

The Cigar Taster

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Life curls through the air like carnival streamers,
the frills of white skirts on *chicas*
shaken before men like the bullfighter's cape,
then pulled back, cruelly, like curtains.
Feet mirroring hands on drums, fluttering
like moths, hips sketching circles
that screw their way heavenwards.
How I loved as a young man!
The Cohiba - spicy as any Cuban *chica*,
her guava, papaya, banana teasing the tongue.
Such freshness. Morning, when I wake, the scent
of rum lingering, the washing hung out like flags
of celebration; noon, when brown stubs measure
the day half gone and yet to come; evening,
when I leave the factory, two Cohibas for home.
At night the day grows to maturity – the *maracas*,
the *bongos*, *guitarras* infect, the chant of the *son* summons.
The *cigarra* performs her best seduction. Oh, how I love!
The richest leaves are at the top, near the sun's caresses.
I know the very plantation –the kiss of bonnet chillis,
the bite of honey. All I want is in the *cigarra*;
mi muchacha, mi mujer, mi corazon, mi vida.
The cowboy dies with his boots on. I shall die
a Cohiba in my mouth, and two in my pocket for the after.

* a Cohiba is a type of Cuban cigar.