

Poema de Sete Faces
Carlos de Drummond de Andrade, 1930

Quando nasci, um anjo torto
desses que vivem na sombra
disse: Vai, Carlos, ser *gauche* na vida.

As casas espiam os homens
que correm atrás das mulheres.
A tarde talvez fosse azul
não houvesse tantos desejos.

O bonde passa cheia de pernas:
pernas brancas pretas amarelas.
Para que tanta perna, meu Deus, pergunta meu coração.
Porém meus olhos
não perguntam nada.

O homem atrás do bigode
é sério, simples e forte.
Quase não conversa.
Tem poucos, raros amigos
o homem atrás dos óculos e do bigode.

Meu Deus, por que me abandonaste
se sabias que eu não era Deus
se sabias que eu era fraco.

Mundo mundo vasto mundo
se eu me chamasse Raimundo
seria uma rima, não uma solução.
Mundo mundo vasto mundo,
mais vasto é meu coração.

Eu não devia te dizer,
mas essa lua
mas essa conhaque
botam a gente comovido como o diabo.

Poem of Seven Faces

trans. John A. Nist, 1965

When I was born, a twisted angel,
one of those who live in the shadow,
said: Go, Carlos! Be *gauche* in life.

The houses spy on men
men chase after women.
The evening might have been blue,
Had there not been so many desires.

The streetcar passes by full of legs:
white, black, yellow legs.
My God, my heart asks, why so many legs?

And yet my eyes
question nothing.

The man behind the mustache
is serious, simple and strong.
He seldom talks.
He has a few, rare friends,
the man behind the glasses and the
mustache.

My Lord, why did you abandon me
since you knew that I wasn't God
since you knew that I was weak.

World, world, vast world,
if my name was Twirled
it'd be a rhyme, it wouldn't be a solution.
World, world, vast world,
even vaster is my heart.

I shouldn't tell you
but this moon
but this cognac
shake a person up like hell.

John A. Nist, trans., *In The Middle of the Road; Selected Poems of Carlos Drummond de Andrade* (Tucson: U of Arizona P, 1965), p. 17.

Seven-Sided Poem

trans. Elizabeth Bishop, 1969

When I was born, one of the crooked
angels who live in shadow, said:
Carlos, go on! Be *gauche* in life.

The houses watch the men
men who run after women.
If the afternoon had been blue,
there might have been less desire.

The trolley goes by full of legs:
white legs, black legs, yellow legs.
My God, why all the legs?
my heart asks. But my eyes
ask nothing at all.

The man behind the moustache
is serious, simple, and strong.
He hardly ever speaks.
He has a few, choice friends,
the man behind the spectacles and
the moustache.

My God, why hast Thou forsaken me
If Thou knew'st I was not God,
if Thou knew'st that I was weak?

Universe, vast universe,
if I had been named Eugene
that would not be what I mean
but it would go into verse
faster.
Universe, vast universe,
my heart is vaster.

I oughtn't to tell you,
but this moon
and this brandy
play the devil with one's emotions.

Elizabeth Bishop, trans., in Bishop and Emanuel Brasil, eds., *An Anthology of Twentieth-Century Brazilian Poetry* (Middletown: Wesleyan UP, 1972), p. 63.

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Poem of Seven Facets

trans. Duane Ackerson & Ricardo Sternberg, 1972

When I was born, a crooked angel,
One of those who inhabit shadows,
Said: Go Carlos! Be *gauche* in life.

The houses look at men
Who run after women.
The afternoon might be clear
If it weren't for so many desires.

The tram goes by, full of legs:
Legs, white, black, yellow.
My God! Why so many legs, my
heart asks.
My eyes however,
Ask nothing.

The man behind the moustache
Is serious, simple and strong.
Talks very little.
He has few friends,
The man behind the glasses and
moustache.

My God, why did you abandon me
When you knew I was no God
When you knew I was too weak.

World world vast Globe
If my name was Job
It would be a rhyme not a solution
World world vast world
My heart is vaster

I shouldn't tell you
But this moon
This cognac
Move me like the devil.

Duane Ackerson and Ricardo Sternberg, trans., *The Dragonfly* 3.1 (Spring 1972): 83.

Seven Sided Poem

trans. Mark Strand, 1976

When I was born, one of those
crooked angels who live in shadow
said: Go on, Carlos, be *gauche* in life.

The houses look out on men
chasing after women.
If the afternoon were blue
there might be less desire.

The trolley passes full of legs:
white, black, yellow legs.
My God, my heart asks, why so many
legs.
But my eyes
ask nothing.

The man behind the mustache
is serious, simple, and strong.
He hardly talks.
He has few and precious friends,
the man behind the glasses and the
mustache.

My God, why hast Thou forsaken me.
Thou knewest I wasn't God
Thou knewest how weak I was.

World, wide world,
if my name were Harold
it might be a rhyme
but no answer.
World, wide world,
my heart is bigger
than you are.

I shouldn't tell you
but this moon
and this cognac
are hell on a person's feelings.

Mark Strand, trans., *Souvenir of the Ancient World by Carlos Drummond de Andrade* (Montreal: Antaeus Editions, 1976), p. 2.

Heptagonal Poem

trans. Jack Tomlins, 1978

When I was born, an unjust angel
—one of those who dwell in the shades—
said: Go forth, Carlos! Be *gauche* in life.

Houses spy on men
who chase after women.
The afternoon would perhaps be blue,
were there not so many desires.

The streetcar passes full of legs:
Legs white black yellow
Why so many legs, good God, my
heart asks.

But my eyes
ask not a thing.

The man behind the moustache
is glum, simple and strong.
He speaks almost not at all.
His friends are few and far between
the man behind the spectacles and
moustache.

My God, why hast Thou forsaken me
if Thou knewest I was not God
if Thou knewest that I was frail.

World world wide world
if my name were Harold
'twould be a kind of rhyme,
but no solution.

World world wide world
wider still my heart.

I really shouldn't tell you this
but that moon
but that cognac
turn me on like the very devil.

Jack Tomlins, trans., *Literary Review*
21.2 (Winter 1978): 167.

Poem With Seven Faces

rans. Virginia de Araújo, 1980

When I was born, a crooked angel
the kind that lives in shadow
said: Go, Carlos, be *gauche* in life.

The houses mount surveillance
on the woman-chasers.
Maybe if the afternoon were blue
there would be fewer desires.

The trolley passes packed with legs:
white legs, black and yellow ones.
Why so many legs, my God, my
heart asks.

However my eyes
raise no questions.

The man behind the mustache
is serious, strong and simple.
He hardly talks.
He has few, precious friends
the man behind the glasses and
mustache.

My God, why hast Thou forsaken me
knowing I wasn't God
knowing how weak I am.

Sphere sphere vast sphere
if I were a sonneteer
it would be a rhyme, not a solution.
Sphere sphere vast sphere
More vast is my emotion.

I oughtn't to tell you
but this moon
but this cognac
work on a man's feelings like a devil.

Virginia De Araújo, trans., *The Minus
Sign, Selected Poems by Carlos
Drummond de Andrade* (Redding
Ridge, CT: Black Swan Books, 1980),
p. 45-46.

Poem of Seven Faces

trans. Frederick C. Williams, 1996

When I was born, a crooked angel
of the kind that lives in shadows
said: Go, Carlos! be *gauche* in life.

The houses spy on men
who chase after women.
If the evening perhaps were blue,
there wouldn't be so many desires.

The street-car passes full of legs:
white legs black yellow.
Why so many legs, dear God, asks
my heart.
But my eyes
don't question a thing.

The man behind the mustache
is serious, uncomplicated and strong.
He almost never converses.
He has few, very few friends
the man behind the glasses and the
mustache.

My God, why have you abandoned me
if you knew I wasn't God
if you knew I was weak.

World world wide wide world
if I had been christened McEarld
it would be a rhyme, it wouldn't be a
solution, though.
World world wide wide world,
my heart is much wider I know.

I shouldn't tell you
but that moon
but that cognac
put one in a crazy mood.

Frederick C. Williams, ed. and trans.,
in *Brazil's Finest Poets: A Bilingual
Selection* (Santa Barbara, CA:
Jorge de Sena Center for
Portuguese Studies, 1996), p. 223.

Seven-sided poem

trans. Richard Zenith, 2015

When I was born, one of those twisted
angels who live in the shadows said:
"Carlos, get ready to be a misfit in life!"

The houses watch the men
who chase after women.
If desire weren't so rampant,
the afternoon might be blue.

The passing streetcar's full of legs:
white and black and yellow legs.
My heart asks why, my God, so many
legs?
My eyes, however,
ask no questions.

The man behind the moustache
is serious, simple, and strong.
He hardly ever talks.
Only a very few are friends
with the man behind the glasses and
moustache.

My God, why have you forsaken me
if you knew that I wasn't God,
if you knew that I was weak.

World so large, world so wide,
if my name were Clyde,
it would be a rhyme but not an answer.
World so wide, world so large,
my heart's even larger.

I shouldn't tell you,
but this moon
but this brandy
make me sentimental as hell.

Richard Zenith, trans., *Multitudinous
Heart: Selected Poems by Carlos
Drummond de Andrade* (New York:
Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2015), p. 3.

Poem of Seven Faces

trans. Anne Connor, 2016

When I was born, a crooked angel,
one of those who live in the shadow,
said: Go on, Carlos! be *gauche* in life.

The houses spy on men
who chase after women.
The afternoon might be blue
If there weren't so many desires.

The trolley passes by full of legs:
legs white and black and yellow
Why so many legs, my God, asks my heart.
However my eyes
don't ask a thing.

The man behind the mustache
is serious, simple and strong.
He almost never converses.
He has few, rare friends
the man behind the glasses and mustache.

My God, why did you abandon me
if you knew I wasn't God
if you knew I was weak.

World world vast world
if my name were Earl
it would be a rhyme, but not a solution.
World world vast world,
more vast is my heart's resolution.

I shouldn't have told you,
but that moon
but that cognac
play the devil with one's emotions.

Note from *Delos*: A concession has been made to symmetry in setting the original and translations of the "Poema de sete faces." In each two-page spread, additional blank lines have been inserted between stanzas to allow the first lines of each stanza to align across the pages.