# Todos Somos Náufragos:

## A Translation of Poetry from the Cuban Diaspora

Kyra Gurney

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Advised by Clara Lomas and Corinne Scheiner

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# Table of Contents

**Part One: Critical Apparatus**

Introduction 7

Colonial Cuba 13

The Cuban Diaspora 15
- The Cuban Diaspora in the United States 17
- The Cuban Diaspora in Spain 25
- The Cuban Diaspora in France 29
- The Interpretation of Cuban Work in the Diaspora 31

Translation and the Ethical Double Bind 33
- The Dangers of Target-Oriented Translation 36
- Translating Into English 39
- Source-Oriented Translation 41
- Thick Translation 43

From Theory to Practice 48
- Facing-Page Translations 49
- Footnotes 50

Translation Challenges 53
- Different Uses of Spanish 53
- Syntax and Grammar 54
- Alliteration, Assonance, Consonance, and Repetition 55
- Colloquial Expressions 57
- Words in Other Languages 58

Other Translations 58

**Part Two: The Translations**

Lourdes Gil
- Hablando en diásporas 63
- La extranjera 65
- Fata Morgana 66

Iraida Iturralde
- Exilio, la sien 68
- Claroscuro 69

El rostro de la nación 71

Milena Rodríguez
La piel es un sitio inseguro 72
Granada, tierra soñada 73
Palabras de un inocente 75

Isel Rivero
En el jardín 79
Catálogo de guerr@ 83
Marea Negra 86

Zoé Valdés
Ante la correspondencia 89
Mujer perdida dentro de la casa 91
Un hombre se ha perdido 92

Biographical Information 93

# Part I:  Critical Apparatus

**INTRODUCTION**

During my first day conducting interviews with Cuban writers and artists in Spain,[1] a Cuban writer named León de la Hoz took me to see one of his favorite paintings at a museum in Madrid. As we stood in front of a Eugène Delacroix painting depicting a group of people stranded at sea, drenched and huddled together with looks of fear on their faces, de la Hoz told me that this painting spoke to him on two levels. It made him think of the *balseros*, the Cubans who brave the Florida Straits on rafts trying to make it to the United States, and on a metaphorical level it reminded him that in his experience "todos somos náufragos," we are all shipwrecked, at some point in our lives. As I conducted interviews over the next two weeks, I thought about de la Hoz's words and noticed that other Cuban artists and writers expressed a similar sentiment—they explained that aspects of their work reflected their experiences as part of the Cuban diaspora, a population of people separated from their country of origin by political and historical forces, and aspects of their work related to their individual experiences as human beings. This convergence between the individual and the diasporic, which enabled de la Hoz to see both the plight of Cuban emigrants and his experience of feeling shipwrecked, in a metaphorical sense, in the same painting, finds expression in many of the texts produced by Cubans living abroad.

In the poems I have translated for this project, the convergence between individual experience and experience as part of a displaced Cuban population plays out in a variety of ways. These poems depict experiences and feelings related to loss, separation, nostalgia, and

[1] With Colorado College Venture Grant funding, I conducted research with another Colorado College student, Elena Ketelsen, on the representation of Cuban art and literature in Spain. We interviewed several Cuban artists, writers and gallery owners in Madrid and Granada between January 3 and January 14, 2012, and visited museums and galleries displaying Cuban artwork. We were also able to correspond via e-mail with the director of Editorial Betania, a publishing house in Spain that has distributed the work of numerous Cuban writers.

displacement that seem to exist in the overlapping spaces between these two realms of existence. Some of these poems refer explicitly to exile and immigration, and contain cultural references and literary allusions to specific Cuban experiences and to other writers and artists who have left the island. Other poems depict similar emotions and experiences in a way that may or may not be related to the writer's geographical displacement. They depict the loss of a lover, the absence of a family member, painful memories, or the sensation of losing oneself in love. These fifteen poems are also connected by a shared imagery of oceans and gardens and by a preoccupation with memory, as well as by the use of alliteration and consonance to create rich and textured phrases in Spanish. In my translations, I have tried to render this balance between two overlapping aspects of life by providing the reader with extensive background information about the poems and offering alternative translations to specific words and phrases in footnotes, enabling the reader to interpret Spanish words based on either their standard usage or their meaning in colloquial Cuban Spanish. My hope is that these translations and the accompanying critical apparatus provide the reader with the tools to interpret the specific cultural and historical references in these poems and to appreciate the convergence, and sometimes tension, between these two realms of experience.

My interest in the literature of the Cuban diaspora stems from both an interest in Cuban culture and history and an interest in the creative responses writers produce to cope with the traumas of immigration and exile. As Anaya Jahanara Kabir explains, diasporas "give rise to population displacements and cultural disorientations that, in turn, catalyze creative expression as the means to grapple with, evaluate and transcend diaspora's material consequences" (145). Diasporic literature provides an avenue for exploring the relationship between individual experiences and official histories and, in some ways, provides insight into the human struggle to

define oneself amidst changing external circumstances (Kabir 146). As Kabir argues, "The diasporic subject, conscious always of a slippage between origin, belonging and location, seems best placed to respond to the questions that have vivified modern literature: Who am I, and what has formed me?" (146).

Questions of identity in the context of diasporic populations are frequently complicated by gender variables. Differing gender roles in the country of origin and country of residence, which might be in direct opposition to one another in regard to the traditional roles women occupy in the family and in society at large, have an impact on the ways in which women adapt to their new environments (Alvarez Borland, *Cuban-American* 11). As Eliana Rivero writes, referring specifically to the U.S. Cuban population,[2] women in the diaspora often question "their actual psychic relationship with a nation that lays divided, spread over a geography of space and time," in terms of gender and sexuality (111). My choice of source texts reflects both an interest in gender identity among diasporic populations and a desire to make texts written by Cuban women available to a broader audience. In the foreword to an anthology of short stories written by Cuban women, Luisa Campuzano writes that creating spaces for work produced by women writers has the potential to "foment the growth of gender awareness and accord greater prominence to women's history and cultural achievements" (10). Through these translations I have tried to create more spaces for women's voices, in this case English spaces for the voices of Cuban women writers, voices that are often underrepresented in contemporary society.

[2] Although many critics refer to ethnically Cuban individuals living in the U.S. as "Cuban-American," Lillian Manzor-Coats argues for the use of the term "U.S. Cuban" because the word "American" technically refers to all of the peoples who inhabit North and South America. Manzor-Coats feels that, in appropriating the term "American" to refer exclusively to people from the U.S., using the term "Cuban-American," "reproduces the cultural and political imperialist ideologies which have characterized the last two centuries of history in North and South America" (163). For this reason, individuals of Cuban descent residing in the U.S. will be referred to as "U.S. Cuban" in this paper.

The five female poets whose work is included in these translations exemplify the diversity of the Cuban diaspora in terms of their experiences in Cuba, the ages at which they left the island, and their current countries of residence. As evidenced by the personal histories of these writers, the Cuban diaspora is not a unified movement of people; rather, it reflects the disparate experiences of Cubans from different social classes, racial backgrounds and generations who have chosen to leave, or been exiled, for a variety of reasons. Two of these poets, Lourdes Gil and Iraida Iturralde, were sent to the U.S. by their parents in the early 1960s, shortly after Fidel Castro came to power, and currently reside in the New York area. Milena Rodríguez Gutiérrez and Isel Rivero both live in Spain, but Rivero left Cuba for the U.S. in 1960 at the age of nineteen and lived in several other countries before settling in Madrid. Rodríguez, on the other hand, immigrated to Spain in the 1990s after the fall of the Soviet Union precipitated an economic crisis in Cuba. Zoé Valdés also left Cuba in the 1990s, but settled permanently in France, where she is best known as a novelist who portrays life in Cuba under the Castro government. The poetry of these five women expresses many of the aforementioned themes in diasporic literature and explores both the tensions and convergences between the personal and the diasporic, tensions that are sometimes expressed in the use of a single Spanish word with different meanings in colloquial Cuban Spanish, Castilian Spanish (the type of Spanish spoken in Spain) and different Latin American vernaculars. The personal cannot easily be separated from the historical context of many of these poems, as many of the individual experiences of the writers have been shaped by historical forces beyond their control.

Due to the radical nature of the Cuban Revolution, critics and politicians on both sides of the debate tend to politicize Cuban art and literature. As Eliana Rivero argues, critics often make "political rather than aesthetic judgments" (119) about Cuban texts and interpret U.S. Cuban

literature, for example, as either socially conservative and anticommunist, if the critic feels sympathetic towards the values of the Castro government, or, if the critic supports U.S. policy towards Cuba, as a portrayal of the failings of communism and a justification for the economic and political sanctions imposed on Cuba by the U.S. government. Given this tendency to politicize Cuban work, I feel it is important to state that my choice of texts in no way reflects any political agenda or ideological judgment on my part. I have not chosen to translate the work of Cuban poets writing in the diaspora and excluded that of poets who still reside in Cuba in order to make any sort of commentary on the Castro government; rather, the poets I have chosen to translate are a reflection of my own interest in diasporic literature. I have also had the opportunity to meet Gil, Iturralde and Rodríguez, and talking to these poets about their work has influenced my decision to translate their poetry. In terms of U.S. Cuban poets, I have chosen to translate the work of poets who do not reside in Miami as a means of drawing attention to Cuban writers who do not belong to the politically and culturally influential Cuban community located in the Miami area.[3] I would also like to clarify that it is not my intention to suggest that the poets whose work I have translated only write about themes related to exile and immigration or that these poets should only be viewed as Cuban writers, and not as writers with a variety of identity markers and allegiances in addition to their nationality. These translations are intended to serve as an introduction to the poetry produced by women in the Cuban diaspora, but are by no means an exhaustive anthology.

[3] When the 2000 census was completed, 52 percent of U.S. Cubans lived in Miami-Dade County and 67 percent in the state of Florida as a whole. Many reside in Little Havana, a predominantly Cuban neighborhood in Miami. As a result of the size of this Cuban community, and their residence in a state with strategic importance during presidential elections, U.S. Cubans in Miami exert a considerable political influence in regard to U.S. policies towards Cuba and in cultural matters related to Cuban art and literature. (Boswell 5)

The following critical apparatus provides the reader with the tools necessary to both understand the type of translation I have employed and learn about the cultural and historical context in which these poems were produced. The first section presents the reader with background information on Cuban history and the Cuban diaspora, as well as information about the work of the poets whose texts I have translated and some brief analysis of these texts. Contextual information about Cuban history and the more recent Cuban diaspora serves two functions in this critical apparatus. First, it provides the reader of the following translations with the information to recreate, albeit in a provisional and limited way, the writer's "universe of discourse."[4] Information about Cuba's colonial history, as well as the Cuban Revolution and subsequent diaspora, supplies the reader with part of the cultural and historical background of the poets whose work I have translated and hopefully presents a foundation for understanding the more detailed and specific footnotes included with each poem. Second, because of the "highly context-dependent" (Appiah 400) nature of thick translation,[5] one of the translation theories I have used to craft my own method of translation, an understanding of Cuba's historical relationship to Spain, the U.S., and France is necessary in order to conceptualize how thick translation can be applied to poems written by women in the Cuban diaspora. As a result of the plethora of information written both by and about U.S. Cuban writers, however, the section on the Cuban diaspora in the U.S. contains more information than the corresponding sections on France and Spain. Similarly, I was not able to find as much information about Cuban writers in France and Spain, or about the poetry of Rodríguez, Rivero, and Valdés.

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[4] André Lefevere defines "universe of discourse" as the language, literary traditions, "material and conceptual characteristics" and standards that a writer "inherits" when he or she is born into a particular culture and time period and which affects his or her writing (86).

[5] Thick translation is a translation theory developed by Kwame Anthony Appiah that centers on providing the reader of a translation with extensive historical and cultural context (see the "Thick Translation" section in this critical apparatus).

The second section in this critical apparatus offers an explanation of the theory behind source-oriented and thick translation, the types of translation I have employed, and explains why I feel these methods are appropriate to the English translation of diasporic texts written by Cuban women. Following this section, I have provided the reader with examples of how I applied translation theory to my translations and of specific decisions I made in regard to word choice and grammar. The facing-page translations of the fifteen poems I have selected, along with biographical information about each of the poets, can be found after the critical apparatus. Although readers may find this accompanying critical apparatus lengthy, I feel it is important for the reader to have a thorough understanding of recent Cuban history in order to appreciate the convergence between individual and diasporic experience in these poems. I have provided detailed information about the cultural and historical context in which these poems were produced to enable the reader to pick up on the Cuban cultural and historical references embedded in these poems.

## COLONIAL CUBA

Cuba's long colonial history began with the arrival of the Spanish in 1492 during Christopher Columbus's first voyage. Cuba's geographical location, as well as its ability to produce tobacco and sugarcane, made it a strategically important territory in the Spanish quest to control Mexico and Central America, and gave it a privileged position in the Spanish Empire (Skidmore, Smith, and Green 121). In spite of two armed struggles for independence, one beginning in 1868 and the other in 1895, Cuba remained under the direct control of the Spanish Empire long after the rest of its Latin American neighbors broke away (Skidmore, Smith, and Green 123). In fact, when the Mexicans and Central Americans ejected the Spanish from their

newly independent countries, these Spanish settlers sought refuge in Cuba, further strengthening the Spanish presence in this colony. By the end of the 19th century, however, Spain began to lose economic control of Cuba. The U.S. had been developing a considerable economic presence in Cuba throughout the late 1800s, and by the 1880s had established itself as Cuba's main trading and investment partner, creating ties to the island that far outweighed those of the Spanish Crown (Skidmore, Smith, and Green 122).

When the U.S. declared war on Spain in 1898, the Cubans appeared to receive their long-awaited independence only to become a U.S. protectorate in 1901 (Skidmore, Smith, and Green 124). Through the incorporation of the Platt Amendment into Cuba's new constitution, the U.S. solidified its right to intercede in Cuban politics, ostensibly as a peace-keeping power, and inaugurated a nearly 60 year period of U.S. control over the Cuban economy and Cuban politics (Skidmore, Smith, and Green 124). U.S. investors bought land in Cuba, purchased close to 80 percent of Cuba's sugar exports, and ostensibly turned Cuba into a part of the U.S. economy under the control of North American entrepreneurs and the U.S. Congress (Skidmore, Smith, and Green 126). When Fulgencio Batistsa came to power in a military coup in 1933, Cuba also became a playground for wealthy North Americans. Under Batista's tutelage, the island was converted into a destination for gambling, drugs, and prostitution, attracting U.S. tourists and mob bosses to its casinos, brothels and beaches (Skidmore, Smith, and Green 130). Unlike its Latin American neighbors, Cuba remained a de facto colony from the late 1400s to the late 1950s, passing from a Spanish colony to a U.S. protectorate, from the sugar factory and naval base of the Spanish Empire to the sugar factory and brothel of the U.S., without successfully acquiring independence. Cuba shed one imperial power only to be snatched up by another, in some ways more controlling, and certainly more powerful.

## THE CUBAN DIASPORA

> "Someone who's been uprooted, exiled, has no country. Our country exists only in our memory, but we need something beyond memory if we're to achieve happiness. We have no homeland, so we have to invent it over and over again."
>
> —Cuban writer Reinaldo Arenas (qtd. in Alvarez Borland, *Cuban-American* 1)

Fidel Castro came to power in 1959, after leading a group of guerrilla fighters in an armed struggle against the Batista government. Although several of his closest advisors were members of the communist party, when Castro first came to power he was a proponent of radical nationalism, not communist revolution (Skidmore, Smith, and Green 133). Several leftists reforms, passed between 1959 and 1961, however, prompted outside observers to wonder about the political leanings of Cuba's new leader. The Agrarian Reform Law, passed in May of 1959, called for the expropriation of large estates and the division of farmland into plots managed by cooperatives and individual farmers (Skidmore, Smith, and Green 133). Shortly afterwards, Castro nationalized most U.S. holdings in Cuba, including oil refineries, sugar mills, and telephone companies (Skidmore, Smith, and Green 134). The U.S. responded by establishing a trade embargo against Cuba, which initially exempted food and medicine, but became more restrictive in 1962 (Skidmore, Smith, and Green 134). Castro also enacted social reforms, including a successful literacy campaign, universal healthcare, free public education through the university level, gender equality laws, and other measures that significantly improved the lives of Cuba's poorest citizens (Skidmore, Smith, and Green 135). The new mantra was *Cuba para los cubanos* (Cuba for the Cubans), an ideology that increased popular support for the Castro regime among lower class Cubans while alienating wealthy Cubans and U.S. interests (Pérez-Stable 74).

After the disastrous Bay of Pigs Invasion ordered by President Kennedy,[6] Cuba severed all ties with the U.S.. Castro officially endorsed socialism in April of 1961 and began cultivating an alliance with the Soviet Union (Pérez-Stable 80). In the polarized world of Cold War politics, Cuba's ties to the Soviet Union provided the island nation with subsidized oil, a market for its sugar exports, and political clout. In many ways, however, Cuba became as economically dependent on the Soviet Union as it had once been on the U.S.; Soviet aid amounted to nearly a quarter of Cuba's gross national product (Skidmore, Smith, and Green 144) and by the 1980s Cuba conducted close to two-thirds of its trade with the Soviet Bloc (Pérez-Stable 88). When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1989, Cuba's economy devolved into a state of crisis and many of the socialist reforms that had improved the lives of the Cuban lower class could no longer be sustained. Castro inaugurated what he referred to as the "Special Period" in the early 1990s, an era of economic austerity and food shortages (Pérez-Stable 179). Although subsidized oil provided by Venezuela's Hugo Chavez has kept the island's economy from total collapse, internal dissent has increased since the 1990s and Cuba's future as a socialist country seems increasingly uncertain (Skidmore, Smith, and Green 148).

As a result of the drastic economic, political and social changes that have occurred in Cuba over the last sixty years, many Cubans have left the island. Roughly 1.3 million people of Cuban descent currently live in the U.S., and thousands of other Cubans have moved to Europe and South America (García 75). Some have chosen to leave as a means of political protest, others have left to find work, and some for reasons that have little to do with the Cuban government. Some, especially writers and intellectuals whose work is considered subversive by

[6] On April 17, 1961 President Kennedy sent a group of Cuban exiles, who had been trained by the CIA, to Cuba to overthrow Fidel Castro. The invasion was unsuccessful, and most of the participants were taken prisoner within two days of the invasion (Pérez-Stable 80).

the Castro government, have been exiled, forced to leave if they do not want to face jail time. Their experiences outside of Cuba have been equally varied; Cubans settling in the U.S., especially in Miami, often find themselves perceived as a part of a politically charged group of exiles (Rojas 240), whereas Cubans in other countries are more often viewed as one group of Latin American immigrants among many (Berg 18). The Cuban diaspora as a whole has resulted in an abundance of art and literature, much of which explores themes related to Cuban identity, exile, and separation (Rivero 111).

**The Cuban Diaspora in the United States**

Since 1959, more than one-tenth of Cuba's population has migrated to the U.S. (García 75). Most scholars divide this migration into four phases: one beginning in 1959 and lasting until 1962, the second stretching from 1965 to 1973, the Mariel boatlift in 1980, and the *balsero* (raft people) migration that began in the early 1990s (Alvarez Borland, *Cuban-American* 5). The first wave of Cubans to come to the U.S. left shortly after Castro came to power. Most were part of the upper and upper-middle classes who already had strong North American ties, settled in South Florida, and identified themselves as "exiles" (García 77). Some left because they had been supporters of the Batista regime, but others emigrated when the Castro government started taking over foreign companies and private land (García 77). Many members of this first generation supported the U.S. government's anticommunist stance and some were even active in attempts to overthrow the Castro government (Rojas 240). Given their temporal and geographical proximity to the Cuban Revolution, many writers in this first generation have produced texts that reflect "indignation and anger toward the traumatic events or individuals causing the exile" (Alvarez Borland, *Cuban-American* 7), nostalgia, and "a feeling of alienation

from the world of English" (Alvarez Borland, *Cuban-American* 9). In most of these texts, the U.S. does not figure prominently in the narrative (Alvarez Borland, *Cuban-American* 7), as many members of this generation saw their exile as a temporary situation and held onto the hope of one day returning to Cuba (García 85).

Subsequent waves of Cubans emigrated throughout the 1960s and 1970s in response to changes in Cuban policies and increased opportunities to settle abroad, sometimes traveling on makeshift rafts and boats, and sometimes through third-party countries like Spain and Mexico (García 78). In 1980, the Castro government gave Cuban citizens permission to leave the island if they wished to do so, and thousands of Cubans residing in the U.S. sailed to the port of Mariel to pick up their relatives in what became known as the Mariel boatlift (García 79). Once it was revealed that Castro had used the boatlift to get rid of prisoners and other "undesirables," the *marielitos*, as these immigrants were called, were not regarded as legal refugees by either the U.S. government or by many in the U.S. Cuban community (Alvarez Borland, *Cuban-American* 5). This distrust resulted in discrimination against the *marielitos* and in their exclusion from the Cuban community in Miami. The *balseros*, those who made the treacherous journey across the Florida Straits on rafts in the 1990s, also faced discrimination upon arriving in the U.S. (Rojas 242). Like the *marielitos*, but in contrast to the first wave of Cuban immigrants, the *balseros* were predominantly working-class, came from all parts of Cuba, rather than just Havana, and included a larger percentage of mixed race and Afro-Cuban people (García 80).

The literature produced by Cubans who left in the 1980s and 1990s deals with the themes of exile and displacement, but from a different perspective than that of the first generation (Alvarez Borland, *Cuban-American* 6). As a result of the political repression they faced in Cuba,

and the racial discrimination and suspicion they were subject to in the U.S., many writers in this generation have produced memoirs that are "strongly marked by a type of pain that is reluctant to approach any type of reconciliation" (Rojas 242). The theme of return to Cuba also figures prominently in these texts, sometimes explored critically, other times hoped for, and in some texts outright rejected (Rojas 244). Texts produced by this generation that deal overtly with political themes tend to reflect more nuanced political stances towards the Castro government, since many members of this generation actively participated in socialist programs in Cuba and originally supported the ideals of the Cuban Revolution (Rojas 243).

There are two groups of U.S. Cubans who grew up in the U.S.: the "one-and-a-half generation" and the U.S. Cuban ethnic writers (Alvarez Borland, *Cuban-American* 7). Members of the one-and-a-half generation were born in Cuba and came to the U.S. as children or adolescents. Most came with their families, but some were sent to the U.S. alone by their parents in what was called "Operation Peter Pan," a CIA organized mission to bring 14,000 Cuban children to the U.S. so that they would not be raised in a communist country (Yanez). For writers of this generation, choosing to write in Spanish or English is often a difficult decision that involves choosing between the language of their childhood and the language of their adopted country (Alvarez Borland, *Cuban-American* 9). Some writers from this generation have continued to write in Spanish, while others started out writing in Spanish, and then began to incorporate English words and phrases into their texts later on (Rivero 116). Others chose to write exclusively in English, acknowledging "the disruption of their exile and creat[ing] for themselves a new persona in their adopted language" (Alvarez Borland, *Cuban-American* 8). In most cases, choosing one language means that these writers have to give up a source of intellectual and creative support, either limiting their influence to the Spanish-language cannon

in the U.S. or giving up the possibility of belonging to this group (Alvarez Borland, *Cuban-American* 9).

Most members of the second generation, those who were born to Cuban parents in the U.S., are either bilingual or more comfortable with English (Alvarez Borland, *Cuban-American* 8). With the exception of those who have traveled back to Cuba to visit family, many second generation U.S. Cubans have inherited the idea of an absent homeland and are mainly connected to the island through the stories their relatives have told them (García 86). U.S. Cuban Coco Fusco writes about growing up with the "presence of an imaginary country in my home; it spoke to me in another language, in stories, rhymes, and prayers; it smelled and tasted different from the world beyond the front door" (4). In spite of their weaker ties to the island, themes related to Cuba and Cuban identity still appear frequently in literary works by members of this generation. Their novels and poems often explore family stories and memories of Cuba, as well as the search for a cohesive identity that encompasses both their Cuban heritage and their U.S. upbringing (Alvarez Borland, *Cuban-American* 9). Many of the younger writers in this generation also describe their experience of belonging to a minority group in the U.S. (Alvarez Borland, *Cuban-American* 1), and some, like Achy Obejas write about issues affecting other Latino groups. While themes related to Cuban identity are prevalent in texts written by second generation U.S. Cubans, some texts contain no references to Cuban culture.

Gil and Iturralde are both members of the one-and-a-half generation and were sent to the U.S. when they were children as part of "Operation Peter Pan." Gil writes primarily in Spanish and, unlike many U.S. Cuban writers, considers herself a part of the Cuban literary tradition, rather than the Spanish-language community in the U.S. (Alvarez Borland, *Cuban-American* 58).

She advocates for the recognition of Cuban writers in the diaspora by cultural establishments on the island, and argues that books published by Cubans abroad should be available in Cuba (Alvarez Borland, *Cuban-American* 58). Defending her decision to write primarily in Spanish, Gil explains that for her Spanish is "bound to a sense of place, a sense of belonging" and that in her family Spanish has always been "the glue holding everything and everyone together" despite the separations created by the political situation in Cuba ("Against the Grain" 179). Gil sees writing in Spanish as a "gesture of defiance," a representation of her desire to hold onto her Cuban heritage in spite of the historical forces that have kept her from the island for so many years ("Against the Grain" 180). "Once I was uprooted," she writes, "I lost what may be called a sense of place. This detachment may seem an extraliterary experience, but its incongruities are a part of my writing" ("Against the Grain" 180).

Gil's poetry reflects her love of the Spanish language and contains archaic Spanish words, as well as a multitude of references to other writers, artists, and historical figures (Hernández 229). Ana María Hernández describes Gil's writing as part of the neo-baroque tradition "que se deleita en las elegantes circunvoluciones y laberintos verbales de la lengua española"[7] (228), and argues that in carefully choosing each word Gil creates poetry that has a sonorous and musical quality (229). Iturralde also writes primarily in Spanish, although she has published some poems in English. Iturralde's earlier work, like Gil's poetry, reflects neo-baroque influences, but her most recent book of poems, *La Isla Rota*, has a more direct and testimonial style and deals more explicitly with themes related to Cuban politics and the Cuban diaspora (Martínez 94). Many of Iturralde's poems also feature strong female figures, some of

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[7] "That delights in the elegant circumvolutions and verbal labyrinths of the Spanish language" (my translation).

which come from Latin American and Spanish history, and other that appear to be the poet's invention (Martínez 94).

In the paragraphs that follow, I have provided the reader with my interpretation of the Gil and Iturralde poems included in this translation. I have taken brief examples from these poems and analyzed them with the aid of the historical and cultural context I have provided for the reader in this critical apparatus and in the footnotes included within the poems. These interpretations merely serve as one example of the ways in which the reader could use the contextual information to situate these poems within their universe of discourse, but there are certainly other interpretations and connections that could be made. My intention is not to develop an exhaustive critique, but to aid the reader in appreciating the connections between individual and diasporic experiences portrayed in these texts. I have provided the same type of preliminary analysis for the other poems in this translation under the "Cuban Diaspora in Spain" and "Cuban Diaspora in France" sections of this critical apparatus.

The first Gil poem in this translation, "Hablando en diásporas," depicts the day in which Gil left Cuba as a part of "Operation Peter Pan" (see footnotes in my translation) and seems to express the pain of separation through a child's eyes. The speaker in this poem imagines that for Edward Said, another literary figure separated from his country of birth at a young age, "Habría en tu vida un día como el de hoy" (There must have been in your life a day like today). Like the children suspended in a plane in midair, however, this poem remains suspended outside of time and place, in the realm of the possible, as indicated by the use of the conditional tense in Spanish. While immigration seems to offer an opportunity for new beginnings and human connections, "nuevas almas" (new souls) sprouting, the possibility of freedom ("seríamos

libres"), and an imagined reunion in which the speaker and Said can speak together at last, it does not come without a cost. The child's world of fairytales is shattered by exile; there are no breadcrumbs ("rastros de migajas") leading the way back home, and although the speaker imagines that he or she is freed in some way by immigration, Said and the speaker are also rendered "esperpentos" (grotesque) by their separation from their countries of birth.

The other two Gil poems in this translation, "La Extranjera" and "Fata Morgana," also contain references to absences and separations, but from different perspectives. "La Extranjera" depicts the Cuban painter Amelia Peláez looking out onto her garden, reminded of some ambiguous "ausencias" (absences) that "fosforecen" (phospherece), whereas "Fata Morgana" seems to depict the kind of loss of self suffered through love. Like "Hablando en diásporas," "Fata Morgana" contains both allusions to aspects of Cuban culture and references to myths and figures from Western history. The speaker in "Fata Morgana" refers to an "almácigo," a type of tree found in Cuba, and the speaker in "Hablando en diásporas" alludes to "Operation Peter Pan." Similarly, Orpheus appears in "Hablando en diásporas," while the sirens lure the speaker in "Fata Morgana," and a Franz Kafka quote serves as the bookends that hold this poem together. Gil invites the reader to explore Western cultural references, specific experiences from the Cuban diaspora, and her own personal history, all the while using richly textured and relatively uncommon words like "esperpentos" (grotesque), "penumbras," (penumbras), "fosforecen" (phosphoresce), and "vendavales" (sea gales).

The overlap between personal experience and the Cuban diaspora is also explored in Iturralde's poetry. Memory plays a central role in her work, sometimes "como forma de

resistencia y restauración de la identitdad"[8] (Martínez 95), as in "El rostro de la nación" in which memory is described as "de báculo" (as support), and at other times, like in the poem "Claroscuro," as unreliable, tangled up and distorted. The theme of exile also figures prominently in Iturralde's poetry; in "Exilio la sien" it rips the speaker apart from within and without, and in "El rostro de la nación," the speaker finds himself or herself in a land so alienating and confusing that "se enreda la lengua / al pronunciar su nombre" (the tongue entangles itself / pronouncing its name). As in Gil's poem "Fata Morgana," images of a turbulent sea appears in several of Iturralde's poems, including "El rostro de la nación," in which the description of wanderers captivated by the sea and unable to speak evokes a sense of dread and confusion.

Iturralde mixes these images and references to exile with allusions to her own personal history, combining past and present, reality and imagination. Although "Claroscuro" begins with the evocation of a memory, Iturralde's daughters, who were born in the U.S., make an appearance later in the poem in a land populated by mangroves, palms, and ceibas, all of which are trees found in Cuba. Memory encompasses both positive and negative experiences in this poem; it contains a turbulent sea as well as an "estelar perenne" (perennial star) that shines above the water. Past and present are merged as the heroes "de atańo" (of long ago) awaken and Iturralde's children walk along the shore. In this way, "Claroscuro" seems to embody what Arenas wrote: "Our country exists only in our memory, but we need something beyond memory if we're to achieve happiness. We have no homeland, so we have to invent it over and over again" (Arenas qtd. in Alvarez Borland, *Cuban-American* 1). This poem provides a place for the speaker's disparate experiences to coexist and merge with the imaginary: a personified ceiba

[8] "As a form of resistance and restoration of identity" (my translation).

tree, a crustacean with the names of children etched on its back, a happy crocodile, and memory tangled up among the seaweed.

**The Cuban Diaspora in Spain**

The Cuban diaspora in Spain differs from the diaspora in the U.S. in many ways. For one thing, the Cuban diaspora in Spain is much smaller (50,000 Cubans have migrated to Spain since 1959 as opposed to over 1 million to the U.S.) and exerts less political influence than Cubans in the U.S. (Berg 16). Writers, artists, musicians, and other creative professionals, many of whom traveled to Spain as visiting artists from Cuba and established residency after their tours were finished, are also disproportionately represented among the diaspora in Spain, (Berg 16). In contrast to "Little Havana" in Miami, the Cubans in Spain are not geographically concentrated in one area of a city, or even in one city (Berg 16). Many reside in Madrid, but other Cubans live in Barcelona, Andalucía and even the Canary Islands.

As with the Cuban population in the U.S., however, Cuban immigrants in Spain can also be divided into different generational groups. Mette Louise Berg divides the Cuban diaspora in Spain into three groups: the "exiles," the "children of the revolution," and the "migrants" (Berg 19). She characterizes those who left for political reasons in the years following the revolution and came to Franco's Spain as "the exiles," (Berg 18) a group with a demographic makeup comparable to that of the first wave of Cuban migrants to come to the U.S. The "children of the revolution" are those who grew up in Cuba and came to Spain after Franco's death. Many members of this generation came to Spain with a grant to study at a Spanish university or participate in a conference or festival, and currently work in Spain as artists, dancers, writers, or other types of creative professionals (Berg 21). They tend to agree with the ideology of equality

behind the socialist revolution in Cuba, but have become disillusioned by certain aspects of the government and therefore have a less polarized view of Cuban politics (Berg 21). The "migrants," the most recent group to come to Spain, left for mainly economic reasons after the fall of the Soviet Union. The majority of these individuals do not view their immigration as a political act and do not participate in diaspora politics. Their primary motivation for moving to Spain, in most cases, was to earn money to support their families back in Cuba (Berg 24).

These generational divisions are not without exceptions, however, and neither Rodríguez nor Rivero fit perfectly into these categorizations. Although Rodríguez came to Spain in 1997, her personal history reflects more characteristics of the "children of the revolution" generation than the "migrants." She initially came to Spain with a scholarship to complete her Ph.D., met a Spaniard, and decided to stay for a combination of political, personal and economic reasons (Rodríguez, personal interview). Her poetry reflects a more ambivalent stance towards Cuban politics than the work of members of the "exile" generation, and in "La piel es un sitio inseguro," she writes about the experience of someone who used to criticize Cubans for leaving the island while he or she still lived there, and later found himself or herself living abroad. As in Gil's poem "Hablando en diásporas," Rodríguez also explores a child's view of the political situation in Cuba and the experiences of loss that come with exile and immigration. In "Palabras de un inocente" the speaker is a child saying goodbye to Gastón Baquero, a Cuban poet who was exiled to Spain, and seems unable to understand why Baquero is leaving. The child can only express his feelings in the language of dreams, innocently believing that Baquero's departure is temporary, or that his departure is a nightmare from which the child will wake up.

While both "Palabras de un inocente" and "La piel es un sitio inseguro" contain references to Cuban politics, in "Granada, tierra soñada" the speaker focuses not on his or her

relationship to Cuba, but on his or her feelings of alienation in Granda. The tension between the speaker's culture and the culture of Granada is expressed in the language used in this poem, a combination of Castilian Spanish and Cuban Spanish, and epitomized in the use of the word "cañas" which, to a Spaniard, refers to glasses of beer, but to an immigrant from Latin America refers to a type of plant. When I interviewed her, Rodríguez explained that in her first two books of poetry she tried to create poems that contained references to Cuba, but that "se pudieran leer en una manera en que ni necesariamente los asociarás con Cuba siempre …o sea que tenían un lenguaje más abierto, más universal,"[9] while in her most recent book of poetry the themes of exile and separation appear with more intensity (Rodríguez, personal interview). This shift is evident in the poems included in this collection, since "Granada, tierra soñada" comes from one of Rodríguez's earlier books, and both "Palabras de un inocente" and "La piel es un sitio inseguro" were published in *El otro lado*, her most recent collection.

Unlike Rodríguez's poetry, in which the tension between Cuban Spanish and Castilian Spanish can be felt in the word choice, Rivero's poetry employs a more standard form of Spanish. Rodríguez argues that Rivero's poetry represents the last phase of immigration, "la des-nación, el despojamiento,"[10] which is represented not only through Rivero's use of Spanish, but also through a sense of cosmopolitanism that permeates her poetry (Rodríguez, "Poetas transatlánticas" 127). Rivero's poetry seems less focused on themes pertaining to exile and contains what Rodríguez refers to as "una apertura de la identidad, que ya no es siquiera doble, sino deslocalizada o multiple en sus numerosos desplazamientos"[11] (Rodríguez, "Poetas

[9] "could be read in a manner in which you wouldn't necessarily associate with Cuba always...in other words that had a more open language, more universal" (my translation).
[10] "the un-nation, the relinquishment" (my translation)
[11] "an opening of identity, that is not just double, but dislocated or multiple in its numerous displacements" (my translation)

transatlánticas" 127). Rivero's poems take the reader inside, to a new interior reality (Rodríguez, "Poetas transatlánticas" 129), rather than to a new place like the poetry of Rodríguez, which often situates the speaker in Spain. The speaker in some of Rivero's poetry, like in "En el jardín," appears to be in a mystical place, in which the moon is personified and dead birds sing. The images in this poem do not situate the speaker in one specific space, but seem to be an amalgamation of different images ranging from a cetacean rising to the surface of a dark sea to birds cut up on plates.

Rivero also tackles global issues in her poetry, focusing on war profiteering and the way in which technology allows individuals to distance themselves from the consequences of war in "Catálogo de guerr@". While this poem does not contain specific references to the Cuban diaspora, the phrase "refugiados de índole periférica" (refugees of a peripheral sort) draws attention to the ways in which individual lives are affected by decisions politicians and word leaders make. The poem "Marea Negra" also explores issues of global significance, including a massive oil spill and the objectification of women. References to a Miss World competition in Lagos are interwoven with images of an oil spill and references to a women's liberation protests in the 1960s. Like ""Catálogo de guerr@," this poem explores the tension between individuals caught up in their own lives and the consequences of global events. At the end of the poem, for example, the beauty pageant contestants are herded onto a plane and fly over the oil spill, seemingly oblivious to the birds drowning in oil down below. Of all of the poems in this translation, "Marea Negra" makes the most overt references to gender issues, with allusions to the 1968 protest of the Miss American pageant in Atlantic City. While the protesters seem to have agency in the poem, and are described as raising the red lanterns, the beauty pageant contestants are depicted as passive individuals; "fueron sacadas del hotel" (they were taken from the hotel) and "enviadas a Londres" (sent to London) like a "rebaño" (flock).

**The Cuban Diaspora in France**

France has served mainly as a destination for Cuban writers and artists seeking freedom from the censorship of the Castro government, and has attracted few economic immigrants. Many prominent Cuban artists received scholarships to study in Paris between 1959 and 1965 and stayed in France long after the Castro government terminated this scholarship program and asked participating artists to return to Cuba (Navarrete 41). Public opinion in France was initially sympathetic to the Cuban Revolution (Navarrete 43), and the French did not attempt to turn the experiences of Cuban immigrants into anti-communist propaganda, as the U.S. government had done. In recent years, however, the political activism of Cuban writers and artists in Paris has resulted in greater public sympathy in France for the plight of Cuban intellectuals under the Castro government, and spurned the creation of pro-democracy organizations in Paris aimed at ending the imprisonment of Cuban intellectuals who have spoken out against Castro (Navarrete 43).

Valdés's novels, which have become bestsellers in both France and Spain, have contributed to this change in public opinion (Navarrete 43). Many of Valdés's novels center on the experience of living in Cuba under the Castro government as late as the 1990s, when Valdés left the island. They feature female protagonists who struggle to survive Cuba's harsh economic conditions and employ a poetics that stems from the Cuban literary tradition, rather than that of France (Alvarez Borland, "Fertile Multiplicities" 256). Valdés's novels belong to a relatively recent development in the Cuban diaspora: the creation of semi-autobiographical texts, a tradition that does not exist on the island and has been developed almost exclusively in the diaspora (Rojas 238). Rafael Rojas attributes this surge in memoirs and semi-autobiographical

writings to "the reclaiming of a subjectivity inhibited by strong collective pressures" within Cuba; the "detachment of the *I* from a collective, totalitarian *we*, and the reconstruction of personal identity experienced in every exile" (238). Like Iturralde and Gil, Valdés writes mainly in Spanish rather than in the language of her adopted country.

Although Valdés has become well known as a novelist in Europe, very little has been written about her poetry. The three poems included in this translation depict individuals who are struggling to deal with loss, or feelings of being lost, and absence, but from different perspectives and using different tones. One of the poems included in this translation, "Mujer perdida dentro de casa," was written before Valdés left Cuba permanently, but while she was working in France as part of the Cuba's UNESCO delegation. I have included it in this translation because its depiction of a woman lost within her own home fits thematically with the other poems in this translation, and because the poem was written while Valdés was off the island, although at this point in her life her residence in France was sanctioned by the Cuban government.

Unlike the Gil and Iturralde poems in this translation, which contain specific references to Cuban exile, these three Valdés poems approach loss and displacement from a more personal perspective. In "Mujer perdida dentro de la casa," a woman wanders through her house, seemingly lost to the outside world. The tone of this poem is similar to that of Iturralde's "El rostro de la nación," with the wanderers who have fallen mute and seem bewitched by the sea, yet it depicts the kind of displacement and alienation that can occur without even leaving one's home. Although "Ante la correspondencia," written after Valdés settled permanently in France, contains specific references to Cuba, its emphasis seems to be on the mixed emotions of a speaker about to open some letters from family and friends in Cuba. The intensity of the

speaker's feelings can be felt in lines like "necesito un calor de mil grados / y mucho todo el sol" (I need a heat of a thousand degrees / and much everything the sun), "el mentón las piernas de mi amante" (the chin the legs of my lover) and "Niña mía amiga queridísima Vida" (My daughter friend beloved Life) that contain strings of nouns without verbs inbetween them. In contrast to the somber tone in this poem, "Un hombre se ha perdido" has a more humorous tone. The speaker in this poem cannot find her lover, and searches for him in the police station and in the hospital, convinced that something terrible has happened. At the end of the poem, when a police officer asks the speaker "¿Un policía le convendría?" (Would a police officer be suitable for you?), the reader realizes that the speaker's lover has simply left her. Although there are notes of sadness in this poem, Valdés relates the speaker's search using subtle, self-deprecating humor that contrasts with the way in which the other poets in this translation have approached similar themes.

**The Interpretation of Cuban Work in the Diaspora**

As evidenced by these examples, the disparate experiences of Cuban immigrants in the U.S., Spain, and France have had a varied effect on artistic production in the diaspora. Isabel Alvarez Borland aptly summarizes this phenomenon when she writes, "the consecutive yet different waves of immigration have brought with them artists and writers producing a unique pattern of exchange and renewal among the various generations of intellectuals in exile" (*Cuban-American* 6). The work of Cuban writers and artists has also been received and interpreted in different ways depending on the political climate of the receiving country. The volatile political situation between Cuba and the U.S., for example, has resulted in U.S. appropriation of Cuban literature and art to further both anti-Castro and pro-Castro agendas. Cuban and U.S. Cuban

cultural productions are often interpreted in line with dominant political ideologies in the U.S., whether or not their creators were trying to make a political statement or even referencing politics at all. As Eliana Rivero argues, some critics interpret U.S. Cuban literature as "representative of socially conservative (read anticommunist) immigrant values" (Rivero 119), while others applaud depictions of individual struggles as representative of the pitfalls of communism.

Based upon interviews I have conducted with Cubans residing in Madrid and Granada, it does not seem like the interpretation of Cuban art and literature is politicized to the same extent in Spain. Most of the Cuban artists and writers I interviewed described feeling that their work is included under the umbrella of Latin American art and literature in Spanish galleries and publishing houses. Several, however, did mention feeling that Cuban culture is exoticized in Spain and that Cuban work is sometimes viewed as representative of an idealized tropical culture. Rodríguez explained that in Spain, "más que buscar lo político a lo mejor van a buscar algunas cosas que aquí se cree…de alguien que sea cubano, que tiene que ver con la salsa, el baile…con la cuestión exótica…tiene más peso que la cuestión político" (personal interview).[12] In an essay about Latin American women writers in Spain, Rodríguez has also argued that Latin American literature is often marginalized in Spain unless the writers attempt to write in a typically Spanish style (Rodríguez, "Fertile Multiplicities" 113).

In France, in contrast to the U.S., public opinion was initially sympathetic to the Cuban Revolution and to the type of socialism implemented by Fidel Castro (Navarrete 43). Many

[12] "more than look for the political [in Cuban work] they're more likely to look for some things that here they believe…about someone who is Cuban, [things] that have to do with salsa, the dance…with the exotic question…[in Spain this] has more weight than the political question." (my translation)

intellectuals, especially in Paris, actively supported the Castro government throughout the 1960s. Castro's decision to imprison several prominent Cuban intellectuals in the 1970s, however, started to change public opinion towards the Castro government (Navarrete 41). The work of writers like Valdés that depicts daily life in Cuba under the Castro government has also resulted in public opposition to the manner in which the Castro government has dealt with intellectuals who are accused of espousing subversive ideas in their work (Navarrete 43).

## TRANSLATION AND THE ETHICAL DOUBLE BIND

As Edward Said and other postcolonial theorists have argued, Western cultural productions are inextricably linked to Western imperialism. In *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism*, for example, Said provides examples ranging from travel journals to Jane Austen novels that demonstrate the ways in which literary texts have both shaped and perpetuated imperialist discourse. He discusses the "consolidation" (*Culture* 12) of imperialism in the literary cannon as well as the "imprint" of individual writers and works on the "collective body of texts" (*Orientalism* 23). For Said, many Western literary texts reflect dominant ideologies about Western superiority in the language they employ, their portrayals of the "other," and in the voices they exclude (*Orientalism* 208). By focusing on the effects of individual writers and works, however, Said also portrays literature as a form of cultural production that has the capacity to challenge the hegemonic discourse. The content and form of a work of literature, the socio-political context in which it is produced, and its dissemination all take on political significance in the struggle for decolonization and the current period of neocolonialism.

In the context of literary translation, especially the translation of texts from former colonies into the language of their colonizers, the relationship between the text and the

hegemonic discourse acquires added significance. In his essay, "Translation as Cultural Politics," Lawrence Venuti argues that translation has played a role in global conflicts, in the creation of national identities, and in the dissemination of ideas and practices that either challenge or reinforce the "dominant conceptual paradigm" (67). For these reasons, Venuti defines translation as a cultural political practice that has the potential to "(re)constitute and cheapen foreign texts, to trivialize and exclude foreign cultures, and thus potentially to figure in racial discrimination and ethnic violence" ("Translation as Cultural Politics" 67). Steven Ungar expresses similar ideas about the political implications of translation, arguing that in a globalized world in which cultural productions flow with the same ease as material goods, the importance of a translator's decisions should not be underestimated (130). Ungar posits that the significance of a translation extends beyond questions of its "accuracy" and aesthetic merit into the realms of "force, influence and power that set poetics by necessity alongside politics of various kinds and degrees" (130).

In spite of their reservations, however, none of these theorists are suggesting that texts should not be translated or that translations do not also have the potential to resist dominant ideologies. Translation has been conceptualized by some theorists as a "cultural political practice" with the potential to create social change (Venuti, "1990s and Beyond" 330) and build communities of people around a shared interest in a translated text (Venuti, "Translation, Community" 491). In this context, translation constitutes a sort of utopian act, a way of forming communities between distinct groups within the target culture who might ordinarily be divided by cultural and social differences, as well as a way of uniting members of the target and source culture (Venuti, "Translation, Community" 499). Like all utopian acts, of course, this "way of imagining a future reconciliation of linguistic and cultural differences" is never fully realized in

translations, even in those performed with the utmost attention to ethical and political considerations (Venuti, "Translation, Community" 499). Translation does, however, have the potential to teach us about cultural and linguistic differences and can be used as a means to explore broader questions about cultural interactions (Lefevere 12), or act as a bridge between different nations and linguistic groups.

These seemingly contradictory ideas—the importance of making foreign texts available to domestic audiences and the alarming possibility of erasing the presence of the other in a translation—result in an "ethical double bind" (Bermann and Wood 89) that leaves the translator trapped between two opposing imperatives. While no simple or straightforward solution to this theoretical impasse exists, any act of translation necessitates a discussion of the political and ethical implications of this practice. If, as André Lefevere writes, a translated text can serve as "a culture's window on the world" (11), the translator must take care that he or she minimizes the degree to which this window is tinted with domestic ideologies and stereotypes about the source culture, and avoid obscuring the glass completely by removing all foreign traces from the text. Robert Eaglestone aptly characterizes this dilemma when he asks rhetorically, after listing several of the ethical problems related to translation, "Does this mean we should not translate? No. But it does mean that we have ethical grounds to be even more suspicious of the idea of translation and the way in which it relates to communities" (137). Given the extent to which political ideology has affected the perception and distribution of Cuban work in the U.S., Spain, and France, I have attempted to translate in a way that resists this type of cultural appropriation as much as possible.

**The Dangers of Target-Oriented Translation**

Although some types of translation are more problematic than others, all translations have the capacity to shape and distort a text. Even when the translator tries to minimize the degree to which he or she changes a text, all translated texts absorb the target culture's values and beliefs to some degree. Part of the problem with translation is that, as "an activity engaged with language as the material expression of cultural difference" (Ungar 129), it runs the risk of either distorting this difference or eliminating it altogether. For Eaglestone, attempting to translate the "other" into our own language is analogous to rendering the other as a "version of one's own thought" (130) so as to refuse its "otherness" and "turn the other into a category understood by the same" (136). Venuti echoes this idea, arguing that the intent behind translation is to "bring back a cultural other as the same, the recognizable, even the familiar," a goal that can result in "a wholesale domestication of the foreign text" ("Translation as Cultural Politics" 67). For this reason, Venuti believes that the "violence of translation" can be found first and foremost in its rationale and function; in simply attempting to convey foreign words in another language, the translator must distort the text to fit the values and ideas imprinted in the target language ("Translation as Cultural Politics" 67). Although the source text can never completely escape appropriation, the type of translation employed by the translator can determine the degree to which the source text is "imprinted" ("Translation as Cultural Politics" 67) by the values and ideologies of the target audience.

In addition to a method of appropriating the "other," Eaglestone sees translation as a communicative act intimately linked to the imperialist desire to understand as a means of domination. He calls the exercise of this desire "the metaphysics of comprehension," explaining

that "knowing the other is most often a comprehension, a 'taking power'" (136) that seeks to turn the other into a nonthreatening entity that can be understood in terms of the dominant discourse. A similar ideology can be found in what Said characterizes as the motivations behind "cultural relations policy" in the U.S. (*Orientalism* 295). Under the guise of Middle Eastern Studies departments and other social sciences in U.S. universities, according to Said, the U.S. government posits the Middle East as an object of study with the primary objective of understanding this region as a means to control it (*Orientalism* 295). This "frankly strategic attitude" towards the study of the Middle East is built upon the idea that in order to bring this region under Western control, the U.S. must first understand the opposing cultural and political forces (*Orientalism* 295). What Said defines as the intent behind "cultural relations policy," in this context, serves as an example of the "metaphysics of comprehension" Eaglestone views as underlying certain types of translation.

Given the problems inherent in all translation, critics like Venuti and Eaglestone see target-oriented translations as the most insidious form of this practice. One of the major issues with target-oriented translations is that in an attempt to make translated texts more easily readable, these translations domesticate foreign ideas and concepts to create texts that sound as if they had originally been written in the target language. This enables the target audience to extract the text from its foreign context and forget that what they are reading is an interpretation of the original text, not a perfect equivalent. Venuti describes this practice as the "forcible replacement of the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text" ("Translation as Cultural Politics" 67) according to target culture values and standards that "constrain communication" ("Translation, Community" 483). A target-oriented translation might replace colloquial expressions in the source text with domestic expressions, for example, or substitute

one cultural reference for another, swapping a cultural or literary allusion familiar to the source audience for a domestic analog. In the English translation of a Cuban text, substituting George Washington for a textual reference to Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, Cuba's founding father, would be an example of using a domestic analog.

As a result of their focus on readability and attention to target culture norms, target-oriented translations are more likely to be well-received by domestic audiences than translations that preserve the unfamiliar references embedded in the source text (Hermans 381). By adapting texts to accommodate dominant ideas in the target culture, especially ideas about acceptable literary conventions, the source culture, and the proper use of the target language, target-oriented translations neutralize aspects of the foreign text that could potentially clash with target culture values. These translations are therefore more likely to gain "cultural authority" (Venuti, "Translation, Community" 499) in the target culture, especially if the translator has altered the form of the source text to accommodate prevailing ideas about a particular literary genre. In 19th century Europe, for example, unrhymed classical poetry was often translated into rhymed verse to conform to target audience expectations about what constituted respectable poetry (Lefevere 87). Unless they had knowledge of Greek or Latin, the European readers of these translations were most likely unable to detect the "domestic inscription" (Venuti, "Translation, Community" 496) in these texts because the texts fit their expectations about both classical civilization and poetic form. All of these factors conspire to prevent the target audience from confronting difference and from seeing a translation as an interpretation of the original text rather than its absolute expression.

**Translating Into English**

The problems inherent in target-oriented translations are exacerbated when these translations are rendered in English. Gayatri Spivak argues that the position the U.S. occupies in the current world order has created a situation in which the U.S. has "been able to impose [English] as an international norm" and create a demand for "wholesale translation into English" ("Politics of Translation" 378). She cautions that because the prominence of a target language affects the possibility of an ethical approach to translation, questions of the translator's responsibility become even more complex when translating into English, especially if the source text was not written in a northwestern European language ("Translating into English" 94). Target-oriented translations into English carry the possibility of reinforcing the power disparities between the U.S. and other non-European countries by providing English-speaking readers with translations that "neutralize" ("Politics of Translation" 372) the other, rather than forcing the reader to come to terms with difference. In this context, Spivak warns, "translators into English should operate with great caution and humility" ("Translating into English" 94).

As a result of the power disparities between the U.S. and other non-European countries, many native English speakers have the luxury of "willful monolingualism" (Ungar 131), a luxury available only to those with the resources to turn all that is foreign into their native tongue. The sentiment behind this elected monolingualism in the U.S. leads to translations created with the intention of easy consumption, translations that remove the inconvenient speed bumps of foreign concepts, words and rhythms. These types of translation, which Spivak terms "quick translations," are marketed as a fast and easy way to learn about a foreign culture and predicated on the notion that the only thing foreign texts need in order to be understood is a glossary

("Translating into English" 95). Venuti addresses this type of translation in a similar manner, arguing that many English-language translations focus on "making [the text] intelligible in an English-language culture that values easy readability, transparent discourse and the illusion of authorial presence" ("Translation as Cultural Politics" 71). For Venuti and Spivak, "quick" translations remove texts from their historical and cultural context and turn them into pale imitations.

In addition to extracting texts from their socio-historical context, these "quick translations" diminish the style and rhythm of the original work. In her essay "The Politics of Translation," Spivak describes this phenomenon as the reduction of literature from non-Western countries "into a sort of with-it translatese, so that the literature by a woman in Palestine begins to resemble, in the feel of its prose, something by a man in Taiwan" (372). As an example, Spivak critiques two different translations of a Bengali text by the writer Mahasweta Devi. She compares the English titles of both translations, one of which renders the Bengali word "Stanadãyini" as "Breast-giver" and the other as "The Wet-nurse." For Spivak, translating this title as "The Wet-nurse" removes the Marxist and Freudian references embedded in the Bengali neologism "Stanadãyini" and "neutralizes the author's irony," leaving the reader without clues to ideological references that figure prominently in the source text and without access to Devi's unique style (372). Translations such as this one, which neutralize the language of the source text and employ "translatese" are, in the words of Ungar, "wholly inadequate to the transmission of literary and cultural specificity" (131). For Venuti, Spivak, and others, the combination of target-oriented translation theory with English as the target language constitutes what Venuti refers to as the violence of translation.

Although Venuti believes that the violence of translation is to some extent unavoidable due to the nature of this practice, he argues that the translator's decisions have an effect on the extent to which his or her translations domesticate difference ("Translation as Cultural Politics" 68). Spivak, Lefevere and Ungar also recognize the importance of the translator's decisions in regard to his or her chosen methodology and signal the potential of those choices to "project positive or negative images" (Lefevere 14) of texts, writers, and foreign cultures. Even Berman, who believes that many of the "forces" propelling translators towards domestication are unconscious, concedes that there are "operations that have always limited deformation" (Berman 278) which can be applied by individual translators. If nothing else, a thorough understanding of the problems inherent in translation empowers the translator to explore more ethical techniques within the constraints imposed by the "ethical double bind."

**Source-Oriented Translation**

Some theorists, including Berman and José Ortega y Gasset, argue that a more ethical approach to translation involves creating translations that are purposely foreignizing and that subvert the conventional grammar and syntax of the target language to reflect that of the source language. Drawing on Friedrich Schleiermacher's ideas about foreignizing translations,[13] Berman and Ortega y Gasset advocate for translations that change as little as possible from the source text and enable the reader to enter into the original work (Berman 276). Ortega y Gasset writes that translators must "try to leave [their] language and go to the other" instead of creating

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[13] In his essay "On the Different Methods of Translating," Friedrich Schleiermacher advocates for translations that render the original text word-for-word in the target language and sound foreign to domestic audiences. Although Schleiermacher was motivated by a nationalistic desire to expand German language and literature in order to challenge France's domination over German-speaking areas, his ideas about translation have been applied to less imperialistic translation theories. He believed that a translator has two choices: he either "leaves the author in peace as much as possible and moves the reader toward him; or he leaves the reader in peace and moves the writer toward him" (49).

target-oriented translations which serve as merely "an imitation, or a paraphrase" of the source text (112). Venuti also favors this type of translation, arguing that "disrupting the cultural codes that prevail in the target language" forces this language to record cultural difference and resist cultural imperialism ("Translation as Cultural Politics" 68).

While plausible in translating prose texts, creating a purposely foreignizing translation that subverts the grammar and syntax of the target language is much more difficult when it comes to poetry. In my first few translation drafts, known as trots, I attempted to apply Schleiermacher's ideas and maintain the Spanish syntax and grammar as much as possible. The results, however, were unintelligible in many places, changed the meaning of certain lines, and destroyed all of the rhythm and sound of the original poems. They also read more as jumbled short prose than poetry and distracted the reader from the cultural references and literary allusions embedded in the poems.

Once I abandoned my attempt to create purposely foreignizing poetry translations, I focused on the numerous cultural references in the source texts. In poetry, source-oriented and target-oriented translation theories generally determine the translator's decisions regarding rhyme and meter, but since all of the poems I have translated are in free verse, I applied source-oriented translation theory by keeping cultural references in my translations rather than replacing them with domestic analogs. In addressing what he describes as the mechanisms through which translators domesticate texts, Berman identifies the practice of replacing idioms, cultural references and expressions with domestic analogs as a form of ethnocentrism. He argues that finding domestic analogs amounts to "attack[ing] the discourse of the foreign work" and cautions that "to translate is not to search for equivalents" (287). Replacing the cultural references and

allusions in the poems I have translated with domestic analogs also presupposes that there are North American equivalents to the experiences Cubans have endured as part of the diaspora. While there are certainly North Americans who have undergone difficult and traumatic experiences related to immigration, suggesting that these experiences are analogous would undermine the commitment to cultural specificity I have attempted to maintain in my translations.

**Thick Translation**

Although source-oriented translation serves as a more ethical alternative to target-oriented translation, it does not always provide the reader with information about the cultural and historical context of the source text. Lefevere instructs translators to remember that this literary practice does not occur in isolation and that unless the translator attempts to reconstruct the source text's "universe of discourse"[14] either by replacing foreign elements with domestic analogs or by using footnotes and a preface, the reader will miss important contextual information (87). Some of the foreign-language differences that are lost in the translating process can be restored through footnotes explaining a literary allusion, the historical usage of a particular word, or the meaning of a cultural practice referenced in the text (Venuti, "Translation, Community" 486). The information provided by a translator's note and preface can help the reader to understand both the cultural framework of the source text and the rationale behind the translator's decisions in a particular line or passage (Hermans 381). These constant reminders that the translated text came from another cultural and perhaps historical context serve the vital function of "invalidat[ing] the glib linearity of one-to-one lexical matchings" (Hermans 381). As

[14] Although Lefevere seems to favor the target-oriented solution of providing domestic analogs in translations, he also suggests footnotes as a possibility for recreating the source text's universe of discourse (87).

Spivak aptly states, a “commitment to correct cultural politics” on the part of the translator does not always suffice (“Politics of Translation” 375). For Spivak, “the history of the language, the history of the author’s moment, the history of the language-in-and-as-translation, must figure in the weaving as well,” both in terms of the translator’s own knowledge of the source culture, and the way in which he or she conveys this context to the reader (“Politics of Translation” 375).

Moving beyond the binary of target-oriented and source-oriented translations, Spivak instructs translators to “surrender” (“Politics of Translation” 377) to the text and “inhabit, even if on loan, the many mansions and many levels of the host language” (“Translating into English” 95). She believes that it is only through this type of surrender that a translator can preserve the “trace of the other, trace of history, even cultural traces” present in the original text (“Translating into English” 105). In order to keep these traces, Spivak argues that the translator needs to both “gras[p] the writer’s presuppositions as they inform his or her use of language” (“Translating into English” 94) and understand their history and geography. In her own translations, Spivak attempts to preserve these traces and create “metropolitan teaching texts” (“Translating into English” 95) that can, ideally, be taught alongside the original work to inform a non-native speaker’s understanding of the source text. She acknowledges, however, that this often proves to be wishful thinking and that most readers will use her translations without comparing them to the original.

Recognizing, like Spivak, that most readers are neither able nor willing to compare a translation to the original text, Kwame Anthony Appiah proposes a type of translation that seeks to provide extensive cultural and linguistic context for the reader (399). This technique, which he calls “thick translation,” strives to present readers with some of the cultural context they could

glean by reading the original text if they were familiar with the source language. Appiah advocates for employing annotations and other notes in order to "locate the text in a rich cultural and linguistic context" (399). In this way, the translation resists "quick" consumption by setting up speed bumps that prevent the reader from easily turning the source text into a "version of one's own thought" (Eaglestone 130). Based on an "unwillingness to appropriate the other through translation" (Hermans 386), thick translation forces the reader to "face up to difference" and "undertake the harder project of a genuinely informed respect for others" (Appiah 399).

Appiah conceptualizes thick translation as a "highly context-dependent" (400) practice that manifests differently in every situation. In the case of translating texts from Africa, for example, Appiah argues that what constitutes a thick translation varies depending on the target audience. For an American audience, the translation of an African text might include footnotes providing cultural context and explaining concepts and terms that would be unfamiliar to most Anglo-American readers. In the "Westernized academy in Africa," on the other hand, a thick translation would emphasize the connections between pre-colonial and contemporary forms of literature as a way to "challenge Western cultural superiority" and "provide a modality through which students can validate and incorporate the African past" (400). Hermans provides other examples of thick translation including Erasmus' *New Testament* and Heidegger's translation of a passage written by the Greek philosopher Anaximander. Hermans classifies this version of the *New Testament* as a thick translation because of the copious amount of footnotes, annotations, "explications" and "digressions" included with the text, which draw attention to "the original's inexhaustible fecundity" (387). Heidegger's translation of Anaximander functions in a similar way, providing fifty pages of notes for the translation of a small section of text and "slowly circling around each individual word" from the original, "interrogating both the Greek words and

tentative German equivalents" (387). For Hermans, thick translation employed in this manner serves as a "highly visible form of translating" that "flaunts the translator's subject position" and keeps the reader from mistaking the translation for a "transparent or neutral description" (387).

Thick translation does not solve all of the problems inherent in a target-oriented translation, nor does it address all of the questions raised by postcolonial translation theorists. Even if a translator produces "the closest literal (faithful) translation," translations are still created according to the translator's ideology and affected by the historical and cultural context in which the translator works, as well as the structure of both the source and target language (Lefevere 6). The "asymmetry" between the foreign and domestic cultures remains even when a translation strives to be foreignizing (Venuti, "Translation, Community" 499), and in creating a dense translation with unfamiliar syntax and numerous footnotes, the translator in some ways "privileges" an academic audience (Venuti, "1940s-1950s" 112). Source-oriented translations and thick translations also disrupt the rhythm of the original text and are rarely as elegant as the source text or flow as nicely as a target-oriented translation. Adding extensive footnotes can sometimes result in a translation that feels more like an "annoying apparatus" than a literary text (Ortega y Gasset 111).

Recognizing these limitations, Hermans explains that even if it does not address every ethical or aesthetic consideration, thick translation creates a space for the questions he sees as most vital to the study and practice of translation:

> "In whose terms, for which linguistic constituency, and in the name of what kinds of knowledge or intellectual authority does one perform acts of translation between cultures?" (Lydia Liu qtd. in Hermans 385).

Combined with the source-oriented practice of preserving cultural references embedded in the source text, thick translation provides a more ethical approach to literary translation. A translation that, with the aid of historical background information and footnotes, helps the reader to “locate the text in a rich cultural and linguistic context” (Appiah 399), has the potential to challenge readers to interact with texts “in ways that recognize [their] linguistic and cultural differences” (“Translation as Cultural Politics” 80). As Appiah argues, thick translation into English can “extend the American imagination—an imagination that regulates much of the world system economically and politically—beyond the narrow scope of the U.S.” (399). Eaglestone correctly surmises that there are ethical reasons to be “suspicious of the idea of translation and the way in which it relates to communities” (137), but this should not prevent translators from making foreign texts available to domestic audiences in a way that allows those audiences to develop a “deeper respect” (Appiah 400) for the other. While no translation can entirely escape ethical dilemmas, a translation that resists easy consumption at least provides the possibility of “recognizing the otherness of the stranger” (Eaglestone 130).

In the context of the neocolonial relationship between the United States and Cuba, thick translation seems not only suited to the process of translating Cuban poetry into English for a North American audience, but necessary from an ethical standpoint. A target-oriented translation could all too easily fit into the United States’ history of control and appropriation in Cuba, continuing the North American tradition of shaping all things Cuban to align with U.S. interests, values and desires. The idea of translating the literature of the colonized into the language of the colonizer is somewhat complicated in this situation, however, as the texts I am translating were created in the Cuban diaspora, by Cubans who have left the island to live in either Spain or the United States, the countries of their former colonizers, or France, a country

that never colonized Cuba, but that as a European power occupies a similar position in the global order. The way Cuban politics and Cuban cultural productions are viewed in the United States, Spain and France, in addition, provides further justification for the use of thick translation in order to allow the texts to speak for themselves as much as possible rather than risk interpreting them in line with a particular ideology through a target-oriented translation. This type of translation also seems appropriate in the context of texts written by women, since women have been treated as other throughout much of Western history.

**FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE**

In the following translations, I have attempted to create what Hermans calls a "highly visible form of translating" (387). I have combined the source-oriented practice of preserving cultural references with the emphasis in thick translation on providing the reader with historical and cultural context. I have also adhered closely to the source texts and refrained from taking many creative liberties as a translator, maintaining punctuation, line breaks, and the number of words per line whenever possible. When faced with a Spanish word with several possible English translations, I have attempted to use the most standard plausible translation even when it differs from my personal interpretation of the poem. In this way, I have attempted to minimize the degree to which I have imposed my own interpretations and ideologies onto the text.

In these translations, the footnotes, cultural references, and words left in Spanish serve as speed bumps to prevent the reader from what Spivak calls "quick" consumption and to remind the reader that what he or she is reading in English is a translation of a text that comes from another cultural and linguistic context. Although this style of translation makes the reading experience more cumbersome, my hope is that these translations will resist cultural appropriation

to a greater degree than target-oriented translations and allow the reader to enter into the foreign context of the poems, rather than moving the poems all the way into the reader's language and culture. These translations are also intended to be read after the critical apparatus, which provides the reader with the historical and cultural information necessary to contextualize the specific cultural references and allusions within the poems.

**Facing-Page Translations**

I have created these translations with English-speaking North American readers in mind, and attempted to provide information that will be useful to both readers with some knowledge of Spanish and readers who have no familiarity with the Spanish language. To that end, I have provided facing-page translations primarily for two reasons. First and foremost, the use of facing-page translations, in conjunction with the footnotes and source-oriented translation techniques, serves to remind the reader that these poems come from a different cultural and linguistic context. Second, the facing-page translations allow readers with some knowledge of Spanish to access the original poems with the aid of the English translations. These readers can use the footnotes I have provided explaining the meaning of certain words and grammatical conventions in Spanish to make their own decisions about the translation of specific words and phrases. Although every translation inevitably imposes the translator's interpretation onto the reader to some degree, I have provided the reader with alternative translations to words and phrases with multiple plausible definitions so that he or she can challenge my translations with his or her own interpretations. While providing the reader with this information does not necessarily fit under the umbrella of either source-oriented or thick translation theory, I feel it is

important to remind the reader that my translations merely serve as one interpretation and to allow the reader to engage with the source texts and question my authority as the translator.

**Footnotes**

Although thick translation usually entails providing footnotes that refer to only the historical and cultural context of the original text, Appiah argues that this type of translation is “highly context-dependent” and should be applied in a manner that reflects both the intended audience and their relationship to the source culture (400). In the context of translating poetry from the Cuban diaspora into English for a North American audience, I feel it is important to provide the reader with information about the source texts that extends beyond explanations of cultural references and literary allusions specific to the source culture. My footnotes can be divided into four categories: 1) footnotes that explain Cuban cultural references and literary allusions, 2) footnotes that explain mainly Western cultural references, 3) footnotes that explain references specific to the poets, and 4) footnotes that explain the meanings of certain Spanish words and grammatical conventions. All of these footnotes are provided in the English translations, rather than in the source texts, because most North American readers will presumably be relying on the translations and referring to the source texts, if at all, to support their readings of the translations.

My intention in providing these four types of footnotes is to aid the reader in perceiving the connections between the different cultural references and literary allusions in each poem, enabling the reader to enter more fully into the text while still recognizing his or her position in relation to the source culture. While the footnotes explaining Western cultural references, such as Edward Said, Orpheus, and the Loreleis, are not specific to Cuban culture, an understanding of these references and their relationship to the text enables the reader to arrive at a more

nuanced reading of the specifically Cuban cultural references. Given the history of neocolonialism between the U.S. and Cuba, providing the reader with additional context enables him or her to view the Western cultural references embedded in the poems from a different perspective. In the Gil poem “Hablando en diásporas,” for example, the footnote to the poem’s dedication to Edward Said explains the connections between Said, Gil and “Operation Peter Pan.” While most readers are probably familiar with Said, they may not be aware of the fact that, like Gil, he was sent to the U.S. by his parents at a young age. This information allows the reader to appreciate the first line of the poem, “Habría en tu vida un día como el de hoy” (There must have been in your life a day like today) on two different levels: both in terms of the experiences Said and the speaker of the poem share as members of diasporic populations, and their experiences as individuals who were sent to the U.S. and separated from their families as children. Other footnotes explaining general cultural references, like the footnote in “Granada, tierra soñada” explaining the significance of red and yellow cards in soccer, provide the North American reader with information that, while not specific to Cuba, would probably be familiar to a native Spanish-speaker given the popularity of soccer in Latin American and Spain. I have used this same rationale to footnote “Galicia” and “Almería” in “Marea Negra” because both of these regions in Spain would probably be familiar to native Spanish-speakers.

The footnotes that refer specifically to Cuba provide explanations of cultural references and literary allusions that are likely unfamiliar to most North American readers. In some of these poems, a word or phrase has one meaning in standard Spanish and another in colloquial Cuban Spanish. Since all five of these poets have lived outside of Cuba for many years and come into contact with other forms of Spanish, I chose to translate these words according to their standard Spanish usage and employ footnotes to explain their possible meanings in Cuban

Spanish. In "En el jardín," for instance, I translated the line "Los sables los tienen en la armería" as "They have the sabers in the armory." Although in Cuban Spanish "los sables" refers to a type of fish found in the Caribbean, I used the conventional definition in my translation and explained the Cuban meaning of this word in a footnote. As mentioned in the section entitled "Facing-page translations," this type of footnote provides the reader with information about a reference that could be embedded in the text and allows him or her to make up his or her own mind about the meaning of specific words. Other footnotes explain references specific to the poets, such as the date Gil left Cuba in "Hablando en diásporas," and the names of Iturralde's children in "Claroscuro." Although these footnotes provide the reader with information that may be unknown to many native Spanish speakers, the names of Iturralde's children would be familiar to readers well-versed in her poetry, since she includes them in several of her poems. Similarly, although the exact date of Gil's departure might be unknown to Spanish-speaking readers, most of the biographical notes about Gil that I have encountered in poetry anthologies reference the fact that she left Cuba as a part of "Operation Peter Pan" in 1961.

Lastly, the footnotes explaining the meanings of certain Spanish words and grammatical conventions either describe grammatical conventions that do not exist in English or list the meanings of words with several plausible translations. In the Rodríguez poem "Palabras de un inocente," the original text contains the word "usted," which is the form of the pronoun "you" used when addressing older people or people in positions of authority. Since both "usted" and the informal "tú" translate as "you" in English, I used a footnote to explain the connotations of the word "usted" in order to provide the reader with this linguistic context. Other footnotes in this category explain the suffix "ísimo," which does not have an equivalent in English, the difference between "la mar" and "el mar," which cannot be rendered in English without adding

words that do not exist in the source text, and the ambiguous use of possessive pronouns in one of the poems that necessitates choosing between "his" or "her" in English. In instances in which words in the source text have multiple meanings in English that seem equally plausible, I have provided the reader with the other possible translations in a footnote so that he or she can choose according to his or her own interpretation.

## TRANSLATION CHALLENGES

### Different Uses of Spanish

In an article on Latin American poets in Spain, Rodríguez discusses the tension between different uses of Spanish as it manifests in the poetry of Latin American immigrants. She argues that the differences between Castilian Spanish and colloquial Spanish from different Latin American countries creates a "choque lingüístico" (linguistic clash) that emphasizes the status of these immigrants as foreigners even though they technically speak the same language as the citizens of their adopted country (Rodríguez 115). Tensions between standard Spanish and colloquial Cuban Spanish created problems for me as a translator in the poetry of Gil, Iturralde and Valdés, but these types of problems were most noticeable and difficult to resolve in Rodríguez's work. While Rodríguez does not reference her own poetry in the aforementioned article, her poems contain a variety of words that have different meanings in Cuba and Spain.

Berman cautions translators against what he calls the "effacement of the superimposition of languages" in translations, arguing that translators often fail to create translations that reflect the tensions between different vernaculars or between colloquial expressions and a more formal use of language (287). In order to avoid this "deforming tendency," as Berman calls it, I have used footnotes to explain the various meanings of certain words in passages in which I have no

direct information about the poet's intended usage. When I have had the opportunity to ask the poet about her word choice and discovered that the poet chose a particular word because of its multiple meanings, I have kept this word in Spanish. In the Rodríguez poem "Granada, tierra soñada," for example, the speaker mentions "las cañas," which in Castilian Spanish commonly refers to glasses of beer, and in most of Latin American refers to a type of plant. I contacted Rodríguez to ask about her use of this word, and she responded that she chose the word "cañas" precisely because of its various meanings, which reinforce the speaker of the poem's sense of alienation from Granada. For this reason, I have kept this word in Spanish in my translation.

**Syntax and Grammar**

With a few exceptions, I have maintained the original line breaks and punctuation marks throughout these poems and, wherever possible, the same number of words per line. I have added commas to replace the punctuation mark "¿" which precedes questions in Spanish, but has no equivalent in English. In this way, I have set questions apart from the rest of a line using a comma, approximating the way a "¿" indicates the beginning of a question in Spanish. I have also added a few commas to maintain correct English grammar and to avoid changing line breaks. For the purpose of clarity in the poem "Claroscuro," for instance, I have added commas in the lines "atrapado por el mangle / oscuro y mustio de un ocaso" (trapped by the mangrove, / dark and wilted, of twilight). Adding commas in these lines enabled me to avoid modifying the line breaks so that the translation read "trapped by the dark and wilted mangrove / of twilight" which would have constituted a more significant change from the source text. In a few poems, I have changed the line breaks in order to keep the translation from sounding purposely foreignizing. In "Claroscuro," I have translated the lines "mientras sobre la conversación pesa /

un maullido vecino," which would translate word-for-word as "while over the conversation weighs in / a meowing neighbor" as "while over the conversation / a meowing neighbor weighs in."

Although I have not attempted to create purposely foreignizing translations by maintaining Spanish syntax and grammar, in instances in which the source text subverts conventional Spanish syntax I have subverted conventional English syntax to mirror the style of the original poem. In the Valdés poem "Ante la correspondencia," for example, there are three lines that contain strings of nouns and adjectives without any verbs or commas in between. The line "Niña mía amiga queridísima Vida," for example, which I have translated as "My daughter friend beloved Life," exemplifies this style. Although it does not mirror a subversion of Spanish grammar, the phrase "an innocent" in "Palabras de un inocente" might also strike the reader as an unusual use of English. In Spanish, "inocente" can serve as both a noun and an adjective, whereas in English "innocent" is typically used only as an adjective. I have translated this phrase as "an innocent" instead of as "an innocent person" because "an innocent" best expresses the way innocence describes the entirety of a person, often a child, referred to as "un inocente" in Spanish, where as in the phrase "an innocent person" the word "innocent" qualifies a noun. Translating this phrase as "an innocent" also enabled me to maintain the flow and visual formation of the original, in which "un innocente" appears in a succession of short lines near the beginning of the poem.

**Alliteration, Assonance, Consonance, and Repetition**

Most of the poems in this translation contain alliterations, assonance, consonance and repetition that help to shape the rhythm of the lines. When doing so does not change the

meaning of the poem, I have attempted to use the same literary devices in order to preserve the textures and sounds of the original poems. In "El rostro de la nación," for example, I have translated the line "su carga de mendrugos que" as "its burden of bread crusts that," because although I was unable to keep the repetition of the "g" and "r" sounds, I was able to translate using words with "b" and "r" sounds. In this line "burden" mirrors some of the sounds in "mendrugos" and the consonant blend "br" in "bread" is reminiscent of the consonant pair "rg" in "carga." In "En el jardín" I translated the line "cuando revienta la mar al surgir de la negrura" as "when it shatters the sea as it spouts from the blackness," replacing the repetition of the "r" sound in Spanish with the repetition of the "s" sound in English.

In instances in which preserving the repetition of words or sounds would change the meaning of the line, however, I prioritized meaning over literary devices. In the lines "La mujer anda por los pasillos, / por el techo, por los balcones, por las gárgolas," for example, keeping the repetition of the word "por" by using the same preposition in English would have rendered these lines as "The woman walks by the hallways / by the roof, by the balconies, by the gargoyles," when the woman is in fact walking through the hallways and on the roof. In other poems, such as "La extranjera," I had to choose between alliteration and repetition. The line "la ciudad se hace más dulce y más distante" contains both alliteration ("dulce" and "distante") and repetition ("más" and "más"). I chose to translate this line as "the city becomes more pleasant and more distant" instead of replacing "pleasant" with a word that conveys a similar meaning and begins with the letter "d," such as "dearer," because it would not be possible to maintain the repetition of "más" (more) using the word "dearer." In this poem, due to the number of lines with two parallel phrases connected by the word "y" (and), such as "Cada día es invierno y primavera"

(Every day is winter and spring), I felt that maintaining the repetition and parallel structure of the line was more important than preserving the alliteration.

**Colloquial Expressions**

Among the "deforming tendencies" Berman identifies in translation, he lists what he refers to as "the effacement of the vernaculars." He cautions against searching for an expression in the target language that serves roughly the same purpose as an expression in the source text, arguing that "a vernacular clings tightly to its soil and completely resists any direct translating into another vernacular" (286). To avoid using domestic analogs by replacing one colloquial expression in Spanish with another in English, which would be a target-oriented solution, I have translated most colloquial expressions word-for-word. In "Palabras de un inocente," for example, I have translated "sana y salva" as "healthy and safe" instead of using the expression "safe and sound. Similarly, instead of translating "Me pongo mal su acento" as "Their accent rubs me the wrong way," which would be more target-oriented, I have translated this line as "Their accent bothers me." The only instance in which I have translated one colloquial expression as another is in "Granada, tierra soñada," in which I have translated the expression "se harta" as "fed up" because the Spanish verb "hartarse" literally means satiated or stuffed. In this same poem, translating "hago agua" word-for-word in the last line results in the colloquial expression "I make water" in English, a euphemism for urination, but translating it in a different way would change the syntax and meaning of the original.

## Words in Other Languages

In the Rivero poem "Marea Negra," the speaker uses English words when he or she refers to "Miss Mundo" (Miss World), "un *charter* especial" (a special charter) and "jumbo jet." To create this same effect in my translation, I have translated these words as "Señorita World," "a special chárter" and "avión gigante," respectively. While some English words, like "jumbo," have entered into the Spanish language, these words would probably not be familiar to all native Spanish-speakers. The title of the poem "Fata Morgana" also uses foreign words, although in this case the words are in Italian. I have kept the Italian title in my English translation, since this title would also be foreign to Spanish speakers reading the original poem, and used a footnote to explain the meaning of these words. I have also kept some Spanish words in my translations when they refer to objects without an English name, such as the almácigo tree in Fata Morgana, or when the word itself is referenced in the text. Since the speaker in "Palabras de un inocente" discusses the letters in the words "jamás" and "eternidad," letters which are not contained in their English translations, I have left these words in Spanish.

## OTHER TRANSLATIONS

In general, the only other translations I was able to find of these poems are target-oriented translations that take extensive creative liberties. In the following section, I have provided passages from two different translations of the poem "La extranjera" to provide the reader with examples of how different translation theories shape the text. In both of these translations, the translator takes creative liberties and creates a translation that, while slightly easier to read in English, changes the meaning of the original poem. In Andrea O'Reilly Herrera's translation of

"La extranjera," published on the blog Cuba Transnational, the line "Cada día fosforecen las ausencias," which I translated as "Every day the absences phosphoresce" is rendered as "Each day the phosphorescent absences of others." While these translations do not appear very different, Herrera's translation changes the verb "fosforecen" (phosphoresce) into an adjective, altering the meaning of the original line. A translation of the same line by Cristina Noboa reads "Every day she remembers those who are absent" and removes the word "fosforecen" altogether. Although in the source text the meaning of "las ausencias" is ambiguous, both of these translations remove the ambiguity in this line and replace it with a more specific interpretation of "las ausencias" that refers explicitly to absent people. These translations are an example of the "deforming tendency" Berman calls "clarification," a tendency on the part of the translator to "impose the definite" on aspects of the source text that are indefinite. He acknowledges that all translation enacts some sort of clarification, "to the extent that every translation comprises some degree of explication," but warns that in general explication tries to clarify that which "does not wish to be clear in the original" (281).

In the last two lines of this poem, Noboa and Herrera also take significant creative liberties with the source text. I have translated these lines, which read "Allá afuera / llueve a torrentes y triunfan las urracas" as "Outside beyond / it rains in torrents and the magpies triumph." Herrera, on the other hand, creates an additional line break and adds an extra comma, rendering these lines as "Outside, / there is torrential rain / and the magpies conquer all," even though this additional comma and line break are unnecessary in terms of conveying the meaning of these lines using standard English grammar. Noboa alters both the meaning and the line breaks, translating these lines as "Outside it is pouring rain / And the enemy triumphs." In Spanish "las urracas" means "the magpies," not "the enemy," and the source text contains no

explicit references to an "enemy" of any kind. These examples provide the reader with an illustration of the way in which the translation style employed by Noboa and Herrera moves further from the original text than my translations, rendering ambiguity as certainty and changing the meaning of words. While in this context these examples merely represent a different style of translation, they demonstrate the potential for a translator to impose his or her ideology or bias on the translation, by adding some additional words and changing the meaning of others, in a way that is invisible to the reader.

# Part II: The Translations

**LOURDES GIL**

HABLANDO EN DIÁSPORAS
*a Edward Said*

Habría en tu vida un día como el de hoy:
asciende Orfeo en un avión lleno de niños
sin dejar rastros de migajas
como en los cuentos de hadas.
Un día en que a los cuatro vientos
esparce el miedo sus semillas
en una línea azul.
Un día en que los pasos fueran eco
de otros pasos
ruidos desconcertantes
penumbras del exilio.

Habría en tu vida un día así:
trazos de nuevos mapas

**LOURDES GIL**

SPEAKING IN DIASPORAS
*To Edward Said*[1]

There must have been in your life a day like today:
Orpheus[2] ascends in a plane full of children[3]
without leaving a trail of crumbs
like in the fairy tales.
A day in which to the four winds
fear scatters its seeds
in a blue line.
A day in which the footsteps were echoes
of other footsteps
disconcerting sounds
penumbras of the exile.

There must have been in your life a day like this:
outlines of new maps

---

[1] Edward Said (1935-2003), a prominent literary critic, was part of the Palestinian diaspora. Said was born in Palestine, but like Gil he was sent to the U.S. by his parents at a young age. He spent the majority of his adult life in the U.S. and is most famous for his book *Orientalism* (Ruthven).
[2] In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Orpheus descends into the underworld to rescue his bride, Eurydice. Hades, the god of the underworld, agrees to let Orpheus take Eurydice back to the land of the living, but only if Orpheus refrains from turning to look at her while they are leaving. Unable to resist, Orpheus turns his head and Eurydice falls back into the underworld (225).
[3]After Fidel Castro came to power, the CIA organized a mission called "Operation Peter Pan" to bring 14,000 Cuban children to the United States. Between 1960 and 1962, children whose parents feared they would be indoctrinated into communism were brought to the U.S. and cared for by Catholic charities while their families remained in Cuba (Yanez).

nos desplazan
y otras gentes
ocuparían nuestras casas

Un día en que el polvo quieto de las almas
removido
se apagara
como invisibles lilas
brotaron nuevas almas de la húmeda tierra
y los muertos caminan
entre los seres vivos.

Un día en tu vida como el de hoy:
23 de agosto de 1961
se rasga el velo de la esfera
cae su cáscara inservible.
Seríamos poetas
libres, esperpentos.

Un día para poder al fin
hablarnos
cruzar tantos océanos
atravesar distancias.

displace us
and other peoples
must be occupying our homes

A day in which the still dust of the souls
agitated
would extinguish itself
like invisible lilacs
new souls sprouted from the humid earth
and the dead walk
among the living beings.

A day in your life like today:
August 23, 1961[4]
the veil of the sphere is torn
its useless shell falls.
We would be poets
free, grotesque.

A day to be able to at last
speak together
cross so many oceans
traverse distances.

[4] August 23, 1961 is the date Lourdes Gil was sent to the U.S. from Cuba as a part of "Operation Peter Pan" (Herrera, personal correspondence).

LA EXTRANJERA

*a Amelia Peláez*
*y a Carmen, por supuesto*

Cada día se asoma a su jardín
de pájaros y helechos,
ensarta el reino
de lo visible a lo invisible.
Cada día fosforecen las ausencias
la ciudad se hace más dulce y más distante.
Cada día es invierno y primavera
cada día es guerra y pacto venturoso.
Más allá del patio y los vitrales
trituran su mural.
Cada día Amelia se sumerge
en el raído mimbre de su silla.
Allá afuera
llueve a torrentes y triunfan las urracas.

THE FOREIGNER

*to Amelia Peláez*[5]
*and to Carmen,*[6] *of course*

Every day she looks out at her garden
of birds and ferns,
she threads together the realm
from the visible to the invisible.
Every day the absences phosphoresce
the city becomes more pleasant and more distant.
Every day is winter and spring
every day is war and fortunate agreement.
Beyond the patio and the stained glass windows
they shred her mural.
Every day Amelia sinks
into the threadbare wicker of her chair.
Outside beyond
it rains in torrents and the magpies triumph.

---

[5] Amelia Peláez (1896-1968) was a Cuban painter who was active in the creation of the Cuban avant-garde movement. She worked mainly in a studio in her family home outside Havana and painted the plants that surrounded her. Like many Cubans of her generation, she was separated from several of her family members after they moved to the U.S. and was unable to visit them because of the hostile relationship between the U.S. and Cuban governments (Blanc).

[6] Carmen Peláez is Amelia Peláez's grand-niece. Born in Miami to Cuban parents, Carmen Peláez is an actress and playwright best known for her one-person play RUM & COKE which recounts, among other subjects, her journey to Cuba to visit Amelia Peláez's house (Gonzales).

## FATA MORGANA

Si lo que dijo Kafka fuera cierto
—que algunos han logrado sobrevivir el canto de las sirenas
pero que nadie ha sobrevivido a su silencio—
entonces debo estar agradecida a las deidades que nos rigen.

Pues a pesar de haber abandonado tierra firme
de haber zafado las cuerdas del almácigo en el puerto
para lanzarme en pos de los clamores de sus voces
(remolinos ubicuos que ensordecen en la noche
y no parecen brotar de sus gargantas)

a pesar

## FATA MORGANA[7]

If what Kafka[8] said were true
—that some have managed to survive the song of the sirens
but that no one has survived their silence—
then I should be grateful to the deities that govern us.

So in spite of having abandoned firm ground
of having released the ropes from the almácigo[9] in the port
to launch myself in pursuit of the cries of their voices
(ubiquitous whirlpools that deafen us in the night
and do not seem to spring from their throats)

in spite

---

[7] A mirage on the horizon of the sea, named after King Arthur's half-sister Morgan le Fay (Fata Morgana is the Italian translation of her name). In legends, Morgan le Fay creates illusions at the edge of the sea that appear to be the shore or a port in order to lure sailors to their death (Jahnke).
[8] In *The Silence of the Sirens* (1917), Franz Kafka wrote: "Nun haben aber die Sirenen eine noch schrecklichere Waffe als den Gesang, nämlich ihr Schweigen. Es ist zwar nicht geschehen, aber vielleicht denkbar, daß sich jemand vor ihrem Gesang gerettet hätte, vor ihrem Schweigen gewiß nicht." This translates to "Now the Sirens have a still more fatal weapon than their song, namely their silence. And though admittedly such a thing has never happened, still it is conceivable that someone might possibly have escaped from their singing; but from their silence certainly never." (Kafka 431)
[9] An almácigo is a copper-colored tree found in Cuba.

de haber perseguido los blancos brazos espectrales
de Loreleis desmelenadas en lo alto de las rocas
entre marinos vendavales, a pesar
de haber flotado a la deriva en la negrura del océano
haber visto apagarse el resplandor del coro
y cómo cesaba el aleteo de sus manos.

He sobrevivido al canto de tu amor.

Y quizás (como afirmara Kafka) no habría sobrevivido
al silencio del cielo
al del mar sin magias y sin aves
sin destino.

of having pursued the white spectral arms
of Loreleis[10] disheveled at the top of the rocks
amidst sea gales,[11] in spite
of having floated adrift in the blackness of the ocean
having seen the splendor of the chorus trail off
and how the flapping of their hands ceased.

I have survived the song of your love.

And perhaps (as Kafka would affirm) I wouldn't have survived
the silence of the sky
of the sea without magic and without birds
without destiny.[12]

---

[10] Loreleis are female water spirits, similar to mermaids, named after a rock on the eastern side of the Rhine River in Germany (Lindemans).

[11] The Spanish word "vendaval" can also refer to the rainy, windy season in Cuba.

[12] In Spanish, "destino" can mean both "destiny" and "destination." I chose to translate this word as "destiny" because of the reference to "las deidades que nos rigen" (the deities that govern us) in the first stanza.

**IRAIDA ITURRALDE**

EXILIO, LA SIEN

La cáscara del pez
de algún modo se aproxima,
despide el rumor salobre
que la piel esconde.
Su aroma no es estéril,
es la conciencia unida
que de algún modo nos deshoja.
La sien es el espejo:
adentro nos desgarra,
afuera, aislados de la isla,
nos derrota.
Lejos los frutos, muy lejos,
erguidos e invisibles nos imploran.
El alma, atónita, se encoge.
Sólo la música nos redime,
de algún modo nos consuela.

**IRAIDA ITURRALDE**

EXILE, THE TEMPLE[13]

The husk of the fish
in some way approaches us,
emits the briny murmur[14]
that the skin hides.
Its aroma is not sterile,
it is the united consciousness
that in some way unpeels[15] us.
The temple is the mirror:
inside it tears us,
outside, isolated from the island,
it defeats us.
Far away the fruits, very far away,
erect and invisible, implore us.
The soul, astonished, contracts.
Only the music redeems us,
in some way consoles us.

---

[13] In Spanish, "la sien" refers to the temples on the side of a person's forehead, not to a religious temple.

[14] The Spanish word "rumor" translates as both "murmur" and "rumor" in English, but I chose to use the word "murmur" because "murmur" seems to fit better with the aquatic vocabulary in this poem.

[15] The Spanish verb "deshojar" literally translates to "unleaf" because "hoja" is the Spanish word for leaf and "des" is a prefix meaning "un." I avoided creating a neologism in my translation because no neologisms exist in the source text.

CLAROSCURO

Turbulento el mar en el recuerdo,
no el larguísimo espolón
que circunda y pertrecha el mural de la bahía.
Allí los peces se asoman a la calma,
al extraño estupor de una manigua,
no al placer vertiginoso
de su límpida ciudad distante.
Se entrampa entonces la memoria entre las algas,
en el baile sincopado de las olas
sobre el leve crespar de la menguante.
Y hay también en la memoria el estelar perenne,
el antiguo resplandor sobre las aguas.
Esta tarde se levantan los nuevos héroes
de antaño.
Secuestradas a lo lejos dos hermanas,
Irina y Alexandra,
descifran la armadura de un crustáceo.
¿Tendrá sus nombres grabados en la espalda
como su historia, allá en el tronco,

CHIAROSCURO[16]

The sea is turbulent in the memory,
not the long[17] seawall[18]
that encircles and supplies the wall of the bay.
There the fish peep out in the calm,
in the strange stupor of a swamp,
not in the vertiginous pleasure
of its limpid distant city.
So memory ensnares itself between the seaweed,
in the syncopated dance of the waves
above the slight curl of the low tide.
And in memory there is also the perennial star,
the ancient gleam above the waters.
This afternoon the new heroes of long ago
awaken.
Kidnapped far away two sisters,
Irina and Alexandra,[19]
decipher the armor of a crustacean.
Will it have their names engraved on its back
like their story, there on the trunk,

---

[16] The word “chiaroscuro” comes from Italian and refers to the distribution of light and shade in a picture to create the illusion of volume (Merriam-Webster).
[17] In Spanish, “larguísimo” literally translates to “extremely long” because the suffix “ísimo” means something like “extremely” or “very” in English.
[18] In this context, the Spanish word “espolón” could refer to the malecón, a long seawall that runs along the coast in Havana, Cuba.
[19] Irina and Alexandra are the names of Iraida Iturralde’s daughters (Herrera, personal communication).

guarda la ceiba sabia?
¿Sabrá decirles si la arena en la otra orilla
esconde los secretos de su andar descalzo,
o si ellas son costal de un alegre cocodrilo
atrapado por el mangle
oscuro y mustio de un ocaso?

La palma, alada y alta,
les salpica la frente a las hermanas,
les de la brisa transparente que gira dócil
en el cuello de su colosal penacho.
El sol las sorprende mojadas
por el enrejado de espuma.

kept by the wise ceiba?[20]
Will it know how to tell them if the sand on the other shore
hides the secrets of their barefoot walk,
of if they are the bag of a happy crocodile
trapped by the mangrove,
dark and wilted, of twilight?

The palm, fluttering and tall,
splashes the foreheads of the sisters,
gives them the transparent breeze that spins docilely
in the neck of its colossal crest.
The sun surprises them soaked
by the lattice of foam.

[20] The ceiba is a large tree with a spreading canopy found in Cuba and other parts of the Caribbean. In Cuba, ceibas are considered sacred and it is considered bad luck to cut down a ceiba tree without first making an offering. Some Cubans view this tree as the tree of the Virgin Mary, and in the Afro-Cuban tradition of Santería (a mix of Catholicism and African spiritual beliefs), the ceiba is seen as both a life force and a place for the souls of the dead to rest (West 179).

## EL ROSTRO DE LA NACIÓN

Andando entre los vuelos
de una madre ajena,
se enreda la lengua
al pronunciar su nombre.
De báculo sirve la memoria
el marinero errante que
a la puerta asoma.

Que detenga la represa
el líquido del suelo,
repleto de aforismos.
Que se pudra adentro
el ícono insolente,
su carga de mendrugos que
en la noche apesta.

Ahora griten,
que allá los andantes
se han quedado mudos.
Pendientes del mar,
se alejan.

## THE FACE OF THE NATION

Moving between the flounces[21]
of a foreign mother,
the tongue entangles itself
by pronouncing its name.
Memory serves as support
the errant mariner who
appears at the door.

Let the dam detain
the liquid from the soil,
replete with aphorisms.
Let it rot inside
the insolent icon,
its burden of bread crusts that
stink in the night.

Now cry out,
because there the wanderers
have fallen mute.
Intent on the sea,
they move away.

---

[21] In Spanish, the word "vuelos" can also mean "flights," but I translated this word as "flounces" because, given the reference to a "madre ajena" (foreign mother), translating this word according to its meaning in terms of women's clothing seemed more appropriate than translating it as "flights."

**MILENA RODRÍGUEZ**

LA PIEL ES UN SITIO INSEGURO

*Ya yo también estoy entre los otros*
Fina García Marruz

Descubrirme sentada al otro lado,
en el sitio de aquellos, los que entonces
mirábamos pasar como traidores,
como islas que huían de la isla.

Seguros cada uno en nuestro nombre,
eran ellos mentira, sombra oscura,
sólo un número menos en la Historia
que borrábamos dócil, mansamente.

Ellos, los enemigos,
los de la voz extraña
y un paisaje distinto en la mirada.

Y ahora yo, aquí sentada,
con su cielo en mis ojos
y sus mismas palabras en mi boca.

**MILENA RODRÍGUEZ**

THE SKIN IS AN INSECURE SITE

*Now I too am with the others*
Fina García Marruz[22]

To discover myself seated on the other side,
in the site of those people, those that at the time
we watched pass by like traitors,
like islands that fled from the island.

Each one secure in our name,
they were a lie, dark shadow,
only one number less in the History
that we erased docilely, meekly.

They, the enemies,
those of the foreign[23] voice
and a different landscape in their gaze.

And now I, seated here,
with their sky in my eyes
and their very words in my mouth.

[22] Fina García Marruz (b. 1923) is a Cuban poet, scholar, and essayist. "Ya yo también estoy entre los otros" is the title of one of her poems, and describes the experience of growing older and remembering what it was like to be a child observing adults. In García Marruz's poem, "los otros" refers to "los mayores de edad, los melancolicos" (the older people, the melancholy people) (Marruz 306).

[23] In Spanish "extraña" can also mean "strange," but I translated this word as "foreign" because of the reference to another land, "un paisaje distinto," (a different landscape) in the next line.

GRANADA, TIERRA SOÑADA

Va bien esta ciudad, según se dice,
aunque a mí no me sirven sus horarios:
cuando llegan las seis a sus relojes
dan las doce en el centro de mi alma.
Me pongo mal su acento, sus hombres, sus abrigos.
Corren fuera de mi idioma sus palabras:
las cañas para mí no son espuma
y no puedo adaptarme, no me adapto
a encontrar al amor lleno de polvo,
sucio, avergonzado en los rincones.

Va bien esta ciudad, qué duda cabe,
pero no conmigo y con mi sombra
que se harta
de la estupidez
posando en las revistas y en los diarios,
en la televisión, en los percheros:
tantos goles marcados en la puerta de lo inútil.

GRANADA,[24] DREAMED LAND

This city is fine, so they say,
although for me their schedule does not work
when their clocks arrive at six
it is twelve in the center of my soul.
Their accent bothers me, their men, their coats.
Their words run outside of my language:
the cañas[25] for me are not foam
and I cannot adapt, I do not adapt
to encounter love full of dust,
dirty, ashamed in the corners.

This city is fine, there is no doubt,
but not with me and with my shadow
that is fed up
with the stupidity
posing in the magazines and in the newspapers,
on the television, in the coat racks:
so many goals scored in the goal of the useless.

---

[24] The poet, Milena Rodríguez Gutiérrez, currently lives in Granada, Spain where she works as a professor at the University of Granda.

[25] In Spain, “las cañas” refers to glasses of beer sold in tapas bars, but for most Latin Americans “las cañas” refers to a type of plant. In my correspondence with her, Rodríguez explained that she purposely chose this word for its distinct meanings in Latin American and Castilian Spanish.

Va bien, seguro, esta ciudad con Dios,
a quien no sacan nunca tarjetas rojas ni amarillas
y exhibe derecha su sonrisa entre los dientes,
pero también izquierda,
entre las piernas.

Aquí ya no soy yo sino mi isla
y su dolor exótico, sin marca.
Y a pesar de los amigos que son ciertos
me vuelvo mar a veces, hago agua.

This city is fine, surely, with God
who never draws red cards or yellow ones[26]
and its smile appears straight[27] between the teeth,
but also left,
between the legs.

Here I am not myself but my island
and its exotic pain, without a record.
And in spite of the friends who are certain
I become the sea sometimes, I make water.

[26] In soccer games, the referee draws a yellow card for players who have committed a serious foul and a red card for players who have committed a more serious foul that warrants their removal from the game. A player who receives two yellow cards during the same soccer game is also removed from play.
[27] In Spanish, "derecha" also means "right." The two meanings of this word in the poem create a play on words with "izquierda" (left) in the next line.

PALABRAS DE UN INOCENTE QUE DESPIDE A GASTÓN BAQUERO, DESDE LA ARENA DE UNA PLAYA, EN LA HABANA DE 1959

Usted me puede ver.
Yo soy un niño
que está creciendo todavía.
Yo todavía creo
que la noche es un buque,
un elefante,
un susto que el sol pretende darnos.
Quiero decir,
yo soy un inocente.
Yo no sé lo que digo.
Yo despierto en lo oscuro
y confundo palabras, las invento.

Pero yo soy un niño
y le pregunto:
¿Por qué me deja solo con la noche
y se lleva los peces, las estrellas?
¡Anda usted tan deprisa por las olas
con su nombre colgado de su brazo!...

THE WORDS OF AN INNOCENT WHO SEES OFF GASTÓN BAQUERO, FROM THE SAND OF A BEACH, IN THE HAVANA OF 1959[28]

You[29] can see me.
I am a child
who is still growing.
I still believe
that the night is a ship,
an elephant,
a scare that the sun tries to give us.
I mean to say,
I am an innocent.
I do not know what I say.
I wake up in the dark
and confuse words, I invent them.

Yet I am a child
and I ask you:
Why do you leave me alone with the night
and take with you the fish,[30] the stars?
You move so hurriedly on the waves
with your name hanging from your arm!...

---

[28] Gastón Baquero (1918-1997) was a well-known Cuban poet who spent close to 40 years in exile in Spain. As a homosexual, Baquero was afraid he would be persecuted under the Castro government and left Cuba shortly after the Cuban Revolution in 1959 (Nash).
[29] In Spanish there are two forms of the pronoun "you": "tú" and "usted." "Usted" is the form used by children to address adults, and the form that people of all ages use to show respect or to address people they do not know well, whereas "tú" connotes familiarity.
[30] One of Baquero's most famous poems is "Testamento del pez" (The Fish's Testament) and contains aquatic imagery (Nash).

¿A dónde va a marcharse con su nombre?
Su nombre es un juguete,
un caracol,
el columpio del patio
donde vuelo sin miedo por el aire.
Su nombre es un sombrero,
una pelota
que se lanza al espacio
y regresa de nuevo, sana y salva.

Mañana será usted otro inocente
como yo, dibujando
figuras en la arena.
Será usted invisible
como el Dios de los niños
y jugará a llamarse
los lunes, Nicanor; Adrián, los martes…
Y acabarán los días
y seguirá usted teniendo nombres.

Mañana habrá otros magos ensayando
el número en que usted desaparece.
Pero usted, que es la magia,
usted que es inocente,
se escapará en un traje

Where are you going with your name?
Your name is a toy,
a snail,
the patio swing
on which I fly without fear through the air.
Your name is a hat,
a ball
that one launches into space
and that returns again, healthy and safe.

Tomorrow you will be another innocent
like me, drawing
figures in the sand.
You will be invisible
like the God of the children
and you will pretend to call yourself
on Mondays, Nicanor;[31] Adrián,[32] on Tuesdays...
And the days will end
and you will continue having names.

Tomorrow there will be other magicians practicing
the number in which you disappear.
But you, who are the magic,
you who are innocent,
will escape in a costume

[31] Gastón Baquero wrote a poem entitled “Los lunes me llamaba Nicanor” (On Mondays I called myself Nicanor) in which the speaker changes his name every day of the week (Baquero 124).
[32] On Tuesdays, the speaker of the Baquero poem “Los lunes me llamaba Nicanor” calls himself Adrián (Baquero 124).

de mendigo vienés,
de muñeco de nieve,
de leopardo lunar,
de palabra *jamás* con *s* larga.
Se vestirá de Coriolano,
el perro que lloraba a Nureyev,
y se reirá feliz en su escondite.

Mañana será usted una ciudad
alumbrando en la noche como un parque.

Mañana será usted un inocente
y jugará conmigo entre las olas
al juego del regreso.
Regresará en el agua,
en el río invisible
que llegará a mi boca,
del que podré beber
y crecer alto.

of a Viennese beggar,[33]
of a snowman,[34]
of a lunar leopard,[35]
of the word *jamás*[36] with a long *s*.
You will dress like Coriolano,
the dog who cried to Nureyev,[37]
and you will laugh happily in your hiding place.

Tomorrow you will be a city
illuminating the night like a park.

Tomorrow you will be an innocent
and you will play with me between the waves
the game of return.
You will return in the water,
in the invisible river
that will arrive at my mouth,
of which I will be able to drink
and grow tall.

---

[33] "El mendigo en la noche vienesa" (The beggar in the Viennese night) is the title of another Baquero poem.
[34] "Cuando los niños hacen un muñeco de nieve" (When children make a snowman) is the title of a Baquero poem.
[35] In the Baquero poem "Breve viaje nocturno" (Brief nocturnal voyage), the speaker travels to the moon in a dream and rides on the backs of "leopardos de la luna" (leopards of the moon) (Baquero 120).
[36] In Spanish, "jamás" means "never."
[37] Rudolf Nureyev (1938-1993) was a Russian ballet dancer who left the Soviet Union for Western Europe in 1961. Baquero wrote a poem entitled "Nureyev" in which the speaker's dog, Coriolano, reads about Nureyev's death in the newspaper and begins to cry (Percival).

Ese río que a veces
sonará a eternidad,
con una *d* que se alza como un muro,
y otras veces a otoño, o a esperanza.
Y cuando sople el miedo
y me despierte,
usted me abrigará como una madre,
me contará su cuento como arrullo:

"Aunque tú no me veas,
yo estoy aquí contigo, transcurriendo.
Yo estoy creciendo todavía
para empapar la noche
y que se apague.
O mejor, que se encienda.
Ninguna noche dura para siempre.
Mañana saldrá el sol.
*Vuelve a dormirte."*

That river that sometimes
will ring of eternidad,[38]
with a *d* that rises up like a wall,
and other times of autumn, or of hope.
And when the fear blows
and wakes me up,
you will shelter me like a mother,
you will tell me your story like a lullaby:

"Although you do not see me,
I am here with you, passing by.
I am still growing
to soak up the night
so that it turns off.
Or better yet, so that it ignites.
No night lasts forever.
Tomorrow the sun will come out.
*Go back to sleep."*

[38] In Spanish, "eternidad" means "eternity."

**ISEL RIVERO**

EN EL JARDÍN

I

No tienes nada que decir
-eso crees-
Todos los teléfonos han enmudecido
ya no hay alambres
reptando bajo las alfombras
las vibraciones
aletean en el cerebro.

II

Me cobijo bajo las sombras
que dejan los mirlos con sus alas
mirlos ayer ateridos de frío
hoy caballeros y damas
cortejando

Si no vas a venir
escríbelo en las nubes
para acallar el silencio.

III

Sin duda sabían lo que no estaba
o lo que habían olvidado de poner en la lista

una lista larga

**ISEL RIVERO**

IN THE GARDEN

I

You do not have anything to say
-that you believe-
All of the telephones have fallen silent
now there are no wires
creeping under the carpets
the vibrations
flutter in the brain.

II

I take shelter beneath the shadows
that the blackbirds leave with their wings
blackbirds yesterday shaking with cold
today gentleman and ladies
courting

If you are not going to come
write it in the clouds
to hush the silence.

III

Without doubt they knew what was not there
or what they had forgotten to put on the list

a long list

de ser o no
Después se fueron a fondear las costas africanas

Era la migración al sur
Las garzas y sus polluelos
vivirán para el regreso, me pregunto

El corazón se vacía entero.

IV

Denostado el texto
a la papelera.
La película de media noche
refugio bajo la tormenta
    y ya son las cuatro y media de la mañana

Aunque no hay luz ni sombra
la luna olvidó mi sueño.

V

Así de generosas
son las aves
no saben por qué las encierran
pero siguen entregándonos sus dádivas

Luego aparecen troceadas
en platos congelados.

to be or not
Afterwards they went off to search the African coasts

It was the migration to the south
The herons and their chicks
will they live for the return, I ask

The whole heart empties.

IV

Reviled, the text
went to the trashcan.
The midnight movie
refuge beneath the storm
    and now it is four thirty in the morning

Although there is no light or shadow
the moon forgot my dream.

V

So generous
are the birds
they do not know why they are locked up
but they keep presenting us with their gifts

Later they appear cut up
in frozen dishes.

VI

Yo amo el soplido del cetáceo
cuando revienta la mar al surgir de la negrura
Alegría infinita de saber que está aún ahí

Qué estremecimiento tu voz
entre las olas
el resplandor de tu llamada bajo la plata líquida

Los sables los tienen en la armería
escondidos
Los arpones se derriten en sus manos

VII

Si me dejaras saber lo que pienso
la tarde permanecería
a mi lado haciéndome compañía
y es augurio claro
la floración tardía de los amarilis
en junio

Las diosas dictan susurros
mientras sobre la conversación pesa

VI

I love the blow of the cetacean[39]
when it shatters the sea[40] as it spouts from the blackness
Infinite joy to know that it is still there

How trembling your voice
between the waves
the gleam of your call below the liquid silver

They have the sabers[41] in the armory
hidden
The harpoons melt in their hands

VII

If you would let me know what I think
the afternoon would remain
at my side keeping me company
and it is a clear omen
the flowering of the amaryllises will be late
in June

The goddesses dictate whispers
while over the conversation

---

[39] Cetaceans are an order of marine animals with hairless bodies, flippers, and a flat, notched tail. Dolphins, whales, and porpoises belong to this order (Merriam-Webster).

[40] In Spanish, “la mar” and “el mar” have two different connotations. The use of “la mar” signifies a more intimate relationship with the sea and is the form most commonly used by sailors.

[41] In Cuba, “los sables” are also silver fish with long, thin bodies like eels.

un maullido vecino.

El gato negro no volvió a hablar
en toda la tarde

Yo me tragué la lengua.
Ahora firma el documento.

VIII

Libertad decidió albergarse en la cárcel
Tanto vagar con la verdad mochila en mano
la aburrió

Así dejó que llegaran las voces oscuras
y los susurros malignos
quizás con el miedo
que el terror también la aburriera

En la noche
el canto de los pájaros muertos.

a meowing neighbor weighs in.

The black cat did not return to speak
in the entire afternoon

I swallowed my tongue.
Now sign the document.

VIII

Liberty decided to take shelter in the jail
So much wandering with the truth backpack in hand
bored her

In this way she kept the dark voices from arriving
and the malignant whispers
perhaps with the fear
that the terror would also bore her

In the night
the song of the dead birds.

CATÁLOGO DE GUERR@

Buenos días,
gracias por acceder a nuestra página.

Este es un nuevo catálogo.
Puede escoger los productos de acuerdo a sus necesidades
tamaño, posición y reflejos, longitud y latitud.

Cada objeto que se muestra en nuestro inventario
está descrito de acuerdo a las fuerzas, duración y equipo utilizable.

Además puede encontrar un registro privado
con una lista de aquellos que participan o están involucrados.

Desde luego
puede usted tomar partido
o no.
Como nuestro cliente favorito
y ya registrado
no pretendemos influir en su decisión final.

También incluimos un catálogo de los actores
incluyendo líderes, refugiados de índole periférica
que los identifica aparte de los colaterales;
grupos no gubernamentales
soldados para el mantenimiento de la paz
estados fallidos o dependientes
grupos étnicos divididos claramente por religión, raza e ideología
corporaciones famosas
y otros tantos añadidos.

CATALOGUE OF W@R

Good day,
thank you for accessing our page.

This is a new catalogue.
You can choose the products according to your needs
size, position and reflexes, longitude and latitude.

Every object that is shown in our inventory
is described according to forces, duration and usable equipment.

In addition you can find a private register
with a list of those who participate or are involved.

From now on
you[42] can take part
or not.
As our favorite client
and now registered
we do not attempt to influence your final decision.

Also we include a catalogue of the actors
including leaders, refugees of a peripheral sort
that are identified apart from the collaterals;
non-governmental groups
soldiers for the maintenance of the peace
failed or dependent states
ethnic groups divided clearly by religion, race and ideology
famous corporations
and a few more in addition.

---

[42] In Spanish there are two forms of the pronoun "you": "tú" and "usted." "Usted" is the form used by children to address adults, and the form that people of all ages use to show respect or to address people they do not know well, whereas "tú" connotes familiarity.

Todo esto accesible
de acuerdo al nivel de complejidad que usted escoja
pero listo para satisfacer sus necesidades y las de su familia.

En nuestras páginas también encontrará
modalidades del salida de conflicto
cuando lo estime necesario.

Si se decide a comprar
le reiteramos que nuestros productos
son constantemente actualizados
y nunca serán tecnológicamente obsoletos
a no ser que las facciones se autodestruyan
en cuyo caso nuestro seguro a todo riesgo
garantizará su inversión.

Quizás le interese examinar nuestro programa de mantenimiento
que llevará un pequeño sobrecargo
y un escenario diferente
siempre bajo su control.

Antes de salir
le sugerimos que contacte con la lista de prestigiosos clientes
que nos han visitado
y que se encuentra en el apéndice X
de esta página.

El ilustrísimo conglomerado Modus
utilizando nuestras ofertas
ha lanzado sus safaris fotográficos
para visitar las zonas de conflicto

All this accessible
according to the level of complexity that you choose
but ready to satisfy your needs and those of your family.

In our pages you will also find
methods to exit the conflict
when you deem it necessary.

If you decide to buy
we reiterate to you that our products
are constantly updated
and they will never be technologically obsolete
unless the factions self-destruct
in which case our insurance for all risks
will guarantee your investment.

Perhaps it would interest you to examine our maintenance program
that will carry a small surcharge
and a different setting
always under your control.

Before leaving
we suggest that you make contact with the list of prestigious clients
that have visited us
and that can be found in the appendix X
of this page.

The illustrious conglomerate Modus[43]
utilizing our offers
has launched its photographic safaris
to visit the zones of conflict

---

[43] Modus does not refer to a specific company, but represents any transnational corporation that offers a variety of services on the internet (Rivero, personal correspondence).

Esto le ha representando un éxito empresarial
y ya cotiza en bolsa.

Cuando termine de comprar
encontrará que el producto final
puede tener usos tanto terapéuticos como pedagógicos.
puede que calme su conciencia estresada
su insomnio
ya que lo llevaremos a donde está el vórtice de la acción
y hasta le enseñe una lección de geografía a sus hijos.

This has resulted in a business success
and is now listed on the stock exchange

When you finish shopping
you will find that the final product
could have uses as much therapeutic as pedagogical.
it could be that it calms your stressed conscience
your insomnia
now that we will take you to where the vortex of the action is
and even teach a geography lesson to your children.

MAREA NEGRA

*A Robin*

El concurso de belleza
en Lagos
un bazar
que pretendía catapultar a la fama a la Nueva Helena
me recordó aquella noche
cuando tú
y otras mujeres alzaron las linternas rojas
y tomaron Atlantic City por sorpresa.
Dice la CNN
que los musulmanes hoy se lanzaban a las calles
acusando de blasfemia a las mujeres del Norte.
Hay más de doscientos muertos

La BBC
habla del buque tanque Prestige
que amenaza con partirse en dos
encallado en las costas de Galicia.

BLACK TIDE

*To Robin*[44]

The beauty contest
in Lagos
a bazaar
that claimed to catapult the New Helen to fame
reminded me of that night
when you
and other women raised the red lanterns
and took Atlantic City by surprise.[45]
CNN says
that the Muslims rushed onto the streets today
accusing the women of the North of blasphemy.
There are more than two hundred dead

The BBC
speaks of the tank ship Prestige[46]
that threatens to split into two
stranded on the coast of Galicia.[47]

---

[44] Isel Rivero dedicated this poem to Robin Morgan, a North American feminist activist and writer. She was one of the founders of the New York Radical Women group and one of the organizers of the 1968 Atlantic City protests (Rivero, personal correspondence).

[45] In 1968, women's liberation groups protested the Miss America pageant in Atlantic City, arguing that the contest objectified women. They threw bras, curling irons and other clothing and beauty products marketed to women into a "freedom trashcan" (PBS).

[46] On November 19, 2002 the oil tanker Prestige broke in half and leaked more than two million gallons of oil into the ocean off the coast of northwestern Spain. This oil spill killed approximately 200,000 birds (Brown and Vincent).

[47] An autonomous community in Northwestern Spain.

La sangre no mezcla bien con el petróleo
especialmente si se condimenta con azufre.
Es, como una amiga dice,
el dolor de cabeza de un alquimista
ningún aprendiz
logra acercarse a la esencia
de los principios más esotéricos
en la destilación
cuando el azufre, el temido, se constela.

Al hacer su aparición el Diablo
las candidatas a Miss Mundo
fueron sacadas del hotel
y como rebaño
enviadas a Londres
en un *charter* especial.

Voló sobre la Costa de la Muerte
donde cormoranes, gaviotas, frailecillos, golondrinas de mar
se ahogaban pegadas al petróleo
luz de pluma blanca, apagada.

La hedionda brisa puede haber llegado al jumbo jet
Donde las señoritas ya estaban vestidas y listas para el aterrizaje
en Heathrow.

Las noticias dicen ahora
que las aves migratorias han sido vistas en la costa de Almería

The blood does not mix well with the oil
especially if it is seasoned with sulfur.
It is, as a friend says,
the headache of an alchemist
not one apprentice
gets close to the essence
of the most esoteric elements
in the distillation
when the feared sulfur fills up.

As the Devil makes his appearance
the candidates for Señorita World
were taken from the hotel
and like a flock
sent to London
in a special *chárter*.

It flew over the Coast of the Death
where cormorants, seagulls, puffins, sea swallows
were drowned[48] stuck to the oil
light of white feather, extinguished.

The fetid breeze would have arrived at the avión gigante
Where the ladies were already dressed and ready for the landing
in Heathrow.

The news says now
that the migratory birds have been seen on the coast of Almería[49]

[48] In this context, "se ahogaban" could also mean "drowned themselves," but I translated this verb as "were drowned" because the birds were caught in the oil spill.
[49] A city in the Andalucía region in Southern Spain.

cubiertas de chapapote.
El ministerio ha perdido un inventario.

covered in oil sludge.
The ministry has lost an inventory.

**ZOÉ VALDÉS**

ANTE LA CORRESPONDENCIA

No quiero leer las cartas que vienen de La Habana
reconozco la firma de la ausencia a trasluz
Mejor no rasgo los sobres
no me precipito sobre los duendes
y me hundo en la bobería de la mañana
No quiero equivocar noticias
recibir tanta alegría de golpe
que después enseguida se convertirá en tristeza
o puede estar la muerte acechante en cada línea
tal vez una ardilla saltarme en un susurro
No quiero descubrir caligrafías
colores temblorosos de tintas
la agonía del papel de bagazo de caña
mochos de lápices apretados
Pero necesito la mala ortografía de mi madre
leer el mentón las piernas de mi amante
sus expediciones
la pelambre de mi gata dejada en un rincón
Quiero el martirio de mi primo
sus debilidades en mi parque
El mar gota a gota ¿entrará en las palabras?

**ZOÉ VALDÉS**

IN FRONT OF THE CORRESPONDENCE

I do not want to read the letters that come from Havana
I recognize the signature of the absence against the light
Better not to tear the envelopes
not to rush over the elves
and sink into the foolishness of the morning
I do not want to mistake news
receive so much happiness at once
that immediately afterwards will turn into sadness
or death may be lurking in every line
perhaps a squirrel skips over me in a whisper
I do not want to discover calligraphy
trembling colors of inks
the agony of the sugarcane bagasse[50] paper
machetes[51] of narrow pencils
But I need the bad spelling of my mother
to read the chin the legs of my lover
his[52] expeditions
the fur of my cat left in a corner
I want the torment of my cousin
his weaknesses in my park
The sea drop by drop, will it enter in the words?

---

[50] Bagasse is the fiber or residue left over after sugarcane is processed and can be used to make paper (Merriam-Webster). Sugarcane is one of Cuba's main agricultural products (Skidmore, Smith, and Green 124).
[51] In Cuba "mochos" are wide, curved machetes used to cut sugarcane.
[52] The possessive pronoun "sus" can refer to "his," "her," or "their." Since "amante" means lover, but does not specify the lover's gender, "sus" could also mean "her" in this context.

no peguen sellos sobre él
Cuéntenme qué fue de mis sandalias gastadas
de aquel viejo libro de princesas árabes
y de mi café con leche cuando había
Igual me da mi manta
necesito un calor de mil grados
y mucho todo el sol
No podré zafar sogas en lugar de cintas y leer:
Niña mía amiga queridísima Vida
La ausencia es incapaz dudo que pueda
redactar esas cosas tan cercanas.

they do not paste stamps over him
Tell me what happened to my worn out sandals
to that old book of Arab princesses
and to my coffee with milk when there was some[53]
My blanket does not matter to me
I need a heat of a thousand degrees
and much everything the sun
I will not be able to untie ropes in place of ribbons and read:
My daughter friend beloved[54] Life
The absence is incapable I doubt that I can
write those things that are so close.

---

[53] This line could refer to the food shortages that have occurred in Cuba since the beginning of the "Special Period" (see the "Cuban Diaspora" section of the critical apparatus). In Cuba, citizens are given monthly rations of staple items, but these staples do not always last until the end of the month. Items like coffee and milk have been particularly hard to come by at certain times over the last twenty years (Pérez-Stable 90).

[54] In Spanish, adding the suffix "ísima" to a word is similar to adding "very" or "extremely" before a word in English. "Queridísima" translates to something like "extremely beloved" or "extremely dear."

MUJER PERDIDA DENTRO DE LA CASA

La música llega ronca desde un radio achacoso,
viene desde una buhardilla alfombrada con colillas.
¿En qué espacio podrá vivir esa mujer?
La música va a desaparecer y ella se envolverá
en una seda amarilla de tiempo y de sudor.
Un olor prohibido se apodera de la noche,
cruza piedras con formas de animales,
escapa con la espalda al aire y las piernas pecosas.
El agua despierta el sonido de sus pasos.
Mamá llega perfumando la respiración,
llega con cuentos de niños que no querían comer
y se convirtieron en aire.
La mujer anda por los pasillos,
por el techo, por los balcones, por las gárgolas.
Y no regresa más.
Tú reconocerás su inhabitable mundo,
verás cuadros oscuros pintados por un amigo sin
nombre,
te dará libros y fotos.
Luego aprenderás a leer,
o a aprenderte las palabras de memoria
que es como leen los niños al principio.

WOMAN LOST INSIDE OF THE HOUSE

The music arrives hoarse from a sickly radio,
it comes from an attic carpeted with cigarette butts.
In what space could that woman live?
The music is going to disappear and she will wrap herself up
in a yellow silk of time and of sweat.
A forbidden smell will take possession of the night,
cross rocks with shapes of animals,
escape with its back to the air and its freckled legs.
The water awakens the sound of her steps.
Mamá arrives perfuming the respiration,
arrives with stories of children who did not want to eat
and turned into air.
The woman walks through the hallways,
on the roof, on the balconies, by the gargoyles.
And does not return again.
You[55] will recognize her uninhabitable world,
you will see dark pictures painted for a friend without
a name,
she will give you books and photos.
Later you will learn to read,
or to learn the words by memory
which is how children read at the beginning.

[55] In Spanish there are two forms of the pronoun “you”: “tú” and “usted.” “Tú” connotes familiarity and is used to address family members, friends, and children.

UN HOMBRE SE HA PERDIDO

Un hombre se ha perdido
Y yo me arrodillo
debajo de los muebles
Muy dispuesta
A andar de casa en casa
preguntando por su ausencia
En los hospitales no aparece
desfigurado por los accidentes
Tampoco en los cuarteles
No es un fugado
Ni un delincuente
Ni un suicida
Es sólo un hombre
al que yo amaba
Y se me perdió
O me lo robaron
Como si fuera un monedero
El policía interroga
Mirándome a los ojos
Si no es un fugado
Ni tan siquiera un delincuente
No posee la estatura del suicida
¿A qué clase de persona usted busca?
No lo sé
¿Un policía le convendría?

A MAN HAS BEEN LOST

A man has been lost
And I kneel
underneath the furniture
Very willing
To go from house to house
asking about his absence
In the hospitals he does not appear
disfigured from the accidents
Nor at the headquarters[56]
He is not a fugitive
Or a delinquent
Or a suicidal person
He is only a man
with whom I was in love
And I lost him
Or he was stolen from me
As though he were a coin purse
The police interrogate
Looking me in the eyes
If he is not a fugitive
Nor even a delinquent
He does not possess the profile of a suicidal person
What type of person are you looking for?
I do not know
Would a police officer be suitable for you?

[56] In Spanish, the word "cuarteles" usually refers to military barracks, but in some forms of Spanish this word refers to police headquarters. I translated this word as "headquarters" because of the references to police in the poem.

**BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION**

**Lourdes Gil**

Lourdes Gil is a poet and essayist who writes primarily in Spanish. She was born in Havana, Cuba in 1950 and immigrated to the United States in 1961 as a part of "Operation Peter Pan" (see the "Cuban Diaspora" section in the critical apparatus preceding these translations). Gil has published numerous books of poetry and several essays on Cuban literature. She currently resides in New Jersey, where she teaches Latin American literature and history at Baruch College. The following poems can be found in the anthologies *Indómitas al sol* and *The Whole Island: Six Decades of Cuban Poetry*.

**Iraida Iturralde**

Iraida Iturralde is a poet, translator and editor who writes mainly in Spanish, but has published some poetry in English. She was born in Havana, Cuba in 1954 and came to the United States in 1962 as a part of "Operation Peter Pan." She has published several books of poetry and has served as the president of the Centro Cultural Cubano de Nueva York (the Cuban Cultural Center of New York). Iturralde currently teaches political science in New York. The following poems can be found in the anthology *The Whole Island: Six Decades of Cuban Poetry*.

**Milena Rodríguez Gutiérrez**

Milena Rodríguez is a poet and essayist who teaches philology at the University of Granada in Spain. In addition to completing three books of her own poetry, she has compiled several anthologies of poetry by other Cuban writers, including an anthology of poetry by Fina García Marruz. She was born in Havana, Cuba in 1971 and came to Granada in 1997 to complete a Ph.D. program. The following poems were originally published in *El otro lado* and *El pan nuestro de cada día*, but the versions included in this translation come from an e-mail Rodríguez sent me.

**Isel Rivero**

Isel Rivero is a poet who was exiled to the United States in 1960 after publishing two books of poetry in Cuba. She was born in Havana, Cuba in 1941 and helped found a group of poets known as El Puente before leaving the island. Rivero began working for the United Nations in 1968 and has lived in Vienna, Namibia, Honduras and Rwanda in her capacity as a U.N. employee. She moved to Madrid, Spain, where she currently resides, in 1996.

**Zoé Valdés**

Zoé Valdés is better known as a novelist than as a poet. She was born in Havana, Cuba in 1959 and worked for the Instituto Cubano de Arte e Industria Cinematográficas (the Cuban

Institute of Cinematographic Art and Industry) as a screenwriter before moving to Paris to work for Cuba's UNESCO delegation between 1984 and 1988. Upon returning to Cuba, she edited the magazine *Cine Cubano* for five years. Valdés settled permanently in France in the mid-1990s and has written several bestselling novels, including *La nada cotidiana* and *Te di la vida entera*, as well as several books of poetry. The following poems are from *Breve beso de la espera*, *Respuestas para vivir*, and the anthology *Otra Cuba secreta*.

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