

Olavo Bilac (1865–1918, Brazil)

Born in Rio de Janeiro, Bilac did not meet his father, who was a military surgeon participating in the Paraguay War, until he was five years old. Profoundly affected by the war, he became an active nationalist, twice imprisoned, in 1892 and 1894, for his protests against President Floriano Peixoto. His sonnets and clear simple style won over the public who elected him the prince of Brazilian poets in 1907. He also founded the Academia Brasileira de Letras and was a member of the Academia de Ciências de Lisboa. In his early days, he focused on the themes of sexuality and physical beauty. Later his themes deepened to include war, the indigénous Brazilian, death, and aging. PRINCIPAL WORK: *Poesias, 1884–1887* (1888)

Portuguese Language / Língua portuguesa

Odile Cisneros, trans.

Latium's last flower, lovely and wild,
You are at once splendor and tomb:
Native gold, the ore subsumes,
Coarse mine in gravel, undefiled . . .

I love you so, unknown, obscure,
Loud-clanging trumpet, simple lyre.
You have the hiss of tempests and the fire,
Tender *saudade*, lullaby's allure!

I love your rural rankness and your scent
Of virgin forests and of boundless seas!
I love you, oh rough language of lament,

In which I heard a mother's call "My son!"
In which Camões in bitter exile wept
His ill-starred genius and lackluster love!

Última flor do Lácio, inculta e bela,/ És, a um tempo, esplendor e sepultura:/
Ouro nativo, que na ganga impura/ A bruta mina entre os cascalhos vela . . .//
Amo-te assim, desconhecida e obscura,/ Tuba de alto clangor, lira singela,/
Que tens o trom e o silvo da procela,/ E o arrollo da saudade e da ternura!//
Amo o teu viço agreste e o teu aroma/ De virgens selvas e de oceano largo!/
Amo-te, ó rude e doloroso idioma,// Em que da voz materna ouvi: "Meu
filho!"/ E em que Camões chorou, no exílio amargo,/ O gênio sem ventura e
o amor sem brilho!