

A Cueca Chilena Sequence

Paul Brooke

BRIEF NOTE: A cueca is a ritual courtship dance. Most poems are in Cueca Chilena with the syllables running 9/7/9/7/8/9/9/9 with an abcBBded rhyme scheme. In the fifth line, it must begin with a "Yes."

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: Paul Brooke is the author of five books of poetry. This work is part of his newest manuscript: Finding Meteorites in Antarctica: Form Poems from Seven Continents. He travels to Chile to photograph pumas and other wildlife for the images for this book.

Huemul (1)

—a Cueca Chilena

A young girl wrapped herself in herself,
reading under fir verdure,
near her tiny house. Whole days friendless.

A young stag with gorgeous antlers.

Yes, a young stag with gorgeous antlers
cozied up and bedded down near her.

She scooped over, touching velvet tines,
stroking soft ears, caressing curled fur.

Quirquincho Peludo (2)

—a Cueca Chilena

She unhurriedly unwound, sketching
woodpeckers, rock earthcreepers
and armadillos. A Quirquincho

unrolled from a ball, reassured,

yes, unrolled from a ball, reassured,

not fainthearted around multitudes.

With drawing, the girl unfurled further,
ending her enduring solitude.

Misguided in the Andes (1)

—a Cueca Chilena

Brothers rebuffed. *El hombre llorò.*

No penguins at Isla Foca.

Fogged in mountains at Torres del Paine.

The guide never tracked pumas,

Si, the guide never tracked pumas.

But unlocked rocks and faced ice-shard winds.

The man regretted his feeble choice,
blazed a trail himself through the unkind.

Stolen Passport (2)

—a Cueca Chilena

Safe in his hotel room ransacked.

Man scours grasses for cache

under Blue Towers' hocked hills.

Winds slant him like a backslash.

Yes, winds slant him like a backslash.

Guanacos graze in small herds.

Stone broke without prospect, in limbo,
he imagines suicide, unnerved

No Rut No Trail No Passage (3)*—a Cueca Chilena***"No, dad, I don't want to talk to you."**

He wanders among blue stones,
rag winds and snow. No one to follow.
Zigzagging through ribs and gnawed bones.
Yes, zigzagging through ribs and gnawed bones.
Strip down and freeze? Step off cliff and fall?

"Will she cry silently? Sob wildly?"**Will she think fondly of me at all?"****Andean Condor (4)***—a Cueca Chilena***At first foul taint of me, they uplift.**

Catching thermals, priest-condors
circle. No, I do not have much time:
guanaco with leg ensnared,
yes, guanaco with leg ensnared.
From black lichen rock, condors descend.

My distressing cries their cue to cull.**Bedridden, rotten, I am condemned.****Chatter Marks (5)***—a Cueca Chilena***Shivering, he sought divine flashpoint.**

Obscured by snow, he decays,
inconsolable, resigned to die.
Then, a puma charged its prey.
Yes, then a puma charged its prey,
wrestling a guanaco down boulders,
nearly colliding with the shocked man
His wick once primed and inert, smoldered.

Guanaco Kill (6)*—a Cueca Chilena***Jolted, he wanted to live again.**

Puma pulled and peeled the hide
and ate her fill of the deep red meat,
knew suffering and stepped aside.
Yes, knew suffering and stepped aside.
Kneeling at the carcass, bowing down,
he ate to satiate while she stood,
sentient; her cubs bounded around.

Ghost of the Andes (7)*—a Cueca Chilena***Her tongue combed his hair and cleaned the blood.**

It raked away his despair.
She tended to him, mother to cub.
White whiskers tickled his ear.
Yes, white whiskers tickled his ear.
Her claws napped contently tucked in paws;
her long tail curled like a treble clef,
her fur velour, her eyes nebulas.

Torpidity (8)*—a Cueca Chilena***Benumbed by ten thousand calories**

and curled in a cave comatose,
he undulated under thundersnow.
Warm bodies dispersed best dose.
Yes, warm bodies dispersed best dose.
Their throated purrs drowned sound, silencers.
His atoms vibrated, thrilled children.
He slept, swaddled in sea of fur.

Pantagrueian (9)*—a Cueca Chilena***The recharged man was a neutrino,**

weight once zero, trail prolonged
in this universe, pulled from black hole,
his darkest matter restored.
Yes, his darkest matter restored.
Sunlight traveled straight through his body.
His gray shadow flipped from strange to charmed.
His dead forest turned to luscious trees.