

GREGOR MC GREGOR

King of Mosquitoes

*To Felipe Mc Felipe,
 Founder of Kingdoms much happier than Poyais,
 Where I exist and grow,
 This is for the love I have for him.
 ... and this is based on a true story...*

SCENE 1

Paris, 1826, visiting hour, in the Jail of La Force...

JOSEFA:

Goddamn, Gregor... After getting so far...

GREGOR:

As far as the seas, maps, and distant kingdoms...

JOSEFA:

... Way too far...

GREGOR:

I know of no borders, imagination has no limits, Josefa Antonia, because once it does, it no longer is.

JOSEFA:

Out of the 240 who embarked, only 50 returned...

GREGOR: (TURNING AROUND WITH VIOLENCE, LOOKS AT HER)

Freedom has a price; dreams also have a price... Those dead are not mine. I have no debt, Josefa Antonia...

JOSEFA:

The London Stock-market doesn't agree.

GREGOR:

Living off their scams, frauds, they, cannot understand other currencies, other values, other destinies.

JOSEFA:

What did you do wrong, Gregor?

SCENE 2

Suspicion arrives without notice to the house of Josefa Antonia...

JOSEFA:

Why don't you ask him?

MARIE:

I want to know your point of view, as an American, I am sure that you see things differently.

JOSEFA:

To be born in different places, does not make us any more or less similar... That is no guarantee of anything.

MARIE:

I know you come from an honorable family.

JOSEFA:

Honor... although it runs in one's blood, is also no guarantee of anything.

MARIE:

But it is not insignificant being the cousin of Simon Bolivar, the Liberator.

JOSEFA:

Rock, paper, scissors ... Rock today, paper tomorrow, then... scissors...

MARIE:

I don't understand you.

JOSEFA:

Can you imagine what it means to be the cousin of the Liberator? Married to a motherland hero, from the army of the Liberator, as well? To live contained in between glorious dates and battles, among illustrious achievements and defeats, dreams and justice, virtue and disgrace?

MARIE:

But we all live subjected to historical changes, somehow...

JOSEFA:

You are right: some days are more fortunate than others, that is all. And perhaps this is not one of my best days. So... what's your point? (FINALLY WATCHING HER) What interests you?

MARIE:

I want to prove that your husband's imprisonment is an injustice.

JOSEFA: (APPROACHING, SEATING BY HER SIDE)

And why do you care so much, if you don't mind me asking?

MARIE:

I know your husband.

JOSEFA: (SUSPICIOUS, INTERRUPTS HER)

I see.

MARIE: (JUSTIFYING HERSELF)

A man who has made so much history cannot end up in jail.

JOSEFA:

You've said it.

MARIE:

The only way out is by gaining public support.

JOSEFA:

Then you should know that Sir Mc Gregor is writing a proclamation to all the Central American states, in French, so that all the French can read it...

MARIE:

I myself have made contacts to also publish it in London...

JOSEFA:

But in London the climate is not the same... there are many who would not give credit to my beloved husband's truth... they already gave all they had.

MARIE:

The judgment begins April 6, 1826, in two weeks. You are summoned to declare...

JOSEFA:

I got him transferred to the prison of Bicetre. In the prison of La Force conditions are inhumane.

MARIE:

Your word as wife, mother of his children, born in the Americas, of patriotic ancestry...

JOSEFA:

My children, my children they are. Those of Mc Gregor... only Mc Gregor could justify.

MARIE:

You have shared more than a bed, more than the children: all his battles, defeats and victories, you know the distant lands that they are now attempting to erase from the map... your declaration is of vital importance.

JOSEFA:

I am his wife, yes, mother of his children, yes, cousin of the liberator, yes... but I am not the owner of the truth.

MARIE:

Do you also accuse him?

JOSEFA:

I have not said such a thing.

MARIE:

Then, will you give your testimony?

JOSEFA:

My sheets are cold... but I know where Gregorio is.

MARIE:

I don't understand you.

JOSEFA:

Let's try to understand each other, then. Where are you heading with this?

MARIE:

To Poyais!

JOSEFA:

From what I understand, a boat was expected to leave Le Havre in a few days... although now with all this misunderstanding...

MARIE:

They say Poyais doesn't exist.

JOSEFA:

Poyais indeed exists. In what later became Nicaragua, in the Mosquito Shores... bathed by the Caribbean Sea... Poyais exists.

MARIE:

Have you ever been there?

JOSEFA:

What else did Mc Gregor tell you?

MARIE:

But if you've been there, why won't you give your testimony and faith, why won't you speak up?

JOSEFA:

Did he tell you how when we first met, I didn't speak a word of English... and how it was not necessary... because we understood each other immediately, deeply... a once in a lifetime kind of thing, that only happens to those fortunate enough, once in a life, for an entire life... Did he tell you that he was the one who taught me English, showed me the world and all its borders, good wines and delicacies, silks and perfumes from distant lands... Did he tell you how fertile the soil is in Poyais?

MARIE: (SOMEHOW AFFECTED)

Yes...

JOSEFA:

What else did he tell you?

MARIE:

That Poyais was originally a Principality, but at present it is a Republic.

JOSEFA:

But he continues to be the Cacique, you do understand, no?

MARIE:

Well, Cacique, yes... But Caciques are like kings, royalty of the Indians, right? What you are trying to say is that there can not be Caciques in a republic?

JOSEFA:

He was a Republican Cacique of the Republic of Poyais with a City Council, banks, commerce, carriages and women with umbrellas. Did he tell you that in Poyais there is a magnificent Opera House? I suppose you've seen the engravings of the bay of San Juan where one can watch the boats arrive daily, filled with wind and all the best Europe has to offer... in Poyais, nothing is lacking.

MARIE:

Apparently Sir Mc Gregor has committed certain exaggerations, if that is what you are trying to say, but from that to say that Poyais doesn't exist and to accuse him of fraud...

JOSEFA:

I must tell you that San Jose has existed since 1730, founded by the first English colonizers that arrived there. That is before Gregor founded Poyais... image of the irresistible Paradise...

MARIE:

I don't know if Poyais is truly a Paradise, but I prefer to put my stakes on a better world than to defend the interests of the London stock market.

JOSEFA: (LAUGHS WILLINGLY)

And that better world, no doubt, is in Poyais...

MARIE:

That world is within us, Lady Mc Gregor. Within each one of us, lies the possibility of imagining the sky to be blue when it is raining, because if in our inner world the poor do not exist, then we will know how to fight poverty.

JOSEFA:

And what if what we carry inside has nothing to do with what is on the outside? Can't they very well accuse us of fraud and deceit? Couldn't we be the one's to die in prison?

MARIE:

But is it true that Poyais is an inhospitable swamp? More than inhospitable, an impossible place of ruins walled up by an impenetrable jungle, kingdom of mosquitoes, poisonous snakes and all types of tropical diseases?

JOSEFA:

It is true that Poyais was the old Kingdom of the Mosquito Indians.

MARIE:

Does that mean that those English men who disembarked in that place called Poyais who say Indians armed with poisonous arrows attacked them, are saying the truth?

JOSEFA:

They are saying an English truth.

MARIE:

And what is the American truth? That is the one I want to know.

JOSEFA:

Mc Gregor is Scottish not English, don't forget that. He sees things differently. As I'm sure you as a French woman, also have a different way of seeing...

MARIE:

But there is only one truth.

JOSEFA:

You are mistaken. If that were so, Europe would not exist. Do you not see that after the Europeans invented America... it began to invent itself by itself?

MARIE:

America is not an invention; it is a continent, with land, rivers, mountains, people and oceans...

JOSEFA:

How much is a person worth in America, if nobody else knows about them? What is the value of a mountain if there is no river nor plain that celebrates it? That is why it was necessary, indispensable, that everybody knows that Paradise is in Poyais.

MARIE:

Then if you believe so, why don't you want to testify?

PAUSE

JOSEFA:

Because... I have too much to lose.

SCENE 3

Prison of Bicetre, France... the visit...

GREGOR:

Every one is free to believe whomever they chose, don't you agree?

JOSEFA:

It seems that they have located Mister Lehuby in Belgium. That might change things.

GREGOR:

How could that change things?

JOSEFA:

Because they will no longer be able to declare him the only culprit in absence, while they exonerate you of faults and your partner Hippisley, Irving, the secretary... as long as you get out of France. That was the agreement. Now when Belgium offers to deport Lehuby, the judges may change their opinion. Of course... Lehuby could defend himself, he could say things, declare...

GREGOR:

The one who should declare is you, Josefa Antonia, why do you refuse to?

JOSEFA:

Because... I have nothing new to say. I can only say what you have already said much better. What's the use? It would distress the children more, to see their mother involved in a trial... What worries me is this new lawyer, Merilhou, who insists on placing all the blame on you.

GREGOR:

There is nothing to worry about. Lehuby has nothing to say against us. As manager of the Nouvelle Neustrie, he was in charge of selling all the lands and concessions of Poyais, in France...

JOSEFA:

Is there anything else you need?

GREGOR:

I am well, my dear Josefa Antonia, very well, thanks to your diligence, many thanks my dear wife... although perhaps maybe a good Armagnac ...

JOSEFA:

Who is Marie Rosette?

GREGOR:

I do not know.

JOSEFA:

But she does seem to know, and a lot.

GREGOR:

Ah... then she must be a journalist of Le Figaro who has been coming to interview me. I can't remember her name exactly...

JOSEFA:

But you remember the color of her hair, I suppose...

GREGOR:

She is blond?

JOSEFA:

... the color of her eyes?

GREGOR:

Her eyes, I don't know, clear, I suppose, how could I know? What importance could it have, Josefa Antonia?

JOSEFA:

What importance do you give it?

GREGOR:

Josefa Antonia, please... you are not going to make a scene when I am locked up in a cage, I could hardly...

JOSEFA:

But what is a cage? ... Bars, nothing else, a circumstance, real and transitory! I know you, Gregorio. I know you have no limits. Your limit is not what happens or what exists in reality. You can reach much further... Inca, Prince, Cacique, national hero, dear husband of mine... that is why I do worry.

GREGOR:

Are you happy to have me imprisoned... is that it?

JOSEFA:

I am happy to have you, that is all.

GREGOR: (UNDERSTANDING)

Is that why you do not want to testify?

JOSEFA:

You did well in giving Marie Rosette all the evidence. I know she has in her power all the engravings, the bonds...

GREGOR:

How can you be so selfish, Josefa Antonia?

JOSEFA:

Because I love you.

GREGOR: (INFURIATED)

That is not love. Not even love for oneself.

JOSEFA:

... And other's love? Who has it? Who takes it? Marie Rosette?

GREGOR:

You are fearful... coward... small...

JOSEFA:

And what is Marie Rosette? Tell me!

GREGOR: (WITH RENOVATED PATIENCE)

My little Josefa Antonia...

Love... Don't underestimate the power of the press. If the press supports me, I am saved. At the moment, Le Figaro is the most read French newspaper...

JOSEFA:

I understand... it will be known that Poyais truly exists in maps...

GREGOR:

It exists in the ocean... I did not invent it.

JOSEFA:

It exists, yes... en el trópico posible... in the possible Tropics.

GREGOR:

Besides, Marie is a woman committed to freedom, with revolutionary ideas, the emancipation of the Americas...

JOSEFA:

I understand... it will be possible to know that we Americans exist and have rights...

GREGOR:

She is on our side; she can help us...

JOSEFA: (GETTING AWAY ABRUPTLY)

She is on your side, you mean to say... but since when? When were you weighing anchor?

GREGOR:

You are sick, Antonia.

JOSEFA:

And you are imprisoned, Gregorio, which is much worse.

ANTONIA LEAVES, LEAVING GREGOR ALTERED.

SCENE 4

Marie Rosette begins to tell the story...

MARIE IS WRITING.

(NOTE: when she is writing is indicated with bold italics, otherwise she is commenting on what she is writing)

Sir Gregor Mac Gregor, grandson of Gregor Mc Gregor, known as Gregor the Beautiful... was born on December 24 of 1786... as if men born on the 24th of December were destined to make history... no matter what history... He came from a family of soldiers, and so it was natural that he should enter into the British Armada, to fight in the peninsular battles of Spain... When he returned to Edinburgh, he began his studies in the university. There he was introduced to revolutionary ideas and patriotic acts of the natives of Caracas... but Mc Gregor was a man of action (IN LOVE)... In 1811, he departs for Venezuela and joins the army as a Colonel. In 1812 he receives from Miranda the rank of Brigadier General of Cavalry and marries Josefa Antonia Lovera, beautiful Creole, cousin of the liberator... (WITH SOME JEALOUSY AND RESENTMENT)... what other honor, what greater gesture of confidence, of devotion, could Venezuelans undertake towards the Scot... The first trial was just lost. But there is always a second opportunity...

SCENE 5

Prison. After making love...

GREGOR:

Your powers have no limits... I cannot believe that you managed to get us such privacy! What you must procure now is my freedom, Josefa Antonia... there is another trial where you could testify...

JOSEFA:

If I had this power you speak of, I would make the Poyais opera house, real.

GREGOR:

You lack imagination, Josefa Antonia! The Poyais opera house is real, although it doesn't exist. What does it matter if it doesn't exist? It will exist. It will exist because it is already invented, dreamt ...

JOSEFA:

Explain that to all those who embarked from London and found nothing but a swamp instead of palm trees.

GREGOR:

Those are people without imagination.

JOSEFA:

Imagination has a limit... right when it touches one's pocket.

GREGOR:

Depends whose wearing the pocket...

JOSEFA:

You sold riches that do not exist, Gregorio.

GREGOR:

Josefa Antonia: without dreams life is not possible, there can be no progress without growth, without dreams there is no history, nor science or art... All revolutions began as a dream, all the conquests...

JOSEFA:

Then you are responsible for what you have dreamt, as for convincing the others.

GREGOR:

Because without others there can be no revolution or conquest. Don't you understand?

JOSEFA:

But, what revolution are you speaking of? Those 20.000 miles along the coast and inland, wouldn't be yours without the rum and whiskey you gave your great friend Jorge Federico Augustus, poor king of the coasts domain of the Mosquito Indians, which you left even poorer, when you became Cacique of the invention of Poyais...

GREGOR:

Neither your dresses nor luxuries... the receptions at the Guildhall, organized by the very own Lord Mayor Christopher Magney... London received you in such a way... you did not think about the Mosquito Indians then... nor when we organized the fabulous banquets at the Oak Hall...

JOSEFA: (REMEMBERING)

... There was no ambassador, military rank man, minister nor politician who could resist...

GREGOR:

... And you, my Josefa Antonia, you were always the most beautiful, the best dressed, the most celebrated native beauty... you were the incarnation of the Possible Poyais...

JOSEFA:

You don't have to tell me. I was there.

GREGOR:

Exactly. Art and part! Although now you don't want to accept it.

JOSEFA:

I accept it...

GREGOR:

You enjoyed it...

JOSEFA:

... Yes, I enjoyed it, as well as I can now accept, the fall of Poyais. And you are the one who does not want to accept it.

GREGOR:

The world is not finished yet, Josefa Antonia, the dream goes on standing, the mosquitoes end, and the opera houses are constructed...

JOSEFA:

That's fine: revolution prevails, the dream becomes reality. But if... as is the case, it fails, the dream becomes a fraud.

GREGOR:

Is it that you don't love me anymore?

JOSEFA:

I simply ask...

GREGOR:

Sure, now you have time to ask... but when you lived from ball to ball, from banquet to banquet...

JOSEFA:

Is Scottish success not the same size as the failure of the mosquito Indians? Who is the deceitful, who is the deceived? Whose dream is more worthwhile? How much is it worth? Or it is that Marie Rosette is the only one that has the right to ask questions?

GREGOR:

Ask the Thomas Jenkins Bank... perhaps they will tell you the story you want to hear. I cannot tell it.

JOSEFA:

They can speak of the many loans and investments and bonds. But what about the illusion of the shoemaker of the rainy and dreary London, who dreams of dancing hips? ... his entire life savings? There are no princesses for whom he can make slippers in Poyais, Gregorio, and you knew that from the very beginning.

GREGOR:

Josefa Antonia: I have not committed any crime. I simply made them see a new world. Poyais exists; it is the kingdom of the possible... What is wrong about dreaming of living among palm trees and risking everything for it?

JOSEFA:

That the palm trees do not exist but in the engravings you ordered to be made... rock, paper, scissors...

GREGOR:

One, two, three...

JOSEFA:

What will be our destiny now? What will be of our children?

GREGOR:

Why doubt now? Is it that you no longer love me, Antonia? Is that it? You don't want me?

JOSEFA:

I don't want... to lose you.

GREGOR EXITS.

JOSEFA:

On September 10th, 1822, the Honduras Packet left the port of London, and on January 22nd, 1823, the Kinnersley Castle soon followed setting sail from Leith to Poyais... 240 wishful immigrants, among them Mr. Gauger, expected to become manager of the main bank of Poyais, changed all their pounds into Poyais dollars, printed by Gregor himself,

already a multimillionaire... When the boats first arrived at the indicated spot, many insisted on continuing their sailing, convinced that they had been taken to the wrong place, it did not look anything like Poyais. The Honduras Packet was turned upside down by a storm, when trying to return. Some managed to get to Belize, -among them the lieutenant colonel Hector Hall, future and promissory governor of Poyais-, looking for another boat that took them back to Europe. Others remained and tried to settle, fighting among themselves, infected by all type of contagious tropical diseases... some preferred to commit suicide.

In April, the Mexican Eagle, official boat of the British Honduras, accidentally discovered the stragglers of Poyais... Captain Bennet listened to their story, "Poyais does not exist", he assured them. He took them to Honduras where a couple of days later appeared colonel Hall, with the very king Jorge Federico, who affirmed to have revoked the titles given to Mc Gregor, since he had assumed sovereignty without any right. The Mexican Eagle took 60 passengers back to England... the others were slowly evacuated later. Many died in the journey at sea or in hospitals of the British Honduras, before setting sail.

5 more boats had left London with Poyais in their destiny. Edgard Codd, superintendent of Belize was the one who sent the warning that made them return.

... Of the 240 deluded immigrants, less than 50 managed to return to London... many newspapers published the complete story. How the hell Mc Gregor thought he could get out of this one, once the immigrants knew the reality of such coasts, is something which I cannot explain... Perhaps he thought of escaping, once again, perhaps we didn't have enough time... I believe he ended up convinced of the truths and virtues of his Kingdom.

SCENE 6

Marie continues writing... trying to understand...

MARIE:

*Mc Gregor fights in Nueva Granada and in the east of Venezuela, next to general Piar, until the year of 1916, when the Libertador Simón Bolívar promotes him Major General and grants him the Order of the Liberators... liberator with no frontier... he liberated so many Scots out of their cold and senseless lives... he also liberated me... me, who thought that the world was in Paris... **On the 29 of June of 1817, Mc Gregor takes the Amelia island and begins to organize the republic of Las Floridas, after proclaiming its freedom...** Why would Josefa Antonia say that freedom became libertinism there? ... How many women may Mc Gregor have had? ... **Mc Gregor goes back to London.** Why did not he remain in Edinburgh, with his beautiful and loyal Venezuelan wife? What is it about the spirit of this man that makes him organize yet another expedition, another conquest? ... **In 1819 he disembarks in Panama forcing the Spaniards to flee. But that victory lasted only a few days: the Spanish counterattack was ferocious, only 20 survived, among them, Mc Gregor...** blessed you, Mc Gregor... **In 1820, he is named Deputy of the Constituent Congress of Cúcuta, but Mc Gregor does not take charge...** Again: why does he not take the position of such high rank and recognition... **Mc Gregor, man of action, prefers to go away to Nicaragua, to drink and negotiate a great lot of land with king Federico of the Mosquito Indians, to be called His Royal Highness Prince Gregor I, Cacique of Poyais...** and what about the revolutionary ideas? ... and the freedom of the people?*

SCENE 7**Jardin de Luxembourg, Spring in Paris...****MARIE:**

They have granted him a new hearing. Some evidence has appeared on his behalf. The new trial begins on July 10th

JOSEFA:

It is clear that Sir Mc Gregor is not guilty. The situation was set.

MARIE:

What do you mean?

JOSEFA:

Well, if Colombia, Chile and Peru got away with selling London Royal Exchange bonds, why couldn't Poyais? Where's the crime? Or is it not true that when Manhattan began its history, it was not also a swamp?

MARIE:

They want to appeal.

JOSEFA:

Furthermore, Sir Mc Gregor did not invent the greed those British men felt for those territories... now freed from the Spanish yoke, fertile soil, new market, a new place to invest and construct their dreams... my husband only made this possible.

MARIE:

This time you will have the opportunity to testify, Lady Mc Gregor. He has a very good chance to be freed.

JOSEFA:

I thought that was already clear.

MARIE:

I just don't understand what causes you to refuse. You have the power to save him, you know the truth, it is your word, the word of his honorable wife...

JOSEFA:

I understand you are going. You must understand, that I am coming back.

MARIE:

He is counting on your testimony.

JOSEFA:

Mc Gregor knows how to defend himself for God's sake! He doesn't need me.

MARIE:

Anything that can be used to...

JOSEFA: (INTERRUPTING)

... Nor you! Therefore I will give you a recommendation...

MARIE:

Whatever you say.

JOSEFA:

You are in such desperate need for a landscape... But paradise does not necessarily lie in the Americas. What about Indochina? Over there, there are also fabled kingdoms, with kings and queens with parasols and millions of elephants... and they even speak French over there!

MARIE:

You seem to be very sure that Sir Mc Gregor will not be freed after this trial.

JOSEFA:

I am simply suggesting that you look for another Scot to fabricate your life, because Gregor has finally stayed still and with little possibility to travel, for the time being.

MARIE:

You seem to be happy that your husband is in prison?

JOSEFA:

That belongs strictly to my very personal affairs. Affairs that I am not interested in sharing with you or anybody else.

MARIE:

The problem is that the personal life you both have constructed is founded on the illusion of many... I am only trying to help because I know that truths change according to the interests of those in power and it doesn't seem right that...

JOSEFA: (INTERRUPTING IT)

And how can you be so certain that what you believe is true? Could it no be that you wish it to be true? Because you imagine it, or perhaps, because you were born and raised in Europe you think you know everything... how can you be so sure that you are right?

MARIE:

Because there are piles of documents that prove it.

JOSEFA:

You are a very well documented woman, yes. But in real life, documents are one thing and reality is another. Especially the real life that is lived in the south.

MARIE:

Do you mean to say that those documents are worthless, that they do not fit reality?

JOSEFA:

What I mean to say is that in Europe words have more value than reality, and it's hard for them to understand that in other places life is not lived in the same way.

MARIE:

Do you mean to say that those who accuse Sir Mc Gregor, are right?

JOSEFA: (SIGHS DEEP, SHE LOADS WITH PATIENCE)

What I mean is that there isn't just one right.

MARIE:

But how can one live without a sense of being right... without a north star to follow?

JOSEFA:

When one is born in the south... it is hot... every day in life, it is hot... we pour sugar on shaved ice, and we laugh and cry without much reason...

MARIE:

But Mc Gregor was born in Edinburgh... in the north...

JOSEFA:

Scottish north, Celtic, he disembarked in Venezuela wearing a skirt, playing music with a bagpipe... it was such a scandal that it even appeared in the newspapers.

MARIE:

He has a very festive spirit.

JOSEFA:

... and a great capacity of adaptation. That is one of his virtues. Imagine that when he arrived in Paris without a doubt he turned the Kingdom of Poyais into a Republic. He even changed its constitution.

MARIE: (STATING)

Similar to when he arrived in Venezuela, he quickly became a patriot.

JOSEFA:

"Josefa Antonia, I want to introduce you to this patriot, although he comes from distant lands, he is here to make history... patriotic history"... that is the manner in which

Miranda introduced Gregor to me, and from that moment on, he surely began to make history.... my history.

MARIE: (WITH CERTAIN TIMIDITY)

You fell in love that very same day?

JOSEFA: (REMEMBERING)

... I was wearing my cobalt blue dress... perhaps that helped things along.

MARIE:

Wasn't he already married in London?

JOSEFA:

He had survived his first English wife, Marie Bowater, he was a widower when I met him. We were married, and shortly thereafter we began fleeing... At that time the first republic had been lost, from Curacao to Cartagena, Villa del Socorro, Santa Fe, Pamplona, Cúcuta, Maracaibo, Tunja, Carúpano, Haiti, Ocumare, Choróni, Villa de Cura, Onoto, Barcelona, Filadelfia, Florida, Isla de la Providencia...

MARIE:

And then, London...

JOSEFA:

But only for a moment... immediately Portobello, Panama, Río Hacha, Santo Domingo, Margarita...

MARIE:

Now I understand why you are so pleased to have him in one place, finally still...

JOSEFA:

I don't think you can really understand... what I forget is too much. It is much more than he can ever tell... much more than I know. Gregor has never had free time. Can you imagine the amount of time it takes to invent a country, a Kingdom with cathedrals and opera house... to finance it, to trade it and to live like a Cacique from that? Or do you really think that the guide of Poyais, for instance, *Sketch of the Mosquito Shore*, was actually written by captain Thomas Strangeways? No. Everything was created by Gregor.

MARIE:

I have never heard of that document.

JOSEFA:

How strange that Gregor never mentioned it to you... There he describes the land of Poyais in great detail, in such brilliant terms that it leaves no doubt of the benefits that can be obtained by investing in such a country... Gregor did not leave out the smallest detail nor the most insignificant nomenclature. They cannot accuse him of working without rest: flag of Poyais, events of Poyais... maps, engraved landscapes of Poyais, bonds, lands, property documents... paper money, dollars of Poyais... all that exists. The evidence is there.

MARIE:

But does Poyais, actually exist?

JOSEFA:

It is written on paper.

MARIE:

But this is no common paper; they are bonds, property titles, contracts, money!

JOSEFA:

Have you ever tried to buy an apple with a dollar from Poyais?

MARIE:

Here in France no, but in Poyais...

JOSEFA: (SINGING)

En Poyais, la vida es más sabrosa...

(In Poyais life is more flavourful)

MARIE:

France is also full of swamps and yet it still exists.

JOSEFA: (SINGING)

En Poyais, se goza mucho más...

(In Poyais you enjoy much more)

MARIE:

Then, how can you explain that the greedy London Stock Market granted so many loans to Sir Mc Gregor?

JOSEFA:

My dear Marie, stories are made by two: those who tell them, and those who wish to hear them. Gregor made me see an old world... and I love him for that. And those who he showed a new world love him for that.

MARIE:

Do you prefer to live in Europe rather than in the Americas?

JOSEFA:

In Europe, lies become truths with the ease of an afternoon of tea and cookies, that makes me wonder... people live with the illusion of certainty, of being so right... and that gives much tranquility. Especially when you come from a land where you can never know what happened, what is happening or what will happen.

MARIE:

It is for that reason that people invent so many stories there.

JOSEFA:

No more than they do here. Or do you actually think that Europe is not also an invention? And the Americas are as much an invention as the Europeans have wanted to lie about the matter. And they have to lie... because the Americas are extremely difficult to understand if you were not born there...

MARIE: (EVOCATIVE, DISTANT)

Lies can sometimes travel so far...

JOSEFA:

Very far... Mc Gregor went as far as to hold meetings with the Prime Minister Jean Baptiste Guillaume Joseph, Comte de Villele, to obtain from him a formal resignation from the Spanish right and reclamation of Poyais...

MARIE:

An illusion can invade your whole body...

JOSEFA:

Well, illusions reside mainly in one's head... perhaps one's heart...

MARIE:

... One's womb...

JOSEFA: (CAUTIOUS)

What are you talking about?

MARIE:

I stopped bleeding.

JOSEFA: (NERVOUS)

I did not know that you were married.

MARIE:

I am not married.

JOSEFA:

Who is the father?

MARIE:

Seven months ago...

JOSEFA: (HORRIFIED)

... Seven months? ... You cannot tell... I would have never guessed.

MARIE:

Me neither...

JOSEFA:

... and the father? Is he going to look after that child? Who is the father?

MARIE:

I am in no position to tell you.

JOSEFA: (STATING)

Is he a married man?

MARIE:

I cannot say.

JOSEFA:

How could you?

MARIE:

He swore he loved me.

JOSEFA: (IRRITATED)

That has nothing to do with it. That is unreal. You cannot buy apples with that either...

Reality is marriage, a home, furniture, family...

MARIE:

When one is in love...

JOSEFA: (VERY ANXIOUS, SUSPECTING THE WORSE THING)

Whose blood runs in the veins of that child?

MARIE:

There is no blood.

JOSEFA:

What do you mean there is no blood?

MARIE FAINTS. JOSEFA HELPS HER.

JOSEFA:

You are very pale. You have to see a doctor.

MARIE:

Tell me something, Josefa Antonia...

JOSEFA:

Ay, Marie, you talk with such "parsimonia" as if this were the last thing you were ever going to say in your life. You know that disease also has a lot to do with invention, it is your mind, come on, cheer up!

MARIE:

Are you going to testify in this trial?

JOSEFA:

No, I am not going to testify.

MARIE:

Are you going to let your husband rot in jail?

JOSEFA:

He is doing very well where he is. You yourself have seen it. Where do you get the strength to concern yourself with my husband's life when your own is such a mess?

MARIE:

I feel responsible.

JOSEFA:

Is Gregor the father of that child? Tell me the truth once and for all!

MARIE:

There is no child.

JOSEFA:

I do not understand.

MARIE:

They have put me through all kinds of tests and they cannot find the child. I have all the symptoms but there is no baby.

JOSEFA:

What then?

MARIE:

There is no child and there is no Gregor.

JOSEFA:

But... was there Gregor?

MARIE:

In my head. The child only exists in my head.

JOSEFA:

That much you wanted to have a child?

MARIE:

That much.

JOSEFA:

Poor thing. But let me tell you that an imaginary pregnancy is better than giving birth in Poyais. Let's go to the house, the temperature got chilly. We could have a glass of champagne... since you are not pregnant...

MARIE:

That is no reason to celebrate.

JOSEFA:

But you don't have to torment yourself about it. You are still young, you will be able to have many children, real ones... and maybe you may even find yourself a kingdom with a real Cacique as well.

MARIE:

Josefa Antonia, I...

JOSEFA:

I do not want you to explain anything. I prefer to have doubts... by knowing too much one becomes an accomplice. That's why sometimes it's better to keep quiet. That's why I will not testify.

SCENE 8

House of Josefa Antonia... when women drink...

JOSEFA:

Women back home, have believed for hundreds of years after today, that a child can tie a man down... and fill themselves up with children... Here in the first world that is not the case. You don't seem French at all. You are too sentimental...

MARIE:

Maybe that's the idea an American woman has of a French woman.

JOSEFA:

Aha! I was wondering if you were ever going to defend yourself?

MARIE:

Gregor does not fit one's idea of an Englishman, born in Edinburgh, that one has in mind either.

JOSEFA:

You think more about Gregor than me.

MARIE:

For reporters their subjects often become obsessions.

JOSEFA:

I have always thought that cheating, deceit and the steam of fantasy grow in equatorial lands, so fertile that it can give life to the most unexpected insects... and you cannot imagine what it feels like to discover that that way of inventing ourselves, is also imported...

MARIE:

I do not understand.

JOSEFA:

Have you ever seen how they depict us in Hollywood films? We, Latinos are a bunch of cheaters, who are cheap, deceivers by occupation, illegal by principle, short and hairy... sleepy and lazy, always hot...

MARIE:

It is true that there are many prejudices...

JOSEFA:

... We speak without awaiting an answer, we scream instead of speaking, we sing when there is no party, we dance on tables at bars... we make love when we feel like it, we feel sleepy when we sit down to read...

MARIE:

You are exaggerating...

JOSEFA:

And they say it's the climate... the heat... the stupor... the mosquitoes... and after so much Europe, I ask myself: could it be the cold of the north that has made them invent us to be so hot, us living in the south? Do you want more champagne?

MARIE:

Now that I hear you speaking I can understand why you have been married to Sir Mc Gregor for so many years. Is it true that Tovar y Tovar painted a portrait of him that continues to be exhibited on the walls of the National Assembly of Venezuela?

JOSEFA:

Yes that is true, there is a fabulous painting of Gregor in the Capitol... and all the medals that have been given to Mc Gregor in Venezuela, are made of gold, that is no invention... and the honors and decorations and the restitution of his retroactive salary, due to his prolonged absence... In my country Gregor was considered a hero. A patriot born in Edinburgh. A trustworthy patriot of light eyes and white skin.

MARIE:

I do not understand any of that.

JOSEFA:

Pardon my honesty. But it is very difficult, if not impossible, that a French woman would ever understand an invention such as Venezuela... That it produces fascination to the point of inverting all their savings into bonds of Poyais, I can wrap my head around that... but there is really only one way to understand Venezuela.

MARIE:

I do not think that there is really only one way of understanding anything. There are as many people as there are ways of understanding things, we are possibilities...

JOSEFA:

We are not a possibility. We are a mistake of History, as Jose Ignacio Cabrujas used to say. That you can only really understand if you were born there, if you are a part of it, if when you sweat you smell like it...

MARIE:

But Gregor seems to know your world very well... so well that he was able to invent it.

JOSEFA:

In the same way that I can say that Reynaldo Hahn invented Mozart... when nobody would give Mozart a nickel, he discovered that this was the best music possible, if it was interpreted in the right way... And you know where Reynaldo Hahn was born?

MARIE:

I do not have the faintest idea.

JOSEFA:

Lover of Proust, director of the Paris Opera, -an opera that truly exists and continues to exist as a miracle-, he was born in Caracas, and he came to show this continent how to play Mozart so it sounded like Mozart.

MARIE:

So nationalities are not the most important thing. Instead it is about people, who happen in one place or another but...

JOSEFA:

No, you are wrong. Nationalities are very important, because they serve to appreciate as well as depreciate: two very important things in anyone's life.

MARIE:

I believe more in people than in countries.

JOSEFA:

Mon petit venezuelien... that is how Proust called him... petit in stature? Petit, because of his place of origin? Petit, for affection? That we can never know... And you know where the word "*rastacuer*" comes from?

MARIE:

No.

JOSEFA:

From the very same place as Hahn: from the Venezuelan dust. Páez, when faced with the realistic troops of Boves, with a smaller number of soldiers, was commended by the commendable Liberator, -my cousin yes-, to maneuver to gain time... Oh, you must know that in Venezuela time runs at a different pace...

MARIE: (AMUSED, WITH SOME MOCKERY)

Faster? ... Slower...?

JOSEFA:

It all depends. In this case, for the lack of soldiers, and for a little entertainment, the dry leathers of dead cows were tied to the horses' tails. This raised such a cloud of dust that confused the Spaniards who were deceived into believing that there was an infinity of soldiers advancing to the beat of death. It only gave them time to flee. "*Rastacuer*", the French word that qualifies all those who believe themselves to be more than they are, comes from Venezuela: leather dragger, *rastracuer*...

MARIE:

Incredible! One cannot even imagine where the words come from...

JOSEFA:

... or the countries, the flags, the money, the History... nor the children... It all depends on who is the one telling the story, who invents it... By "dragging leathers" we invent great battalions, power and riches... here and there.

MARIE: (PENSIVE)

Rastacuer, leather dragger...

JOSEFA:

As long as it is not one's own hide... that is what it is all about... But Páez was a sharp man; he became president... even though he is scared of snakes.

MARIE:

And what are you scared of?

JOSEFA:

History. To go on living, constructing what you know will never be glorious... From the place I come from, comes all the forgotten.

MARIE:

It is true that History sometimes swallows men.

JOSEFA:

It swallows their destinies, their past and their future... it swallows the chapters that do not please, certain books disappear from the shelves, each revolution is like a beginning all over again... History changes each time another person tells it.

MARIE:

I wonder if Rousseau or Voltaire would have been as important if it were not for the French revolution.

JOSEFA:

Perhaps that is where Gregor's obsession for nomenclature comes from. The same thing happens to dictators. They want to name everything because they want to become part of history, to save themselves from oblivion. He gave a name to the land, Poyais; he placed a green cross over a white background as a flag. What is your name again?

MARIE:

Marie... Marie Rosette.

JOSEFA:

And what does he call you?

PAUSE.

JOSEFA:

Do not worry it does not interest me. It was simply to show you that what I say is true.

MARIE:

Rosita... Rosita of France.

JOSEFA: (IN PAIN)

Little Rose... of France... Rosita... what a pretty name...

MARIE: (NERVOUS)

I understand that in Venezuela there are streets, avenues and squares named after him...

JOSEFA:

His name and picture are in all the history books of Venezuela, but in England he is studied in the School of Economy, for his ability in fraud.

MARIE:

Nobody is a prophet in his own land.

JOSEFA:

And "the freedom of the New World is the hope of the universe"...

MARIE: (MOVED)

Is that a quote by Sir Mc Gregor?

JOSEFA:

It is a quote by Bolivar. My beloved cousin said some very good things... and so many others that can be very dangerous when spoken out of context... as we are now, out of context.

MARIE:

But many great things may arise, out of context: the Englishman who interprets America, the American who interprets Europe...

JOSEFA:

It is not that simple. But it is late. I must take care of the correspondence.

MARIE MAKES A HINT OF LEAVING. JOSEFA STOPS HER AT THE LAST MOMENT.

JOSEFA:

I just remembered something that surely Sir Gregor Mc Gregor would never have told you...

MARIE:

What would that be?

JOSEFA:

He surely never told you that soldiers in Venezuela used to call him “*Pavita*”.

MARIE:

And what is “*Pavita*”?

JOSEFA:

... A bird of the night that brings bad luck and misfortune. Because they use to say that Gregor was a bird of evil omen. That bad luck followed him, it was common not to want to march with him.

MARIE:

But he won many battles... or is that also an invention?

JOSEFA:

Gregorio is a man of many lives, do not worry about that. The first time he died was on August 28th, 1816. It was published in the official newspaper of Caracas: "filled with grief his companions buried him, after a soldier assassinated him traitorously and robbed him of his uniform". In Caracas there was an uproar. You can just imagine when Gregor returned to the city one night, the fear, the rumor that did not take long to spread, they began to speak of the ghost of MacGregor; and soon thereafter they began to call him *Pavita*.

MARIE:

You know the History better than anyone.

JOSEFA:

Do not imagine it, Rosita. To live with a General in times of revolution is like living with no one; to find out from the newspaper; to burn with fever with no way out. Because when you are unfaithful to a motherland hero, you are not betraying the man, you betray the motherland.

SCENE 9

Marie writes the end... the last drink.

MARIE:

Almost by an act of magic, Sir Gregor Mc Gregor manages to convince the jury that his title of Cacique of Poyais, was obtained in free elections among the natives of that coast... in this way he obtained his release from prison. He is free! ... Hippisley was also released although Lehuby, his other partner, was condemned to 13 months in prison for making false promises... But freedom for Mc Gregor only represents the possibility of starting over, Poyais, to be happy in Poyais, bonds and debt... although this time his management is more modest and renders therefore much less benefits... Mc Gregor is imprisoned again, in 1826, for reasons apparently unknown, in the prison of Tothill Fields in Great Britain.

Fleeing from creditors, Sir Gregor Mc Gregor returns to Venezuela. He is naturalized, returns to the army, recovers his pay retroactively and his honorable life. He writes an autobiographical pamphlet... where he doesn't even mentioned me... while he lives a calm life until he finds death, on the 4th of December, 1846. His corpse lies in the National Pantheon. Josefa Antonia Lovera dies in London before that, but not in this story...

SCENE 10

In Venezuela, accomplices, many years after...

JOSEFA:

Do you know that some worms have fallen ill?

MARIE:

Gregor is very discouraged.

JOSEFA:

But a cousin of mine -who knows nothing about worms but is an importer of silks-, says that in other lands such a condition is cured with starch.

MARIE:

And have you already told Gregor?

JOSEFA:

He does not want to believe... he says those are Asian superstitions. That Jose Antonio, after so many trips, has become very inventive.

MARIE:

But Jose Antonio is a serious man.

JOSEFA:

Certainly. So serious that the London stock market has just given him a loan to bring a new shipment of silks from Asia.

BOTH LAUGH WILLINGLY.

MARIE:

If it were not for the European stock markets, what would become of our seriousness? Is it not true, Josefa?

JOSEFA:

We would be deceivers, swindlers by occupation... although born in Edinburgh.

SCENE 11

Gregor... his right to retort

GREGOR:

If reality cannot keep up with me, is there any guilt?

Where did you go wrong, Gregorio? Me? Guilty of not being able to live without Josefa, forced to invent the opera of Poyais before it was constructed... That they were inhospitable lands, yes, they were, swamps similar to those which served as the foundation for the construction of Manhattan. Before selling the Empire State Building, somebody had to imagine it, to draw it, to convince investors... the photos and pamphlets, books, tourists and glories will follow later. Before the Panama Canal was constructed, there were many French who dug their graves as they believed they were uniting two oceans, uniting two worlds. The channel shares were also sold. Illusion? Usurpation? ... The mosquitoes were stronger. Renewed North American efforts found the cure for malaria. The channel came later. Who shall we give the blame to... or the

merit? What happened with the mosquitoes? And the Mosquito Indians? ... What about the Panamanians before being owners of their canal?

On whose side are you, Mc Gregor? Patriot or Scot? Principality or Republic? Cacique or Democracy? Definitions only serve to justify what we need. They are no more truth nor less a lie than that. Of what use is it now: left, right, rock, paper, scissors?

What are you made of, Gregorio? Of man and woman, father and mother, long before you knew about me, or even imagined. I had to bring him back to life, but I am not Mc Gregor, in fact, you knew that from the start and agreed on playing this game. I am only a body in which he lives, now, in favor of Mc Gregor, his memory many years later redeemed... Because he remained in utopia, future in the past, in the memory of those who knew him and who are no longer here. My portrait by Tovar y Tovar was not enough. How many Venezuelans live without knowing me? How many Scots? Innocents! What importance does it have? To watch oneself in the past that returns, to live again. Would you dare, for that reason, accuse me of swindling? Would you ask for a refund of the ticket?

Shall Gregor Mc Gregor's great-grandchildren remember Gregor Mc Gregor? If they remember him it would be out of pride... if they forgot him, it would be out of shame... mirror that returns. The truth of what we are, past - swamp, future - opera house, creator - Mc Gregor, crime - none.

(LIKE PLAYING) Past - Poyais. Present - Nicaragua. Future - who throws the first stone?

Past - Mc Gregor. Present - Venezuela. Future -...? Who imagines, who dares? Past - Scotland. Present - United Kingdom, European Union, until when, future, rock, paper, scissors!

You knew how to understand it, my adorable Josefa Antonia... past - Josefa, present - Josefa, future - Josefa Antonia, my Josefa... from the beginning you knew: how can you abandon me now? Without you, life has no sound, has no echo, the machine that defines me stops, it lacks fuel, I drift among worms... Because worms are the last beneficiaries of what we all are and believe to be eternal... The only difference is that these worms of mine turn leaves into silk... silk that becomes dresses, linen and pajamas, curtains and scarves... and who is to blame? The worm, the cocoon...? Or the one that realized and suspected it, imagined it, made industry...? The one who added color to the silk or the one who made the dress? The woman who put the dress on, or the man who fell in love with the dress...? Cobalt blue, radiating tropics, excellence of what is imagined, risk, kiss, silk that slides, in my memory that inhabits me like the sole remedy to this solitude to which you have forced me with no right, Josefa Antonia... because you did not have the right to die first... And Gregorito and Josefina and Constantino? ... Your children, Josefa Antonia, your children! ... And Gregorio? This Gregorio who only you name, this Gregorio who stopped existing. Without you I am not enough, (SPEAKING TO AUDIENCE) although you are seeing me at this moment, accomplices all of you of this invention, (JUBILANT) all swindlers!

Because this Gregor Mc Gregor who is left, is only a motherland hero recovered by the patriotic generosity that celebrates the freedom of its days. Mac Gregor, whenever you open a history book or whenever the sun rises and the doors of the Capitol are opened, or the curtain is raised and we recognize ourselves as a country, or we invent ourselves in affections, which is the same, noise and plantains... Ways that Scotland was never able to imagine, ways they owe me, seeding in their illusion, they gave life back for a moment, to Edinburgh, to Glasgow, to London...

There are so many Poyais' that have followed and continue cheering us up when it rains... They are sold as packages in travel agencies. Although they sell not land titles, they sell the holidays or the dream to us, Europeans, who survived wintertime because of the posters of the Caribbean framed in mischief. Any utopia, or shoddy revolution, could become truth in the lands of the south. Lands that now have owners. The dreams have become realities, further than I imagined, failed tries, dangerous hell, poverty and crime, Poyais has surpassed itself, it is out of hand... me, guilty?

PAUSE

Still, when someone dares to approach this story, I only aspire to revive your need to tell the truth of what you feel... even if it is a lie.

THE END

Coda...

MARIE:

Josefa Antonia...

JOSEFA:

Tell me...

MARIE:

Did you know you can still buy Poyais bonds?

JOSEFA:

Seriously?

MARIE:

I swear...

JOSEFA:

How much are they?

MARIE:

120 pounds... on the Internet...

PAUSE.

JOSEFA:

But... isn't the Internet a fraud?

JOSEFA:

Internet does not exist, you fool... it is virtual.

THE END