

A Translational Turn: Does Latinx Literature in Spanish Translation Expand Martí's "Nuestra América"

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Presentation for delivery at the ATA 60th Annual Conference, Palm Springs, USA, Oct 23-26, 2019

Abstract: A Translational Turn: Does Latinx Literature in Spanish Translation Expand Martí's Nuestra América?

José Martí in “Nuestra América” imagined two different Américas: Spanish-language América (including Mexico) to the South (“nuestra América”) and the U.S. English-language expansive empire to the North that did not speak, as he said, “nuestro idioma.” Today, Spanish in the United States is considerably more pervasive than when Martí, writing and translating from within New York City (1881–1895), articulated his hemispheric linguistic division of two Américas. It is arguably now the second national language of the United States. In this presentation, I discuss the unprecedented phenomena (1990s and aughts) of counter-national English to Spanish translations of Latinx fictional narratives by U.S. mainstream presses. This turn in translation signals meaningful change in the historical importance of Spanish in the United States. I explain the translational turn of Latinx narratives to Spanish of intra-national translation within the same nation-state, as opposed to translation from one national border to a different national border, and I highlight brief textual examples of the twists and turns in the translations themselves, especially the erasure of their multilingual effects. I explain how my readings bring to the surface what the acts of translation attempt to bury in the texts, namely the multilingual effects. The demographic increase in the Spanish-language origin population due to in-migration and the high birth rate in the native population is a foundational reason for this translational turn, which helps to make Martí’s “other América” part of the Spanish-speaking Américas.

A Translational Turn

Does Latinx Literature in Spanish Translation Expand Martí's Nuestra América?

At a certain moment, a moment that extends from the early 1990s to the first decade of the 21st century, something unusual happened in the historical evolution of Latinx literature. This unusual event is the translation to Spanish of Latinx narratives first written in English, by women and men, by New York mainstream presses for audiences at home and abroad. The unusualness of this event is heightened by the fact that these same presses had not published this literature in English prior to the 1990s—only small independent minority presses had published it in English and Spanish. Now commercial presses were not only publishing it in the original English. These presses were also commissioning its translation into Spanish. One might argue that the publication of Latinx literature in Spanish is a logical outgrowth of a long-standing historical record of publication in Spanish in the United States. However, the surprising element is *who* was doing it. Never had U.S. mainstream presses published and translated this literature. These counter-national translations appeared from 1990-2010. A few examples are Rudy Anaya’s *Bless Me Ultima* (1972), Esmeralda Santiago’s *When I Was Puerto Rican* (1993), Sandra Cisneros’s

House on Mango Street (1983), and Piri Thomas' *Down These Mean Streets* (1967).¹ The two U.S. mainstream presses primarily taking on this venture were Harper Collins and Random House. Each of these presses created their own subsidiaries for publication in Spanish: Rayo for Harper Collins and Vintage Español for Random House.

This is the main “translational turn” of my title: translation of Latinx narratives into Spanish by U.S. mainstream presses, primarily for domestic audiences. This turn in translation signals meaningful change in the historical importance of Spanish in the United States. One major reason for this new status of Spanish is the augmentation of three historical transformations in late U.S. twentieth century society: 1) the growth of a U.S.-born Spanish-language heritage population, 2) a constant, multidirectional worldwide movement of millions of people (and languages) across national borders, especially the new influx of im(migrants) from Spanish-speaking countries that began in the 1970s, and 3) the rise of electronic communication (wireless internet, the personal computer, and social media). All are the result of an increased intensity of transnational and global forces since the 1960s. The Spanish language has always had deep historical roots, but today—especially since the 1980s to the present—it has a wider and deeper status. For one, it is a global language. Then, too, it has grown in size and enjoys a wider scope and geographical concentration in the United States. Rather than seeing it as a “foreign” language, cultural and literary scholars (Mary Louise Pratt, Carlos Alonso, and Walter Mignolo) see it as the second national language, or majority-minority language, of the United States. I concur. The existence of this literary translational phenomenon is a powerful statement about the strength of the Spanish language in the United States.

In the late nineteenth century, the Cuban-born José Martí, journalist, essayist, poet, translator, and diplomat—an exile living and writing in New York City, an Anglophone metropolis, who wrote and translated (to Spanish) for audiences in but mainly outside the United States, imagined two different Américas.² Speaking for Latin Americans, he developed the

¹*Bendíceme, Última* 1994, *Cuando era puertorriqueña* 1994, *La casa en Mango Street* 1991, and *Por estas calles bravas* 1997.

²Martí's essay was published in New York and Mexico City in 1891. The writings and translations of the Cuban-born Jose Martí and other Latin Americans living on the eastern coast in the late nineteenth century interjected cultural and political commentary into an assumed Anglo-American empire's expansion into the Global South. For extensive discussions on how Martí's writing reexamined and expanded the definition of US literature and its perspective on modernity. See Lomas, *Translating Empire*.

concept of “Nuestra América” “Our America” in his well-known essay of this title (Martí), and referred to it in his writings, implying “the America that speaks Spanish.” The English-speaking Anglo-American United States was by derivation “the other America,” the “America that is not ours” (Lomas 292, note 80), the America that does not speak Spanish. The basis of his hemispheric partition was language. Though he did not totally bi-furcate his vision into North and South, English and Spanish, the geographical and linguistic spaces of a U.S. expansive empire and the rest of the continental body emerged in his writing. The lines are blurrier now. The Spanish language in the United States is eminently more pervasive and visible than when Martí resided in New York City (1881-1895) and articulated his linguistic vision, more pervasive and visible even when the sizable number of translations of Spanish American literature (the “boom”) appeared in the 1960s. Martí’s “other America” is now more saliently part of “Nuestra América.” The United States, more than ever, is part of the Spanish-speaking Américas.

In my essay, I discuss the unprecedented phenomena of counter-national English to Spanish translations of Latinx fictional narratives by U.S. mainstream presses that occurred during the 1990s and aughts. Previously, the translation of Latinx narratives had been a one-way street, Spanish to English. In this twenty-year period, it became a two-way street. The overriding purpose of my analyses is to bring to the surface what the acts of translation attempt to bury in the original texts, namely the bi- and multilingual effects. The tendency is to erase the multi-language effects and to turn them into standard forms of Spanish or English familiar to readers. This is what is most at stake with these translations: what happens to the bi- and multilingual features of the original texts when they undergo translation to Spanish (and English). My interest is to uncover the contradictory moments in which these effects become visible to readers. I defamiliarize the familiar forms. We thus, if only for a moment, encounter that which is deemed “foreign,” that which is not like us, that which is untranslatable.

I focus on three textual pairs of this counter-national translation. These imaginative narratives and their translations are classified under the wide and porous net of U.S. Latinx literature.³ The first pair is *Pocho* (1959) by the Chicano José Antonio Villarreal and its

³For the sake of brevity, excepting *Pocho and Pocho En Español*, I abbreviate throughout the titles of the other main texts: *When I Was Puerto Rican* is *When I Was* and *Cuando era puertorriquena* is *Cuando era*; *Diario de un mojado* is *Diario* and *Diary of an Undocumented Immigrant* is *Diary*.

translation *Pocho en Español* (1994) by Roberto Cantú; the second is *When I was Puerto Rican* (1993) by the mainland Puerto Rican Esmeralda Santiago translated as *Cuando era Puertorriqueña* (1994) by the author herself. Both source and translation texts are written and published in the United States. *Diario de un mojado* (2003) by the Zapotec Mexican Ramón “Tianguis” Pérez and *Diary of an Undocumented Immigrant* (1991) translated by the journalist Dick Reavis is the third pair. This third textual pair is somewhat unique. Unlike the other two translations, its translation moves from Spanish to English, but it shares the counter-national movement of the other two pairs from English to Spanish in terms of publication. *Diario de un mojado* runs the full Spanish-English and English-Spanish translation and publication circuit: from a manuscript Pérez wrote in Spanish in Mexico entitled “Diario de un mojado” to the translation manuscript Reavis turned into Arte Público Press, the publisher in Houston, titled “Diary of a Wetback,” to the book Arte Público published as *Diary of an Undocumented Immigrant*, then onto the Spanish version it published as *Diario de un mojado*. It goes from Pérez’s “mojado” to Reavis’ “wetback” to Arte Público’s “undocumented immigrant, then finally a full return to the original title chosen by Pérez himself.

Pocho en Español did not appear until thirty-four years after the original’s first publication (1959), but *Cuando era puertorriqueña* (1994) occurred almost simultaneously with *When I Was Puerto Rican* (1993), during the twenty-year period (1990-2010) of the bumper crop of translations from English to Spanish.⁴ Here again, the publication and translation of *Diario de un mojado* is different because the publication of the translation (1991) preceded the publication of the original text (2003). *Diary of an Undocumented Immigrant* stood alone in the book marketplace for twelve years because no antecedent text was available. This textual pair is important because it raises the question--what constitutes an original? what constitutes a translation? Is it the sequence of publication or is it readership? Must a translation come later than its original, as Walter Benjamin said in “The Task of the Translator” (“For a translation comes later than the original” 71); it extends, he also believed, the life of its original (“since the important works of world literature never find their chosen translators at the time of their origin, their translation marks their stage of continued life” 71). Or, does readership turn a translation into an original if the translation is read first, because no original text is available prior to the

⁴By my count, there is a cadre of almost sixty translations from English to Spanish and about thirteen Spanish to English translations published between 1990 and 2010.

translation. Reading is prioritized over writing. In *Diario*'s case, the translation (*Diary*) is the original because it was read first; it circulated in translation beyond its national Mexican culture for twelve years before *Diario* existed as a tangible concrete book.

All three primary texts dramatize acts of migration, either of the protagonist or of immediate family members. Migration routes imply deep changes in a writer's/protagonist's ancestral roots. One deeply important area of change is language. All three writers are "language migrants" (Besemeres 10) either because they did the migrating themselves, for example Santiago and Pérez, or because they were brought up to speak their migrating parents' language at home and then drawn into English through schooling, for example Villarreal (Yildiz calls the latter "postmigrants" 170). They are all bilingual and their literary language is not their mother tongue. Villarreal and Santiago are U.S. American writers from working-class backgrounds whose first language was Spanish.⁵ Pérez is a Zapotec Indian Mexican whose mother-tongue is Zapotec but is literate in Mexican Spanish. All three come from ethnic groups, in the United States and Mexico, who have been dispossessed of their mother-tongue, in confrontation with a dominant national language.

For my purposes, I identify three different categories of translation: international translation, intranational (counter-national) translation, and transnational translation. International translation is the standard, most common type of translation which occurs between different nation-states with different national languages and cultures. It moves from one national language of one nation-state to a different national language of a different nation-state. Usually, this type of translation implies monolingual readerships across national borders. In a general sense, a German or Japanese novel translated into English in the United States or Britain is an example. Late twentieth-century examples of Spanish-to-English international translation are the numerous translations of Spanish-language Latin American "boom" authors in the 1960s and 1970s. The preeminent example is Gabriel García-Márquez's *Cien Años de Soledad* (1967). Then, U.S. cultural philanthropic institutions and university presses initiated the translation and publication of Latin American literature from a foreign (*their* Spanish) language into the national

⁵Both Villarreal and Santiago learned Spanish prior to English. Villarreal was born in Los Angeles, California. His parents were born and raised as peons on a hacienda in the state of Zacatecas, Mexico. See Vallejos. Santiago explains her loss of Spanish to English in the introductory pages of *Cuando era*.

language (*our* English) of the audience for whom the translation was done. Works in Spanish were “foreign,” published elsewhere, not here, especially not by mainstream presses. At that time, one could still perceive Spanish as a language “outside” the United States. International translation is business as usual. The conditions of publishing international translation involve business negotiations between a press in the text’s home country and a press in the foreign translating country that aims to assimilate the literary piece as its own, recontextualizing it in a new place and time, repositioning it for a potential new audience. The crucial point is that languages in an international paradigm of translation (from language A to language B) are considered monolingual and existing in a dichotomous relationship of foreign/native, native/non-native readers, insiders/outsiders, separated by sovereign borders. The writings of the boom authors originated outside the United States; the translation of their books originated inside a dominant English language country.

Intranational translation occurs within the same-nation-state, inside the same national borders, done primarily but not exclusively for domestic audiences. Latinx translations are intranational translations. This kind of translation does not imply nations as bounded monolingual linguistic communities. It presumes a multilingual source text, involving a copresence of two or more languages within one country. This kind of translation is not a question of translating from an original text in one national language to a text in a different national language, as is true of international translation. Ideally, it keeps readers from separating languages into native and foreign; it blocks equivalency between one language and one nation. It disrupts dyads of foreign/native that characterize international translation because it deals with texts, minimally, in two languages that are indigenous to one nation-state. At the same time, they are connected to a global world because they represent cultures that have ongoing communication with home communities outside the United States. Hence, they are also transnational translations since once translated to Spanish they are available to readers in the world-wide Spanish-language literary market. A few texts are commissioned and published by “foreign” presses, for example Spain’s Alfaguara.

Two of my imaginative narratives, *Pocho* (1959) and *When I was Puerto Rican* (1993), are intranational translations because the original text is written, published, and read within the same nation-state; but they are transnational in that they can also move into global Spanish-language countries. The translation of *Diario de un mojado* is more complex; it touches on all three types:

international, transnational and intranational translation, fitting partially into all three but not fully into any one alone. It is an international translation in that the source text originated in Spanish in México, but it is a transnational translation in that the manuscript (“Diario de un mojado”) had to cross the border (or be crossed, so to speak), in order to be translated and published, with a new title (*Diary of an Undocumented Immigrant*). It represents a population and culture with on-going relations between the two countries. It is an intranational translation in that both original and translation texts are published and read within the same nation-state, namely the United States. While the writing of the source text is fully on the Mexican side of the border, the publication, translation, and audience of both source and translated texts are in the United States.

All together, these texts exemplify my main themes: language, translation, migration, bilingualism and multilingualism. Acts of translation are generally thought of as acts of crossing over from one nation-state, one culture and language to a different nation-state, culture and language; acts of migration are encounters with the “foreign” as are acts of translating literary texts because they involve interaction of different languages and cultures. The social processes of migration and translation can result in the assimilation of “foreign” persons and texts to make them fit the cultural norms of what is designated “native” (say, English), or they can result in allowing non-native persons and texts to maintain traces of their “foreign” selves (say, non-English). When a translation is seen in this framework, a translator can bring the source text closer to readers, making unfamiliar elements familiar. That is, a translator can domesticate the the unfamiliar into the familiar cultural codes of the reader’s home culture. Or, she can bring the reader closer to the source text, allowing unfamiliar elements to stand as “foreign,” challenging readers to encounter and respect their unfamiliarity. My preference is the latter.

The Anglo-American tradition and practice of evaluating translations places high value on fluency: the more fluent, the more effortlessly it reads to the target audience, the better presumably the translation (Venuti, *Translator’s Invisibility* 1–6). Translations are to sound original, yet they are, paradoxically, also thought of in common practice as derivatives, fakes, second-order performances; only the original text deserves top billing. I would argue that original and translation are codependent, not separate entities. Indeed, translations ought *not* to be completely fluent. Something of the original should show through; the mark of cultural

difference should be visible in the translation. It is at these moments in the translations I studied that we see (become aware of) the bi- and multilingual effects they would attempt to erase.

I bring to the fore the tensions and contradictions posed when U.S. Latinx narratives are translated from English to Spanish and Spanish to English. I discuss both source and translation texts as interdependent co-equals, as opposed to the historical hierarchical relationship between the author and original text as the prime generators of meaning and the translator and the translation text as imitators and imitative, producing a derivative product. Robert Wechsler in *Performing Without a Stage*, laments that derivativeness has defined the translator's work (7). The translator, he says, is a "performer without a stage" (7). Actors are praised (or condemned) for embodying a role in a play, a dancer for interpreting a choreographer's composition, a pianist for interpreting a musical score, a singer for interpreting a songwriter's piece. An actor, a dancer, a pianist, or a singer operate in different mediums than the playwright, the choreographer, the musical composer, or the songwriter, a reality that contributes to establishing the independence of their medium. Translators are different because they interpret and perform the same medium as the author: that is, the translator's work takes the same form of the author's--it is also writing. This is one reason why translators and translations are underappreciated. A translator's work of translation is, so the thinking goes, "nothing but ink on a page" (7). This hierarchical relationship also has masculine-feminine implications. Lori Chamberlain does an excellent critique of the masculinist tradition in theories of translation in "Gender and the Metaphorics of Translation." She uncovers the metaphors of gender bias, and their implications, that maintain the hierarchical relationship of author as originator (masculine) and translator as secondary and derivative force (feminine) in translation theory, a belief held since the 17th century.

I read original and translation texts in tandem not to insist upon the adage—a translation is no substitute for the original. Rather, I do it to show that a translation is only a translation in relation to a source text, or in some cases, in relation to its other translations.⁶ Except in classroom settings on studying translation, source and target texts usually are not read together, but translation raises important issues about language difference and language transference that

⁶For Jorge Luis Borges, there is no "definitive text"; in his view there are only translations of translations, not only in the sense that there no "originals," only drafts and versions, but also in the sense that one text, say *One Thousand and One Nights*, can have many translations. See Waisman 2005, 43.

we can confront only if we consider both original and translation texts side by side. This lesson was brought home to me in the case of *Diario* and *Diary*. While both translations of *Pocho* and *When I was* had a prior text to consult, *Diary* stood alone in the book marketplace before its original was published. The prime moment of cultural and linguistic complexity enacted in this text was delayed from 1991 to 2003 because there was no antecedent to the translation available to readers.

The Literary Texts and Tropes: *pocho*, *jíbaro*, and *mojado*

The three central texts provide me with three figures of popular culture, each from the respective books, which I use to organize my textual analyses: the Chicana *pocho* (*el mexicano norteamericanizado*), the island Puerto-Rican *jíbaro* (loosely translated as “hillbilly”), and the Mexican *mojado* or unauthorized migrant (the derogatory term is “wetback”). These figures are hybridized cultural figures of marginalization--Villarreal’s *pocho*; Santiago’s *jíbaro* or *jíbara*, and Pérez’s *mojado*⁷--central to the histories of migration of Chicanos/as, Mexicans, and Puerto Ricans. These ciphers carry emotionally-charged connotations given the strong histories of racialization in the respective national contexts of these groups (the United States, the island of Puerto Rico, and Mexico). They have been used pejoratively but the recipients of the verbal sting have turned them and given them a liberating force. Like other idiomatic terms, *pocho*, *jibaro/a*, and *mojado* are born “untranslatable” (Yildiz 31), yet, as Barbara Cassin explains in her introduction to *Dictionary of Untranslatables*, untranslatables are “expressions . . . syntactical or grammatical turns one keeps on (not) translating” (xvii). In other words, untranslatables are paradoxes: one has no choice but to translate them even though they impede translation, no choice but to make them intelligible though impossible to capture the full extent of their meaning in the native culture. In a longer study,⁸ I tell the story of these terms: their etymologies, their histories of usage, and their turn-around meanings.

⁷Luis Spota, the Mexican journalist-author chose to perform a *mojado* identity in preparation to write his novel, *Murieron a mitad del río* (1948). This is one of the few times the figure appears in Mexican literature. In contrast, Pérez actually is a *mojado*. Furthermore, he comes from a Zapotec community in Oaxaca with a long line of men who have left their village to cross the international border, in hopes of sending economic support to their families.

⁸I refer to my recently published book: *A Translational Turn: Latinx Literature into the Mainstream* (Pitts: Univ of Pittsburgh Press, 2018).

Briefly, the *pocho* or *pocha* is specific to Chicana-Mexican cultural histories. It incorporates ethnicity and social class, but above all it indexes linguistic behavior: it refers to someone who mixes English and Spanish or simply someone judged to speak Spanish “badly. As a rule, the person to whom the term is attributed (and sometimes will assume self-consciously) grows up in the southwestern United States. The term points to an individual who is the *result of generational migration*. The term *jíbaro* is a Puerto Rican identification, more generally Caribbean: the “white” peasant who lived and worked in the Puerto Rican highlands, reputedly descendants of Spanish colonizers, as opposed to the black or *mulato* population, descendants of slaves, that inhabited the coastal areas. It relates to internal island migration from country-side to city, especially during the 1950s and 1960s (Operation Bootstrap). It also encompasses migration to the mainland, primarily to New York City. *Mojado* is a term of clandestine migration, for whoever crosses from Mexico into U.S. territory without legal authorization and for whom the material reality of the identity is created *at the moment of crossing* water, specifically the Rio Bravo/Rio Grande, though it also through the years has come to be used more generally to include those who cross by land, whether by foot, bus, or train (more seldomly by plane). Unlike *pocho* and *mojado*, the *jíbaro* (mostly a male attribution) became a national icon for a specific group of island Puerto Rican intellectuals and nationalists, after World War II when Luis Muñoz Marín, the island’s first democratically elected governor (1948-1965) established the Commonwealth (1952). Coded by Puerto Rican intellectuals as connected to the white Spanish colonial past, it represents the national soul, primordial and pre-industrial Puerto Rico.

My three narratives are inaugural texts. *Pocho* and *When I was Puerto Rican* are “firsts,” for different reasons, in their respective literary communities, the two Spanish-language origin communities, Chicano and Puerto Rican, with the longest histories in the United States. *Pocho* was the first Chicano novel written in English of the modern period, published in the pre-Chicano movement years by Anchor Doubleday in 1959. It is the first, and perhaps the only one since that time, to make the *pocho* a foundational figure of Chicana literature, the first to narrativize him and make him a central trope. The novel has remained viable, steadily appearing on syllabi of Chicana literature courses, Chicana Studies, and Latina Studies since its second printing in 1970 when the world had prepared for it a fit audience--an active readership during the university campus militant years. It was then that Chicanos/as demanded to read relevant material from their specific histories.

Pocho is a multilingual text not because Villarreal offers words or phrases in Spanish immediately followed by their English counterparts (say in the typical way of one-on-one translation in bilingual texts), nor does he use intra-sentential code-mixing, the alternation of Spanish and English at the word, phrase, clause, or sentence level. It is a dual language text because he chooses to appropriate the English language and varieties of vernacular Spanish to produce what Frances Aparicio called “sub-versive” narrative texts (795): a text with “undercover” meanings that reveal an author’s bilingual, bicultural sensibilities by encoding references to lived realities beneath English, for example, deliberately filling Spanish syntax with English words, making their awkwardness apparent even to English readers. Some examples are: “I have fifteen years” for “tengo quince años”; “an ache in the head” for “dolor de cabeza”; “I feel deeply the intrusion” for “siento la molestia” and “[she] gave light” for “dar a luz.” These are also examples of borrowing, “where the English element is [willfully] incorporated into the Spanish system” (Valdés 125). Such a bilingual technique joins two different languages, what Stavans calls “verbal promiscuity,” a linguistic form “that refuses to accept anything as foreign” (Introduction 9, 15), showing us how interdependent and interactive, in partnership or in conflict, the two languages and cultures are. In this sense, *Pocho* is important as a precursor to the advanced bilingual techniques, for example the variations of intra-sentential code-mixing that emerged as a self-conscious literary style in the 1960s and 1970s when the Chicano poet Alurista (b.1947), the dramatist Luis Valdez (b.1940), and the Puerto Rican poets Miguel Algarín (b.1941) and Miguel Pinero (1946-1988) began to write poetry in formats of vernacular Spanish and English.

In contrast to Villarreal’s *Pocho*, Santiago’s narrative (1993) is not a chronological first in the modern history of mainland Puerto Rican literary narratives. *Down These Mean Streets*, *Nilda* by Nicolasa Mohr, and *Family Installments* by Edward Rivera were all published years ahead of *When I Was*, in 1967, 1973, and 1982 respectively. It is the first, however, by a Puerto Rican woman--born on the island and come of age on the mainland--to take the identity of the island *jibaro* and twist this figure’s gender and geographical location to make it central to the formation of her female literary identity: a *jibara norteamericana*. While Piri Thomas in *Down These Mean Streets* exposed racially-charged linguistic terms (*moyeto*, *blanco*, *negro*, *moreno*, *trigueño*) commonly used by young Puerto Rican men of his time in a New York urban context

to refer to African- and Anglo-Americans, Santiago is the first to take the marginalized figure of island rurality and transpose it to an urban Puerto Rican mainland literary narrative. Similarly, to *pochos* or *pochas*, *jíbaros* and *jíbaras* were a source of shame to middle-class, educated island Puerto Ricans, an attitude internalized by working-class Puerto Ricans and *jíbaros/as* themselves, because they were judged to lack *buenos modales* and to speak Spanish badly (“bad speech”). Such pejorative attitudes are not unknown today among those who judge bilingual English-Spanish speakers to speak Spanish “badly” because they mix Spanish with English and vice versa. The linguistic judgment often goes together with class-based, racial, ethnic, and gender stereotypes of *puertorriqueños/as* and Chicanos/as. *When I Was* offers various linguascapes of multilingualism, for example, translations of dialectal speech and transliteration.

The bilingualism of *When I Was* consists of different *linguascapes*, various types of bilingual writing practices. One linguascape is overt translation: words and phrases in Spanish are translated by appositives in English to make them intelligible for the English-language reader. This act of translation draws solid lines between Spanish and English, keeps them contained in their separate places. It enacts their interchangeability, from language A to language B. Translation moves from one word in one language to another word in another language, in parallel form, but it does not bring them together—they do not touch. A few examples are *sinvergüenzas* immediately followed by “had no shame” (29), *Muñequita* by “little doll” (13), *pasita* by “raisened” (13), and *bohíos* by “the kind of house *jíbaros* lived in” (12), a word probably familiar only to a Puerto Rican audience. A second type of linguascape involves untranslatable words, such as *jíbaro* (explained as “country dweller” with “unsophisticated customs and peculiar dialect” *When I Was* 12) and *cocotazo* (*Cuando era* xvi) from “coco,” slang for “head,” and “azo,” a suffix to indicate something huge, as in *Bogotazo*, a *coup d'état* in Bogota). It means a “rapping of knuckles on the head.” If she is to be intelligible to her English readers, she has no choice but to provide an explanation in English the first time she uses them to keep her English readers reading.

Diario, the third text, is a “first” in that it presents a case of a Zapotec Indian and Spanish-speaking Mexican male, the author himself, who flees Mexico in the late 1970s for political reasons. On crossing the international border, he leaves behind his Zapotec Indian communal

identity, thus ending his life as a Zapotec *guerrillero*⁹ to begin his life as a Mexican *mojado*/"wetback." It is this marginalized *mojado* identity that Pérez makes the primary trope of his book. *Diario* is the first text in the history of Spanish to English translation done by Latinx presses to describe the *mojado* experience in a sustained way through the eyes of a literate Spanish-writing Zapotec Mexican. Together with its translation text, it brings into relief a transborder nexus of translation and migration. The two acts are inseparably linked, at both literal and metaphoric levels. Few source texts and translations provide as tight a nexus between the author and the translator: the translator (Reavis) literally crosses his subject (Pérez) across national borders and discursively when he translates Pérez' work. The translator orchestrates the author's actual crossing (in 1979) and several years later (in 1991) transfers him, metaphorically, between two sovereign countries. Pérez's story is a metaphor of the inextricable connections between migration and translation, translator and translation, Spanish and English language, and source and translated texts.

Pérez's preference to self-identify in *Diario* is the term "mojado." For the greater part of *Diary*, Reavis usurps Pérez's preferred term of *mojado* and linguistically substitutes it for "wetback;" that is, he inserts Pérez's identity into the conventions of speech and behavior of an immigrant-hostile U.S. society. Reavis strives for fluency advocated by mainstream theorists and practitioners of translation. In choosing to transform Pérez from a *mojado* into a "wetback," Reavis normalizes him, linguistically incorporating him into the norms of the translating language and culture. He makes the translation sound natural to the ordinary English-speaker. But he does so at some cost because he chooses the most offensive term among the liminal status categories in U.S. English for Mexicans who are "outside the normative teleology of immigration" (Ngai 13). Reavis domesticates the narrating voice of *Diario*. We might go further and say that he performs an act of epistemic violence.

⁹Before making his way hundreds of miles north to the border, Pérez had been a *guerrillero* in a peasant rebellion in the southern Mexican state of Oaxaca. He and his fellow *compañeros* had been fighting to defend their communal lands against encroachment by multinational agribusiness companies in the 1970s. Their leader, Florencio Medrano-Mederos, *el güero*, is assassinated in 1979. Pérez and his *compañeros* are arrested, tortured, and released from prison. Pérez cannot return to his indigenous village because his actions have made the village vulnerable to government attack.

The Textual Analyses

Pocho raises the question: just how does, should one translate *Pocho*, a text with bilingual features, when the language necessitated by its translation belongs to the Mexican culture the *pocho* defies and resists? Cantú's translation favors the medium of expression (the national standard of Spanish) of the Mexican culture that has represented the *pocho* as its false replica, as a sign of "betrayal." Nowhere do the contradictions around the phenomenon of the *pocho* stand out more starkly than when we hold the language of *Pocho en Español*, the translation text, up against the text translated, *Pocho*. I discuss *Pocho* and *Pocho en español* in tandem to show how the translator's translation creates the odd spectacle of the *pocho* who speaks a high-level diction of Spanish. The translator translates *Pocho*'s narration and dialogue into a cultivated mode of Spanish, thus making it seem that Villarreal's *Pocho* is either not about a *pocho*, or about a *pocho* who speaks "perfect" Spanish. He creates the "anti-*pocho pocho*."¹⁰ No matter how we take him, Cantú's *Pocho en Español* is a blatant contradiction, a good example of cognitive dissonance! Importantly, the illusion of flawless Spanish that pervades the book collapses in a key scene when Richard adopts not only *pocho* but also *pachuco* slang (*caló*) expressions. This scene is crucially important because it tells us that Cantú is unable to sustain the high literary mode he attributes to Villarreal's *pocho* (and *Pocho*)

In chapter 9, Cantú makes an unexpected swerve worth noting. He beefs up Villarreal's scene where Richard, the *pocho*, meets the *pachucos* of his neighborhood and performs the role of a *pachuco* (Villarreal 153–157; Cantú 223–227). Speaking "pocho" is a more familiar dialect to English readers, a less radical dialect than the *caló* words more commonly used by *pachucos*. Villarreal does not even use "pochismos" in the original parallel scene; much less would he have used the *caló* that Cantú inserts to beef up Villarreal's dialogue in his translation. Villarreal's Richard decides to participate in a gang fight with his *pachuco* friends, not because he has become a *pachuco*, or wants to be one, but because he is curious about what it would mean to perform like one. Where Villarreal used plain English, "car" and "man" (Villarreal 153–7), Cantú uses *ranfla* (226) and *vatos* (227), examples of *caló* for the same, and throws in a "pochismo" (*noqueó* for Villarreal's standard "knocked" 227). These registers of Spanish that Cantú uses startlingly depart not only from Villarreal's text, but more importantly, from his own

¹⁰See my article *Pocho en español: The Anti-Pocho Pocho*.

translation where he established very correct Spanish since the beginning of the novel. Cantú's unexpected maneuver exposes that his anti-*pocho pocho* has a productive multilingual side

In Santiago's case, the translation (*Cuando era*) rather than the original (*When I Was*) holds the key to multilingual effects. The *jíbaro* dialect is lost in the original text because she translated it into English for the benefit of her Anglophone audience. For example, in writing *When I Was*, Santiago replaced (or translated) the linguistic hybrids (like *breiks*, *lanlord*, and *rocanrol*--the *esplanglés* Santiago talks about in her introduction to *Cuando era*)--with their standard literate versions ("breaks" and "landlord"). To understand this dynamic requires that we understand that words like *breiks*, *lanlord*, and *rocanrol* were uttered first in spoken language by Negi (Santiago's alter-ego) in Brooklyn, where she grew up until her migration to New York. Upon translating *When I Was* into *Cuando era*, she retranslated them and returned them to their "original" form. Other examples are "yo no soy zángana" in *Cuando era* (28), a phrase uttered by her mother on the island and that appears in the translation text. The phrase "I'm not stupid," a translation of "yo no soy zángana," appears in *When I Was* (24). To recuperate "yo no soy zángana," probably nearer to what her mother said, one must look to the translation text. A second example, "Yo no sirvo pa' estar sentá hacienda ná (*Cuando era* 125) corresponds to the English she naturalized in *When I Was*: "I'm not the kind of person to sit around doing nothing" (115). Santiago fulfills how the mother *should* sound to the English-language audience of *When I Was*. She fulfills the demand of a monolingual paradigm for native competency. Literate English covers up a Puerto Rican oral dialect. If one is interested in recuperating the multilingual effects, one must resort to the translation text where the *jíbaro* dialect is maintained. Her translation text, ironically, bears the hidden traces of "originality"--the *jíbaro*/dialect--that source texts are assumed to bear, if we accept reigning translation paradigms of "origin and target texts" that suppose source texts are "more original" than their corresponding translation texts. Santiago's translation shows that translation can be a medium of "origin" and not just of "afterlife," as held by Benjamin.

There is a scene in *Diario/Diary* that I consider primal because it upsets the either/or logic of fluent translation. It occurs in a chapter titled "*Mojados*," one of three chapter titles in *Diary* that Reavis decided to keep in Spanish; the other two are "*La Migra*" and "*La Mota*." The chapters are marked by idiomatic expressions which, if translated, would lose their emotional punch. Why is not the title of this primal-scene chapter "Wetbacks," the word Reavis uses

throughout his translation? Why break with the precedence set by the text and foreground “mojado” at this point? The non-translation of the term emphasizes the importance of this chapter.

Let me explain. Most of Pérez’s stay in the United States is in Houston. In this chapter “*Mojados*”, we see Pérez struggle daily to find a job. One man he meets outside a mechanics shop offers him advice. “Why don’t you go to the church of the Virgin of Guadalupe? I hear they help wetbacks find gigs” (*Diary* 70). Once inside the Church, Pérez meets a “tall woman of about thirty-five in a pale green dress” (*Diary* 72), with “bronze skin” (*Diary* 72; *piel morena* in *Diario* 88). Pérez asks her: “‘Pardon, I say *in Spanish*, is this the place where you help wetbacks’” (*Diary* 72, emphasis added). Reavis inserts “in Spanish” to create a sense of linguistic realism; it does not, of course, appear in *Diario*. So far, Reavis has maintained his use of “wetback.” But in an immediate aside, Reavis has Pérez add a thought to himself (and to us, his readers): “‘As always I use the word *mojados*’” (*Diary* 72). Again, there is no comparable sentence in *Diario*. In *Diary*, Pérez utters aloud “wetback” to the woman (probably a “Hispanic” or “Latina”), but he tells us that he is really using the word “mojado.” Pérez is “winking” to us in Clifford Geertz’s sense of “winking.” The important point is that the woman hears “mojado.” We know this because she repeats the word aloud to Pérez: “Mojados?” She thus confirms that Pérez has spoken “mojados,” even though Reavis is telling us that Pérez is speaking “wetback.” When Pérez assures her that “mojados” is the word he uttered, her response is telling: “‘¡No!’—she says with cold emphasis. “‘Here there are no *mojados*’” (*Diary* 72). The term in overt play is now “mojados.” Although she forcefully denies the term, most probably because she finds it offensive, it is Pérez’ identity-term. It is as if Pérez, through Reavis, is saying “I may say ‘wetback’ to communicate with my English-language audience, but I really mean “mojado.” In other words, Reavis acknowledges that Pérez is not relinquishing his identity-term.

This scene is important because Reavis, the translator, breaks the frame of linguistic equivalence (“wetback” = “mojado”) and exposes the mirage of fluency. He keeps both the translation term (“wetback”) and the original term (“mojado”) before the reader’s eye. But he prioritizes Pérez’ “mojado” because this is the term the woman hears. He cannot keep up the mirage that “wetback” is equivalent to “mojado.” If it were, he would not allow Pérez’ identity preference of “mojado” to break through the textual fabric.

In all three translation texts, there are moments that jar fluency or rupture the smoothness that the translation texts seem to want to achieve by covering up acts of translation. Through these unexpected turns, small and insignificant as may seem, we are able to glimpse the “foreign”—moments of linguistic diversity--bilingualism. I emphasize these moments of rupture. I offer a way to read these texts that reveal the multilingual forms flattened by translation practices that render texts into the standard format of national languages.

I think it important that we see and retain these multilingual forms. I favor an approach that makes readers aware of the translator and the translation itself. The translator makes a rhetorical turn that jars the predominant language choice and style of the rest of the text and that I interpret as a move that makes him or her visible. It is a translator’s inadvertent slip that causes a disfiguration in the text, and these are precisely the moments of rupture that I look for in these texts. The translator lays her or himself bare and we recognize a mutual agency of the author and translator functions. The goal is not to arrange everything into a bicameral relationship of author-creator and translator-imitator, English and Spanish, domestic and foreign. I want to locate traces of the translator’s voice in the author’s voice and vice a versa, traces of the foreign in the familiar. I want to privilege moments of linguistic diversity. These disfigurations may be awkward, and some readers might take them as signs of failure upon encountering them. But they are failures only if we assume that fluency is the main value, only if we assume the translation should sound like the original, without “betraying” itself as a translation. To my mind, they are successes—productive failures—because they interrupt the impression of language as a coherent whole.

The translation of Latinx literature to Spanish is one indication that the United States is part of Martí’s “Nuestra América.” I like to think that were Martí alive today, he himself would acknowledge that the United States, his prime example of “the other América—is now part of “Nuestra América,” now part of the Spanish-speaking Américas.

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