

On the Way to School

I rode my bicycle to school.
Along a peaceful street that ran through the center of the noble mysterious
city.
I rode by, surrounded by lights, and the carriages made no noise.
They passed, majestic, pulled by distinguished bays or chestnuts that
moved with a proud bearing.
How they lifted their hooves as they went along, like gentlemen, precise,
not disdaining the world, but studying it
from the sovereign grace of their manes!
And inside, what? Old ladies, scarcely a little more than lace,
silent ornaments, stuck-up hairstyles, ancient velvet:
a pure silence passing, pulled by the heavy shining animals.

I rode my bicycle, I almost had wings, I was inspired.
And there were big wide sidewalks along that sunny street.
In the sunlight, some sudden butterfly hovered the carriages and then the
sidewalks
above the slow transients made of smoke.
But they were mothers taking their littlest children for a walk.
And fathers who in their offices of glass and dreams . . .
I looked as I went by.
I rowed through the sweet smoke, and the butterfly was no stranger.
Pale in the iridescent winter afternoon,
she spread herself out in the slow street as over a sheltered extended valley.
And I saw her swept up sometimes to hang suspended
over what could as well have been the delicious edge of a river.
Ah, nothing was terrible.
The street had a slight grade and up I went, impelled.
A wind swept the hats of the old ladies.
It wasn't hurt by the peaceful canes of the gentlemen.
And it lit up like an imaginary rose, a little like a kiss, on the cheeks of the
children.
The trees in a row were a motionless vapor, gently
suspended under the blue. And by now nearly up in the air,
I passed by in a hurry on my bicycle and smiled . . .
and I remember perfectly
how I folded my wings mysteriously on the very threshold of school.

(From *Historia del corazón*, 1953)