

TRANSLATION AS A MEANS OF CULTURAL IDENTIFICATION AND CROSS-  
CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

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A Senior Honors Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department

of Hispanic Studies

University of Houston

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By

Rachael A. Stemple

December, 2018

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For my Mother

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## **ABSTRACT**

The argument that this project presents is a moral one: that wide, indiscriminate translation of foreign language (specifically Spanish) literature in the United States would provide a wide array of both educational and cultural benefits. It consists of three parts. The first explores translation theory, poetry translation, and translator ability; the second discusses cultural importance of language, literature, and translations, as well as the benefits presented by translation; the third is a practical exercise in translation that uses and demonstrates the claims of the previous two parts.

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## I. Introduction and Translation Theory

Through discussing several different aspects of research related to translation, this project will strive to create a moral argument for the wide, indiscriminate translation of foreign language (specifically Spanish) literature into English in the United States. This research covers translation theory, as well as how translation relates to culture and education. This project will heavily focus on Latin American literature translation in the United States due to the country's high percentage of Spanish speaking citizens, especially those of Latin American descent. The research used for this project is wide and varied, as is the subject to which it pertains, but all is relevant to the argument this thesis is presenting. The project has been organized into three separate parts, the first being the study of translation theory, the second being how translation relates to culture, and the third being a practical exercise in translation. The concrete research will be presented in the first and second parts, with the main argument being presented in the second part, after most of the research has been presented. The third part is a practical exercise exemplifying the claims of the previous two parts.

Though the art of translation has been studied by a plethora of different scholars, when it comes to the general practice of translation, there are two basic schools of thought: 'word for word' translation and 'sense for sense', or 'free', translation. According to Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet "translators can choose from two methods of translating, namely direct, or literal translation and oblique translation" (Vinay 84). The former refers to the practice of translation where each word, phrase, or sentence is translated independently and as exactly as possible. The latter, on the other hand, refers to a translation that cares little for the words themselves and

instead focuses on a translation of the sense or ‘feeling’ of the literature, or that which the literature is trying to convey. The discussion of translation theory hovers always above and between these two opposing ideas. For Friedrich Schleiermacher, these methods are referred to as paraphrase, which “deals with the elements of both languages as if they were mathematical symbols that can be reduced to the same value by increasing or decreasing them, but neither the spirit of the transformed language nor that of the original can be revealed by such a procedure” (40) and “it completely abandons the impression made by the original” (40). Imitation on the other hand, “concedes that no replica of a verbal work of art can be produced in another language that would correspond exactly in its individual parts of the original” (41) and that “Such a recreation is no longer the work itself” (41). These specific terms deal with the amount of domestication the translator should apply to the original work: a concept which will be dealt with in greater detail further on.

It is generally agreed that literal translation has its place in the world of scientific and other non-fiction writings in which the sole purpose is the transfer of factual, explicitly stated information. In these specific cases, there is no need for the translator to guess at or interpret the author’s meaning, as the meaning is explicit. However, “not every word in one language has an exact equivalent in another. Thus, not all concepts that are expressed through the words of one language are exactly the same as the ones that are expressed through the words of another” (Schopenhauer 32). That is to say, while most words and concepts can be equivalently expressed in any language, there are certain of those that cannot; at least not with a single, equivalent, word. These concepts mostly appear in literary translation, as technical and scientific concepts have exact equivalents in most languages, whereas exact philosophical equivalents are much more rare. Take, for example, the Spanish language phrases *me gusta* and *me encanta*. Their



English significances, respectively, are *I like* and *I love*, but the latter has a different, very specific connotation in Spanish. A Spanish speaker would not use *encantar* to express love for another person, but instead only things and ideas; to express love for another person, the verb *amar* would be used for romantic love and *querer* would be used for familial or platonic love. *Me encanta el té con azúcar y leche* would translate to *I love tea with sugar and milk*, but *I love Gabriel and we are going to get married* would translate in Spain as *Le amo a Gabriel y vamos a casarnos*, and in Latin America as *Amo a Gabriel y vamos a casarnos*. In English, families say *I love you*, but it would be more likely to hear *Te quiero* in the same familial setting in Spanish. This one example shows how different two languages can be: in Spanish, there are several linguistic differentiations for the concept of love, while in English there is simply the one word. This causes English speakers to be far less concise in their expression of the concept, and leads to an inability to properly express the meaning with its literal translation. Additionally, due to its singular expression, the concept of love itself in English does not have the expansive meaning that it does in Spanish. In English, for example, the word is frequently used in sentences such as *I love coffee*, the meaning of which would be the equivalent to *encantar*, but a word for word translation may result of the improper use of *querer* or *amar* due to this lack of multi-dimensionality. These inconsistencies across languages make literal, word for word translations difficult to use exclusively in the case of literature, be it prose or poetry, “we will never grasp the spirit of the foreign language if we first translate each word into our mother tongue and then associate it with its conceptual affinity in that language” (Schopenhauer 33). The translation of literature will simply never prosper with an exclusively literal translation due to its extreme limitations.

Before continuing further with this discussion of translation, it is important to define the word *domestication*, which will appear frequently, and how it relates to this project. The term refers to the process in which any product, be it literature or otherwise, is translated into the target language and culture in a manner that removes the foreign aspect of said product. The product is then unrelated to the original in the most basic manner. This can be seen heavily in all entertainment industries - most prominently in literature and the film industry. It is an undesirable effect if the purpose of the product's translation is to truly share it's meaning and the piece of its culture which it represents. For example, many Japanese horror movies have been remade for North American audiences due to their success and quality, but the end products have been criticized for over-domestication. That desired quality, due to the movie's innate connection to the Japanese culture, is lost in these cinematic translations. The foreign quality of the original is removed, even though that quality is what was appealing. The idea of the domestication of literature through translation, its undesirability, and how it can occur and how to avoid it, will be discussed many times throughout this thesis.

Vinay and Darbelnet lay out a 7-step procedure, with a specific method for each step, to deal with this problem; the first three steps regard direct translation and the last 4 regard oblique translation. They are as follows, in order of appearance: borrowing, calque, literal translation, transposition, modulation, equivalence, and adaptation. To begin with the first method: borrowing, "the simplest of all translation methods" (Vinay 85). This method consists of leaving a certain, very specific foreign word untranslated. This procedure usually applies to currency and food; these words, though foreign, will be understood by the target audience. An additional benefit of borrowing is the choice by the translator to use the method as a way to minimize the domestication of the original work. Additionally, "for certain concepts a word exists only in one

language and is then adopted by other languages...At times a foreign language introduces a conceptual nuance for which there is no word in our own language” (Schopenhauer 32). There are many words and phrases in the English language that have come from other languages which are used frequently and understood easily, for example, *joie de vivre*. After they have been borrowed and used for a certain amount of time, they become part of the language. Another form of borrowing and procedure two, calque, is a method in which individual words are translated, but the format of the expression of those words is copied from the original language. These two types of borrowing bring to attention the cultural importance of translation, as well as its linguistic effects, both of which will be discussed in detail further on. The third procedure, literal translation, the concept previously mentioned consists of a word for word translation, generally making only those changes required by grammar. For example, the Spanish phrase *libro nuevo* would not be translated as *book new*, but instead *new book* as dictated by the rules of English grammar. The changes made in a literal translation are generally only these types of cases with ungrammatical results.

At this point, Vinay and Darbalnet say “If, after trying the first three procedures, translators regard a literal translation unacceptable, they must turn to the methods of oblique translation” (Vinay 87). A translation could be regarded as unacceptable if a literal translation renders the language robotic, or the translator simply believes it does not convey the original in a satisfactory way. Now, the translator is meant to turn to what its creators refer to as oblique translation. The first oblique method, transposition, refers to the process of, when possible, changing the form of an entire sentence or phrase. The translator uses this option when she believes a calque to be unsatisfactory. For example, the Spanish phrase *Tengo hambre*, of which a calque would be *I have hunger*, would be changed to *I am hungry*. This method is similar to

literal translation, but the translator takes certain freedoms to ensure that that end product reads as naturally as possible. The translator must be careful while using this method, as it may domesticate the text further than desired. Modulation, procedure five, “can be justified when, although a literal, or even transposed, translation results in a grammatically correct utterance, it is considered unsuitable, unidiomatic, or awkward” (Vinay 89). That is to say, it is a step beyond the strictly grammatical changes that would be made in a literal translation. For example, a common greeting in Spanish, *buenos días*, literally translated as *good day(s)*, though grammatically correct is a rarely used greeting in English. Here, a translator could use a literal translation, but she may choose to use a greeting less common in Spanish, so the translation reads as if it was originally written in English instead. One drawback that accompanies this method, and of which the translator must be aware, is the amount of domestication that a work undergoes through the use of “free modulation” (Vinay 89). Procedure six, equivalence, shares this drawback, as it is closely related to linguistic occurrences such as idioms. Take for example English’s *you’re pulling my leg* or animal sounds like a dog’s *bow wow*. This procedure works perfectly well for cases such as animal sounds: the foreign onomatopoeia is simply replaced with its home language equivalent. Equivalence does not tread on the territory of cultural appropriation here, because the idea that it is replacing, that is to say the sounds that an animal makes, is not foreign; it is merely the representation, or the coding, of that sound which is foreign. An idea is not being domesticated, merely the form in which it is presented.

Borrowing and calques should be used delicately by an honest translator as these methods could result in inaccessible language and unintelligible translations, “Yet this is exactly what happens amongst members of so-called bilingual populations, who have permanent contact with two languages but never become fully acquainted with either” (Vinay 90). Borrowing is an

excellent way to allow the foreign components of a work to remain alive, but used with too heavy a hand, result in a barely translated work. Calques are a clunky solution to any translation problems, as the results often read poorly or unintelligibly. Equivalence may seem like a perfect solution in this case, and it certainly can be when used with restraint. It is a better method in some cases than the previously mentioned borrowing methods, but it is best used by a translator with complete understanding of both languages. No two languages share idioms in a fashion that make them easily, or at all, translatable. For example, a literal translation into Spanish of the English idiom *you're pulling my leg* would be *me estás tirando de la pierna*. Due to its lack of existence in Spanish, this translation would make no sense to a heritage speaker as a phrase that means anything other than what it explicitly says. A dishonest or poor translator, since the phrase itself makes sense semantically and can be translated directly between languages, may leave it at that, but a translator with complete knowledge of both languages would know the truest equivalent Spanish idiom: *me estás tomando el pelo*.

Again, a literal translation from this Spanish idiom does not make sense as it would be *you're taking my hair*, which, although it makes semantic sense, is not an existing English phrase with any attached, idiomatic meaning. If the translator would prefer to leave the direct translation, it could be acceptable in conjunction with either a footnote to explain the phrase, perhaps with an English example to ensure the readers' understanding or included as a part of index, used by the translator throughout the work for anything that needs additional explanation. This method of keeping the foreign illocution with a small explanation is perfectly acceptable, and would merely be a choice by the translator to have her new audience brought that much closer to her original author. Equivalence can be an excellent tool in the hands of a talented and honest translator, but without complete knowledge and command of both languages, she would

be unable to harness it. The level of necessary translator knowledge will be specifically discussed in more detail later in this project.

The last method is referred to as “the extreme limit of translation” (Vinay 90) by its creators: adaptation. Vinay and Darbelnet write on this method as the last, and furthest from the original, form of translation. However, when they use the word adaptation, they are not using it in the same way in which it is commonly used to mean: a retelling of a story through either a time or space change or a different medium. Their definition of adaptation used in reference to translation, “can be described, therefore, as a special kind of equivalence, a situational equivalence” (Vinay 91). Adaptation as a separate translation method is misleading, as it would be, by their definition, easy to include as a part of method six instead of causing confusion with the separate concept of adaption as a retelling. Their situational definition of adaptation begs the question of why they did not include it under equivalence in the first place as, “it is used in those cases where the type of situation being referred to by the SL message is unknown in the TL culture” (Vinay 91); SL refers to the text’s source language and TL to that which is it being translated. This definition is parallel to the previously mentioned case of idioms, as it essentially reduces down to an idea or message that simply does not exist in the same form in both languages. It is important to use this method sparingly, as it can domesticate the text if used inappropriately.

There is a danger of the text changing from a translation to a retelling if this method is used too recklessly. The line must be drawn somewhere, though it is difficult to give an exact place for it to be so. For example, in Vinay and Darbelnet’s explanation of methodology they relay “the story of an interpreter who, having adapted “cricket” into “Tour de France” in a context referring to a particularly popular sport, was put on the spot when the French delegate

then thanked the speaker for having referred to such a typically French sport. The interpreter then had to reverse the adaptation and speak of cricket to his English client” (Vinay 91). That is to say, the original story in English referred to an inherently English sport: cricket. For the translation, the sport was changed to the Tour de France for its French audience. The use here of this sort of equivalent adaptation changes the translation into an adapted message. It no longer retains its cultural connection to the original. Equivalence does not need to go so far in translation that details such as the above are changed; it is then retelling the story for a different audience in place of relaying the original tale in a different language.

Though these methods are useful and indeed necessary during the exercise of translation, they should not be used in a linear fashion as is suggested by Vinay and Darbelnet’s presentation. This linear presentation separates these methods, and thus, translation back into the dichotomy of literal versus free translation. This is where the distinction between these two major translation methods becomes a problem. As far as literature is concerned, neither of these methods function properly alone; they must be used together. If a word for word translation is used only, most of what makes the work a piece of literature will be lost. Alternatively, if a translator disregards the specifics of the original and only applies a free translation, it will stray too close to adaptation. To be successful as tools of literary translation, these methods must be used side by side. The reason for this is that, at times, the translator will find that she must use more than one method within the same unit of translation. This methodology leads to a generally slower, but more rewarding process that begets a far better finished product.

This integrated process is much closer in form to that of Robert Bly, as described in his study and exercise on translation *The Eight Stages of Translation*. Bly states that “The stages will often collapse into each other, or a single line will suddenly go through all eight stages in a

flash” (13). To lay out his translation process he claims then to “pretend that all goes in order; but this is an ancient ploy” (13). Bly admits that while the stages he describes may look sequential, they, in reality, cannot be used sequentially. This presentation then, is merely a way to organize his process; it is a list of the stages he sees within the whole process, but they do not follow one after another as they are presented. His eight stages include steps that are not taken into account by Vinay and Darbelnet, primarily due to Bly’s focus on poetry. In fact, he does not detail as much the intricacies of the translation process itself, such as suggesting particular methods to use, but instead the revision of the translation along the way with different aspects, such as sound. He discusses both a stage that focuses on “the spoken quality” (Bly 25) of the language of the translation and the literal sound as compared to that of the original.

As to the first, he claims that “the aim is not street language...but rather the desperate living tone or fragrance that tells you a person now alive could have said that phrase” (Bly 25). This stage needs to be treated with extreme delicacy, as too heavy a hand could lead here to unwanted domestication. In the second, he emphasizes the need for similarity in rhythm and to a certain extent, tone, as well (Bly 36). Tone, he says, leads to the question of sound, as both of these aspects should be as similar to the original as possible. Without saying it directly, Bly instructs the translator to avoid domestication as often as possible. However, on the subject of sound, he says “I believe in working as much as possible with internal rhymes, but I think it’s best not to insist on recreating end rhymes” (Bly 44). His reasoning is that “the translator has to add images that destroy the poem’s integrity” (Bly 44-45). Even as he advises to adhere to the original poetic form, the advice comes hand in hand with caution, as he knows this desperation for matching forms can backfire and become domestication in itself.



One particular stage of translation that Bly emphasizes is the interpretation of the original poem by the translator. Either before or after a literal translation has been rendered, the poem and its meaning, as Bly calls it, must be understood by the translator, and that “At the end of this stage, the translator should ask himself whether the feelings as well as the concepts are within his world” (Bly 21). That is to say, the translator should understand the meaning of the original poem and be able to recreate them in the target language of the translation. This literary ability is one of the most important for a translator to have. In fact, one aspect highly regarded and discussed by Bly is translator ability. It is an important aspect of translation that is not discussed as heavily by Vinay and Darbelnet in their exploration of the translation process.

The first need that must be met is that of the translator being fluent in both languages. A translator’s equal command of both languages is not only important because of simple linguistic differences, such as the differences in word order English and Spanish, which can make a translation unreadable if mishandled, but also the way the languages interact with themselves and each other. As Arthur Schopenhauer says, “in learning a foreign language one must map out several new spheres of concepts in one’s own mind that did not exist before. Consequently, one does not only learn words but acquires concepts” (33). These concepts must be acquired so the translator can see how they connect the two languages she is using. These concepts are what compose the human language, which most poetry and literature of any language rely on heavily, through which anything being translated must first travel. This is not necessarily hard to find in the academic world of translation, but the vocabulary of what is being translated must be considered, as literature often employs a higher vocabulary than technical writing or speaking. Again, this is not the most difficult standard to meet, so we move to the next: literary ability in both languages. The translator must be able to recognize and easily use literary devices as well as

have a working knowledge of both language's literary canon, because "what is actually translated is not the sender's intention but *the translator's interpretation of the sender's intention*" (Nord 85). This is essentially what Bly says on the subject, as he insists at every turn that the translator look inward and decide if she is truly capable of the task in front of her. If the translator has poor literary ability, she will not be able to parallel the author's intention as she may not have a complete picture of it herself.

Finally, the translator must have cultural knowledge of both the source and target cultures; this is potentially the most important, but often relegated to the back burner in favor of linguistic and literary competence. However, "When producing a text, the text producer must be aware of the audience's world and cultural knowledge, their emotivity, their sociocultural environment and previous reading experience" (Nord 85). When a translator is deciding what she will borrow and what she must find an equivalent for, she is employing her cross-cultural knowledge. Many translations end up domesticated further than necessary due to a lack of cultural knowledge. A translator who understands that a *tortilla* from Spain is a breakfast dish frequently made with eggs, potatoes, and onions and not the soft corn or flour taco shell of Mexico will be able to incorporate that type of knowledge into her translation. This level of cultural understanding allows the translator to verbalize foreign concepts without being forced, from lack of understanding, to domesticate the text. This, in turn, creates further cultural understanding in the reader, as they realize they are identifying with something foreign without having to make it their own.

While the best and most honest translations shy as far as possible from domestication of the text, it is important to remember that "Even if a source text has been written without any particular purpose or intention, the translation is always addressed to some audience (however

undefined it may be) and is thus intended to have some function for the readers” (Nord 83). Though the original work is the inspiration and focus of the translation, the translator cannot ignore her intended audience: her home language citizens. It is a delicate balance that must be struck by the translator; the foreign appeal of the book needs to be left intact, while being made accessible to the audience of the translation. This ability requires the translator to not only be familiar with English literature, linguistics, and culture, but with those of Spanish, as well. Passable translations can be made if the translator does not meet these standards, however for the truest and best translation possible, these should be the standards.

As suggested by the difference between Bly’s exploration of translation and that of Vinay and Darbelnet, the translation of poetry generally presents more problems than that of prose. As Yves Bonnefoy says, “The translator meets too many contradictions that he cannot eliminate; he must make too many sacrifices” (Bonnefoy 186). While prose literature needs the same treatment as poetry, there are fewer literary devices in use that affect the aesthetics of the work; alliteration is found easily in prose literature, but devices that impact rhyme and rhythm are far more frequent in poetry. As poetry typically consists of fewer words than prose, more import is laid upon the interpretation and translation of each individual word in the most appropriate way. This is the cause of many translation problems. “Where a text has its felicities (accidental or not), its cruxes, its density- its unconscious- the translation must stick to the surface, even if its own cruxes crop up elsewhere” (Bonnefoy 187). Take, for example, the challenge of translating Shakespeare, a distinctly English language poet. Not only does the translator have to deal with, or choose to discard, iambic pentameter, but she must also decide how to deal with the many linguistic tricks Shakespeare employed: the “felicities” of the language. These tricks include

many of the literary devices still in use in modern poetry, however, it is a well-known fact that Shakespeare made up words in addition to playing with how all words can be used.

Translating poetry into English from Spanish presents two major complications concerning rhythm: synalepha and syneresis. Both terms refer to the merging of two syllables into one, and they make frequent appearances in the reading of Spanish language poetry. The former refers to this incident between two words, and the latter refers to the occurrence within a single word. Synalepha and syneresis, which can also be called *encadenamiento* or ‘chaining’, are a major part of standard Spanish phonetics. In normal speech, which is quite rapid, they occur with great frequency. For example, *de el* is ungrammatical, instead *del* should be used; this is an extreme example as this chaining has been accepted to the point of an orthographical change, but this type of combination of vowels occurs all the time in Spanish. Their poetic appearances are worth mentioning due not only to their frequent use, but their near non-existence in the reading of English language poetry. In fact, Spanish poets use chaining as a literary device with success due to the high occurrence in normal speech. This challenge takes on another level when colloquial speech is considered. Every Spanish speaking country, region, and group of people has some linguistic distinctions that only apply them, and many authors from those countries write in their specific dialect. At the very least, there are small regional and cultural differences that can only be recognized by someone with higher than average knowledge of that culture. A translator must be aware of these cultural challenges that she will face: dialectal speech can mean something slightly different, and colloquial speech can be almost unreadable to many. Take the book *Trainspotting* by Irvine Welsh. It is written completely in the Scottish dialect; this means not only using terms specific to Scotland but also writing the words as they are said instead of how they are spelled. Even someone whose first language is English can have

problems reading this book, so how does it get translated into another language? Due to the large number of Spanish dialects, translators will encounter this issue frequently, therefore they must be equipped with the knowledge of these issues and how to solve them.

Specifically, synalepha and syneresis directly affect how easily a poem's form can be imitated through translation and are exactly the type of sound, tone, and rhythm to which Bly refers in *The Eight Stages of Translation*. Occasionally, English will have a linguistic trick to make the rhythm of a translated poem similar to the original. For example, while Spanish sentences have specific accented syllables based on the words themselves, it is not exactly the same in English. Accent distribution in an English sentence is worked around the sentence as a whole rather than through the syllables of the specific words themselves. That is to say, the addition or subtraction of words from a poetic verse in English does not necessarily affect the rhythm of the verse or the poem, whereas in Spanish, where the duration of each syllable is the same, it would do so drastically. It is likely that a translator will have to work and rework certain lines to fit, or decide the loss of meaning from too much reworking is or is not worth replicating the original poetic form. Here again, the translator must be careful not to stray from translation into adaption. Too many major changes will separate the translation from the original work and its author. These challenges, instead of suggesting the futility of attempting to translate these works, points to the necessity of their translations. In a larger view, instead of focusing solely on Spanish language literature, without the existence of challenging translations from all languages, World Literature would not be what it is today.

## II. Translation in Culture

People in power have a long history of using language to oppress those under their control. The English language itself has been called a patriarchal construct by some theorists, such as Dale Spender, created and used by men specifically to oppress women, “Spender believes that ‘maleness’ pervades language as a whole. Moreover, according to her, the reality most of us inhabit most of the time is a male one because language (male language) creates reality” (Assiter 231). Additionally, “Spender presents a formidable array of examples in support of her thesis. She points out that the meaning of some words is different when applied to females and males. For instance: ‘He’s a professional’; ‘she’s a professional’” (Assiter 232). This example in particular is quite convincing, as the male connotation is a positive one, as in he is a capable, educated cog in the machine of his field and the female connotation is that of a prostitute. Further, it must be admitted that due to the power structure between men and women that has existed globally for thousands of years, men have had control of how the language *officially* grows. That is to say, how a language is made concrete by the written and accepted rules of its grammar. Spoken language will always change and only by the hands of the masses, but men have controlled the politics and academics surrounding the allegedly ‘correct’ form of English without a doubt, and many, if not most, other languages around the world.

Another example of sexist oppression through the English language is the supposedly gender-neutral use of ‘he/his’. When speaking or writing in general terms, it is acceptable to use only male pronouns. On this subject Spender tells us:

That, in 1746, John Kirby formulated his ‘Eighty-eight grammatical Rules’. One of these...stated that the ‘male gender was *more comprehensive* than the female’. As she

points out, in articulating this norm, Kirby did not mean that there were more males than females. What he must have been doing was reflecting the common belief, in society at the time, that males counted for more than females. (Assiter 239)

Another theorist, Alison Assiter, disagrees that Kirby's grammatical rule was made purposefully to oppress women, but instead for linguistic simplicity. Assiter does state that "if it had not been for male dominance generally, in society, there would have been no reason for proposing that 'he' should encompass 'she' rather than the other way about" (Assiter 239). It is interesting to note that though this research is all in reference to the English language, Spanish has a very similar, sexist rule: if there is a group of ten people and all ten of them are women, the pronoun used to refer to them is *nosotras*, but if there is even one man in the group, the pronoun changes to *nosotros*. It does not matter how large the group is, if there is even one man in the group, the pronoun changes to the male form in place of the female. One man outweighs literally countless women. The same can be seen in Latin and Greek, showing that this inequality is nothing new.

Returning to the discussion of English's 'he/his', Assiter says that "Kirby's reasoning did indeed serve to reinforce a state of affairs that was already in existence: the domination of women by men" (Assiter 239). As previously mentioned, as men are the ones who decide what rules, not only grammatical, become official, they decide how we use language to shape our reality, "There are two reasons, then, why 'he/man' language tends to reinforce unequal power relations between the sexes. First of all, the claim that there is a genuinely neutral sense of the term 'he' is, in fact, false; rather the introduction of such language presupposes unequal relations between the sexes. Its continual use reinforces oppression" (Assiter 240). Not only does the presupposition of inequality introduce this type of oppression into the language, but its longevity continues to suggest and naturalize that same inequality. The subconscious hierarchy that

patriarchal language creates in those people who use it perpetuates gender inequality and through that, gender oppression. The appearance of such a similar rule in Spanish shows that this oppression is not only an English occurrence, but a worldwide linguistic phenomenon. As some languages have actual gender distinctions, such as the use of gendered nouns in Spanish, it is easier to connect the occurring linguistic oppression to an actual root, but many languages do not have such gender distinctions, such as English; while there is a number of words that can be gendered to create a distinction, that is an outdated form of speech. For example: *waiter* and *waitress*. They are the same word, but purposefully gendered, which inherently creates inequality. However, these terms are not used as frequently as in generations past. The term *server* has come to be the norm, as it is more inclusive. There are many other examples of this gender distinction being removed in the English language. As the language ages and evolves, that gendered aspect of the language becomes outdated and even obsolete. English even has a gender-neutral pronoun that has seen more use in recent years that can be used in place of *he* or *she* when necessary: *they*. The use of the plural, third-person pronoun as a singular, third-person pronoun is not a novelty, as the word *their/theirs* is frequently used as a possessive, singular, third-person pronoun. It should be noticed that this project has committed to using female pronouns when referring to a general translator, as the translator of the included poems is female and will be referred to thusly or in the gender neutral form of *they/their*. While this particular type of oppression is based in gender relations, sexism is far from the only reason for cultural, linguistic oppression.

Colonialism, by countries such as Britain, France, and the United States, saw oppression through language as a common control tool. This type of oppression takes many forms, from the forced language use during the height of colonialism to the compulsory use of English in



American schools, often to the detriment of non-English speaking students. Using translation in the process of oppression through language is not a recent concept, nor is it restricted to any people or part of the language. Once, the process “in which the translator endeavors to transport himself into the foreign situation but actually only appropriates the foreign idea and represents it as his own” (Goethe 60) was the standard form of translation. In that case, not only is the translator redefining their own and a foreign culture with this type of appropriation, but she is able to present whatever information she desires, in whatever manner she desires. Translation directly affects what can be read and by who, whether that means limiting access to literature through low levels of narrow translation, or the lack of translation, period. Take for example, the translation of the Bible into English. It was not until the beginning of the sixteenth century, with William Tyndale’s translation from the biblical Latin and Greek that the average English-speaking person could read the Bible for herself; until that time, it could only be read by clergymen and those with an above average education. The majority of people, circumstantially unable to access or achieve a higher level of education, were forced to either not have access to the Bible, or spend their time having it read and interpreted for them. The ability to control the type of information someone reads directly leads to the ability to control the person herself. Control of translation is another way to control the manner in which information is received. Not only does control of translation allow authority over what information is being received in general, but a translator can dress up that information in any way she so chooses. Friedrich Nietzsche says of the Roman Empire,

Anything past and alien was an irritant to them, and as Romans they considered it to be nothing but a stimulus for yet another conquest. In those days, indeed, to translate meant to conquer- not merely in the sense that one would omit the historical dimension but also

in the sense that one would add a hint of contemporaneousness to the material translated and, above all, in the sense that one would delete the name of the poet and insert the translator's name in its place. And all this was done with the very best conscience as a member of the Roman Empire without realizing that such action constituted theft.

(Nietzsche 69)

They found anything non-Roman so abhorrent that, to receive it as a culture, they completely reformed it into something domestic. They did this because though the original work had value, its value could only increase by allowing it to be claimed as Roman. The translated work would then be presented not as a foreign work, but as a Roman one, "This is one of the most rigorous manifestations of Latin cultural and linguistic imperialism, which despises the foreign word as something alien but appropriates the foreign meaning in or to dominate it" (Friedrich 13). Taking from one culture a piece of their culture, such as literature, is an incredible way to show dominance as well as decrease the influence of that culture. For example, the Greek idea of *mimesis* which the Romans presented as their own: *imitatio*. Instead of merely introducing this foreign idea into their culture, they completely removed it from its Greek-ness and reintroduced it as something completely Roman. Further, "translation from the Greek came to mean something else for the Romans: The appropriation of the original without any real concern for the stylistic and linguistic idiosyncracies[sic] of the original" (Friedrich 12). The total lack of importance given to the original work shows how little respect the Romans had for any language but their own. It was an integral part of their cultural identity; a part that they actively attempted to take away from other cultures through linguistic dominance. This clear disregard shows how important they considered their own language as it related to their culture; this fact is why conquering civilizations always do their best to separate the colonized and conquered from their

own language. A person without connection to her language and therefore her culture is much easier to break down and mold into the 'ideal' citizen.

In the United States, this sort of oppression is far from unknown. In fact, Spanish language speakers have been experiencing it throughout the country's history. In her book, *Language, Culture, and Power*, Lourdes Diaz Soto details the history of Steel Town, Pennsylvania and its Spanish speaking (mostly Puerto Rican) inhabitants. In early 1993, the industrial town decided to eliminate its twenty-year-old public school bilingual program. The community's leaders and citizens were ignored during the process of eliminating the program, and this linguistic oppression led to a sharp ethnic divide in the community of Steel Town. Soto shows the linguistic oppression seen in public schools in the area: even during its existence, the Latinos and Latinas attending the schools' bilingual programs in question experienced discrimination due to their language and culture, "The linguistic and cultural repression in Steel Town and in the Commonwealth is a reminder of the Carlisle Indian school experience- perhaps the most glaring example of how mainland schools implemented a systematic process of linguistic and cultural repression" (Soto 32). The Carlisle Indian school was a failed experiment to integrate Native Americans into White American culture. The curriculum was focused on erasing their language, and their connection to the Native American culture. The children who attended were forced to speak only in English and to practice only Christianity, among other changes. This discriminatory repression led to many of the children having mental health issues. There were many incidents of suicide, and the children who were able to return to their homes and cultures were frequently rejected or had extreme difficulty in their attempt to readjust.

In Steel Town, children of Hispanic and Latin American descent (a term used by the study) who attended public schools were forced to speak only English, apart from the existence

of their bilingual programs, and even those programs were simply an attempt to integrate them into English only situations, “The families revealed interactions with school personnel that devalued their native language and culture. How schools initiate that process of language loss is of interest here as is the idea that schools are capable of initiating a systematic process that results in the loss of languages and cultures” (Soto 31). According to the families interviewed by Soto, the education system was mostly used to systematically strip these children of their language, and where language goes, culture follows. As Ilan Stavans states, while speaking of bilinguals’ experiences, Stavans. Due to lack of knowledge on bilingual education, the schools of Steel Town often sorted Spanish speakers with little English knowledge into Special Education classes; frequently these children ending up earning higher education degrees and went on to work in education themselves. The fact that English is not their first language is equated with legitimate special needs. Other children defined as Special Education were removed from U.S. schools and returned to their home country to finish their education, often with very positive results. It is incredible that in a country with such a high percentage of Spanish speaking residents, the knowledge of bilingual education is so low that it forces children to leave the country to get the education they deserve. An increase in successful, bilingual education would mean an increase in successful, bilingual citizens that do not feel ostracized by their country.

At times, these children’s home lives could be a reprieve from the discrimination they faced daily in school, but frequently, parents encouraged them to speak only English at home, as well, in an attempt to ensure academic success in English only schools. Many families were reported to attempt what is referred to as a ‘one parent-one language system’, in which one parent speaks one language with the child, and the other parent speaks the other. Some reported success with this method however:

Other professionals I interviewed opted to “temporarily” sacrifice home language development with the hopes of assuring early English language proficiency and school acceptance of their child. One father, for example, began the one parent-one language approach but discontinued it and implemented an English-only approach when he felt that his children were not acquiring higher levels of English needed for the school’s academically rigorous English-only curriculum. His children now have difficulty speaking to their grandparents, and he expresses considerable sadness at this loss of communication. It was evident that the children’s mother appears limited in English proficiency. What impact the implementation of an English-only environment at home will have on the children’s relationship with their mother can only be surmised. (Soto, 28)

It can be seen in these examples how connected language is to one’s culture, and how the loss of language results in an immeasurable loss that stems into all facets of life. As was previously mentioned, mental health was shown to seriously suffer at the Carlisle Indian school, and it is not a far leap to say that even less aggressive linguistic and cultural repression can have lasting effects on those that experience it,

The families also recalled gatherings filled with special traditions, sights, sounds, and tastes that were unique during their formative early childhood years. Such traditions helped the participants understand issues of language and culture in the informal and caring family setting. The intergenerational wisdom and values given by the family to its young children left a lasting impression on these adult informants. As children they developed in an increasingly complex society so that the traditional wisdom and knowledge helped them gain a strong sense of self. (Soto 29)

The intergenerational communication and relationship development that happens when children interact with their parents, grandparents, and other extended family members connect them to their culture. Without their ability to use their native language, this connection is easily severed; not only the lasting connection to their culture, but the immediate connections to their family, as well. Additionally, the lack of respect given to their native tongue creates a hierarchy of languages; English is valued above Spanish instead of them being seen as not only equal, but helpful to each other. Bilingual children are frequently shown to be more successful academically than those who are monolingual.

This cultural appropriation is something that still happens today, throughout the country, though not as much through translation; instead of taking translated works and erasing its connections to its home culture, translations simply are not valued as they should be or have been in the past. In fact, many people in the U.S. believe that translations from other languages are so infrequent due to the lack of ‘good’ literature in other languages than English; that if there was good literature in other languages, it would be translated without question. Since those translations don’t exist, the literature itself must not exist. This leads directly to the small amount of value attached to literature in other languages in the U.S.. In addition to that lack of value, the lack of translations is owing in part to the widespread ethnocentrism present in the country and to the fact that English is considered one of the most important literary languages. However, the cultures and countries attached to the languages thought to be the most literary languages, French and English, are cultures and countries widely known for their aggressive colonialism. This imagined linguistic hierarchy creates the same hierarchy within world literature. The only way to solve this problem is widespread, indiscriminate, and honest translation. More true translations into English would demonstrate that the issue is not, in fact, a lack of quality literature in other

languages, but instead a lack of desire to find it. Poor translations cannot be said to accomplish the same goal, as a dishonest or poorly made translation can be detrimental to this cause in that they do not provide the correct lens with which to view the original work. A translation cannot be presented as anything else: a different lens through which to see the same image. The original could be called the same thing; the message is written in human experience. An honest translation “attempts to identify itself with the original [and] ultimately comes close to an interlinear version and greatly facilitates our understanding of the original. We are led, yes, compelled as it were, back to the source text” (Goethe 63). The original text should never be in danger of being erased, eclipsed, or overshadowed by the translation; the two texts should reside alongside each other, and in cooperation, with each one encouraging the reading and understanding of the other. If the translation and original work together properly, it will increase the cultural importance both of translations in general, as well as those cultures whose literature is being translated.

To return to a previous point, it is important to mention that for literary translation, in terms of domestication, that the original work should always be the translator’s driving force. The translated work should therefore be kept as closely related to the original as possible, “all the power is generated by the original” (Friedrich 16). It is important for the audience reading the translated text to first, understand and second, identify with the work. The foreign spirit of the original, however, should not be sacrificed to this end, “Therefore it is not the highest praise of a translation, particularly in the age of its origin, to say that it reads as if it had originally been written in that language” (Benjamin 21). The issue of domestication essentially boils down to whether the author should be brought to the audience or the audience to the author. As says Friedrich Schleiermacher. A translation that reads as if it were an original English work, while

very easy to understand, cuts contact with the original. This type of translation results in an almost-adaptation. While it transmits well the words of the original, the spirit of the original cannot be translated in this fashion, “the kinship of languages is brought out by a translation far more profoundly and clearly than in the superficial and indefinable similarity of two works of literature” (Benjamin 17). That is to say, an ultra-readable almost, or actual, adaptation, no matter how similar, cannot do that which an honest translation can for a of a piece of literature. If the translation of a certain work is dishonest or poor, as with those taken too far from their original, that work cannot be considered to have been truly shared outside of its culture. Therefore, that piece of the culture which it represents is also unshared.

It is the foreign component of the original work that is so important to communicate. That is exactly why Vinay and Darbelnet went into such detail with their methods, and why more and more, many translators are abandoning the two-tiered literal versus free system:

Both procedures...cannot satisfy that person who, inspired by the value of a foreign masterpiece, wants to communicate its power to those who speak his own language, and who has the stricter concept of translation in mind. Paraphrase and imitation cannot therefore be more closely evaluated here, because they deviate from this concept; they are mentioned only to outline the boundaries of the field with which we are concerned.

(Schleiermacher 41)

Translation should not be an attempt to integrate a foreign work as a culture’s own, but instead to allow a more complete identification with those foreign aspects that make the translation of that work so important. These aspects are not necessarily different than aspects of domestic life, but the identification of the foreign work with those familiar to the home language audience creates cultural identification. It is this identification that decreases any desire to appropriate the



translated work; valuing another culture's contribution to the human language of literature as something another culture cannot contribute.

As the discussion of translation moves forward, it is important to decide where within the literary spectrum it falls. How does a translation identify with and relate to the original considering the importance of their relationship to each other? Additionally, it is important to this discussion to distinguish between a true translation and an adaptation as the two will occupy a different space in the spectrum. First, it must be considered that translation is objectively more important to literature and the transmission of said literature between cultures. On this subject, Itamar Even-Zohar says, "Through the foreign works, features (both principles and elements) are introduced into the home literature which did not exist there before. These include possibly not only effective, but a whole range of other features as well, such as a new (poetic) language, or compositional patterns and techniques" (193). Examples of this can be found in every culture: Shakespeare and his extensive use of iambic pentameter, Gabriel García Márquez and the introduction of magical realism, or Albert Camus' absurdism philosophy. World literature would not be what it is today without contributions from culture to culture through translation and it is important to continue this tradition through the increase of translation. Further,

To say that translated literature maintains a central position in the literary polysystem means that it participates actively in shaping the center of the polysystem. In such a situation it is by and large an integral part of innovatory forces, and as such likely to be identified with major events in literary history while these are taking place. This implies that in this situation no clear-cut distinction is maintained between "original" and "translated" writings, and that often it is the leading writers (or members of the avant-

garde who are about to become leading writers) who produce the most conspicuous or appreciated translations. (Even-Zohar 193)

That is to say, the importance of translated literature is due to how it has shaped the literary polysystem of all literature. It is incorrect to suggest that the English-language literary canon would be what it is today without incredible input from other languages and cultures. There was a time not long ago in which French was the language of literature, even for primarily English-speaking people; eventually when literature began to be written in English, much of it was in the style of another language's literature such as French or Latin, "Since a young literature cannot immediately create texts in all types known to its producers, it benefits from the experience of other literatures, and translated literature becomes in this way one of its more important systems" (Even-Zohar 194). Translated literature, in these situations of one language's young literature, provides a healthy base from which to work.

Translations of great literature inhabit their own space on the literary spectrum simply due to their ability to transmit excellent works of literature between languages. Does the novel, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, an English translation, garner less literary respect than the Spanish original? To a certain point, admittedly, it does, but would the quality of that piece be served better by remaining untranslated? Certainly not. Honest translations should exist parallel to their originals, as the originals cannot occupy that space in the literary spectrum of a different language. Are translations of lesser regarded pieces of literature therefore to be considered lesser works themselves? Translations can only hold a place equal to that of their originals, because true translations are merely a vehicle for the sense, feeling, and content of the original. Additionally, as previously detailed, the world literary canon would not be what it is today without the availability of well-done, honest translations.

Additionally, translated literature can help not only new literature, but new languages themselves. The English language was not always as dominant across the world as it is today. In fact, it was primarily a spoken language for the lower classes in England; most highly regarded literature was written, and business was conducted, in French, with aspects such as religion consisting primarily of Latin. It was during the Protestant Reformation in England that the language began to be used heavily by more educated people for written and official communications and the desire for a higher functioning English language developed. It was at that time, the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, that the first English translation of the Bible was published by William Tyndale; the common man, the English speaker with little working knowledge of Latin, wanted access to that work. Soon after, William Shakespeare rose to prominence due to using the English language in ways in which it had never before been used. As Marenbon succinctly states:

Standard English has been developed over centuries to fulfil [sic] a far wider range of functions than any dialect- from technical description to philosophical argument, from analysis of information to fiction and poetry. Only by using another language (such as French) which had been developed similarly, over centuries, by a similar culture, could the speaker enjoy a similar resource. (Marenbon 252)

Without English speakers' knowledge of the French language, acquired heavily through literary translation, the English language would not be what it is today. All young languages and literatures require the base of translated foreign works from which to grow. As mentioned above, young languages must acquire new ways in which to express ideas to fill the gaps within it; to reform English as a literary language, translations were used as examples of what can be done with a similar language. Through the act of translation itself, a new function of language is

created from the foreign work that enhances the language and literature of the target culture. Further, the iteration of the English language in which the first canonical literature was written is almost unrecognizable. Take Chaucer for example, though he is still studied heavily, most of his works are accompanied by a modern English translation. The same can be seen with Shakespeare's works. If it is recognized that these almost unreadable works, which could be said to come from a different culture, are worthy of a modern English translation, there should be room for full translations, as well.

Given these facts, it is shocking "that 3% of all books...published in the U.S. are translations and 0.7% (of all books published) are translations of literary fiction and poetry" (Pollack 354). Not only is the US not translating other languages, but less than a third of what is translated is literary prose and poetry. Languages, as previously explored, are increased by translation of literature through the introduction of different concepts for which one language does not yet have the vocabulary. Non-fiction language, or technical language, has little room for improvement, as the concepts expressed by that set of vocabulary are not in a constant state of change, as with the often more philosophical concepts contained within the literary spectrum. Only three percent of the literature being published annually in the United States has a chance to introduce or grow those concepts for which we have limited vocabulary. As Sarah Pollack writes, "it is a deplorably low level of translated titles, especially when compared to the percentage of translated titles published in Spain (25%) and Italy (22%), to name just two examples for which numbers are available" (Pollack 354). English translation from Spanish language literature, specifically Latin American literature, has always been low due to the fact that it has not been assigned a high level of "symbolic literary value (the prestige and history of a language and attention from key arbiters of culture such as Oprah and *The New York Times*)"

(Pollack 348). The Latin American Boom of the 1960s and 1970s represents the highest level of Spanish language literature's translation into English. The reason behind the movement's popularity can be boiled down to the introduction of magical realism as a literary concept to English literature, which, as previously discussed, is one of the most important functions of translated literature.

Magical realism is still considered a distinctly Latin American literary theme, as the concept was not domesticated by the translations, but instead the translations displayed a different culture through the lens of the English language. The popularity of the movement has had one major drawback, however, and that is that due to the extremely low level of translated titles being published in the United States, "currently, iconic boom novelists continue to be given many of the limited opportunities for the translation into English as they produce new works, thus eclipsing in visibility their younger counterparts" (Pollack 352). That is to say, authors such as those from the Crack generation, a more recent literary movement primarily in Mexico that attempts to break with Spanish language literary tradition that has come before, are not being afforded the same opportunities as those authors who have already contributed to the English literature of the United States. The fault here cannot be placed on the Boom authors, as their work certainly should be translated also, but instead on the devastatingly low levels of translated titles being published in the United States. The validity and popularity of the translations from one movement of Spanish language literature should not negate the existence of translations into English of works from other Spanish language literary movements. The Spanish language literature that is translated into English, as stated previously, is mostly canonical literature such as Cervantes, Neruda, and García Márquez. There is nothing to be said against the importance of these works, however, it is just as important to read modern literature as it is to read classic

literature. Literature can only be discovered if it is read, and if we do not translate literature into English at a more appropriate rate, we are potentially missing out on literature that could increase our own language, literature, and culture as has occurred in the past.

Another, similar argument for increased translation of a wider berth of authors and genres is the recent popularity of Chilean author Roberto Bolaño. Among other works, the two translations that have been deemed important are *2666* and *The Savage Detectives*. His work has become so popular that Sarah Pollack suggests that “the significance of Bolaño’s place at the center of a new canon in translation is magnified and necessitates inquiring into how his critical success in the United States market may be shifting the politics of translation of other texts” (Pollack *After Bolaño* 660). He has received critical acclaim in addition to his popularity and high sales and the reason for this is that he has introduced new concepts, significantly different than magical realism, into the literature of the United States. People and critics alike can connect to this literature and that is due both to the original and the translation. Critics appreciate the honest translation that has been made by a translator who has the literary talent and cultural knowledge to properly carry the literature over into a second language. The high sales can be attributed to the creation of a cultural connection between the audience and the original work through the translation. According to Sarah Pollack,

The prominence of Bolaño and his works, with their boundless potential for interpretation and comparison, is a rare gift to translation...helping open the literary field on the United States to the translation of an exciting new corpus of Latin American works, with which many comparatists will work in the future. (665)

Translation of Bolaño’s work has accomplished, on a small scale, exactly what is needed in the United States: it has shown the value of Spanish Language literature that is not either a literary

classic already included in the canon of World Literature or from an author of the Latin American Boom. The gathering interest related to the Chilean author will inevitably spark interested in other Spanish literature and their translations. With luck, this spark will be enough to create a new boom more expansive and lasting than its predecessor.

On the subject of narrow foreign language literary translation in the U.S., Edward Said discusses Arabic literature in his article entitled “Embargoed Literature”. He begins by revealing that he was told by publishers in the United States, after being asked to compile a list of works that he believed should be translated, that Arabic is a controversial language and that was why the now Nobel Prize winner Naguib Mahfouz, who was on the list, was not chosen to be translated. Said relates how this reaction from the publisher made him realize “that Arabs and their language were somehow not respectable, and consequently dangerous, *louche*, unapproachable, was perfectly evident to me then” (Said 97). This sounds unfortunately similar to the relationship to the Spanish language in the United States in the current political climate. Immigration, specifically of people from Central and South America who speak Spanish, into the United States is not only a hotly discussed, but incredibly divisive issue under our current presidential administration. As Said says, on the subject of translation of Arabic literature, “It is impossible not to believe that one reason for this odd state of affairs is the longstanding prejudice against Arabs and Islam that remains entrenched in Western, and especially American, culture” (Said 98). There is not a lack of literature to be translated from either language, but the audience in the United States is, essentially, afraid of foreign literature as though it threatens the survival of the English language in the country. Foreign literature that is widely accepted in the US allows the audience to create a singular cultural identity for those cultures from which it comes. On this, Said says:

Indifference and prejudice were a blockade designed to interdict any attention to texts that do not reiterate the usual clichés about “Islam,” violence, sensuality, and so forth. There almost seems to be a deliberate policy of maintaining a kind of monolithic reductionism where the Arabs and Islam are concerned; in this, the Orientalism that distances and dehumanizes another culture is upheld, and the xenophobic fantasy of a pure “Western” identity elevated and strengthened. (Said 99)

This statement is important for many reasons and relates directly to the cultural importance of translation espoused in this project. First, that the Arabs and Islam are constantly reduced to a certain, singular image due to the lack of wide literary translation of the literature and that has a direct affect on the general perception of that culture. Sarah Pollack mentions this in her discussion of the importance of the translation of Roberto Bolaño’s work into English in her article “Latin America Translated (Again): Roberto Bolaño’s *The Savage Detectives* in the United States”. Pollack says of the first wave of Latin American translation in the 1930s, that “they were almost exclusively appreciated in thematic terms, as picturesque, exotic examples that reinforced an image of rural, underdeveloped, culturally distant lands” (Pollack 348-9). She continues regarding the Latin American Boom in the 60s and 70s, specifically the novel *Gabriela, Clove and Cinnamon* written by Jorge Amado, “Its humor and romantic plotting appealed to the U.S. reader, and its tropical, exotic, and sensual Cinderella story came to represent the literary flavor of the region” (Pollack 349). From the examples given by Said and Pollack, it is clear that publishers in the U.S. publish certain literature that reinforces that singular image of the culture from which it comes. U.S. publishers control exactly what information regarding foreign cultures is being shared through the discriminate, narrow translations of foreign language literature.



It is a deliberate choice to only narrowly translated foreign language literatures and only portray an “exotic” culture, instead of widely translating that literature and representing the entire culture. The only value that is served by this deliberate translating is that of, as Said stated, xenophobia that is so prevalent in the Western culture of the United States. As with the continued use of gendered language discussed earlier and its naturalization of sexism, the limited cultural information being shared through translation feeds the xenophobic view of those cultures. The second reason that Said’s statement is so important is that it brings this terrible truth to light. The United States has a strong sense of ethnocentrism and xenophobia, and always has. However, while that particular sentiment may be strong in the U.S., that is not the only country in which it persists. Ilan Stavans, in his discussion of Spanglish both in Mexico and the U.S. says of the sentiment in Mexico, “On the other side of the border, their right-wing opponents fear that their own nation is in the course of a sharp decline that entails a switching of tongues” (Stavans 134). Here, Stavans is demonstrating, as has been discussed previously in this project, how incredibly connected to its particular culture language is. The perceived “loss” of culture through the interaction of two languages leads to the fear of foreign languages themselves and the cultures to which they are attached. The fear of foreign infiltration of English and the alleged language of the U.S. and the culture to which it connects is incredibly evident in this clear, purposeful exclusion of literature that would display a culture that is similar to the Western culture that is so treasured in the U.S., or literature that would not fit the particular brand of foreign that has been decided for that culture. However, this terrible truth proves the cultural power and importance of literary translation. If translation did not have such a strong connection to culture through language, this obvious and deliberate exclusion would not exist. If the lack of widely translated foreign literature feeds this xenophobia and ethnocentrism, it only stands to

reason that the opposite is also true: if foreign literature were more widely translated in the U.S., it would allow cultural connection to the point that that xenophobia could be weakened.

If the connection between language and culture is so important, why does this project insist that Spanish translation into English is so necessary? Many young people of Hispanic and Latin American descent living in the United States, while able to speak Spanish, either fluently or only passably, are frequently unable to read the language very well. This stems from the lack of public bilingual education: these children may be speaking Spanish at home, but written communication is infrequent in home situations. Children primarily learn to read and write in school, and that is done in English. This leaves a large gap when it comes to their literary knowledge of their native language. With the lack of translations into English, this leads to a disconnect with their culture's literature. Widely translated Spanish literature can help close that gap. When their native language literature then becomes more accessible that accessibility not only encourages them to read that literature, but it shows them that the education system of which they are a part value their native language and culture. The presence of more accessible English translations can lead to these young people to expand their knowledge of Spanish, and as previously mentioned, bilingual children often succeed educationally when their bilingualism is encouraged and grown.

Similarly, the lack of translated literature can create problems with linguistic development. White American children living in the US have access to a plethora of United States American literature that they are able to identify with, and thus have more desire to read, all throughout the educational process, and all of them are written in their native language. Descendants of Spanish speaking people, however, do not have the same access to their own heritage's literature if they are educated in the U.S. Some children love to read, but by and large

it is difficult to get even college level students to read something they do not want to read. Often this distaste for reading comes from the inability to identify with so much of the literature they are meant to read. This comes from the lack of representation of a diverse cast of characters, because most school curriculum literature, which is derived from the accepted canon, consists of works written by white, primarily British, men.

It is important that kids in the American education system have more worldly literature that they will enjoy reading because reading is the best way to increase vocabulary as “Research in monolingual children suggests that in contrast with vocabulary breadth, which expands quickly in preschool and school-age years, the accumulation of deep vocabulary knowledge takes a prolonged period of time and repeated exposures to words in a language” (Sheng 1035). The only way to actually increase your vocabulary is to be in constant contact with new words. The primary way for increased exposure to new and different words is to read and to read widely, as most children’s speaking vocabulary is quite limited. Additionally, depending on what generation immigrant the child is, Spanish may be primarily spoken at home, which leads to less exposure to those same higher-level English vocabulary words which they encounter in literature, “One domain of language that shows the greatest growth in school-age children is vocabulary. A rich vocabulary is essential for smooth and functional communication” (Sheng 1034). Without the extra at home exposure to these higher-level vocabulary English words, their English vocabulary will not increase at the same rate as a child who speaks English at home as well as at school. This is a problem because “Semantic elaboration is a gradual process and requires many encounters with the target word and can be more prolonged for bilingual children who have reduced exposure to words in each language” (Sheng 1042). The answer to this, however, is not to encourage them to speak English at home, but instead increase their exposure

to literature. On the subject of a 'good' English teacher, John Marenbon says, "From the beginning he will have used literary texts (among others) to illustrate the usages of English, since these texts provide examples of English used at its best" (Marenbon 256). Easy, clear communication is key to success in life and in this day and age that communication is not only spoken, but written as well, due to the heavy use of electronic communications. Without the strong base of a higher-level vocabulary, which comes primarily from literature, higher level communications become that much more difficult.

Linguistic separation of classes has been an aspect of society for as long as there has been written language to record the differences. Fortunately, the modern world does not depend as heavily on the class system as past societies, especially in the United States as:

Today, a member of the upper class is, for instance, not necessarily better educated, cleaner, or richer than someone not of this class. Nor, in general, is he likely to play a greater part in public affairs, be supported by other trades or professions, or engage in other pursuits or pastimes than his fellow of another class. There are, it is true, still a few minor points of life which may serve to demarcate the upper class, but they are only minor ones. (Ross 221)

Here, A.S.C. Ross is discussing the class system in Britain in 1953, but it is very applicable to the United States today. As Ross says, there are not many actual, countable differences between the different classes, if they should even be called that. Language, however, is one of the last indications of the differences in what little class system is left, "It is solely by its language that the upper class is clearly marked off from the others" (Ross 221) and those judgements are quite pervasive in the U.S.. Frequently, people's speaking habits, vocabulary, and accents are assessed not only in professional situations, but personal and public ones, as well.

Further, “class has played a significant role in identification and placement and continues to do so” (Crowley 220). Full knowledge and acceptance of whatever class division still exists helps all people, but especially children build a solid identity, as “there can be no doubt that sensitivity to forms of language as factors in the building of social identity is extraordinarily high” (Crowley 219). Even children realize when someone sounds different than them, and although they may not make the same judgements as an adult would, they, at the very least, identify the differences and allow that to influence how they see themselves in relation to that person. The linguistic advantages of heavy reading in children are undeniable, as seen by their incredible ability to increase their vocabulary. These linguistic differences are noticeable even to the smallest degree: single words can make a difference in how someone is perceived. For example, in English, the use of *ain't* or overuse of the word *like* as an interjection tend to be an indication of lower class placement, whereas the use of words considered to be of a higher vocabulary level, such as *incandescent* or *compulsory* or the correct use of *who/whom* are perceived to be of a higher class and education level. In many cases, these linguistic differences can come solely from the exposure to and retainment of the typically higher vocabulary of literature. That being said, including honest, well-done translations of literature that students will actually read and retain will assist greatly in the attainment of the vocabulary and linguistic skills bilingual children need to assure their own success. Retainment comes from enjoyment, and enjoyment comes primarily from identification, either with the story, some aspect or theme within it, or the characters. Some detractors of multiculturalism may ask why, if these children are bilingual, there must be translations for them to have access to their culture’s literature, and the answer is simple: many children, while they can speak both languages easily, cannot read and write in Spanish nearly as well as they can in English because American schools focus all

reading and writing training on English. Simply because these kids are not able to read Spanish does not mean they should be cut off from their culture's literature, which is a defining characteristic of any culture.

Due to the increasing multiculturalism of North America, cultural understanding has become incredibly important, but that is not the only reason. As stated by Rosann Jweid and Margaret Rizzo,

Global events of the past few years accentuate the need for understanding people of cultures different from our own. The attack on the World Trade Center in New York City, ongoing conflict in the Middle East, and violations of human rights in places like Africa, Europe, and Latin America have bred fear and distrust among peoples of different cultures, religions, and ethnicity. This distrust is present among nations of the world and even among people of different races and cultures living in the same country. The need to promote understanding and tolerance between races, religions, and cultures is essential to create peace among nations and individuals. (Jweid v)

The United States is full of cultural diversity; it can be found in all corners of the country. With the current political environment regarding immigration, the racial tension between native Spanish speakers and North American monolinguals is incredibly high. English language literature has been increased by that of the Spanish language in incredible ways in the past. Most of what is translated from Spanish to English are the traditional, influential authors who contributed to the world literary canon, and rightly so, but there is a serious lack of modern Spanish literature being translated into English. A possible reason for this is the increase in other expression mediums than traditional literature such as film and digital media, but that does not change the fact that:

Literature can be a powerful tool in promoting understanding, acceptance, and friendship. When children read about characters that share their dreams and problems, even though they are in different countries or cultures, they begin to realize the oneness of the human race. This knowledge is the foundation for acceptance. (Jwein v-vi)

Introducing children to important literature is one of the major aspects of the education system in this country, and those pieces that are called important are rarely reevaluated to reflect the modern world. Translations of foreign language literature into English are then incredibly important, as they provide not only educational advantages, but cultural ones as well. It has been stated here that literature itself is one of the most important aspects of a culture, and when a child reads foreign literature with which they are able to identify, they, as readers, then connect the literature to those people they encounter in their own lives who are part of that culture. This connection then leads those people to extend that identification to people they do not know, because they have now been able to connect with that culture and its people through translated literature.

Let's consider for a moment exactly what it is that appeals to us about a book written in another country, in another language- even in another time. It is not the folklore or the exotic elements. That is all at best interesting...it is not the foreign way of dressing that we simply accept as costume. It is not the foreign living habits that differ from our own. It is not the foreign religions, foreign ideologies, foreign institutions. As I said before, that is all very interesting and informative material for comparative studies. But, like everything that is merely interesting, it is subject to fashionable trends and is quite transitory. However, we as readers immediately understand something over and above these superficialities: to use a hackneyed phrase, we recognize that things are no different

anywhere else, which relieves us momentarily of our sense of isolation as human individuals. We recognize that human conflicts are the same everywhere, however perfect or however strange the façades of our institutions are. (Nossack 235)

As said perfectly here, humankind has many shared experiences without realizing it. The best way to communicate across cultures is through these shared experiences which compose what is frequently called the ‘human language’: across languages there is a human understanding. It is a desire for this understanding that makes translation so important. Translation, in this sense, simply becomes the changing of the form of information coming from this human language.

This project speaks specifically on Spanish translation because of the language’s global prevalence, as well as the language’s and culture’s significance in the United States. According to Stavans, “After Chinese, English today is the largest language of the globe in terms of number of speakers: a total of 350 million; it is followed by Spanish with 250. In the Americas the two languages cohabit promiscuously” (Stavans 131). Spanish is not a foreign language in the United States anymore, as “Latinos in the United States are also the fifth largest concentration of Hispanics worldwide, surpassing demographically the overall population of countries like Venezuela or Uruguay but equal in size to Spain” (Stavans 133). The United States now has a population of Spanish speakers equal to the birthplace of that language. That being said, Spanish should not be considered a foreign language in the US. Stavans states that “No other immigrant group in the United States has held on to its original tongue for so long” (Stavans 139). To that point, it should be said that the term immigrant for the group is an overstatement as “Latinos have been an integral part of American society for centuries, ever since the Spanish explorers first set foot in Florida and what is today the Southwest” (Stavans 133). Spanish and English have been growing simultaneously, it only stands to reason that Spanish has as much literature to



offer the English canon as the opposite. Additionally, Spanish should be exempt from the ethnocentrism of the United States as it is as much of an integral part of the spoken language in the country as English.

### III. Practical Exercise in Translation

The last section of this thesis will consist of several translated poems written by two different Spanish language authors: Maylan Álvarez and Daniel Chávez. I was fortunate enough to be able to meet both of these poets, and to work closely with Álvarez throughout the translation of her poems. While I did work personally with Chávez as well, it was not specifically on the translations of the poems chosen for this project. The selections will each appear in Spanish first, accompanied immediately by their English translations. With each set of translations, a short discussion of the particular choices made by the translator will appear, as well as the reasoning for each selection. Following the translations of the works selected specifically for this project, a digital copy of a book of translated poems recently published in Cuba has been included. It includes two additional Maylan Álvarez poems as well as two poems each from eight other Cuban poets. That work is the result of a University of Houston faculty-led Study Abroad program in Matanzas, Cuba in which I co-translated Alvarez's poems and edited the rest of the translations in the collection, along with the author's biographies. The first two poems to appear here were selected specifically for this project.

The experience of being the primary English-language editor for a book of translated Cuban poetry was quite different than translation alone, but my own translation played a heavy part in the editing process and the final product. Some of the translations worked very well, and needed little editing from what was originally presented, but there were many that needed changing before they met the standards which have been presented in this project. In a few rare cases, the problems were grammatical: for example, a Spanish reflexive pronoun was misread and thus the entire line was translated incorrectly and had to be completely redone. Other times, the edits

were simply to make the translated form reflect the original more closely. I tried my best to stay away from purely stylistic changes, as those choices were made by the poems' respective translators. Only when I felt a particular choice got in the way of understanding the translation, or took the work too far from its original, were stylistic choices changed in the editing process. This felt as if it would be the best way to approach the process of editing on translator's work as an experienced translator myself, otherwise the translations would become a work of mine, as opposed to something I edited. I merely attempted to make sure that the translations I presented for publishing followed the translation process previously laid out, while considering the problems mentioned in this project, as well.

A. Máylan Álvarez

Yo quisiera que mi cabeza fuera cuadrada.

Como un ring de boxeo.

Quisiera que en su interior trabajara

gente que siempre decidiera por mí.

Qué debo hacer o no.

Qué debo decir.

Qué debo callar.

Porque lo mejor es que escojan por una

y así complacer a todas y a todos.

Bajo esas condiciones mi cabeza no me metería en problemas.

Nunca más.

Lo terrible es que mi cabeza no es cuadrada.

No es un ring de boxeo.

Pero las ideas se disputan unas con otras,

jamás abandonan el entrenamiento

y yo no tengo vocación de árbitro.

I wish that my head were squared.

Like a boxing ring.

I wish that people worked within it

that always decided for me.

What I should or should not do.

What I should say.

What I should silence.

It would be best that they dictate

and like this, please one and all.

Under such conditions my head would not get me into trouble.

Never again.

It is terrible that my head is not squared.

It is not a boxing ring.

The ideas are opponents;

they never abandon their training

and I am not a referee.

A mí me gusta ponerme la ropa corta para lucir los muslos  
y ver en cara de la gente esa expresión de sorpresa  
ante un descubrimiento grato.

Los muslos son lo mejor de mi cuerpo.

Eso tú no lo comprendes porque de la cintura

saltas al clítoris a la velocidad de la luz

y no te das tiempo para escalar en mis montañas nevadas

y fundirte desde la base a la cima

porque solo quieres llegar a la cima.

Pero los muslos son lo mejor de mi cuerpo.

Limpios de manchas,

de cicatrices,

bien torneados,

firmes en la definición de un adjetivo

que contradice a los años y las carnes sueltas.

Tengo la convicción que, de poder,

ellos también me amarían,

devolviendo las caricias que les dedico,

la crema que les unto.

Me afeitarían dos veces por semana

y quizás hasta no me pellizcarían tanto

cuando hagan el amor.

Mis muslos me acompañan desde abajo  
con la ingenuidad de las cosas  
que llegaron sin ruido a mi cuerpo  
para quedarse.

I like to wear short shorts to show off my thighs  
to see people's surprised faces  
in light of a happy discovery.

My thighs are the best part of my body.

You will never understand as from my waist  
you jump to the clitoris at the speed of light  
and you don't give yourself time to scale my snowy peaks  
or to melt from my bottoms  
as you only wish to arrive to my tops.

But my thighs are the best part.

Without spots,

without scars,

well-hewn,

firm in their definition of an adjective  
that contradicts my years and loose skin.

I have the conviction that, if possible,

they would love me also,

returning those caresses I have devoted to them,

the lotion that I spread on them.  
They would shave me twice a week  
and maybe not pinch me so much  
when they make love.  
My thighs accompany me from below  
with ignorance of the things  
that come silently to my body  
to stay.

These poems, written by Cuban author Maylan Álvarez, do not have traditional titles. The book from which they come, *Otras lecturas del cuerpo*, is split into three parts titled *cabeza*, *tronco*, and *extremidades*, respectively. This first poem, which for the purposes of this translation will be called *Head*, is from the first section, and the second poem, to be called *Thighs*, is taken from the third section. The book is full of body themed poetry written in free verse with plain language; that is to say she does not use overly poetic language in her work. The Cuban poems were chosen to demonstrate the use of this type of free-form poetry in Spanish, as well as demonstrate the value of Cuban poetry and literature in general. Due to the strained nature of the relationship between Cuba and the United States of America, it is important that value is attributed to Cuban culture, especially in reference to its potential place in the canon of World Literature.

The first and third lines of the poem *Head* follow a parallel semantic format, *Yo quisiera que...* (Álvarez). These lines, which now appear as *I wish that...*, were originally translated as *I would that...* The purpose behind this first draft translation, as well as its revision, was multi-fold: to include a Shakespearean allusion, to enhance the author's use of the subjunctive tense in

Spanish, and the aesthetic of ultra-poetic language. It became clear that the use of Shakespearean language to enhance the poetry or validity of the translation was a misstep for two reasons: first, it ages the translated text in a way that is inappropriate to Álvarez's writing and second, it complicates the text in a similar fashion. Álvarez is a modern poet who does not use overly poetic language; her poetry speaks as would a modern woman. Throughout the translation process, as I worked with Álvarez, she stressed the simplicity of the language she chose to use for her work. She wrote these poems in every-day spoken Spanish purposefully: to allow widespread connection to this book of poetry. To include an allusion that adds undue age and flourish to her original would have been a disservice. As Hans Erich Nossack says,

I know of a recent German novel that has been translated into classical French. The novel was strangled by this translation; it was neither written nor conceived in classical German, but in a clean, contemporary, colloquial German that any one of us might use on the street without sounding strange or appearing affected. (Nossack 230)

The effort to change to more poetic sounding language, according to Nossack, ruins this work, because it distances the translation from the original; also, the change moves the text too far from the original through the dismissal of its linguistic form. The desire for an ultra-poetic aesthetic in the translation of Álvarez's poem fell to the wayside for the same reasons: the age added to the text and the realization that, additionally, the use of Shakespearean allusion domesticated the text too far for comfort. While this type of allusion is frequent in English language poetry, it is not so in that of the Spanish language. It is not uncommon to find similar, culturally appropriate allusions in Spanish poetry, but it is non-existent in this poem specifically and most of Álvarez's poetry in general. For these reasons, it became obvious that a simpler, more direct translation would serve better. The wish to highlight the use of the subjunctive tense simply became



superfluous; though the tense's use is far less obvious and frequent, there is no need to specifically point out its use, especially when the enhancement causes the problems encountered above.

Additionally, line 7 of the untranslated version of *Head* contains the Spanish verb *callar*, which has many slightly different definitions and connotations that accompany those. I had difficulty deciding between *to keep silent* and *to silence*. Clearly, while these two translations could both be considered correct, there is one that I consider more appropriate: *to silence*. I made this choice due to the fact that Álvarez is a Cuban poet, and the forced silence of its residents is a major aspect of everyday Cuban life. I believe the connotations of *to silence*, to be an aggressive, almost violent one, whereas *to keep silent* seems more voluntary. Silence in Cuba is not voluntary, and I did not want my translation to make it seem so. This particular line of Álvarez's work is the only line that is specifically Cuban in these poems, and I could not allow the translated line to not carry the same weight as the original.

In the poem *Thighs*, the first lines include the phrase *ropa corta*, which, directly translated, would be *short clothes*. However, I have decided to translate it as *short shorts*, as I feel the phrase is more appropriate, even though it is not a direct translation of what may seem to be a simple phrase. In order to keep the rhythm of the phrase, I chose to translate it the way I did, in place of something longer such as *barely any clothes*. As the idea of *ropa corta* is not a foreign one, this change does not domesticate the text. Additionally, in lines 8 and 9 both conclude with *a la cima*. Translated directly, this simply means *to the top*; the use of direct translation would present the translated lines as *and melt from the base to the top/ because you only want to arrive to the top*. While this version would replicate the semantic repetition Álvarez uses in the lines, it would lack the phonetically pleasing aesthetic created by that repetition. The

Spanish phrase *a la cima* sounds much more pleasant and poetic to the ear than the English *to the top*, so to use the direct translation would be depriving the poem of a bit of its auditory value. Again, the English phrases *from my bottoms...to my tops* used in the translation have a much more similar sound in the way the lines flow when read, especially aloud, even though they do not employ the use of repetition as does the original. The English phrases, though not identical, are related enough linguistically to provide an equivalent sensation when read. This choice, while a definite change from the original, was not made to domesticate the text or make it easier to understand, but instead to keep it closer, poetically, to Álvarez's original and make it more satisfying to the auditory sense. For reference, this choice would be categorized as a modulation according to Vinay and Darbelnet and would be included in the sound step of Bly's *Eight Stages*. The direct translation was ruled unfit for poetic reasons, and thus the oblique translation method of modulation was employed to parallel the original more in spirit and sound as well as keep a similar semantic theme.

Additionally, the Spanish language does not apply ownership to body parts as does the English language, so many 'unclaimed' body parts in Álvarez's original poems have been assigned to the poem's first-person narrator, whom the translator considers to be the subject of the poem. Instead of the English, *my head hurts*, the Spanish *la cabeza me duele mucho* translates directly to *the head hurts me a lot*. The use of the direct object pronoun in conjunction with the verb assigns ownership of the body part without having to claim it with a possessive pronoun. The translator must not only be aware of this semantic difference between the two languages but must also realize that not using the possessive pronoun in the English translation will result in a clunky poem.

B. Daniel Chavez

*Voz de Soldadera*

Volvierá del fuego

Como los caballos

Del miedo y la sed

Bajo mi sarape

Ésta es la avena

Ésta la parcela

*Voice of a Soldadera*

I returned from the fire

Like the horses

From the fear and the thirst

Under my serape

This is oatmeal

This the plot

*La tierra mirada*

La tierra es un espejo

A oscuras, hay que sembrar

Sudor y lumbre

Para que vuelva

Camina derecho

Como el jaguar y la paloma

Que persigue

Estando lejos del río

Se levanta sonámbula

Hacia la orilla

Si se encaja

Profundo el arado, brotan

Escarabajos, armadillos

Casi sangre apurada

En las piedras que se parten

Que fuera tuya se notara

En la leche del maíz

Iluminada al comenzar

Temprano la faena

*The Earthen Gaze*

The land is a mirror

To darkness, that must sow

Sweat and fire

In order to reap

It walks forward

Like the jaguar or the dove

Which stalks

Being far from the river

The sleepwalker arises

Toward the shore

If it fits

Deeply plowed, they blossom

Beetles, armadillos

Almost hurried blood

In the stones that break

That were yours to notice

In the milk from the corn

Illuminated at the beginning

Early the chores

These two poems written by the Mexican author Daniel Chávez were chosen from his book of poetry *Versiones en Luna Agreste y Nitrato de Plata*. The work was written as a reflection on the photography and visual culture of the Mexican Revolution. Each poem has a photograph to which it relates, though the photographs themselves do not appear in the book. The first poem, *Voz de Soldadera*, references the famous photograph by Agustín Víctor Casasola of a group of women on a train. It is unclear as to whether they are arriving at their destination or departing, but these are women who traveled to the battlefield to assist the war effort and the revolutionary soldiers in some way or another. The women pictured were called *Soldaderas* or *Adelitas*. This particular poet was chosen to appear with the work of Maylan Álvarez in this project to show a different type of cultural importance that can be attributed poetry. While Álvarez's poetry presents cultural value through the poetry's ability to connect its culture with others, Chavez's shows that poetry can be used to present its culture through their own distinct styles or themes. Álvarez speaks in the human language through poetry in the Spanish language, but Chavez uses the language to convey an intrinsically Mexican message. They are the two sides to the poetry coin: Álvarez gives us poetry that we perhaps could write ourselves and shows that we are no different from each other, and Chavez gives something culturally Mexican as well as linguistically Spanish.

The word *soldadera* could be translated simply as *female soldier* or *soldier*, but it takes a powerful cultural element from the word. The word does not simply represent a soldier who is of

the female gender, but instead has a specific cultural meaning related to the Mexican Revolution. Rosie the Riveter could be used as an example relating to the United States of America, but to use that example as a replacement in the translation would be obvious and deliberate domestication. For this reason, it was simply borrowed from Spanish in place of being translated literally into English. In this case, the translator could choose to have a footnote to explain to the reader exactly what is a *soldadera*. The English word *serape*, used later in the translation, is an example of a word (though slightly changed due to English phonetics) that has a specific cultural significance in Spanish, and therefore is borrowed as it cannot be properly translated. The word shawl simply does not convey the many significances of the word from the original language. The orthographic change from Spanish to English is due to its repeated borrowing.

One of the more difficult aspects of Spanish poetry translation is that in many Spanish verb tenses, times, and aspects, the first and third-person singular forms are the same. In addition to the fact that Spanish does not require conjugated verbs to be accompanied by their subject, the forms can become confused. I encountered this problem in the first line of *Soldadera* with the word *volviera*; this verb could be referring to the first or third-person singular form. That is, either *I* or *she*. In this instance, the author gives a hint in the second stanza by writing *mi sarape*. The first-person ownership of *sarape* indicates that the verb in the first line also refers to the first-person singular. While at first, I had translated it as *She returned*, I decided to change it to *I returned* for the final version due to the ownership presented in the second stanza.

The second poem *La tierra mirada* was chosen for its poetic language. Spanish is widely believed to be a more poetic language than English due to the flexibility of the language; Spanish has fewer words but can express all the same concepts due to its flexible nature. English is a much more precise language; instead of using one word with multiple possible meanings or

connotations, English has a specific word for those possibilities. In comparison to the poetry of Álvarez, the poetry of Chávez uses heavily poetic language as well as a more traditional poetic form. The title alone poses problems to a literal translation into English as both *tierra* and *mirada* are grammatically defined as nouns. Due to the flexibility of Spanish, this fact does not pose an issue in the reading of the poem, but without a looser translation of the phrase, an English translation would not have made sense.

C. 9x19: Cuba Translated

***Versos de isla, traductores del Golfo***

Traddutore, traditore, traditionem parecería un posible juego de palabras al ensayar una introducción para 9X19. Hay una historia en el juego y un deseo de continuidad en él. La historia reza que como cada año, desde hace ya un lustro, viajaron en el verano del 2017, un grupo de residentes del área del Golfo de México, a la isla de Cuba, a la ciudad de Matanzas. Eran diecinueve estudiantes de pregrado y postgrado de la Universidad de Houston y una profesora acompañante que resultó siendo acompañada. Eran nueve poetas matanceros cuidadosamente elegidos por el editor Alfredo Zaldívar. Era la mejor tradición de Matanzas -la poesía- puesta en manos de traductores jóvenes. Era la agudeza de aquellos -viajeros asombrados- que más que anotar experiencias en sus maltrechos cuadernos escolares, más que alzarse como cronistas de ínsula, devinieron sagaces



intérpretes de lo desconocido.

El libro que ahora usted leerá es sui generis -como todos- pero más. Y es que se trata de una coral de voces. El mosaico de citas del que Bajtín nos alertara allá lejos y hace tiempo, es aquí no sólo mosaico sino caleidoscopio. Cada poema, si bien en principio escrito por un solo autor, ha sido en realidad reescrito, varias veces, por al menos tres orfebres de la palabra. Cada verso, si bien estuvo destinado a cargar consigo la experiencia de una vida, ahora lleva muchas. La desde siempre interrogable frontera entre autor y obra, aquí se declara imposible. Los “diecinueve” reposeyeron la escritura de los “nueve” para convertirla en este delicioso amasijo.

En tiempos de aviesas fronteras, de banderas alzadas por la sinrazón y el odio, el castellano y el inglés vienen a hacerse lengua franca en este volumen ejemplar. No hay límites entre ellas, no hay momento final, no hay urgencia de volver a comenzar porque todo sucede a la vez. La poesía de la isla viaja al Golfo de México y regresa. Los visitantes del Golfo se bautizan isleños para siempre. El mar que comienza y recomienza cada día (releer y traducir a Valery parece siempre pertinente) se lleva y devuelve a estos autores y sus palabras dichas y reescritas por todos. Y es espiral y es caleidoscopio.

Los estudiantes de la Universidad de Houston que aparecen acreditados como traductores, vivieron el verano del 2017 como uno que partió las aguas de su vida para siempre. Los poetas de Matanzas y su casa editorial homónima así lo facilitaron. El viejo oficio y el igualmente viejo estigma del traduttore traditore encontró un desafío más entre quienes aquí conviven. No sólo la idea de traición se hizo entonces inaceptable -pocas veces ha tenido el autor el privilegio de asistir a su traductor y viceversa- sino que además entre estas páginas se instaló un deseo, este: que las aguas del Golfo de México y el Mar Caribe, así como las muchas deidades que las habitan, faciliten desde este 9X19, el nacimiento de una nueva tradición. Que así sea/So be it.

*Mabel Cuesta Universidad de Houston*

*Verses from the Island, Translators from the Gulf*

Traduttore, traditore, traditionem, would seem like an apt phrase to toy with while dreaming up an introduction to 9x19. There's a certain history embedded into the phrase as well as a desire for continuity. The story goes that in the summer of 2017, like every year for the past lustrum now, a group of residents from the Gulf Coast traveled to the island of Cuba, to the city of Matanzas. They were nineteen

undergraduate and graduate students from the University of Houston that had been accompanied by their professor who, as it turns out, ended up being accompanied by them. They were nine poets from Matanzas who had been carefully selected by editor Alfredo Zaldívar. It was poetry, the best tradition in Matanzas, placed in the hands of young translators. It was their keenness, that of the “astonished travelers”, who, more than simply jotting down their experiences in their battered journals, more than exalting themselves as chroniclers of the island, became sagacious interpreters of the unknown.

The book that you will be reading is *sui generis* -like every book- but even more so. This is because it is made up of a coral of voices. The mosaic of quotes that Bakhtin apprised us of a long time ago, is in this case not only a mosaic but a kaleidoscope. Each poem, if at first written by a single author, has in reality been rewritten multiple times by at least three wordsmiths. Each verse, if at first destined to carry with it one life experience, now carries many. The forever questionable boundary between author and work is here declared impossible. The “nineteen” repossessed the writings of those “nine” to turn it into this delicious concoction.

In the age of treacherous borders, of flags raised in the name of nonsense and hatred, Spanish and English come to be an honest tongue in this exemplary

volume. There are no limits between them, no final moment, no urgency to start over, because everything happens at once. The poetry of the island travels to the Gulf of Mexico and returns. The visitors from the Gulf are baptized as islanders forever. The sea that will always recommence (rereading and translating Valery seems eternally pertinent) washes away and returns these authors and their words, which are spoken and rewritten by everyone. And it's a spiral. And it's a kaleidoscope.

The students from the University of Houston that are credited as translators, lived the summer of 2017 as one that parted the waters of their lives forever. The poets from Matanzas and the homonymous editorial house facilitated that. The old trade and likewise, the old stigma of traduttore traditore found another challenge among those who coexist here. Not only did the idea of betrayal thus become unacceptable, as there are few instances in which the author has had the privilege of assisting their translator and vice versa, but, more than that, a desire installed itself within these pages: that the waters of the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea, as well as the many deities that inhabit them, may allow a new tradition to be born from this 9x19. So be it/Que así sea.

*Mabel Cuesta University of Houston Translated by Dafne Sánchez*

## MAYLAN ÁLVAREZ

(Unión de Reyes, Matanzas, Cuba, 1978)

Poeta. Ha laborado como periodista y editora. Miembro de la Unión Nacional de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba (Uneac). Ha publicado, entre otros títulos, 12 creadores *entrevistos. Coordinadas de arte y literatura (2011), Naufragios del San Andrés (2012), La callada molienda (2013), Tratados de la mala hierba (2014), La dulce superficie de la vida (2016), Otras lecturas del cuerpo (2017)*. Ha sido incluida en varias antologías.

Poemas y artículos suyos se han publicado en revistas nacionales y extranjeras.

(Unión de Reyes, Matanzas, Cuba, 1978)

Poet. She has worked as a journalist and editor. Member of the National Writers and Artists Union of Cuba (UNEAC). She has published, amongst other titles, 12 *creadores entrevistados. Coordinadas de arte y literatura (2011), Naufragios del San Andrés (2012), La callada molienda (2013), Tratados de la mala hierba (2014), La dulce superficie de la vida (2016), Otras lecturas del cuerpo (2017)*. She has been included in various anthologies.

Poems and articles of hers have been published in foreign and national magazines.

6:00 a.m. en ese lugar común.

Lavarse la cara es un acto heroico,  
fundamentado en los principios  
que hacen del hombre y la mujer,  
del niño y el púber,  
la anciana y el melancólico,  
seres hermanados en el prosaico instante  
de borrar la marca verde del sueño.

Lavarse la cara nos convierte en un animal social,  
pre-dispuesto al intercambio más allá de la puerta.  
Es un inicio de jornada con bautismo de los párpados,  
la nariz.

Delimita las arrugas de la sábana y las del rostro.

Desatasca los sentidos corporales.

Lavarse la cara es un inicio común,  
quizás restaurador más nunca acabado.

6:00 a.m. in that common place.

Washing the face is a heroic act,  
establishing at the start  
what makes the man and the woman,  
the boy and the youth,  
the aging and the melancholy,  
in brotherhood in that crude moment

of erasing the green mark of sleep.  
In washing the face, we become social animals,  
pre-disposed to interaction on the other side of the door.  
The daily journey begins with the baptism of the eyelids,  
The nose.  
It reveals the wrinkles of the sheets and of the face.  
It clears the corporeal senses.  
Washing the face is a common start,  
perhaps to restore but never to finish.  
Alrededor de mis labios han crecido grietas.  
Pequeñas,  
de norte a sur y viceversa.  
Dicen las que todo lo saben que bebo poca agua,  
que estoy fumando demasiado,  
que sonrío demasiado,  
que demasiado me han visto reclamar con mi boca.  
Pienso que cada grieta es una arruga  
y ya dije antes que cada arruga es un trofeo.  
Estas grietas también son la muestra de mis victorias,  
la constancia de mis fracasos,  
la certeza de mi virtud,  
el beneficio de mis dudas.  
En las fotos de los veinte nunca vi una grieta.

En las fotos de los treinta,  
en esas fotos con grietas,  
nunca más vi a la muchacha de los veinte.  
All around my lips cracks have grown.  
Small,  
from north to south and vice versa.  
The know-it-alls say I don't drink enough water,  
that I smoke too much,  
that I smile too much,  
that I've sought to claim too much with my mouth.  
I think that every crack is a wrinkle  
and I have said before that every wrinkle is a trophy.  
These cracks also demonstrate my victories,  
the constancy of my failures,  
the certainty of my virtue,  
the benefit of my doubts.  
In the pictures of my twenties I never saw a crack.  
In the pictures of my thirties,  
in those pictures with cracks,  
never again did I see the girl of my twenties.

Traducido por: Luz Salazar y Rachael Stemple



Translated by: Luz Salazar and Rachael Stemple

**DANIEL A. CRUZ BERMÚDEZ**

(Sancti Spíritus, Cuba, 1974)

Poeta y editor. Tiene publicado el libro de poesía *Alucinaciones para un óleo* (2013).

*Su obra está recogida en la antología Toda Luz. Décima escrita en Sancti Spíritus*

(1997-2013) (2014). Ha obtenido premios y reconocimientos en certámenes

literarios, entre ellos, Premio Escambray 2010 y 2011. Actualmente es el

coordinador de Ediciones Aldabón.

(Sancti Spíritus, Cuba, 1974)

Poet and editor. He has published his poetry book *Alucinaciones para un óleo* (2013).

His work appears in the anthology *Toda Luz. Décima escrita en Sancti Spíritus (1997-*

2013) (2014). He has received awards and acknowledgments in literary contests,

among them, Premio Escambray 2010 and 2011. He is currently the coordinator at

Ediciones Aldabón.

**CRÓNICAS DEL INSTINTO**

I

Sobre la barra está el ron que pregonan  
las monedas,  
el silencio donde hospedas la costumbre.

Corazón:

¿Dónde buscas la razón?

¿En el trago de la muda irreverencia?

¿En la duda?

¿En el humo de los cirios?

¿Es acaso en los delirios de Frida Kahlo desnuda?

II

Unos párpados enrejan mi luz  
perdida en el goce de un óleo:  
almendran el roce de las letras  
que vallejan los heraldos  
cuando añejan las visiones del arquero.

Cuánto fabulan mis fueros  
con tanto silencio a cuesta.

Cómo empuñar la ballesta  
si en su mirada me muero.

**CHRONICLES OF INSTINCT**

I

Above the bar is the rum that  
the coins proclaim  
the silence where you house your habit.

My dear heart:

Where do you find reason?

In a swig of mute irreverence?

In doubt?

In the silence candles' smoke?

Is it perhaps in naked Frida Kahlo's deliriums?

II

Eyelids cage my light

lost in the pleasure of an oil painting:

they embellish the grazing of the letters

making the heralds as painful as Vallejo did

when the visions of the archer aged.

How much they invent my limits

burdened with so much silence.

How to grasp the crossbow

if I die in your gaze.

## **Y NO EL FIEL DE SAGRADAS ESCRITURAS**

Cómo ser el elegido de las seis caras del dado. En la cruz: moneda. El hado, sobre un diamante rendido por el aplauso perdido en el silencio feroz del templo. Cómo

ser Dios en los naipes la ballesta cuando el as de espada apuesta por máscaras en mi voz. Cómo ser, cómo pensar, cómo redimo las dudas, si la diatriba de Judas venda mis ojos y un mar de abismos en el altar invoca mis desnudeces.

Si te falta fe, no reces salmos porque no perdonas el rostro con que coronas la sed: confiesan tus peces que la verdad es impura y pecadora. Daniel, eres el hombre y no el fiel de sagradas escrituras. Ni Bach, en sus partituras, pudo ser como un jazmín. Tu sangre nieva en un ring sin luz, espiga en el prólogo cuando Dios es el monólogo de un concierto de violín.

#### **AND NOT THE ONE FAITHFUL TO THE SACRED SCRIPTURES**

How to be chosen by the six faces of the dice. On the cross: a coin. Destiny, over a diamond worn out by the applause, lost in the fierce silence of the temple. How to be God in a game of cards, the crossbow when the ace of spades bets on the masks in my voice. How to be, how to think, how do I redeem doubt, if Judas's diatribe covers my eyes and a sea of abysses on the altar invokes my nakedness.

If you lack faith, don't pray psalms, because you don't forgive the face that crowns your thirst: your fish confess that the truth is impure and sinful. Daniel, you are the man and not the one faithful to the sacred scriptures. Not even Bach, in his scores could have been like a jasmine. Your blood snows in a lightless ring, gleaned in the prologue when God is the monologue of a violin concert.

Traducido por: Emmanuel González y Dafne Sánchez

Translated by: Emmanuel González and Dafne Sánchez

## ISRAEL DOMÍNGUEZ

(Placetas, Villa Clara, Cuba, 1973)

Poeta y traductor literario. Miembro de la Uneac. Tiene publicados los poemarios

*Hojas de cal (2001), Collage mientras avanza mi carro de equipaje (2002), Después de acompañar a William Jones (2007), Viaje de regreso (2012), En dirección contraria (2015).*

Sus poemas han aparecido en diferentes antologías y revistas. Ha recibido importantes premios.

(Placetas, Villa Clara, Cuba, 1973)

Poet and literary translator. Member of UNEAC. He has publications in the poetry

collections *Hojas de Cal (2001), Collage mientras avanza mi carro de equipaje (2002),*

*Después de acompañar a William Jones (2007), Viaje de regreso (2012), and En dirección contraria (Ediciones Aldabón, 2015).* His poems have appeared in various

anthologies and magazines. He has received important awards.

## LEGO

Jugábamos LEGO y armábamos casas. Con los bloques plásticos construimos una

ciudad. Leggodt es una frase danesa que significa jugar bien. Para Papá jugar bien es jugar correcto.

Decía que mi hermano era muy inteligente porque jugaba bien. Yo en cambio era un desastre: mis construcciones le parecían extrañas. A mi hermano le gustaban, pero temía perder su confianza.

Un día amenazó con golpearme si seguía haciendo “esas cosas raras”. Boté algunas piezas y mi hermano lloró.

“Casa linda y carro del año”, habla orgulloso de su hijo.

A veces mi hermano aparece en Facebook con aquella cara triste, como si todavía le faltaran algunas piezas. A mí me faltan, pero sigo haciendo esas cosas raras que tanto le molestan a Papá.

## **LEGO**

We used to play with LEGOs and build houses. With the plastic blocks, we constructed a city. Leggodt is a Danish phrase that means to play well. For Dad, playing well means playing correctly.

He would say my brother was so intelligent because he played so well. I, on the other hand, was a disaster; he thought my creations were odd. My brother liked them, but was scared of losing Dad’s confidence.

One day, he threatened to hit me if I continued making “those weird things”. I trashed some pieces and my brother cried.

“Beautiful house and a new car”, he says proudly about his son.

Sometimes, my brother shows up on Facebook with that sad look as if he’s still

missing some pieces. I am missing some, but I keep doing those weird things that bother Dad so much.

## INTO THE WEST

Hacia el oeste viajaron hombres y mujeres  
atraídos por la idea de la felicidad.

Los que no pudieron ver el final eran más dichosos  
que aquellos que perdieron sus almas  
mucho antes de morir.

Cuando “el caballo de hierro” atravesó la Gran Pradera,  
por donde corría libremente el búfalo,  
hombres y mujeres fundaron sus villas  
como quien monta un set o construye un escenario.

Jacob Wheeler, hacedor de ruedas,  
viajó desde Virginia hacia la Nación Lakota.

Allí conocería a Amado por el Búfalo,  
un joven elegido por los dioses.

Mientras Jacob fijaba metal sobre madera en la fragua de su padre,

Amado por el Búfalo hacía el círculo de Wakan Tanka:

una rueda que viaja hacia otros círculos,

un círculo de piedra que viaja hacia los astros.

La rueda de los Wheelers separó familias en Illinois, Maryland, Kentucky...

El círculo de Wakan Tanka, en la Gran Pradera, las unía.

Cuando mi hija partió hacia el oeste  
sobre ruedas que se esconden en el aire  
recordé a Jacob Wheeler.

Puse piedras sobre el techo de mi casa  
y alcé mis manos al cielo.

## **INTO THE WEST**

Toward the West traveled men and women  
attracted by the idea of happiness.

Those that weren't able to see the end were happier  
than those that lost their souls long before dying.

When "the iron horse" traveled through the Great Plain,  
where the buffalo roamed freely,  
men and women founded their towns  
like someone who mounts a set or constructs a scene.

Jacob Wheeler, wheel-maker,  
traveled from Virginia to the Lakota Nation.

There, he would meet Loved by the Buffalo,  
a young man chosen by the gods.

While Jacob fixed metal over wood in his father's forge,  
Loved by the Buffalo made Wakan Tanka's Circle:  
a wheel that travels toward other circles,  
a stone circle that travels toward the stars.



The Wheelers □wheel separated families in Illinois, Maryland, Kentucky...

Wakan Tanka's Circle, in the Great Plain, united them.

When my daughter departed into the West

on wheels that hide in the air,

I thought of Jacob Wheeler.

I laid stones on my roof

and lifted my hands toward the heavens.

Traducido por: Josh Davis y Yesenia Guevara

Translated by: Josh Davis and Yesenia Guevara

### **DERBYS H. DOMÍNGUEZ FRAGELA**

(Sabanilla del Encomendador, Matanzas, Cuba, 1974)

Poeta. Ha publicado los libros de poesía *Residuo* (2009) y *Futurama* (2014).

(Sabanilla del Encomendador, Matanzas, Cuba, 1974)

Poet. He has published the poetry books *Residuo* (2009) and *Futurama* (2014).

### **DIÁLOGOS BAJO LA LLOVIZNA**

Ya mi vida será otra vida.

Ya mi muerte será otra muerte.  
Aún es piedra lo que fue piedra  
y será agua lo que es agua.  
Yo que nací en Yo  
he de morir en cenizas y escombros.  
Las piedras y el agua lo saben.  
Yo estoy viviendo la vida de otro hombre  
que nació en mí cuando yo moría.  
Él escucha el reloj, toma el ómnibus  
se balancea sobre los restos de una ciudad  
ama a una mujer desconocida  
asiste a los funerales de un camino  
duerme en el aire  
muerde un pedazo de pan  
y escucha el orine del cielo.  
Yo sufro la oscuridad o la ausencia de Dios  
y me acomodo en un árbol, soy una rama, una hoja  
y aunque los pájaros no coman de mi mano  
a veces leo a Whitman bajo las estrellas  
pero él se acomoda en el aire.  
Yo morí el día que nací.  
Yo nací el día que morí.  
Él nació en una isla.

Yo amo el viejo mundo  
por eso de que Dios podría quedarse ciego.  
A veces Yo y Él  
usamos la misma ropa  
comemos lo mismo  
o amamos a la misma mujer  
y como el amor y el vino y el pan  
igualan las cosas  
en el espejo nos damos las manos  
en mí su corazón conversa  
viaja mi cuerpo hacia sus huesos  
y nos creemos la misma persona.  
Bajo un árbol nos hablamos:  
¿Qué será del caballo que pude ser?  
¿Qué será del guerrero que quise ser?  
¿Qué será del rey que sueño ser?  
¿Serán la muerte en otra vida  
o habrán nacido en otra muerte?  
Ulises, el hombre y el pez  
la sombra y la luz  
el arado y el perro  
el oro y la hierba  
cabalgan en mis huesos. Son en mi sangre.

Yo soy la unidad.  
Tú eres la mitad de mi rostro  
y lo que se ve.  
Yo soy la ausencia que buscas.  
Si te dejas alcanzar  
o alcanzas tus huesos en mi cuerpo  
Ulises, el oro, y todas las cosas de la tierra  
se unirán y sembrarán un árbol en tu cabeza.  
Yo podría morir en Yo y Dios podría nacer en Dios.  
Tiro mis huesos al mar y toco el agua  
pero el cielo se yergue inexpugnable.  
Bajas la cabeza y saltas el muro del tiempo.  
Infalible será el cielo por siempre.  
Dios que quería nacer en Dios  
y yo que quería morir en él  
hemos de morir en cenizas y escombros.  
Yo amo el viejo mundo.  
Él nació en una isla.

#### **DIALOGUES UNDER THE DRIZZLE**

Now my life will be another life.  
Now my death will be another death.  
Yet the rock was still a rock

and the water will remain water.

I was born in I

I must die in ashes and debris.

The rocks and water know.

I am living the life of another man

that was born in me when I was dying.

He listens to the clock, takes the bus

he balances over the remains of a city

he loves an unknown woman

accompanies the funerals of that road

sleeps in the air

bites a piece of bread

and listens to a rain drop from the sky.

I suffer the darkness or the absence of God

and I settle on a tree, I am a branch, a leaf

and although the birds don't eat from my hand

sometimes I read Whitman under the stars

but he settles in the air.

I died the day I was born.

I was born the day I died.

He was born on an island.

I love the old world

that way God could go blind.

Sometimes He and I  
wear the same clothes  
eat the same food  
or love the same woman  
and like the love and wine and bread  
even things  
in the mirror we shake hands  
in me his heart converses  
my body travels toward his bones  
and we believe we are the same person.

Under a tree we talk:

What of the horse that I could become?

What of the warrior that I wanted to be?

What of the king I dreamt of being?

Could they be death in another life,

or have they been born in another death?

Ulysses, the man and the fish

the shadow and the light

the plow and the dog

the gold and the herb

ride in my bones. They are in my blood.

I am unity

You are the half of my face

and what is seen.

I am the absence for which you look.

If you let yourself reach

Or reach your bones into my body

Ulysses, the gold, and all the things of the Earth

will reunite and sow a tree in your head.

I could die in I and God could be born in God.

I throw my bones to the sea and touch the water

but the sky stands impregnable.

You bow your head and leap over to the wall of time.

Infallible the sky will be forever.

God that wanted to be born in God

and I that wanted to die in him

we must die in ashes and rubble.

I love the old world.

He was born on an island.

## **UNA ISLA**

Una isla es como un barco en el agua

detenido, inmóvil para siempre,

pues ha perdido la capacidad de moverse y no va, no va a ningún lugar.

Si lo descubres a tiempo y te tiras al agua

te ahogas, el mar es ancho y vasto como un paisaje.

Una isla es como un barco de pasajeros  
de diferentes razas y nacionalidades.  
Pasajeros que sin saberlo tienen un boleto  
marcado hacia el mismo destino.  
Y así la noche se convierte en día.  
Los días se hacen siglos.  
El negro se enamora de la rubia hermosa.  
Ella sin dudas le da su cuerpo  
y engendran los primeros mestizos de la Casa.  
Al cabo de los años los padres se casan con las hijas.  
Los hijos embarazan a las madres  
y los primos a las primas,  
creando una suerte de mitos y religiones  
que nos definen como una familia.  
Una isla es un barco que se detuvo hace siglos en el agua  
y nada, ni el viento, ni el fuerte viento, lo puede mover.

## **AN ISLAND**

An island is like a boat in the water  
stopped, motionless forever,  
it has lost the capacity to move and doesn't go, doesn't go anywhere.  
If you discover it in time and dive to the water  
you drown, the sea is wide and extensive like a landscape.



An island is like a boat with passengers  
of different races and nationalities.  
Passengers that unknowingly have a pass  
marked for the same final destination.  
And like that the night becomes day.  
The days become centuries.  
The black man falls in love with the beautiful blonde.  
She offers her body with no doubts  
and begets the first mestizos of the House.  
Through the ages fathers marry their daughters.  
Sons impregnate their mothers  
and cousins their cousins,  
creating an order of myths and religions  
that defines us as a family.  
An island is a boat that stopped in the water centuries ago  
and nothing, not even the wind, not even the strongest wind, can move it.

Traducido por: Laura Danielle Fuentes y María Antonia Saavedra

Translated by: Laura Danielle Fuenes and María Antonia Saavedra

**ABEL GONZÁLEZ FAGUNDO**

(Jagüey Grande, Matanzas, Cuba, 1973)

Poeta. Realiza la Revista Literaria Mar Desnudo. Ha publicado los libros de poesía

*El sitio de las memorias (1991), Golpes de Dios (1999), Extinción (2002), El Costal de los pecados (2007), El Terco Persistir (2008) y En el Bosque Francés de la Calle Medio (2012)*. Su obra ha aparecido en antologías y medios de prensa del mundo hispanohablante. Ha obtenido diversos premios nacionales.

(Jagüey Grande, Matanzas, Cuba, 1973)

Poet. He has been featured in the Literary Magazine Mar Desnudo. Some of his

published works are *El sitio de las memorias (1991), Golpes de Dios (1999), Extinción (2002), El Costal de los pecados (2007), El Terco Persistir (2008)* and *En el Bosque Francés de la Calle Medio (2012)*. His work has appeared in anthologies and press media of the Spanish-speaking world. He has won several national awards.

## **EL MULO**

El señor del pelo blanco

saca sus plátanos de la bolsa criolla

se mezcla el juego natural

de los colores que alimentan.

Jamás he trabajado

con la decencia que ese señor

espera de un hombre.

Mis poemas no paren frutos

que puedan comerse

con la felicidad del sembrador.

Son como mulos

asisten al desequilibrio de la vida

pero no alcanzan

a reproducirla por sí mismos.

El señor del pelo blanco

va a morir en paz

yo moriré con el dolor rabioso

de las almas inútiles.

## **THE MULE**

The gentleman with the white hair

takes his bananas from a creole bag

the natural game mixes

the colors that they feed.

I have never worked

with the decency that that gentleman

expects of a man.

My poems don't bear fruits

that can be eaten  
with the happiness of a farmer.  
They are like mules  
assisting the inequality of life  
but unable  
to reproduce it for themselves.  
The gentleman with white hair  
will die in peace  
I will die with the raging pain  
of useless souls.

## **SALITRE**

Nos hundimos en las vísperas.  
El agua sirvió para confirmar la muerte  
la orgía de marinos desgastados.  
Este es un barco con sus cadáveres a cuesta  
una fauna perdida  
en el fondo de la diáspora azul.  
Dejen en paz al naufrago  
que sirva de cobija  
de hueso marino  
no queda sangre  
por beber en sus entrañas.

Déjenlo ser salitre

arena

caracol.

### **SALT REMAINS**

We drowned in the evening.

The water served to confirm the deaths

the orgy of tired sailors.

This is a boat with its cadavers aboard

a fauna lost

in the depths of a blue abyss.

Leave the shipwrecked in peace

let him serve as a blanket

of ocean coral

there is no blood

to be sucked from his body.

Let him become salt remains

sand

shells.

Traducido por: Digna Medina y Emilse Rosa

Translated by: Digna Medina and Emilse Rosa

## YANIRA MARIMÓN

(Matanzas, Cuba, 1971)

Poeta y narradora. Editora de la revista artística y literaria Matanzas. Miembro de la Uneac. Algunos de sus libros publicados son *La sombra infinita de los vencidos* (2005), *Donde van a morir las mariposas* (2006), *Contemplación versus acto* (2009), *Tocar las puertas del cielo* (2016), *La fragmentada memoria* (2016). Su obra ha sido traducida a varios idiomas y aparece recogida en numerosas antologías y publicaciones periódicas de Cuba y el extranjero. Ha alcanzado premios nacionales e internacionales.

(Matanzas, Cuba, 1971)

Poet and narrator. Serves as editor for the artistic and literary magazine Matanzas. She is also member of UNEAC. Some of her published works include: *La sombra infinita de los vencidos* (2005), *Donde van a morir las mariposas* (2006), *Contemplación versus acto* (2009), *Tocar las puertas del cielo* (2016), *La fragmentada memoria* (2016). Her work has been translated into several languages, and has been featured in several anthologies and newspaper periodicals in Cuba and abroad. Her work has

earned her much recognition, including both national and international awards.

### **ANTES FUI UN PEZ**

Antes fui un pez de milenario ojo  
con su sueño de luna y superficie  
su vocación de silencio.

Antes fui un pez,  
lo sé cuándo miro esas escamas brillantes a la luz  
el sereno movimiento de su cuerpo y sus aletas  
y los descubro míos.

Antes fui un pez  
y no logro recordar mis branquias  
usurpadas por estos pulmones enfermos  
el acto de mi boca  
cercana a la punta del anzuelo.

### **I WAS ONCE A FISH**

I was once a fish with an undying eye  
dreaming of the moon and the surface  
and its fondness for silence.

I was once a fish,  
I know it when I see those shimmering scales in the light

the serene movement of its body and fins

and I discover that they are mine.

I was once a fish

and I can't remember my gills

replaced by these sick lungs

the act of my mouth inching

close to the tip of the hook.

### **MI MADRE Y YO**

Mi madre y yo apuntalamos el sueño, la casa,

damos sustento a mis hijos casi huérfanos

nos colocamos en la puerta como mástiles firmes

para que no entre el vendaval.

Mi madre y yo espantamos el miedo

protegemos a los niños de la noche,

del hambre que ronda perennemente

y amenaza con atravesar las paredes

e instalarse en la mesa sin padre de familia.

Mi madre y yo cuidamos el jardín

los peces del estanque

el limonero de los antepasados,

detenemos la muerte a golpe de ser muros.

Mi madre y yo, troncos cansados



agrietada tierra  
falsas profetas mintiendo a la luz del día  
resistentes como acantilados ante la furia del agua.  
Mi madre y yo  
sin saber cuál de las dos caerá primero.

### **MY MOTHER AND I**

My mother and I secure our sleep, our house,  
and feed my children practically orphans  
we stand at the door like firm poles  
so that the storm won't enter.

My mother and I scare away the fear  
protect the kids from the night,  
from the hunger that perpetually looms  
and threatens to break down our walls  
and taking a seat itself at our fatherless table.

My mother and I protect the garden  
the fish in our pond  
the lemon tree of our ancestors,  
we stop death like an obligatory wall.

My mother and I, tired stumps  
an arid land  
false prophets lying in plain daylight

angled and resistant against the water's fury.

My mother and I

not knowing who will fall first.

Traducido por: Tanya Campos y Joycelyn Wilson

Translated by: Tanya Campos and Joycelyn Wilson

## **LEYMEN PÉREZ**

(Matanzas, Cuba, 1976)

Poeta, editor y profesor. Miembro de la Uneac. Ha publicado, entre otros, los libros de poesía *Pared con grabado de Pollock (2004)*, *Circo artesanal (2005)*, *Hendiduras (2005)*, *Tallador de ruidos (2005)*, *Transiciones (2006)*, *Corrientes coloniales (2007, 2016)*, *Los altos reinos (2014)*, *El libro de Heráclito (2014)*, *Fatigas del trópico (2015)* y *Subsuelos (2017)*.

Su poesía aparece recogida en antologías y revistas de Cuba y otros países. Ha alcanzado múltiples premios nacionales e internacionales.

(Matanzas, Cuba, 1976)

Poet, editor and profesor. Member of UNEAC. He has published, among others, *the poetry books Pared con grabado de Pollock (2004)*, *Circo artesanal (2005)*,

*Hendiduras (2005), Tallador de ruidos (2005), Transiciones (2006), Corrientes coloniales (2007, 2016), Los altos reinos (2014), El libro de Heráclito (2014), Fatigas del trópico (2015) y Subsuelos (2017).* His poems have appeared in anthologies and journals in Cuba and other countries. He has received multiple national and international awards.

## **EL LIMPIAVENAS**

El cansancio  
que implica distinguir  
entre un paisaje verdadero  
y otro deforme  
es similar al dolor que sientes  
cuando te raspan  
la boca  
la soledad  
que nada ni nadie cura.  
El cansancio  
que implica ver  
cómo te pinchan  
pinchan  
y  
pinchan

para que el limpia venas entre

y se acomode

para que el tóxico entre

y se acomode

para que el infierno entre

y se acomode

como quien hace

y deshace

cicatrices

hilachas con hilachas

sobre la deshabitada sangre

que apenas coagula

madura.

Hay demasiado dolor

en el amanecer

en la puerta

en la silla

en la mesa

en la cama

en las cortinas

en el vaso tembloroso

y en el cabello

que se cae

siento miedo  
y ya no siento  
como en el limpia venas  
donde se lee mi dolor.  
Es tiempo  
de que la sangre se levante  
de la oscuridad  
y aprenda a vivir.  
Hoy  
sufro  
más  
abajo  
y más  
adentro  
hoy  
sufro.  
El dolor no te sirve  
si no lo pones a funcionar.

### **THE VEIN CLEANSER**

The exhaustion  
that aims to distinguish  
between a true landscape

and a deformed one  
it's similar to the pain you feel  
when they scratch  
your mouth  
your solitude  
that nothing or no one can cure.

The exhaustion  
that aims to see  
how they prick you  
they prick  
and  
they prick  
so the vein cleanser enters  
and settles  
so the toxin enters  
and settles  
so hell can enter  
and settle  
like one who does  
and undoes  
scars  
shreds with shreds  
over the uninhabited blood

that barely clots

grown.

There is too much pain

in the sunrise

in the door

in the chair

in the table

in the bed

in the curtains

in the trembling glass

and in the hair

that falls

I am afraid

and I don't feel anymore

as the vein cleanser

reads my pain.

It's about time

that blood lifts itself

from darkness

and learns to live.

Today

I suffer

further

down

and more

profoundly

today

I suffer.

Pain is useless

if you don't put it to use.

## POETRY DURBAN

En Durban

llegó hasta mis manos el océano Índico

mientras anocheecía y cuatro mujeres entraban al agua

para terminar sus ritos, sus oraciones, su limpieza del aura.

Yo hablaba en zulú

*(Sawubona –Ye bo.*

*Ninjani? –Ngiyaphila)*

con un pescador y con el pequeño pez

que todavía boceaba con el anzuelo en la boca.

Yo no tenía boca ni nadie que me nombrara

cuando otro pez se arrastró hasta mí

implorando diez rand para darle de comer a otro

que estaba en el fondo esperando...

sin saber que muchos de nosotros



desde el otro lado del mundo también esperamos

ya no sabemos qué.

Y mientras capturaban a los grandes peces con camarones

langostinos mejillones almejas chipirones y pulpos,

pensaba en qué comía mi hijo César

que aún no había conquistado nada

a la misma vez que lo había conquistado todo.

Yo tenía ocho tentáculos pero fueron cortándolos

poco a poco como si fueran olas

sobre las que no está permitido surfear.

Mis manos y el océano Índico eran uno la extensión del otro.

Dicen que las primeras civilizaciones se desarrollaron alrededor de él.

Dicen que es un mar tranquilo

y que es el más contaminado del mundo.

Yo también.

## **DURBAN POETRY**

In Durban

The Indian Ocean came into my hands

while the sun was setting and four women entered the water

to finish their rituals, prayers, and cleansing of their auras.

I was speaking in zulú.

*(Sawubona –Y e bo.*

*Ninjani? –Ngiyaphila)*

with a fisherman and with the small fish  
that was still gasping with the hook in its mouth.  
I didn't have a mouth and nobody to name me  
when another fish dragged himself upon me  
begging ten rand to feed another  
who was at the bottom waiting...  
unaware that many of us  
from the other side of the world are also waiting  
no longer knowing what for.

While the big fish are being are captured by shrimp  
prawns muscles clams squid and octopus,  
I pondered what my son César would be eating  
who had not conquered anything yet  
but at the same time had conquered everything.

I had eight tentacles but they were cut off  
little by little as if they were waves  
where surfing is not permitted.

My hands and the Indian Ocean were extensions of each other.  
They say that the first civilizations were developed around it.  
They say it is a peaceful sea  
and that it is the most contaminated in the world.

Me too.

Traducido por: Chelsea Carswell, Adriana Corzo, y Rolando Recendez

Translated by: Chelsea Carswell, Adriana Corzo, Rolando Recendez

## LAURA RUIZ

(Matanzas, Cuba, 1966)

Poeta, editora, ensayista y traductora. Miembro de la Uneac. Ha publicado los libros de poesía *Queda escrito (1988)*, *La sombra de los otros (1994)*, *El camino sobre las aguas (2004)*, *A qué país volver (2007)*, *Los frutos ácidos (2008)*, *Otro retorno al país natal (2012)* y *Fe de erratas (2016)*, entre otros. Suyos son también *A ciegas (2005)*, *Hoy es domingo y mañana también (2007)* y *A la entrada y a la salida (2012)*. Recientemente apareció su traducción al español de *El exilio según Julia*, de Gisèle Pineau. Textos suyos han aparecido en múltiples antologías, así como en publicaciones periódicas impresas y digitales cubanas y extranjeras; y otros han sido traducidos al inglés, alemán, sueco y turco. Es la editora principal de Ediciones Vigía y dirige La Revista del Vigía de esa misma editorial. Es la directora de la revista digital Mar Desnudo.

(Matanzas, Cuba, 1966)

Poet, editor, essayist, and translator. Member of the UNEAC. She has published

the poetry collections: *Queda escrito* (1988), *La sombra de los otros* (1994), *El camino sobre las aguas* (2004), *A qué país volver* (2007), *Los frutos ácidos* (2008), *Otro retorno al país natal* (2012) and *Fe de erratas* (2016), among other works. Other titles include *A ciegas* (2005), *Hoy es domingo y mañana también* (2007) and *A la entrada y a lasalida* (2012). Her translation into Spanish of *El exilio según Julia* by Gisèle Pineau has been recently released. Her work has appeared in multiple anthologies, as well as in Cuban and foreign periodicals, in both print and in digital format. Her works have been translated into English, German, Swedish, and Turkish. She is the executive editor at Ediciones Vigía, as well as director of *La Revista del Vigía* of the same editorial. Additionally, she is the director of the digital magazine *Mar Desnudo*.

## LA VISITA

*¿Cómo están por allá? era el saludo.*

Aunque no recordáramos  
quiénes vivían en su casa  
si la hija por fin se había casado  
si la nieta iba ya a la escuela.  
Su familia  
la casa de la calle siguiente

eran ese allá.

Nosotros también éramos el allá

de otro que saludaba.

Todo quedaba tan cerca

tan en la punta de la lengua

para decir hazme la visita.

Pasa a tomar café.

No era el petróleo o el oro

era el café lo que queríamos.

Tomado en aquel allá

que era la cocina de la casa

el murito de la entrada

el quicio del patio...

Ahora, para tomar aquel café

se necesita dar explicaciones,

ofrecer fotos

visas y pasaportes.

Ahora, aunque se le colme de azúcar

cada vez sabe más amargo.

## **THE VISIT**

*How are things over there? was the greeting.*

Although we won't remember

who lived in that house  
if the daughter finally married  
if the granddaughter had started school yet.

The family

the house on the next street

*was that over there.*

We were also the over there

for others with salutations.

Everything was so close

on the tip of the tongue

to say pay me a visit.

Come over for coffee.

It wasn't the oil or the gold

it was the coffee that we wanted.

Which we drank over there

that was the kitchen of the house

that small entrance gate

that door stoop...

Now, to drink that coffee

one needs to provide explanations

offer photos

visas and passports.

Now even with a brimful of sugar

it tastes increasingly bitter.

## ÁRBOL DE NAVIDAD

en mayo julio o diciembre

lleno de burbujas y juguetes rotos

bombillas que se quemaron

guirnaldas descoloridas.

en enero marzo o noviembre

con telarañas que cuelgan

como simulacros de nieve

inamovibles bolas de jugar

soldaditos viejos

desgastadas tapas de pomos plásticos.

en invierno y verano

lluvia o sequía

bajo huracanes y apagones

con pesebre o sin él.

en medio de la sala

codeándose con el cactus y la sábila

engañoso, conmovedor, solitario

viendo crecer a los niños

y la familia despedirse.

testigo de bodas y funerales

sin que nadie se atreva a recogerlo  
ni guardarlo en su caja  
porque nunca se sabe  
en qué día qué mes o qué año  
aparecerá el milagro.

### **THE CHRISTMAS TREE**

in May July or December  
filled with broken toys and baubles  
bulbs that burned out  
faded garlands.  
in January March or November  
with spider webs that hang  
like the simulated snow  
immovable marbles  
old toy solders  
worn plastic bottle tops.  
in winter and summer  
rain or draught  
in storms and blackouts  
with a manger or without.  
in the middle of the living room  
gathered among the cactus and aloe



illusive, moving, solitary  
watching the children grow  
and the family say goodbye.  
witness of weddings and funerals  
which no one would dare to collect  
or put in a box  
because no one knows  
which day or month or year  
the miracle will appear.

Traducido por: Isis Campos y Kim Parker

Translated by: Isis Campos and Kim Parker

## **ALFREDO ZALDÍVAR**

(Sojo Tres, Holguín, Cuba, 1956)

Poeta, editor y promotor cultural. Ha incursionado en el ensayo, la crítica, la dramaturgia y la narrativa. Miembro de la Uneac. Tiene publicados, entre otros, los libros de poesía *Concilio de las aguas* (1998), *Papeles pobres* (2002), *La vida en ciernes* (2003), *Contra la emoción* (2005), *Malentendido* (2007), *Esperando a Viernes* (2009), *Cuchillos en el aire* (2015) y *trillos / precipicios / concurrencias* (2015, publicado en

edición bilingüe por Red Mountain Press, Santa Fe, Estados Unidos, 2017). Es autor de varias antologías y compilaciones de ensayo y poesía. Su obra ha aparecido en antologías y revistas de Cuba y otros países. Fundó Ediciones Vigía en 1985. Desde 2001 trabaja como editor en Ediciones Matanzas y desde 2006 es el director de esta editorial. Dirige la revista de literatura y arte Matanzas desde el 2003. Fundó en 2008 la Casa de las Letras Digdora Alonso, de la que es también director. Le fue concedido el Premio Nacional de Edición por la obra de toda la vida en 2012. La Biblioteca Nacional de Cuba le otorgó en 2013 su Premio Honorífico por la Promoción de la Lectura. Ostenta la Distinción por la Cultura Nacional, que entrega el Ministerio de Cultura de Cuba.

(Sojo Tres, Holguín, Cuba, 1956)

Poet, editor and cultural promoter. He has published numerous essays, literary critiques, dramaturgy, and fiction. He is a member of the UNEAC. He has published, among others, the poetry books *Concilio de las aguas* (1998), *Papeles pobres* (2002), *La vida en ciernes* (2003), *Contra la emoción* (2005), *Malentendido* (2007), *Esperando a Viernes* (2009), *Cuchillos en el aire* (2015) and *trillos / precipicios / concurrencias* (2015, published in a bilingual edition by Red Mountain Press, Santa

Fe, United States, 2017). He has authored of several anthologies, as well as essay and poetry collections. His work has appeared in anthologies and magazines in Cuba and other countries. He founded Ediciones Vigía in 1985. Since 2001, he has worked as an editor for the publishing house Ediciones Matanzas and since 2006 he has served as its director. He has managed the art and literature magazine Matanzas since 2003. In 2008, he founded Casa de las Letras Digdora Alonso, of which he is also the editor. He was awarded the Premio Nacional de Edición for his life's work in 2012. In 2013, The National Library of Cuba awarded him their Premio Honorífico for the Promotion of Reading. He holds the Distinction of National Culture, awarded by the Ministry of Cuban Culture.

## **FRENTE AL PAISAJE**

*para Lisette Rodés*

*para Aristides Vega*

Qué hacer frente a un paisaje que no es mío,  
frente a un paisaje que amo y he creído que puedo poseer.  
He apretado puñados de tierra y he metido  
mis manos en el agua,  
con ese barro fresco he embarrado mi cuerpo,  
me he sumergido en sus aguas más dulces

y he vuelto limpio ya  
frente a una hilera de palmeras silvestres  
que me anima a buscarlo.  
Quiero encontrar la boca del paisaje,  
quiero besar los labios que tendría,  
poner junto a su pecho mi oído y descubrir  
los ruidos, los silencios del corazón que late.  
Pero nada me es dado.  
Soy el viajero que no ha vuelto,  
ni va a ninguna parte,  
menos que el forastero suelo ser.  
Ahí va el río hacia el mar,  
ahí están las palmeras destellantes,  
ahí las rocas y el viento,  
los dos cielos, mi espalda.  
Simple telón de fondo también yo,  
una ajena silueta recortada,  
frente a un paisaje que amo  
del que apenas soy nada,  
como el paseante que vaga en la postal  
sin mirada ni aliento.

**IN FRONT OF THE LANDSCAPE**

*for Lisette Rodés*

*for Aristides Vega*

What do I do in front of a landscape that is not mine,  
in front of a landscape that I love and have believed I could possess.

I have clenched handfuls of dirt and placed  
my hands in the water,  
with that fresh clay, I have muddied my body,  
I have submerged myself in its sweetest waters  
and have returned clean  
in front of a row of wild palms  
that encourage me to search for it.

I want to find the mouth of the landscape,  
I want to kiss the lips that it would have,  
put my ear to its chest and discover  
the sounds, the silences of its beating heart.

But nothing is given to me.

I am the traveler that has not returned,  
nor goes to any place,  
less than what a foreigner would be.

There goes the river to the sea,  
there the gleaming palms,  
there the rocks and the wind,  
the two skies, my back.

I am that simple backdrop,  
an alien, jagged silhouette,  
in front of the landscape that I love  
of which I am barely anything,  
like the vagabond that wanders on a postcard  
without a glance nor a breath.

### **LOS PECES ESTÁN VIVOS**

Se ovillaba el cordel,  
vueltas de luz,  
clamor,  
vueltas de sombras.  
Los peces están vivos.  
Pero quién desenreda  
los hilos de un carrete que nadie ha preparado.  
Y las redes que anudaron distantes pescadores de luz,  
quién las desteje.  
Ah del que no decida su suerte milenaria;  
yo velo su mudez, ese silencio ágil, desprovisto,  
su escuálida embestida.  
Los peces están vivos.  
Quién anima las velas  
hacia el tesoro oculto en esa isla

que inventamos de noche para alzarnos  
por entre la madeja que al cabo nos reviste.

Quién destrona las huestes coronadas,  
el espacio abisal donde fundaron su reino,  
quién lo expropia.

Quién destiende las redes que estiraron  
sobre nuestras canciones de cuna.

Los peces están vivos.

Solo falta una mano,  
el brazo abriendo una muesca en el aire,  
el plomo augurador, el hilo, las canciones  
que llegarán al fondo, donde esperan  
por las limpias traiciones del anzuelo  
los peces que arrojaron al mar,  
hermanos míos.

Yo que voy en el jamo,  
yo que suelo escaparme  
camino del pueril infierno de los hombres  
anuncio la contienda:  
los peces están vivos.

Un agua nueva espera por su origen.

**THE FISH ARE ALIVE**

The string was wound up,  
whirls of light,  
clamor,  
whirls of shade.

The fish are alive.

But who will disentangle  
the strings of a reel that no one has prepared.

And the nets that tangle distant fisherman of light,  
who will unweave them.

Oh, the one who does not decide his millenarian fate;  
I watch over his muteness, that agile silence, devoid,  
his squalid onset.

The fish are alive.

Who unfurls the sails  
to the hidden treasure on that island  
that we invented at night to raise us up  
from the tangled ropes that envelop us.

Who dethrones the crowned hosts,  
the abyssal space where their kingdom was founded,  
who seizes it.

Who unfolds the nets which they extended  
over our lullabies.

The fish are alive.



Only a hand is missing,  
an arm opening a notch in the air,  
the foreboding plumb, the string, the songs  
that reached the depths, where they wait  
for the honest betrayals of the lure  
the fish that they cast back to the sea,  
brothers of mine.

I am in that bag,  
I who tend to escape  
I walk the inane inferno of man  
I announce the struggle:  
the fish are alive.  
A new water awaits its origin.

Traducido por: Kayleen Babel y Andrea Cavazos

Translated by: Kayleen Babel and Andrea Cavazos

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