind as a whole; a destiny in which all men and women are forever installed. The theme of my poetry is destiny itself. Someone is the Absolute Subject of our loving destiny that even death cannot close. ("A la atención del lector", *Dios y árbol* 5)

This same preface clearly delineates Rielo's mystical vision of man as god, as hero--a vision derived from the aforementioned tradition of mythical legend:

I offer you, in summary, an image of God as the illustrious form of our destiny and of that which you are as a human being his tree; a tree

that is at the same time a God. I suppose you thus in my poetry, dear reader, as the deity you are and never less than that. ( 5)

This vision is grounded in the authority of Scripture by means of an allusion to John 10:33-6, where Jesus uses the term "gods" to describe those "unto whom the word of God came."<sup>1</sup>

Throughout Rielo's career, this vision has found expression not only in poetry but also in educational and civic work. In Tenerife in 1959, this vision led Rielo to found a Catholic institute of higher education, *Fundacion de Cristo Redentor e Instituto Id: Misioneros y misioneras Identes* [The Foundation of Christ the Redeemer and *Id* Institute: *Idente* Missionaries]. The majority of missionaries, who are members of this foundation, now extended throughout many nations, hold the Ph.D in both theology and philosophy as well as in a third field of specialization which varies according to individual talent and interest. Those fields include law, engineering, medicine, biology, chemistry, physics, pedagogy and literature among others. Fernando Rielo is affectionately called *Nuestro Padre Fundador* [Our Founding Father] by the extraordinarily talented and committed *Idente* missionaries. They live together in communities and respond to their founder's call: *Id*. *Id* is the plural imperative of the Spanish verb for *to go*: "Go forth" and heal the sick; feed the poor; educate the youth of the world in the humanities, the sciences, and the love of God. This is the mandate of the founding father and these are the life-tasks of his missionaries who could be called priests and sisters of the highest Catholic tradition. They continually renew their vows of poverty, chastity, and faith; they commit their lives to the service of God not only in prayer and liturgical practices but in active work in international education and health centers and parishes around the world. They take a special vow of academic excellence in order to prepare themselves academically and professionally to defend Christian ideals, the Catholic Church, and the honorable head of the Church in the person of Pope.

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1. The full text of John 10:33-6 reads as follows: "The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God. Jesus answered them. Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken; say ye of him, whom the father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, thou blasphemeth; because I said, I am the Son of God?"

Each of the Foundation Centers has weekly cultural events or athenaeums, usually on Sunday, when doors are open to the community and all may participate creatively in the writing and performing or reading of mystic poetry, music, drama, and philosophy. These events maintain the high standards of integrity, love and faith of the missionaries who have dedicated their lives to God.

Fernando Rielo's missionaries are united in their love of Jesus Christ as "the way, the truth and the life." Their purpose is to assist the international youth of today in reaching their full moral and spiritual, as well as intellectual, potential. They are modern day apostles who go forth to live and practice and teach the word of God wherever the Church might need them, dedicating to their institutions and congregations the ecumenical commitment of the founders of the Catholic Church.

Rielo's civic and educational projects also include the *Juventud Idente* [Idente Youth], a group whose goal is to draw together the highest cultural and moral ideals of the youth of many different countries, races, and beliefs in order to form a "universal parliament of youth." In addition, Rielo has recently founded a health association in Rome: *Asociación Sanitaria Fernando Rielo*. This foundation provides medical and civil assistance to the immigrants there.

Such civic, educational, and religious projects, however, have by no means diminished--indeed, have only strengthened--Rielo's commitment both to his personal literary vocation and to the encouragement of important literature worldwide. In 1978 Rielo published *Llanto azul* [Blue Sob], his most widely acclaimed book of mystic poetry. The following years were also intensively dedicated to poetry. In 1979 *Paisaje desnudo* [Naked Landscape] and *Pasión y muerte* [Passion and Death], two outstanding volumes of mystic poetry, were published, and in 1980 another in the classical mystic tradition called *Noche clara* [Clear Night].

By 1981, Rielo's intense passion for poetry and the arts brought about the founding of a cultural organization bearing his name: the Fernando Rielo Foundation. This foundation is a nonprofit organization recognized by the Spanish government that seeks to promote encounters among different traditions and cultures in Spain and internationally. In keeping with Rielo's personal humanistic aims and endeavors the principal aim of the foundation is the development

of humane values and the promotion of literature, especially mystic poetry, as well as of all the other arts at an international level.

The main activities of the Fernando Rielo Foundation are divided into different fields such as poetry, music, pedagogy, and philosophy, though it remains open to additions from other fields that might arise in the course of its ongoing work. Specifically, the Foundation organizes poetry readings, concerts, lectures, courses and other events, as well as sponsoring a diverse array of publishing projects. It also initiates and organizes gatherings that draw together literary, musical, and philosophical activities, and it participates actively in congresses and exhibitions at the local, national, and international level. The headquarters of the Foundation is in Madrid, but it maintains delegations in fifteen countries and collaborates with a large number of highly trained professionals who assist in all phases of organization and work. It has close ties with other foundations and organizations in Spain and around the world, and it actively pursues joint projects with various embassies and universities, as well as with UNESCO.

The section of the Fernando Rielo Foundation dedicated to poetry promotes poetic production as an expression of the profound sensibility possible in mankind in the face of a transcendent reality--a reality which as we have already seen, Rielo believes to be man's essential destiny. Poetry, according to this conception, can open the doors and initiate constructive dialogue between races, cultures, and differing constructions of reality; the fruit of poetry is peace. As Rielo puts it:

Man, the heir of opposing forces, when faced with peace and nonpeace, has not succeeded in choosing precisely what defines peace: poetry. I am referring to the great poetry of life and not at all to rhetoricized language lacking those spiritual values which are proper to the human soul. Peace is single, necessary, indivisible. Poetry is its richest language because it possesses a multiform world of images which movingly recreate our feelings.

In homage to this exalted conception of poetry, the Fernando Rielo Foundation includes within its program for the promotion of poetry the publication of the plurilingual international poetry journal *Equivalences*. This international literary journal is directed by the prestigious Spanish poet Justo Jorge Padrón, recipient this year of the Crown of Gold Poetry Prize of the International Poetry Festival held

at Struga, Yugoslavia. The journal focuses on current, unpublished poetry and has included contributions from internationally renowned poets and essayists such as Octavio Paz, Allen Ginsberg, Rafael Alberti, Léopold Sédar Senghor, and Jon Silkin, and Jorge Guillen to name but a few. The journal also seeks out young, still undiscovered poets whose talents warrant an international forum. Thus far *Equivalences* has attracted contributions from more than 120 poets representing such diverse nations as the United States, Spain, Yugoslavia, Malta, Rumania, Mexico, France, Germany, England, Scotland, Italy, Argentina, Chile, Perú, Colombia, Portugal, Belgium, and Nicaragua.

*Equivalences* employs an experienced team of translators, providing its readers with a completely bilingual Spanish-English text on facing pages, in addition to the native tongues of poets representing other language communities. The journal's high standards of content and format render it unique in international publishing. University circles are acclaiming its value for teaching comparative literature and linguistics as well as literary translation in the standard languages and the less commonly taught languages. The special recognition that this literary journal has been given by the academic community render it a necessary item for any public or private library concerned with contemporary poetry.

The publishing activities of the foundation are also responsible for the collection of contemporary Hispanic texts of the mystical tradition in poetry titled the *Sky Blue Collection*. This series includes poems awarded the World Prize for Mystical Poetry as well as those which, for their special literary value or as contributions to man's perennial heritage, deserve to be made available to interested readers.

The Fernando Rielo World Prize for Mystical Poetry [*Premio Mundial de Poesía Mística*] is given once a year; it consists of 600,000 pesetas (approximately \$6,000) and the publication of the winning entry. Rielo intends this prize to encourage a growing sensitivity to the celestial transcendence of the human spirit in the face of the materialism which powerfully conditions much contemporary thought and cultural production. The prerequisite for winning this prize is a demonstrated mastery of heightened spirituality in the context of authentic literary creation. Its ethical substance involves a poet's expression of his "condition" or "elevated state of being" as an implicit declaration of his state of "being in love" with God. Even works which

do not precisely fulfill these particularly difficult requirements, however, may still be considered for the award, as Rielo makes clear:

The stringency of this model should, however be tempered by human understanding and openness enabling the prize to be awarded to poets who, though distinguished more for their literary creativity than for their mystical wealth, contribute a sensibility worthy of respect. This prize is rooted in a mystical principle: to manage when the desired goal was not fulfilled, to give the prize, before declaring it void of a winner, to true poets who, although they cannot be classified as mystics in terms of a typical definition, nevertheless dream buried [*sepultados*] in a datum essential to art: the mystery of suffering is the poet's companion.

This prize does not discriminate by sex, age, nationality or race. The foundation that awards it actively supports women's rights and recognition in the arts. In 1982, for example, the World Prize for Mystical Poetry was awarded to Blanca Andreu for her book *Báculo de Babel* [Babel Staff]; Andreu's importance and influence in contemporary Spanish literature was confirmed that same year when she received the ADONIS prize for poetry, Spain's most prestigious poetry award, for her book *De una niña de provincia que se vino a vivir en un chagal* [Of a provincial girl who came to live in a Chagall]. Rielo's statement about the Mystical Poetry Prize's recognition of "the mystery of suffering" is borne out by Andreu's description of *Babel Staff* in a pamphlet from the IV European Congress of Poetry in Louvain as "a long poem, a delirium written in two days and originally intended to be a letter for a certain person. There is mention of love, of solitude; I try to subject the dispersion of languages-hence the title- and submerge myself in identity, in my own internal chaos...." (n. pag.)

Other cultural activities of the Fernando Rielo Foundation include the International Institute of Music, designed to teach Pianistic techniques under the direction of the celebrated professor Américo Caramuta; the Seminar on Thought, initiated with a seminar on Spanish thought; prizes for foreign students in cooperation with diplomatic missions; and courses and awards in collaboration with UNESCO for young people from countries other than Spain studying Spanish language and literature. The Foundation works intensively to bring foreign artists into Spain and also to promote Spanish authors in other countries.



Through the Fernando Rielo Foundation and through the publication of his own poetry (the latest volumes being *Balcón a la bahía* [Balcony on the Bay], 1989, and *Dolor entre cristales* [Pain within Panes], 1990, Rielo has done much to make a wide range of important literary work available to the general public. In contrast, however, his voluminous writings on philosophy are largely still unpublished and thus unavailable to a wide audience. This is doubly unfortunate since, as I will show in a later chapter, Rielo's philosophical thought undoubtedly marks an important turning point in the history of philosophy in general and is unprecedented in Spanish philosophical writings to date. His most important contribution as a writer in terms of revolutionary thought and in sheer volume is in the field of philosophy. He has written some 200 volumes of philosophy which are only now coming to press. His genetic concept of metaphysics has been examined and debated at several international conferences of the United Nations, the Organization of American States, and UNESCO as well as at various universities and cultural centers in the United States, France, Italy, and Spain. Some of the titles of the papers presented at these conferences include the following: "Concepción mística del hombre" ["Mystical Conception of Man"]; "Teoría estética" ["Aesthetic Theory"]; "Concepción genética del infinito" ["Genetic Conception of the Infinite"]; "Plateresco, mensaje inédito" ["Plateresque, Unpublished Message"]; "Ser y verdad" ["Being and Truth"]; "Concepción genética de la metafísica" ["Genetic Conception of Metaphysics"]; "Concepción genética de la ética" ["Genetic Conception of Ethics"]; "Concepción genética del derecho" ["Genetic Conception of Law"]; "Teología metafísica" ["Metaphysical Theology"]; and "Teología Física" ["Physical Theology"]. Rielo's critical studies on the principles of identity, metaphysics, and logic are compiled in a manuscript titled "Crítica a los sistemas filosóficos y escuelas teológicas" ["Critique of Philosophical Systems and Theological Schools."] Other manuscripts include studies of various disciplines viewed from the perspective of genetic metaphysics. His latest philosophical contribution, published in 1990, sprang from the meetings of the *Aula de Pensamiento* of the Fernando Rielo Foundation. Titled *Existe una filosofía española? Raíces y valores históricos del pensamiento español* [Is There a Spanish Philosophy? Roots and Historic Values of Spanish Thought], it provides a synthesis of Fernando Rielo's philosophic thought in a single volume.

One of Rielo's most original ideas is found in a collection of his essays called *Teoría del Quijote: Su mística hispánica* now found in

English translation as *Theory of Don Quijote: Its Hispanic Mysticism*. As the title suggests, Rielo argues in these essays that the *Ingenioso Hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha* represents the passage of Spanish mysticism into the novel. Although the verbal and stylistic brilliance of these essays (and especially the innovative metaphysical and mystical terms they deploy) would alone suffice to make them a masterpiece of literary criticism, their most important contribution lies in their vision of Spain and its cultural projection into the world. Rielo not only examines Quijotism but presents a vision of the essence of Don Quijote as manifested throughout Hispanic literature and culture. He goes beyond Quijote by means of a literary intervention which brings to life the significance of Spanish cultural values. This intervention consists in a convincing revelation of mysticism as the keynote to the interpretation of Hispanic culture. What is the core, the heart of Spanish culture? For the answer to this question, Rielo argues, one must turn to the mystics and, more specifically, to the *Quijote* as a mystical novel.

The innovative force and importance of Rielo's recently translated study of Cervantes, especially for English-language readers, can be gauged by placing it in the context of the overall range of Cervantes criticism available in English. First, one is forced to conclude that the axiom with which the Cambridge guide to the *Literature of the Spanish People* begins its Cervantes chapter--"A curious thing about Spanish literature is that it travels badly" (175)--applies doubly to Spanish criticism in English. For aside from the work of Salvador de Madariaga and Savi López, much of the most important Spanish criticism of Cervantes remains untranslated, including Menéndez Pidal's *Cervantes y Lope de Vega*, Juan Arbo's *Cervantes*, and works by José María Asensio y Toledo and Manuel Azaña. Second, critical studies in English are relatively few in number, and many are outdated.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, such studies tend to focus on somewhat peripheral topics, such as customs, stylistics, how to teach Cervantes, the author's

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2. Much of the English-language work on Cervantes was done decades ago, with the result that most of it is out of print. See Bell, Bernadete and Flores, Entwistle, Ford and Lansing, and Grisner. Happily, works by Schevill, Watts, and Fitzmaurice-Kelly have been reprinted. However, H.R. Hays' translation of Juan Ramón Jiménez essays does not include Cervantes in its selection from Jiménez portraits of writers. More recent English-language studies include Church, Close, Green, Mosely, Torbert, and Wilson. One should also note the Cervantes Society of America's journal *Cervantes*.

feminist sensibilities, and even such things as place-names. The Cambridge and the Chandler and Schwartz histories of Spanish literature devote a good deal of space to Cervantes' absurdist wit, revolutionary psychology, and taming of what they take to be innate Spanish fanaticism. Treating *Don Quixote* as a wonderful travelogue of seventeenth-century Spain, they document Cervantes' sketchy education and deep knowledge of the common people, considering him an ordinary man who became a sort of social critic. They call *Don Quijote* the "tragedy of reformers" and document its power as a chronicle of moral education.

As my use of the term "document" suggests, the major problem with most English-language works on Cervantes and *Don Quijote* is that they treat both author and character not as what Benedetto Croce would have called "monuments," but rather as "documents," as measurements or milestones of something else. Furthermore, I have not found a single work dealing with the mysticism of Cervantes. The only mention that the Cambridge history makes is negative, calling *Don Quijote* an "epistemological riddle ... without a trace of mysticism" (191). Chandler and Schwartz devote many pages to mysticism, mostly the Siglo de Oro classics such as Fray Luis de León, San Juan de la Cruz, and Santa Teresa de Jesús, but Cervantes is conspicuously absent from those pages.

The exceptional value and importance of Rielo's *Theory of Don Quijote* thus lies in its tracing a fundamental and historically constant core of mysticism through all the various dimensions of Hispanic culture as well as through that culture's historical evolution. The study follows the course of Spanish mystical thought from its most remote origins in the *Devotio Iberica* [a sacred oath for life in favor of the other members of the community]; through the Silver Age of the Visigoths, as exemplified by St. Isidore; and into the Golden Age of the famed Spanish mystics Santa Teresa and San Juan de la Cruz to set the parameters for an original interpretation of *Don Quijote*.

As this brief survey of his career shows, Fernando Rielo's civic and educational projects, his art, his critical studies, and his philosophy form a harmonious unity. There is no division, no fragmentation. We see in Don Rielo a true modern hero, a man who balances perfectly the concerns of heart, mind, body, and spirit. His life itself is unitive, inclusive, and expansive. He has not isolated himself behind the walls of his own competitive desires and achievements. Rather, his work in

all fields forms a continuing expression of his love of mankind, nature, the universe, and God--the love mirrored in his extraordinary poetry. That poetry's radical challenge: the possibility of a world without brutality, hatred, violence, misery, and confusion. The new world envisioned in that poetry--a world where love *is*, where compassion *is*--constitutes Rielo's gift to the reader. Creating such a world, as Rielo's poetry shows, involves entering into the root meaning of passion as sorrow. Poetic movement begins with sorrow; the sorrow is embraced and absorbed until it turns into passion and passion in turn becomes love. In this Rielo's thought parallels the thought of Eckhardt, the German mystic: "God is in all things. He is the light that shines when the veil is rent." Or as Rielo himself puts it, "Si quieres llegar a sabio, detente en el misterio que tú eres" ["If you wish to become wise, dwell upon the mystery you are"]; (*Transfigurations* 84). Fernando Rielo is not only a modern hero; he is also the Prince from the ancient fairy tale who has come into his own and the door is shut; he works his magic.

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# I

## Poetry As Communication

To establish the setting of the present study let us begin with a passage from a poem collected in Fernando Rielo's 1990 volume *Dolor entre cristales* [*Pain within Panes*]. Written and set in New York City, this poem explores the problems faced by poetry as a communicative act in the contemporary social world:

[The sky in New York rain of planes  
kidnapped by stars and truths;  
it seems like a Hollywood movie:  
each plane an actor with makeup.

And why go further than Earth  
if the moon has its banner?  
the moon will fall too at the end of the world  
dragging scenery before it.

The fall of those idols of sky  
concludes that death is worth nothing:  
not even the vile price of a dollar  
that an absent-minded man finds in his pothole.

This sunset of the sky on our earth  
is premonition of the fleeting instant  
that velocity can neither wash nor extinguish:  
only space and its air subsist.

Technology cannot reach my soul  
although stars and galaxy reach:  
my only star is much, much farther  
with her invisible step of lover wing.

Only I know it because it is mine:  
You gave me a 6th of January, Father  
that star that guided the Three Wise Men  
and that dries my sob in this valley

It goes out on me it is true, sometimes  
and appears again incessant light  
when pain reaches my lament  
and in breathed love I continue my travel...

How to exclaim that technology and Creation  
are distant from the invulnerable end  
of my destiny in perfumed sob  
that now no longer sheds tear nor blood?

Then I will be bird of your happiness  
and in my feathers you will see your blue semblance:  
this hour, finally, will recreate the intactile  
kiss for that which You, Father, created me.]

El cielo en Nueva York lluvia de aviones  
por secuestro de estrellas y verdades;  
parece una película de Hollywood:  
cada avión, un actor con maquillaje.

¿para qué ir más lejos de la tierra  
si la luna tiene su estandarte?  
caerá también la luna al fin del mundo  
arrastrando escenario por delante.

La caída de estos ídolos del cielo  
concluye que la muerte nada vale:  
ni siquiera el precio ínfimo de un dólar  
que un hombre despistado halla en un bache.