



# PTERODÁCTILO

SPRING 2011 · Nº 10

Revista de arte, literatura, lingüística y cultura  
Department of Spanish and Portuguese  
The University of Texas at Austin

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## THE WELDER

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For some reason, without anybody knowing where they came from, several welders moved to that shantytown. They settled mostly in the areas surrounding a bare, rocky hill, which, when it wasn't wrapped in fog, was warmed by the sun. Bordering the adobe and straw houses, the desert extended further beyond.

At precisely the base of a boulder, situated against the hillside, a pallid and scrawny man took up residence, a welder too, accompanied by his crippled wife and his anemic daughter. They settled there and he built a shack held together with logs and sheets of corrugated metal. Out front, in a kind of portico supported by branches, he placed an electric welding machine. It was a dilapidated machine with some very old wires that he draped over a boulder and, without asking anybody's permission, connected to those of a nearby line. He also set out an anvil, a rudimentary press, a worktable. And his fellow tradesmen said to one another: "Who's going to trust those pieces of junk? Who's going to give him any work?"

And sure enough, nobody asked him to build any doors and windows. But there were those who, considering their poverty, did ask him for more modest services—making benches and tripods for flowerpots, for example, or repairing brackets, fixing pots and washbasins. And unlike his colleagues, the welder didn't refuse these jobs or pretend to solely occupy himself with large projects. Without changing his taciturn air in the least, he accepted those requests and finished them patiently and punctually. And afterwards, when he had nothing left to do, he would sit at his table, pondering, and wait.

But one day, somewhere, he found some iron rods in different cuts and lengths, leftovers, no doubt, from a building under construction. He also gradually amassed wires and little scraps of metal. And in his spare time, he seemed more absorbed in his thoughts. Then, when he had gathered a certain amount of materials, he began working with them. And what his hands pieced together appeared to be a giant grille. “He wants us to think he has real clients,” his neighbors commented.

After several days, the man stopped to observe the outcome. Then he headed to the boulder and climbed up one of its sides. With a rope, he lifted the structure he had created, still not very large, and he secured it to the rock with some nails and much effort. But it wasn’t a grille, or window frame, or anything of the sort. Its lines, some straight and some curved, formed a whimsical web—a meandering, spiraling web that crisscrossed with arrow-like sections, and whose form seemed to obey a secret project. It was as if its author had begun to hang over that rock, a climbing plant of metal.

But his efforts didn’t stop there. During his free time in the following weeks, he continued working on that task, for which he had to obtain more components. And so his web grew and grew with surprising combinations expanding a few centimeters above the granite, like lianas, like tentacles. One could say that a spider, all iron and welds, covered the cliff little by little—an incredible spider. And when it reached the hilltop, the welder rested.

People came to see this strange production, and seeing the care with which it had been crafted, many wanted its owner to make them complicated doors. Even a millionaire, having heard what happened, came and wanted a colonial-style grille for his mansion. But the man courteously refused and continued filling holes in pots and fixing pans, kettles, braziers, clothing irons. But in the afternoons, without fail, he would sit in front of the rock, on the edge of the desert, and contemplate his work. That useless, beautiful flourish...