

Amor Ideal

(Ideal Love)

Carmen Hernández

Translated by
Dr. Myriam Borges Thompson



Royal Fireworks Press
Unionville, New York

Copyright © 2018
Royal Fireworks Publishing Co., Inc.
All Rights Reserved.
Royal Fireworks Press
P.O. Box 399, 41 First Avenue
Unionville, NY 10988-0399
(845) 726-4444
fax: (845) 726-3824
email: mail@rftp.com
website: rftp.com



ISBN: 978-0-89824-586-8

Printed and bound in Unionville, New York,
on acid-free paper using vegetable-based
inks at the Royal Fireworks facility.

All rights to this play, including performing rights, are
protected by copyright. Producers, professional and amateur,
are advised that performance rights cover not only production
but professional readings. Permission is required
to perform any section of this play.

Inquiries about performance rights
should be addressed to Royal Fireworks Press.

Whenever the play is performed, the program must contain
the following information: “The text of the play is found in
Ideal Love: Carmen Hernández,
translated by Dr. Myriam Borges Thompson,
Royal Fireworks Press, 2017.”

Cover photo:
A View of Seville, seventeenth century,
by an anonymous artist



25o17 ps

Contents

Acknowledgments	7
Preface	9
Introduction: A Brief History of Early Latin American and Puerto Rican Literature	13
A Woman Named Carmen, <i>Expósita</i>	17
Reading the Dramatic Text of <i>Ideal Love</i>	27
Dramatis Personae	32
<i>Amor Ideal/Ideal Love</i>	34
Act I	34
Act II	126
Act III.	190
Glossary	243
Highlights of the History of Puerto Rico	249
About the Author	257



*Palace of the Dueñas
Residence for the Duchess of Alba, Seville*

Qué cuando el amor no es locura,
no es amor.

*When love is not madness,
it is not love.*

– Pedro Calderón de la Barca



*Old church in a Spanish village
near Santiago, Spain
Photo by Myriam Borges Thompson*

Acknowledgments

In translating this play, I gave preference to the English words that were most similar to the Spanish original, both in sound and meaning. In the Spanish text, I used modern spelling only when necessary for clarity.

I appreciate the editing assistance of Michael Clay Thompson, my husband, an attentive and enthusiastic reader of my work whose support and knowledge of the English language made him an invaluable asset. The transgressions and mishaps that afflict these pages I reached on my own.

I also wish to express my gratitude to David M. Strachan for his assistance in transcribing the play from a printed document to digital form, and for his valuable questions and comments about the text.

– Dr. Myriam Borges Thompson



Palacio de Mañara, Seville

Preface

When we read, we search for familiar words, structures of grammar, and ideas that provide us with understanding and enjoyment of what we are reading. To achieve understanding in a non-native language, however, the learner must make room in his or her mind for a different set of symbolic hierarchies, word associations, grammar structures, and syntactic arrangements. At the highest level of learning a foreign language, we find, traditionally, the study and appreciation of literature. Literature requires for exegesis the use of everything the student has learned: the vocabulary and grammar structure, certainly, but also the history, culture, and—most importantly—the world view and sensitivities that encompass the human experience of a particular group of people. Thus, to learn a foreign language is to acquire a new perspective of the world.

Due to the difficulty of the task, the study of literature in the foreign language classroom is typically relegated to abbreviated or simplified versions of prose and poetic expressions. Emphasis is placed on the study of vocabulary, the answers to yes or no questions, and the completion of simple activities. In some cases, it is not until the student reaches college that he or she encounters literature in its original form.

I advocate a different approach. I think we must introduce foreign language students to as much literature as possible from the beginning. Let us captivate students' imaginations and hearts through one of the most beautiful artistic expressions in any language: literature.

As an artistic form of expression, literature demands its own set of interpretive skills. A good story can be told

in a particular way due to the influences of a particular artistic period and the choices of the artist, but that same story can also be understood and appreciated in a number of other ways by people who read it years after it was first published and in places other than those familiar to the author.

If we add to this equation the subjective interference of a translator, then we multiply the possibilities of meanings, extend the story's realm of conflicts, and possibly even alter the end result. Nonetheless, reading a translation of *La vida es sueño* (*Life Is a Dream*) by the Spanish playwright Pedro Calderón de la Barca (1600–1681), for example, is far better for students than not even being aware of the existence of the play until they reach college.

In Calderón's plays, when the characters face life's tragedies, there is an exquisite representation of the profound stoicism that Spanish speakers identify with even to this day. When I was a young student, I—like many other students in the Spanish-speaking world—had to memorize Segismundo's soliloquy from Act II of *La vida es sueño* expressing stoic resignation to destiny. Here is the original:

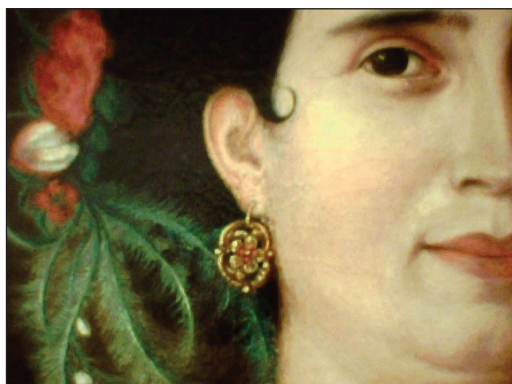
¿Qué es la vida? Un frenesí. ¿Qué es la vida? Una ilusión, una sombra, una ficción, y el mayor bien es pequeño; que toda la vida es sueño, y los sueños, sueños son.

I would translate it this way:

What is life? A frenzy. What is life? An illusion, a shadow, a fiction, where the greatest gift is a small one, because all of life is a dream, and the dreams are dreams.

We know that literature as an art form offers readers the possibility of forming connections to other people's life experiences and viewpoints. But the study of a foreign language remains alien and distant until that language becomes a part of one's mind and spirit. What better tool to accomplish that than literature?

This book contains Carmen Hernández's brilliant play in verse *Ideal Love* (1866), a wonderful example of literature from the Spanish-speaking world. It is printed here in the original, with facing pages of translated text so that readers fluent in Spanish can appreciate the work in its native form, and yet readers who are not speakers of Spanish are not excluded from the experience of reading Hernández's play. Its subject matter and themes of love, honor, and justice are as pertinent today as they were in Hernández's time. Few people have ever seen *Ideal Love*; the play has never before been translated into English, and it has not received critical attention since Hernández's death.



Carmen Hernández



The walled city of San Juan



The walled city of Seville