Sargasso, a peer-reviewed journal of literature, language, and culture edited at the University of Puerto Rico's Río Piedras Campus, publishes critical essays, interviews, book reviews, and some poems and short stories. The journal seeks original submissions that have not been published elsewhere, including new translations of previous publications. Sargasso particularly welcomes material written by or about the people of the Caribbean region and its multiple diasporas. Comparative work is also welcome. Unless otherwise specified, essays and critical studies should conform to the guidelines of the MLA Handbook. Short stories should be kept to no more than 2,500 words in length and poems should be kept to thirty lines or less. See our webpage for open calls, submission guidelines, and additional information. For inquiries or electronic submission, write to: sargassojournal@gmail.com.

Postal Address (new):
SARGASSO
Department of English
College of Humanities
13 Ave. Universidad, Ste. 1301
San Juan, Puerto Rico 00925-2533

Translating Difference
Yvette Torres & Don E. Walicek, Issue Editors
Keishla M. González García, Administrative Assistant
Sharif El Gammal-Ortiz, Administrative Assistant
Ivelisse Jiménez, “Ten con Ten #8,” front cover image
Rubén Rolando & Carlo André Oliveras Rodríguez, back cover image
Marcos Pastrana, layout

Editors
Don E. Walicek, Editor
Sally Everson, Contributing Editor
Katherine Miranda, Contributing Editor
Lowell Fiet, Founding Editor
María Cristina Rodríguez, Book Review Editor

Editorial Board
Jessica Adams, University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras
Mary Ann Gosser-Esquín, Florida Atlantic University
Edgardo Pérez Montijo, University of Puerto Rico, Arecibo
Peter Roberts, University of the West Indies, Cave Hill
Ivette Romero, Marist College
Felipe Smith, Tulane University

UPR Administration
Jorge Haddock Acevedo, President of the University of Puerto Rico
Luis A. Ferrao, Interim Chancellor, Río Piedras Campus
Agnes M. Bosch Irizarry, Interim Dean of Humanities, Río Piedras Campus

For online resources, access to past issues, and purchase and subscription form visit:
http://humanidades.uprrp.edu/ingles/?page_id=312

Opinions and views expressed in Sargasso are those of the individual authors and are not necessarily shared by the editors or its Editorial Board members. All rights return to authors. This journal is indexed by HAPI, Latindex, MLA, and the Periodical Contents Index. Copies of Sargasso 2015-16, (I & II), as well as previous issues, are on deposit in the Library of Congress. Filed March 2019. ISSN 1060-5533.
# Table of Contents

## INTRODUCTION

Don E. Walicek  
Translation, Region, and Difference  

## POETRY BY JULIÁN DEL CASAL, TRANSLATION BY G. J. RACZ

*Marina / Seascape*

*Coquetería / Vanity*

*Nocturno / Nocturne*

## ESSAYS

Thomas Rothe  
Diálogos turbulentos: Traducción inter-caribeña como estrategia anticolonial  

María M. Carrión  

Desrine R. Bogle  
Translation in the Anglophone and Francophone Caribbean: Facts and Figures  

David A. Auerbach  
Re/Presentations: Translation, Art, and Identity in Puerto Rico  

Charlotte M. Ward  
Two Puerto Rican Writers Translating Themselves: Rosario Ferré and Pedro Juan Soto  

---

*SARGASSO: TRANSLATING DIFFERENCE (2015-16, I & II)*
# Table of Contents

## Research Note

Juan Manuel Picabea (introduction by Jorge L. Giovannetti and Juleisa Avilés Acarón, translation and annotations by Jorge L. Giovannetti and Don E. Walicek)

- Religion, Ethnicity, and Race in Rural Cuba: A Pre-Revolutionary Amateur Ethnography

## Interview

Crossing Over: An Interview with Translator Suzanne Jill Levine

- Interview by Don E. Walicek

## Poetry

Poetry by José Ramón Sánchez Leyva

- *La nariz ganchuda del semita* / The Hooked Nose of the Semite, translation by Álvaro García Garcinuño

- *El hombre del desierto* / Desert Dweller, translation by Don E. Walicek

- *Daños colaterales* / Collateral Damages, translation by Eduardo Rodríguez Santiago

## Short Fiction

Rodney Morales, translation by Geniz Hernández Rosado

- *Ship of Dreams / El Barco de los sueños* . . .

Vanessa Vilches, translation by Aurora Lauzardo Ugarte

- *Pasadizo / Passageway*

## Reviews

Rafael Bernabe, translation by Eduardo Rodríguez Santiago

- *The Extreme Island; The Peril and Promise of Urban Life in the Age of Climate Change* by Ashley Dawson . . .

Lydia Platón Lázaro

- *Dangerous Moves: Performance and Politics in Cuba* by Coco Fusco
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 179  | Gabriela Ortiz Díaz  
*Construcción mediática de la guerra y el terrorismo: la exclusión de la memoria histórica de la identidad polifónica discursiva latino-americana* by Doris E. Martínez Vizcarrondo . . . |
| 183  | Keith E. McNeal, translation by Sharif El Gammal-Ortiz  
*Atlantic Gandhi: The Mahatma Overseas / Gandhi atlántico: El Mahatma en el extranjero* by Nalini Natarajan |
| 185  | Juan Recondo  
| 189  | Zorimar Rivera Montes  
*In Visible Movement: Nuyorican Poetry from the Sixties to Slam* by Urayoán Noel |
| 192  | Michael Huffmaster  
*Being Bilingual in Borinquen: Student Voices from the University of Puerto Rico*, edited by Alicia Pousada |
| 194  | Michael Sharp  
*TransLatin Joyce: Global Transmissions in Ibero-American Literature*, edited by Brian L. Price, César A. Salgado, and John Pedro Schwartz |
| 198  | Rafael L. Joglar  
*Sounds of Watching: A Visual Introduction to Urban Ornithology in Old San Juan/ Sonidos de avistamiento: Una introducción visual a la ornitología urbana en el Viejo San Juan* by Javier A. Román-Nieves |
| 201  | Diego Agostini Ferrer  
*Puerto Rican Labor History 1898–1934: Revolutionary Ideals and Reformist Politics* by Carlos Sanabria  
*The Trinidad Douglas: Identity, Ethnicity, and Lexical Choice* by Ferne Louanne Regis |
| 209  | LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS |
INTRODUCTION
TRANSLATION, REGION, AND DIFFERENCE

Don E. Walicek
Sargasso Editor

Cada vez que intentamos expresarnos, necesitamos romper con nosotros mismos.

Each time we express ourselves, we have to break with ourselves.

Evri taim wi chrai fi bi wiself, wi afi ort wiself.

—Octavio Paz, “El laberinto de la soledad” (1950)

Since Caribbean Studies took shape as a formal area of academic inquiry in the 1960s, practitioners and theorists alike have recognized translation as having an important role in the field. While some have upheld translating between the languages of colonizing European empires as essential to making sense of the region’s complexity, others have seen translation as a resource for its transformation, a means of reconfiguring patterns of communication and understandings of cultural difference, even longstanding social and economic relationships. In both of these cases, translation is essential for making connections across divergent socio-historical trajectories. It is, among other things, a way of getting to know our neighbors and ourselves, as well as a means of engaging—and possibly overcoming—the linguistic, political, and economic fragmentation that exists across societies that are often separated by language.

The interplay between the two aforementioned views of translation brings to mind various issues that the renowned author and researcher Gordon K. Lewis discussed in a 1987 Sargasso interview in which he spoke with George Lamming, Stella López, and Lowell Fiet. Lewis conceptualized competency in multiple languages as a crucial component of regional scholarship that
could yield new insights as well as set a precedent for the development of the field of Caribbean Studies by assisting writers and researchers in expanding their understandings of the topics of inquiry at the center of their work.

Concerned about the challenges facing emerging post-colonial societies, he described limited multilingualism among scholars as a forewarning of sorts. In his words:

What I still find a little disturbing is that too many Caribbean scholars are still writing within terms of their own island society or a group of island societies, and they are still not writing the sort of more regional scholarship that I would like them to see. . . I don’t think you can write about the Caribbean as a whole unless you have some kind of control—or mastery—of the three working languages of the region: French, English and Spanish. (27)

Translation is integral to the “control” that Lewis sees as necessary for understanding the region, as it promises to facilitate access to insights that would otherwise be out of reach. As his comments suggest, a scholar who can translate well is one who can make significant contributions to existing knowledge and thereby raise the bar for future research.

Several shifts that have taken place since that interview was done more than thirty years ago help to situate ideas about translation and multilingualism in terms of the dynamics of contemporary scholarship on the Caribbean. First, it seems that fewer scholars today would insist that fluency in the three European languages that Lewis names is essential to their current work. In fact, many would probably agree that efforts to better understand the region should include additional languages, including the region’s Creole languages and languages spoken in other places, including Surinam and the islands of the Dutch Caribbean (e.g., Dutch, Sranan, Papiamentu). Also significant, in the last few years government agencies in several Caribbean countries have taken steps to provide translation and interpreting services for speakers of Creole languages, thereby establishing a foundation upon which these languages can gain expanded use in formal domains associated with the written word and eventually emerge as “working languages.”

---

2 In some instances these steps complement efforts to educate youth in their native languages. For details, see articles 41 and 48 of the Charter on Language Policy and Language Rights in the Creole-Speaking Caribbean as well as Sargasso 2011-12, II, which deals with language policy and language rights.
A second shift worth noting is that scholars from a variety of disciplines increasingly rely on the services of interpreters and translators, many of whom are based in the Caribbean, to complete their work. The region is home to a growing number of talented translators who possess highly relevant specialized knowledge, including knowledge of the region’s cultural heritage and its production in the areas of history, literature, and the arts. Numerous Caribbean translators have published both important translations and peer-reviewed scholarship in their area(s) of specialization. Scholars who aim to write regional scholarship can and do, of course, work with interpreters and translators to produce it.

The final shift to be mentioned here relates to the language in which scholarship is published. Today a growing amount of the work published on the Caribbean is written in English, including scholarship on societies in which the population’s main language is a language other than English, and little of it is published in translation. And while the number of academic journals dedicated to Caribbean topics has grown significantly in the last decade or so, few journals regularly feature translations. Many—including those that accept submissions in several of the region’s languages—continue to be largely monolingual publications.²

Exploring the role of translation in Caribbean life today while calling for translation as a necessary priority, this issue suggests that future scholarship and other types of academic collaborations involving translation are significant because they can nurture increased dialogue among writers, scholars, and educators; and also because they can contribute to making work on the region available to a wider and more linguistically diverse spectrum of readers. We emphasize both the insights of regional scholarship written by authors with knowledge of multiple languages and the benefits of publishing in multiple languages as a means of enriching scholarship and making it more accessible for the region.

Commentary by the Barbadian essayist, novelist, and poet George Lamming—one of the other participants in the 1987 Sargasso interview mentioned above—assists in further grounding this issue’s thematic focus. Lamming describes writing about the Caribbean as part of “the region’s conscious discovery of itself” as “a unique and creative place” (p. 28). He

---

² Notable exceptions, journals that consistently publish in more than one language, include Anales del Caribe, Caribbean Studies, Small Axe, and Sargasso.
signals that translators, researchers, artists, and others can contribute to the self-understanding that is important to the journey of discovery. Providing details about what this might look like, Lamming mentions the importance of a “regional emphasis” and a “regional character” within cultural institutions and institutions of higher education, hinting that both these institutions and individuals alike should pursue understanding across and within the Caribbean, rather than focus on the establishment or reinforcement of external links with metropolitan centers of power.

The opinions shared by Lewis and Lamming resonate with our motivation for conceptualizing this issue of Sargasso. However, one of the challenges faced in putting together this volume is that it was difficult to identify a selection of contributions representing the geographic and linguistic diversity of the region. Our call for submissions was widely disseminated and published in multiple languages, but most of our submissions were written in English, and most came from Puerto Rico. In addition, all of the submissions received were written in either English or Spanish. As established in the call, we encouraged contributors to approach translation as an indispensable resource for humanities scholarship, artistic endeavors, and future interdisciplinary collaborations. Several contributors did so, and as expressed in our volume’s title, they also explored ways in which translation is linked to difference.

As the work of historian Vicente L. Rafael (2000) underscores, the translation-difference interface concerns not only the language of texts, but also the wide array of grammars, experiences, epistemologies, and aspirations that are fundamental to history, political formations, and contemporary social life. These and other spheres of significance—language ideologies, poetics, religion, the law, taboos, the cosmic—can reveal commonalities as well as compelling patterns that chart differences in the region’s perspectives, experiences, and collective identities. These spheres are operative at multiple levels, among which are the individual, the speech community, language, society, and international networks. Moreover, contemplating translation and difference alongside one another is useful because the Caribbean, like other parts of the world, is a place where it is often assumed that the social and linguistic systems that shape its multilingual landscape are either near equivalents or essentially the same. Yet, examples suggesting the contrary abound.

Think, for example, of Caribbean poetry and its intimate links with diverse genres of oral traditions in the region. Ponder the knowledge required to translate the poetic works that gave shape to surrealism, indigenismo,
négritude, testimony, and spoken word. In her masterful English-language translation of *Un arc-en-ciel pour l’Occident chrétien* (*A Rainbow for the Christian West*) by the renowned Haitian poet and activist René Depestre, Joan Dayan (1977) offers a moving and highly informative narrative concerning the text’s immersion in the symbolism and cosmology of Vodou. She draws attention to Depestre’s “urgency and faith in the power of utterance, almost as a spell to create the substance of his vision” (p. 49). One of the reasons Dayan’s translation is effective is that it teaches the reader about language itself; she writes of a view of the power of the word that can engender all things, one that is even capable of suspending and creating life.

The insights that Rafael and Dayan share through their work gain importance when they are considered in light of questions about how to produce the type of “regional scholarship” that Lewis hoped scholars would eventually generate. These suggest that multilingualism and knowledge of translation are assets because rather than facilitate erasure, they make possible the communication of difference. New understandings of difference are embraced and nurtured by what Lamming terms “regional emphasis” and “regional character.”

The publication of this volume is long overdue. As we were poised to complete it in 2017, our campus became inoperative due to protests that consisted of a one-week shutdown and a student strike that kept our campus closed for more than two additional months. Striking students rejected the $512 million in cuts to the public funding of the University of Puerto Rico System’s budget that were demanded by the Financial Oversight and Management Board, and called for the country’s billions of dollars in government debt to be audited. This oversight board was established in conjunction with the US federal government’s passage of the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act (PROMESA) in late 2016, a law that established a process for restructuring debt and various mechanisms that now control the Commonwealth’s finances. Concerned about future negative effects of the cuts imposed by the board—increases in tuition, limited financial aid, cuts to public services, fewer employment opportunities, new waves of emigration, the closure of public schools—striking students and others pointed out that the debt had not been incurred
by the university and questioned the decision to slash funding for higher education given that it directly strengthens Puerto Rico’s economy and thereby supports both financial recovery and the mitigation of staggering social problems.

The closure of our campus, adjustments to our academic calendar, and the general malaise at that time meant that the administrative steps which make the journal’s publication possible could not be carried out. As a result, this issue had to be put on hold until the following semester, but then hurricanes Irma and María hit the Caribbean.

The first category-five storm on record to strike the Leeward Islands, Irma, was a catastrophic storm that resulted in death and destruction throughout the region. It was followed less than two weeks later by María, which brought about fatalities, serious flooding, extremely costly damage, and months without electricity in Dominica, Puerto Rico, and other islands.

María also completely destroyed the building housing *Sargasso*, the Facundo Bueso Annex. We lost our office and all of the material resources that we relied on to produce our volumes—computers, electronic files, desks, printers, supplies, reference books, archives, even the roof. While we have now operated without an office for more than a year, the editors have made plans for the future, and the journal has continued to receive important financial and administrative support at two key levels within our institution: the Department of English and the Office of the Dean of Humanities.

*Sargasso’s* editors greatly appreciate the messages of concern and other signs of support that we received in the wake of Hurricane María. Sent by Facebook and email from a list of places that includes Jamaica, Anguilla, the Bahamas, St. Martin, Trinidad, Guadeloupe, Cuba, and the US, they show us that expressions of regional solidarity are powerful, perhaps especially so when they come in the dark and in multiple languages. Looking back on them now suggests that the journal has made progress in cultivating the sense of region that Lewis and Lamming imagined.

This issue includes translations of several poems, each of which is presented alongside its respective source text. G.J. Racz translated the three Spanish-language poems by the Cuban writer Julían del Casal, which were written in the nineteenth century, into English.
The five essays included in this volume show that the analysis of translation can motivate provocative interdisciplinary forays in various areas of the humanities. The first, Thomas Rothe’s “Diálogos turbulentos: Traducción inter-caribeña como estrategia anticolonial,” positions literary translation as an opportunity to respond to the linguistic balkanization of the region, one that can promote increased understanding of shared cultural elements that are associated with transculturation and Afro-Caribbean heritage. His work discusses the Cuban poet Nancy Morejón’s translation of the poetry collection *Fastos* by Édouard Glissant into Castilian.

The volume’s second essay is “Translation and Decolonization. *Puerto Rico (1908–1912). El viaje cartográfico del teniente William H. Armstrong*” by María M. Carrión. Providing a view of US colonialism a decade after the Spanish-American War, her work discusses the creation of the first paleographic bilingual (English–Spanish) edition of ten extant field books that date to the earlier period of the US occupation of Puerto Rico. Carrión describes and comments on the significance of numerous tasks faced by translators and editors in the unfolding of this project, and in the end she argues that the Spanish-language translation undermines specific aspects of the original author’s colonizing agenda.

Next, “Translation in the Anglophone and Francophone Caribbean: Facts and Figures” by Desrine R. Bogle offers an overview of literary translation, Bible translation, translation training, and certification and associations, among other related topics. Her work considers the important question of whether translation activity in the Caribbean is geared primarily towards its inter-regional multilingual needs or focused on external needs.

David A. Auerbach is the author of the fourth essay, “Re/Presentations: Translation, Art and Identity in Puerto Rico.” Focusing on the translation of art-related texts for museums and cultural institutions in Puerto Rico and abroad, his essay discusses challenges related to rendering visual signifiers in written language as well as issues pertaining to the translation of cultural identity and iconicity.

The final essay included in this volume is “Two Puerto Rican Writers Translating Themselves: Rosario Ferré and Pedro Juan Soto” by Charlotte M. Ward. Her essay discusses and compares the work of Ferré and Soto, contextualizing each in terms of concerns that will be of interest to both translators and scholars of Puerto Rican literature.

Following the essays is a research note featuring the work of an amateur
ethnographer from Cuba named Juan Manuel Picabea. Part of a larger project undertaken by Jorge L. Giovannetti, this contribution consists of an introduction that situates Picabea’s work in terms of anthropology, the English-language translation of several texts that describe life in Cuba during the early twentieth century, and original annotations that will assist readers in understanding the content and significance of Picabea’s work.

My interview with translator Suzanne Jill Levine, which was conducted when she visited our campus in 2014, is also included in this volume. Sharing personal anecdotes, professional insights, and candid opinions, Levine answers questions about her career and her experiences as the translator of works by the Puerto Rican writer Luis Negrón and other authors from the Caribbean. Making connections with the inspirational work of Jorge Luis Borges, she describes literature as a dialogue between the past, present, and future that offers “an ongoing conversation that negates mortality or at least gives the present a hopeful vitality.”

Also featured in this volume are three poems by the poet José Ramón Sánchez Leyva, who is from Guantánamo City, Cuba. The idea of translating Sánchez Leyva’s work arose in the context of his 2016 visit to our campus. At that time Sánchez Leyva presented his work and participated in a translation workshop sponsored by our Graduate Program in Translation. Eduardo Rodríguez Santiago, Álvaro García Garcinuño, and I each translated one of the poems included in the pages ahead.

The issue continues with a selection of two short stories. The first is Geniz Hernández Rosado’s Spanish translation of “Ship of Dreams,” a story by Rodney Morales, a writer of Puerto Rican descent who was born and raised on the island of O’ahu, the third-largest of the Hawaiian Islands. The second story is Aurora Lauzardo Ugarte’s English translation of “Passageway” by Vanessa Vilches, a local writer, columnist, and literature professor.

The volume closes with a section that features a wide variety of book reviews, all of which discuss recent work on the Caribbean.

Our ability to publish Sargasso for more than thirty years has much to do with a collaborative spirit that the expression of appreciation makes stronger and more meaningful. With this in mind, I thank, first and foremost, my co-editor for this issue, Yvette Torres, for her work on this volume. She has been generous with her expertise, energy, and time from beginning to end.

I am grateful to Katherine Miranda, Maritza Stanchich, Alicia Pousada, Sally Everson, Jessica Adams, and Nancy Vicente for the ways in which they
support the journal. I thank Keishla González and Sharif El Gammal Ortiz for the work that they completed as editorial assistants. On behalf of our editorial board, I also thank the numerous anonymous peer reviewers who provided comments on the submissions received for this volume. Additional thanks to Esther Whitfield of Brown University and Aurora Lauzardo Ugarte, one of the directors of the Graduate Program in Translation on this campus, for supporting the workshop in which the initial translations of José Ramón Sánchez Leyva’s poetry were completed.

Finally, a sincere thank you to the translators, authors, reviewers, and other individuals who have contributed to this volume. We appreciate your dedication to your work and thank you for your patience.
REFERENCES

The section of poetry that follows includes three poems from *Bus-tos y rimas* (1893), a posthumously published book of poetry by the Cuban author Julián del Casal (1863–1893). Critics have suggested that he was a precursor of modernism in Latin American literature, with some pointing out that his early romanticism yielded to the influence of prevailing French aesthetics. He died young of tuberculosis, having published only two collections in his lifetime, *Hojas al viento* (1890) and *Nieve* (1892).

The original Spanish-language source texts are presented alongside English-language translations by G. J. Racz, Professor at Long Island University Brooklyn. Racz previously published translations of Casal’s poems, “Tropical Landscape,” “Things I Love,” and “Salome,” in *Downtown Brooklyn* in 2011.
Marina

Náufrago bergantín de quilla rota, 
mástil crujiente y velas desgarradas, 
írguese entre las olas encrespadas 
o se sumerge en su extensión ignota.

Desnudo cuerpo de mujer que azota 
el viento con sus ráfagas heladas, 
en sudario de espumas argentadas 
sobre las aguas verdinegras flota.

Cuervo marino de azuladas plumas 
olfatea el cadáver nacarado 
y, revolando en caprichosos giros,

alza su pico entre las frías brumas 
un brazalete de oro, constelado 
de diamantes, rubíes y zafiros.

Julián del Casal
Seascape

Wrecked brigantine, your keel demolished fore
To aft with creaking mast mid tattered sails,
You’ll right yourself while white-capped calm prevails
Or flounder to the depthless ocean’s floor.

A woman’s naked corpse winds far from shore
Whip mercilessly with their icy gales,
Your muted shroud of silvery sea foam pales
Beside the verdigris that marks death’s door.

An azure-winged marine bird spots your list
And, picking up your nacreous body’s trace
In flights of fancy sporting dips and whirls,
Flees holding in its beak amid chill mist
A golden wristlet spangled with a brace
Of diamonds, rubies, sapphires and pearls.

English translation by G. J. Racz
Coquetería

En el verde jardín del monasterio,
donde los nardos crecen con las lilas,
pasea la novicia sus pupilas
como princesa por su vasto imperio.

Deleitan su sagrado cautiverio
los chorros de agua en las marmóreas pilas,
el lejano vibrar de las esquilas
y las místicas notas del salterio.

Sus rizos peina el aura del verano,
mas la doncella al contemplarlos llora
e, internada en el bosque de cipreses,

piensa que ha de troncharlos firme mano
como la hoz de ruda segadora
las espigas doradas de las mieses.

Julián del Casal
Vanity

Amid a convent garden’s green demesnes,
Where nards and lilies blossom side by side,
A novice scans the purlieus wondrous-eyed,
A princess in the realm in which she reigns.

The gush from marble fountains entertains
That captive grace in which her hours bide
Along with echoes tinkling bells provide
Attended by the psaltery’s mystic strains.

Her ringlets windblown by the summer air,
She contemplates her lovely curls and weeps
For, mid this cypress forest she’s forlorn,

Foreseeing some rough hand shave off her hair
The way a rustic harvester’s scythe reaps
With scant emotion golden ears of corn.

English translation by G. J. Racz
Nocturno

El mar, como la luna de un espejo, que, de amarilla lámpara al reflejo, retratase nevadas mariposas, de la noche a las luces misteriosas, copia el disco de pálidos luceros que tachonan del éter los senderos.

Tras sí dejando la nacarada estela airosa barca de latina vela surca gallarda el ámbito marino, empeñándole el dorso cristalino, pero, al tocar en la risueña orilla, más luminoso el mar de nuevo brilla.

¡Oh, mi triste adorada! Fue mi alma mar apacible que, en augusta calma, retrataba en sus límpidas corrientes de astros puros los discos refulgentes, mas, al cruzar de tu pasión la nave, perdida vio la transparencia suave, y en el cristal, que guarda impuras huellas, no han vuelto a reflejarse las estrellas.

Julián del Casal
Nocturne

The sea, so like a mirror’s moon of wan
Reflecting yellow light, projecting on
Itself a scrawl of snowy butterflies—
A mystery, thus, from sunset to sunrise—
Will image forth that orb whose pallid rays
Diffuse throughout the night sky’s starry ways.

A steam of nacreous froth left in its trail,
A gallant ship floats by with Latin sail
And plies the water, all too proud to pass
While misting up its surface looking glass.
Yet, when the vessel reaches smiling shore,
The moon shines brighter than it did before.

Oh, sorrowful beloved! Once my soul,
A tranquil sea serenely calm and whole,
Reflected on its limpid waves the light
Of starry orbs refulgent in the night—
That is, until your skiff of passion crossed,
At which its sweet transparency was lost
And in its glass, still marred by impure prints,
The stars’ reflection hasn’t figured since.

English translation by G. J. Racz
Este trabajo plantea que la traducción literaria dentro del ámbito sociocultural del Caribe puede desarmar la balcanización lingüística que dejó los antiguos poderes coloniales y permitir conocer elementos culturales compartidos, como los procesos de transculturación y las muchas veces negada herencia africana. El trabajo evidencia la complejidad de traducir en este contexto, donde la tradición oral y las lenguas criollas son factores influyentes. Después de una breve contextualización teórica e histórica, el autor analiza un caso específico en que la poeta cubana Nancy Morejón traduce al castellano el poemario Fastos, del escritor martiniqueño Édouard Glissant.

Palabras clave: Nancy Morejón, Édouard Glissant, traducción de lenguas criollas

Abstract

This essay proposes that literary translation within the Caribbean sociocultural environment can disarm the linguistic balkanization that the ancient colonial powers left behind and permit us to know shared cultural elements, such as the processes of transculturation and the often denied African heritage. This work demonstrates the complexity of translating in this context, where oral tradition and Creole languages are influential factors. After a brief theoretical and historical contextualization, the author analyzes a specific case in which the Cuban poet Nancy Morejón translates the collection of poems Fastos by the Martinican writer Édouard Glissant to Spanish.

Keywords: Nancy Morejón, Édouard Glissant, translation of Creole languages
Introducción

A pesar de la diversidad lingüística en el gran Caribe, hay quienes argumentan que existe una cultura en común que trasciende las fronteras instaladas por los poderes coloniales de turno. Hechos históricos como el haber pertenecido a sociedades de plantación dependientes de mano de obra esclava (Benítez-Rojo, 1998) y los procesos de transculturación (Ortiz, 1940/1987) o acriollamiento (Glissant, 1981/2005), son algunos de los elementos que dan cuenta de experiencias compartidas y sus consecuencias culturales. Sin embargo, la producción literaria del Caribe aún tiende a ser estudiada dentro de los distintos bloques lingüísticos: castellano, francés, inglés, holandés (Glover & Munro, 2013). Resulta necesario, entonces, que cualquier acercamiento a la literatura de la región, se enfrente en primera instancia con este problema de la lengua, que también implica considerar problemas de traducción literaria.

En este trabajo repaso algunas consideraciones teóricas sobre la traducción para luego situar el debate específicamente en el espacio sociocultural del Caribe. Por eso he optado por el término de traducción intercaribeña, que entiendo como la que se realiza entre los distintos países de la región o entre caribeños de la diáspora. La traducción dentro de ese contexto puede operar como una estrategia para dar cuenta de rasgos culturales compartidos por los distintos pueblos caribeños y que superan las fronteras lingüísticas instaladas por la colonización europea. Desde esa perspectiva, el acto de traducir se inscribe en la corriente del pensamiento anticolonial.

Para fortalecer estas propuestas, me concentro en el caso específico de las traducciones realizadas por la reconocida poeta cubana Nancy Morejón (1944), en particular de autores del Caribe francófono. De ese grupo de autores, ha emprendido significantes diálogos con el escritor martiniqueño Édouard Glissant (1928-2011), cuyo trabajo poético y teórico tiene gran influencia en la literatura de la región. La versión española que entrega Morejón de su poemario Fastos (2002), se presenta como un libro escrito por dos poetas provenientes de dos tradiciones literarias distintas; sin embargo, deja constancia de un proceso que busca fortalecer los tendones de un imaginario caribeño, nutrido de elementos culturales africanos a menudo ignorados por los discursos hegemónicos. El análisis de este poemario que aquí propongo no busca una comparación entre el original y su traducción, sino más bien discutir los procesos del lenguaje en transición, a partir...
de algunas reflexiones del mismo Glissant, como las relativas al traspaso de lo oral a lo escrito.

**La traducción en teoría: contextualización y ubicación en el Caribe**

Autonomía, equivalencia y función son tres grandes esferas que establecen los típicos marcos para los estudios de la traducción. Según el traductólogo Lawrence Venuti, la historia de una teoría de la traducción puede ser “imaginada” en términos de las relaciones que cambian entre estas tres categorías (2012, p. 5). Mientras la primera categoría refiere a los factores que distinguen una traducción de su original y de otros textos pertenecientes a la lengua meta, la segunda concede espacio para explorar los límites de la simetría entre ambas obras, generalmente a través de comprobar su precisión o su fidelidad. La tercera se centra más profundamente en los elementos socioculturales, puesto que mide los efectos potenciales de una traducción, tanto en la lengua desde la que se traduce, como en la de destino. Venuti señala que:

> Yet the effects of translation are also social, and they have been harnessed to cultural, economic, and political agendas: evangelical programs, commercial ventures, colonial projects, and social activism, as well as the development of languages, national literatures, and avant-garde literary movements. Function is a variable notion of how the translated text is connected to the receiving language and culture. (2012, p. 5)

En este ámbito de la función entran en juego relaciones de poder, porque la traducción tiene un papel político, social o personal en la sociedad de destino. Frecuentemente se asocia este papel con la producción de sentido del texto que es traducido, lo que en términos prácticos de ciertos oficios desvinculados a las artes, tiene lógica, pero que cuando se trata de la literatura, corre el riesgo de reducir la obra a un estatus de utilidad. Para Walter Benjamin, este traspaso de sentido con un propósito de aprehender algo de una lengua y cultura extranjeras, es la marca de una mala traducción, y nunca logrará representar más que un mero mensaje (1923/1971, p. 128). Aunque Benjamin escribía hace casi un siglo, sus reflexiones en torno a la traducción siguen siendo pertinentes en una época obsesionada con el consumo de información y signos efímeros.

El crítico alemán veía la traducción como una forma de arte que claramente depende de otra obra original, pero cuya premisa es la alteración de
ella. Cuando habla de traducibilidad, renuncia a la posibilidad de reproducir de manera completamente fiel un texto literario en un idioma distinto a su original. Según Benjamin, “puede demostrarse que ninguna traducción sería posible si su aspiración suprema fuera la semejanza con el original” (1923/1971, p. 132). Lo que quiere decir que no existe mimesis, sino transformación y reescritura. Esta idea se justifica a partir de lo siguiente: “Porque en su supervivencia –que no debería llamarse así de no significar la evolución y la renovación por qué pasan todas las cosas vivas– el original se modifica” (1923/1971, p. 132). Esta perspectiva le otorga una suerte de espiritualidad a la obra de arte: para Benjamin, la traducción representa una sobrevivencia o ultratumba de la obra original.¹ El texto traducido no se desvincula nunca de su original, pero tiene que asumir cierto grado de autonomía, respondiendo a los códigos lingüísticos y culturales de una lengua distinta a la que dio las bases para su producción original. Por eso, el traductor intermedia o negocia entre dos polos lingüísticos y culturales, un papel que exige no sólo un profundo conocimiento de las lenguas con las cuales trabaja, sino que también un alto nivel de ética.

Críticos literarios más contemporáneos como Edward Said y Gayatri Spivak, entre otros, han insistido en el peso ideológico que implica trascender cualquier texto a una lengua de dominio mundial, como es el caso del inglés estándar. Para Spivak, la traducción tiene un aspecto fundamentalmente político, sobre todo cuando se trata de relaciones entre países colonizados y los grandes centros metropolitanos. En ese contexto, identifica que existe una tendencia facilista al traducir que reorganiza la lengua original, simplificando el texto para suscribirse a los códigos y normas de la lengua meta (2012, pp. 314-315). Así, no sólo se pierden elementos estéticos (la musicalidad de la palabra, el sentido del humor, intertextualidades, etc.), sino que se refuerza la visión hegemónica del mundo que proyecta esa lengua y cultura dominantes, pues significa conquistar a lo ajeno (o al Otro) para moldearlo a una forma de comprensión cómoda sin ningún sentido de extrañeza. Y es que para Spivak, este tipo de traducción, que denomina sin equívocos neocolonial, sostiene las relaciones asimétricas de poder simbólico y material, incluso cuando se trata de ciertos grupos o movimientos subalternos, como el feminismo (2012, p.

¹ En la traducción española que he podido revisar del texto “La tarea del traductor”, se omite esta idea de ultratumba (Überleben), poniendo todo énfasis en la noción de sobrevivencia (para una comparación con la traducción al inglés y la palabra alemana, véase Venuti, 2012, p. 71).
Estas reflexiones son importantes al considerar el lugar desde dónde uno traduce y ayuda a situar el debate en el Caribe, cuya historia y situación actual han sido atravesadas por empresas coloniales y neocoloniales, constructoras de sistemas sociales altamente estratificados a partir de la clase, raza y género, entre otras categorías. Tales condiciones hacen que traducir en, desde o hacia el Caribe se presente como un ejercicio complejo cuya potencialidad no ha sido plenamente reconocida ni realizada.

La traducción literaria dentro del Caribe ya tiene una larga trayectoria y ha favorecido el intercambio de ideas y propuestas políticas al interior de la producción intelectual caribeña, como ocurrió, por ejemplo, al interior del movimiento de la negritud en los años treinta y cuarenta. Un caso emblemático de ese período lo constituye la primera traducción al castellano que se hace del *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal*, el influyente poema escrito por Aimé Césaire (1913-2008). Publicado por primera vez en 1939 en la revista *Volontés* en París, el poema luego pasa por las manos de la etnóloga y escritora cubana Lydia Cabrera (1899-1991), quien publica su versión al castellano en 1943, acompañada de dibujos del pintor cubano Wifredo Lam (Maguire, 2013, p. 126).

Sobre este primer acercamiento a la obra del poeta martiniqueño desde el mundo hispano, la traductora cubana Lourdes Arencibia Rodríguez argumenta que, a pesar de los diversos elementos “mejorables”, la traducción coincide con el original al revelar una misma visión de lo antillano, alimentada por el compromiso de ambos escritores con el rescate de la identidad y la cultura del negro (2007, p. 103). Concluye que no es,

Nada casual entonces que los ritmos cadenciosos o frenéticos, por ejemplo de un quindembo, baile congo que se interpreta al son de tres tambores: yuca, mula y caja parecido al del tam tam ancestral del mundo onírico de los orishas, el monte y los patakines, que tienen una presencia tan fuerte en la propuesta de la Cabrera, se interpenetren y se fundan en un pentagrama a la vez conjugal e infiel con las estrofas apocalípticas de Césaire habitadas por el correr de agua despeñada de los montes sagrados, los gritos de los

---

2 No existe claridad sobre el título original que elige Cabrera en esa primera traducción que Arencibia Rodríguez describe como “inencontrable” hoy (2007, p. 106). Tampoco hay consenso sobre la fecha de su publicación: según Arencibia Rodríguez se publica en 1945, mientras Maguire y otras fuentes consultadas lo datan en 1943. Pese a esa incertidumbre, versiones posteriores han optado por una traducción del título bastante literal: *Cuaderno de un retorno al país natal*. 
Animales, los quejidos del viento en una misma y otra manigua antillana. (2007, p. 110)

Lo inextricable del poema de Césaire no pasa por la semántica, el ritmo ni la música, más bien se trata del mensaje de revalorizar al negro, que en la Cuba prerrevolucionaria, donde la segregación racial era práctica común, resulta ser nuevo, radical y trascendental. Versos como “La negrada oliente a cebolla frita encuentra en su sangre derramada el sabor amargo de la libertad” y el ya clásico “Está de pie la negrada” (Césaire, 1969, p. 46), lanzan fuertes imágenes de reivindicación para los pueblos negros antillanos. La traducción al castellano hace posible que Cuba fuera parte de ese proceso de reivindicación, o por lo menos que los lectores se reconocieran y se identificaran dentro del texto poético. Sin embargo, esos planteamientos no sugieren que todos los lectores tienen que ser negros para relacionarse con el texto, sino reconocer elementos de una historia en común —ciertamente, la traductora no era negra. El ejemplo de la traducción de Césaire no sólo pone en evidencia una estrategia para abrir la literatura caribeña hacia las distintas lenguas habladas en la región, sino que también revela el intento de generar un canon literario del Caribe —y en cierta medida de América Latina— que responde a problemáticas más pertinentes a las realidades socioculturales que se enfrentan en esta parte del mundo.

Articular las piezas de un campo fragmentado: Morejón y el reto de traducir el Caribe

Desde su ubicación en Cuba, Nancy Morejón se ha embarcado en el proyecto de traducir otros poetas del Caribe francófono. El hecho de que tanto la traductora como los autores pertenezcan a una misma región geográfica y que compartan marcas identitarias —todos son afrodescendientes—, establece desde un comienzo relaciones más horizontales entre ambos lados del texto, y posiblemente facilita o fomenta una toma de posición ética de parte de Morejón. Entre los autores que la poeta ha traducido se cuentan los ya mencionados Césaire, y Glissant, además de su compatriota Nicole-Cage

3 Aunque la versión citada sea del poeta chileno Enrique Lihn, según Arencibia Rodríguez, la traducción está hecha encima de lo que ya había realizado Cabrera y no se aprecian muchos cambios. Ambas traducciones son de versiones aún incompletas del poema (Arencibia Rodríguez, 2007, p. 106).
Florentiny (1965), los haitianos Jacques Roumain (1907-1944), Paul Lara-que (1920-2007) y René Depestre (1926) y el guadalupeño Ernest Pépin (1950) —todas las traducciones son de poesía—. El cargo institucional que Morejón ocupa como Presidenta de la Asociación de Escritores de la Unión de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba (UNEAC), además de ser Premio Nacional de Literatura de 2001, entre una larga lista de otros reconocimientos dentro y fuera de la isla, influye en las plataformas con las cuales cuenta para realizar sus propias traducciones o gestionar otras.

Morejón empieza a traducir seriamente al darse cuenta de la escasez de obras disponibles en lenguas extranjeras en la Cuba de los años sesenta, justo en el marco del reciente triunfo de la Revolución Cubana. Relata su primer contacto con la poesía del Caribe francófono de la siguiente manera:

Césaire llega a mi vida precisamente a través de Frantz Fanon, quien había llegado a la nuestra gracias a la gestión de Ernesto Che Guevara, donde publicó Los condenados de la tierra. […] Yo descubro así esa poesía: se empieza a organizar el Encuentro Cultural de La Habana, viene Césaire, y yo le digo que estoy escribiendo mi tesis universitaria sobre su obra. Entonces, descubrimos —no sólo yo, sino un montón de personas— la pertenencia de Cuba al Tercer Mundo, la pertenencia de Cuba al Caribe… Y, desde ahí, comenzaron mis labores como traductora. (Morejón, 2002b, p. 23)

Esta cita demuestra los matices políticos de la traducción intercaribeña y, en una escala mayor, el intercambio de ideas entre autores del llamado Tercer Mundo, a pesar de barreras lingüísticas. A diferencia de tantos intelectuales y escritores caribeños como los mismos Fanon (1925-1961) y Césaire o los barbadenses Kamau Brathwaite (1930) y George Lamming (1927), cuyas conciencias políticas cambian a partir de los viajes que realizan a la metrópolis, Morejón toma contacto con ideas semejantes sin salir de Cuba. Tanto el contexto revolucionario como la traducción le permiten abrir un diálogo con las ideas anticoloniales que empiezan a tomar vuelo en los años sesenta y posibilitan ampliar la conciencia de raza y clase, entre otras divisiones tradicionales de poder.

Un factor de suma importancia que complica cualquier teoría de la traducción en el Caribe es el papel que juega la expresión oral, sobre todo en los países no hispanos donde han surgido lenguas criollas, consideradas de
uso popular. Esta diferenciación de la lengua problematiza la traducción de literatura caribeña al castellano, que no cuenta con variantes del *créole*, salvo en casos aislados como el palenque en Colombia. Sin embargo, como señala Arencibia Rodríguez,

la inserción de voces en *créole*, inglés y francés en los textos en español adquiere un significado particular porque contribuye a enraizar los relatos en la cuenca antillana y a hacer de la multiplicidad lingüística y de la fragmentación cultural de la región heredada del colonialismo, un tema subyacente en los intertextos. (2001, párr. 16)

Es decir, la presencia de tantas lenguas distintas en un mismo espacio geográfico termina alterando las mismas, haciendo que la lengua sea un escenario capaz de manifestar conflictos históricos, como la colonización y la esclavitud, o circunstancias sociales actuales, como las migraciones entre países del Caribe u otras regiones del continente. Por eso, Arencibia Rodríguez considera que la tarea del traductor en el Caribe exige investigar las relaciones entre la historia oral y la escrita (2001, párr. 20).

En un estudio que examina la traducción como estrategia de resistencia en la obra de cuatro poetas mapuche, el académico chileno Rodrigo Rojas utiliza el concepto de “mentes biculturales” para describir un tipo de pensamiento dual que se desarrolla bajo condiciones de colonialismo o en las sociedades poscoloniales (Rojas, 2009, pp. 19-20). Para Rojas, una “mente bicultural” supera la conceptualización de bilingüismo, acercándose a lo que el crítico argentino Walter Mignolo ha denominado bilingualismo (*bilanguaging*). Este neologismo “alude a comunidades que habitan un espacio entre dos culturas y cuya lengua, más que un idioma, se ha transformado en una forma de vida. En palabras de Mignolo, es un momento en que la lengua viva se transforma en un modo de vivir” (Rojas, 2009, p. 22).

Aunque Rojas centra su trabajo en las obras de poetas mapuche, examinando las tensiones que recrean entre el castellano (lengua dominante) y el mapudungun (lengua originaria), las reflexiones dibujan paralelos con las distintas formas de diglosia que se manifiestan en el Caribe. Por un lado,

existen tensiones entre el uso de las lenguas europeas y las criollas, sujetas a discriminación en espacios como la escuela, el trabajo y hasta hace muy poco en la literatura como consecuencia del sistema de valores coloniales. Por otro lado, en un país como Puerto Rico, el uso del castellano representa cierto gesto de resistencia ante la avasalladora influencia cultural estadounidense, en vista de la prolongada intervención militar y económica de esta última desde comienzos del siglo XX. Otro caso, casi inverso al anterior, también se puede observar en las costas atlánticas de Centroamérica, a donde en el siglo XIX llegaron en masa grupos de obreros principalmente del Caribe anglofono; hoy la mayor parte de la población de esa costa es afrodescendiente y el uso del inglés créole (o broken English, como suele llamarse) constituye una forma de mantener viva sus raíces culturales.

El bilingüismo y la diglosia en el Caribe son factores que evidencian la presencia constante de la traducción fuera del ámbito literario pero cuya influencia no puede ser pasada por alto en las letras escritas. Desde esta perspectiva, la poesía del Caribe francófono que traduce Morejón es el producto de autores que se mueven y piensan, al menos, entre dos lenguas y dos culturas. De modo que esa poesía ya estaría sujeta a un tipo de traducción interna antes de que Morejón realice su traducción textual al castellano. Esto también tiene implicancias para la misma poesía que escribe Morejón, ya que es una poeta que habla varios idiomas. ¿Cómo influye esta coexistencia de lenguas y culturas en la traducción literaria? ¿Qué tiene que asumir el/la traductor/a cuando intermedia diálogos entre dos o más de estas culturas? Édouard Glissant pareciera esbozar una respuesta tentativa cuando afirma que traspasar textos de una lengua a otra implica necesariamente reconocer las particularidades de todas las lenguas del mundo y sus relaciones, incluso si aparentemente no interactúan (1999, p. 121). De esta forma, plantea que el espacio donde se interpenetran dos lenguas genera relaciones impredecibles que pueden resultar en nuevas sensibilidades (Hantel, 2013, p. 110). Aunque son muy pocos los textos donde Glissant se refiere directamente a la traducción, su interpretación cultural de la lengua, sobre todo en contextos coloniales, proporciona perspectivas a menudo pasadas por alto en los estudios de esta índole.

5 Además del francés, Morejón habla inglés, idioma que aprendió en la niñez, aunque su labor de traducción no considera muchas obras de autores anglofonos.
Del grito a la escritura y del francés al castellano: la poesía de Glissant en traducción

Gran parte del trabajo teórico de Glissant se concentra en las tensiones entre la oralidad y la escritura en las sociedades antillanas, manifestando la necesidad de unir ambas esferas como una manera de liberar el imaginario y la conciencia. En ese afán, conceptualiza la acción de gritar para explicar cómo surge el créole martiniqueño, relacionando el grito a una estrategia que los africanos esclavizados usaban para comunicarse sin que los amos entendieran. Sostiene que “Desde un inicio (es decir, desde el momento en que el créole se forjó como término medio entre el esclavo y el amo), el grito impuso al esclavo su sintaxis particular. Para el antillano, la palabra es ante todo sonido. El ruido es palabra. El estrépito es discurso” (1981/2005, p. 263). Así, para Glissant el grito forma parte del proceso histórico en que los esclavos fueron obligados a reinventar un lenguaje: se transforma en un código a partir del volumen y la rapidez del sonido, disfrazado de estallidos de expresión y un aparente sinsentido. Como un elemento decisivo de la tradición oral, el grito resiste ser traspasado a lo escrito, un plano que Glissant llama el “universo mudo”, pues la escritura se caractériza típicamente por el silencio y la inmovilidad, un escenario donde “la voz y el cuerpo son la continuación de una carencia” (1981/2005, p. 263). Esto es clave para Glissant, quien afirma tajantemente que “la palabra antillana sólo tendrá continuidad como tal en lo escrito, a partir del lugar donde se enuncie esa carencia” (1981/2005, p. 263). ¿Cómo, entonces, dar cuenta de esa carencia sin explicitarla, pensando sobre todo en la escritura que reproduce lo hablado? Quizás no se trata de producir una mímesis de la lengua hablada, sino de reconocer que la escritura no puede operar al mismo nivel y ocupar ese espacio de entremedio como un lugar de enunciación.

La poesía de Glissant refleja sus teorías desde otro registro que trata de poner en práctica las mismas. En su poemario Fastos, la traducción al castellano permite que un público hispanohablante se acerque a su pensamiento a través de la recreación de un lenguaje poético que además evidencia varios tipos de traducción, como el reto de trasplantar una expresión oral a la escritura. Fastos se ordena en una serie de 65 poemas, cada uno hecho de una

---

6 Debo enfatizar que el propósito del presente análisis no es comparar el original con su traducción, sino más bien discutir el poema traducido al castellano desde una perspectiva literaria y las implicancias que tiene para los diálogos intercaribeños.
Diálogos turbulentos

estrofa con cuatro versos, además de una presentación escrita en prosa. El contenido aborda una diversidad de temas y geografías, anunciado primero en el título de cada texto, que tiende a ser nombres de lugares, desde barrios populares de Martinica hasta la Gran Muralla China, ciudades en la antigua Yugoslavia y un templo en Perú, entre otros. El concepto del grito cobra relevancia en niveles textuales y conceptuales, haciendo eco a otro tipo de comunicación: el diálogo, intercambio que se ve multiplicado al ser traducido a otro idioma. En el primer texto del libro, titulado “Presentación”, queda expuesta esta intención:

Conceder al elogio una geografía subterránea, de donde no se borren las rupturas... Recordarles a los videntes y a los moradores que se reconozcan entre sí...

Mi tiempo se ha prendido a sus imágenes: comarcas y bosques que me han llamado desde lejos, arenas por donde anduve errante.

Ofrecerles una correspondencia de lenguaje y de oscuridad, por donde perdure, en un todo, lo imprevisto de la palabra: como un espejo que agrandara sus lunas, sobre sombras siempre esculpidas. (2002, p. 49)

Con estas palabras, Glissant y Morejón como la traductora manifiestan intenciones de proyectar la palabra antillana en la escritura, que incluso podría expandirla. El movimiento de esta escritura desde el grito al francés escrito y luego al castellano, busca evocar la espontaneidad del lenguaje, y la traducción posibilita aún más el movimiento del texto.

Aunque la mayoría de los poemas no intenten reproducir lo hablado, algunos insertan frases del habla cotidiana con sutiles guiños políticos. Por ejemplo, en “La Palun”, sitio de una antigua plantación en Martinica, se intercambian distintas voces que bien podrían ser de sujetos históricos que pasaron por la plantación: “Silla de montar y brida son mi legítima propiedad”, dice un verso, y otro reza: “Al molino en donde ustedes acechan la Cifra de Oro” (p. 57). Sin atribuirles identificación a quienes hablan, estas exclamaciones captan posibles frases sueltas de un dueño de plantación, que habla de su “legítima propiedad” y un esclavo consciente de su propia explotación que produce una “Cifra de Oro”. Sin embargo, las frases son ambiguas y es posible que pertenezcan a otros sujetos. Lo que este texto logra es juntar fragmentos a través del nombre de un lugar y voces cruzadas en un mismo espacio que evoca un carácter espectral. Aquí hay resonancias de lo dicho (el grito), pero se contienen en la palabra escrita, sin cuerpo para emitirlo.
Otro poema donde se evidencia este tipo de resonancias es “Terres Sainville”, el nombre de un barrio popular de Fort-de-France. Aquí no se reúnen voces, sino pequeñas fotografías de la pobreza del lugar:

–La equidistancia está alquilada por ciclones
–Las chozas en un caos se extienden sobre el lodazal
–El maestro de latín yace en alpaca blanca
–Una niña enloquece en la recurva del canal

Sin articular una narrativa sobre el barrio, el poema capta su ambiente físico y social, el cual podría asociarse a cualquier barrio pobre del Caribe. Aunque no esté el original en francés para comparar estos versos, la traducción que proporciona Morejón amplía las posibilidades de lectura del texto, entregando a los lectores hispanohablantes la oportunidad de reconocersemejanzas entre lo descrito en el poema y su propia realidad o una más cercana, y así corroer la extrañeza de una experiencia caribeña de habla francesa.

Otros elementos de la traducción —quizás los más evidentes— que revelan vínculos entre los diversos pueblos caribeños son las imágenes de la historia y memorias afrodescendientes. Dos poemas ejemplares que indagan en esas imágenes son “Gorée” y “Cascadas”. En el primero el hablante dice:

Halen, hermanos, halen la tempestad más alta
Nunca retornaremos al tragaluz alucinado
Nuestros cuerpos no pulirán jamás la arena negra
Al menos soñamos más allá de la franja de espumas. (p. 54)

La isla de Gorée, frente al actual Senegal, operaba entre el siglo XVII y el XIX como un lugar de paso para muchos africanos esclavizados en su travesía a América. Invocar esa isla-cárcel implica un ejercicio de recordar y recrear ambientes de la trata, articulando momentos del pasado que apelan a una memoria afectiva y traumática. Los versos aquí combinan la afirmación y la negación: por un lado invocan una acción positiva a través de “halar” la tempestad y de soñar más allá de una frontera hecha por el mar, pero por otro lado, rechazan volver a ese estado de deshumanización que fue la esclavitud. Utilizando pocas palabras, el poema logra recrear ambientes como el barco negrero con su “tragaluz alucinado”, que proporciona la única forma de ver dentro de las cámaras oscuras de los barcos. El poema “Cascadas” funciona con una lógica parecida pero con citas menos explícitas:
Desde lo más estrecho del subterráneo se aglutinó la espuma
Nos mantenemos en la demencia esparcida de eternidad
Firmes para apresar el sitio, la espiga: memorias de agua.
Cuando despertamos, el sol se duerme. (p. 55)

Empezando desde un sitio subterráneo, el poema circula para terminar
en la noche, momento en que el hablante sugiere que desenvuelve sus activi-
dades cotidianas. Más allá de invertir el orden normal del día, el último verso
parece remitir a la jornada laboral de muchos esclavos de campo, e incluso a
horarios laborales en la actualidad. La toma de posición de un nosotros es
también particularmente significativa. Al respecto, Glissant señala que “la
repetición incesante del discurso es la medida de un Nosotros” (1981/2005,
p. 281). Acaso por eso la estructura repetitiva de los poemas a lo largo del
libro es el martillo de la insistencia para desarrollar un discurso que habla
desde la unidad plural de un grupo; una estética que se asemeja a la geografía
de las Antillas, islas que se repiten, al decir de Antonio Benítez-Rojo. Un
guiño a esta idea aparece en el primer poema del volumen donde “Grita la
multitud” (p. 51). El mismo proceso de traducción refleja esa idea, oscure-
ciendo las autorías, haciéndolas más opacas.

Al evocar imágenes verosímiles de la esclavitud, estos poemas y otros
muchos incluidos en el volumen revelan la necesidad de recordar traumas de
dese doloroso capítulo de la diáspora africana. Hay una articulación histórica
en los poemas pero no apunta a reescribir la historia sino a la constitución
memorística de un pasado que carece de conocimiento, debido tanto a la falta
de fuentes concretas como a borramientos interesados y sistemáticos. Bajo
condiciones tan extremas, el traspaso oral constituye un elemento imprescín-
dible para crear memoria y cultura, tal como la traducción de los poemas del
francés al castellano hace posible el diálogo entre diversos pueblos que han
vivido experiencias semejantes.

Glissant pone límites a la palabra escrita porque la considera cómplice
de la empresa colonial, pero él mismo la utiliza como un medio legítimo
para expresarse y comunicarse. Quizás por eso afirma lo siguiente: “(Dejar
el grito, forjar la palabra. No es renunciar a lo imaginario ni a las potencias
subterráneas, es asumir una duración nueva, anclada en el surgimiento de los
pueblos.)” (1981/2005, p. 27). Se hace imposible negar las semejanzas de
estas afirmaciones con el proceso de transculturación, concepto inaugurado
en 1940 por el cubano Fernando Ortiz para explicar cómo surgen nuevos
conjuntos culturales a partir del contacto entre dos o más culturas.\textsuperscript{7} Tanto la transculturación como la traducción son maneras de aceptar la presencia de la heterogeneidad cultural o lingüística y negociarla hasta crear nuevos sentidos a partir de ella, sin anular las raíces de cada elemento integrante. Ambos procesos involucran luchas, pero también diálogos constructivos, y establecer su vínculo ayuda a concebir la traducción no como un simple traspaso fijado entre dos objetos lingüísticos, sino como un resultado altamente influido por el mismo proceso de traspaso. Este tránsito entre dos o más fuerzas nunca es lineal, sino más bien explosivo.

Llama la atención que la versión de Morejón no incluye el francés original de Glissant, haciendo imposible la comparación entre traducción y original. Esta decisión bien podría habér estado más influida por la carencia de recursos materiales en Cuba —entre ellos, el papel— que por una propuesta literaria. Sin embargo, este contexto evidencia cómo el rol del traductor se vuelve esencial, pues el público lector se ve obligado a confiar en sus interpretaciones y en las formas en que decide recrearlo en la lengua a la que se traduce. Además, el texto solo en castellano refleja lo que Benjamin llama la “sobrevivencia” o “ultratumba” de una obra, porque se lee como un texto autónomo, aunque vinculado siempre al original. Las versiones de Morejón, cuya propia obra poética goza de una importante trayectoria, le entrega a los poemas de Glissant otra duración, otra vida, otra resonancia y significación para los lectores hispanohablantes. De hecho, su escasa intervención a través de notas explicativas a pie de página corrobora esta afirmación.\textsuperscript{8}

En su nota final del libro, Morejón escribe que descubrió “revelaciones de un mundo antillano que hasta ese momento había sido relegado al desconocimiento o, lo que es peor, al olvido” (2002a, p. 79). También señala que

\textsuperscript{7} Aunque Ortiz originalmente toma el caso de Cuba con los factores hispano y africano, la transculturación es un fenómeno compartido en todas las sociedades latinoamericanas.

\textsuperscript{8} Sólo incluye tres notas a pie de página, siempre con la indicación, “N. de la T.”, como un sutil recuerdo del género a que pertenece su voz. Cabe señalar que esto presenta un cambio desde la traducción que hizo del poemaario \textit{Remolino de palabras libres} (1991), del guadalupeno Ernest Pépin, donde las notas aparecen como “N. del T.”. Sin embargo, las notas de ese libro tampoco intervienen de manera notoria en el texto; al contrario, sirven con el propósito de explicar ciertas referencias a elementos culturales afrocaribeños, como el \textit{créole}, o africanas, como la figura del \textit{griot}, una especie de músico y poeta ambulante en la costa oeste de África. Así, en vez de utilizar las notas para explicar lo que no se pudo traducir, el gesto de Morejón enriquece la lectura desde un punto de vista educativo que enfatiza las raíces africanas de los distintos pueblos caribeños.
mientras traducía pudo “reconocer contextos, paisajes, sonoridades y, sobre todo, una memoria más que conocida, compartida” (2002a, p. 79). Son esos puntos precisamente los que ejemplifican las experiencias desconocidas pero cercanas que existen en el Caribe a partir de un pasado y elementos culturales compartidos. En la medida en que la traducción deja de funcionar como herramienta para entender el mundo extranjero y se inscribe en un proceso de construir conciencia, tanto de lo ajeno como de lo propio, se revelará cada vez más como una estrategia imprescindible para combatir las herencias coloniales que pesan en las sociedades caribeñas y latinoamericanas en general. El caso del trabajo de Morejón con la obra de Glissant forma parte de un diálogo turbulento pero necesario, que socava fronteras lingüísticas y pone en relación la palabra sin saber con seguridad el resultado.

A modo de conclusión

El hecho de que tres de los idiomas oficiales hablados en el Caribe sean algunos de los más influyentes en el mundo evidencia la complejidad para traducir en la región, ya que los lenguajes populares no encajan dentro de los sistemas lingüísticos oficiales de esas lenguas. También demuestra que la traducción no es un mero ejercicio lingüístico y que reclama hondo conocimiento de las culturas que están siendo mediadas. En este trabajo he tomado la decisión de no adentrarme en una comparación entre los textos originales y sus traducciones, sino más bien plantear las diferencias de lengua como un problema vigente dentro de las letras y sociedades del Caribe. En cualquier traducción, existe una negociación entre la ética del traductor y la confianza del lector. En este caso, sin el original del francés al lado de su versión en castellano, tal relación se intensifica, presentando un problema de traducción que no se puede resolver aquí. Aunque hubiese sido oportuno consultar el original, la imposibilidad de acceder a él refleja cómo las divisiones lingüísticas de nuestra América se vuelven fronteras reales que desincentivan la comunicación, reforzando la necesidad de producir más traducciones entre autores que abordan problemáticas compartidas a lo largo del continente.

Ahora bien, una traducción intercaribeña no asegura siempre una versión más fiel o legítima de una obra. Influyen demasiados factores, incluyendo el manejo de la lengua del traductor, cómo escribe en su lengua materna, si los fines de la traducción son comerciales o no, las diferencias de sexo o sexualidad del autor y traductor, entre muchos más. Estos temas y otros
afines requieren mayor atención y desarrollo para problematizar la traducción intercaribeña. En este artículo he esbozado la potencia de un proyecto amplio que busca desarmar las fronteras impuestas por los antiguos poderes coloniales y dejar ver los procesos histórico-culturales comunes sin anular las diferencias de cada experiencia particular. Algunos de los elementos compartidos incluyen la herencia africana, tanto sanguínea como cultural, memorias de trauma obliterateadas y sociedades fragmentadas por sistemas jerárquicos racionalizados. El caso específico de Morejón se enmarca en este campo cultural y permite ilustrar cómo la traducción de autores caribeños de otras lenguas ha fortalecido su sentido de pertenencia al Caribe. Mientras las sociedades latinoamericanas no sean polilingüistas, la traducción será una herramienta fundamental para el proyecto de conocernos como americanos en el amplio sentido de la palabra, y los estudios sobre sus características políticas, éticas y estéticas seguirán teniendo carácter de urgencia.
REFERENCIAS


Abstract

El viaje cartográfico del teniente William H. Armstrong. Puerto Rico 1908-1912 is the first paleographic bilingual edition (English-Spanish) of the ten extant field books delivered to the War Department by Lieutenant Armstrong, cartographer in the US Army Porto Rico Regiment of Infantry. This essay dwells in the map of complex tasks faced by translators and editors in the unfolding of this project, which resulted in textual and conceptual grids of cartography, colonization, and translation. The cartographic tales represented in El viaje cartográfico move between Puerto Rico and the United States, between colonizer and colonized-to-be subjects, between visual and textual planes, and between military, religious, commercial, and natural early twentieth- and twenty-first century historical registers. This study shows how the transdisciplinary circulation of knowledge deployed by the translation throws a wrench in Armstrong’s original military colonizing agenda.

Keywords: translation, decolonization, cartography, Puerto Rico, William H. Armstrong

Resumen

El viaje cartográfico del teniente William H. Armstrong. Puerto Rico 1908-1912 es la primera edición paleográfica bilingüe (inglés-español) de los diez cuadernos de notas de campo entregados al Departamento de Guerra por el teniente Armstrong, cartógrafo del Regimiento de Infantería del Ejército de Tierra de los Estados Unidos. Este ensayo analiza el complejo mapa de trabajos llevados a cabo por traductores y editores en el proceso
de producción de esta edición, los cuales resultaron en marcos textuales y conceptuales determinados por principios de cartografía, colonización y traducción. Los relatos cartográficos representados en *El viaje cartográfico* recorren las geografías de Puerto Rico y los Estados Unidos, los sujetos del colonizador y los futuros colonizados, así como planos visuales y textuales, y registros históricos militares, religiosos, comerciales y naturales de principios de los siglos XX y XXI. Este estudio muestra cómo la circulación de saberes transdisciplinarios articulados por los traductores entorpecen la agenda militar y colonizadora original de Armstrong.

**Palabras clave:** traducción, decolonización, cartografía, Puerto Rico, William H. Armstrong
The forthcoming publication *Puerto Rico 1908–1912. El viaje cartográfico del teniente William H. Armstrong* is the first paleographic bilingual (English–Spanish) edition of the ten extant field notebooks, titled *Books*, delivered to the War Department by Lieutenant Armstrong, cartographer in the US Army Porto Rico Regiment of Infantry.¹ The mission Armstrong was given constituted one piece of a larger puzzle: to compile all the necessary data about the island in order for the cartographers in Washington to put together the *Progressive Military Map of the United States Division: Porto Rico*. Armstrong’s *Books*, translated into Spanish as *Bitácoras* due to their liaison with processes and products of navigation that shall be discussed in brief, are included in the forthcoming publication *Puerto Rico (1908–1912)*, a project for which Aurora Lauzardo and I served as lead translators. For this edition, the editors added Lt. Louis Emmanuelli’s *15 Road Reports* to Armstrong’s *Books*; Emmanuelli composed the short text that completes in geographic terms the island tour started by Armstrong.² Lanny Thompson’s

¹ This project was sponsored by the Centro de Investigaciones Históricas at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras (UPRRP), Ediciones Puerto, and the Historiador Oficial de Puerto Rico. About half of the translation work took place between 2009-2012 in the Graduate Program in Translation at UPR-RP; the remaining translation rounds and the editing were done between 2012-2014 between UPR-RP and Emory University and Spelman College in Atlanta. In 2017, the year this project was to be completed, the publication process came to a halt, as Ediciones Puerto and UPRRP suffered substantial damage. A year later, work has resumed, and the release of the two-volume edition is tentatively scheduled for 2019.

² Emmanuelli’s *15 Road Reports* portray the townships of Gurabo, Humacao, Naguabo, Fajardo, Luquillo, Loíza, and Río Piedras, among other places. Armstrong’s sequence for the *Books* does not correspond with the cataloguing numbers of the Colección Puertorriqueña of the Biblioteca Lázaro, UPR–RP’s main library. The table of contents of *Puerto Rico (1908–1912)* includes the sequencing data assigned to both the *Books* and the *Bitácoras* throughout their textual journey.

---

*—Octavio Paz, Traducción: literatura y literalidad (1971)*
introduction to *Puerto Rico (1908–1912)*, titled “Un cartógrafo de espacios coloniales,” analyzes the significant contribution that Armstrong and Emmanuelli made with their respective *Books* and *Reports* to better understand the monumental context of predatory expansion and colonization in which they lived and wrote.

As Thompson’s study reveals, this context was significantly marked by the imposition of Manifest Destiny and the Monroe Doctrine in the Caribbean. In Puerto Rico, these mores resulted in the island becoming a source of cheap labor and the industrial production of cane for sugar, as well as numerous changes highly favorable to US capitalist expansion; these included, but were certainly not limited to, the island’s acquisition of strategic significance as a naval outpost (along the lines of what Alfred Thayer Mahan’s termed “sea power”), the imposition of symbolic strictures such as the US flag, compulsory use of English as a language of instruction, and the production and reproduction of historical texts about this colonial outpost in the metropolis.³

As our translation project unfolded, this set of variables led to the map of complex tasks faced by translators and editors traced in the “Prefacio a la traducción,” which is situated right before Thompson’s study. Such tasks resulted in the textual and conceptual grids of cartography, colonization, and translation considered here. These grids, following André Lefevre’s terms, are superstructures foreign to the original space of a map or original language of a translation; mapmaker and translator must align these structures with their originals, in order to bridge the cultures of the original space or language to be represented / translated, and so their final product (map or translation) makes sense (75–78). The transitional context that characterized Puerto Rico in the first years of the twentieth century, which traveled between the metropolitan rule of Spain and that of the United States, and between these two Western axes and the liminal space of non-Westernhood frequently ascribed to the Caribbean colonial territories, was the soil upon which Armstrong’s *Books* and Emmanuelli’s *Reports* planted their seed and took root. Lefevere’s reading of how translators “compose the other” in texts that move between Western and non-Western spells out one of the key critical issues faced by the translator in *Puerto Rico (1908–1912)*:

---

³ Thompson’s extensive bibliography includes historical, sociological, and cultural studies, as well as archival materials, such as newspaper entries and governmental maps and documents. Readers unfamiliar with this context can consult César Ayala and Rafael Bernabé’s *Puerto Rico in the American Century*. 
Problems in translating are caused at least as much by discrepancies in conceptual and textual grids as by discrepancies in languages. This fact, which may be obscured to some extent in the process of translating between languages that belong to Western cultures (and most thinking and writing on translation, having been done in the West, relies on this kind of translating), becomes blatantly obvious when we are faced with the problem of translating texts from Western to non-Western cultures, and vice versa. (76-77)

Indeed, the tales represented in *Puerto Rico (1908-1912)* move between Puerto Rico and the United States, between Spanish and English, and the colonizer and the colonized, between the visual and the textual, and between the military and the religious, and the commercial, and the natural, and the local, as well as through the negotiations of all of these pendular movements referring to, and dating from, specific historical registers between the early twentieth- and early twenty-first centuries. These referential shifts entailed a host of research rounds and ensuing executive decisions in the editing and translation processes, and they led the project to evolve from a solo flight by a single translator to a collaborative endeavor undertaken by an ever-evolving group of scholars and students with backgrounds in various academic disciplines.⁴ The circulation of knowledge about cartography, colonization, Puerto Rico, and the United States in the form of a transdisciplinary perspective throws a wrench in the military colonizing agenda driving Armstrong, and it helps to reframe the original text of his island tour, most poignantly because translation turns the tables on the fugue point of the colonizing subject.

In finding ways in which the colonies, “emerging from colonialism” and its foundational fiction that the metropolis, or original, was superior to the copy or translation that the colony was, Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi cite Oswald de Andrade’s “metaphor of cannibalism as a way forward for Brazilian culture,” through which the colonies could devour Europe and “break away from what was imposed upon them” (4). The translator of *Puerto Rico (1908-1912)* swings between Europe and the new metropolis, remembering that 1908-1912 was a critical time in Puerto Rico’s entrance into what Ayala and Bernabe call “the American Century” or “the rise of the United States as a global power” (1). With this in mind, the task of translation re-

⁴ The term “translator” hereafter refers to this scholarly, editorial, and translation team led by Thompson, Luque, and Carrión with the objective of composing Armstrong’s other.
quired to render Armstrong’s *Books* in Spanish insisted on the importance of what Bassnett and Trivedi (citing Homi Bhabha) see as a new politics of in-betweenness, a “reassessment of the creative potentialities of liminal space” that eschews any politics of polarity (5–6).5

The original *Books* by Armstrong appear to be an initial, predatory attempt to depict the island in textual form to facilitate its digestion by the colonial apparatus, an event that embodies Antonio Benítez-Rojo’s concept of “repeating” the island. *Puerto Rico (1908–1912)*, by means of collating the original text and its colonizing agenda alongside the translation and critical apparatus, simultaneously inscribes the historical context and subverts the initial attempt at repetition, thus cannibalizing once more the source text while rejecting its colonizing designs and designations. Benítez-Rojo’s formulation of the act of repeating the island as a paradox, as a “metonymic displacement toward scenic, ritual, and mythological forms, that is, towards machines that specialize in producing bifurcations and paradoxes” is well suited to understand the relationship between this translation and its original (25).

The question of whether or not the original text by Armstrong and Emmanuelli is a Caribbean text lies at the heart of historical debates about Puerto Rico. On the other hand, the manifold “bifurcations and paradoxes” present in this new critical edition and translation are an undeniable Caribbean enterprise, an act of translation as decolonization. The translation is paradoxical in that it resuscitates an attempt to exercise colonial control through textual appropriation of a territorial space, while, at the same time, it seeks to take away the force of the colonizing original by rewriting in a different language, offering a radical recontextualization that can also be viewed as a bifurcation with respect to the ‘original’ historical trajectory of the source text. Such a destiny, otherwise manifest, traces instead a dual pathway through its simultaneous English and Spanish renditions, a pathway paradoxically both convergent on the page and divergent in effect and ideological impetus.

In this sense, Armstrong’s *Books* and Emmanuelli’s *Reports* constitute instances of ‘altered’ writing of the sort that Mary Louise Pratt sees in imperial eyes, as they become *Bitácoras, Informes*, and *Puerto Rico (1908–1912)* in

5 Bo Pettersson offers a relevant comparative reading between “the postcolonial turn” and literary translation studies. For a perspective from a non-Western critic, which Bassnett and Trivedi rightfully deem crucial in the process of decolonizing translation, see also Tarek Shamma’s “Postcolonial Studies and Translation Theory.”

María M. Carrión
translation, a decolonized version of an original determined by the important historical transition through which both Puerto Rico and the US were travelling through those momentous years (3–4). It is not a coincidence that this kind of translation is possible precisely because of the myriad decolonizing efforts that have taken place in this past century in Puerto Rico. To explore this uncanny turn of the screw performed by means of translation, the following pages analyze first the material aspect of Armstrong’s ‘original’ text, and second, its linguistic composition, including its logic and rhetoric, in order to interpellate its standing as an original and consider it, echoing Paz’s epigraphic words, not ‘entirely’ one.\(^6\) The textual grid, as Lefevere calls the markers set by an author, was designed by Armstrong to be received and processed by his readers as a piece of a military colonizing project; the latter constitutes a great portion of the conceptual grid of his Books (Fig. 1).

In the translation, that same textual grid emerges as a decolonizing cartography, a map with bodies that matter both to the colonizer and to the colonized. In other words, in translating the military Books initially rendered...  

\(^{6}\) Limited space here does not allow for a thorough analysis of these matters. The aforementioned “Prefacio a la traducción” offers a more in-depth panorama of this picture.
in English, the translator offers an alternative conceptual grid in Puerto Rican Spanish in which the original—itself a militarized, colonizing translation of Puerto Rico’s soil, peoples, engineering, flora, fauna, and so forth—is turned on its head. With this reconceived grid the translator seeks to grasp the beauty of the soil and the subjects, as well as the rigor of the cartographer and even the sheer magnitude of his imperial agenda (Fig. 2). In the end, the Bitácoras reveal Armstrong’s viaje cartográfico in ways that his Books could not have imagined.

Fig. 2. Armstrong, Book 6. Progressive Military Map of Porto Rico, folio 67

Translation Matters

Armstrong and Emmanuelli composed their field notebooks between 1908-1912, and they delivered them in that same time frame to the “War Department. Office Chief of Staff, Second Section,” which stamped them and sealed them with that logo. As mentioned above, these texts became the raw material for the Progressive Military Map of the United States Division: Porto Rico that was printed in Washington, DC in 1914. Information about the return of these texts from DC to the island, and the question of why they were not preserved as a collection once they were compiled in the War College, falls outside the scope of this study. For the purposes of research-
ing and writing *Puerto Rico (1908-1912)*, the editing and translating team located and was able to consult ten *bitácoras* in Puerto Rico. Nine of these are scanned as digital facsimiles and can be viewed online at the website of the Colección Puertorriqueña of the José M. Lázaro Library at UPR-RP. *Book 6*, identified later in the process (in June 2014), is available in print form at the Archivo General de Puerto Rico.

Armstrong’s island tour begins in the Guaynabo-Cataño area, where *Book 1* takes off in 1908; its textual trajectory abruptly ends in 1912 between Santa Isabel and Salinas at the end of what he calls *Book 12. Puerto Rico (1908–1912)* moves the rich paleographic textual grid written in English and illustrated by Armstrong (with drawings, maps, photographs, and panoramas) to a modern page in Spanish; the original, as we shall see in brief, sports a clear and present colonizing military agenda, while the translation, coexisting on the page following the facsimile reproduction of each handwritten folio, negotiates such an agenda with its own goal to make the original accessible to readers other than those intended by Armstrong. The original has all the ‘defects’ of a manuscript text redacted, drawn, and put together on the road: heterogeneous, telegraphic, and occasionally illegible writing; imprecise linguistic, technical, topographic, and geopolitical terms; unfinished sentences; torn and damaged pages, due to the many hands who handled Armstrong’s *Books*, climatic conditions, as well as the aging paper upon which they were written and drawn (Fig. 3). The original text shows the marks of a manuscript text over 100 years old that has been consulted, annotated, moved, revised, catalogued, and used as the basis to build other texts. Where the material platform of the page has suffered, or where Armstrong’s hand fumbled, the text contains some broken or illegible words. At times the pages of a book are ripped, marred by water damage, some of them disintegrating; even one of the covers suffered a sharp cut that took away its number (*Book 6*). At the same time, almost every page is filled with legible calligraphy and virtually each one of the ten books harbors marvelous colored elevations or maps, along with photographs and panoramas. To bridge these textual gaps the translation is frequently marked with the sign […]; the incorrect usages that could lead to confusion, such as, for instance, the ubiquitous swap of Isabela for Santa Isabel, were edited in order to prevent errors in reading the cartography. However, the translator did not incorporate any data that was not part of the original, even if it meant that the Spanish version sounded broken, telegraphic, minimalist, or repetitive.
The importance of these original texts can be undoubtedly better understood in reading them side-by-side with the translation and Thompson’s introductory study; such is the other cartography of Puerto Rico (1908–1912). To bring the original textual grid to a readership other than the original military colonizers for whom Armstrong wrote, the translation team conducted research and sought the advice of experts in the fields of cartography, engineering, soils, history, anthropology, and sociology, among others.

Fig. 3. Armstrong, Book 8. Progressive Military Map of Porto Rico, folio 1[…]

Thanks to this scholarly collaboration, the translator was able to deploy a substantial glossary spanning the semantic fields of numerous areas of study, such as geomorphology and orometry (montes, llanos, ramal, picos, cimas, quebradas, montañas, colinas), engineering and railroad and civil architecture (hormigón, vía, sendero, retrete, macadán, camino, escuela, carretera, chozas, armazón, ramal, vigas, gravilla, atarjea, pilastras, tanques sépticos), agriculture
and sylviculture (ingenios, maleza, centrales, cocos, trapiches, café, caña, pasto, azúcar, parcela, forraje, manglares), as well as anthropology and sociology (pobre, indígena, negro, raza mixta, residente, retrete, peón, trabajador de caña), among others. These terms, and their intended meanings in Armstrong’s original textual grid, are many and varied; in turn, their translations are likewise many and varied and, hopefully, will elicit sociolinguistic and historical analyses that will build on interactive originality of both texts.

Decolonizing Words

The task of the translator in Puerto Rico (1908–1912) revolves around a clearly expressed agenda: Armstrong, Emmanuelli, and Thompson wrote their text in English in Puerto Rico, and in it they represented Puerto Rico. The translator, driven by a desire to question the rhetorical hegemony of the English language and the United States over Spanish and Puerto Rico (stamped in Armstrong’s texts by his use of the language of the colonized) chose to reflect that specific brand of Spanish as it is used in this geopolitical area. While it is true that the overarching rule mandated clarity of expression (even when Armstrong’s original did not always point in that direction), every choice in Spanish favored an idiomatic precision appropriate to the sociolinguistic context of Puerto Rico. In every case in which possible equivalents included a Puerto Rican usage as well as one from Latin America or from Peninsular Spanish (or both), the translator always chose the former. Thus, for instance, “campo de pelota” was chosen over “béisbol” to translate baseball grounds, and “americano” over “estadounidense” to translate American. The three guiding lights for the linguistic, rhetorical, and logical composition of Puerto Rico (1908–1912) were: the theoretical terms selected and deployed by Thompson, Armstrong’s at times overwhelming colonial tone and register, and his technical and scientific competence.

7 The aforementioned “Prefacio a la traducción” includes a list of sources consulted for this lexicon.
8 Despite their common thread, linguistically speaking and in terms of their scope, these texts represent three very different stands with respect to the military colonizing agenda. While Armstrong fully advances such an agenda, Emmanuelli favors the descriptive, scientific lens to portray Puerto Rico in his 15 Reports; Thompson, in turn, articulates an academic, theoretical, and critical reading of that military colonizing agenda.
Given that, as Thompson clearly demonstrates, these originals were documents commissioned, composed, and redacted with a military colonizing function in mind, the translator did not modify their plain and highly descriptive style. Converting their text in English into entertainment was never a priority, although the translator hoped that many a reader would be seduced by the beauty of some of the narrative segments, by the ugliness of some of its judgments, or by the arresting negotiation of text and image. Given the referential complexity in Armstrong’s textual grid, Thompson’s study became critical to the work of translation, even when it presented singular challenges, such as the negotiation of theoretical terms associated with the various disciplines mentioned earlier.

Thus, for instance, the term “sujeto” was chosen to render subject and “posición de sujeto” to translate subject position, with all the theoretical charge that these terms carry when referring to an individual who faces and grapples with a certain ideological pressure and, in responding to it, delivers a response informed by his/her specific agency. Hence, the translator chose not to use the words “súbdito” or “sujeto subordinado,” which in other textual and conceptual grids might make sense to infuse meaning in a Spanish translation for the word subject. Likewise, “figura autorial” (authorial figure in the original) was translated to mean a literary theoretical concept that refers to the figuration of an author, and not to the actual author him/herself, which would have required the word “autor.” The “figura” analyzed by Thompson, which constitutes the key to his proposed reading of the Bitácoras, is composed of the sum of biographical data known about the “autor,” William H. Armstrong, and its correspondence with the notebooks he wrote, as well as the interpretations that may be proposed of them—which may or may not take into account the intentions that Armstrong himself had. The translation of Armstrong’s Books into Bitácoras rests on the premise that, besides him being the person who physically wrote these books and, as a result, the juridical subject of such work, he is the product of a series of subject positions that condition his authorial figuration in order to confront the colonialist context and the military agenda that would culminate in the publication of the Progressive Military Map of Porto Rico, and its use in various stages of the Cold War and thereafter.

The description of this map in Spanish also represented a singular issue for the translator: in the map’s technical, cartographic, military title in English, Progressive Military Map of Porto Rico (Armstrong’s abbreviated use
of the full name for this military tool, *Progressive Military Map of the United States Division: Porto Rico*), the word “progressive” refers to the gradual, incremental, and forward-looking nature of the process mandated to tailor a military map of the United States for a specific political and economic purpose. It should be recalled that Puerto Rico had not merely joined the United States as a territory transferred from Spain’s colonial rule; rather, as a result, it also had become a prized possession given its location in the Caribbean and in relation to Latin America. The process of producing such a map followed a series of formats and protocols which, because they were strictly dictated to the author by the US Army, conditioned the formation of the authorial figure. In his introductory study, Thompson explains this process, which had to be done gradually, in a predetermined sequence, and in accumulative stages that progressed as the work was done. Such is the origin of the word “progressive” in the title of this kind of map, which led to its translation as “progresivo” and not, as it is translated oftentimes, as “progresista,” a word that, besides being a misnomer, bears echoes of party-line associations in the island.

Armstrong assigned the title *Book* to each of the notebooks he produced for the task with which he was charged by the US Army. This generic title afforded the translator a chance to contribute to the process with creativity. A quick comparison with Emmanuelli’s textual grid underscores this opportunity: the *15 Reports* are a list of descriptive annotations from the places in the island that he toured, depicted in precise scientific, cartographic detail for those who needed to either invade that land, or defend themselves from an attack there. Armstrong’s textual grid, along these same lines, kicks off his tour in the first notebook with a sober, level voice to describe what he sees, thus denoting a clear, colonizing agenda. However, this is no longer what readers have in front of them by the end of the Bostonian’s tour, past Ponce, when Armstrong virtually seems to have experienced a breakdown of some sort and engages in rants, insults, and the deprecation of Puerto Rican people. This makes his ten extant books quite the source for cartographic, cultural, political, economic, and historical navigation, a ghostly (and, at times, ghastly) voice of a military man who, as Thompson rightly notes, articulates contradictory autobiographical stances. Hence, these field notebooks overflow the frame of a strictly military scientific report and, at once, betray the flow of a journey by a cartographer (Fig. 4).
The end result for the translator, a highly creative choice, was the inclusion of the word *bitácora* (binnacle) to denote both the place, direction, movement, and maneuvering of the Armstrong ‘vessel,’ as well as its shipwrecks. The translator makes very clear in the “Prefacio” that this choice does not mean to say that these notebooks literally hold maritime notes; rather, it means that in these *bitácoras* Armstrong, a navigator of sorts on Puerto Rican soil, establishes a close relationship between his work of annotation and the cartographic sketching of such soil and contemporary traditions to compose progressive naval maps. These maps serve military strategies that Thompson lays out in the first section of his introductory study, titled “Panorama general.”

Armstrong’s colonialist tone and register, colored by a clear racist agenda, is perhaps nowhere more tangible than in his constant usage of derogatory terms to refer to Puerto Rican subjects. This represented one of the greatest challenges for the translators and editors, none of whom profess alliance with either colonialism or racism. Two words were particularly painful to negotiate in the conceptual grids: first, the ubiquitous use of the English word “native” and second, the likewise frequent use of “Negro” and “black.” Despite their close historical relationship to the colonizing matters stated above, these two
semantic fields touch upon the singular racialization of Puerto Rican subjects that Armstrong met during his island tour, and which he intently tried to deploy as a key piece of his colonizing agenda. As far as the first case is concerned, “native,” the word “nativo” exists in Spanish; however, it refers to a person born and/or raised in a place or country. In no way does “nativo” convey the explicit and undeniable colonizing intention of both Armstrong’s tour of the island and his writings, or their relation to the map.

After much debate and negotiation, the team agreed on the use of the word “indígena” to translate “native.” This term denotes a birthplace, a point of origin, like “nativo;” at once, and differently from the latter, it conveys the semantic register of strangeness and disdain ostensibly deployed by Armstrong as the colonizer towards the natives from the colonized soil. Armstrong’s own tone and register support this translative editorial decision. Notoriously, Armstrong did not seem to despise local animals (mules, horses), flora (cane, coffee), or even abstract subjects in a census; hence, whenever “native” was used in one of these instances, it was rendered as “nativo.” In sum, the translation reflected colonization and its ensuing practices of exclusion, abjection, and contempt for local human beings by using “indígenas,” while it went along with Armstrong in rescuing animals, plants, bureaucracy, and certain objects—key props in the military disciplinary scene he was bound to produce—from such referential stain.

Armstrong speaks frequently about Afro-Puerto Rican subjects, especially when he describes the environments where peons worked in agriculture—particularly in the cane fields. He typically refers to these subjects with the words “Negro” or “black.” Because these were always accompanied by an assessment of the inferior conditions in which blacks lived, and the filth that surrounded them, the translator interpreted both of these to be racist terms; as a result, the translator chose to translate them literally as “negro” or “negra.”

9 Armstrong’s acts of discernment between races do not show any of the relative enlightenment, solidarity, or compassion shown by Clifton Johnson who, only four years before the Lieutenant kicked off his island tour, alluded to the prejudice conveyed by the word “nigger” and the attitudes towards African Americans in the North and South of the US: after describing the battle between “a Negro named Terry” and the “youthful aristocracy” of his fellow evangelical churchgoers, in which Terry and his white neighbor ended up shot, and Terry’s son, seeing how he was going to be lynched by the mob, decided to shoot them all, Johnson concludes that there were some colored people to be feared, but that that did not mean that sympathy was “entirely lacking between southern whites and blacks” (n. p.). Although the North may have been perceived as a better place for black people than the
The author of *Books* reserved that maximum degree of racism to insult a few times those racial subjects he deemed worthy of the greatest dose of contempt and even verbal violence. The word “nigger,” used as an especially forceful vituperation against the female manager of a hospital near San Se-

South, Johnson alludes to the treatment of blacks in Massachusetts, which he calls “scarcely angelic,” and to the fact that white Northerners, the people with whom the author identifies, “have the same feeling of superiority that exists in the South. This is characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon race in its relation with all other races, and very likely the North would discriminate against the blacks more if they were with us in greater numbers” (n. p.). Although Johnson’s critique of the word “nigger” and the Southern racist attitudes do not demonstrate solidarity with African Americans—“there is a vast deal of slovenly poverty and thriftlessness, easy morals and lack of ideals among the Negroes, and the leaven that works for better things is entirely inadequate,” he says—at least his overarching agenda does not call for their disappearance in the name of development, as Armstrong’s text does. In the end, Johnson concludes that, “They are a race apart. They must learn self-reliance and build up a worthy social life in their own ranks” (n. p.). In other words, his proposal for African Americans to be separate, yet equal, supports black subjects’ efforts to “strive quietly and steadily for better homes, for better and more general education, and for the ownership of property” (n. p.). This is a very different agenda from the one established by Armstrong, and the basis for the translator’s conceptual grid for the racialization of terms in *El viaje cartográfico.*
bastian, is deployed in a place of filth, excrement, disease, and bodily degradation. The translator chose the likewise forceful and spiteful expression in Spanish “negra sucia” for these instances.

In Book 8 readers find another context marked by Armstrong’s colonialist and racist agenda, one pertaining to the design and usage of water closets by policemen in Mayagüez. The archaic term in English, which in the US has now been replaced by the euphemistic restroom, refers to the place where flush toilets, or “inodoros,” were located; this is a place where the filth of those subjects of color who so left him smitten is reflected in his comments about the peoples living in the West coast of the island (Fig. 5). Since Armstrong does not clearly distinguish between the architectural structure or “retrete” and the bowl or “inodoro,” where humans deposit both solid and liquid excrement, the translator opted for the less taxing “retrete” when referring to the place or water closet, and “inodoro” when referring to the flush toilet. In the end, the translator chose to use two terms to clearly reflect how their use in the original constituted excuses to inscribe the policemen’s unworthy racialized bodies in the text.

These acts of traslatio of a scientific cartographic original substantially peppered with colonizing markers remain stamped in Puerto Rico (1908-1912) not as definitive uses, but as catalysts of future dialogue about these subjects, subject matters, issues, and affairs. The original character of Armstrong’s Books, laboriously translated in the Bitácoras of El viaje, is subverted by the critical analysis and creative execution of the translation process. In the making of the Bitácoras, the translator considered the translated texts as originals in order to contribute to a different appreciation of cartography, language, and creation. Hopefully, with this new original forged by decolonized subjects (at once the same as, and different from, what Armstrong wished such subjects to be), more readers will be able to appreciate both the severity and rigor of Armstrong’s travels throughout the island. Furthermore, this translation as decolonization will underscore both his disciplinary agenda towards Puerto Rican people, the duress he faced in his tour, and the beauty of the cartographical work that transport both the Lieutenant and us, the readers, to the textual shores of Puerto Rico (1908-1912).
REFERENCES


TRANSLATION IN THE ANGLOPHONE AND FRANCOPHONE CARIBBEAN: FACTS AND FIGURES

Desrine R. Bogle
University of the West Indies, Cave Hill

Abstract

With a special emphasis on the Caribbean’s Anglophone and Francophone components, this paper seeks to add to the growing body of literature on translation in the region. It offers an overview of translation in the Anglophone and Francophone Caribbean in the areas of literary translation, Bible translation, translation training, certification and associations, as well as translation demand and providers. It also considers whether translation activity in the Caribbean is geared primarily towards its inter-regional multilingual needs or focused on external needs.

Keywords: translation in the Caribbean, translation studies, translation training

Resumen

Este artículo busca contribuir a la creciente bibliografía caribeña acerca de la traducción, aportando una visión general del campo orientada al Caribe anglófono y francófono. Incluye las áreas de traducción literaria, traducción bíblica, formación de traductores, certificación y asociaciones, así como la demanda por traducciones y los proveedores. También procura determinar si la actividad de traducción en el Caribe se orienta principalmente hacia las necesidades internas de la región o si se centra en suplir necesidades externas.

Palabras clave: traducción en el Caribe, estudios de la traducción, formación en traducción
Introduction

Several articles on translation in the Anglophone and Francophone Caribbean have appeared in various journals dealing with translation, social sciences or cultural studies (Lewis 2003; Sumillera 2008; Montout 2010; Forsdick 2015). An examination of the European Society for Translation Studies database for specialized translation journals reveals that just a few of the more than 120 journals, excluding those published in electronic form, have dedicated entire volumes to the theme of translation in the region. These include the journal of the research centre on translation and transcultural communication (TRACT) at the Université Sorbonne nouvelle-Paris 3, Palimpsestes, which in 1999 devoted its twelfth issue to the topic, titling it “Traduire la littérature des Caraïbes. La plausibilité d’une traduction – Le cas de La Disparition de Perec.” The following year, 2000, the journal of the Canadian Association for Translation Studies, TTR: terminologie, traduction, rédaction, dedicated the second issue of its thirteenth volume to the theme “Les Antilles en traduction / The Caribbean in translation.” Both volumes focused primarily on the translation of Caribbean literature. More recently, in May 2015, The University of the West Indies (UWI) hosted a symposium under the theme “Translating Creolization” at its Cave Hill campus in Barbados with creolization within the Caribbean as its main focus. As a corollary activity, the second issue of volume two of the journal Translation and Translanguaging in Multilingual Contexts featured the most poignant papers from that meeting. With a special emphasis on the region’s Anglophone and Francophone components, this paper seeks to add to this growing body of literature on translation in the Caribbean. It offers an overview of translation in the Anglophone and Francophone Caribbean in the areas of literary translation, Bible translation, translation training, certification and associations, as well as translation demand and providers. It will also seek to determine whether translation activity in the Caribbean is geared primarily towards its inter-regional multilingual needs or focused on external needs.

1 I am grateful to Marie-José N’Zengou-Tayo for reviewing a preliminary draft of this essay.
Literary Translation

Prior to the early mid-twentieth century, a minimal number of literary works were produced in the Francophone and Anglophone Caribbean and many of these were not shared across language boundaries. By extension, relatively few works were translated. However, from the early to mid-20th century, Anglophone and Francophone Caribbean authors gained international recognition and the number of translated works increased. Translation activity was impacted by awards such as the Nobel Prize for Literature, which was won by Guadeloupean poet Saint John Perse (1960), St. Lucian poet and playwright Derek Walcott (1992), and Trinidadian essayist and novelist V.S. Naipaul (2001) and the Prix Goncourt, which in 1992 was awarded to Martinican Patrick Chamoiseau for his novel *Texaco*. The award-winning literary works of these and numerous other writers, including Barbadian Kamau Brathwaite, Jamaican Claude McKay, Martinican Aimé Césaire and Haitian Dany Laferrière, have resulted in the translation of Caribbean literature into major world languages such as French, Spanish, Italian, and German.

Despite the general outward focus in translating texts from the region, notable efforts have been made to promote intra-regional translation. This is evidenced by the quarterly *Cariforum, Cultural Review of the Caribbean*, an arts and culture magazine with a regional project based in the Dominican Republic. The project was supported by the European Union and Cariforum governments in the Caribbean, funded under the 7th European Development Fund. Edited in English, French, and Spanish and dedicated to projects that seek to cultivate cultural integration, cultural identities, and cultural exchanges it encourages intra-Cariforum cultural communication, in short, regional integration. Another notable example is the annual Cuban-based Casa de las Americas Literary Award. Awarded alternately to texts originating in the Francophone, Anglophone, and Hispanophone Caribbean, it recognizes excellence in the three major literary genres of poetry, drama, and prose and includes the translation and publication of literature from the region.

Bible Translation

As used here, Caribbean Bible translation refers to the production of Bibles in local vernaculars. This work is often done by commissioned translators under the auspices of regional Bible Societies, namely the Bible Society of
the West Indies, the Eastern Caribbean Bible Society, the Bible Society in the Netherland Antilles and Aruba, and the American Bible Society. Versions of the Bible in Creole languages, whether in audio or print, partial or complete, have been produced throughout the region. Bibles in English-lexifier Creoles exist in several settings where English is the official language: for example, Antigua, Belize, Guyana, Jamaica, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Creole Bibles exist in French-official Guadeloupe and French Guiana. With French and Haitian Creole as official languages, Haiti first produced a version of the Bible in Haitian Creole in 1985 and a 2002 version of solely the New Testament. Saint Lucia, which is an English-official island, with a French-lexifier, has a Bible in St. Lucian Creole.

**Translation Training, Certification, and Associations**

Professional training for translators in the region is offered either through full undergraduate degree programmes, undergraduate courses in foreign language degree programmes, or postgraduate certificate or degree programmes. In the Francophone Caribbean, the Université des Antilles in Martinique offers undergraduate courses in translation in its foreign language undergraduate degree programmes. The Université d’État d’Haïti offers a six-month programme dedicated to French to Haitian Creole translation. At the undergraduate level, the University of Puerto Rico at Río Piedras offers an undergraduate interdisciplinary degree with a track in translation. Northern Caribbean University in Jamaica offers French translation, and the UWI Cave Hill campus in Barbados offers courses in Spanish and French translation. Translation exercises form part of the final year French and Spanish language courses at the UWI St. Augustine and Mona campuses.

At the postgraduate level, translation training in the region is varied. The University of Puerto Rico offers an MA in Translation as well as Post-MA Certificate. The Mona campus of The UWI runs an MA in Translation Studies with options in legal, financial, and technical translation corresponding to regional and international demand; and the Cave Hill campus provides supervision for MPhil and PhD research degrees in the field. The Université des Antilles in Martinique offers a Master de recherche (MA) in foreign languages with options in translation studies, intercultural translation, and development (traductologie, traduction interculturelle et développement).
Translation certification is thus primarily gained through academic programmes coupled with immersion opportunities that are available within the degree programmes. Alongside academic programmes within universities, Caricom’s Caribbean Regional Information and Translation Institute (CRITI), provides training and certification in legal translation. This work is aligned with its mission of contributing to integration in the Caribbean through information and translation.

Translation associations have played an important role in professional translation, frequently attending to matters of advocacy, standards setting, maintenance, and professional development. However, as membership in translation associations is not always compulsory to professional practice, the rate of membership in the region is significantly lower than its counterpart associations in other regions such as North America and Europe. In the English-official Caribbean, Jamaica and the twin island Republic of Trinidad and Tobago currently have a translation and interpreting association. In Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, translators are sometimes certified by the American Translators Association (ATA), with those working for in areas such as the U.S. courts require special certification. Discussing trends across the region, Craig and Sánchez (2007) point out that most freelance translators do not voluntarily affiliate themselves with these associations given that in many cases they do not view them as essential to the exercise of their profession.

Translation Demand and Providers

Translational activity is inherently undergirded by language mastery and, by implication, intercultural understanding. In the Francophone and Anglophone territories, language professionals are trained for local, regional, and international markets. In the Francophone Caribbean, English is the foreign language of choice due to its high employability prospects locally, regionally, and internationally. In the Anglophone Caribbean, the major modern foreign language of choice has historically been Spanish, with French as the next major modern foreign language. Given global expansion and increased regional exchange with BRICS members China and Brazil, governments and private industry in the region have been focusing on capacity building in offering opportunities to learn Mandarin and Portuguese as foreign languages, with a view to producing language professionals capable of bridging the linguistic gap and strengthening commercial activity.
The volume of professional translation work in the Caribbean varies from territory to territory. The work of the International Development Bank, the International Seabed Authority (headquartered in Jamaica) and the Association of Caribbean States (headquartered in Trinidad) increases the need for translation services in specific settings. Moreover, Craig and Sánchez (2007) point out that Trinidad’s proximity to and economic partnership with Venezuela provides a continuous demand for translations between English and Spanish. Additionally, the seventeen-member PetroCaribe Development Fund between the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and twelve Caricom nations, including Haiti, also generates demand for translation. Commercial activity also contributes to the need for inter-regional translation. For example, the conglomerate GraceKennedy Limited, which is headquartered in Kingston, Jamaica, required translation services when it launched an extensive campaign in conjunction with its efforts to enter the Latin American market.

Though translation in its widest understanding can be considered the bane of Caribbean identity due to the diversity of European languages involved in its colonization and the creolization of Amerindian, African, European, Indian and Asian languages and cultures, translation as intercultural communication was not historically a regional activity. Nevertheless, a sense of region is promoted by initiatives that facilitate communication across languages. For example, in 2011 the Association of Caribbean Historians (ACH) began to make conscientious efforts to provide translations of its website into the four major languages of the region: English, Dutch, French, and Spanish. Approximately sixty percent of its membership speaks English as their primary language and most of its publications and announcements appear solely in English. Today the association’s multilingual publications cater to its forty percent non-Anglophone membership. Like the ACH, various academic publications and government initiatives in the region promote the dissemination of scholarship in multiple languages, but the resulting works are not always translated. Though Caribbean populations share a similar colonial past, efforts to ensure consistent inter-regional translation are generally lacking.

The provision of general and technical translation services in multiple languages— including Arabic, Mandarin Chinese, Dutch, English, French, French-lexicon Creoles, German, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, and Spanish— takes place through language centres, university language depart-
ments, freelancers, and local government-affiliated agencies. Translation is state-regulated in the French overseas departments of Martinique and Guadeloupe, and translations of official documents there must be done by certified translators. The various Alliance Française organizations in the region provide translation services from and into French as affiliates of the Republic of France. In territories not served by The University of the West Indies, such as Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, some translation services are provided by university language departments and agencies, which as pointed out above, are members of the American Translators Association. As the major regional university with representation in the majority of the English-official territories, all the modern languages departments of the University of the West Indies provide translations through their Translation Bureaux.

In recent years the translation programs of numerous institutions have expanded. For example, in July 2008, the St. Augustine campus officially launched its Caribbean Interpreting and Translation Bureau, which had begun in 2005. The Bureau offers translation services in twelve languages: Arabic, Mandarin, Dutch, English, French, French-lexicon Creole, German, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, and Spanish. The Cave Hill campus formalized its Translation Bureau with a launch on May 27, 2015. Its Translation Bureau offers services in five foreign languages, that is, from and into English for Spanish, French, Portuguese, German, and Mandarin. The Mona campus formalized its translation and interpreting services in 2012 in five languages: from and into English for French, Spanish, Japanese, Mandarin, and Portuguese. Examples of local government-affiliated agencies providing translation services include the Language Training Centre in Jamaica; the Barbados Community College; and the Caribbean Institute of Languages and International Business; and the College of Science, Technology, and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago (COSTATT).

It is worth noting that language service needs also include interpreting and audiovisual translation. Although there are economic ties between the region and bilingual English-French Canada, Spanish-speaking Latin America, and the multilingual European Union, these do not necessarily equate with the need for translation services. Overseas partners oftentimes have sufficient proficiency in at least one of the official languages of the Caribbean to successfully facilitate business communication. In these business negotiations, interpreters are more frequently required than translators.

The current role of translation has been expanded to include the commercial
arena with the increase with multilingual partners whose languages are not those of the regional providers. As the region expands its trade partners beyond the traditional relations with Great Britain and North America, and increases linkages with non-Anglophone and non-Francophone regions in areas such as security, education, and health, growth in the field of translation is expected. The provision of trained translation service professionals can thus continue and even expand in the current environment where training is available across the regional institutions.
REFERENCES


Abstract

This paper explores certain complexities involving the translation of art-related texts, specifically within the framework of art museums and cultural institutions in Puerto Rico and abroad. An initial discussion focuses on the inherent difficulties in rendering visual signifiers in written language. Drawing on various key theoretical positions in Translation Studies, the paper then examines issues pertaining to the translation of cultural identity, iconicity, and the role which institutions play in determining not only cultural constructs but also translational approaches.

Keywords: intersemiosis, transcreation, postcolonial translation, hybridity, Puerto Rican art

Resumen

Este ensayo intenta analizar las complejidades que puedan surgir en la traducción de textos relacionados con el arte, específicamente en el contexto de museos de arte e instituciones culturales dentro de Puerto Rico y en el extranjero. La discusión que abre el ensayo se enfoca en las dificultades inherentes al proceso de trasladar signos visuales de índole visual al lenguaje escrito. Recurrir a varias posturas clave del campo de traductología, el ensayo luego examina una serie de asuntos relacionados con la identidad cultural, la iconicidad y el papel que juegan las instituciones en determinar no solo construcciones culturales sino también estrategias traductológicas.

Palabras clave: intersemiosis, transcreación, traducción poscolonial, hibridity, arte puertorriqueño
To presuppose that every recombination of elements is necessarily inferior to its original, is to presuppose that draft 9 is necessarily inferior to draft H—as there can only be drafts. The concept of the definitive text corresponds only to religion or fatigue.

—Jorge Luis Borges (Waisman), 2005, p. 51

Bruegel’s *Fall of Icarus*? Even representational artworks, without some cueing, can be mute. Rafael Trelles provides a signpost or two with the title of this series: *Samsa*. This, the most benign work in the series, still manages to cast hybridity in a pestilent frame. According to the artist,¹ the backdrop—which evokes one of the more dismal corners of Kafka’s Prague—was photographed in a former shopping area in Havana now partly occupied by a technical school. A lone figure looks on anxiously from a window above. (Image courtesy of Rafael Trelles)

¹ Email correspondence with Rafael Trelles dated August 21, 2014.
Over the course of a recent museum translation project, I was chided by the curator/author for being “overly creative” with his text. His choice of words, of course, struck me. I was possibly being reminded of my ancillary role, of the derivative nature of my task as a translator. The pairing of one critical text with its translation, as occurs frequently in museum panel texts and catalogues, can potentially create frictions. Yet, the author of any critical or scholarly text and the translator ultimately carry out parallel functions—they are both writers working from models, albeit somewhat different ones. The better authors and the better translators may, in retrospect, look back on their work with a feeling of regret. No text is ever definitive; once published it is always open to further criticism, and also to revision. Few readers will bother to consider both versions, even in the case of bilingual museum panels. Most students or scholars in Puerto Rico or the United States who navigate the works of Huysmans or Heidegger, will do so via the versions created by translators, without any idea of the processes or transformations involved in creating that translation, and without ever grazing the actual contours of the original.

The incident described above may also point to a misunderstanding of the nature of translation or, furthermore, of how perspectives and practices have changed over the past decades, given that the translation process is now generally seen as a form of intercultural mediation and a creative act in its own right. The issues relating to mediation will be dealt with further in this essay, however it should be noted that many Translation Studies theorists (Nida, 1964; Snell-Hornby, 1988; Nord, 1991) have stressed the importance of this element, with Snell-Hornby (1988) noting that the translator should not only be “bilingual but also bicultural” (p. 46). As Suzanne Jill Levine (1991) lucidly points out, translation should, under optimal conditions, involve a negotiation between writer and translator, one that is aimed at producing what can never be a mirror image of the source text, but which, rather, opens a “space for a potential subtext to emerge” (p. 14). As Levine observes:

The traditional authority of original over translation has prevented us, on the other hand, from seeing translation as a continuation of the original’s distant yet interpretive relationship to an unspoken network of referents. (p. 16)
In *The Subversive Scribe*, Levine discusses her close collaborations with various authors, particularly Guillermo Cabrera Infante, which ultimately led to the creation of an English version of his *Tres Tristes Tigres* (*Three Trapped Tigers*) that added thirty pages of additional material to the original (Levine). While Levine’s concerns center largely on literary translation, as most works discussing translational creativity have, her assessments can and should be carried over to other fields of translation. In practice, they resonate most profoundly when approaching art historical or critical texts for a variety of reasons.

Robert Neather (2008), one of the few scholars to have dealt specifically with translation for art museums, notes that this niche discipline offers a specific characteristic environment defined by unique verbal/visual, interlingual or intersemiotic interactions.²

The museum provides a particularly interesting case for discussion, since it represents a complex semiotic environment in which a number of differing systems of signification interact to produce meaning. A given verbal text, for instance, must relate both to other texts within the museum system and to visual signifiers such as objects, pictures, and diagrams. In such a system, meaning is thus always “combinatorial and relational,” such that no one element within the system can be considered in isolation. The implications for interlingual translation are complex: an individual target text must be considered not simply in terms of its relation to its source text, but also in terms of its relation to other target texts within the museum text-hierarchy, as well as to visual elements. (p. 219)

While it is true that other forms of translation must also take into account broader contexts—and the complexities of transmitting language and ideas from one culture to another—it seems clear that translation of art-related texts bears a close correlation to literary translation, insofar as there is an intrinsic need to transfer a range of intricate semiotic referents into

---

² See Roman Jakobson, “On Linguistic Aspects of Translation” (1959). Jakobson’s paradigm relates to the translation of verbal signs by non-verbal signs (thereby establishing dramatic or film adaptations, for example, as modes of translation). The formula can be applied to any interaction between distinct systems of signification, thus including texts that relate to any of the arts (music, dance, drama, photography, film, etc.), and even film subtitling and dubbing. The reverse process occurs in the case of translating visual language into written language.
the target language while also recreating/representing an image in the process. In other words, a palpable or conjurable rendering must be made of the image/object/concept under discussion. More succinctly, while keeping the source text constantly in view, the translator must employ language that can successfully bring the described object or artwork to the fore. The ultimate aim is not to simply reproduce the text in question—which in the case of art criticism can involve stylistic quirks, citations, literary or philosophical excerpts, and historical documents or textual fragments—but to scan beyond the source text in order to replicate the desired impact or resonance of that text, as well as the object it describes, i.e., make the object/artwork and the hovering discussion live in the mind of the target-language reader. This process leading to any translation entails progressive stages of interpretation and rendering, which are summarized in the figure presented below.

Excluded from this equation is the reader, who must also reengage this process, although with one element missing—he or she will generally read only the translation or the source text, but not both. As Shirley Chew and Alistair Stead (1999) observe:

The identification of reading with translation has by now a distinguished literary pedigree (one thinks of a line of modern writers from Proust to Calvino who have either claimed that reading entails an act of translation, or, more challengingly, that translation is the only proper way to read a text). “Reading is already translation, and translation is translation for the second time,” wrote Hans-Georg Gadamer, and this is dynamically related to writing, also seen by Proust as, ideally, translation. (p. 1)

Textual complexity may be intensified under many circumstances, due, for example, to the inclusion of text within the artwork itself, the require-
ment of some form of explicitation or contextualization, reference to the pro-
cess of creation/representation (as in the case of any self-referential works),
or instances in which the very authority of the art object is questioned (per-
haps most significantly in the case of conceptual art). In Puerto Rico, there
are often very specific cultural, historical, or sociopolitical contexts dealt with
in art that may be unknown to the outside translator, or not explicitly elu-
cidated or transmitted in a source text, which will be discussed later. The
processes delineated above clearly mimic those of the “original” interpretive
text, with the role of the translator/interpreter closely paralleling that of art
critic/interpreter, since both perform exegetic functions that, following Der-
rida translator Barbara Johnson’s (1985) oft-cited formula, involve “the care-
ful teasing out of the warring forces of signification within the text.” (p. 5)
While ekphrasis, or writing about art, has existed for millennia, the impor-
tance of art criticism and interpretation—particularly in terms of reflecting
and/or determining identity—is far more correlative to modernity, especially
following the demise of representational art. Within the context of muse-
ums—the main focus of this article—interpretive texts are considered an
essential part in making artworks accessible or comprehensible to the pub-
lic, providing historical or biographical information, and positioning works
within a particular canon, which, again, is often institutionally determined.

Neather’s discussion of the museum “text-hierarchy” (p. 219) points to
another complexity. The selection, arrangement, and presentation of objects
and text not only follow various inherent levels of complexity—or clusterings
of signification—but are also determined by the objectives of the curator, the
museum or sometimes the prevailing political forces (in part to elicit cer-
tain reactions or associations among viewers), and therefore generally reflect
some overarching ideology, regardless of any pretense at objectivity. This
point is very clearly laid out by Carol Duncan (1991), who provides various
examples of how, despite the purportedly democratic/enlightenment impe-
tus behind the initial public museums, these institutions have also been used
to legitimate some of the more corrupt or despotic regimes, as is the case
with Imelda Marcos’ hastily contrived Metropolitan Museum of Manila, or
the Shah of Iran’s Museum of Contemporary Art.

As is often recounted, in 1793 the Louvre established the paradigmatic
model for the public museum, one that would be reconfigured accord-

David A. Auerbach
from reflecting vaunted Enlightenment principles of public education and egalitarianism, “[...] public art museums were regarded as evidence of political virtue, indicative of a government that provided the right things for its people” (Duncan, p. 88). Beyond these lofty ideals, the Louvre also served as a monument to empire and dominion, and thus, as an embodiment of France’s vast colonial power and wealth. This very model, gleaned from the same seemingly contradictory inspirations, would be applied to public museums as icons of national identity and, often, political hegemony, even as the notion of the museum has continued to evolve, encompassing practically every conceivable format.

In Puerto Rico, the first public museum—the Museum of History, Anthropology, and Art (which is located on the University of Puerto Rico’s Río Piedras Campus)—was established at the relatively late date of 1951. The timing of this event can be seen as a response to very specific factors relating to the country’s history and identity, amidst what can also be acknowledged as a cultural crisis. As a colony of the United States, Puerto Rico was undergoing rapid socioeconomic transformation from a largely agricultural and rural society to an urban and industrial one. This transformation occurred in tandem with ongoing U.S. entrenchments—military, political, ideological and otherwise—and what was perceived as a profound threat of linguistic and cultural incursion and dominance. This process also coincided with massive northward emigration and the growth of the Puerto Rican diaspora. In this context, the museum may have been viewed as a cultural anchoring mechanism, one that would seek to preserve the recent and even distant past, yet which could also be used to foment established or evolving concepts of national identity, while also establishing definitions for Puerto Rican iconicity, and determining the nature of cultural capital. Linked to the University of Puerto Rico, the Museum of History, Anthropology, and Art would also gain greater academic stature as a center for research, particularly in the field of archaeology.

Over the course of the past sixty years, the number of museums in Puerto Rico has grown exponentially. According to the Puerto Rico Association of Museums, the institutions listed with that entity as of 2009 totaled 74.\(^3\)

sudden proliferation can be analyzed from various perspectives. On the one hand—as is the case with the Museum of History, Anthropology and Art, as well as the venues that grew out of the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture—there was a very practical need (as reflected in museum mission statements) for storing, exhibiting, conserving, interpreting, and completing research on the collections that had been amassed by public entities or donated privately. On the other hand, the establishment of such institutions can also be understood as part of the essential requirements for achieving modern nationhood (in keeping with Western notions of “high” culture), asserting national identity, creating a contrastive discourse that could be fostered and foregrounded against the dominant/hegemonic culture of the colonizer, or even as some sort of utopian sanctuary. As Tim Edensor (2002) notes:

Thus a mass education system binds state and culture together, canons are devised, museums are established, official histories written, scientific bodies set up to subvert the propagation of “official” knowledge, so that specific bodies of knowledge, values and norms are ingested by all educated citizens. (p. 10)

The discourses fostered by cultural institutions in Puerto Rico have evolved over the years into an extensive narrative that has highlighted a linear trajectory of art historical and cultural development, often tying together disparate cultural manifestations in an attempt to formulate an overarching construct aimed at defining the singular nature of Puerto Rico’s identity as evidenced in the artworks created in the country. This narrative would also be nourished by the research and criticism produced in the Puerto Rico’s academic institutions. Marina Reyes Franco (2013) observes:

La creación del Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña en el 1955 fue instrumental en la institucionalización de un proyecto cultural que neutralizó a la izquierda. La nueva visión cultural buscaba el rescate del pasado ancestral del puertorriqueño, formas originarias y una historia en común como pueblo, ejemplificada por el logo del Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña en que se presentan las tres raíces de la cultura puertorriqueña como el indio Taíno, el español y el africano. La culminación de esta mezcla, y el prototipo del puertorriqueño sería el “jíbaro”, un campesino derivado de la literatura del siglo diecinueve que es curiosamente blanco. Según Arlene Dávila, en otros contextos coloniales y poscoloniales, esta ideología
del mestizaje y sincretismo racial ha resultado en una inclusividad de la exclusión “que esconde la valorización desequilibrada de sus componentes raciales bajo el tropo de la mezcla racial.” (p. 4)

(The creation of the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture in 1955 was instrumental in formulating an institutional framework for neutralizing the left. The new cultural vision [espoused within this framework] sought to retrieve the ancestral past of Puerto Rico, along with common intrinsic forms and a collective history, as exemplified by the Institute’s very emblem, which presents the anchoring roots of Puerto Rican culture personified as the Taíno, Spaniard, and African. The culmination of this mixture—leading ultimately to the prototypical Puerto Rican—would be the “jíbaro,” a campesino drawn from the island’s nineteenth-century literature who is, curiously enough, white. According to Arlene Dávila, in other colonial and postcolonial contexts this ideology of racial mestizaje and syncretism has led to an inclusivity of exclusion, “which conceals the imbalanced valorization of its own racial components beneath a trope of racial mixing.”)

A “coat of arms”? Imposed collective identity can trigger other knots and ambiguities. Absent in this image is the other major layer of historical hybridity, which, nevertheless, insinuates itself as a subtext into the work of Puerto Rico’s artists. Numerous other layers are, of course, also absent.

The official emblem of the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture, which has remained unchanged since that institution was first established, presents
a clearly defined image of cultural nationhood, with a white, male Spanish colonizer occupying the center of the escutcheon flanked by half-naked indigenous and African counterparts. This imposed collective identity offers a reductive and even unsettling view of cultural contributions (also pictured through the insertion of agricultural and cultural paraphernalia, suggestions of subjugation, and enlightenment in the form of the written word presented by the central figure). It also ignores many other cultural and ethnic complexities, and erases the U.S. presence entirely. As Isar Godreau discusses in “La semántica fugitiva: ‘raza’, color y vida cotidiana en Puerto Rico,” black identity as a central issue is often ignored in official, academic or cultural discourse (as are other “non-Puerto Rican” identities present in the country). Meanwhile, the cultural elements of pre-Hispanic indigenous groups are treated as archaeological artifacts, and are therefore not discussed from a theoretical vantage point or even found in the Puerto Rico’s major art museums. More importantly, outside of the country’s indigenous ceremonial sites, there is no major museum devoted specifically to those indigenous cultures. As art critic Nelson Rivera (2012) stated in a recent interview, the characteristics establishing a cultural identity have been also defined by Puerto Rico’s status as a colony:

[Much of the art produced on the island is closely related to the concept of identity.] Frankly, this is inevitable when you’re dealing with a colonial situation. If you’re always being told that you’re insignificant and that your existence is defined by dependency—and that appalling idea is reinforced by institutionalized violence—artists are left with no other recourse than to create images that somehow contradict this of-
In Puerto Rico, concepts of identity have always been tightly intertwined with those of language. While official language policy, and even the legislation governing the instruction of English, has oscillated in keeping with partisan politics, pride and support for the Spanish language has been unwavering since the United States wrested control of Puerto Rico in 1898. Given this scenario, it is understandable how translation might also be viewed with a sense of ambivalence (or resistance), unless it is absolutely required.

Within a cultural framework, this ambivalence has been fueled by alignments with nationalism, and also by sociocultural condescension on the part of the United States (possibly as part of an ideological arsenal). In 1957, Puerto Rico presented its first major art exhibition in the continental U.S. at the Riverside Museum in New York City. The dismissive criticism of that show from various top-tier publications, including *The New Yorker* and *The New York Times*, was undoubtedly instrumental in stoking resentment, and possibly further stimulating already-existing impulses toward cultural seclusion. Author Nilita Vientós Gastón (1957), writing in the Índice Cultural column of *El Mundo*, responded to these reviews as follows:

La opinión de la crítica norteamericana se distingue en general por su actitud de condescendencia. [...] Algunas se apoyan en hechos que no responden a la realidad, incurren en falsedades que acusan no sólo crasa ignorancia de la cultura de que provienen estos artistas sino del propio arte de la pintura. [...] El crítico del *New Yorker* apunta que la pintura comenzó a manifestarse en Puerto Rico en los últimos ocho o diez años con la fundación del Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña. Después de comparar este organismo con la WPA, añade con extraordinaria candi-

---

4 Translation my own.
5 We need only refer to Luis Muñoz Marín’s pronouncement, “El idioma es la respiración del espíritu. El idioma de un pueblo ha sido hecho por generaciones de ese pueblo y del pueblo de donde arrancó. Es un proceso de la más íntima interacción y concordancia entre palabra y espíritu. Así, al hablar su idioma, la gente respira, no traduce—y así no tiene que traducirse a sí misma en su manera de ser y de sentir para poder hablar.” *Puerto Rico: sociedad, cultura y educación: antología de lecturas*, p. 190.
dez: “Queda el problema de por qué los artistas se volvieron con tanto tesón hacia la pintura en vez de escribir o adoptar otra forma de expresión.” (para. 2)

(The opinion of the U.S. critics can be summed up by a general attitude of condescension. […] Some support their views with facts that have nothing to do with reality, while also committing gross errors that reveal utter ignorance not only of the culture that produced these artists but also of the very art of painting. […] The critic from *The New Yorker* observes that painting only began to appear in Puerto Rico over the past eight or ten years with the establishment of the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture. After comparing this entity to the WPA, he adds with extraordinary naïveté: “The problem remains, of course, of why the artists turned to painting so wholeheartedly, instead of to writing or some other form of expression.”

Although certainly attributable to budgetary constraints, linguistic wariness or ambivalence is partly accountable for a disinterest among many art institutions for English-language texts. This ambivalence may also result in approaching the task of translation as a purely mechanical operation based mainly on the pairing of lexical equivalents. Of the currently functioning websites for Puerto Rico’s art institutions, few offer any text at all in English. This has led to a situation where art-related discourse has become geographically circumscribed, and where dissemination has been limited to the Spanish-speaking world (thereby also ignoring regional, i.e. West Indian, and diasporic realities) at a time when global art discourse is dominated, regrettably or not, by English.

Yet English manages to creep inevitably into the national imaginary. Individual artists based in Puerto Rico create their own websites in English in order to exert a presence in the international art world. Scholars, critics, and commentators often pepper their work with English words, phrases, and quotes. A recent exhibition at the Antiguo Arsenal de la Marina Española in San Juan provides an interesting example. Titled bilingually *Behind the Scene: arte, cuerpo y derecho*, the exhibition focused on various mostly recent cases of art censorship in the country, often accompanied by ample documentation.

---

yet with no English-related explanations whatsoever. However, many of the
titles of individual artworks here and at two other shows running simultane-
ously at the same venue were in English without any Spanish translation.
This is also because San Juan is, whether despite or because of its colonial
status, a linguistic/cultural contact zone, a “dual city” (or multiple city) in
Sherry Simon’s words (2012) —a bilingual or multilingual space with porous
linguistic boundaries where translation becomes a daily reality. Yet the lay-
ers of hybridity, like some coat of paint, have not been added voluntarily in
Puerto Rico (or in Northern Ireland, the Basque Country, Palestine or Cata-
lonia), even if they are ingested on a daily basis. With regard to the colonial
city, Simon states the following:

It would be misleading to suggest that the dual city provokes a constant
state of interested interaction. Language communities turn their backs on
one another, as they aggressively cultivate their distinctiveness. […] Here
translation reveals its paradoxical nature as the “bridge” that separates as
much as it joins. Translation can deepen the sense of otherness, reifying the
categories of knowledge production. (p. 13)

As in Simon’s Montreal, sentences may begin in one language and end in
another, with degrees of fluency, acceptance, embrace or resignation. While
English always manages to filter onto the menu, it often bears an acrid after-
taste of unsolicited invasion. There is no doubt that the view of translation
as a form of theft, appropriation, or colonization persists, which may also be
one reason that various writers in Puerto Rico feel compelled to translate
their own work, regardless of the outcome. As Lawrence Venuti (1995) once
asserted:

The violence of translation resides in its very purpose and activity: the
reconstitution of the foreign text in accordance with values, beliefs, and
representations that pre-exist in the target language, always configured in
hierarchies of dominance and marginality, always determining the produc-
tion, circulation, and reception of texts. Translation is the forcible replace-
ment of the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text with a text
that will be intelligible to the target-language reader. (p. 14)

However, if there is a “tyranny”—or political treason—imposed by
translation it is potentially only one “tyranny” within the chain of cultural
interpretations, all of which direct our gaze according to a specific, often
rigid framework (even if one tyranny is defined simply by the use of the present colonizing language). Maria Tymoczko and Edwin Gentzler (2002) have noted that this view of translation—despite any historical accuracies—prejudicially imposes an ideology based on language which may have nothing to do with the inclinations of the translator. As such, it engages a fallacy in the form of linguistic “profiling,” suggesting that all speakers of a language share a single prototypical worldview (which would also be absurd given the diversity of Puerto Rico’s translators). As Tymoczko (2007) also points out, although translation has served as a tool of oppression and censorship, it has been used equally for causes of empowerment.

As part of larger resistance movements, translators in postcolonial contexts have engaged in radical manipulation of texts, constructing cultural images and identities, fostering self-definition, and creating knowledge through their work. Representation, transmission, and transculturation are all evident as essential but varying strands in postcolonial translations, indicating the importance of such frames of reference for analyzing the work of empowered translators. (p. 200)

Puerto Rico’s art scene—and the critical discourse that attempts to situate it within a national narrative—has, in more recent years, become continually more tangled and, certainly, less univocal, also reflecting more diverse linguistic demographics. Many artists have physically exited the island—relocating to U.S. cities but also to other parts of Latin America or Europe—while still maintaining a critical foothold within that discourse. Some have also moved to the country from other parts of the hemisphere, or the globe, often without any Puerto Rican ancestry. In the art world, the divide between Puerto Ricans of the diaspora and those living in Puerto Rico may also have contracted over the years, in part due to cultural exchanges, and accelerated in- and out-migrations—be they temporary, seasonal, or permanent. (Social media and other virtual platforms have certainly played a tremendous role in further fragmenting notions of territoriality, with identities being re-schemed predominantly in English.) Added to this greater plurivocality is the fact that San Juan has seen itself transformed by the works of street artists from around the world, inserting their own visions (often with only vague or even preconceived nods to Puerto Rico or any sense of Puerto Rican identity) onto the walls of the otherwise often-ignored neighborhoods of Santurce, Río Piedras, and Hato Rey.
Diasporic-Irish artist Conor Harrington’s *San Juan Fight Club*, Hato Rey (*Los Muros Hablan*, 2013) Harrington has created other similarly themed works in a variety of formats; this mural suggests one reading of a dual city. (Image: David Auerbach)

A more benign vision: Damaris Cruz’s symbiotic intervention on Calle Ernesto Cerra for the *Santurce es ley* (SEL5) festival. The support for this piece was fashioned from telephone-directory yellow pages, largely supplied by local residents. The structure was demolished in late 2014. (Image: David Auerbach)
At the same time, the ostensible shapers of this critical discourse (the practitioners, theorists, and commentators) have, in recent years, included exponents from various parts of Latin America, Europe, and the United States, thus reflecting San Juan’s far more cosmopolitan contemporary fabric. It is interesting that—perhaps to the surprise of Puerto Rico’s museum-goers—many artists and critics have veered toward a more Eurocentric reading of cultural production, one that is far more heavily informed by academic enterprises. At times it seems that the Puerto Rican imaginary is becoming increasingly inflected by the work of Baudrillard, Rancière, Deleuze or Duchamp (much of which is consumed by the art critics via English translation). The academic/artistic double life of various figures—as is the case with Bernat Tort, Nora Rodríguez Vallés, Carlos Ruiz Valarino, Elías Adasme, or Elsa María Meléndez, among others—is another factor that has added to the complexity with which art is produced and interpreted. The lure offered by Eurocentric readings can be interpreted as another attempt to undermine the hegemony of the U.S. as a colonizing power, or to seek refuge from its cultural incursions. (Any exhibition at the Museo de Arte de Ponce would be, arguably, Eurocentrically framed.) In many respects, this phenomenon is similar to the more consciously programmatic approach to sidestep U.S. cultural influence adopted by Mexico’s institutions in the twentieth century, most notably under the Porfirio Díaz regime.

The critical narrative has, however, already escaped local control, as Puerto Rico emerges as a focal point for a skittish global art world, exemplified most recently by broad coverage of the Santurce es ley and Los Muros Hablan street-art festivals, and San Juan’s inclusion in Phaidon’s Art Cities of the Future: 21st-Century Avant-Gardes. (In addition to the layered ironies of Puerto Rico-based and –defined Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla’s appearance as U.S. emissaries to the 2011 Venice Biennale.) Meanwhile, the blogosphere abounds with dissident voices, sometimes from the vantage point of cultural “exile,” questioning the authority of Puerto Rico’s institutions in defining cultural narratives and assembling constructs of identity, as exemplified by such sites as Quantum de la Cuneta, Boxscore, and Rotund World. Writing in the Chicago-based Contratiempo, Pedro Vélez contends that acts of omission by Puerto Rico’s bureaucrat-academics fuel what is essentially a fundamentalist propaganda vehicle aimed at perpetuating folklorism (Vélez, 2008, para. 1).

The collection of the Museo de Arte de Ponce is largely composed of European art, with smaller collections of North and South American and Puerto Rican works.
Instead of thinking of national cultures as unified, we should think of them as constituting a discursive device which represents difference as unity or identity. They are cross-cut by deep internal divisions and differences, and “unified” only through the exercise of different forms of cultural power. [...] Modern nations are all cultural hybrids.

—Stuart Hall, 1992, 292

With regard to the production of museum materials, outside the bilingual or multilingual context of contact zones, museums and other cultural institutions produce generally monolingual interpretive texts following specific criteria that often blur the very notion of authorship. Under the most responsible conditions, museums usually accord adequate time and resources to the creation of a scholarly companion piece geared toward providing visitors with an enriching experience while also serving as a potential object of scholarship/fetishizable objet d’art. Source texts—in the case of museum catalogues dealing with artworks/objects originating from outside the institution’s culture and language—are translated and then edited, keeping in mind appropriate treatment of materials tailored to the museum’s public and the museum’s own image. Many translators and translation agencies specializing in museum translation refer to the work as falling under a rubric of transcreation or transediting, catch-all terms that encompass localization/glocalization, cultural adaptation, promotion, and any other form of highly creative and transformative translation work consonant with Nida’s (1964) concept of dynamic equivalence, and notions formulated by exponents of the Manipulation School, most notably André Lefevere (1992), who argue that translation is essentially, and most importantly, a form of rewriting[^8].

From a practical vantage point, the translator acts as an initial editor, one who is hopefully fluent not only in the source and target languages, but also versant in the corresponding cultures. Texts are interrogated from the obvious linguistic standpoints of grammar and syntax, but also in terms of logic, scholarship, style, and ultimate transferability into the target language, keeping in mind, as noted earlier, the operation of interlingual elements, i.e., the work of art (thereby implying some level of visual literacy on the part of the translator). Within this context, translational hyperfidelity or doggedly literal translation is not seen as translation at all, but the perfunctory product that

[^8]: Although several translators and editors specialize in museum or art-related translation in Puerto Rico, there are no agencies specifically devoted to this niche operating in the country.
hovers interlingually between source and target text, simulating the most conspicuous features of the original without ever questioning their validity or providing any comprehensible access for the end reader. Once translated, the texts are further scrutinized and polished by sometimes various layers of additional editing. The resulting text, which bears the names of both author and translator, can sometimes be a radically modulated variant of what was initially penned by the author. The transformations reproduced below were approved by the editors and led to a “renegotiation” of the original text.

Source Text: A moderna ideia de paisagem, hoje comum em diferentes partes do globo, surgiu no Ocidente, na longa passagem do Medievo para a Idade Moderna.

Literal Translation: The modern idea of landscape, which is now common in different parts of the globe, arose in the West during the long passage from the Middle Ages to the Modern Age.

Revised Translation: The modern Western idea of landscape—which prevails in much of the world today—arose during the long passage from the Middle Ages to modernity.⁹

Unbeknownst to many cultural institutions employing this practice, the term “transcreation” has a rather interesting, Latin American provenance. Coined originally as “transcriação” by the Brazilian poets, translators, and theorists Augusto and Haroldo de Campos in the 1950s, it referred to the reimagining of the original text through the recontextualization of the author’s intent and a reconfiguring of the structural effects (phono-semantic, even musical, in the case of poetry) achieved in the source text reapplied within the framework of the target language and culture, and opposed to the literal transference of the original work’s most superficial aspects of content and form. Thus, translation could also be likened to the interpretation given to a piece of music by a musician or performer, which could potentially vary infinitely. As noted by Thelma Médici Nóbrega (2006), transcreation is the invention of a new poem extrapolated from an old one, methodologically similar to Ezra Pound’s modernist versions of Provençal, Chinese, and Latin poetry. The De Campos approach, however, is quite different from

---

⁹ From “Cultural Landscape: An Invitation to a Voyage” by Francisco de Carvalho Dias (translated by David Auerbach) in Rumo a Navegantes / Approaching Navegantes, Maria Cristina Wolff de Carvalho, ed. 2014.
Pound’s—which has also been broadly criticized due to his lack of source-text cultural and linguistic knowledge—since it posits a revalorization of cultural identity by appropriating works from within the dominant Western canon, which are accordingly digested and rewritten.

Transcreative strategies are not meant to imply reckless abandon. Translating scholarly or art-related texts is also not the same as translating poetry, even if the former can contain elements or large samplings of the latter. Much in the same way that a translator must follow a script, so does any scholarly author. In an ideal world, poets would translate poets and artists or art scholars would translate art texts (even if the poet-translator often finds it difficult to expunge his or her own unique poetic voice in such processes). What is exceptional, however, about monolingual museum translations is that the “original” text is often erased entirely.

An example of the often highly transformative process that occurs in the production of museum texts. Taken from initial edits to a critical essay on the production of Spanish- and Portuguese-influenced art in colonial Asia. Furthermore, essays created and submitted for use in catalogues may never see a published life of their own beyond the translation, which is often quite different from what the original author created. This leads to a very unique situation, one which even Gentzler (1993) may not have considered when describing deconstructionist approaches:

What if one theoretically reversed the direction of thought and posited the hypothesis that the original text is dependent upon the translation? What if one suggested that, without translation, the original ceased to exist? What if the very definition of a text’s meaning was determined not by the original, but by the translation? […] What if the ‘original’ has
no fixed identity that can be aesthetically or scientifically determined but rather changes each time it passes into translation? (pp. 144-145).

Several museums in Puerto Rico follow a rigorous approach to textual preparation, translation, and presentation. There is, however, a tendency here and elsewhere to apply greater focus on the source-language text. This is unfortunate since both texts must communicate complex ideas, ones that may even be more difficult to grapple with for the translator than the text author, especially if they involve elusive culturally specific concepts or realities, aspects that are sometimes deemed “untranslatable.” As Nida observes, “differences between cultures may cause more severe complications for the translator than do differences in language structure” (p. 140). Such culturally specific concepts can include localized designations of flora or fauna, geography, historical events, literature, cuisine, music, sports, the media, political slogans, colloquialisms, regionalisms, or other perhaps more complicated sociohistorical aspects, and can extend from lexical content to ideologies and the immeasurable residue of the collective imagination. Directly translating terms such as ceiba, higuero, or mamey as silk cotton tree (kapok), Crescentia or mammee apple may often seem inadequate or even confusing for the target readership and may require explicitation or further contextualization, in addition to inclusion of the source-language word. These direct translations may even be seen as lexical “colonizations.” Ostensibly straightforward toponyms, such as Machuchal or Cerrro Maravilla, or the English-language quip “Such is life,” will fail to resonate with a public unversed in modern Puerto Rican history or popular culture. An interesting example can be drawn from the wall text accompanying a self-portrait exhibited at the Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico. The English source text by Edward J. Sullivan attempts to interpret/translate various salient elements in the composition, some of which are culturally specific to Puerto Rico: “This is a fantasy portrait of the celebrated Spanish court painter Luis Paret y Alcázar, shown standing in a misty landscape and dressed as a jíbaro, or country field worker of mixed race.” The Spanish translation of this same line considerably modifies part of the text by eliminating all references to race: “Este es un retrato de fantasía del célebre pintor de la corte española Luis Paret y Alcázar. Aparece de pie en un paisaje neblinoso y vestido de jíbaro, o campesino.”

10 Wall text for Self-Portrait by Luis Paret y Alcázar, from El impresionismo y el Caribe: Francisco Oller y su mundo transatlántico, Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico, 2016.
The translational negotiations which Levine invokes require time, patience, and effort on the part of the author and the translator. The appearance of parallel descriptive panel texts or catalogue essays in both Spanish and English, as noted earlier, can lead to various constraints, many stemming from the tendency to adhere to a more literal translational strategy, since any divergence may be perceived as an act of “hyper-creativity.” These parallel texts—virtually joined at the hip—may also cause other frictions and resentments of a political or cultural nature among many viewers/readers, reminding them, again, of unsolicited forms of hybridity. Yet absent the provision of a meticulously crafted translation—one that respects (or questions, as appropriate) and fluently transmits information, ideologies, and viewpoints across cultures, audiences, belief systems, and writing traditions—culturally linked interpretation and dissemination potentially end within our borders or behind the doors of our cultural institutions, thus leaving the task of articulating an immensely rich cultural narrative to less understanding or competent hands.

In a recent interview, Dutch photographer Thieu Riemen stated the following:

I believe that the photographic image is only really capable of revealing the superficial or surface level of things. Thus, as a tool, the medium is somewhat limited in its capacity to comprehensively and accurately document [...] In photography, there is always the potential for some discrepancy between what we see and what is actually conveyed. Therefore, we often still need the aid of storytelling or language to elaborate on subjects and what is actually being viewed in images. (Nemeth, para. 9)

It is certainly accepted that artistic creation forms an essential part of Puerto Rico’s cultural heritage. Returning to the beginning of this essay, it is also understood that visual art represents an interpretation/translation of external/internal realities. That translation is decoded in written language through the gloss provided by art criticism and commentary, thereby creating an ongoing dialogue that seeks to expand an already existing epistemological enterprise. Perhaps it should also be understood that translation itself also constitutes an essential and inseparable component of this dialogic process.
Spear Torres. *La dualidad borinca* (Borincan Duality). Santurce es Ley (SEL6), 2016. (Photograph: David Auerbach)
REFERENCES


Abstract

Contrary to the majority of authors who translate themselves, Rosario Ferré and Pedro Juan Soto returned to their native land after living abroad. They are in great contrast: the first is the daughter of a governor who defended statehood, and the second was a militant campaigner for independence; she is a Magical Realist, and he a Neo-Realist; she rewrites her texts constantly, and he remains fixed in his aims; she is recognized internationally, and he is better known on the local level; she belongs to the Generation of the ‘70’s, and he is of the Generation of the ‘50’s. Metaphor from the world of books is a forte of Ferré, and the ability to translate as an insider is one of Soto’s significant achievements.

Keywords: self-translation, feminism, Magic Realism, Realism, Rosario Ferré, Pedro Juan Soto

Resumen

A diferencia de la mayoría de los autores que se autotraducen, Rosario Ferré y Pedro Juan Soto regresaron a su tierra natal, Puerto Rico, después de vivir en el extranjero. Los contrastes entre ellos son marcados: ella, hija de un gobernador que defendía la estadidad federada; él, un independentista militante. La obra de ella se inscribe en el realismo mágico; la de él, en el neorealismo. Ella reescribe sus textos constantemente; él mantiene los suyos inalterados. Ella pertenece a la generación de 1970 y él a la de 1950. Las metáforas de origen libresco son un punto fuerte de la escritura de Ferré, y la capacidad para traducir como un insider, uno de los mayores logros de Soto.

Palabras clave: autotraducción, feminismo, realismo mágico, realismo, Rosario Ferré, Pedro Juan Soto
In contrast to the usual pattern of self-translators, who begin the process after they have moved away from their roots—Samuel Beckett from Ireland to France, Vladimir Nabokov from Russia to England and the United States—Rosario Ferré and Pedro Juan Soto began translating their own works after they came home to Puerto Rico. One could hardly find a greater contrast between two writers within a small geographic space: one the daughter of former Governor Luis Ferré, prominent campaigner for United States statehood, the other a militant independentista; one a Magical Realist, the other a Neo-Realist; one ever rewriting her protean identity, the other consistent in his ideology; one well known outside Puerto Rico, the other not so well known; one from the Generation of the ‘70’s, the other in the Generation of the ‘50’s. Focusing on narrative, the following essay will explore translations by both of these authors, paying special attention to technique. It makes comparisons between texts by different translators, as well as comparisons between source texts and translations.

Although Pedro Juan Soto’s novels and short stories have proved popular among assigned texts in Puerto Rican schools, his translation activity is virtually unknown. How was it that he took on this task? In an interview that I conducted with Kal Wagenheim, he provided the interesting details as to how these translations came to be. Wagenheim was a journalist who wanted to learn Spanish, but instead of attending classes and memorizing paradigms out of grammar books, he decided that it would be more interesting to translate a Puerto Rican novel. Everyone told him that Manuel Zeno Gandía’s La charca was the best-known Puerto Rican novel, and in fact quite exciting. He jumped in and never gave up. Then he contacted the most recent publisher of the novel in hopes of finding a proofreader for his efforts. The publisher replied, indicating that Pedro Juan Soto, who did his undergraduate and master’s degree in New York, was the most perfectly bilingual person he knew. Surprisingly, Soto agreed to take on Wagenheim’s translation of La charca, and finished correcting it within two weeks. He and Wagenheim then launched the English-language San Juan Review, where Pedro Juan Soto would act as short story editor.

Modestly enough, Soto only selected three of his own stories for publication within the magazine: “The Innocents” ‘Los inocentes’ 3 (7), (September 1966): 21-22, reprinted by Barbara Howes in the anthology From the Green Antilles: Writing of the Caribbean (NY: Macmillan, 1966) and again in Wagenheim’s Cuentos: An Anthology of Short Stories from Puerto Rico (NY:
Two Puerto Rican Writers Translating Themselves


All three of these stories are about displaced persons. In the story “The Innocents,” a Puerto Rican mother is living in New York. Since being a mother is her most important mission in life, she refuses to place her son, who suffers from Down Syndrome, into institutional care. Many critics have repeated the opinion of René Marqués that “Los inocentes” is indebted to William Faulkner’s novel The Sound and the Fury, which opens with a golf game being narrated in stream of consciousness style by a boy with Down Syndrome. But another influence could be Gustave Flaubert’s “Un coeur simple” (‘A Simple Heart’), which is about a girl with mental problems who wants to become her pet parakeet, since she understands God to be a bird. In “That Fragrance of Long Ago,” a Bostonian supports herself in San Juan with an artificial flower shop, a reaction against the concrete jungle of urban development. She experiences not only a language divide, but the loneliness of old age, with her husband dead and her son about to leave to study in Florida. In the third story, “The Champ,” a young Puerto Rican man is an alien in New York and an outsider to his peers as well, because he has not yet proved himself.

Victoria Ortiz’s translation is better known, because she published the entire collection of Pedro Juan Soto’s first short stories, Spiks, in 1973. She goes much further than Pedro Juan Soto in making the language colloquial, by mixing Spanish with English, by providing phonetic transcription, and by having the characters make grammatical mistakes in English. But parts of the text can be easily misunderstood, especially by those who are unfamiliar with Spanish. This is because those words that are retained from the source text are not italicized, and unintentional bilingual puns result. For example, the child asks in Spanish for pan. Soto and Howes translate it as “bread,” but when Victoria Ortiz leaves it as “pan,” the monolingual English reader cannot understand what a cooking vessel has to do with the pigeons that the child is watching and would like to become. His sister, Hortensia, who wants the child taken away, uses double negatives and non-standard vocabulary that suggest she is of lower socioeconomic status. Ortiz says, “Don’ start that again, mama. Nothin ain gonna happen to him. They’ll take good care of him and it don’ cost us nothin’” (p. 43). In contrast, Soto and Howes say,
“Don’t start that again, Mama. Nothing’ll happen to him. They’ll take good care of him and it won’t cost us a cent” (p. 8l). Ortiz’s cue probably came from the characteristic suppression of s and d and substitution of r for l in Soto’s original text: “No empieceh otra veh, mama”. “No le va pasal na. Lo cuidan bien y no nobs cuenha” (1956, p. 44). However, the pronunciation in this passage seems regional and relaxed more than anything else. Soto and Howes achieve colloquialism with the image “a cent,” rather than bad grammar; Ortiz’s character seems selfish and cheap by comparison.

The story “That Fragrance of Long Ago” also shows a concern with the transcription of living speech. Pedro Juan Soto has been given credit for this work. As stated in the original translation, “The English-language translation of this month’s story was done by the author, with minor corrections by Kal Wagenheim” (p. 37). When speaking on the telephone, the character Florence Charing mispronounces Spanish in a typically Anglo way, identifying her shop as “Hogar de las Flores” (p. 34), beginning the phrase with an aspirated ‘h’ and putting an accent on the wrong syllable. She rattles off the available flower types in a fast mishmash: “rosagladiolas, jasminacacias, crisan-temoamapolas, pascuagirasoles” (1961, p. 54). This is rendered into English as, “gladioliroses, jasminacacias, hibischrysanthemums, poinsettia-sunflowers.” But trinitaria (p. 58), known in English as “bougainvillea,” is translated “pansy” (p. 36), which is neither a tropical plant nor a towering shrub. The aptly named Florence is more punctilious in the English translation, eating her lunch promptly at noon, rather than “at lunchtime” as in Spanish (p. 33). She has more of the Protestant work ethic in English because her ritual tea is said to be “invigorating” (p. 34) rather than reconfortante (p. 52). When her lazy local helper replies “Sf” to an order, she corrects him to “Sí, señorita,” (p. 55); he repeats, “Sí, señorita,” and she gives up correcting him. In English this is rendered, “Yes, m’am,” corrected to, “Yes, mum” (p. 35). The former sounds Southern American and the latter British working class. A proper Bostonian of her age would not say “God” (p. 35) and “Christ” (p. 36) as a frequent interjection, even though Dios and Cristo (pp. 55, 58) come from the mouths of elderly Spanish-speaking ladies. Starting the story with Gertrude Stein’s “A rose is a rose is a rose” reveals what may have instigated Soto’s story in the first place. Mrs. Charing offers a lot of her artificial merchandise for one real rose worn in the hair of a Puerto Rican girl.

Included in Spiks, and illustrated by Lorenzo Homar, “The Champ” is the story that Soto is most likely to have translated entirely on his own. José
Emilio Gonzalez judged its capturing of Puerto Rican speech so perfectly a rarity, writing: “en muy pocas veces hemos tenido un escritor que supiera capturar tan bien el habla del pueblo” (in very few instances have we had a writer who knew how to capture the speech of the common people so well’) (October-December 1957, p. 93). Various passages confirm this statement. For example, “¿Quiubo, men? ‘Wha’ happen, men?” (pp. 66-7) is perfect in both Spanish and English. Pilemielda has it all—the Anglicism “pile,” the Puerto Rican l for r, the easy profanity of teenage boys calling one another mierda (‘shit’). Soto’s translation is more colloquially convincing in its phonetic transcription than that of Ortiz. He writes, “You t’ink a pile of crap like you gonna call me a cheata?” (pp. 74-5). Ortiz, on the other hand, writes, “You think a pile uh shit like you can call me a cheat?” (p. 68).

From this New York Hispanic idiolect we move to the technical vocabulary of the pool hall, with words like taco, ‘cue;’ mingo, ‘cue ball;’ and tronera, ‘pocket:’

The cue made a last swing over the green felt, hit the cue ball and cracked it against the fifteen ball. The stubby, yellowish hands remained motionless until the ball went “clomp” into the pocket and then raised the cue until it was diagonally in front of the acned, fatuous countenance: the tight little vaselined curl fell tidily over the forehead, the ear clipped a cigarette, the glance was oblique and mocking, and the mustache’s scarce fuzz had been accentuated with pencil.

Victoria Ortiz, in her translation of this portrait of the reigning rival pool hall champion Gavilán, has a more feminine narrative voice, which is removed from the style of the dialogue. She calls the hands “plump,” not “stubby”; writing, “his cigarette was tucked jauntily behind an ear,” instead of following the Hemingway-like flat brevity of the Spanish, as Soto does (p. 63). In addition, Ortiz does not sustain the technical pool hall vocabulary throughout. At the height of play, Soto translates “Caramboleó la doce a la
tronería” as “He caromed the twelve in” (pp. 72-3), whereas she says, “He can-
noned the twelve ball into the pocket” (p. 67). One of the differences is that Ort-
iz uses longer sentences and a higher level of diction for the commentary. Compare, “the three-day beard, seeming to confound the ill-humor on his face and not succeeding,” with Soto’s phrase, “the three-day beard tried to camoufla-
g the face’s ill temper, but didn’t make it,” for the original “la barba de tres días pretendía enmarañar el malhumor del rostro y no lo lograba” (p. 63; pp. 66-7).

Another difference between these two translations is that Ortiz uses pho-
etic spelling to a greater degree in dialogue. “You seen it, right?” ‘Uht-
edeh lo han vihto, ¿veldá?’ says Soto (pp. 72-73), Ortiz translates. “You saw’im, dinchya?” (p. 67). Without the original Spanish alongside, this is hard to decipher. The protagonist Puruco has caught Gavilán cheating by elevating himself off the floor and leaning on the pool table for a better shot. Gavilán denies it verbally and physically, ripping Puruco’s shirt while the scorekeeper slyly assents. It is in this context that Soto has Gavilán say, “An’get outta here before I kick you for good.” “Y lárgate di aquí anteb que te meta tremenda patá” (pp. 74-5). Ortiz runs four words together: “An geddoudahere fore I kick yer ass” (p. 69). Obviously, the Soto narrator identifies with the young contender, but in Victoria Ortiz’s text there is a lack of connection between the narrative voice and the dialogue.

Pedro Juan Soto’s translation of his own Spanish title from Campeones in the plural to “The Champ” in the singular is very revealing. Since even the scorekeeper was too intimidated by Gavilán to call him a cheat, Puruco thinks he has lost out to the bully, but as he walks away, he realizes he has ac-
tually won, and it is just a matter of time before his skill becomes recognized. There is only one champ. This story has only one obvious metaphor: “He crossed over to the other sidewalk, furiously kicked a beer can, his hands, from inside the pockets, pinching his body nailed to the cross of adolescence (pp. 76-7).” (Cruzó a la otra acera pateando furiosamente una lata de cerveza, las manos pellizcando, desde dentro de los bolsillos, su cuerpo clavado a la cruz de la adolescencia).

Given such an intuitive gift for language and the experience of two cul-
tures at a young enough age to learn the rules of both perfectly, why did Soto not go on translating himself? After all, he defended Puerto Rican literature in English when it was said not to be truly Puerto Rican (Ayala & Bern-
abe, 2007, p. 368, notes). It may have been part of his conscious decision to
choose Puerto Rico over the continental United States. Soto’s translation performance gives us an entirely new critical perspective on his own writing. Unlike most people who satirize the U.S., his translations prove that he was able to do so as an insider. We must look upon his impeccable cultural transplantation with great respect and with deep regret that he left so few translations.

To turn to Rosario Ferré as translator of herself is to discover a large amount of evidence that permits the exploration of her work as a translator: some dozen short stories, four novels, essays, and a collection of poetry, amply reviewed in print and subject of a significant number of Ph.D. dissertations (e.g., Hintz, 1991, Esplin 2013). She describes the act of writing as translation from what was not completely defined before. Thus translating from one language to another releases a creative force, especially when one feels trapped by traditional values.

Once her book The House on the Lagoon won the North American National Book Award in 1995, Ferré became much appreciated in the English-speaking world, but some Puerto Ricans did not like the idea that the English version was published first. Even some outside observers reacted strongly to the idea that she may have chosen to publish first in English: “unthinkable heresy [. . .] a most regrettable error in judgment, a seduction, a responding to the siren song of a multicultural, post-colonial book market” (1998, p. 162). The fact that some chapters were published in 1991-92 in El Nuevo Día would suggest it had its genesis in Spanish, but the origins of the text are complex. The full version in Spanish appeared in Barcelona under the imprint of Emecé in 1996, a year after Farrar, Straus, and Giroux published the English-language text in New York. Nevertheless, occasional turns of phrase reveal conceptualization in Spanish. For example, the narrator and writer of family history, Isabel, says of her silent mother: “I liked to sit and tell her about my things.” “Me gustaba sentarme a su lado y hablar de mis cosas” (1996, p. 204; 1997, p. 217). “My activities” would be more idiomatic.

Ferré defended herself in an interview published with Delgado Esquilín in El Nuevo Día (July 23, 1998) titled “Sea lo que sea, en cualquier status” (“Let it be, in whatever status”). At that time, she explained, “La dificultad de escribir en inglés me ayuda a profundizar más.” The unnaturalness of writing in English had made her go more deeply into the subject, perhaps analogous to Joseph Conrad writing in English after learning Polish, Russian, and French. Puerto Rico’s most famous living dramatist, Luis Rafael Sánchez,
also a prominent novelist then based in New York, had defined her writing sympathetically when her first book, *Papeles de Pandora*, appeared, as a kind of liberation through the printed word not possible to a protected Puerto Rican woman in real life: “*la palabra desencadenada y puesta a la disposición del sujeto protagónico*” (April 21-27, 1978; p. 11).

The first story within the collection, “*La muñeca menor*,” was translated by Gregory Rabassa for *Kenyon Review* 2 (1), (Winter 1980, pp. 163-67). It is very faithful to the original. Why, then, did Rosario Ferré want to do her own translation of the text, with the help of Diana Velez, in *Feminist Studies* (Summer 1986, pp. 243-49)? She makes a great many additions, and a few of them have actually been taken over from the work of Rabassa, in the characterization of *A Thousand and One Nights* by Borges—translators assimilating the work of previous translators (1995, pp. 127-72).

This essay on translation by Borges opens Ferré’s story “*El cuento envenenado*,” for which it provides the title. An old maiden aunt, suffering from a parasite the doctor could have easily cured, but prefers to continue collecting fees, makes dolls for her nieces: “*Lo único que la tía transigía en utilizar en la creación de la muñecas sin que estuviese hecho por ella, eran las bolas de los ojos*” (1976, p. 11). Rabassa translated, “The only compromise the aunt made in the creation of the dolls regarding items not of her manufacture was with the glass balls for the eyes” (p. 165). “Glass” has been added by Rabassa. Ferré also adds “glass,” plus the phrase “from the land,” writing: “The only items the aunt would agree to use in the birth of a doll that were not made by her with whatever materials came to her from the land, were the glass eyeballs” (1991, p. 3). The vicarious existence of the aunt who cannot give birth herself is made more explicit in Ferré’s translation, and the aunt’s insistence on natural materials from Puerto Rico recalls Ferré’s maternal ancestry of hacienda owners. From Rabassa, too, is the addition of the word “white” to describe the hair-bows and the technical vocabulary of the kind of cloth: “She always dressed the youngest in Swiss embroidery and the older ones in silk guipure. On their heads she would always tie the same bow wide and white and tremulous, like the breast of a dove.” Ferré’s translation and original text, respectively:

She would dress the younger ones in Swiss embroidery and the older ones in silk guipure, and on each of their heads she would tie the same bow, wide and white and trembling like the breast of a dove.
Vestía siempre a las más pequeñas de tira bordada y a las mayores de broderí colocando en la cabeza de cada una el mismo lazo abullonado y trémulo de pecho de paloma.

Since paloma can mean “pigeon” as well as “dove,” the translators may have felt it necessary to emphasize the appropriate image.

The Ferré translation makes more radical changes to imagery than does that of Rabassa. Various passages show this. For example, the son of the quack doctor comes courting the youngest niece, bearing “el mismo ramo de siemprevivas moradas” (p. 12), “the usual sprig of purple immortelles” (p. 166). Ferré’s “identical bouquet of purple forget-me-nots” is from more northern climes, a sentimental cliché in keeping with his “ostentatious tiepin of extravagant poor taste” (C, p. 5). There are many additions of detail in Ferré’s translation: “the family was nearly ruined,” “embroidered linen,” gourd tree “in the garden” (C, p. 2), rain “like watercolor” (p. 3), “fanlike” stair case, old-fashioned kid slippers “end gloves” (p. 4), ants “streaming over the piano” (p. 6). Ferré’s visual imagination elaborates ever the more richly.

The title of the original collection of short stories, Papeles de Pandora, gets dropped in favor of the title of the lead story, “The Youngest Doll.” This seems appropriate to the extent that the mythological character Pandora does not appear, while dolls do appear in several stories: “Marina and the Lion,” where the heroine was herself delivered as a doll in a box to a costume party, “Amalia,” a protected albino with a parallel existence in a wax doll, “Coppélia,” in the first section of “Sleeping Beauty,” in which the ballerina dancing the role of the mechanical doll leaps off the stage into the audience. The influence of the story “Las hortensias” by Uruguayan writer Felisberto Hernández, whom Ferré studied during her master’s coursework at the University of Puerto Rico, has been noted (Socorro Velázquez, 1996, p. 104). Amalia’s name recalls Amiliamia, a doll worshiped instead of a disabled daughter, in Carlos Fuentes’ 1964 short story “La muñeca reina.” Indeed, woman as doll has been an important theme in Latin American literature.

“Amalia,” translated by Ferré on her own, is more notable for its omissions than its additions. A non-Catholic audience must have been imagined. Once Amalia’s military uncle comes to live with them, “like an endless procession of archangels, always immaculate in their gold-braided uniforms” (p. 52), is the description of visitors, whereas specific orders of angels were enumerated in Spanish, “tronos y dominaciones” (p. 59). To Amalia, their voices sound like “praying” (p. 52), but in Spanish they are like hymns from
Pentecostal churches, “como esos himnos que se elevan por las noches de los templos pentecostales” (p. 59). Some 53 lines of “stream of consciousness,” mingling religious repetitions with military details, as filtered through the mind of the child, have been omitted in the translation. At the end, the bloody destruction by resentful servants speaks of “cabezas de mártires” (p. 65), but instead of martyrs’ heads, they are merely “empty heads” in English (p. 57).

Another noteworthy difference is that local color related to Puerto Rican food has been dropped in the translation. For example, the typical Caribbean dessert “guayaba con queso” (guava paste with cheese) (p. 60) is merely “snacks” (p. 52) in English. Gone is the pork chop “served in La Coneja, Avenida Ponce de Leon No. 009 next to Martín Fierro Restaurant” (p. 60), with “the flesh and fire of tropical fiestas, of piña colada and cocorum” (p. 61), referenced in English. The blonde doll in military uniform resembling Amalia’s uncle has his hair dyed by her using the West Indian tree “hicaco” (p. 65), but “blackberry juice” (p. 57) has been substituted in English. There is one translation slip when the “mentas blancas” (p. 61), with which Amalia’s hands are filled when seated on her uncle’s lap, are rendered not “white mints,” but “mint pasties” (p. 52). The translation conjures up a filled pastry similar to the Spanish empanadilla. But bold analogies are made by the child, such as the guests’ fingernails of “guanábana” (‘soursop’) (p. 61). Given the central importance of food that continues in Ferré novels, linked as Mikhail Bakhtin theorized to moments of crisis (Medina-Rivera, 2004, pp. 57-71), deleting these references is a significant loss.

Both English and Spanish obscenities are in the original, but removed from the translation: rival plastic dolls “25 dollars a fuck” (p. 64), or the uncle’s resentment of his uncooperative niece, “so pila de mierda descarada jódete con tu negro ahí tienes a tu pendeja muñeca” (p. 65). Is this a concession to a more puritanical culture? It could be the result of advice from a university press that envisions an undergraduate textbook, in contrast to an audience of Latin American intellectuals. In an interview with Waleska Pino-Ojeda years later, Ferré acknowledged her distress at being accused of pornography (2000).

There is no attempt to experiment with the wordplay of the original. When the doctor suggests that Amalia’s intolerance to the sun could have been inherited from an incestuous relationship, her mother considers him crazy: “INCESTO, IN-cesto, in the basket, encestó, señora, el cesto de la basura” (p. 55), with 23 lines of explanation and altercation omitted. A number of Caribbean writers famous for punning could be cited—Ana Lydia Vega, Charlotte M. Ward.
Mayra Santos, Guillermo Cabrera Infante. The latter has been ingeniously translated by Suzanne Jill Levine in *Three Trapped Tigers* and her efforts defended in *The Subversive Scribe* (1991). Ferré has given her own explanation in “On Destiny, and Translation; or, Ophelia Adrift in the C. & O. Canal,” within the same collection of her translated short stories: “[. . .] I discovered that the Spanish (and Latin American) literary tradition permits a much greater leeway for what may be called ‘play on words,’ which generally sounds frivolous and innocuous in English” (p. 157). The original Spanish ended somewhat differently: “juegos de palabras y los malabarismos lingüísticos que la tradición norteamericana contemporánea. (No diré que la inglesa o la irlandesa, donde autores como James Joyce responden a otra tradición.)” (2000, p. 153).

In other instances of translation, prices increase in English and new information is added. “When Women Love Men” has the prostitute Isabel la Negra planning to go into business with her deceased client’s wife Isabel Luberza, and the prices will increase from $50 in Spanish (p. 32) and from $100 in English (p. 142). In “The Other Side of Paradise,” world conditions are updated by the addition in English of “they were afraid to give themselves in love because their hearts were eaten up by fear of a sickness which is rampant today on the island, but which I have always taken the greatest care not to contract” (p. 82), doubtless referring to AIDS. In “The Glass Box,” some 40 new lines give a sympathetic account of the narrator’s father attempting to develop Puerto Rico (pp. 30-31), with American help. In her essay “De la ira a la ironía,” collected in *A la sombra de tu nombre*, Ferré explains that she was angry when she wrote the collection of stories *Papeles de Pandora*, but by the time she came to translate them, her priorities had changed somewhat, and her politics were no longer opposed to those of her family (p. 165).

The translation of Rosario Ferré’s first novel, *Maldito amor*, re-named *Sweet Diamond Dust*, has already been the subject of competent analysis by Hintz (1995), Beatson (1999), Mayrirck Vidal (2001), and Allatson (2002). The most obvious difference between the source text and the English translation is the suppression of anti-American comments in the latter. When Puerto Rico changes from Spanish to United States hands, “I’m too old to molt my feathers” (p. 28) is substituted for “estoy demasiado viejo para dejarme hacer gringo a la fuerza” (p. 135), which means “I’m too old to let myself be made gringo by force”. Indeed, Laura adds pro-American comments not in Spanish: “I saw that everything I had been told since childhood about the northerners who had arrived on the island a few years before was a shameful lie” (p. 67). The
English translation includes several pages of achievements including roads for buses, steel bridges, 700 schools, glass panes, penicillin, telephones, telegraph, electricity, running water. It may have been more difficult to borrow money, but there was less social snobbery, particularly for marriage (p. 72). In contrast to Ferré’s earlier translations of short stories, she has retained local foods such as fried plantain *tostones* and stuffed *alcapurrias*, with additions that nostalgically glorify holiday fare: “And presiding over all of this the fragrant suckling pig, slowly turning on its perfumed branch over the smoking embers; a golden deity sacrificed to an even greater glory of the senses” (p. 6).

In English, the town of Guamaní is given a Romantic opening: “its houses spreading their balconied verandas upon the slopes like a debutante’s brightly colored skirts, its bright-yellow cathedral, with the shimmering plume of its belfry and the red-tiled crest of its dome, preening like a bird of paradise” (p. 3). Some twenty-five lines about the Taíno Indian heritage have been added, including: “In Taíno legends, all living things on the island—men, animals, and plants alike—had been born from the sacred caves of Cacibajagua in Mount Guamaní, dwelling place of the god Yuquiyú” (p. 4).

A consistent translation practice in the work of Rosario Ferré shows her to be exactly the opposite of Pedro Juan Soto in translation technique. Instead of endeavoring to transplant common speech from one cultural context to another, she turns direct speech into indirect speech. After her husband Buenaventura’s death, Rebecca discovers their finances are precarious: “She told Petra that now, with Buenaventura gone, the family couldn’t go on paying the same salaries as before. Her daughters, nieces, and nephews would receive half of what they had been earning. Those who didn’t accept would have to go back to Las Minas” (p. 268). The Spanish-language text reads: “Ya no podemos seguir pagándoles a los sirvientes los mismos sueldos. De hoy en adelante, tus parientes recibirán la mitad de la paga por sus trabajos. Los que no acepten los nuevos términos, deberán regresarse de inmediato a Las Minas” (p. 286). When Rebecca asks her daughter Libertad about Quintín’s plans, Isabel’s grandmother Abby quotes a proverb, “La rama que se dobla no se quiebra: ese es el secreto de la supervivencia” (p. 315). In English it is merely summarized as, “Abby used to say adaptability was the secret of survival” (p. 295). The effect is to place the narrator and reader in more intimate relation because there is no stylistic disjuncture.¹

¹ Also noteworthy is that the long Spanish narrative tradition of incorporating proverbs, such as Sancho Panza’s in *Don Quixote*, has often been omitted in the English version of *La casa de la laguna*.
The evocative power of proper names apparent in such short stories as “The Glass Box”—General Electric, Frigidare, Hot Point, Sunbeam—(p. 28) has frequently been deleted in The House on the Lagoon. Quintín’s father Buenaventura waited down Calle Tanca, waving an American flag at Governor Yager’s Studebaker in Spanish, but not in English (pp. 28–9). Isabel’s father lost his wife’s investments in Pan American and Kodak stocks in Spanish (p. 265). The original manuscript by Isabel was written on a portable Smith Corona typewriter (p. 351), while running her household according to the Boston Cooking School Book, and Clorox (p. 350).

In the Spanish version, racism and class consciousness are more overtly expressed, possibly because the publisher was less concerned about political correctness, since racism is a major theme in the novel. The modern Czech architect Pavel (obviously modeled on the real Nechodoma) is wary of Buenaventura’s commission, but Rebeca convinces him in the end. Her physical appearance is key, omitted in English: “Había heredado la piel pálida y los cabellos dorados de sus antepasados de la lejana Umbría, patria de Raphael y del Perugino, y vestía una larga túnica de gasa que le daba un aspecto de ninfa” (p. 591), (‘She had pale skin and the golden hair of her ancestors in faraway Umbria, home of Raphael and Perugino, and wore a long, crepe tunic that gave her the allure of a nymph.’). Possibly Ferré did not want the most likeable and artistically avant-garde characters to be tainted with illiberal sentiments. Quintín forbids his son Ignacio to date the beautiful Esmeralda “because she’s part black” (p. 232). But in Spanish he is more cruel: “Piensa cómo te hubieras sentido, sentado a la mesa a la hora de la cena, rodeado por tus hijitos grifos” (p. 249, “Think how you would feel, seated at the table at dinnertime, surrounded by your kinky-haired little children”). The English version emphasizes historically objective statistics, such as the Bloodline Book of the parish; “They would wipe the cobwebs off the covers, blow the dust from the parchment pages, and peruse them carefully until they verified the spotlessness of the suitor’s stock” (p. 25). In the Spanish-language text, there are more details of dress that reveal status. For example, “Rebeca’s artistic friends come to their house dressed in “gasas estampada de flores” (p. 72, “crepe stamped with flowers”), merely “elegant gowns” in English (p. 57), “corbatas de pajarita de seda” (p. 72, “silk bow ties) for the men. The relatives of the male ballet dancer Tony, sitting in seats far from windows, wear “camisas de algodón y pantalones de mezclilla” (p. 188, “cotton shirts and gray pants”). The art dealer Maurice in Spanish wears “un clavel rojo en el ojal” (p. 318, “a red carnation in his lapel”).
Rather than omit local references as in the short story translations, *The House on the Lagoon* usually adds and explains them. Landmarks in Old San Juan such as San Felipe del Morro, “The Old City’s largest medieval fort, crowned with Spanish cast-iron cannons” (p. 12), and La Rogativa, commemorating the English abandoning their siege when they mistook the torches of a prayer vigil for an army (p. 335), enliven the scene. Luis Palés Matos’ significance to local literature with the publication of *Tuntún de pasa y grifería* in 1937 is made explicit: “in which black ethnic roots were regarded as fundamental to Puerto Rican culture” (p. 57). Foods are explained: carajitos, “shots of rum in their coffee” (p. 31), and mofongo, “green plantain mashed with pork rind” (p. 307). But changing foods to English seems unnecessary: The heroine narrator’s shoulders are compared to “cream-puff” (p. 28) instead of “natilla de caramelo” (p. 40, “caramel custard”), well known in the English-speaking world. Or why must brazo gitano” (p. 118, “jelly roll”) be changed to “ladyfingers” (p. 104) in the repertory with which the widowed grandmother Abby supports herself? Some metaphors have been made more northern as well. Esmeralda’s dress clings to her like “un celaje” (p. 245, “a cloud”), but like “snow” in English (p. 229). The surf where the half-caste son Willie is conceived is “cuarzo líquido” (p. 336, “liquid quartz”) in Spanish, but “snow” again in English (p. 315). An abandoned black baby has bones of a lizard in Spanish, a sparrow in English (p. 416, p. 393).

In some instances, the idiom has been changed even when it existed in English. Buenaventura demands that his children “ganarse el pan con el sudor de su frente” (p. 83, “earn their bread with the sweat of their brows”), which becomes “earn his keep” (p. 68). Quintín envies his wife’s leisure to write, since he has had to “agarrar al toro por los cuernos” (p. 200, “take the bull by the horns”) in order to support his family, “bite the bullet” (p. 187) in English. A great many details about the American take-over of Puerto Rico have been added to the English translation: President Wilson’s granting of American citizenship (p. 15), the founding of the first public schools (p. 17), labor laws (p. 92). The narrator’s praise of the Ivy League women’s college Vassar (perhaps related to Ferré’s Wellesley experience) is more detailed in English: “Its brilliant professors and its liberated students” (p. 185).

The novel *Vecindarios excéntricos* (1999b), published simultaneously in English as *Eccentric Neighborhoods* (1999a), is in a totally different tone than Rosario Ferré’s preceding fiction. The first three parts appeared in the University of Puerto Rico newspaper *Diálogo* from September 1989 to February
1990. There is a sense of humor and optimism, and some characteristics of past translations can be observed. For example, details of Catholic liturgy disappear when the Freemason Chaguito agrees to a wedding with “misa nupcial cantada, bendición papal, confesión y comunión […] monaguillo y campanilla” (p. 213, “sung nuptial mass, papal benediction, confession and communion, altar bowl and bells” (p. 212), but this happens in Spanish only. As identified in other texts that are discussed above, direct speech is changed to indirect speech. Aunt Venecia favors her son Rodrigo because he looks like her, and “Cuando seas grande podrás hacer todo lo que yo no he podido hacer” (p. 345), rendered, “When Rodrigo grew up he would be able to do all the things Venecia had never been able to do” (p. 265), because he was male.

In addition, racist comments have been toned down in English. The narrator questions why a Radcliffe-educated Newport heiress would marry Uncle Ulises, “un pituco medio sambo” (p. 237, “a dashing young man, half black”). Although sambo exists in English, it is no longer politically correct, so “an odd little mustachioed Latin lover” (p. 180) is substituted.

Spanish terms are translated more frequently than in other texts translated by Ferré. His family returns to Emajaguas in December for the zafra “—the Plata’s sugarcane harvest” (p. 12). Pasteles, defined as “Caribbean tamales of mashed green plantains and spiced ground pork” (p. 24), are brought to the table without their banana-leaf wrapping, so as not to soil one’s fingers and the lace tablecloth. Aunt Valeria bemoans Christmas trees replacing nacimientos, “with their shepherds and Holy Family carved in wood or in painted gesso, kneeling in front of Jesusito” (p. 32). Proverbs are translated at times: “El que guarda siempre encuentra”—“He who saves always finds,” answered by Aunt Artemisa’s “El que da lo que tiene a pedir se atiene”—“If you give away what you own, one day you’ll have to beg” (p. 207). Picking up a street-vender as wife, Ulises sings the popular song. “A la orilla de un palmar, estaba una joven bella, su boquita de coral, y sus ojitos de estrella, al pasar le pregunté, que quién estaba con ella, y me contestó llorando, sola vivo en el palmar”—“At the edge of a palm grove I met a beautiful girl, her lips like coral, her eyes like stars. I asked who was with her and she answered, crying, “I live alone among the palms” (p. 262). This is a far better solution than omitting crucial local contexts.

The most readily perceptible change between the Spanish and English versions concerns the old photographs that serve as illustrations. A sort of semiotic translation, a different picture of President Theodore Roosevelt,
introduces chapter 26. For “El presidente Roosevelt llega a la isla,” he is shown on horseback as a heroic Rough Rider in the Spanish-American War that ceded Puerto Rico to the US, but “President Roosevelt Visits the Island” has him crossing a bridge in a new role, with dignitaries. The English version has exchanged the order of the pictures for chapters 40 and 53, starting with the famous striped Ponce fire station and ending with an informally dressed man in a jaunty hat for “Fosforito Vernet’s Last Spark,” Grandfather “Match” being proud of serving as a fireman.

As Vecindarios excéntricos takes place mainly in the countryside, nature is often personified, and this is increased to mythological proportions in English. When the memoir opens, Río Loco “reared up like a muddy demon and tumbled this way and that over the dusty plain enraged at everything that stood in its way (p. 3). The Emajaguas River is said to be “more a creek than a river except when the heavy rain turned it into a dragon’s tail of mud” (p. 13). The tile veranda of the house at Emajaguas “was like a magic carpet on which one could fly away to Europe or to the United States. Planters full of ferns encircled the veranda, the curly green leaves melting into the blue of the sea as if the house itself were about to set forth on a voyage” (p. 31).

Though certain themes dominate Rosario Ferré’s work—the fall of privileged families, the escape of the younger generation of women, art in relation to politics, the positive contributions of minorities—the manner of their treatment has been ever evolving, inspired by creativity developed in the act of self-translation. In her case, an audience beyond the confines of one island has been crucial. She changes her own metaphor tellingly: “Toda escritura es, en cierta manera, una traducción;... El traductor de un texto literario actúa como el lente telescópico de su autor; tiene como meta lograrla comunicación a larga distancia. In English, she states: “In a way all writing is a translation... the translator can be said to be a shaman, a person dedicated to deciphering conflicting human texts, searching for the final unity of meaning in speech” (“Ofelia a la deriva en la aguas de la memoria,” 2001, p. 151). The scientific metaphor in Spanish becomes Magical in English, not objectively visual, but soothingly verbal. Rosario Ferré has become a negotiator between cultures.

The comparison between Pedro Juan Soto and Rosario Ferré as self-translators is as much a sociological as a literary study. Issues of class, race, and gender present themselves constantly in the work of both of these authors. Ferré forefronts them more openly than Soto, criticizing her own origins in particular. Exaggerated displays of destruction show her affini-
ties with Magical Realism. Soto’s understated pathos is a Neo–Realism with which the reader cannot fail to identify. Rosario Ferré’s contribution has been recognized, but not always compared with that of other writers. Pedro Juan Soto’s self-translations deserve more recognition.
REFERENCES


Two Puerto Rican Writers Translating Themselves


INTRODUCTION

Most of what we know today about the history and culture of Caribbean grassroots folk is mediated by those writing about it, in many cases professional social scientists. As “professional strangers” writing from the field or from printed primary sources, our publications attempt to portray people in Caribbean cities, rural towns, or other sites of sociocultural exchange. Yet, for all the empathy social scientists may create with a person...
or cultural group, or the profound knowledge that we acquire about a place, our representation of Caribbean life remains that of someone other than the people really living the lives described in our texts.

Moreover, the histories we construct are produced using sources that are also mediated by its producers: journalists writing newspaper articles, government officials writing letters, or police officers reporting daily events. These articles, letters, or reports may refer to the lives, and even the feelings, of persons that had little to say about what was written about them. And yet, it is that rendition—by the journalist, the civil servant, or the police—that will permanently describe that person in the eyes of the interpreting social scientist reading the source years later (Trouillot 1995). We have developed methodological tools and strategies to deal with this dilemma, but it remains true that we rarely have access to the voice of Caribbean grassroots social actors in their own terms.

There are notable exceptions, such as the life history of Don Taso Zayas in Puerto Rico, written in collaboration with Sidney W. Mintz (1974 [1960]), and the voices of the Saamakas from Suriname through the multiple works of Richard and Sally Price (R. Price 1983, 1990, 2008; R. Price and S. Price, 1991, 2003). In the Anglophone Caribbean, Erna Brodber collected the voices of dozens of Jamaicans of African descent that are archived and served as basis for her publications (Brodber 2003, 2004). Lambros Comitas has made available the manuscript of Rastafarian Mortimo Planno, which is entitled “The Earth Most Strangest Man” (1969). In Cuba, there is the testimony and literary account of Esteban Montejo by Miguel Barnet (1996 [1966]) and the story of Afro-Cuban woman “Reyita” written by Daisy Rubiera (1997).

But even these contributions have been taken to task by researchers who question the selective filter of the professional scholar trying to provide an autochthonous narrative (Scott 1991) or openly challenge some of these testimonies with historical evidence (Zeuske 1997; Barnet 1997). Sometimes, these questionings and critiques serve to improve and advance knowledge about subaltern social actors and open new lines of inquiry. In fact, the challenges to social scientific representation and critiques of it have heightened the social awareness of scholars who have, in response, refined their research practices.

Our efforts to produce knowledge about marginal social groups should not stop because our representation might not be accurate. No represen-
TRANSLATING DIFFERENCE

RELIGION, ETHNICITY, AND RACE IN RURAL CUBA

tation is. We should continue to work in generating knowledge, particularly about subaltern groups and actors whose perspectives are erased, overlooked, or marginalized in the historical and anthropological records. When possible, we should also create outlets for the “voices” of common (or perhaps uncommon!) folk from the Caribbean and opportunities for their dissemination.

The texts that follow, and their translation, emerge precisely out of the commitment to disseminate the “voice” of one social actor detached from what we may call the headlines of history. These texts are part of the work produced by a young man in Cuba, Juan Manuel Picabea (“Manolo”) during his three-year collaboration with U.S. anthropologist Carl Withers (1900–1970). In them, Picabea reported to Withers about daily happenings in Mayajigua, a rural town in central Cuba where Withers did his fieldwork. Originally written in Spanish, the translation to English does not escape the predicament of representation outlined above, recalling the traditional Italian phrase “Traduttore, traditore.” But even with the challenges that this translation might face in mediating Picabea’s “voice,” the result is a mediated whisper rather than complete silence. Without the publication of this translation, his accounts would remain in an archive for the sole use of those literate in Spanish.

Juan Manuel Picabea (or “Manolo”) was neither a high profile politician or businessman, nor a labor leader or a famous artist. He was not poised to appear in any political, economic, or cultural history. A sociologist would not be able to identify him as the main actor of a social event of interest. Picabea was a twenty-two year old Cuban, growing up in the rural town of Mayajigua, who happened to be there when Carl Withers decided to do fieldwork in the Cuban north-central countryside in the 1940s.

Withers was a writer who studied anthropology at Columbia University and authored the pioneering community study Plainville, U.S.A. under the pseudonym James West ([1945] 1945). He never finished his Ph.D. but continued to pursue his anthropological interests by developing a proposal for ethnography in Cuba sponsored by the Viking Fund (now the Wenner-Gren Foundation) and the American Philosophical Society (Giovannetti 2015). Withers met Picabea through Luis René Escobar, who appears to have been an early assistant to him in Mayajigua. Withers offered work to Picabea, paying him one dollar per hour or thirty dollars a month for written reports consisting of his observations on daily life.
A man in his early twenties, Picabea had training as a typist, worked as the local correspondent for the Havana newspaper *El Mundo*, and helped in Mayajigua’s post office. His skills as a typist uniquely qualified him for the job Withers offered him, and they began joint trips in the town and the vicinities (e.g., Nela Sugar Mill). The first written report by Picabea is from April 1948 when Withers was still in the field, but most of the reports were written and sent by mail to Withers, whose main address was in New York. And when we say *most* of the reports it is because Picabea continued writing from August 1948 when Withers left Cuba up until August 1951. Overall, he produced more than 1,500 single-spaced typewritten pages of individual reports that piled up to become what is known now as “The Manolo Manuscript” (Brown and Giovannetti 2009: 181-184).

These individual reports followed the model Withers used with his collaborators in his Plainville research, in which he recruited them to write “autobiographies” of varied length “under the general assignment of ‘I Remember…”’ (West, 1945: xiv). With titles such as “What happened today,” Picabea followed that procedure, but he also generated his own titles, including “My life is a disaster,” “María and I,” and “Mayajigua in times of guaracha.” At times, Withers would request Picabea to expand his writing about particular events such as the *parrandas* during the Christmas holidays, or those dealing with themes such as Santería and flying saucers (UFOs).

Another possible layer of mediation for Picabea’s “voice” also emerges here, given that the texts were produced as part of a working relationship (with payment) between an anthropologist coming from a country which exerted extraordinary political and economic power over Cuba. Even with this in mind, readers of the extracts from the “Manolo Manuscript” that are translated here will notice that Picabea’s liberty went beyond the development of his own titles. While we recognize that “The Manolo Manuscript” would not exist if Withers would have not recruited Picabea and instructed him concerning what to do, we are certain that Picabea’s assignment—and how he did it—was very much *his* making. The writing he produced is in many complex, even empowering, ways a representation of his own story, his own version of events, and his own perspective on the society and culture of Mayajigua.

Picabea’s appropriation of his writing assignment is perhaps more evident in several reports that are autobiographical. He understood well that Withers was an anthropologist who arrived in Cuba to study Mayajigua,
interested in knowing everything about human beings and their progress. Therefore, according to Picabea’s logic, any exposition of his own life would assist Withers precisely because he was one of the Cuban individuals in which the anthropologist was interested. It is as if he had readily assumed his position as “subject.”

Picabea also saw his relationship with Withers beyond their collaboration through work. He considered the foreign anthropologist his best friend. Picabea perceived Withers as sincere, polite, and educated, all qualities that generated trust and allowed him to open up to Withers about his personal issues. Under the confidentiality of their arrangement, Picabea would express openly his feelings, emotions, economic frustrations, and his feelings for María. Thus, while the relationship between the anthropologist and the assistant/informant is one mediated by power (which we should be aware of when assessing the data), in this case it is also a relationship of trust. As such, it raises a different set of issues to ponder in our reading of Picabea’s texts, namely, the sincerity and authenticity anchored in that trust. Picabea himself noted once:

My dear friend, we have met one another as a matter of coincidence or maybe, yes, by the works of destiny; from the first times of our good friendship, we have always appreciated and considered each other as true friends. I have always seen in you more than my boss in work, a true and sincere friend of which I have only two… that is why I wish with all my heart that even when our work concludes, our correspondence can continue active because it is a way to cultivate our great friendship which will increase more each time (Picabea, 1948-51: 1466).

Simultaneously, for Picabea, his paid work collecting information was a way to improve his life of economic hardship. The combination of earning a living and doing something that also served his personal needs probably explains why he was so invested in and responsible about his assignment.

Since I got my work [with Withers], I have tried to do it with the utmost possible care, I have invested much interest in it and always do it before all the other things [...]. I might not go any place or be able to go

---

2 On the relationship between Withers and Picabea and the materials they produced see the essay by Olivia Maria Gomes da Cunha (2015).
to the movies like others do, but my work is primary over everything else, because with it, Thanks to God, as my teacher has already told me, I am solving my economic problems, which were already pretty serious (Picabea 1948-51: 434).

With this commitment, Picabea set out to perform his duties. His strategies to obtain information for his reports were varied. He would go out to observe what was happening in the town at different hours and locations carrying “a fountain pen and a small block to take notes on whatever information would be possible for me.” Later, he would expand the data collected as much as possible into a “long and detailed report” (Picabea 1948-51: 40). On other occasions, he would go out with the intention of doing interviews and paying close attention to people’s conversations. He frequented places such as the post office and the large drugstore where people and employees would talk about things happening in the town. Picabea’s own description of his practice suggests rigor and patience:

Whenever I am listening to a conversation, I listen as much as possible and observe carefully to be able to write clearly and provide all kinds of details, since without observation, you cannot know that which is not said with words… (Picabea, 1948-51: 920, our emphasis)

I am going to write everything, without concealing the smallest detail however insignificant it may be, without leaving anything that comes to my mind unwritten, in order to accomplish a perfect description (Picabea, 1948-51: 826, our emphasis).

Paradoxically, for all of his emphasis in careful observation, Picabea was facing the challenge of gradually losing his eyesight. That condition, however, did not stop him from continuing his observation and his writing.

One thing certain about the “Manolo Manuscript” is that Picabea wrote providing all kinds of information, and he clearly did not leave many of his observations unwritten. As readers go through the selected reports that are translated below, it will be evident that some of them are loaded with so much detail that at times the flow of the story told or the actions of an inci-

---

3 This is not that different than the system used in traditional ethnographic practice (Emerson, Fretz, Shaw 1995: 39-65).
This tendency, along with Picabea’s own writing style in Spanish (which includes non-standard usage), would make many think twice before attempting the translation of a text as complex as the “Manolo Manuscript.” But once again, our intention is to make this unique source of Cuban pre-Revolutionary history accessible to a wider readership.

The eight reports translated here are only a very small fraction of the 1,515 pages of the “Manolo Manuscript.” Remarkably, the author managed to type all of these even though he was visually impaired. While they by no means reflect the totality of Picabea’s written legacy, they certainly touch upon some of the principal topics he tackled in his amateur ethnography: religion, ethnicity, and race. Their translation as English texts can serve students of anthropology, history, Cuban Studies, and Caribbean and Latin American Studies more generally.

We hope the publication of these excerpts will contribute to the achievement of several goals. First, we hope it can open an outlet for a “voice” of a common and unprivileged Caribbean person telling his own version of what it was like to live in rural Cuba before the 1959 Revolution. Second, this work will provide a deserved space to its author, someone who invested a lot of time and energy in contemplating and writing about Cuban rural culture. Third, this work should make Picabea’s unique narrative available to a wider audience, one that extends beyond those scholars who consistently complete research on Cuba but still includes those with interests in Cuba’s pre-Revolutionary rural and cultural history. Fourth, we hope that it can serve social science students working on religion and culture in the Hispanic Caribbean from an anthropological perspective by providing them with an unusual and distinct perspective on various topics. Finally, we hope that our translation might (just might) generate interest in the “Manolo Manuscript” as a primary source about grassroots Caribbean life, prompting others to work with it, use it in their research projects, and maybe even translate other sections of it.

---

4 In addition to Picabea’s preference for an extremely charged narrative he often uses long sentences with many commas. Some full paragraphs consist of only one sentence. Our translation preserves this aspect of his writing, but at times, we have been made edits so that the text makes sense in English.
WHAT I HAVE DONE

I, Juan Manuel Picabea and Niebla, of the white race, of 21 years of age, and neighbor of Mayajigua, was born in Jiquí, Province of Camagüey, on the 27th day of the month of September of 19[26], my father then was one of the first merchants of that locality, one of the components of the commercial firm Paliza, Picabea, and Co., which owns a sawmill and cartwright workshop in existence there and furthermore was also one of the owners of the small farm “La Patricia” [a colonia], one of the largest in the locality and his capital was approximately $24,000.00 (TWENTY-FOUR THOUSAND PESOS); because of his behavior he was, one of the most valued men in the region.

I was raised with my grandparents because they always wanted me to be with them, and my father never opposed it, because by all means he tried to please them. He gave me clothes, shoes, and everything I might have needed, so that my grandfather didn’t have to cover those expenses. [My grandfather] was a poor man, only the overseer [mayoral] of my father’s small farm, and as one would think, a high salary isn’t earned in this position.

At the age of 10 I went to school for the first time and continued going until I was 15, staying, as is natural, with my grandparents until the age of 17.

At the beginning of 1944, I went to Esmeralda with my mother, for the purpose of studying music, which I started with professor Juan A. Rojas, then director of the Municipal Band. I could not continue my studies in that field, due to my poor eyesight, and could only study 6 months.

On March 20, 1944, I came to my father’s house when he called me to be with him for the purpose of studying typewriting which I started the next day after being with him; I studied during the morning, and in the afternoon I assisted my dad in his work in the workshop where I did not earn anything, since I was only interested in helping my father, which I never missed an opportunity to do, and I continue to help him.

5 “Manolo Manuscript,” N.D. [somewhere between March 28, and May 20, 1948], p. [20]. Other biographic data of Picabea is found in page 826 of the manuscript, where Picabea noted: “Mi verdadero nombre, es Juan Manuel Pica[be]a Niebla, aunque casi generalmente se me conoce por el nombre de Manuel o de “MANOLO”; este es el nombre que me dan todos mis familiares y personas que me quieren, el de Juan Manuel, lo utilizo solamente para los efectos civiles. Mi padre es Juan José Picabea Yturria, natural del poblado de Lesaca, Provincia de Navarra, España. Mi madre es María Eustacia Niebla Ruiz, natural de Florida, Provincia de Camagüey.” (“Mi vida tal cual es, sin reservarme ningún por menor” [Entry for March 16, 1949, pp. 826-827], p. 826)
I could never have a regular position in the shop [in the sawmill] because of the problems with my eyesight, I could not work with the rest of the men, but I worked as wedger [cuñero] on the brush and sometimes on the conveyor belt [sinfín]; I also had to work at the boiler as fireman for a week when my father was ill since this was one of the tasks that he did in his workshop.

[...]

For approximately one year I studied typewriting, which I did with immense labor, given [—] as any person could appreciate [—] my diminishing eyesight, but I never found anything impossible in life regarding what we can do [,] and each time I struggled with more enthusiasm, despite [the fact that] some typists and other people not of this profession told me on different occasions: “You cannot study typewriting.”

[...]

For me to be able to do my typewriting lessons, it was necessary for the teacher to enlarge them in ink on a sheet of paper, and even after all of that, it took me a lot of work to read what was written and complete my assignments as correctly as possible. My intellectual capacity was very little, I was only a third grade student from a public school in which one could say not much is taught [,] and that made my work even more difficult.

ABOUT VARIOUS THINGS

[...]

In our conversations, we talked about how there are some sorcerers [brujos] in Mayajigua, that cannot go to a wake for the dead or accompany a burial procession to the cemetery, because their religion forbids them from doing so, and the man says that he confirmed this through something that happened to him [with] one of the sorcerers and which I will refer to below.7

[...]

The Negro with the surname of Pérez said that one time a little son of his died and that then, he went to a friend who was also a carpenter like him

---


7 Here Picabea refers to a conversation with an informant, an Afro-Cuban man by the name of Pérez that he met in a bar.
and requested that he make a little coffin [*cajita*] for the child and he says that his friend told him that if he needed money that he would give it to him, however much he needed, but that he could not make the little coffin [*cajita*] that he would be at his disposal to assist him as a friend [;] and then [;] the one speaking with me [Pérez] became somewhat upset [*bravo*] because of what his friend told him, thinking that the latter did not want to help him [;] and then, Pérez wanted to end it and told him that he would make it himself, that he had requested his help because he did not have a way to pay for it, since his situation was [economically] very bad at that time, but given that he had refused, Pérez did not need him.

Then, because the black man was going to leave and not listen to him anymore [;], the other friend and *compañero*, said that he should not leave [;] that he wait a moment for him to explain and realize that it was not because he did not want to make it, but because the circumstances forced him not to.

The man patiently turned around and then, his friend explained to him that he was a sorcerer and that he could not deal with anything that was related to the dead, that they also cannot go to burials or wakes, which is bad according to his beliefs.

From all this, I deduced then, that it is right that the men that dedicate themselves to this [witchcraft, *brujería*], according to the black man, who had already told me that there were two, are individuals that truly do practice black magic, which is the so-called witchcraft and that because this is done [—] according to people [—] with the devil, they cannot go any place where there are crucifixes or something sacred.

[...]

This was the first occasion on which I heard it said that the sorcerers could not go to wakes, burials, or places where there are sacred things, but my deduction was based on my understanding that they do not practice with sacred things, but with the devil, and then, we reached the conclusion that they are that way, given that we know that the devil has much fear of the crucifix because it’s of God.
ABOUT VARIOUS THINGS

Withcraft has always been persecuted by the authorities, but there are places such as Mayajigua[,] for example, that are more persecuted than others, here the Sergeant is always going after them.

Santerismo has originated from the Afro-Cuban and the conga, two dances that are very common in my country and that are liked very much by people due to their happy rhythm.

The Santeros give certain very strange names to the Saints, these names are of African origin, and I have been able to gather some of them days ago talking with a woman that knows much about these things and now I am going to mention them.

They call them Saint Barbara Changó, Saint Lazarus Babalú Ayé, Saint Peter Elegua, Saint Anthony of Padua Okgún Arere, the Virgin of Mercy, Obatalá, the Saintly Virgin of Charity, Ochún and many more names that I have not been able to gather, but I hope to gather them little by little and then proceed writing them.

*The Virgin of Regla is Ollá and there are many more that I have not found but that I hope to find.

The Santeros say that the mother of all Saints, is Obatalá, the Virgin of Our Lady of Mercy.

Also there are other things and one is that Okgún Arere (Saint Anthony of Padua) is a rival in love and opposed to Changó (Saint Barbara) and they were always quarreling [*fajaban*].

I once heard a reading of a written piece that had come out in Prensa Libre9 about this very matter that I am considering [here] and it said that a famous Santera of Havana had provided them a story about the Saints and that they were as follows.

Changó was a warrior I believe of a tribe called the Arará and since he was so brave, all the young females of the tribe were always trying to get hold of him, so that he would fall in love with them, but they could not get hold of


9 A Cuban newspaper.
him, only the Virgin of Charity (Ochú[n]) succeeded in winning him over. They had love relations and Changó was the son of the Virgin of Regla, but since he was so mischievous, the mother threw him down and then the Virgin of Mercy took him in along the way and saved him and raised him and because he was so brave and always acted against injustice, the Virgin of Mercy converted him into a Saint, that is to say, gave him the power that he has today.

Santa Barbara, whenever there was storm, she would go deep into the hills to see the thunderbolts at night and when there was strong lightning, [she] would open her eyes wide to see the thunderbolts, according to the published story and I don’t remember much more, but the story is pretty long, if I ever find it, I will see if someone can dictate it so that I can write it down.

[...]

**ABOUT THE PRIESTS**

In Cuba and I suppose in every quarter where they are, the priests are significantly *vivos,¹¹* with their stories they have a somehow discrete way of swindling people and they believe in them as if the priests were really supernatural beings.

Now this is not so much the case, because people have been recognizing for some time now the robbery [*atraco*] of the priests and they go losing the faith that they had in them and already a great majority of the town often makes jokes about them and on other occasions they do not believe in what the priests want to make them believe with their abilities.

We have Holy Week which is a week in which one has to follow rules of life that are completely distinct from the rest of the year and precisely, one must fast and not eat meat on Thursday, Friday, or Saturday. The priests take advantage of this to gain a few *pesetas* and then, if a person gives the priests a quarter, they can eat meat that day, or better said, those days, but they cannot eat on the contrary.

---


¹¹ Literally, alive. A Cuban way to refer to people who are alert, clever, and sly.
This has a name in the Catholic religion and if I am not remembering wrongly it is gluttony, and with this the priests do quite well that week.\textsuperscript{12}

Like me, many people consider this is robbery from the point of view that if it is a sin to eat meat for those three days, it remains so even if you give twenty cents to the priest to say a few prayers (resados) and he gives a few blessings for you to be allowed to eat meat, it is a bit absurd.

They also charge to offer a mass for the deceased, two pesos that have to be paid in cash [\textit{muy al contado}] and the same occurs with baptisms and with the passing-bells that are rung many times for a person when he or she dies, so that if we were to examine it, everything that is done by the priests costs money and if they do not get paid, then don’t do anything, because they are driven by their self-interest.

People are charged a lot for weddings and afterwards, often, those who are getting married have to cover decorating the church and the expenses that come with that.

As with all things, the priests do their part taking advantage of others, since I have never heard any priest telling a person that he must do something badly and on the contrary, I have always heard them preaching the good among their people, but with nice words, they try to make money.

All of them have enough influence to obtain many things for certain people and there are always individuals that become Catholic to make their business grow because the priests can get them many things that other people of the town, however influential they may be, cannot obtain.

[...]

In Cuba there are many commentaries about the priests and there are people that many times confirm them as true, precisely, there are some commentaries about the priests and the nuns. People say that since the priests cannot have women, they have sexual relations with the nuns as if they were effectively their women and as if the habit did not change the nature of people, with the result that one day the nuns end up pregnant and when the child is born, it is killed by the priests and buried wherever they can do it so that it won’t be discovered and so that they can continue their relations with those women who are also forbidden by their religion to have husbands with

\textsuperscript{12} While he was referring to the payment for food here, Picabea was indeed “remembering wrongly” as he must have meant greed—another capital sin—given that the priests were earning money by permitting the consumption of meat.
nature compelling them to commit these mistakes. Since we were all born for this purpose, it is impossible to not fulfill that commandment that says: be fruitful and multiply.

Then we arrive at the conclusion that this is one of the absurd things of the Catholic religion, that the priests cannot have women and the nuns cannot have husbands. So I request that God forgives me if with this I offend him, but if the divine commandment to be fruitful and multiply does exist, why can’t the priests, our most immediate representatives of the religion, not have women, if women as well as men were made to be married and have a spouse.

Certainly this does not impede the priests from having their women or the nuns from having husbands. After all, they are going to spend their lives in the convent without been able to marry. Both are spouses even if not so legally or according to the religion.

I don’t remember where I once heard a story about an old convent that was going to be demolished and hidden within the walls they found packs of children’s bones and the skeleton of a woman that must have been the nun.

[…] Once the newspapers reported that a nun escaped from the convent where she was. She was a young woman and she did this in a rather ingenious way, she constructed a rope with skeins of yarn tying it to the interior of her room, she went down on it hurting herself on the walls and with the rope itself but escaped and afterwards, she was taken to the court of Sancti-Spíritus in this Province. Since I was a child I don’t remember if she was left free or continued her life as a nun.

Neither do I remember her depositions nor whether charges were filed against her for this. But the fact of the matter is that she did not appear in front of the judge with the habit but wore one of the dresses common to women and she covered her face and head with a great veil.

[…] There are women that feel they are called to live the life of a nun and precisely, one daughter, or the only daughter of Don Patricio Suárez, the owner of Nela Central, became a nun much to the displeasure of her father even though he is very Catholic and [she] did it because she likes that life and was born for that. […] What people comment on a lot, but not because they consider being a nun a bad thing, it is that they believe that women who become nuns do so because they have had sexual relations with their
boyfriend and have fought with him. Since in Cuba the woman that is not a señorita is seldom forgiven, they become nuns in order to not be discovered upon marriage, because in that way they don’t get married and people believe that they are in the institution only because it has served to help them.^{13}

[...]

**ABOUT SOME SPIRITISTS**^{14}

For a long time I have had in my possession two sets of notes that deal with two espiritistas, one of them serving as the protagonist in my work and I am going to include the other, essentially because she is a woman, to expand with more details.

Firstly, I will refer to ‘La Menuda,’ an espiritista of whom we have talked about a few times and that lives in Las Llanadas farm, where she operates in accordance with her activities.

This is the individual that [Mr.] Valdesuso told you [Withers] lives in the border area [linderó] of the Municipality of Sancti-Spíritus territory and that of Mayajigua which belongs to the Municipality of Yaguajay – To remind you better, I will tell you that the healer’s [curandero] motive for this is that the ones from Sancti-Spíritus are the authorities concerned with his activities and not those of this area and it is because of this that they don’t do anything to him.

This man, according to what I’ve been told, has cows and various animals that he has gained through his healings and patients, but this cannot really be considered a racket because his patients and friends have given him [as gifts, regalado]—according to what the people have told me and not because I am taking sides with him, since it is my interest only to inquire and write for my work—them because he has healed some people and they always give presents to the healers when they recover dramatically, as there have been cases in which the medical doctors have given up on a person and it so happens that the curandero has healed them.

I have talked to people who have told me that this curandero is good and has healed many people. Since I don’t know him, I don’t know and I cannot

---

^{13} The use of señorita implies virginity, the only acceptable status for an unmarried woman or a bride according to the Catholic church.

assure it, [but] there are many of them that cure very well and in most cases their remedies are very inexpensive, given that it is only necessary to buy the elements to prepare the medicines and the things that will be used in the healing.

Something similar happens to this individual according to what I have been told, although I do not know if it is as they say or not, but it is said that when he cures a person, he does not charge them anything and then, if this is a person that has a good position, someone who has animals or money, they give him a gift that can consist of a horse, a cow, etc., and in this way the healer can become the owner of those animals.

One day talking with the cook of my house, who is quite a believer [muy creyente] in these things, she told me that ‘La Menuda’s’ house is never empty, that he always has people there who are seeking advice or healing.

She [the cook] said something a bit exaggerated for me, it was that she said that the healer always has a full house.

Precisely, since it is said that this man heals so well, Julia was telling daddy to go and consult him and prepare the remedies that he would order because in this way he would cure himself and try to find out what why it is that he always has some ailment: if it’s not the liver, it is the kidneys, if it’s not getting hit, it is a headache. The fact of the matter is that the old man is always in a disastrous state.

Dad is not a believer in these things and as a consequence he has not wanted to go and see the healer, but I don’t doubt that any given day he will go to see him because at the end of the day Julia always gets what she wants from him.

[...]

In La Esmeralda there is a curandera espiritista that has also obtained many arrobas of rice and different things through these practices. She works the Santerismo and the espiritismo at the same time; she says she is a Santera, but I believe that she really is not, but making the people believe it, serves her well, because when there is a person that feels ill or who experiences something such as sudden slowdown in business [,] for example, many go to her and she does a ritual “work,” [un trabajo] and with it she gets some dollars [pesos].

---

15 Arroba is a unit of weight that may change according to regions. In Cuba it would be approximately twenty-five pounds.
These ritual works [trabajos] are at times very costly and according to what the Santeros say, payment is necessary to undo them, the same amount that was paid by the evil one that ordered its construction [that of the ritual work]; for this reason, the ritual work at times turns out to be very expensive, because there are people that even when they have a good economic and social position, when they get furious with others, they use witchcraft on them to see them in the conditions that they desire.

Before I thought it possible that those dealing with these things were only people of the lower class, but I am convinced that it is not that way, there are of the low class as well as the high class, since we have as an example the Mayor of Marianao, Francisco Batista y Saldíbar [sic], brother of the ex-President of the Republic of Cuba.16

This man was not dealing with witchcraft as has been published, but indeed with Santerismo which many detest and look upon with great indifference because in general, in Cuba whoever deals with Santerismo is considered to be a brujero [witch], as more than half or eighty percent of the people consider them the same thing.

There are places where Santerismo is persecuted constantly since it is considered witchcraft such as Mayajigua, for example, and this is criticized by the large part of the people and regarded as good by others.

[...]

The espiritista of La Esmeralda to whom I refer in previous writings, is a woman of the poor class. She had two daughters who were señoritas at that time and she had no husband then, that is to say, she was separated from him.

She had a Center which is the name that is given to the place where espiritismo is practiced[,] and different men of the town and the countryside came to that place, which was her own house located close to the center of town, precisely to be healed. Others were espiritistas (mediums), which is what the espiritistas that work under the direction of the director are called; others, although they weren’t espiritistas went only to receive a cleansing.

That house was frequented by an individual who we only know by his surname, Guerra. He has a farm and lives somewhat far away from La Esmeralda.

16 His brother would be Fulgencio Batista y Zaldívar who, besides his role as military strongman, served as president of Cuba from 1940 to 1944, the period referred to here, and from 1952 to 1959 (Argote-Freyre 2003: 138-140).
He was a peasant who has moved up in the world [guajiro echado para alante] as is usually said and you [Withers] are going to be significantly interested in this, [and] always carried a revolver that he never let go of except during the espiritista session that was twice a week, on Monday and on Saturday, if I don’t remember wrongly.

In La Esmeralda this issue was commented on a lot and it was always said that the gentleman with the surname of Guerra had sexual relations with the espiritista who was a woman of some forty years of age.

I do not know if this was true or not, but one time my mother took my grandmother when she was ill, so she could be healed and saw an enlarged photo of Guerra himself in the living room.

This indicates that either she appreciated him in the extreme or they were really a secret couple because one never puts an enlarged photo like that in the living room of the house unless he is the suitor of any of the young girls of the family or a member of it.

This man was really at home in that house, he arrived and took off his revolver and put it in the wardrobe that was in the bedroom as if it were his house, and in the same way he went into the kitchen and drank coffee without anyone offering it to him. In the end, he did everything that the husband of that woman would have done.

[...]

ABOUT RETAIL ESTABLISHMENTS

[...]

I have not seen this Chinese man [Felipe Li] again since they closed down his store, it might be that he had left Mayajigua, saddened by his situation, or that he had leave to look for work or to establish business elsewhere if he has the means to do so.

These Chinese have a good quality which is that they always help each other out and because of this, they can generate good businesses. But, they are not like Cubans, the North Americans, or the Spaniards who are not content with being poor. All of us, we have to have good furniture, we want to eat well, and we want a fuller life that often is not within our reach and

17 “Manolo Manuscript,” (October 2, 1948), pp. 494-496. This extract is from page 496.
struggle to achieve it. They [the Chinese] are not this way, they always accept having a bench as a chair, and as a bed a bad bed, or a platform made of boards instead of a frame, which ends up being very economical and lasting an infinity.

Not many of them are fond of having nice suits, although I know one that does have nice suits, but there are just a few like this among Cuba’s Chinese; they always have a set of common clothes, the cheapest shirts, and in the end everything is like this. They would rather have the money; and really having money the way that they do without enjoying it is not bad but not good either.

I met a Chinese man named Vicente Tam, who was the proprietor of the renowned provisions store “La Favorita” in the neighboring town of Morón in my homeland of Camagüey. This Chinese has nice suits, he likes to have good things, but he is always inclined not to spend and his other Chinese ways: not buying expensive things, using cheap clothes. In the end, among the Chinese that lived in that area of La Esmeralda he’s the one that dressed the best, and everyone commented on this.

ABOUT ONE RETAIL ESTABLISHMENT

[...] “NORTH AMERICAN RECTITUDE.- The rectitude that the Americans have for their businesses and other matters is, as I see it, more like a custom. There are countries in which the people are more upright and more formal than in others; we have the Spaniard, and even though there are bad and shameless ones, he is almost always more honest and more formal than the Cuban. The majority of Cubans, but not all of us, deal with everything with el choteo and partying [la jarana] joined with informality.

I also have the impression that the Americans have a higher regard for women than what Cubans do. In Cuba, not always, but about ninety or ninety-five per cent of men have a very low, too low, regard for woman, considering them completely inferior, like a slave with the occasional right to speak or more like a child that has to obey our orders and our mandates.

---


19 For the etymology of choteo, see Jorge Mañach’s Indagación del choteo (1940: 9-20).
I believe that the woman is a human being just as I am and that she equally has the right to have opinions about things. Under no circumstances should she be ill-treated or *abasayada* [sic] [stepped on] (*abasayada* means crumpled upon, disrespected, ridiculed) because they feel and suffer the same as I do. Moreover, I realize that my mother is a woman and that unfortunately she has been very ill-treated and has experienced a lot of hardship.

Regarding a woman having her freedoms within bounds, this is something very logical, but this should be within these bounds, not in excess, because otherwise it could bring bad results as always happens.

Speaking with you [Withers] one day, I learned that you [North Americans] are always addicted to reading, the majority of you having many interesting books, which has shown me that you are much more interested in things of true value than we are and that due to the education received, you have a degree of culture superior to ours.

In Cuba a person with important books is not common and when someone does have them, he or she is considered an intelligent person.

[...]

With respect to the Haitians and Jamaicans, I have to say that generally they are well-meaning people but the Jamaican a little less so than the Haitian. The latter is always compassionate and most of the time, a loyal friend. They are men without culture, but they are humans; when a Haitian becomes one’s friend, it is almost always sincere and the friendship is gained only by treating them well and through small acts that for them have much value.

The Jamaican comes across as less sincere, more of a hypocrite, I don’t know why this is the case, but it’s this way much of the time; I don’t have the same regard for them that I do for the Haitians who have more culture.

The former believe they are somehow superior, have deliriums about wisdom and many times are fools, something that Haitians are not.

**AN OLD [FEMALE] HEALER**

[...] Cuban doctors have a lot of hate for the healers and all of them attack them; the latter, of course, are not protected by the law and there is nothing

---

20 “Manolo Manuscript,” (February 26, 1949), pp. 779-781. The entry is titled “Una vieja curandera” and the extract from page 781.
that could support or protect them, but this does not prevent the existence of numerous healers in all parts of the country and mainly in the Province of Oriente.

In Cuba the healers are *espiritistas* and *santeros*, which is common nowadays, but the former are more numerous than the latter, because from what I have learned from more knowledgeable people with whom I have talked, not just anyone can be a *Santero*, but that this is something that is born with the person. Nor does a person does not belong to just any Saint, but each has his or her own and this is a little more complicated than in *espiritismo*. However, according to people with whom I have talked, *Santerismo* is more useful, because it resolves different matters and problems which cannot be solved through *espiritismo*.

For example, if a person has had a spell cast on them, the *espiritistas* cannot undo it, because they do not have enough strength for that, but on the other hand a *Santero* can indeed do it. This has been shown millions of times in Cuba and keeps on happening and the number healed from the cruel effects of witchcraft increases.

[...]

What can be known through the *Santeros*, is that they heal through mediation with the Saints, they can mount a Saint, as they call it, like an *espiritista* can fall into trance, but of course, this is a little different.

On a certain occasion I talked with a woman about this particular thing, she is a *Santera*, this was in Esmeralda, but I did not follow the conversation, because it was too complicated and I don’t want to make myself crazy trying to figure out something I don’t have the capacity for, but nonetheless, I learned enough to be able to do an acceptable job.

That woman did not know that my purpose was precisely to write down the conversation that we had, but she believed *Santerismo* interested me and that I practiced it, and that I was asking her specific questions for that reason.
REFERENCES


Distinguished Professor at the University of California and noted translator of Latin American literature by writers such as Jorge Luis Borges, Guillermo Cabrera Infante, Julio Cortázar and Manuel Puig, Suzanne Jill Levine is Director of Translation Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. A poet and also the author of numerous critical and scholarly works, her books include *The Subversive Scribe: Translating Latin American Fiction* (Graywolf Press and Dalkey Archive, 1991), *Manuel Puig and the Spider Woman: His Life and Fictions* (Farrar Straus & Giroux, 2000), and *Untranslatability Goes Global: The Translator’s Dilemma* (Routledge, 2018). Among her latest translations is Eduardo Lalo’s *Uselessness*, for the University of Chicago Press, which came out Fall 2017.
DEW: Can you tell me what inspires you as a writer?

SJL: That’s a big question.

DEW: Yes. I’m also thinking about the talk that you just gave this afternoon here on campus, specifically when my colleague Professor Yvette Torres introduced you.¹ She described you as an activist in the context of this book *The Subversive Scribe*. What inspires you as an activist?

SJL: Well, as an activist I’ve been rather active. [laughs] What sort of activist? Regarding *The Subversive Scribe* (1991),¹ I was writing a book where I positioned myself as a spokesperson for translators (with myself as prime example) in the academic context. I was aware that traditionally in academe there seemed to be so little regard for translators, and at the same time I recognized that translation, or its presence, has always been part and parcel of scholarly activities, in the humanities as well as anthropology, and particularly in the classics or religious studies. But certainly in all literary fields—especially foreign language literatures. Translation has been so much a part of these fields of inquiry and pedagogy.

For example, the first novella I translated by Adolfo Bioy Casares called *Plan de evasión* (Plan for Escape)² (1945): I was spending many hours researching all the allusions—you know how allusive Bioy, as Borges, is—and I realized I was discovering an interesting sort of backdrop of references that pointed to the genesis of the genre of fantastic literature. It was clear that I was actually discovering all of these significant references and where he was going with it, in a meta-fictional mode. Ultimately, my research into the text for the translation process became the basis for my dissertation. What better proof that translation is—apart from the creative aspect—a scholarly activity! So, I felt it was very important to write a book that would somehow make it apparent how important this was, and how legitimate translation was.

DEW: As you suggested, the translator has been described as easily forgettable or invisible. *The Subversive Scribe* came out in 1991. Do you feel the situation has changed? Is there more awareness now? More visibility?

---

¹ The same day that this interview took place, Levine presented the talk “Borges and/on Translation” in the College of Humanities at UPR Rio Piedras.

SJL: I think there has been. I think that myself and other people have done a lot within North American academe to make certain advances. And I think that in Europe there has always been a lot of attention to translation in the universities. There’s definitely a difference between the situation we are in now and the one that prevailed then. I mean, now there exists a field called Translation Studies. And even if in most of our universities there are still not sufficient resources put into it, there’s no doubt that it is actively present in a number of institutions. Notably it’s now present in the MLA, and I was also involved in getting the translation studies forum going there. So yes, I think we have made progress.

Now, how this affects readers and their relationship to the books they read—well, among the formally educated, obviously there’s always interest in foreign writers, but still that’s a rather minority group—and in terms of publishing, I don’t know how much advancement we’ve really made. It’s a different world now in terms of publishing than it was thirty years ago.

DEW: So that would be another set of issues?

SJL: Well, the main point is this visibility issue… I mean, obviously one of the obstacles is that most readers don’t want, or traditionally didn’t want to even know that a book is translated.

DEW: [laughs]

SJL: They just wanna read the book.

DEW: Exactly.

SJL: In a sense, I think this is summed up in the lecture I gave on Borges—he points us to the perspective that the reader is interested in the work, not who the heck produced it. Obviously, people naturally go to a book because it’s written by a certain writer, but, ultimately, what they’re interested in is their relationship to the work, as readers.

DEW: Another way I want to look at translation in the way I’ve been thinking about it is more specific to the Caribbean, and Caribbean Studies. Caribbean Studies, as a field, a multidisciplinary field, became something more solid around 1980, the late seventies.
SJL: Without any doubt.

DEW: And it’s worth recalling that people like George Lamming and Gordon Lewis, both who were here at the University of Puerto Rico at different times, saw translation as part of nation building. Part of the position that they put forward focused on the fact that societies of the Caribbean were either young countries or colonies that wanted to become young countries. As they envisioned a way forward, they spoke about what would make these places most prosperous and responsible in the future, as well as more humanistic and able to communicate productively with our neighbors. Translation and multilingualism were key to them.

SJL: Right.

DEW: And when we go back to their writings from this period, their position is clear: if you’re gonna call yourself a Caribbeanist, you must have access to three of the region’s languages. You’re either multilingual, a translator, or both.

SJL: Wonderful. Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. Well, I mean, obviously they’re following Friedrich Schleiermacher with that comment, Schleiermacher’s seminal essay about foreignizing versus domesticating. He was talking about the whole idea of building the German nation, right? And how that literature and translation were such an important part of the enrichment of the target language.

DEW: We could also say the enrichment of the target society, and how we understand or otherwise react to difference in our lives.

SJL: Yes. In any case, it’s interesting that you bring this up as we have been looking at this in the seminar I’m teaching right now here at UPR-Río Piedras, with these superb students. I just met with them yesterday. The seminar is in the form of three long sessions—

DEW: Right.

SJL: And we had our first session yesterday. We have a student from Barbados who is in the group mostly with students who are either Puerto Rican plus maybe

---

3 Schleiermacher, F. “On the different methods of translation” (1813).
one or two North American students. It’s sort of interesting to see how—when we were working on a particular translation problem—how it was very useful to have their various points of view. It was interesting to see how she—coming from English, you know, a more British sort of—

DEW: Background. A background linked to British colonization.

SJL: Yes, precisely — how she felt the importance of the connection with Spanish Caribbean, French Caribbean, Dutch Caribbean. Yes, I feel that in some ways there is a Caribbean voice, right?

DEW: Right.

SJL: Or voices. And I was even curious . . . you know, I noted that it would be curious to see how she would deal with some of the aspects of Luis Negrón’s Mundo Cruel (2013). Some of the real spoken, slangy stuff, what she would do with that in the colloquial language of Barbados, . . .

DEW: Called Bajan—

SJL: Exactly, and so how the Caribbean voice, in this context, might be ideal for the translator.

I have an early connection with the Caribbean (as your colleague the translator Andy Hurley was mentioning at the lecture) with Cabrera Infante, author of Tres tristes tigres (1965), who was a polyglot writer. So here you have the first Cuban novel—or book (Cabrera Infante could never face that his novels were novels) that really is in two languages in effect. You have some others in there too, but the basic two are Spanish and English.

And why is English there? Because of the great impact of North America on Cuba politically, economically, geographically and everything else. Not to mention the fascination with, obviously, Hollywood and North American mass culture. And its presence also which he [Guillermo Cabrera Infante] registers in that amazing book. This has obviously been very interesting to me . . . and going back to where we started, you asked me why do I write. I always wanted to write like all young New Yorkers who have artistic aspirations. I always wanted to write the great New York novel, or the great American novel, but I was always also just a lover of the music of language, as also a lover of music, and a pianist. I was a musician. For me, translation was a way to express oneself.
DEW: That’s a good place to come at our work from.

SJL: Self-expression was definitely a great part of translation from the very beginning. And I think it’s really helped me with my own writing. I’ve published a number of academic books, but I’m also working more and more toward creative nonfiction. I’ve worked off and on with poetry, so obviously, it’s been part and parcel of the same, you know, urge. Let’s put it that way.

DEW: And you’re also extremely knowledgeable about—based on what I know about you, and your professional profile—Latin American Literature.

SJL: Well, certainly, some of Latin American literature.

DEW: So I wonder...I would say, I mean, does that knowledge...ever give you a macro level view that affects what types of texts you choose to work with. So I wonder if...do you, for example, ever say to yourself something like “Wow, given what’s been done and already established Text A really needs to be translated?” So you react to the world that way?

SJL: Oh absolutely! I’ve been an activist in that way, too, in terms of trying to get certain writers, certain books translated. And I imagine a number of translators are activists in that way, too. When I was starting out, for example, you know, the Boom was happening, and there was García Márquez, the big writers, Fuentes, Cortázar, Vargas Llosa, and others.

I felt it was my mission to focus on some of the “others,” the slightly more eccentric, less palatable, but really fun writers like Cabrera Infante and Puig, who seemed to be more edgy in the directions they were taking with language. Let’s put it that way. I wanted to help them—and one thinks also of Sarduy—be recognized. My activity during those years was very intense, working with those three writers very particularly. I felt a similar vocation with respect to Bioy Casares because he’d always been under the shadow of Borges: Bioy was so funny, so clever, he’s so amazing, subtle, so insightful, I felt he has to be translated! Whether it was youth or just the era I felt I was on a mission, this must be done, you know?

DEW: Are there any noteworthy tendencies today...has that changed? Is there another set of writers or interests that make you say to yourself, “Wow, that has to be translated!”?
SJL: You know, it’s harder and harder to find and that’s why it was so exciting to find Luis Negrón. I mean, it’s something so fresh about this book, fresh about the writing. I just thought that he captured the humor and at the same time the tragedy of this group of people. And that’s greatness. That with humor he can capture the depth of despair, and the depth of alienation, but with the authentic humor and closeness to how these people express themselves. I thought his writing was wonderful.

DEW: To me it seems like a very realistic text.

SJL: It is! Oh, absolutely!

DEW: Extremely, to the point of teaching me to explore issues I’ve been socialized to turn away from.

SJL: This is a realistic text. Oh, yeah, I mean, these are actually like photographs of actual characters, moments, you know, and you can absolutely feel them, see them. And that’s—this is another thing, I actually did go for a kind of hyper-realistic kind of writing. That’s what Puig’s writing was, and Cabrera Infante, too. Because even though they were very…they were dealing with language…the world they were representing was very real to me. Puig’s children and women characters, and all their issues, frustrations, hope, and desires. They were real people; and the world, the nightlife, and these people struggling to make something of themselves in the corrupt environment of pre-Castro Havana. And it was a very real world they were depicting.

DEW: Let’s go back to the notions of tragedy and freshness and how they link up with Negrón’s work. Something really stands out: the first thing is that this morning Luis Negrón spoke in the part of campus where I teach, in the College of General Studies here at UPR, before a group of about 150 students. Very generous, accessible, and warm. I guess about halfway through the talk he spoke about the day “The Pain of Reading” appeared in your translation in The New York Times. A Sunday in October of 2012, I think.

SJL: Yeah, that’s right.

DEW: And you may know the story, he went to Walgreens, probably pretty excited. He sort of looked through the Sunday edition, or the international edition, which is quite thick. Flipping, flipping through it and he didn’t see it. So he’s like “Ooops! On no, they just decided not to put it in.” So he didn’t buy the paper, but put it back and went home.

SJL: Right! [laughs]

DEW: Later, he went on Facebook and he saw that somebody had posted the piece from the New York Time! It mustn’t have been in the Puerto Rican version, or something like that. And then he called a friend in Boston and that person said, “It’s gotta be in there, man!” So he goes back down to Walgreen’s, and he takes a friend, and he’s flipping through again, and he still didn’t see it. Right? And then his friend says, “Let me see that!” And then boom! His piece is right there. Published! It was so big and so prominent that somehow he had just skipped it. Plus they had changed the title!

SJL: Yeah.

DEW: And Luis said, of course, that he felt wonderful when he saw his piece published in such a respected paper. But more importantly, he said that it was at that moment he knew that writing could save lives.

That’s what he said. Right? And that’s a really, you know, such a beautiful and warm message that gets really close to our hearts.

SJL: Mmm hmm… Yes.

DEW: It’s interesting to me, that translation had a significant role in motivating him to say that.

SJL: Absolutely. Well, I agree. For me, actually, now in my later part of my life, with so many losses, so many people I love who have died, and challenges surrounding issues like that, writing is really a salvation. I can see how I’m experiencing this idea that is so alive in Borges, how literature is a dialogue between the past and the present. And the future, too, I guess. But certainly, it’s this ongoing conversation that negates mortality or at least gives the present a hopeful vitality.
I remember the summer before I was going to start teaching and I was so scared and so anxious, it was the summer of 1977, I guess—and I was translating a Bioy Casares novel, and I was having so much fun. He was so funny, and he was dealing with a character who was truly in a desperate situation [laughs] and who was not going to succeed, but translating that and capturing the irony and the language was so wonderful. I felt the company of the text, of the narrative voice that really becomes alive for you. The way that any wonderful movie or novel rescues you in that moment, so that the act of translation, I think, rescues texts that would not be available to so many people if they weren’t translated.

And sometimes it rescues the writer itself. And it can do the same for the translator of course, the one who’s creating the bridge across languages.

DEW: And sometimes it brings realities that are really accessible closer to us. I’ll give you an example.

SJL: Yes.

DEW: I teach English to freshmen. Most of the texts are not written by Puerto Ricans, or even Caribbean people, but now I’m teaching “The Pain of Reading” to my students. Right?

SJL: And you’re teaching them Suzanne Jill Levine! [laughs]

DEW: Exactly!

SJL: That’s right. A North American, a New York girl who’s actually speaking the words of the suffering of this beautiful person, who had a really hard time as a child in Puerto Rico. So making that alive for them.

In some ways it’s kind of countering all the bad stuff that happens, you know, between nations, between English and Spanish on the geopolitical level, right? It’s like this wonderful relationship that is kind of very confirming. Just like, I suppose, philanthropy, or any good work that anybody does, is.

DEW: Exactly. In the case of my students, it brings them their own reality in a language which they’re still learning. The whole mess is fraught with political relationships, educational policies, neoliberalism, but also some strategic alliances as well.
SJL: That’s right.

DEW: And the story, which comes to them through English and teaches them so much about their home, was originally written in their native language written by someone who works about ten minutes away by foot. I don’t tell them that in the beginning. I just tell them, “Read the story. Be prepared to discuss it.” They love it and many are shocked when they learn where it comes from.

SJL: What a story it is! It’s an amazing story about reading.

DEW: Yes. I have to admit that I’ve thought a lot about that kid.

SJL: Absolutely! And the thing is, you know, the reason why it was so good for me because growing up…I was a fairly lonely little girl. I was the last of this family of older siblings, and so I was pretty much, you know, I had to live with my own imagination. And for me reading was such a salvation. I would read books like The Wizard of Oz or Alice in Wonderland over and over again because it was like visiting a friend.

DEW: Exactly. It’s empowering! It changes your reality.

SJL: Totally. So for me …it added a whole house, a whole room to the house of life. Or a whole vast room. So it was really amazing.

DEW: And the process of translating those texts for Mundo Cruel, I’m wondering if you did something like listen to Puerto Rican radio or visit the island or hang out on a certain stoop?

SJL: You have to know I lived with a Cuban for six years, Okay? [laughs]

DEW: Okay, okay, okay! [laughs]

SJL: It’s the Caribbean. I grew up in a lower middle class environment. It wasn’t a tenement, exactly, but it wasn’t far from a tenement. I grew up in very modest circumstances, in a building, with a stoop, on 192nd Street and Broadway, between Washington Heights and Inwood.
DEW: So you knew where to take it in many instances?

SJL: I know this world.

DEW: You would’ve heard things like a guy calling his friend “La Carlos” before. That wasn’t new to you, then?

SJL: [laughs] “La Carlos,” yeah, because I definitely share in the gay world. These were characters I could really imagine as real people. I definitely love that about Negrón. That he was dealing with these class issues that were very funny. And from the characters’ points of view, not mocking them from above.


SJL: That’s right.

DEW: Any connections with other writers you are interested in?

SJL: Well, queer is difference. Borges was definitely queer. I think that Puig was actually about that, too. Even though, while he was obviously a gay man, a practicing gay man, what he was more interested in was the idea of being tolerant to somebody who was different.

And Borges, of course, his mode of being is so unique. He was not gay, but I’m sure he was, you know, in sexuality there are so many sexes. Emir Rodríguez Monegal once said there are not two or three sexes, there are 500 sexes. The thing is that Borges was an oddball.

DEW: I read this essay “Many Voices: A Life in Translation,” which I find very interesting. And one of the things I noticed is that you quote correspondence with Carlos Fuentes and offer a genealogy of how certain decisions were made in the process of translating his work.

---

SJL: *That’s right.*

DEW: So let’s reflect on them now. So, today, with telephone so accessible, we don’t even have to deal with roaming really anymore, and email is accessible to most. Are you going to be able to do the same with people like Luis Negrón? Is there an archiving mechanism that’s doing that sort of documentation?…

SJL: *It’s very interesting that you say that you don’t have that same kind of mechanism.*

DEW: It would take more effort if there’s not a trail.

SJL: *You know how we make files in our emails so I’m sure I have a lot of notes with Luis, probably in one particular file. It’s not really the same thing, is it? On top of that, we actually got together. So we did a lot of the work, going over it. And basically, I consulted him. I also consulted Leo Cabranes-Grant, who is one of my colleagues at UCSB, a wonderful guy who’s in theatre, who’s from Puerto Rico also.*

DEW: Okay. So, it sounds like the process is indeed one of many voices.

SJL: *Yes. I consulted Jorge Luis Castillo, a writer and a Cuban friend of mine who lived in Puerto Rico, and then I had Luis himself. So, for me, I had some great informants, including the author. And then Gabriel whose last name I cannot now remember and who was our editor, who actually discovered Mundo Cruel, and who was very good. There were some final touches he was very helpful with. You know, I had the best of worlds. I was working with informants who were totally bilingual, who were close to this culture, and that helps a lot. And that’s part of why it’s a scholarly task. You do your research. You go to the source you have to go to.*

DEW: I’m interested in some of the artifacts and memories that are created in the process. I suppose we might see some changes versus what was happening fifteen, twenty years ago?

SJL: *Absolutely. That’s an interesting question for somebody looking back at translations. Well, when I look back at some of my translations, sometimes I love what I see. But at other times I’m like, “Oh God!” Sometimes you don’t want to look at the*
things you’ve done before. Borges said, the only reason to publish things is that, if you didn’t publish them, you’d keep rewriting them forever.

The idea is to move on, because if not, you’re going to get stuck. Nothing is ever finished.

DEW: Have you done any creative work based on your translations, using notes or insights that the process left with you?

SJL: Well, there’s this little chapbook I did called Reckoning—the title was based on a translation of a poem I did, a late poem of Severo Sarduy’s called “Recuento”—and I called it “Reckoning.”6 His later work is quite confessional and much more accessible. He was dealing, courageously, with his struggle with AIDS, which he died from. In that little book, you’ll find a little gathering of poems. Like you probably do, so many of us just write poems over the years and put them in drawers.

DEW: Right. I do precisely that. What else was interesting about the Sarduy-inspired chapbook?

SJL: I felt that in some ways some of the translations were more autobiographical than the actual poems. I saw how personal the translations felt, sometimes more than the source texts, and I thought that was interesting. So that responds to what you were just saying, you know, that they do cross over sometimes. Translation is, dixit Benjamin, a mode of writing. Translation is another way of writing, different from generating your own texts, but I think we should embrace its insights rather than diminish it as a form of writing.

DEW: You help me to recognize translation as a powerful mosaic. Thank you very much for speaking with me.

SJL: Don, it was a pleasure.

---

POETRY
La nariz ganchuda del semita

La nariz ganchuda del semita
es la nariz ganchuda del poeta
que con el dinero (escaso)
de los (indecentes) poemas
se compró un reloj Casio F-91W
y un puñal negro sin marca
en las tiendas de Caracas.

Suficiente para ser devuelto a Gitmo
con estatus de “combatiente enemigo”,
de cualquier lado de la cerca.

Se sabía culpable del puñal y los poemas.
   No sabía que los Casio
distingüían a Al-Qaeda.

Cualquier distorsión de la obediencia
(un puñal, un reloj, un paquete indecente de poemas)
te puede vestir de condenado a muerte.

   El puñal en su funda,
   el Casio sin pila,
   la nariz ganchuda
buscando problemas.

José Ramón Sánchez Leyva
The hooked nose of the Semite
is the hooked nose of the poet
who with (a little) money
earned from the (vulgar) poems
bought a Casio F-91W
and a brandless black knife
in the shops of Caracas.

Enough to be returned to Gitmo
with the status of “enemy combatant,”
from either side of the fence.

He knew he was guilty of the knife and the poems,
but didn’t know that Casios
were a sign of Al-Qaeda.

Any distortion of obedience
(a knife, a watch, a vulgar stack of poems)
can dress you up condemned to death.

The knife put away,
the Casio dead,
the nose hooked
looking for trouble.

English Translation by Álvaro García Garcinuño
El hombre del desierto

No se humaniza al hombre del desierto.
Se le encierra y se le quitan todos los derechos,
excepto el derecho a ser “combatiente enemigo”.
Los cuidados del hombre del desierto
son los cuidados que dan a los locos furiosos
y a los asesinos en serie: cadenas en las manos
y en los pies, vigilancia cada tres minutos,
aislamiento, y trajes de condenado a muerte.
Semejante protocolo es el vértice
del humanismo cristiano occidental:
libertad para luchar por cualquier medio
las guerras convenientes.
El hombre del desierto, superado,
sobrevive en el confort de su enemigo.
Guantánamo es la máxima atención
que pueden ofrecerle: un millón
de dólares anuales, y la cuenta subiendo,
por un número de años incalculable.
Cuando todos seamos “combatientes enemigos”
se van a terminar semejantes exquisiteces.

José Ramón Sánchez Leyva
Desert Dweller

The desert dweller cannot be humanized. He’s caged and stripped of all of his rights, except the right to live as an “enemy combatant.” The care that the desert dweller receives is that provided for the mad and furious, as well as for the serial assassins: shackled hands and ankles, surveillance every three minutes, isolation, and the uniforms of death row. This is the protocol that stands at the apex of Western Christian humanism: liberty to fight by any means available wars that are convenient. The desert dweller, battered and defeated, survives in the comfort of his enemy. Guantánamo is the ultimate that he can be offered: a million dollars each year, with its costs rising, extending for years immeasurable. When all of us emerge as “enemy combatants,” then, such lavish delights will cease to be.

English Translation by Don E. Walicek
**Daños colaterales**

Estamos y no estamos aquí.
Somos y no somos del lugar.
Sabemos que esto es una Base Militar Enemiga
en Territorio Libre de una República que fue Azucarera.

Venimos al trabajo, le damos compañía
a nuestros familiares y aprendemos a ser
esa cosa imposible, ese trauma ilegal que los jueces
no pueden resolver sin causar más conflicto:
un Gitmo
(mitad Cuba, mitad Estados Unidos).
Una especie tan rara como el Troll de las leyendas.

Aves de paso en una tierra estéril
remedamos una vida civil entre las armas.
Lo mismo sentirían las mujeres y niños
de las tribus nómadas del desierto.

El desierto, como siempre, ha crecido.
El Mundo es una Base Militar Enemiga.
Cualquier Territorio es Libre para ser Conquistado.
Los daños colaterales suceden de continuo.

José Ramón Sánchez Leyva
Collateral Damages

We are and are not here.
We are and are not of this place.
We know this is an Enemy Military Base
in Free Territory of a Republic, once a Sugar Plantation.

We come for work, we keep our family members
company and learn to be
that impossible thing, that illegal trauma that judges
cannot resolve without causing more conflict:

a Gitmo
(half Cuba, half United States).

A species as rare as the Trolls of legend.

Birds passing through a sterile land
something resembling a civil life among weapons.
The women and children of the nomadic desert tribes
would feel just the same.

The desert, as always, has grown.
The World is an Enemy Military Base.
Any Territory is Free to be Conquered.
Collateral Damages continuously follow.

English Translation by Eduardo Rodríguez Santiago
SHORT FICTION
Nota de la traductora

“Ship of Dreams” es un cuento publicado en 1988 como parte de la colección The Speed of Darkness, de Rodney Morales. De ascendencia puertorriqueña pero nacido y criado en Oahu, Morales es profesor y escritor. Sus cuentos tratan temas como la pérdida de la inocencia, el amor interracial, la pobreza, la familia, el choque entre culturas, el crecimiento y el envejecimiento, los efectos de la guerra, y la inmigración a Hawái de puertorriqueños, japoneses y filipinos. Todo esto se enmarca dentro de un amplio período histórico: casi 70 años de la historia de Hawái.

En “Ship of Dreams” Morales emplea tres variedades del inglés: el de los personajes japoneses (que incluye palabras en japonés), el de los personajes puertorriqueños (que incluye palabras en español) y el inglés estándar usado por el narrador. Este tipo de variación lingüística suele plantear problemas al traducir. ¿Es necesario reflejarla siempre en el texto meta? En este caso, las variaciones van atadas a los temas de alienación y choque cultural inherentes a la intención del autor, por lo que resulta importante que queden plasmadas en el texto traducido. Por ende, luego de un análisis concienzudo que tomó en cuenta los rasgos lingüísticos del japonés y las características del español hablado en Puerto Rico, se creó esta traducción que intenta reflejar estas variaciones.
Takeshi sabía que tenían que haber sido Manuel y Tony los que se habían robado el calabazo más grande del huerto de su familia. Los había visto merodeando en varias ocasiones, espiando a través de la cerca de madera antes de comprar comestibles en la tienda de su familia. Tenían que haber sido ellos. ¿Por qué? ¿Para qué? Masaharu, el padre de Takeshi, sospechaba lo mismo. “Fueron esos muchachos puerutoriqueños”, dijo.

“Tienen que haber sido esos maluditos borinqués”.

Sin embargo, lo dejaron así. En medio del pueblo de Palama, un lugar en pleno auge que se encontraba en el oeste de Honolulu, durante una época en la que los inmigrantes de distintos orígenes encontraban puntos en común en su búsqueda compartida, no era bueno crear problemas. No más peleas entre los trabajadores. Tenía que prevalecer la cooperación. Compartir la comida, la bebida y los sueños.

Era mil novecientos veintidós. A sus diecinueve años, Takeshi crecía a la par con un siglo que le llevaba tres. Había sido un siglo que, hasta el momento, había traído una amalgama de bendiciones y adversidades, una amalgama de promesas. La guerra había terminado. La Liga de las Naciones evitaría que ocurriera otra. Aun así, durante el último año de Takeshi en la secundaria McKinley, su maestro, el Sr. Armstrong, solía decir que lo peor estaba por venir. Decía de forma enigmática que lo que estaba ocurriendo en Rusia tendría un impacto sin precedentes en el resto del mundo. Sus compañeros de clase, hijos de las plantaciones, prestaban poca atención. El mundo, el siglo, era de ellos para conquistarlo. Estados Unidos, que los proclamó como suyos,
ofrecía oportunidades ilimitadas. No importaba que las gloria de la monarquía hawaiana estuvieran apagándose, pues los legados del Príncipe Kuhio y la Reina Liliuokalani eran antorchas encendidas, malamalama. Aún más importante, el legado de la democracia existía ahora para el beneficio de todos. Este legado era puesto a prueba, entre otras cosas, por las muchas huelgas de los japoneses, los filipinos y los puertorriqueños en las plantaciones...

Sin embargo, el padre de Takeshi ya estaba harto de eso. Tras haber ahorrado de sus míseros ingresos durante veintitantos años, y gracias al tanomoshi y a un pequeño préstamo del banco, por fin había conseguido suficiente capital para renunciar a la plantación y abrir su propia tiendita.

La familia vivía en la parte de atrás de la tienda, aunque Takeshi había logrado recoger suficiente madera desechada para construirse un pequeño desván encima. Necesitaba cierta privacidad pues tenía cuatro hermanitos que hacían lo que los pequeños suelen hacer.

Takeshi pasaba las mañanas hapai-ando arroz en sacos de 100 libras, amontonando papas, naranjas, ñames, acomodando latas de sopa y carne en los anaqueles, al igual que otros productos de uso cotidiano como harina, leche, manteca, frijoles y shoyu.

Echaba de menos ir a la escuela. Su sueño de ser abogado había zarpado en el barco que les trajo a él y a su padre la primera carga de mercancía al puerto de Honolulú. Si ese barco de sueños regresaba o no, estaba por verse.

Los puertorriqueños, por lo menos hasta donde Takeshi sabía, eran gente complicada. Bulliciosos y de relaciones tempestuosas, y muy parecidos a los hawaianos en cuanto a su franqueza, su sentido de familia, pero terriblemente reprimidos por el catolicismo, lo que no sucedía con los hawaianos, que se habían convertido a todos los matices del cristianismo. Si bien las niñas hawaianas vestían todavía de manera bastante casual —en las áreas rurales se podían ver, de vez en cuando, mujeres que, con toda naturalidad, iban con los pechos al aire— las niñas puertorriqueñas parecían ser intrigantemente puritanas con trajes que las cubrían desde el cuello hasta el suelo que pisaban. A Takeshi le vino a la mente una historia relatada una noche en que Masa-haru y un amigo japonés recordaron en su juerga de borrachos (gracias a una cerveza casera) cuán escandalizadas estaban las puertorriqueñas —y algunas portuguesas— cuando los hombres japoneses desfilaron por el camino solo en toalla en ruta al furo. “Las chicas, ellas guritaron”, dijo el amigo, “y ¡nosotros nunca supimos porqué estaban guritando!” Cayeron al suelo atacados de la risa. Entonces, cuando lograron hacer silencio por breves momentos de
sobria reflexión, uno de ellos recordó otra historia de “los viejos tiempos” que ya había sido relatada cientos de veces.

Sin embargo, esas mismas puertorriqueñas realmente se liberaban los sábados por la noche. Lo que Masaharu y los demás llamaban música “ka-chi-kachi” retumbaba desde el salón social de la calle School en donde los puertorriqueños se congregaban, junto a algunos portugueses, algunos hawaianos y un puñado de blancos y filipinos. (Los chinos, los japoneses y los coreanos aún preferían recursos del Lejano Oriente para expresarse, como el sake y el kachashi.)

Algunos de los chicos asiáticos más jóvenes, como Takeshi, pasaban la mayor parte de sus noches de sábado en uno de los árboles de mango frente al salón social, físgoneando embelesados lo que ocurría adentro. Con ojos desorbitados, Takeshi observaba maravillado estas explosiones de exuberancia de fin de semana: el rasgueo changa-changa de guitarras de distintos tamaños, las maracas que marcaban el tiempo como ningún reloj de arena podría hacerlo, el alegre canto que parecía de otro mundo y esa cosa, ah, cómosellama, ese sonido raspa-raspa que le daba unidad a todo, los convulsos movimientos de... ¿baile? Las peleas a puñetazos entre borrachos y las discusiones de los hombres sobre sus mujeres culminaban cada noche sabatina de ensueño.

Takeshi se sorprendió esa fresca tarde de abril cuando vio a su padre medio borracho luchando por treparse al árbol para hacerles compañía a él y a otros jovencitos. Takeshi sabía que no tenía nada que temer, pues el sake parecía disipar las diferencias entre los hombres issei y los nisei e inspiraba una camaradería juvenil.

“Esos maluditos borinquis. No se cansan, ¿eh?”, dijo Masaharu cuando por fin llegó a la rama donde estaba sentado su hijo.


“¿Caerume yo?”, Masaharu rió. “Yo soy mono, sabes. Igual que tú”. Mientras decía esto, se resbaló y se habría caído si su hijo no lo hubiese agarrado por la camisa a la velocidad de un rayo.

“Te dije que tuviera cuidado”.

Masaharu rió con disimulo mientras Takeshi lo ayudaba a acomodarse seguramente entre dos ramas ahorquilladas que formaban una silla bastante cómoda. Durante varios minutos, se sentaron en silencio observando el jugueteo y la juerga. Por fin, Masaharu habló.

“Ese... ¡ese es mi calabazo!” dijo señalando hacia el salón de manera acusadora.
“¿Qué?”, respondió Takeshi. “¿De qué habula’?”

Ya su padre estaba bajándose del árbol, bien agarrado del tronco, aparentemente sobrio. Takeshi estaba desconcertado. No veía ningún calabazo. Se bajó del árbol y siguió a su padre, que irrumpió en el salón y atravesó la atestada pista de baile hasta llegar frente a la banda, justo frente al jíbaro que dictaba el ritmo de manera implacable con el raspa-raspa.

La música se detuvo. Takeshi sintió el calor de miles de ojos sobre él y su frenético padre.

“¡Ese es mi calabazo!” declaró señalando el raspa-raspa, un calabazo finamente tallado, grabado y pintado que cualquier japonés, normalmente, apreciaría. Los músicos rieron. Un viejo puertorriqueño, también bastante borracho, caminó hasta el frente.

“¿Qué pasa, Masaharu-san?”, dijo, en parte curioso, en parte molesto. “¿Pol qué viene a molehtalnoh?”

“Usuted”, dijo Masaharu al reconocer a Pablo, un ex compañero de la plantación. “Sus hijosu...” dijo con ojos desorbitados, “¡ellos robaron... mi calabazo!”

“¡Manny! ¡Mueve el okole, ven ahora mihmo!” gritó el viejo. Takeshi negó con la cabeza. Se apretó el caballete de la nariz con el pulgar y el índice, cerró los ojos por varios segundos, pensando: ¡Esto no está pasando!. Entonces, abrió los ojos y vio a una joven bien vestida que salía de entre la multitud. “¿Cómo conseguihte ehte güiro?”, dijo Pablo refiriéndose al raspa-raspa.

“No fui yo, Pa. Fue Tony”.

“No mientah”, dijo una voz femenina desde la muchedumbre. “Fueron tú y Tony, Manny”. La acusadora salió de entre el gentío. Takeshi reconoció a la hermana de Manny, Linda. Él y Linda habían sido compinches en la escuela hacía algunos años. Sin embargo, no la había visto en la escuela durante los pasados dos años.

“¡Sinvergüenza!”, dijo Pablo golpeando la cabeza de su hijo que era mucho más alto que él.

“Fue idea de Tony”, dijo Manny encogiéndose. “Él...” Su padre lo agarró por los volantes de la manga de la camisa.

“No, Pabulo”, suplicó Masaharu. “Oluvidelo. Déjelo ir”.

Pablo no escuchó. Maldecía a su hijo, lo empujaba hacia la puerta mientras todos los seguían. Takeshi no podía evitar lanzar miradas furtivas a Linda. Estaba hermosa, pensó. Los pechos redondos, el color de sus mejillas.
La mitad de la muchedumbre, Takeshi y su padre incluidos, siguió a Pablo y a Manny hasta afuera del salón. Para ese entonces, Pablo se había quitado el cinturón y gritaba, “¿Dónde está Tony? ¿Dónde carajo está ese maldito muchacho?”, Pablo todavía prestaba oídos sordos a las continuas súplicas de Masaharu, “Olvídalo, olvídelo”, mientras dirigía a su hijo camino arriba hacia la oscuridad.

La multitud entró.

La música continuó.

Takeshi ya estaba trepado en el árbol cuando Masaharu finalmente regresó de donde fuese que había desaparecido y luchaba por treparse al árbol de nuevo. Takeshi no había notado la presencia de su padre. Sus oídos estaban sintonizados con la música, pero sus ojos estaban demasiado fijos como para disfrutar las generalidades de la fiesta y las escaramuzas. Parecía cautivado. Lo que Masaharu vio en los ojos de su hijo no era una mirada de simple encanto. Una mirada y supo que su hijo estaba más perdido que nadie que hubiese conocido jamás en este loco paraíso de piña y azúcar.

Takeshi había sido flechado por el amor.

Desde su percha, Masaharu dirigió la vista hacia el salón, entrecerrando sus ojos japoneses hasta que él también se dio cuenta del resplandor. Debe ser la que brilla. Masaharu golpeó la cabeza de su hijo. “¡Ve casa! ¡Ahora! ¡Hayaku!”

Takeshi, arrancado de su mundo de ensueño, se columpió tristemente de una rama que sobresalía, sus pies apenas alcanzaban pero logró aterrizar en otra rama de una manera que solo alguien que se ha criado entre árboles podría hacerlo. A la vez, sus rodillas se doblaron mientras sus manos agarraron esa misma rama y repitió el movimiento. Después, se dejó caer de una distancia corta, los pies primero, al suelo. Otra vez, su padre tuvo problemas para bajar, se deslizó por el tronco, brazos y piernas agarradas con fuerza, y aun así, cayó de fondillo.

Masaharu se levantó y de nuevo golpeó a su hijo en la cabeza murmurando “Bakatare... muchacho esutúpido... esutú-pido. Má’ mejor envío regureso Japón”.

Esa noche en su cama, Takeshi cerró los ojos para poder ver la cara de Linda con claridad, los hoyuelos que se le formaban en las mejillas cuando sonreía. Imaginó que le tocaba sus grandes pechos, que le soltaba su trenzado cabello. Simuló, como mejor pudo, estar teniendo relaciones sexuales con ella. Hasta que no pudo más. Finalmente, cuando la vaga imagen de los
muslos de Linda ya no palpitaba en su cabeza, y después de haber sentido simultáneamente el éxtasis y el dolor de su viva imaginación y sus sueños infecundos, Takeshi se quedó mojado en sus sueños, roncando ronquidos tan largos como el compás que un tosco palo marca sobre un reluciente calabazo.

El gallo cantó. Eran las cuatro de la mañana. Takeshi refunfuñó. Después, recordó que era domingo. Podría dormir dos horas más. Gracias a Dios por haber descansado ese día para que así él también pudiera hacerlo y tara-reó hasta que se quedó dormido de nuevo.

Takeshi estaba arrancando yerbas en el huerto de su familia esa tarde cuando ella vino.

“Ah, dihculpa”, dijo ella.

Esa voz. “¿Qué?”, murmuró Takeshi a la vez que subía la mirada y vio a Linda parada detrás de él cargando un paquete. Él no llevaba camisa ni zapatos, solo tenía un viejo par de pantalones caqui enrollados hasta la rodilla. De repente se sintió muy cohibido con su apariencia.

Ella se sonrojó de color canela. Llevaba puesta una blusa *kinuli* y un overol de mezclilla desteñida, su cabello recogido en dos trenzas. Sacó algo del paquete. “Ehto eh pa’ tu papá”. Era el calabazo en su nuevo estado, una pieza de arte implícita y explícita. “Y ehto eh pa’ tu familia. Ah, um. Arroh con ganduleh... mi papá dijo que lamenta mucho lo que loh muchachoh hicieron”.

“Nah... ‘tá bien. No hay probulema”. Takeshi logró decir mientras inten-taba agarrar el calabazo y el paquete sin hacer contacto con la chica de su más reciente sueño. Aun así, el dorso de su mano rozó el seno izquierdo de ella durante el intercambio. Ella sonrió. Él se sonrojó. “Ah... graciasu. Ustedesu debieron haberuse quedado con esto... ah...”

“Oh, tú no conocheh a mi papá...”

“Pues... graciasu”. Se sentía más nervioso con cada segundo que pasaba. “Ah... ¿cambiaste esucuela?”

“No”, dijo con sinceridad. “Tuve que salirme... oí que te graduahte”. Takeshi asintió.

“Muy bien... Bueno, mejol me voy”. Linda comenzó a caminar para irse.

¿Por qué saliste?” Ella se volvió hacia él y se encogió de hombros.

“Debeh venil al baile el sábado po’ la noche”, dijo de repente, dio media vuelta y comenzó a caminar. Había un agujero de una pulgada de ancho en sus pantalones que dejaba ver algo de piel.
Espera. Te amo, quiso gritar, pero mantuvo la boca cerrada. Debe tener docenas de pretendientes, pensó. Y soy japonés. Sería más fácil subir el monte Fuji hadashi que conseguir permiso de mamá y papá. Sobre todo de papá. ¿Y qué dirían los padres de ella? Puede ser que ya hubieran acordado un matrimonio para ella.

Takeshi no conocía las costumbres de los puertorriqueños, cómo se hacían esas cosas. Pero sí entendía algo, algo que sobrepasaba toda creencia y costumbre: tenía que lidiar con lo que sentía. No podía dejar sus sentimientos escondidos por mucho tiempo. Sentía que el amor había tallado una ruta hasta su pecho y todo su ser se estremecía con el sentimiento. Tenía la piel de gallina. Con la mano libre se frotó el brazo opuesto para bajarse los pelos de punta. Observó el calabazo. El cuidado que habían puesto al tallar la madera —los surcos perfectamente alineados— y la pintura en las líneas rojo achiote como pintura de guerra indígena parecía casi, casi japonesa. Si él luciera así de bien ante los ojos de ella...

Esa noche, Takeshi soñó con el güiro. Se lo había llevado al sur de la Isla Sand y lo había colocado, con el agujero hacia arriba, con el palito adentro, en el océano. Con cuidado, lo empujó. Regresó. Lo empujó de nuevo. De nuevo regresó, esta vez alterado. Cada vez que lo empujaba, regresaba en una forma un poco diferente: una canoa de doble casco, una goleta, un barco de vapor... Entonces se percató de que una vieja hawaiana, vestida con una kikepa, estaba parada detrás de él y hacia un lado. Tenía una leve sonrisa y movió la cabeza lentamente. Él se estremeció. La última vez que una ola lo trajo de vuelta, Takeshi se dio cuenta de que había un pedazo de papel adentro. Lo sacó de inmediato del junco chino al que ahora se parecía.

El papel estaba en blanco.
El mensaje era claro.
La imagen de Linda marchándose con su overol puka quedó en su memoria por días. Durante esos mismos días, Takeshi —con el estómago calientito por la sopa de miso— navegó por su rutina matutina que comenzaba con los naranjas y azules del alba en los muelles, descargando cajas que abastecerían estantes vacíos, cubriendo de mantillo, desyerbando y hanawaiando el huerto, recogiendo los vegetales maduros, cuidando los calabazos de considerable tamaño que su padre cultivaba con orgullo, siempre observando la enredadera partida de donde se habían robado uno, orgulloso en secreto de su nuevo juguete, practicándolo en cada momento que podía.

Se llevaba el calabazo en sus viajes vespertinos al arroyo Kapalama. Su
escape. *Rrraspa, choc-choc. Rrraspa, choc-choc.* Se obsesionó con capturar el ritmo. Haciendo lo mismo que en su sueño, colocó el calabazo en el agua. Pero no regresó. Por el contrario, fue arrastrado corriente abajo rápidamente. Takeshi lo siguió a lo largo de la ribera corriendo como una mangosta a través del matorral y finalmente se sumergió, con todo y ropa, para capturarlo.

Rió como un chiquillo.

Masaharu no le creyó a su hijo cuando Takeshi le dijo lo que había hecho ese sábado por la noche. Takeshi le mostró el güiro como evidencia. La reacción de Masaharu fue mantenerse sobrio toda la semana, intentando recordar. Takeshi supo que su padre finalmente había atado cabos sueltos cuando Masaharu comenzó a decirle, una y otra vez. *Japonesa buena para ti. Otro tipo chica, no buena.*


Las guerras de mango no ayudaban. Así era como Takeshi le llamaba a la primera caída de la temporada de un mango sobre los techos Quonset. ¡BUM! ¡GUABAM! Sonaba como otra Guerra Mundial.

Los quejidos nocturnos de sus padres, que dormían en el cuarto de al lado, no le ayudaban tampoco. ¿Acaso ese era su destino? ¿Quejarse de dolor por las noches a causa de demasiados años de largas horas de trabajo agotador?

Llegó el sábado. El Sr. Armstrong entró a la tienda. Takeshi había estado sentado detrás de los frascos de ciruelas encurtidas y fruta seca practicando el movimiento de su mano en el güiro.

“Así que esta es la tienda de tu familia”, dijo el Sr. Armstrong.


“Se ve lindo, ¿no?”

“Muy lindo”. El Sr. Armstrong levantó el calabazo. “Esta es la forma de bebé de Lono, el dios de la fertilidad, la agricultura, la música... todo lindo”.

“¿De qué habula?”

“Lono. El dios hawaiano que supervisa las fiestas Makahiki”. Miró a su exestudiante y dijo con toda naturalidad: “¿No sabes eso?” Takeshi se encogió de hombros. “Esto es justo lo que las escuelas deberían enseñar, las cosas valiosas”.

---

El barco de los sueños

TRANSLATING DIFFERENCE
“Oiga, ah...” dijo Takeshi. “Pero eso es puertorriqueño. No hawaiano”.
“Hmmmmm... sabía que había algo diferente. Diferente pero igual. Qué lindo”. Le devolvió el calabazo a Takeshi. “Bueno, mejor hago lo que vine a hacer”. El Sr. Armstrong comenzó a coger comestibles. Después, él y Takeshi hablaron un poco más sobre los compañeros de Takeshi graduados de McKinley y que pasaban los días zambulléndose para recoger las monedas que caían de los botes de pasajeros como el Lurline en el muelle 10; sobre los que eran furyoshonin, vagos en la sala de billar; sobre la falta general de oportunidades para los que no eran blancos, especialmente para los asiáticos, que eran percibidos por la oligarquía blanca como una amenaza. Antes de irse, el Sr. Armstrong, como si estuviese dándole clase de nuevo a Takeshi, como si pudiese leer la mente de su ex estudiante, declaró: “Sabes, he perdido tantos botes en mi vida, pensé que jamás llegaría a ningún sitio. Sin embargo, mira ahora, aquí estoy. Desde Nueva York. Y, créeme, este es el paraíso. No importa lo que otros digan... Creo que lo que trato de decir es que siempre vendrá otro bote. Nos vemos pronto”. Se marchó.

Esa noche cuando se trepó al árbol de mango que estaba afuera del salón social, Takeshi llevaba el güiro atado a su mano izquierda con un pedazo de hilo. Eran las nueve en punto y el lugar estaba a punto de estallar. Los bebedores ya estaban borrachos. Habían comenzado de la nada dos peleas a puñetazos y habían terminado de una manera aún más imprecisa. Los guitarristas —que tocaban guitarras de todos tamaños— rasgaban más y más fuerte, gritando las palabras para poder ser escuchados por encima del ruido. Y el pobre güirero —que tocaba un calabazo que era de la mitad del tamaño del de Takeshi— luchaba por satisfacer las demandas del aumento de volumen. Takeshi, que observaba embelesado toda la locura, no pudo resistir la tentación de comenzar a raspar su güiro desde su peculiar posición. Primero, tocó suavecito, sin tan siquiera atraer la atención de los que lo rodeaban. Pero después él también se perdió en el ritmo y, antes de que Manny lo hiciera darse cuenta, había comenzado a dictar el ritmo desde lejos.

“¡Ay! Baja pa’ca, japonéh”, era la voz de Manny. Takeshi vaciló por un momento, pero se dio cuenta de lo inútil que sería no acceder. Silenciosamente maldijo a su padre por no pasarle su conocimiento de jujitsu y, sosteniendo el calabazo en una mano y el Palo en la boca, bajó de un brinco sin dificultad. Takeshi había visto suficientes altercados sabatinos por la noche como para estar bastante seguro de que se vería involucrado en el próximo.
“Ay”, dijo Manny inclinándose un poco y con una amplia sonrisa. “Si te gusta tocar música, ve adentro. No aquí afuera. Anda”. Manny agarró a Takeshi por el brazo.

“No”, dijo Takeshi, echándose hacia atrás. “Está bien. No me gusta”.

“Anda. ¡No te avelgüenceh! Toelmundo eh igual aquí. No te avelgüenceh”, repitió Manny. “To’h están muy borrachoh como pa’ dalse cuenta, de to’hmodoh”. Takeshi no pudo evitar que lo halaran hasta el frente del salón a mitad de la canción. Manny insistió, haciendo pantomimas del arte de tocar güiro y gritando: “¡Toca! ¡Toca, japonéh!”

Takeshi por fin cedió a la fuerte voluntad de Manny, comenzó a tocar suavemente, con vacilación. Las sonrisas de la banda, algunas caras conocidas, lo consolaron. La vergüenza dio paso al alivio.

¡El sentimiento!” gritó uno de los miembros de la banda. “Sí. Tú entiendeh el sentimiento, mi amigo”.

¡Bienvenido a bordo!” gritó otro mientras Takeshi subía a la tarima.

Takeshi sabía que había roto una espantosa barrera dentro de sí mismo. No podía evitar sonreír ante el pensamiento que comenzaba a nacer en su mente, que era el timonel de la embarcación que navegaría toda la noche, atravesando el mar de bailarines, surcando el océano de oportunidades perdidas... Sólo quería dirigirla correctamente.

Y entonces la vio –no era difícil–, con esos ojos que brillaban como faros en la oscuridad, el cabello suelto que le ondulaba sobre los hombros, bailando al ritmo de la música y su sonrisa... Cuando Linda lo vio, le guiñó mientras chasqueaba los dedos como castañuelas.
The hole is behind the headboard. We opened it some time ago. I couldn’t say exactly, maybe eight years ago, when we became aware of the weariness lurking around us. It lasted for hours, sometimes for days. Then it disappeared. During those anxious periods, we didn’t know what to do. It’s a horrible feeling. You can’t stand being with that person any longer. It’s not boredom in the strict sense of the word. Intolerance perhaps. Everything annoys you. The way they click their tongue, the unexpected smile, the wrong word said at the wrong time, the obsequious caress. Even the things that you thought were funny before seem unbearable now. It may be the cumulative effect, a friend said. A sort of allergy—you stuff yourself on your favorite food until one day your body says: enough! You break out in red spots, itching and sweating, which only makes it worse. Just like that. Too much of a good thing, I say. One day we looked at each other and we couldn’t take it any more—the thing is that I was fed up with him and he with me—and we searched for a solution.

“Let’s make a hole,” he said, as if he had rummaged through my thoughts.
“Let’s make the hole,” I replied, trusting our desire.
And so we did. We began to make way for ourselves.

* This story was originally published in Spanish as “Pasadizo” in Vilches Norat, V. (2007) Crímenes domésticos. Santiago, Chile: Cuarto Propio.
We figured out the most discrete way to do it, we didn’t want to make the neighbors suspicious. We decided to work at night, after everyone had gone to bed. We went to get the tools. We only had a hammer and a chisel in our house. That wouldn’t do. It would take us months to get to the other side. How do you open a hole without bringing down the wall? To pass through the wall and out into the open is rather ambitious. To carefully breach it as if poking a needle through a piece of fabric without tearing it is an art. It took us weeks to figure out the perfect way to open the wall of our room. We decided that was the ideal one. It’s not a load-bearing wall; it’s thinner. Besides, the antique wooden headboard would hide the opening.

Breaking through is not that easy. No, it isn’t. One might think that all it takes is will and strength, but we had to do a lot of thinking; there were so many factors to take into consideration. First, the diameter of the hole. It had to be big enough for us to escape. We measured ourselves, we calculated the pounds that come with age, regardless of how much you exercise, and we agreed to make the hole just a little bit bigger. Since we had decided to make it, we didn’t want to get stuck in it. It is forty inches wide. Second, what would we do with the debris? That’s how the inmates who tried to escape from the state prison were discovered. Poor men. They dumped the rubble in the toilet until it clogged. The water streaming down the hallways betrayed them. We decided to keep it in the back room and put it in the dumpster of a shopping center far away from our house. It was quite a strenuous venture. It took us hours to carry the rubble to the back room using only a shovel. You can’t believe the crap that comes out of a hole in the wall. Then we had to put it in the car avoiding the neighborhood watch. As a result, after all these years, I still suffer from a slight pain in my lower back. Third, having figured out the size of the hole and the place where we were going to dump the debris, we had to think about the tools we would use. We only had a chisel and a hammer. It’s not enough for a concrete wall. Back then I wished I had a house made of wood. It would have been a lot easier to open a hole in a wooden wall. We thought about using a drill, but no, too much noise. We didn’t want anyone to find out. So, we got a cold chisel, a sledgehammer, and a hacksaw, and slowly, little by little, carefully breaking here and there, cutting the steel rebar, we carved out our circle of joy. It was so much fun. We began late at night, around midnight, and sometimes we went on until dawn.

It takes a lot to make a hole of one’s own. We went on like that for a couple of weeks. There were big disagreements. He wanted to make a rectangle.
It was a lot easier, he said. I suppose so. It would probably have been simpler but I've always been very demanding and my sense of aesthetics imposes itself on me like a curse. No one can challenge a circle. A circle represents absolute perfection. A circle has no sharp corners or angles. Nothing would get stuck in it. Wasn't that what we wanted?

It was a beautiful project. We were tickled by it, like little kids. The hole made us frisky, like dogs on the prowl, frantic puppies playing non-stop, digging in the wall like a pair of hounds, until we saw the other side. It was at daybreak. The light was glorious, with the perfect combination of mauves and the dew, so typical of tropical sunrises. We could see the paperbark trees planted on the left side of the house. No more obstacles, we had our secret passageway to the outside. The truth is we were stunned. It is common knowledge that the end of a project is followed by a letdown. So many hours of intense work and coordination and then, all of a sudden, there it was: the way out. Now we needed to restructure time and the night. Fortunately, we had already agreed on an exit and entry schedule. It wasn't going to be a free-for-all. We thought it out very carefully. There were rules. For instance, we would respect each other’s sleep, we wouldn’t put the house at risk, we wouldn’t bring anyone in from the outside, and we wouldn’t miss work. In other words, our life together would go on. The passageway was a shelter, a break from the inside. Just that.

Who would have thought? He was the strict one. He even wanted us to sign a written agreement. I found such a regulation of fantasy very amusing. I tried to persuade him that it doesn’t fit in a contract. We flipped a coin to see who would be the first to go out. I wanted it to be him. He had worked so hard that I thought he deserved the first turn. I got my wish. He looked me in the eye, and I detected a strange mixture of joy and fear. He kissed my lips like he hadn’t for a long time. It seemed as if he was leaving for the moon. He turned around and slowly put his head through, his neck, his shoulders, his waist, and I saw him vanish. I waited for a few minutes and then returned to the book I was reading. This time he didn’t stay for long. He was back within the hour, happy and illuminated. He told me that everything looked different. He spoke of the new light that came from the lampposts, the peculiar sound the cars made on the pavement, and the beauty the shadows cast over the bodies. That was the sweetest dawn in a long time. It was well worth it, I said to myself.

The next day I woke up giddy with anticipation, it was my turn. I couldn't
concentrate at work. When I got home, Rubén was already waiting for me. He decided to come home early from work, I suspected. He wanted me to take the cell phone. I told him it wasn’t necessary. I reminded him of the rules: the one who stays pretends that they don’t notice that the other one has left the house; there’s no tracking, no waiting, no suffering over the other. The one who goes out decides when to leave and when to come back, as long as they keep to the agreed upon schedule. He made me promise that I would call if something happened, and I told him I would just to calm him down. I felt the experiment wasn’t working.

In order to avoid a scene, I left while he was in the bathroom. On the threshold I remembered my first time in an airplane, the unique sensation of traveling in a flying bridge, and my heart was as excited as it was back then. I slipped my head through, my neck, my shoulders, my chest, my waist. I noticed the thickness of the wall. When I was able to see outside I discovered the new light that Rubén talked about. I paid special attention to the bodies, not only the shadows cast over them but also their voluptuousness and their sounds. Voices have always been my weakness. I pride myself on my ability to recognize them, to make out a person’s character just by the tone of their voice. High-pitched voices annoy me; they foretell a hysterical personality on the other side of the sound waves. Deep voices, however, are my ruin. Maybe it’s my corny taste for boleros but there’s nothing like a silky voice. So, that night they swept me away. When I was ready to head back home, two hours had passed. Time is unpredictable. I peeked in from the outside. The tunnel seemed darker. Stealthily I slipped back into our room. I noticed it had changed. It seemed smaller and hotter. I undressed and tried to curl up in our bed without waking Rubén. We had agreed on that. I thought he was pretending to be asleep, but I didn’t check.

At breakfast I shared my impressions. He had woken up in a bad mood, but I ignored him. And things began to work out as planned. He went out one night, I the next, religiously. There were moments of tension, but once we amended the agreement to include a clause stating that we would not tell each other anything the following day, we overcame the crisis. Still, smells are treacherous and words excessive. Each one imagined according to their experience. To some this would seem like the perfect state, the ideal coexistence. You choose to stay because you can escape. And so the years went by. Until now, I believed it was harder for him than for me. Since he was such a stickler for rules, I assumed that he would follow them.
I don’t understand why he’s taking so long to come back. I’ve been waiting for a week. He had never done this. He has always been the keeper of the agreement. The one night that I didn’t come back he really chewed me out. I’d never seen him like that. He had a fit of jealousy, poor thing. I told him that I lost track of time, that I was very sorry to have broken the rules. The truth is that I ran into a deliciously deep voice that night and couldn’t make it back on time. Besides, I got lost. All of a sudden I couldn’t find the street, I went to the wrong house. I confess that I seriously considered staying out. It would have been terribly cruel. It was also cruel to ignore that voice. But I had given my word and I always keep my promises. At noon, when I peeked into the bedroom, Rubén was heartbroken. His chin trembled. An old grudge shone in his eyes. He even threatened to brick up the hole. I showed him the contract, and he had to shut up. That’s how agreements work, that’s what they are. Now I understand how he felt. I never thought it could be so hard.

Last night, as I was waiting for him, I poked my head into the hole and saw a puddle. I hadn’t noticed it before. I decided to clean it up so I took a broom to the stagnant water. Snails and moss had taken over the tunnel walls. A swarm of mosquitoes inhabited the pond. I thought I heard a frog. I closed my eyes as I swept out the water so I wouldn’t have to see the snakes or the rats in the swamp. A circle isn’t that perfect, no matter how beautiful it appears to be. If you look at it long enough you will find a crack, a line that cuts through it, spoiling its perfection. For a moment I thought about plugging it up, yes, closing it, filling it with concrete. He would get lost that way. He wouldn’t be able to come back. He wouldn’t be able to find the hole. I’m furious. It’s been six nights and he hasn’t returned yet. He has broken the rules. And to think it was he who insisted on putting everything in writing. Resentment is an old demon, and you never know how far it can take you when you are on the other side of the threshold. Now, of course, I won’t be able to go out either. I’ll have to stay here, stagnant, like the water in the puddle. I’ll probably get covered in moss and nest in my body venomous frogs that are poised to pounce.

A few days after Hurricane María, I asked my partner Natalia, who was outside Puerto Rico at the time, to send me Ashley Dawson’s book *Extreme Cities: The Peril and Promise of Urban Life in the Age of Climate Change.* In keeping neatly with its topic, I was unable to order it due to the lack of power and Internet access and delivery was nearly impossible due to the stoppage in transportation caused by the hurricane. It arrived several weeks late. I read it by sunlight, candlelight, and lantern light and I don’t regret it. I found the book tremendously illuminating with respect to our current situation under PROMESA in the aftermath of Maria.

The author emphasizes the importance of cities when discussing our current situation. For some years now, more than half of humanity has lived in cities. We are now a mostly urban species. Nevertheless, cities are the areas that contribute most to global warming and the most vulnerable to the changes brought on by said process, like rising sea levels and heat waves (far more severe in cities which, in general, have higher temperatures than the surrounding regions).

While emphasizing the importance of the urban factor in the discussion of climate change (absent, according to him, in much of the literature on the subject), the author focuses on what he calls “extreme cities.” Extreme cities are primarily characterized by three elements: (i) large size and or accelerated and unequal growth, which is generally sprawling or, simply, unplanned; (ii) considerable and increasing economic and social inequality, which also manifests as territorial inequality, and is in many cases ethnic and racial as well; (iii) and heightened vulnerability to the effects of climate change. There are

---

* This review was originally published in Spanish in the December 2, 2017 edition of 80grados.
gigantic ones and not so large ones. Some are rich and others are poor. New York, New Orleans, Lagos, Mumbai, and Jakarta are all extreme cities.

An important cluster of extreme cities can be found in the tropical region most exposed to cyclones, hurricanes, and typhoons, which includes the coastal urban zones of the Philippines, the South of China, Vietnam and Southeast Asia, the Bay of Bengal, Central America, and the Caribbean. A quick glance at this geographic description and the three elements mentioned above is enough to conclude that San Juan and the surrounding metropolitan area qualifies as an extreme city. Perhaps the entire island, with its relatively small, clearly delimited, and densely populated territory, can be described as an extreme island, marked by accelerated and unequal urbanization, significant social and territorial inequality, and vulnerability to the effects of climate change.

Dawson focuses on one problem above the rest, the rising sea levels—a product of the melting ice caps in the Arctic Sea, Antarctica, and Greenland—which threaten to submerge large populated regions, including significant portions of major cities. More than half of the world’s population lives less than 120 miles from the coast. Dawson also discusses the interaction of this problem with the increase in the frequency and intensity of hurricanes and other climate events. Even though, as scientists point out, it is impossible to link a specific event, such as a particular hurricane, with global warming, it is no less true that this process creates conditions that result in more frequent and powerful hurricanes.

According to Dawson, extreme cities, especially in developing countries, are the children of neoliberal capitalism—the same policies that generate increasing economic inequality and drive out part of the rural population (by destroying agricultural production through importation or replacing it with capitalist production). Those who are unable to relocate to developed countries settle in the cities, which in many cases cannot provide adequate employment, housing, or services. In developed cities like New York, neoliberal policies magnify the stark contrast between privileged areas and marginalized, contaminated, and impoverished areas—like Harlem, parts of the Bronx, Rockaway, and other places discussed by the author. Using a concept popularized by Trotsky, Dawson describes the way capitalism, even in advanced countries, is characterized by unequal and combined development, that is, a mixture of progress and decline, modernization, displacement, and abandon. At the same time, the imperative for private profit hinders effec-
tive action to reduce greenhouse gases and exacerbates the threat of climate change. That is to say, the three elements of extreme cities—great size and accelerated growth, social inequality, and vulnerability to climate change—share a common root in the tendencies of neoliberal capitalism.

The disasters caused by capitalism, given the economic inequality this system also creates, have an unequal impact—they don’t have the same effect in New York as they do in Puerto Rico (both affected by Hurricane Sandy in 2012), or in the richest and poorest sectors of those societies. That is, the unequal and combined development generated by capitalism produces disasters that are also unequal and cumulative. This leads to more than one injustice. First, the rich countries and dominant classes, which with their higher levels of consumption, are the ones contributing most to climate change, are also the ones with the most resources to protect and shield themselves from its impact—which is then felt disproportionately by those that contributed least to the problem, yet have fewer resources to defend themselves.

However, the reaction of governing sectors is not to question the current economic system, from which they benefit, but to find ways of administering and managing their disasters. Incapable of questioning capitalism, they are left with no other recourse except adapting to their catastrophes. They cannot talk about the causes of climate change or about ways to address them—which would require a radical economic shift—they can only manage its effects. Hence, the tremendous popularity of the discourse of “resilience,” according to Dawson. This is the most extreme case of evading the cause of the problem—reframing climate change as a problem of security.

Dawson then discusses different “scenarios” formulated by various authors premised on the inevitability of climate change. The process will generate droughts, desertification, famine, political chaos, and large migrations in the poorest countries. The developed countries could open their doors and face the consequences, which would only increase the number of victims without alleviating the situation. This “realistic” estimate concludes that the rich countries will have to fortify themselves against the impending chaos. Humanity will be divided into the chosen and the condemned. This is what Dawson calls the “climate apartheid.” Without a doubt what will initially be justified as inhumane yet necessary, will soon be justified as a defense against what some will see as the threat posed by “others”—poor or dark-skinned immigrants. The ideology behind all this is not hard to guess; compassion is a dangerous sentiment, solidarity a fairy tale. In this world, those who do not
displace others will be displaced themselves. Along with doctrines which reduce climate change to a problem of overpopulation, this perspective encourages resignation in the face of millions of deaths, an inevitable adjustment of the species to the planet. Lastly, the defense of capitalism, combined with the necessity of responding to climate change and to Malthusianism, can generate regressive responses that call to mind fascism and other such tendencies.

Postapocalyptic films help normalize this scenario, allowing audiences to live out the disaster virtually, a sort of catharsis which lets us get on with our “normal” lives toward greater disasters.

But that is the most extreme response. For now it is not the most common, although it does rear its head in the xenophobic and anti-immigrant attitudes generated by capitalism and with which it so easily melds. A more benign version is the discourse of resilience which, in the interest of preparing us to respond to disasters when they happen, hides the causes of those disasters. It is a seductive discourse (and in a way correct, as we will see). Who could oppose preparing ourselves to respond and recover in the best and fastest way possible in the face of some disaster or emergency? Dawson warns, however, that resilience has become the preferred “jargon” when addressing the multiple crises of extreme cities without fundamentally transforming the conditions that give rise to those crises. It is an invitation to prepare for the effects without looking at the causes, perpetuating the causes for the sake of addressing the effects. And since the effects are real and we have to deal with them, this discourse can be very appealing.

According to Dawson, the discourse of resilience avoids the fundamental problem—climate change is the result of capitalism's need for the unrestricted expansion of production and consumption, of its unrelenting quest for the greatest private profit possible which, among other things, prevents it from giving up fossil fuels at the rate that the problem demands. Humanity needs to move beyond the extreme city to the just city, characterized by the acknowledgement of ecological and environmental limits and by social and economic equality. Its goal would not be unrestricted growth, but sufficient production to satisfy fundamental needs and allow for more leisure time for all—a type of progress that cannot be measured as an increase in GDP and which does not correspond to capitalism's logic. The mere word ‘sufficient’ is anathema to said system. (Regarding this topic, I recommend Benjamin Y. Fong’s short piece “The Climate Crisis? It's Capitalism Stupid,” recently published in the New York Times).
When faced with disasters provoked by capitalism, the dominant discourse of resilience focuses on the capacity to respond to those disasters while encouraging the tacit acceptance of capitalism. This is not some ideology vaguely flowing though the social medium. Dawson explains how federal agencies like the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Housing and Urban Development, as well as the World Bank and the Rockefeller Foundation, among other public and private entities, have adopted the discourse of resilience as their new global slogan. The Rockefeller Foundation even created a new managing director position to head up a Resilience Team, and launched a global project called 100 Resilient Cities which invites cities to compete for funds for resilience programs that establish public–private partnerships and sets up a Chief Resilience Officer in charge of developing projects in collaboration with multinational corporations. In 2014, the president of the foundation, Judith Rodin, published a book on the subject whose title neatly combines the topics of profit and climate change—*The Resilience Dividend: Being Strong in a World Where Things Can Go Wrong*. It is neoliberalism’s new package in the era of climate change—a disastrous and unaltered system perpetuated and adapted to the disasters it has caused. According to Dawson, its proponents not only wish to establish it, but they want to gain supporters for it—by hiring representatives from community, environmental, and labor groups for subordinate positions.

Does this mean that resilience has no validity whatsoever? No, it would be absurd to assume that position. Disasters would occur even in the most just society. The more prepared we are to respond, the better. On the other hand, the damage caused by capitalism means that many of the impacts of climate change are inevitable, even if all greenhouse gas emissions cease tomorrow. Consequently, we have to prepare for future droughts, floods, hurricanes, and rising sea levels. That is the undeniable reality appropriated by the resilience discourse in order to lead us away from the underlying problem—the consequences of capitalism and the urgent need to abolish it. That is the deception we cannot allow, one that is already taking place.

Dawson then asks us to grapple with an uncomfortable subject—our inevitable retreat from the advancing seas, leaving behind certain areas that will become uninhabitable. It is now a question not of if we do this, but how. Will we do so through socially unjust means or will it be planned and equal? Much of what I have written about applies to Puerto Rico. I’ll quickly mention the unequal development we have been subjected to as a colonial
country, whose result is a combination of the progress and decline of our current island society. First, an over-specialized agriculture without industry, followed by a fragmented industry without agriculture, until we get a high-tech industry with an infrastructure that is in many ways obsolete. Now we are living through an extreme climate event which impacts that infrastructure and which triggers a sudden exodus to the United States. What is Puerto Rico if not an extreme island, as defined by Dawson (marked by urban sprawl, unequal, vulnerable, located in the cyclone-prone tropics)? And what are the nearly 200 thousand inhabitants that have fled the island after María if not climate refugees (of which the world will see many more in the coming decades)? According to Dawson, Puerto Rico is not an exception but a warning. We could say that we know what capitalism has in store for humanity—we are living it.

It is worth mentioning how Dawson keenly traces New York City’s evolution. The stages were as follows: progressive industrialization in the 1960s, fiscal crisis in the 1970s, austerity policies imposed by something similar to a fiscal control board in the 1980s, and recovery as a global financial center marked by increased inequality in the 1990s. This is Puerto Rico’s evolution, save for the stage of recovery as a global financial center. Our story ends in stagnation and regression, as I discuss in “Manifesto for Hope without Optimism.”

And now that Hurricane María has ravaged the island a new buzzword emerges from the wreckage—resilience. And not just in general terms. The Center for a New Economy has just announced a new $1.5 million project financed by the Ford Foundation, George Soros’s Open Society Foundation, and you guessed it, the Rockefeller Foundation, to devise a plan for a resilient Puerto Rico. Richard Carrión, president of Popular Inc., is also among the project’s directors. I am well aware that these foundations are not mere puppets of the interests they represent. But I also know they won’t contradict those interests on any fundamental issues. I also have no doubt that they will bring a vision of a resilient and without a doubt capitalist and more privatized Puerto Rico. Will they propose the creation of an unelected Chief Resilience Officer who will probably come from the same social circles as the Soros, Fords, Rockefellers, and Carrións? Will they propose new PPPs for resilience? Will they offer external funds conditioned on the acceptance of the guidelines developed by the project? Will participation be reduced in order to keep partisan control in check? Will the power of voters continue to
Reviews

be taken away in order to curb political power? Will democracy be eroded for the sake of improved governance? I hope not, but the answer is probably yes. But let’s not get ahead of ourselves—soon we’ll be able to read their proposal which they announced will be ready by March 2018. We also don’t have to wait to formulate our own—in which we evolve from an extreme island to a just island. And that requires building movements willing to challenge the disaster called capitalism.

Rafael Bernabe
University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus

English translation by Eduardo Rodríguez Santiago
Vassar College
This art book, winner of the Absolut Art Award for Art Writing, focuses on the images, performances, and artists that have placed Cuban art at the forefront of the art world for decades, providing context for author Coco Fusco’s statement that the island: “has enjoyed the status of a cultural superpower for more than fifty years” (10). The hard-copy publication first engages the reader’s vision with the cover photograph of a performance by Carlos Martiel titled *Marea* (Tide) from 2009. The photo depicts an Afro-Cuban man, Martiel, buried neck deep in sand. This particular image, the artist neck deep in immobility? or possibility?, is much a part of what Fusco—author, curator, art historian, and artist—discusses with respect to the contradictions that surround performance art in Cuba. The book comes out as Cuba faces its uncertain agenda moving forward into the twenty-first century and as the island continues to be heralded for its cultural institutions, as well as harshly criticized for the extremely repressive measures that its government takes against the symbolic power of performance artists.

In addition to providing a visual depiction of the most important exhibits, actions, and collective performance projects, the book describes the history of performance art in Cuba, a “dangerous move,” and includes an overview of the politics that have framed much of the arts and artistic education in the contested territory during the twentieth century and more recent years. It narrates battles over the body, race, space, and censorship that have proven to be controversial from the points of view of the state’s institutions, art critics in Cuba, and fellow artists and spectators, showing the reader the rich visual field of the images of these varied scenarios. The text explores the significance of numerous events, including Angel Delgado’s act of defecating on the Cuban newspaper *Granma* at a 1990 exhibition opening (a move that cost him 6 months in prison), the rise of textually critical art pieces and public actions, and finally, the presence of the digital in Cuban art.

Fusco’s analysis centers on the fact that despite the passage of a significant amount of time and political and economic changes that have trans-
pired in Cuba, ongoing negotiations between artists and the government still represent the complex relationship between the space for defiance within cultural institutions and frameworks that seek to “discipline” and control the collective vis-à-vis a caveat to the freedom of expression inherent in all artistic practice. This uncertain space of negotiation between aesthetic values and the political are not solely a Cuban dilemma, as Fusco concedes: “…I would also argue that Cuban artists are not exceptional in their uncertainty about the political activism outside their milieu. Advanced art education in most of the world continues to breed distrust of merging art with political activity by positing this as anathema to ‘real art.’ In some context that separation protects market interests; in others it buttresses state power” (185). This adds to the book’s potential to effectively respond to many of the questions that our changing times, in Cuba and abroad, will impose on art practices, institutional support for art, and education art, to name only a few of the paradigms that will continue to challenge the activism and other actions proposed by performance artists.

The pictures that Fusco has chosen to illustrate her argument are presented thematically rather than chronologically in such a way that no linear continuums are established. The result is a spiraling effect that brings together what more than thirty years of bodily-engaged art forms have produced in the neighboring island. Similarly, the sections that organize the book speak poetically to the discourse Fusco is weaving around the themes of state power, artistic expression, and the relationship between life and politics at stake in live performance. Titles such as “Scandalous Speaking Bodies,” “An Archeology of Cuban Conduct,” “Rebellion, Retrenchment, and Retrieval” are likely to give the reader the impression that Fusco is most interested in exploring those aspects of the story that illustrate the contradictions between state supported art and individual expression. She titles the preface “Where They Left Freedom” and closes with a conclusion that, evoking the heralded Gabriel García Márquez novel, is called “The Autumn of the Patriarch.”

The numerous layers of discourse that Fusco is working with—which include the images in the narrative, a fragment of the Fidel Castro speech “Word to Intellectuals” (1961), and poems by Pablo de Cuba Soria and Herberto Padilla—are in part what allows this book to contribute to our understanding of the many faceted angles of the discipline and rigor of contemporary Cuban performance. These relate to forces of repression and opposition
in the society in which it has existed and the market opportunities that can trap the arts scene in general, specifically around institutional events like the biennials in Venice and Havana. Many of the tales of artists’ struggles relate to their rejection of the values that these same institutions have upheld throughout the years. This has continued despite a changing field of power and politics related to the arts specifically, as dynamics unfold in tandem with the market expansion of artistic products that are sold and funded outside of Cuba.

On November 16, 2016 Fidel Castro died and Nobel Prize Winner Derek Walcott, cited in the epigraph of this review, passed away on March 17, 2017. Both of these figures, using different modes of expression, devoted their creativity (albeit one in a very powerful position and the other seated probably in silence, except when directing plays or teaching) to the possibility of a renewed “vision” for the Caribbean. The “vision” that Walcott spent a lifetime reflecting upon in poems, plays, and essays aligns with the postcolonial overtone, which is also echoed in Coco Fusco’s attempt to grapple with unanswerable questions. Recall that in “What the Twilight Says: An Overture” (1977), Walcott states that “Revenge is a kind of vision.” Certainly Castro would have agreed. But as Fusco’s work suggests, one can’t help but think that artists in Cuba are very aware of how this kind of “vision” works.

Lydia Platón Lázaro
University of Puerto Rico, Cayey Campus

Una breve indagación por Internet informará al interesado o interesada que Doris E. Martínez Vizcarrondo es catedrática del Colegio Universitario de Mayagüez, Puerto Rico y, además, que es especialista en análisis de discursos de temas como: la identidad, la pobreza, el género, la guerra y el terror. Precisamente, el libro que nos ocupa es un conglomerado de un prólogo, una introducción y siete capítulos—de los cuales algunos han sido publicados en revistas académicas como artículos individuales—cuyo tema medular es “los medios de comunicación y sus representaciones turgiversadas de la guerra y el terror”, tal como expone en el prólogo la Dra. Julieta Haidar.

En ese sentido, el libro muestra cómo los medios masivos de comunicación producen y entregan a la sociedad realidades que desinforman porque están basadas en intereses económicos y no en cumplir con la responsabilidad social de reportar desde la realidad de los hechos. Partiendo del argumento de que los medios de comunicación son indispensables para las élites que ostentan el poder económico y político, pues estos les funcionan a esas élites como aliados y por ende, de propaganda de sus ideales, Martínez Vizcarrondo analiza a través de los siete capítulos cómo la prensa estadounidense reformula los acontecimientos de las guerras examinadas—el libro se basa en las guerras del Golfo Pérsico (1991-2003) y en el atentado a las Torres Gemelas del 11 de septiembre de 2001—para crear otra historia que no es la verdadera, una pseudorealidad sincronizada a los ideales e intereses de ese sector poderoso. Así, la prensa corporativa de Estados Unidos funciona como reproductora, vocero y aliada de las políticas del poder, a la misma vez que va amoldando las conciencias de las personas en sociedad a tal magnitud que estas son incapaces de descifrar cuáles son los acontecimientos reales y cuáles son los creados por los medios.

A través de los siete capítulos, Martínez Vizcarrondo va desarrollando esa idea principal, además de argumentar que la prensa estadounidense ha utilizado la propaganda para justificar la violencia contra sus “enemigos”, la
invasión a cualquier país y las declaraciones de guerras mundiales. Con la exposición de lo acontecido durante la cobertura del 11 de septiembre, la autora ejemplifica cómo la prensa continúa los patrones de la élite estadounidense para construir ese falso enemigo o fuente de peligro que se ha instituido gracias a la utilización de las nuevas tecnologías comunicativas que permiten televisar imágenes exageradas y trastocar la realidad. Como comenta la autora (90): a ese enemigo imaginario, árabes/musulmanes que a partir de las guerras del Golfo Pérsico se perfilan en la prensa estadounidense como los enemigos del mundo Occidental, hay que destruirlo para reivindicar la muerte de los inocentes y la paz de Estados Unidos. En el primer capítulo, “Estudios sobre la prensa de guerra”, además de ofrecer un trasfondo histórico de la figura del corresponsal de guerra y de la censura periodística en contextos bélicos, la autora establece cómo la propaganda ha estado al servicio de la creación y difusión de esa fuente de peligro.

El segundo capítulo, “Entre la noticia y la ficción: la representación noticiosa de los acontecimientos y las condiciones de su producción”, elabora el planteamiento de que, a partir de la industria propagandística, la prensa de Estados Unidos ha conformado una “línea difusa entre el suceso real y su representación periodística” (92) incapaz de ser distinguida por los receptores. Asimismo, en el capítulo tres, “La representación gráfica de las víctimas en los atentados del 11 de septiembre y el 11 de marzo”, la autora desarrolla la idea de que los receptores de los medios evalúan los atentados terroristas teniendo en cuenta la espectacularidad noticiosa y no el acontecimiento porque la prensa ha desaparecido el concepto de “tiempo real” y lo ha desplazado por imágenes y discursos que tergiversan lo verdadero. Ese control hegemónico que lucen los medios de comunicación, incluso, ha provocado que en Estados Unidos las campañas publicitarias del Ejército o el ARMY se aprovechen del deseo de la vasta población de jóvenes inmigrantes que hay en ese país de legitimar su identidad social (ser legal, ser residente, ser ciudadano) y exploten esa necesidad a través de la publicidad de reclutamiento, tal como ejemplifica el cuarto capítulo: “La construcción mediática posmoderna de la identidad en Estados Unidos”.

Por su parte, el capítulo quinto, “La representación del enemigo en la prensa puertorriqueña”, examina las representaciones noticiosas que la prensa puertorriqueña ha realizado sobre el “enemigo”, específicamente cuando los periódicos El Nuevo Día, El Vocero y Primera Hora cubrieron los conflictos en el Golfo Pérsico 1991 (Operación Tormenta del Desierto), en Afganistán
2001 (Operación Justicia Infinita) y la captura de Osama Bin Laden (2011). Del proceso de revisión de esas noticias de la prensa puertorriqueña, la investigadora concluyó que el discurso local es parte del consenso ideológico del discurso geopolítico estadounidense, por lo que la prensa puertorriqueña usa y reproduce las estrategias del discurso de las élites de Estados Unidos (26). Esto último llevó a Martínez Vizcarrondo a analizar y concluir en el capítulo sexto, “La dependencia de las fuentes informativas”, que El Nuevo Día se suplió de los servicios de noticias, los periódicos y fuentes gubernamentales estadounidenses para armar las notas periodísticas de esos conflictos. El medio puertorriqueño, entonces, dependió exclusivamente de los servicios informativos estadounidenses y por eso tuvo la necesidad de reproducir la ideología política del imperio. Según indica la autora en el último capítulo, en los medios digitales latinoamericanos que revisó una semana después del suceso del 11 de septiembre se reprodujeron exactamente los contenidos de la prensa estadounidense respecto a que fue un ataque (28).

Finalmente, de este libro se desprende la conclusión de que la guerra, el terror y el enemigo son productos mediáticos formados y fomentados, en este caso, por la prensa de Estados Unidos. Para argumentar esa idea principal, la autora se vale de un sinnúmero de referencias bibliográficas con las cuales conforma un texto que representa una aportación al análisis discursivo de los medios de prensa.

Gabriela Ortiz Díaz
Universidad de Puerto Rico, Recinto de Río Piedras

Al argumentar contra la perspectiva convencional sobre el tiempo que Mohandas K. Gandhi estuvo en Sudáfrica (1893-1914) como mera preparación para el movimiento que eventualmente iba a encabezar en la India, Nalini Natarajan establece que es preciso entender estas estancias en la diáspora como la fundación transformativa de la posición sociopolítica que Gandhi tomaría en su madurez. El único tiempo de Gandhi en la región atlántica fue durante sus viajes a Londres. Por eso, el ‘Atlántico’ que emplea Natarajan en el título no se refiere primariamente a un lugar físico, sino a una posición analítica: la noción de la región atlántica como zona cero para el desarrollo del sistema capitalista mundial moderno. Sudáfrica no es usualmente considerada en los análisis del Atlántico negro, aunque los hacendados de las Antillas que allí se reestablecieron reprodujeron el modelo económico colonial de las plantaciones caribeñas con trabajadores forzados traídos del sur de Asia. Así, Sudáfrica no solamente se convirtió en un locus intensificador de la globalización, sino que también representó un nexo clave en la transformación de la anterior modalidad mercantil de la diáspora surasiática, en el paradigma moderno, colonial-capitalista, basado en la explotación de la labor. La carrera diaspórica de Gandhi por ende encarna el pivote entre este y oeste.

Natarajan traza la experiencia de Gandhi como un sujeto colonial cosmopolita, enfatizando su estatus como un exiliado expatriado en la evolución de su pensamiento y política. En diversas maneras, Gandhi se encontró entre muchos espacios: fue un indio fuera de la India, antes de que se hubiera consolidado la categoría de ‘indio’; fue un abogado académicamente preparado en Inglaterra cuyo estatus lo puso por encima de, pero también en contacto con, los subalternos trabajadores llamados ‘cooilies’; y también fue un sujeto colonial británico sin ciudadanía segura. Su experiencia en Londres le ofreció contacto con la sociedad respetable, aunque su temporada en Sudáfrica lo sometió a un laberinto de terror racial, dirigiendo su atención a la difícil situación de los indios menos afortunados dentro de la maquinaria del colonialismo. Natarajan demuestra cómo estas experiencias contradictorias constituyeron el fermento dentro del cual la posición única de Gandhi tomó forma: el Gandhi diaspórico fue la fundación para el Gandhi nacionalista.
De hecho, la campaña contra el trabajo en servidumbre prosperó en una iniciativa que ayudó a construir el caso contra el colonialismo.

Gandhi se radicalizó a través de una serie de experiencias en el ambiente fracturado, multi-étnico y colonial de Sudáfrica. Su pensamiento se desarrolló en un contexto sobre-determinado por ambas formas del racismo (el europeo y el hindú), el privilegio de clase al igual que la ideología de casta, el prejuicio indio norte-versus-sur y el sesgo patria-sobre-diáspora. Natarajan sitúa el trabajo en servidumbre dentro de la dialéctica entre la esclavitud y la libertad y extiende la lógica del Atlántico negro, como precozmente moderno, dentro del corazón de la diáspora india. El complot de Gandhi para crear una nueva nación durante su diáspora invierte el estatus abyecto de ‘coolie’ en la ideología racial colonial aunque, paradójicamente, también mantiene su impulso homogeneizador al incorporar comerciantes y agricultores, sujetos libres y trabajadores en servidumbre, hindúes y musulmanes, norteños y sureños, hombres y mujeres en una categoría etno-nacionalista consolidada de una indianidad moderna que, a su vez, triunfa en el ‘hogar’ y rechaza la diáspora que la engendró. Satyagraha, en otras palabras, surgió en Sudáfrica y Hind Swaraj fue conjurado en el exilio. Gandhi es por igual un cosmopolita local que vincula las políticas del mundo Atlántico con la Sudáfrica colonial y las lleva hacia un nacionalismo triunfante que desata un tsunami de descolonización global a mediados del siglo veinte, y un moderno anti-moderno que aboga por una nueva tradición compuesta, construida principalmente sobre su maestría de la alfabetización y los medios de impresión.

El proyecto de Gandhi estuvo repleto de ironías y contradicciones que Natarajan considera con valentía y sutileza. Ella incluye un capítulo que trata las políticas de sexo y género, y otro sobre el rol y significado de uno de los principales discípulos de Gandhi, C. F. Andrews. Éste también es un británico diaspórico que no solamente apuntaló la causa desde Fiji, y persuadió al Mahatma-en-proceso-de-hacerse de regresar a la India para continuar la lucha, sino que también trajo la palabra satyagraha al sur del Caribe. Será interesante para los lectores de Andrews el hecho de que su diario fue una fuente indispensable de información con relación a la India y a Gandhi para el grupo radical literario-cultural Beacon a mediados de la década de 1930 en Trinidad. Su relato también influyó profundamente en el pensamiento de C. L. R. James sobre la situación difícil de los indios-caribeños y su evaluación de Gandhi como ‘la figura más grande en los asuntos mundiales de hoy’ (p. 203).
Aunque hubiese apreciado más atención a las experiencias de Gandhi en Inglaterra, para enriquecer y complicar el argumento sobre el lugar de la diáspora en su pensamiento y política, mi única frustración real es que el libro da por sentado que los lectores al lado ‘Atlántico’ de las cosas tienen a su alcance un conocimiento detallado sobre la lucha de los derechos civiles de Gandhi y la historia del nacionalismo. Sobre todo, sin embargo, este importante, eminente y legible texto no solo interviene críticamente en los estudios de la diáspora india y del Atlántico negro, sino también en la historia y política amplia del mundo moderno.

Keith E. McNeal
Spanish translation by Sharif El Gammal-Ortiz

On July 8, 1899, a musical revue titled *La entrega del mando o fin de siglo* (*The Change of Command or the End of the Century*) opened to popular acclaim in Puerto Rico. The show, written by Eduardo Meireles, a Cuban actor living on the island, was immediately censored by the mayor of San Juan, Luis Sánchez Morales. As innocuous as it was, the musical’s parody of the US presence in Cuba and Puerto Rico only one year after the Spanish-Cuban-American War touched a raw nerve in the local political environment. The following evening, when ticketholders discovered that the show would soon close, they lashed out against the authorities clamoring for the mayor’s removal from office. Police arrived with pistols drawn in order to suppress the ire of the people who wanted to enjoy musical theatre. The fight to affirm various sovereignties was at the center of this incident. On the one hand, the colonial government exercised its power as an extension of the US to close down the show. This sovereign act forcefully determined how the state policed islanders’ access to entertainment, thereby curtailing the people’s ability to process and laugh at their new status as a colony of the United States. On the other hand, through their resistance to the authority of the mayor and the police, the people transformed their claims to access a play into a sovereign act that legitimized their rights as ticket holders and their voices as political agents who resisted colonial imposition.

Although this story does not appear in Frances Negrón-Muntaner’s anthology, *Sovereign Acts*, it resonates with the subjects explored in the text. The book examines how diverse expressions of sovereignty coexist in constant tension due to the way that states force themselves onto others and how those othered peoples constitute themselves as resisting nations. The island’s colonial government that prevented Puerto Ricans from enjoying a good show in 1899, now justifies the austerity measures of the Junta de Supervisión y Administración Financiera (Financial Oversight and Management Board). This neocolonial body threatens islanders’ access to public education, health care, and employment, among other necessities. Puerto Ricans are still fighting for rights that are denied to them as an unincorporated territory, thereby performing an act that simultaneously asserts their status as US citizens and challenges the island’s links to the colonial order.
Negrón-Muntaner’s collection of essays proposes a dialogue between acts of sovereignty originating in the circles of settler colonial states and the oppressed that fight to define themselves as a political body. The essays included in this work make evident their connections to concepts such as Aníbal Quijano’s “coloniality of power” and Walter Mignolo’s “colonial difference,” which stand as sites of contention inhabited by conquered local histories and global systems of subjugation. The book’s focus on how the colonized polity reconstructs itself through performative acts of sovereignty expands on Quijano’s and Mignolo’s concepts by underscoring the diverse strategies of representation that contest the dominance of state power. This shift sheds light on how colonial subjects become agents of their own histories. One of the marvels of Negrón-Muntaner’s work is the multiplicity of cultures and political performances that it covers, which range from the symbolic suicide of Chamorro protestors in Guam to how the Young Lords dressed to demonstrate their political strength, among others. Its essays articulate transnational and multidisciplinary examinations that allow for a rich comparative study of diverse histories of state and revolutionary power.

The book is divided into three sections. The first, “Navigating Sovereignty,” addresses how different colonized peoples position themselves as sovereign agents, thereby resisting and questioning the authority of the dominant state. In “Contested Sovereignties: Puerto Rico and American Samoa,” Adriana María Garriga-López and Fa’anofo Lisaclaire Uperesa compare the colonial cases of Puerto Rico and American Samoa. As unincorporated territories of the US, both nations are subjected to a limited application of US constitutional rights. Yet even when their status is similar, Puerto Rico and American Samoa confront these realities in distinct ways that respond to particular historical and cultural contexts. In “Indigenous Peoples and the Politics of Recognition,” Glen Coulthard takes on the Canadian government’s politics of recognition to unmask its real agenda. It may seem that this government’s practices recognize the self-determination of Indigenous peoples ushering in a period of harmonious coexistence. Yet Coulthard argues that the state’s politics of recognition undermines the sovereignty of Indigenous nations and reinstates colonial practices that it supposedly subverts. Michael Lujan Bevacqua’s “The Decolonial Deadlock in Guam” takes us back to Garriga-López and Uperesa’s article in its focus on another US territory. The Chamorro, Guam’s indigenous community, regard decolonization as a suicidal endeavor that would ruin the island. Bevacqua focuses on
how Nasion Chamorro’s actions in a 1993 protest against the US naval base led to an act of sovereignty that resulted in what the writer identifies as the symbolic suicide of the protestors. In the last essay of this section, “Recognizing Native Hawaiians: Reality Bites,” Davianna P maika’i McGregor explores how different entities in Hawai‘i debate between two different moves towards sovereignty, either by declaring themselves a dependent nation in the US or by fighting for their independence.

The second section, “Sovereign Bodies,” focuses on how marginal identities enact sovereignty within a dominant discourse of nation. In “Chairman, Presidents, and Princesses: The Navajo Nation, Gender, and the Politics of Tradition,” Jennifer Nez Denetdale delves into how Navaho nationalism, a movement whose leaders are predominantly male, views sovereignty while confronting the reality of women participating in its governing body. Jessica A. F. Harkins’s “Same-Sex Marriage in the Cherokee Nation: Toward Decolonial Queer Indigeneities” dissects the complexities of how the Cherokee nation’s conservative stance on same-sex marriage and how the mainstream US support of these unions calls into question Native American sovereignty. Stephanie NohelaniTeves’s “Bloodline Is All I Need? Sovereignty and Hawaiian Hip-Hop” considers Hawaiian Hip-Hop as a site where cultural and gender identities perform their sovereignties. Taking a different approach than the other essays, Brian Klopotek’s “Of Shadows and Doubts: White Supremacy, Decolonization, and Black Indian Relations” scrutinizes how Southern Indian communities view blackness within their affirmation of tribal sovereignty in the US. Klopotek argues that racism among Native Americans in the South negatively impacts the way in which they envision their own nations. Finally, in “The Look of Sovereignty: Style and Politics in the Young Lords,” Frances Negrón-Muntaner takes what I consider to be a more theatrical approach. Negrón-Muntaner explores how the fashion trends and body language of the Young Lords represented a performance of resistance and an affirmation of power against the constant persecution of the authorities.

The last section, “Life without Sovereignty,” tests the limits of the concept and its practicality when considering intersections between power and marginal identities. The title of Madeline Román’s essay, “Sovereignty Still?” clearly maps out its goal. Román’s driving question is: should we continue theorizing sovereignty? Her challenge to sovereignty as a signifier is related to its origins in modernity and a type of anachronism that does not really
speak to a political future. In “Indigenizing Agamben: Rethinking Sovereignty in Light of the ‘Peculiar’ Status of Native Peoples,” Mark Rifkin questions the concept in the specific context of Giorgio Agamben’s “state of exception.” For Agamben, what is excluded from the structures of the law, such as the Indigenous nations that have their own forms of governance, becomes a distinct sovereignty in the settler state. However, Rifkin argues that this simply demonstrates the emptiness of sovereignty as a concept since the “exception” of the Native American nations still exists within the state’s juridical structures. Finally, in “King of the Line: The Sovereign Acts of Jean-Michel Basquiat,” Negrón-Muntaner and Yasmin Ramirez study the transition in Basquiat’s work from the use of crowns, which they interpret as Western symbols of sovereignty, to iconic elements of the African Diaspora. For these essayists, the replacement of crowns evidences Basquiat’s questioning of the possibilities for black sovereignty and the waning power of the overall concept.

Sovereign Acts is an expansive study of sovereignty, the performative acts that subvert or affirm its expression, and how national polities (the colonial/settler nations, Native American nations, U.S. territories, and political organizations) and singular voices negotiate the limitations of the concept. As in the case of the 1899 theatre riot that occurred in Puerto Rico, addressed at the beginning of this review, the reader of Negrón-Muntaner’s text will recognize the dangers posed when the state prohibits the people’s performance of their sovereign rights.

Juan Recondo
City University of New York, New York University

With *In Visible Movement: Nuyorican Poetry from the Sixties to Slam*, Urayoán Noel offers a valuable contribution to the critical study of Nuyorican poetry and performance during the last fifty years. Noel’s use of ‘Nuyorican’ does not refer to a unified artistic or social movement, but to “overlapping networks of political and cultural ferment” (xxiii) featuring Puerto Rican poets and other cultural actors from diverse backgrounds and experiences. As such, the book historicizes the Puerto Rican New York scene of cultural production from the 1960s to the 1990s, yet it has the breadth to both examine foundational voices such as William Carlos Williams and Jorge Brandon and to go beyond the geographic locus of New York to look at other important figures in the body of work he traces. Credited as the first book-length study entirely devoted to Nuyorican poetry, Noel’s work provides much-needed attention to this often overlooked literary corpus while transcending the scope of literary analysis by examining the inextricable linkages between Nuyorican poetics and performance. The author offers a close reading of a large body of poets to illuminate the broader cultural dynamics that are at stake. At stake are what he names the “difficult incorporation” (88) of Nuyorican poetry into larger US Latina/o literary canons as well as the categorization of diasporic identities in terms of easy, formulaic conceptions of belonging—from the familial and communal levels to the ethnic, national, and transnational.

Noel’s claims are provocative in a number of ways. First and foremost is the attention given to the performance of Nuyorican poetry, its life “off the page” (xv)—the way the aural, oral, and embodied aspects of these works shape our understanding of the genre. Nuyorican poetry’s deep ties to slam, hip hop, and other non-print traditions, as well as its often marginal status in the print literary market, make these considerations crucial to a rooted understanding of not just the poetry itself, but also the social and political moment that surrounded it. Noel’s rendering of what he calls an “embodied counterpolitics” (xxi) provides illuminating insight into the relationship between print and performance, signaling “the body as a site of political articulation” (xxi) which complicated traditional modes of identification and belonging. In simpler terms, Nuyorican poetics share a history of using the body to complicate facile, binary notions of identification, belonging, and resistance. Earlier readings of poets such as Pedro Pietri which did not take his
performative aspects into consideration could only arrive at more simplistic understandings of his relationship to his ethnic identity, incorporation into the nation (the US or Puerto Rico) and perhaps even miss the decolonial impulse of his work, as the more nuanced and yet powerful commentaries on these issues reside in its embodied performance.

While the book may be considered to be almost equally divided into sections on close readings, performance studies, and the historicization of the movement, Noel’s ingenious look at canonical Nuyorican poets and his close attention to understudied poets may be one its most lasting contributions. While maintaining an impressive balance between rigorous literary analysis, innovative theoretical engagement with performance studies, and the historicization of specific cultural and political moments, the book provides an almost encyclopedic wealth of engaging close readings of a vast camp of poets. From provocative new takes on canonized work and poets such as Pedro Pietri, Miguel Piñero, Piri Thomas, and Victor Hernández Cruz to promising readings of little-known or understudied diasporic poets, such as an interpretation of the complex gender dynamics operating in the work of Lorraine Sutton, the book illuminates our understanding of the era in a way heretofore unseen.

As suggested above, the historical trajectory the book offers a much-needed contribution to knowledge about the development of the Nuyorican movement, as both an aesthetic and a social project. In the first chapter, Noel focuses on the specific ways in which early Nuyorican poetics questioned and complicated the poles between invisibility and abject hypervisibility, which functioned as dominant modes of representation not just for Nuyorican poetry, but for Puerto Ricans stateside generally. He does this by discussing early diasporic works that articulated and negotiated nuanced relationships to visibility and belonging, which he terms “blurred visibility,” and the development of “poetics strategically positioned against both institutional invisibility and abject hypervisibility, complicating existing politics and poetics of resistance and representation” (2). Chapter two examines the galvanization of a self-aware Nuyorican diasporic poetics and the unavoidable tensions the institutionalization of such countercultural and oppositional poetics engendered. By looking at the creation and development of the Nuyorican Poets Café in New York City’s Lower East Side and the poet’s relationship to his/her community and institutions, Noel offers an analysis of the tensions between the drive for institutionalization, outlaw poetry, and the complicated relationship to community shared by most of these poets. He does this by contrapuntally
examining the work of Miguel Algarín, founder of the Nuyorican Poets Café, and his colleague Miguel Piñero, described as an outlaw poet whose work resisted institutionalization and harmonious conceptions of community. The next chapter considers the incorporation of Nuyorican poetics into the larger US Latina/o literary canon/tradition in the 1980s, reading the ways in which poets have complicated relationships with their psychological and political incorporation into both the homeland (Puerto Rico) and the US. By considering the tensions between now-institutionalized Nuyorican poetry’s engagement with the Latino literary marketplace vis-à-vis the decolonial drive of many of the works, Noel examines the “difficulty of incorporation” (88) that this poetry performed in the 1980s. The last chapter ponders 1990s Nuyorican poetics in relationship to a changing city and global landscape. Here Noel looks at the development of slam poetry and def jam traditions that exhibit the commodification of once-countercultural drives, and the implications of the global reach of these new traditions. This is linked to the changing conception of the city as a battleground for ethnic-driven neoliberal practices within a context of local gentrification and globalization. Noel evades, however, simplified judgments about this debate, focusing instead on the generative potential and nuanced commentaries produced by poets in this context.

In Visible Movement is a momentous contribution to the fields of Puerto Rican studies, Latina/o studies, and mid-twentieth century North American poetics. In exploring the incorporation of Nuyorican poetry into these diverse canons, this work manages to place itself as a crucial intervention into all of these fields. The book does a great job of mapping the networks among Nuyoricans and broader Afro-diasporic, African-American—such as the Black Arts poets—other New American poetries, and the Chicano Movement. Anecdotes about the close ties between Nuyorican poets and the likes of Allen Ginsberg, Amiri Baraka, and other towering figures of New York’s poetic history line the books’ pages, putting the author’s exhaustive archival research on display. I believe this work to be a solid foundation for the study of Nuyorican poetics going forward, providing lasting theoretical work for the study of the movement. Its readings of lesser-known poets expands our conception of the body of work that is Nuyorican poetry, and the performative focus on the body is a theoretical tool which may be used to rethink not just Nuyorican poetics, but the way we read poetry.

Zorimar Rivera Montes
Northwestern University

The bulk of this volume consists of twenty-five brief linguistic autobiographies by current or former students of the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras, describing their experiences of becoming bilinguals. These personal narratives are bracketed by an introduction by the editor elucidating the context and rationale for their publication and a conclusion discussing the implications of this unique qualitative data for language planning purposes and language policy in Puerto Rico.

In Chapter One, the editor provides a concise introduction to some fundamental concepts in bilingualism research, describing their relevance for the Puerto Rican context, as well as an informative overview of the contemporary language situation in Puerto Rico, the degree and specific distribution of bilingualism on the island archipelago. Of particular interest in this chapter are the section on multilingualism as a global reality, underscoring that monolingualism historically and geographically has been the exception, not the norm, and the sections describing language-contact phenomena in Puerto Rico, such as borrowing, code-switching, and translanguaging.

Chapters Two, Three, and Four comprise the linguistic autobiographies that constitute the unique qualitative data presented with this publication. These richly detailed and evocative personal narratives truly are “engaging,” as the editor describes them, and make the volume a pleasure to read. Chapter Two, “Made in Puerto Rico,” consists of language learning accounts written by individuals who were born in Puerto Rico and mainly began learning English once they started school. Chapter Three, “Nuyoricans and Other Early Childhood Bilinguals,” contains the language learning narratives of individuals who either were raised in the United States and then moved to Puerto Rico or were raised in Puerto Rico with English-speaking parents. Chapter Four, “Immigrants to the Enchanted Island,” is the smallest group of linguistic autobiographies, made up of the accounts of three individuals who were raised monolingually in English in the United States, had various degrees of formal and informal instruction in Spanish in school and/or college, and then moved to Puerto Rico to study and work. The writers were given guidelines to consider while composing their linguistic autobiographies (included as an appendix), so there is a sense of continuity across them;
however, there is also quite a variety in the specific aspects of the guidelines on which the contributors chose to focus. They all describe in evocative detail the trials and frustrations as well as the joys and exhilarations of language learning, and they all affirm that becoming bilingual has enriched their lives.

As the editor notes, this collection cannot claim to be representative of the language situation in Puerto Rico as a whole, but rather, in offering several accounts of successful language learning, it provides valuable qualitative data from which models of best practices might be derived for planning an effective and successful language policy. Toward that end, in her concluding chapter the editor isolates a list of the several factors that seemed crucial for success across all the language learning narratives. She also stresses the salient differences among them, warning against yet another ill-advised “one-size-fits-all” solution and arguing instead for a more nuanced language policy. After a brief technical overview of language planning and language policy and a brief description of the historical context in Puerto Rico with regard to these topics, the editor sketches out what more effective language planning would involve and what a more nuanced language policy might entail. Though mention is made of the Scandinavian language policy of parallelism or complementary language use as a possible model for Puerto Rico, the discussion here might have benefitted from a consideration of the potential contributions of the translanguaging movement (García & Li Wei, 2014 [included in the bibliography]; Canagarajah, 2013) in helping to change widespread language attitudes grounded in a monolingualist ideology.

By presenting these personal accounts of successful language learners as unique data for the purposes of effective language planning, the volume continues and elaborates in an exciting direction the line of research in applied linguistics highlighting learners’ subjective experiences of the enterprise that was inaugurated with Claire Kramsch’s ground-breaking *The Multilingual Subject: What Foreign Language Learners Say about Their Experience and Why It Matters* (Kramsch, 2009). It is hoped the book will be of interest to language policymakers in Puerto Rico specifically, but it should also interest language policy planners and scholars of language policy anywhere, as well as applied linguists working on bilingualism and multilingualism, language teachers, teacher trainers, and basically anyone who has learned another language and can relate to the challenges and rewards described so evocatively by the autobiographers.

Michael Huffmaster
University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez Campus

James Joyce’s fictions explore not only the servant-master relationship between Ireland and Britain but also the belief system imposed by the Church of Rome which empowered him by “silence, exile, and cunning” to forge “the uncreated conscience” of his “race.” If the gradual liberation from “a race of clodhoppers” and its “borrowed” language in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* freed Joyce to rage against “the national disease” of “paralysis” invoked in *Ulysses*, then the “stolentelling” of *Finnegans Wake* allowed him to rejoice in “the accelerated grimace” and “scribbledehobble” of a new language in which the *lingo* of Ireland is new-marked and well-twanged.

“There cannot be,” Joyce wrote to his brother Stanislaus, “any substitute for individual passion as the motive power of everything.” By articulating the unspoken fragmentation of self and country, Joyce sounded the depths by heightening and giving voice to that which had been silenced by a double colonization.

Given the uneasy history of Spain and Latin America during the twentieth century, national liberation was assisted by acts of culture. The novels of James Joyce, it is claimed by the book under review, helped shape that undertaking. *TransLatin Joyce: Global Transmissions in Ibero-American Literature* edited by Brian L. Price, César A. Salgado, and John Pedro Schwartz (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) argues that Joyce’s legacy in the Ibero-American world is “best valued and understood from the vantage point of postcolonial writing in Spanish and Portuguese” and that “to read Joyce today is to read him through the prism of translatin writers” who have “relanguaged and re-configured the poetics and the politics of the Joycean text for the benefit of non-Anglo-European Global South audiences.” In defining *TransLatin*, the editors mean print cultures where Spanish and Portuguese is spoken and suggest that “A translatin Joyce is never conclusively translated; rather it is suspended in a process of either re- or de- translation.”

*TransLatin Joyce* asks a series of questions that include the influence of Joyce’s novels on Peninsular and New World writing, the Iberian and Latin American avant-garde, the existing scholarship pertaining to or emulating that fiction, and “the face off” between writers who either demonstrated
a close affinity to or who reacted coolly towards the “intervention” of “the gentle Irishman mighty odd.”

In their helpful Introduction, occasionally awash in the “literary” version of wave-theory, the editors give space to essays that relate directly to the Iberian Peninsula, Argentina, Cuba, and Mexico. The essays are introduced according to which historical surge they are associated with so that Gayle Rogers and John Pedro Schwartz’ respective commentaries on the Spanish critic Antonio Marichalar and the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa relate to the first wave (1920-1930), Norman Cheadle on Argentina’s cultural wars and Francine Masiello on the relationship between Joyce and the novelist Roberto Arlt share the second wave (1940-1950). The third wave (1960-1970) is given over to César Salgado’s essay on Edmundo Desnoes’ recalibration of Joyce for the subaltern reader in Cuba and Paula Park’s auditory annotations of the novels of Severo Sarduy. In the fourth wave (1980-), Brian Price traces Joyce’s Dedalian poetics in the novels of Salvador Elizondo, José Luis Venegas writes on the elements of Ulysses in Gustavo Sainz’s Obsesivos días circulares, and Wendy Faris argues that Carlos Fuentes’ Cristobal Nonato takes its linguistic impetus from Joyce’s Ulysses.

Despite flaying the Brazilian writer Paulo Coelho—“author of vapid parables of mystical self-discovery”—for picking a fight with “an Irish writer dead for 71 years” and insisting that Ulysses is “harmful to humanity,” it is a pity that the editors chose to exclude Brazil from their book. A TransLatin study of Clarice Lispector, for example, would have been a welcome addition to an otherwise fine volume. Some of the essays in TransLatin Joyce are worth highlighting because of the many insights they provide for readers unfamiliar with either the territory of Joyce’s novels or the fictions they inspired.

While Antonio Marichalar’s seminal essay on “James Joyce in his Labyrinth” (1924) is well-known, the facts behind the Spanish critic’s popularization of Joyce are not. Gayle Rogers’ essay “Re-creating Ulysses across the Pyrenees: Antonio Marichalar’s Spanish–European Critical Project” is important not only for the historical background it provides but also because it hints that Marichalar’s insistence on Joyce as “a faithful Catholic misunderstood” may well have been a mask to promote the “pornographic” author of Ulysses in Primo de Rivera’s increasingly nationalist and fascist Spain.

Of equal importance is John Pedro Schwartz’ “The Geopolitics of Modernist Impersonality: Pessoa’s Notes on Joyce” which cites the following au-
The art of James Joyce, like that of Mallarmé, is art preoccupied with method, with how it’s made. Even the sensuality of *Ulysses* is a symptom of intermediation. It is hallucinatory delirium—the kind treated by psychiatrists—presented as an end in itself.

Stressing the differences between Joyce and Pessoa and the interventions the latter undertook to differentiate his heteronymic system of self-annihilation from the voices of *Ulysses*, Schwartz concludes, perhaps over-enthusiastically, that the Portuguese poet “failed to perceive that he and Joyce shared the broader political program of universalizing a culture marginalized by over a century of imperial decline and centuries of colonialism respectively.” Pessoa, who owned a 1932 Odyssey Press (Hamburg) edition of *Ulysses* knew better, one guesses, than to commit his personal thoughts to posterity in the margins of Joyce’s book.

Norman Cheadle’s “Between Wandering Rocks: Joyce’s *Ulysses* in the Argentine Culture Wars” comments on the views held by Jorge Luis Borges on Joyce’s fictions. While pitting Borges—liberal, agnostic, Anglophile, anti-nationalist—against the novelist Leopoldo Marechal—Hispanophile, Catholic, nationalist—and his “Ulyssean” *Adán Buenosayres*, Cheadle focuses on the verbal fisticuffs that Joyce’s novel provoked. Reacting to *Ulysses* (and *Finnegans Wake*), Borges was both ambivalent and disdainful. Where Marechal saw “a simple essence that transcends and unifies,” Borges saw chaos. While Marechal was able to write “a big novel accessible to the Argentine equivalent” of the “allroundman” Bloom, Borges’ cranky cracks look forward to “El Aleph,” that “very paradigm of anti-Joycean condensation.” Cheadle concludes, ironically, that it was through Joyce that both Borges and Marechal were able speak to each other.

In “The Cracked Lookingglass of the Servants: Joyce, Arlt, and (Borges),” Francine Masiello compares Roberto Arlt’s strategy of the literary “blow to jaw,” a kind of de Sadean upper-cut, to that of Joyce’s “scrabbled and scratched and scrobbled and skrevened” lingo as both writers pushed “language to the limits.” While reminding readers that Arlt “lambasted Joyce for his elitism,” Masiello adds insightfully that both writers were also odd bedfellows: for Molly Bloom, the bed was a place of meditation; for Arlt it was a bunk of perverse contemplation.
César Salgado’s “Detranslating Joyce for the Cuban Revolution: Edmundo Desnoes’s 1964 Edition of Retrato del artista adolescente” considers the recasting of Joyce as Caliban, as a subaltern Caribeño of rage who re-stoked the fires of his master’s language—in Edmundo Desnoes translation—as part of an anticolonial (Third) World literary agenda and raises questions of the efficacy of either de-, re- translating, or misreading of texts written in colonial extremis.

In “A Portrait of the Mexican Artist as a Young Man,” Brian Price writes that Joyce “snatched the conqueror’s language, subjected it to the ingenuity of the conquered, and elevated it to levels that English literature has still yet to achieve.” This rings true for most of the writers mentioned in TransLatin Joyce. Whether they were heard “off the record” as Paula Park suggests in the case of Sarduy or had little English—Arlt, for example—or were fluent in the language like Pessoa or Borges, the “lingo gasped between kicksheets,” the “language of sigh, grunt and groan,” the “gutterhowls,” the “volupkabulary,” the “blarneyest blather,” and “the longshots, upcloses, outblacks and stagetolets” of Portrait, Ulysses, and Wake would all be “Puffedly offal tosh” were it not for Joyce’s linguistic (and political) appropriation for the oppressed. As Wendy Faris points out, the presence of the “auto-generative potential of language” as a “textual model” might just “mitigate the phenomenon” of colonial domination. While admitting disingenuously that he would “far sooner muddle through the hash of lentils in Europe than meddle with Irrland’s split little pea,” Joyce was a “Sniffer of carrion, premature gravedigger, seeker of the nest of evil in the bosom of a good word.” TransLatin Joyce is testament to what José Luis Venegas calls the “modernist self-transcendence” of the Irishman’s continuing presence in Ibero-American culture and literature.

Michael Sharp
University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus

*Sonidos de avistamiento* no es. quiero concluir esta reseña sin resaltar que, uno as imta, siempre existe la posibilidad de mejorar algún detalle en una se tan solo un libro visualmente hermoso, sino una obra de mucho valor. Abordé el tomo sin expectativas sobre su contenido pues no conocía a su autor y su formato no se parecía al de otros libros de aves que conozco: Biaggi, 2001; Oberle, 2000; Raffaele, 1989; Raffaele et al., 1998. A medida que fui ojeándolo y leyendo su texto, me fui dando cuenta de que es un volumen excelente que recomiendo sin reservas. A continuación documento algunas de sus fortalezas.

La obra está muy bien ilustrada y su riqueza visual reside en sus 387 imágenes a color, muchas de ellas a media página y algunas a página completa. Incluye también mapas, rutas sugeridas, gráficas de barra y algunas recomendaciones valiosas sobre la observación de aves. Está dirigida a todo tipo de lector, de cualquier edad. De cada una de las 70 especies de aves incluidas se ofrece la descripción, dónde fue avistada y algunos datos de su historia natural, además de fotos ilustrativas. La obra es bilingüe y, considerando la diversidad cultural de los puertorriqueños y de nuestros visitantes, un texto en inglés y en español debe ser considerado “lo mejor de dos mundos”.

Aunque no conozco el peritaje ornitológico del autor, reconozco y valoro el de sus asesores: Julio Salgado Vélez (Puerto Rico Birding Trips), Omar Monzón Cardona y Glorimar Toledo (estos dos últimos de Para la Naturaleza). La lista de referencias (algo que considero muy importante para el lector que desea profundizar sobre el tema) es muy completa e incluye, además, las seis más importantes para Puerto Rico (ver la lista al final de esta reseña). El conjunto, tanto de las referencias como de los asesores, le dan al texto y al autor mérito suficiente como para confiar en su contenido. Sin duda, “el que a buen árbol se arrima, buena sombra lo cobija”.

Admiro el arrojo de Javier A. Román-Nieves. Se requiere valor (entre otras virtudes) para aventurarse a escribir “otro” libro de aves de Puerto Rico. Esa valentía es la que le ha faltado a varios ornitólogos profesionales y aficionados puertorriqueños que han dejado esta tarea en manos de ornitólogos extranjeros. Se requiere también mucho valor para cubrir algunos temas deli-
cados que apelan a la sensibilidad de personas que procuran aprender de una manera divertida y de otros grupos cuya intención genuina es la de ayudar.

Uno de esos temas delicados es el de los gatos realengos del Viejo San Juan. Existen pruebas que documentan su impacto negativo sobre la biodiversidad. Esta información no debe pasarse por alto pues los gatos no sólo tienen una alta tasa de reproducción sino que, además, se adaptan fácilmente a ambientes silvestres. Esto los ha convertido en una seria amenaza para muchas especies de animales, en particular en localidades insulares (Joglar, 2005). El autor aborda este problema e incluso ofrece recomendaciones de cómo aliviar una grave situación que tiene consecuencias tanto ecológicas como estéticas.

El respeto a las aves es otro de los temas tratados por nuestro audaz autor, quien expone su preocupación al respecto. Recomienda conocer y seguir al pie de la letra los Principios de Ética de los Observadores de Aves de la Asociación Americana de Observadores de Aves. Dos de estos principios son los siguientes:

(i) Limite el uso de grabaciones y otros métodos de atraer aves.
(ii) Use la luz artificial con moderación al filmar o fotografiar, especialmente para primeros planos.

Como dice el refrán, “a buen entendedor, pocas palabras bastan”.

Creo importante resaltar lo siguiente: uno de los objetivos principales de esta obra es dar a conocer la riqueza de la diversidad de aves en áreas urbanas de Puerto Rico, particularmente en la Isleta de San Juan. Existe la creencia general de que hay poca biodiversidad en las áreas urbanas, lo cual está muy lejos de la realidad (Joglar y Longo, 2017). Con el avistamiento de 70 especies de aves entre 2014 y 2015, Román-Nieves aporta datos valiosos que documentan que la Isleta de San Juan, además de ser rica en historia y cultura, es rica en biodiversidad.

Como en toda tarea que se ejecuta por primera vez, siempre existe la posibilidad de mejorar. En una segunda edición podrían corregirse las dificultades para la lectura de leyendas o comentarios que se hacen sobre algunas de las imágenes, como sucede en las páginas 67, 126, 127 y 141, por ejemplo.

No quiero concluir esta reseña sin recomendar nuevamente este libro y felicitar a su autor por esta contribución. De hoy en adelante, cuando escuche la canción En mi Viejo San Juan, no podrá evitar pensar en esas 70 especies de aves y en el hermoso y valioso libro, Sonidos de avistamiento.
REFERENCIAS


Rafael L. Joglar
Universidad de Puerto Rico, Recinto de Río Piedras

In this succinct book, Sanabria describes how the Puerto Rican labor movement unfolded around the turn of the twentieth century, as the country’s islands came under United States control and the economy underwent a fundamental transformation, several features of which remain to this day. The research builds on previous work and primary sources, many of which are available exclusively in Spanish. As such, one of the book’s welcome contributions is making material accessible to anglophone readers who might otherwise remain ignorant about important aspects of Puerto Rican labor history. Sanabria’s research reveals how the labor movement’s trajectory was shaped by the revolutionary socialist and anarchist views espoused by several of its leaders and yet remained reformist in goals and practice due to the perceived opportunities for labor offered by the new constitutional regime under the United States, such as freedom of the press and the right to strike.

The years between 1898 and 1934 are an especially interesting period to look at given current developments in Puerto Rico; the processes of land privatization, proletarianization, and increased urbanization patterned the history of labor in the period before the establishment of the “Commonwealth,” an arrangement of conditional sovereignty whose limited powers were largely taken away by PROMESA (Caban, 2017). This is not to say that the periods are mirror images of one another, but rather that debates around Puerto Rico’s relationship to the United States and how the plight of workers figured into these concerns were, as they are now, central to the difficulties now facing workers.

Sanabria’s account details the conditions of the working class in the years prior to the US acquisition. Leaders of organized labor were to live both the end of Spanish rule and the beginning as well as the solidification of US rule. The contrasts between conditions under late Spanish and early US rule cast the US government in a more positive light, something emphasized by several labor leaders, and, consequently, many in the labor movement developed a preference for US control. Another crucial change was the increasing proletarianization of labor. In the nineteenth century, the Puerto Rican economy consisted mainly of subsistence farming, there was little wage labor, and agricultural work was mainly done either by enslaved Africans and their
descendants or by the *agregados* (workers with usufruct rights over the part of land granted to them by the landholders in exchange for agricultural work). The rural population had more direct access to land for food and living; some were landholders, some rented, others were *agregados*, which made the harsh conditions of wage labor unattractive for most. This started to change rapidly after Puerto Rico changed hands.

The economic restructuring that followed the US conquest resulted in the creation of a Puerto Rican working class that is more familiar to contemporary observers. The influx of US capital, the expropriation of land, and the concentration of resources in fewer hands (farmers with larger amounts of acreage) forced agricultural workers into wage labor; subsistence farming was undermined, and therefore workers needed wages to satisfy their basic needs. The economy changed in terms of products as well; industrial sugar became one of the main products due to US interest in controlling that market, while coffee, previously a centerpiece, became stagnant due to unfavorable US tariffs and lost markets in Spain and her colonies.

Additionally, the tobacco and needlework industries grew as sectors of the economy. These sectors ran on wage labor and they comprised the bulk of employment in both rural and urban settings.

As readers of the text will learn, not everyone who lost or sold land found employment, and this unemployment was an important driver of immiseration in Puerto Rico. The wages were, of course, far from enough to live on, and on top of this workers were often paid in vouchers redeemable only in factory stores belonging to their employers, where the goods, sometimes of lower quality than the alternatives, were sold at higher prices. This meant that workers barely had enough to feed, clothe, and house themselves, let alone feed and clothe their own children. Improving these conditions was the immediate *raison d’être* of the nascent labor movement. Many of its leaders authored radical anarchist and socialist criticisms of the prevailing economic and political system. The details about the people authoring these critiques, and about the mediums used to reach the working class (especially labor theater, due to widespread illiteracy) is one of the best aspects of the book, as it brings to light the radical currents animating organized labor.

However, these revolutionary ideals did not translate into revolutionary politics within the mainstream of the labor movement. Although Sanabria names early examples of mutual aid initiatives all over Puerto Rico (initiatives more reminiscent of prefigurative politics than of reformism), the
labor movement’s main thrust was trade unionist, focusing on immediate economic concerns, and eventually reform through electoral politics and legislation. Here, the author reviews the discussions around the role played by the influence the American Federation of Labor (AFL) exercised through its close relationship with the Federación Libre de Trabajadores (FLT), the main trade union organization for most of the period in question. He challenges the idea that the AFL was the main driver of these reformist politics, pointing out that local labor leaders were advocating reformism as a strategy before the AFL came into the picture, citing the political positionings of the Federación Regional de los Trabajadores de Puerto Rico (FRT), a precursor to the FLT. Instead, he proposes that AFL support strengthened this already present reformist trend. But where did the trend come from, then?

Sanabria highlights the dual experience of Spanish and US rule and the comparisons drawn by the labor movement. Labor organizing under Spanish rule was heavily repressed; militants in the labor movement lived this repression, and therefore viewed aspects of US civil rights, such as the right to strike and a free press, as more favorable for effectively organizing the workers. Independence, interestingly, was viewed as a threat to labor due to fears that the local elite would strangle labor organizing and secure tight control over the working class. Labor leaders believed that independence would favor hacendados and other local economic elite, not the working class. In light of this contrast, many in the labor movement leadership and base expressed support for the extension of US citizenship to Puerto Ricans and also for the admission of Puerto Rico into the Union. The leadership relied heavily on stateside support to pressure local government and industry. Sanabria shows that AFL support was significant, albeit out of an opportunistic concern for the potential erosion of stateside workers’ rights. He does so citing evidence from AFL conventions and the documented actions of local labor organizers in the FLT, as well as AFL founder and twice-president Samuel Gomper’s correspondence and public statements. While further exploration of AFL motivations would have been welcome, it is clear that the group took an active role in the period, and Sanabria makes a good case for the argument that the FLT’s reformism was rooted in its own internal dynamics, not in outside influence.

As an accessible, digestible yet informative English-language look at the labor movement during the beginning of US rule, this book is a great read. I’m sure there is much more to tell about the period, but Sanabria’s work
a helpful analysis of the different drivers shaping the labor movement in PR during the early twentieth century. Between these covers, then-novel developing aspects of the politics and economy of Puerto Rico are illustrated, and their relationship to the needs of workers at the time is made clear. Many of these aspects, such as the privatization of productive land and the dominance of US private capital, remain central to economic and political questions in Puerto Rico, which makes this book an important element in tracing the historical continuities within our current challenges. Given the relevance of anglophone audiences (especially those in the US) to the unfolding economic and political crisis of contemporary Puerto Rico, such efforts to make our past accessible in English are welcome and appreciated.

REFERENCES


Diego Agostini Ferrer
University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus
The research project detailed in this book focuses on the complex intersection of social identity, ethnicity, and language, homing in on lexical choice decisions as potential evidence of ethnic self-alignment. This intersection is far from understudied, but this book chose a group in Trinidad, the Douglas (those born to African and Indian parents), who differ from prototypical ethnicities in several key ways; the Douglas do not constitute a distinct linguistic community, nor do they always explicitly assert a distinct identity separate from their ancestral groups. Moreover, both Afro-Trinidadians and Indo-Trinidadians remain distinct ethnic communities in Trinidad to which a given Dougla can claim belonging. Together, as the study makes clear, these factors make the expression of Douglas identity a subtly differentiated affair.

The Douglas are not the first group of mixed ancestry that has been studied with an eye towards illuminating the relationship between identity and linguistic practice. Ferne Louanne Regis overviews two cases of communities of mixed ancestry as part of the first three chapters’ introduction to the research, Trinidad’s (and the Douglas’) linguistic and sociohistorical context, and the study’s sample. These groups are the Lumbee of North Carolina and the Métis of Canada. In both cases, we have communities rooted within distinct geographic spaces, a long clan or tribal history, documented linguistic markers (Lumbee Vernacular English and, in the case of the Métis, a Cree-centric trilingual profile combining English and French), and a history of active identification as a group (through spokespersons) and as individual members of the group.

In contrast, the Douglas do not declare themselves a separate ethnicity, there is no distinct linguistic variety linked to the Douglas as an ethnicity, nor is there a clear geographic space associated with the group. An immediate question that crossed my mind while reading was, why are we talking about a distinct group in the first place, then? As the book shows, while Dougla identity does not seem as solidly articulated as the identities of these two groups, they remain an identifiable group due the mixing-yet-not-merging of African and Indian communities in Trinidad and to the surrounding circumstances. Indeed, records show that Douglas have probably been around
since the nineteenth century, although terms other than Dougla were used to name those born of Indian and African unions.

Drawing from sociolinguistics research in Trinidad, Regis reports that there are no clear language varieties that are favored by specific ethnic groups outside of a few pockets of members of older generations in some of them. Additionally, the many distinct influences that contributed to what is now TrinEdian English Creole (TrinEC) are no longer noticed by speakers and TrinEC is the lingua franca across ethnic boundaries. While not always using the word Dougla, the population born of mixed unions between Indian and Afrodescendant parents is referenced in popular culture and has seen an increase in the number of individuals identifying as Douglas in the past decades. Moreover, political developments since the 1970s and in the early 2000s have moved some in Trinidad to seize on the Dougla identity as a potential TrinEdian national identity that transcends ethnic tensions (this, the author tells us, has not been very influential).

The absence of scholarship on the linguistic markers of Dougla identity does not entail that none can be found. In their case, there have been no studies on the matter; this book reports the first major project. Ferne Louanne Regis discusses the extensive research showing that while linguistic behavior and ethnic identity construction don’t have a simple relationship, they do often have an inseparable one, and she uses a highly involved qualitative methodology to investigate this relationship in the Douglas case through the lens of lexical choice. Using a pool of Indic lexical items constructed through questionnaires, a list of words corresponding to the specific semantic domains was constructed. Only Indic items were used because these often signal ethnic alignment, a detail that will be important for the study’s design. She combines the theoretical frameworks of Ethnography of Communication, Communication Accommodation Theory, Social Network Analysis, and Community of Practice Theory to analyze six Dougla consultants and their partial personal networks, as well as three communities of practice. The reason why the sample analyzed is small is that the larger pool of participants was filtered according to specific criteria of upbringing (in a Dougla household) and area of long-term residence (predominantly Indic, Afric or Neutral communities). The author concedes that studies with larger populations may well yield different results, but this does not mar the quality of the findings; it simply limits their generalizability.
An important observation for this study is that African-derived words in TrinEC are not normally perceived as such and therefore the use of these lexical items cannot be readily interpreted as expressions of ethnic affinity. In contrast, Indic items are perceived as expressing ethnic affiliations due to the survival of Trinidadian Hindi/Bhojpuri in the Indian communities, an understanding of both varieties as linked to Indian identity, and the promotion of Standard Hindi to reaffirm identification with India.

This situation is compounded by the perception within the Indian community that TrinEC reflects African identity, which results in a general favoring of Indic alternatives whenever possible. In light of this, the author hypothesizes that, although not all usage of Indic items can be linked with expressions of ethnic affiliation, those Trinidadians who do show an interest in aligning with the Indian community (e.g., through customs, food, social networks, etc.) will tend to choose ethnically-aligned Indic lexical items spontaneously, preferring them over their non-Indic equivalents. Furthermore, those wishing to disavow any links to Indian identity will avoid these items.

The results were expected to fall in three broad patterns: the individual would present an identity aligned with one of the two ancestral groups and exclude the other, they would avoid expressing allegiance to either group, preferring an unmarked position, or they would align strategically with both groups as the situation demanded. Using social network analysis and the additional analysis of three communities of practice, the author found that there is no prototypical Dougla identity. Their lexical choices revealed a polymorphous articulation of identities that followed accommodative goals; some expressed alignment with Indian identity, others avoided Indic terms to align with a more African or Trinidadian identity (per own admission in each case), and there were strategic lexical choices depending on the situation and the company at hand. The analysis of each case is more intricate than what I can overview in this text, but its value should not be understated; examining lexical choice through the varied theoretical frameworks described yielded rich concerning the dynamics that can relate linguistic behavior, social identity, and ethnicity to one another. Extending the analysis to larger samples and other levels of language, like phonology, morphosyntax, and pragmatics, could further illustrate ethnic alignment behavior as reflected in linguistic phenomena and perhaps do so with greater resolution.

Diego Agostini Ferrer
University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus
Diego Agostini Ferrer is an MA student in Linguistics at the UPR-Río Piedras. His interests include sociolinguistics, applied linguistics, refugee education, language policy, and language ideologies.

David A. Auerbach is Professor in the Graduate Program in Translation at UPR-Río Piedras. He has been a professional translator and editor for over 25 years, specializing in financial, legal, and literary texts as well as translation for the arts, working principally from four languages (Spanish, French, Portuguese, and Italian). His publications include translations of essays and museum texts for various agencies and institutions in Puerto Rico and the United States.

Juleisa Avilés Acarón is a graduate student at UPR-Río Piedras where she earned a BA in anthropology.


Desrine R. Bogle is Lecturer in French and Translation at the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus, Barbados. She is a member of the Traduction et communication transculturelle research centre at the Université Sorbonne Nouvelle-Paris 3. Her academic interests include postcolonial translation, paremiology, and translation.

María M. Carrión is Professor of Comparative Literature and Religion at Emory University. She holds a PhD in Spanish from Yale University. The author of Subject Stages; Marriage, Theatre, and the Law in Early Modern Spain (2010), much of her research concerns cultural and literary production in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spain. Her recent work has analyzed Andalus architecture and the history of science.
Julián del Casal (1863-1893) was a Cuban poet whose early romanticism yielded to the influence of prevailing French aesthetics. He died young of tuberculosis, having published only two collections in his lifetime, *Hojas al viento* (1890) and *Nieve* (1892). *Bustos y rimas* (1893), from which the poems published in this volume are taken, appeared posthumously.

Sharif El Gammal-Ortiz holds an MFA in poetry and translation from Columbia University. His poetry has been featured in *The Acentos Review, The Atlas Review, Entasis,* and *SAN.* Currently he is a doctoral student in English at UPR-Río Piedras.

Álvaro García Garcinuño is a professional translator and editor. He completed a degree in English philology and a masters in Education at Universidad de Salamanca, as well as an MA in Translation at the Graduate Program in Translation at UPR-RP. In 2017, he received the Samuel R. Quiñones award for best translation into Spanish.

Jorge L. Giovannetti is Professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at UPR- Río Piedras. His most recent publications include the co-edited digital book *Antropologías del Caribe Hispano: Notas de campo sobre Cuba y Puerto Rico* (2015), the article “An Unfinished Ethnography” in the edited book *Corridor Talk to Culture History* (2015), and *Black British Migrants in Cuba* (2018).


Michael Huffmaster is Assistant Professor of German at UPR-Mayagüez. He is interested in the ways adult foreign language learning and the study of literature in a foreign language foster creative and critical thinking as well as how these disciplines promote the core democratic values of liberal education.

Rafael L. Joglar is Professor of Biology at UPR-Río Piedras. He earned his PhD at the University of Kansas and has completed research on biodiversity, including scholarship that focuses on Puerto Rico. He is the founder of the Coqui Project, a non-profit organization that promotes conservation, the protection of the environment, and environmental education.

Aurora Lauzardo Ugarte is Professor in the Graduate Program in Translation at UPR-Río Piedras. Her translations include *Puerto Rico en el siglo americano: su historia desde 1898* by César Ayala and Rafael Bernabe (2011); “Puerto Rico: principal
List of Contributors

frontera del Mar Caribe 1940-1943” by Fitzroy André Baptiste in Puerto Rico en la Segunda Guerra Mundial: el escenario regional, which is edited by Jorge Rodríguez Beruff y José L. Bolivar Fresneda (2015); and Mar de tormentas: historia de los huracanes en el Gran Caribe desde Colón hasta María by Stuart Schwartz (2018).

Keith E. McNeal is Associate Professor at the University of Houston. He specializes in Caribbean ethnology and Atlantic history. Currently he is working on a book project concerning the politics of sexuality and citizenship in Trinidad and Tobago and beyond called Sexting the Citizen.

Rodney Morales is Professor in the Creative Writing Program in the Department of English at the University of Hawai. He is author of the short story collection The Speed of Darkness (1988) and two novels: When the Shark Bites (2002) and For a Song (2016). His stories have been published in numerous journals and anthologized in Rereading America (1992) and Growing Up Puerto Rican (1997).

Gabriela Ortiz Díaz holds a bachelor’s degree in Hispanic Studies and has published numerous columns in the newspaper Claridad. A graduate of the master’s degree in the Graduate Program in Linguistics at UPR-Río Piedras, she is currently pursuing her doctorate in communications at the University of Navarra.

Juan Manuel Picabea was born in 1926 in Jiquí, Province of Camagüey, Cuba and in the 1940s was living in Mayajigua, working with his father and reporting for El Mundo. In the 1950s, he worked for Radio Trópico in Camagüey. As of 2008, he was living in the town of Florida, Cuba and still kept the Underwood Typewriter that he had used in his work with Carl Withers.

Lydia Platón Lázaro teaches in the English Department at UPR-Cayey. In addition to teaching, she is a translator, a critical freelance writer, and performer. She obtained her doctorate in English at the UPR- Río Piedras. Platón Lázaro is the author of Defiant Itineraries: Caribbean Paradigms in American Dance and Film (2015).

G.J. Racz is Professor of English, Philosophy, and Languages at Long Island University Brooklyn, review editor for Translation Review, and former president of the American Literary Translators Association (ALTA). His translation of Eduardo Chirinos’s The Smoke of Distant Fires (2012) was short-listed for the 2013 PEN Award for Poetry in Translation, and his most recent translations for the theatre appear in The Golden Age of Spanish Drama: A Norton Critical Edition (2018).
Juan Recondo is Adjunct Lecturer at the City University of New York and New York University. He teaches Latinx Theatre, Latin American Theatre, English Composition, and Public Speaking. His main fields of research are Latinx and Latin American Theatre and Performance, Black Cinema, and Postcolonial Theory.

Zorimar Rivera Montes is a PhD student in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at Northwestern University. Her research focuses on twentieth- and twentieth-first century Puerto Rican literature and cultural production, as well as discourses on national identity, colonialism, race, as well as gender and sexualities.

Eduardo Rodríguez Santiago is a graduate of the Graduate Program in Translation at UPR-Río Piedras. His MA thesis was based on the translation of the book La muerte de mamá (2015) by Yván Silén. He is currently a Language Fellow at Vassar College.

Thomas Rothe holds an MA in Latin American and Chilean Literature from the Universidad de Santiago de Chile. He has published several translations of poetry and theater in journals and anthologies. His research interests include the literature and cultures of the Caribbean, Afro-Latin American thought, and literary translation.

José Ramón Sánchez Leyva is a poet from Guantánamo, Cuba. He is the editor and co-director of the literary magazine La Noria. In 1998, he won the Regino E. Boti Prize for poetry. A member of the National Union of Writers and Artist of Cuba, he has published a poetry book called Aislada noche (2005) as well as Marabú (2012) and El derrumbe (2012).

Michael Sharp is Professor of English and Caribbean literature in the Department of English at UPR-Río Piedras. He publishes mainly on African and Caribbean poetry. His own poetry has been published on both sides of the Atlantic.

Yvette Torres is Professor in the Graduate Program in Translation at UPR-Río Piedras. She has translated several texts that are important to Caribbean Studies into Spanish, including Taso, trabajador de la caña by Sidney W. Mintz (1988), Historia económica de Puerto Rico by James L. Dietz (1989), and El presidiario y el coronel by Richard Price (2005).

Vanessa Vilches is Professor of Literature at UPR-Río Piedras. She is the author of De(s)madres o el rastro materno en las escrituras del Yo (2003), Crímenes doméstico-

Don E. Walicek is Professor of English and Linguistics in the College of Humanities at UPR-Río Piedras. Sargasso’s Editor since 2009, Walicek holds a BA in Cultural Anthropology and an MA in Latin American Studies, both from the University of Texas, and a PhD in English from the University of Puerto Rico. His research has focused on issues of language, politics, and history in Anguilla, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic. He and Jessica Adams co-edited the volume Guantánamo and American Empire; The Humanities Respond (2018).

Charlotte M. Ward is Professor in the Graduate Program in Translation at UPR-Río Piedras. She is the editor of the book Pound’s Translations of Arnaut Daniel (1991) and has published on Welsh versions of Arthurian literature and Juan Ramón Jiménez’s re-creations of Anglo-Irish and French literature.
The editors of *Sargasso* remind readers that over thirty years of the journal’s publications are available online via d-LOC, Digital Library of the Caribbean. These are available free of charge. Access is straightforward and requires no registration.

Visit:  http://dloc.com/UF00096005/00011/allvolumes2?td=sargasso

Issues are uploaded subsequent to their publication as print volumes. The Digital Library of the Caribbean (www.dloc.com) is a cooperative digital library for resources from and about the Caribbean and circum-Caribbean. Administered by Florida International University, d-LOC provides access to digitized versions of Caribbean cultural, historical, and research materials currently held in archives, libraries, and private collections.
MA Programs
in English-Language Literature and Linguistics
and
PhD Programs
in Anglophone Caribbean Literature and Linguistics
University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras

Research assistantships, economic support, and teaching and fieldwork opportunities are available at both the master’s and doctoral levels.

The MA program provides advanced studies in the areas of general English-language literature and linguistics.

The doctoral program offers various concentrations, with a focus on the cultures, literatures, and languages of the Caribbean and its multiple diasporas. Areas of specialization at the PhD level include: Narrative, Travel Writing, Women Writers, Poetry, Oral Culture, Drama and Performance, Film, Postcolonial Theory, Creole Studies, Sociolinguistics, Phonology, Syntax, Language Acquisition, Language Typology, Ethnography of Speaking, and Bilingualism.

For more information:
English Department
College of Humanities
University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras
13 Ave. Universidad, Ste. 1301
San Juan, Puerto Rico 00925-2533

http://humanidades.uprrp.edu/ingles/index.htm
Telephone (787) 764-0000 ext. 89611, 89612, 89654
IN THIS ISSUE

POETRY
Julián del Casal
José Ramón Sánchez Leyva

ESSAYS
David A. Auerbach
Juleisa Avilés Acarón
Desrine R. Bogle
María M. Carrión
Jorge L. Giovannetti
Juan Manuel Picabea
Thomas Rothe
Charlotte M. Ward

SHORT FICTION
Rodney Morales
Vanessa Vilches

REVIEWS
Diego Agostini Ferrer
Rafael Bernabe
Michael Huffmaster
Rafael L. Joglar
Keith E. McNeal
Gabriela Ortiz Díaz
Lydia Platón Lázaro
Juan Recondo
Zorimar Rivera Montes
Michael Sharp

TRANSLATORS
Sharif El Gammal-Ortiz
Álvaro García Garciuño
Jorge L. Giovannetti
Geniz Hernández Rosado
Aurora Lauzardo Ugarte
G. J. Racz
Eduardo Rodríguez Santiago
Don E. Walicek

INTERVIEW
Suzanne Jill Levine

ISSN: 1060-5533