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“FRANCISCO Y LOS CAMINOS” DE FRANCISCO AMIGHETTI RUIZ
LA TRADUCCIÓN DE LA PROSA POÉTICA

Traducción e informe de investigación

Trabajo de graduación para aspirar al grado de
Magíster en Traducción
(Inglés-Español)

presentado por

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LA TRADUCCION DE LA PROSA POETICA**

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*Profesores, familia y amigos,
¡mil gracias!*

Resumen

El siguiente informe consta de dos partes: la traducción de *Francisco y los caminos*¹, un texto escrito originalmente en español y el correspondiente informe de investigación.

Se tradujo la totalidad del texto seleccionado, seguido de una investigación sobre la modalidad discursiva de prosa poética y su papel en la traducción de la obra escrita del artista y autor Francisco Amighetti.

Del proceso se resalta el rescate de las características de la prosa poética con función operacional para con este trabajo, las características del texto original que sirven como vehículo a estas características generales y los recursos utilizados para llevar a cabo la traducción. Dichos procesos pretenden contribuir a la definición de la prosa poética mediante un intento de traducción de un texto catalogado dentro de este subgénero. La traducción arroja opciones traductivas que pueden ser tomadas en cuenta para futuros proyectos traductológicos que traten un tema similar.

Descriptores

Traducción | Traducción inversa | Prosa poética | Traducción literaria | Literatura costarricense

¹ Amighetti, Francisco. *Francisco y los caminos*. Editorial Costa Rica. 1980.

Abstract

The following report is composed of two sections: the first, a translation of *Francisco y los caminos*², a text originally written in Spanish, and the second, a research report.

Research is based on totality of the text's translation, followed by a research paper on discourse modality known as poetic prose, and its role in the translation of the written work by artist and writer Francisco Amighetti.

The compilation of poetic prose characteristics as an operational definition for this project is worth highlighting. Said characteristics could contribute to define poetic prose through a translation attempt of a text catalogued as poetic prose. This translation process leads to translation options that may be taken into account for future translation projects involving related topics.

Keywords

Translation | Reverse Translation | Poetic Prose | Literary Translation | Costa Rican Literature

² Amighetti, Francisco. *Francisco y los caminos*. Editorial Costa Rica. 1980.

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Traducción

Francisco and the Paths of Life

PROLOGUE

This book goes by the title of “Francisco and the Paths of Life”, because it covers them all. I had to mark a location for my adventures, and so I did. I write about things, unimportant things. Some of the people I met during my trips had more color and chiaroscuro in their lives, more drama than my pale existence had ever experienced. Those men and women left in my book many of their agitated words, their tears, their elongated silence, their joy, the art of their shadow’s profile.

The geography in which my memories are born is irrelevant; sometimes countries where I lived the memory of my experiences and discovered the scope of their reach.

Years later, I have returned to the very same books where people who passed through briefly in some chapter come back again. The further away they are, the stronger they stand out in time. Evoking their beings is going back to recover what once had turned into fog, and making it a part of living ghosts.

PANAMA

While traveling from Panama City to Colón in a second-class railroad car, a black man stood in front of me, sleeping on his arm that rested high on the window. It was a painting exhibition of tattoos and astrology symbols: the geometry of superstitions displayed next to the sirens one could only find at sea ports. I found it terrible that the man had permanently printed those drawings on his skin; drawings the color of his greenish blue veins and red like dense sick blood. His abandonment on the train was an invitation for me to make a quick sketch. While I drew him, I captured his weariness, the fatigue of a lifetime; his heroic anonymity during the construction of the Panama Canal. The train window ran an endless landscape; a horizontal view that developed in front of my eyes like a somber *makemono* with desolate hills, or vegetation, uniform green; poisonous nature due to snakes, fever and mosquitoes. The skies were grey and stifling, and on that filthy silver overflowing the earth, a cemetery of trees emerged. They were dry. They had lost the calligraphy of their branches; they had two arms left, sometimes one; or trunks emerged with nothing but stumps. It seemed as if black trees had become their own cross, over that sick watery tomb that ran the monotony of its length along the path of the train, where the tattooed black man slept along the rhythm of railway iron. The view had repeated itself to the point it had become static; it was either a human projection of the worker or it was he that personified the landscape. Each closely complemented the other and their reason for being was identical. The purplish skin varnished in sweat; trees drowned in metal grey; tattoos over flesh, symbols of primitive magic; that damn weather weighing souls down; for me these were all keys to penetrate the country and its live history in the effigy of the sleeping worker and his scenery.

BUENOS AIRES

I had never been to any big city; Buenos Aires was my first. Off-track trains overtook some corners, reaching loud and catastrophic proportions. In Costa Rica, they were small and squealed their way to sunset, in my little town surrounded by mountains.

On that paved plain, streets wore silence on Sundays and in the tenderness of the little trees aligning the sidewalks, among the innocence of grocery stores – drawn like a child having fun using a ruler to sketch – I recognized the city in poems by Jorge Luis Borges.

When San Jose was a capital of sixty thousand inhabitants, calling out from afar was enough to stop trams, or even trains, without causing railway accidents in the process. I once had a friend with such a power; an angel-like figure who, running with her arm up, could stop a train. It would stop, puffing and panting, defeated by the strength of her femininity like the unicorn motif in a classic French tapestry.

At that port next to the river, women crowding the omnibus ran and people pushed, be they men or women. They were all enemies at the time. During my first days, in face of the novelty of such a spectacle, I contemplated the lovely shapes of women in action, and their eyes bedazzled me.

It was easy to explain their unexpected aggressiveness and the thousand reasons for their rush, but beyond or before any logic, a feeling arose, probably aesthetic, that made me reject such every-day struggle in which I later participated with quite the same ferocity.

Nine inns in a year: that sums up my path during my stay in Buenos Aires. There I became an urban nomad.

Upon my arrival to the city, the taxi driver, after studying my attire, stopped at Leandro Allen, near Puerto Nuevo. I entered a hotel with marble stairs and sordid rooms that seemed uninhabited. Near by, I found *Plaza de los Ingleses*, Englishmen's Square. There I drew immigrants sitting on benches, haggard by the sun, skintight out of hunger, letting time pass them by, ecstatic. Because we frequented each other at a distance and with a little help from one of Mallea's stories, they started appearing before

me surrounded by an invisible wall, but harder to get through than those built in precincts where men are kept in seclusion. In their faces I read they were people the city rejected and confined to parks, wanderers that never entered. They all saw the sun shining on skyscrapers and gleaming cars passing by, all symbols of the Promised Land that regardless of them being there, they knew not why it rejected them. They just sat in the parks, outdoors waiting rooms, bearing the passing of days in desperate stoicism.

I penetrated their tragedy submerged in their silence. I'm not a painter specialized in drama: I drew them because my line was able to run through their cheekbones and rest in their eye sockets, turn around in them, deepening them, and follow the rhythm of the creases in their clothes, evidently aged in the steadiness of their wait and upon which a steady rain of intangible grime had fallen.

The owner of the restaurant I lived in was an Italian who displayed all of his cordiality the minute he found out I was a painter and insisted on seeing some of my work. I then went up the dirty marble stairs, worn out from use, to come back down with the face of a Bolivian Indian, multicolored *chuyu* on his head, small eyes behind the cheekbones and a bitter mouth. Technique and aesthetics were obviously not going to be the topic of discussion; I told him I had painted that piece in La Paz. The Indian sat very still in my room when I heard the lady of the inn start insulting him. She started calling him "Indian thief", but the minute she realized he was posing for me, she gave me a bunch of excuses only to insult him again while explaining before him how they always stole things and telling me I'd better be careful with my brushes. I found humor and absurdity in picturing what trick could that *aymara* use to take my brushes out of my hand. What I thought more natural was that he could hide underneath his poncho all the crystal knickknacks that glistened with cheap candor on the bedroom table.

The Italian started treating me better and served better food, which was insufficient to keep me there. Those oily stairs of real marble held on to not only dirt but to the breath of whorehouses, and my bedroom was abundant in lewd signs from the hand of anonymous writers and draftsman that had once breath the same thick air, and had known the same fine and lethal filth that piles up over the summer.

I went to another inn where everything was new and a true crusade against dust was taking place. But my room, already small, kept shrinking until it became uninhabitable because all kinds of people got used to being there. I owned nothing but a minimum part; they dug through my drawings showing them to each other, criticizing art and inviting me to see the city at night under the epilepsy of neon signs.

“All of this is my fault,” I said to myself; and Confucius came to mind: “A Chinese gentleman never blames others.” I had used the tenants as models and they decided they’d never leave me; they were moved by my abandonment and the remoteness of my homeland. They probably pitied me for being born in a country they had never heard of and that was hard to find in an Atlas.

I have looked for solitude everywhere; I have loved it as if in the depths of its great silence I could find myself, although I sometimes stumbled over a kind of solitude filled with nothing but desperation. What I needed was for neighbors to stay off of my bed and for the landlady’s two daughters – who, using their two hands, made the windows shine and polished the mirrors in which they appeared and disappeared – to stop circling around me so much. They were not unpleasant, in the least. Although as lacking in ideas as in culture, their big dark eyes and the moving sculpture of their slender bodies was enough to make me forget about searching for solitude. However, “everything is okay if it’s not wrong” like a friend used to say in a sad attempt to quote Aristotle. Their constant intrusions and the avalanche of tenants made me leave that room.

I went outside the city to live in Lanus, calculating that distance would favor the peace I needed. This time everything was going to work out just fine; but I found out I had to share the balcony to the street with a young Italian who showed me his family pictures and those of his two girlfriends, the one in Bologna and the one in Buenos Aires.

He spoke with enthusiasm in a language half Italian and half Spanish with a strong Buenos Aires accent, while he ironed his suits.

That was the place I was planning to turn into a studio.

In front of the building you could see the trains that came and went through Lanus headed elsewhere. At first – as always – problems still held the charm of novelty. I liked the constant sound of the bell, the black smog against the silky sky, or smoke like a brighter cloud absorbing the light over the curtain of the gray city where buildings evaporated at a distance. Railroads and their roar were at first my lullaby, but turned into the seed of my insomnia. The racket shook my brain and made the entire room shudder.

The Italian stopped talking every time a train went by – every five minutes – and stared at the engine with concentrated fury, which suddenly vanished to give way to his interrupted line of thought; and again a train would go by submerging us in confusion, and again the Italian's rage against the last passing-by engine was let loose. We always ended up laughing at the situation; we couldn't get rid of the interruptions anyway, and in our case we were dealing with humanized hot metal beings with flames on their heels and a runaway heart of a bell. Now, away from Lanus and long ago, evoking those moments is raising a shutter on the scenery of those days.

It's pleasant for me to yearn for the streets of Lanus with its cafes, vendors and swift trains vibrating in my memories.

My life in Buenos Aires was the story of the inns I stayed at, and where I necessarily came in contact with people. Again, I found another room with a window facing the street. From there, my retinas captured the geometry of the city, and looking over it I drew workers fixing the street's paving stone; but also the traffic was deafening.

I was used to the silence of the province in my small city. There, sunrise is born on birds' peaks and the oxen-drawn carts were the voice of daybreak. Sunrise in that corner startled me out of bed.

During those seconds between being asleep and awake, unconscious of age or location, I was hoping to hear someone say my name, and wake up close to my home garden, full of geraniums and birds, and hear a singing voice melt with the sound of dishes while preparing breakfast.

I had to convince myself I was elsewhere; the falling pages of the calendar added a day, not the other way around, and numbers piled up over horrible yellow paper invoices that tenaciously appeared on

the table. I had to visit the business offices of magazines and other places where the money I needed seemed to be.

It was no dream: while still in bed, a vendor went by announcing his merchandise – I never knew what he was selling– in a sad shout that truthfully interpreted the pain I felt in waking and the anxiety I felt when rising.

Later, when I contemplated Michelangelo's *Aurora* in Medici Chapel, I found the same pain of waking up, and my past experiences put me in the position to understand that sunrise was, for an artist, the birth of pain, and in contrast I also understood the meaning of Michelangelo's *Night*. My life wasn't always governed by that pessimist conception of the Florentine man. In this very same city I also came to know the sunrise of parks that silences autumn, nested in a silver cold, while hope amassed in my chest made me feel the beating of trees' new blood behind their aged bark.

Many open their eyes in the morning and a prayer is easily born into words or attitudes. My eyes then opened to remind me of the owner of the inn, ruthless symbol of my distress. Had I saved these physiognomies, I would have a very complete album of all the harsh variations a woman's face can adopt. However, this collection would have an angelic being dressed in black, the hands of a young widow crying in the handkerchief that queens in children's stories cry in. Because of her uniqueness, the anthology of my distress today holds, among *goyesque* faces, the portrait of a true poem.

I have never been able to completely get rid of my timidity, and I felt it even more strongly in that tumultuous city that I needed to approach somehow. And so I turned my introspection toward my art, to which I confessed my sorrows, not letting in the overwhelming fear of the unknown that I refused to accept as part of the universe.

Why did I knock on the inn's door as if I were a beggar? On one of these occasions, several minutes went by without anyone opening the door; the elevator boy –to whom I gave the stamps on my letters from Costa Rica – thought he had to help me and pounded on the door with his hands and feet.

After that racket, the landlady herself came out and the boy reproached her in magnificent anger born from his innate sense of justice. He made it clear that the gentleman had been waiting for a while now. I was the gentleman, of course; my garments weren't at all bad, but as usual my payments were a little behind. I tried to excuse myself and babbled some non-intelligible words to avoid hurting the kid's kind gesture. The lady simply put aside her usual altarpiece virgin sadness, and put on an unknown smile that cleaned all worry from my heart.

Boy, did you eat at that house! The Argentina "crowned with fruit and cattle of all sorts" like the Rome of the Latin poet had been missing completely at the other inns I had stayed in. Now olive oil was an abundant mist all over the lettuce and you felt like thanking God after every meal.

Sometimes, a light poured in the window directly from the sky. When it caressed my engraving tools, the everyday glory of the moment was more evident than ever. It flowed, lighting the pieces of polished *quebracho* wood where the incision was going to leave evidence of the port loaders and nocturnal cafes. Besides, under those circumstances, the balcony wasn't a constant invitation to jump into the abyss; it was a keel over a clear ocean, the ocean of clouds and deep blues adorning skyscrapers. The cloud from my smoking was a contribution of intimate blue coming out of my chest in-between my teeth clenched against the wood of the pipe.

My work used to be interrupted by the maid, but her entrance was a parenthesis to rest, like going out on the balcony lying on the fog. She was graceful enough to please me with her movements. I enjoyed the sound of her steps, and her voice singing fragments of tango songs. Because of her pristinely white uniform, her visit was like that of a dove or a deer that made me lift my eyes from the wood wounded by the gouges.

From time to time I saw the inn's landlady go by, in her widowhood, carrying her hands painted by El Greco and a tissue like the handkerchiefs queens from children's stories cried on. Those days I was writing a piece on El Greco for "La Nacion", a local Argentinean paper. Most of what I had come up with had come from the live painting of that legitimate El Greco I had found hidden in the middle of Buenos

Aires. Everything true about the painter's style, everything white flame and deep black, colored perfume and burning flesh in immortal cloth, was also the utmost Christian charcoal in her eyes. Even the lace around the cuff of her sober mourning dress was made of a material whiter than snow or lilies.

I saw her come in to the kitchen, talk to the help and read. It was during those glances that I caught glimpses of her life and fragments of paintings, enough to reconstruct the history of her character. I discovered her little by little, framed in windows or doorframes, surrounded by the aura of the sky sifted over the terrace.

When I told her I was leaving the inn, the landlady talked to me for quite a while; this was actually our first conversation. A human candor ran through her words and once again the shining smile from the tragedy at the door appeared.

Her husband was from Salta; they'd lived happily in Buenos Aires for two years. She insisted I didn't have to leave, she knew that those in the business of the arts have to wait for their work to sell and that struggling in a big city meant sacrifice and long waits. Her nervous insistence was loaded with a sense of nobility.

I assumed she needed my company to bear with her loneliness. It's so difficult making this guess if you are alone! To keep her company a passing hello was enough, and knowing I was locked in my room. Asking her about what bus or tram to take was plenty.

The morning after, the lady placed in my hands a miniature some French painter did during her younger years in Salta. She told me that, not because of the portrait itself, but for its art, I would appreciate it better. It showed the lady as a little girl with a bird on her wrist, and the long ribbon that formed the waistline of her dress like that of a virgin of Perugino, waved, filling the oval in which the painting was found.

I thought the woman had left the provincial rococo of her adolescence, and life, forcing her to change her style, had imprisoned her in rigid mourning, over which her worn thirties showed through.

The miniature and her youth were beautiful. But at that moment, styled by vicissitudes and submerged in a never-ending past, standing next to the door, through what was then her soul, I found her more pictorial. Her flawless fairness was better than marble, without metaphor of the miniature. Behind it, I found an inscription, “to my tenant, painter Amighetti.”

Years later in Mexico, when things repeated themselves differently and previous devotion had a shade of irony, I made a watercolor portrait of the inn owner and wrote a dedication: “To my beautiful creditor Mrs. Santander.”

I don’t know up to what point the places I’ve ended up in necessarily obeyed the limitation of my funds; there probably also was an uneasiness of being in contact with life in the rough, and living its suffering in your own flesh as an irreplaceable experience. "*Voici mon sang que Je n'ai pas verse*". I repeated those verses of Varlaine³ down the street; the lonely and crazy talked alone, some to unveil their neurosis, some to tame it down. "*Voici mes mains qui n'ont pas travaillé*". My hands had worked, turning innumerable pages of books, holding brushes and engraving tools. Yet, I thought it was necessary to sink them into certain sources of pain in order to better penetrate the secret of other men.

I walked through Buenos Aires at night and saw people sleeping on Leandro Allen street, wrapped in newspaper, and children with eyes of grown men, because they had been born with no childhood, who learned before their time what the flesh can only get to understand crucified by years; women coming from bars at dawn, on the “same tram workers took to start their workdays”. The women’s faded makeup contrasted with the men’s blushed faces.

My childhood, like anyone else’s, has a syllabus of pain; but I was missing essential pages and chapters; there was time to spell them in the abc’s of the stars, in the geometry of the millions of lighted windows in the city beating in those square hearts of gold. I also got to understand other things by drawing them or writing about them later on. With them all I put together this *ex-libris* of the only book about my

³ SIC

life, in which a mystery marked by an x crosses its two bones over the baldness of a skull, whose eyes, two smudges of ink, stand for its nightly look with no bright stars in the background.

In this ever so varied Buenos Aires, I found in El Tigre private gardens with statues where refined English girls drank tea next to the flowers.

I walked around lots of parks. They were endless and marvelous. I visited the popular and the unknown. Their existence — the latter's— seems to be within the boundaries of daydreaming, because I wanted to go back to them and I wasn't able to find them. These were not on city maps; when I asked around about their location, no one knew about them.

Once, I found a small park with huge old trees; it was a monastery. Monk trees wearing their bark like timber tunics. Afternoons there were more silent than in any other place. Copper, kissed by sunset, made them stand out: their vine beards and hands, roots like only trees have, held walking sticks more twisted than their bodies. Once the sky's copper was gone, the garden was more abandoned than ever, although the barely tread ground still showed a few rays of light that had been left behind, and made a rosy blush appear on the sand of small streets leading to nowhere.

In all the parks I visited, things —simply for being among trees— spoke a different language, almost poetic.

Parks were my hospitals, my studios, my waiting rooms; they were my smoking lounge and the environment in which my hope strengthened enough to push me into living. In both the anonymous and in the spectacular, it was in parks and in their intimate nooks, like Palermo, that on Sundays I used to watch Cupid wound the hearts of maids and contemplate the elderly cough in line, on benches, while children with bright balloons ran along beside dogs that energized the rhythm of their movements on the pedestal of grass.

They were also my studios and waiting rooms to enter who knows where (perhaps to the dark rooms with worm-eaten floors). When I woke up in the morning in front of the canvas that awaited,

preliminary drawings and all, ideas ready, theories, and experiences, we know we are throwing ourselves into an adventure during which we always have to make use of our talent, as if it were the first time.

I didn't mind the light not coming in from the North, but I did care about those around me wandering in silence. That's how it was at first; they seemed non-existing beings, the people around the new inn during my first days; there, women and men seemed to live doing nothing. Later on, they turned out to be drug dealers, hookers and thieves, together with the family that ran the inn, whose virtue was to ignore it all, even when they knew very well what took place there. Each played their role the best they could, surrounded by their own gravity and away from the cops.

At night, and every night, in the room next to mine, card decks appeared on the table, the lights in the room took on a lusty prancing of splendid and forbidden festivity, all the ashtrays of the house came out, and men took off their jackets to wear shirt sleeves as for a duel, and so a long evening started for me. At first, I couldn't sleep and I peaked my head in to follow the game, to follow the players that is; I saw the light sit on the bald spots of family men, dripping all over their shirts, stopping at their wrists, getting pleasure out of the whiteness of the cards they were playing with; the figures became a composition all on their own for a painting I never did and that I now try to reconstruct with the engraving that illustrates this scene.

Tired of the same old thing, I returned to my room, where I read until I fell asleep. No nightmare grabs on to darkness like the ongoing startling of waking up. As the night grew older and the noises on the street became fewer, lamps acquired a strange and forced luminosity, cursing exploded among those devils, and many a time, father and son, rolled on the floor in what I wouldn't call a loving embrace, falling around and about red and black hearts, spades, jacks and queens living in the cards, among cigarette butts and over turned tables. Finally I decided not to get up to see what was going on. At first, my swift imagination thought of cracked skulls and blood in the bright light. I got used to staying in bed, but I was never able to wake up early. Colors hardened on the palette and getting out of that house during the day was liberating.

The two drug dealers were heading to the pier to wait for the boats coming from Brazil; that's how they explained their absence from the inn and the street corner cafe. Besides this, they did nothing. They threw themselves half-naked on their beds displaying their poor anatomies while reading papers and magazines. They drank a dozen espressos a day and on the nights they did no piers, they woke up next to cards. They looked like retired professors who lived with a clear conscience after long years of work.

The game also included a student who stole and whose double occupation always made him stay up all night long. He wore black shades to hide his eyes and he always kept a certain distance; it was only through osmosis or something that we figured out who he was, and it was something everyone knew.

Amongst us lived a thief partnered with a lady, who – as I found out later – had no interest whatsoever in his partner's fidelity, though his actions showed otherwise. I had seen her walking Florida Street, during the afternoon, lordly air and insufficient nutrition that gave her a flattering languished trait. She was tall and well proportioned, with light-colored eyes and chestnut colored hair with golden highlights. She over rehearsed her lordly walk to the point where she couldn't stop it; not even to walk down the house's single corridor in her blue bath robe.

The teenager at the inn was pretty much a child; one of those children who know it all because they were forced to work during their dreaming years. He told me who was who in that house. The man and the woman had held a conversation on whether or not painters in fact died of starvation or whether they skipped rent from time to time. And they also insisted that suddenly they could sell their artwork at unbelievable prices, like Quinquella Martin the painter of Boca. You could never really tell what their situation was, because they could go from looking like beggars to wealthy and vice versa without transition periods, when you least expected it, like racetrack events.

I also heard through my young friend, of another controversy of theirs, in which the boy himself had participated as well. The discussion revolved around Central America being a part of California, a conclusion the three of them had reached. Anyway, California was still a goldmine, according to them, and the man and the woman thought I had probably brought some of the precious metal; besides I received

numerous phone calls and distinguished visitors. They concluded I might be important. The thief, whose face wasn't fierce but pasty soft, once told me his woman had artistic inclinations. So I showed interest in her skills, a courtesy I would live to regret. Her love for art was limited to coloring photographs.

During one of my passing by through that damp corridor, I was asked in: the lady wanted to consult me on the colors and show me her latest creations. The tall lady with worn metal highlights, always lordly although sitting on a limp chair wrapped in her blue bathrobe, colored photographs; shortly after, her husband excused himself for leaving us. She talked as she painted; every time she reached for colors with the paintbrush, the blue robe showed part of her breasts, dazzling white and perfectly shaped, as I figured in my head. I was impressed, contemplating her in the darkness of that room; my breathing was getting too loud, I thought, in that silence that sometimes only allowed the clinking sound of the brush against the rim of the glass. So I made up my mind to ask her next time to pose for me dressed like that, working in her blue robe.

“Who cares if you're not wise; be beautiful and sad”, I kept repeating in my mind the verse by Baudelaire, which I would mentally vary when I used it — Who cares if you're not wise; be beautiful and dumb. I found the simplicity of spending her time on those photographs to be an ineffable trait of candor.

The next day, it was me who asked. “How is the art of lighting going?” I asked, while she showed me what she had done, jointly offering my eyes that tumulus whiteness governed by a delicate line of tight vases.

I spent several days of that week going over her insipid pictures and magnificent breasts. One time, when I least expected it, the lady abandoned her blue robe on the back of a chair: I dumbly stood in awe before that much whiteness. In the penumbra of my room her body seemed to exude a light that illuminated everything, and resting her hand on the table she said: “You being a painter and all... I want to show you my body in case I can be of service as a model.”

My voice was shaking, even though I hadn't said anything yet, and my chin too. But I didn't want to look like a fainthearted child. With great effort I was able to answer: "Never could I have guessed by seeing you walk around in your blue robe, that hidden underneath were such magnificent curves."

I think my last words were lost, because the husband opened the door and started gesticulating violently; he wanted to take something out of his pocket, but his wife wouldn't let him. During those few seconds, I didn't think of death, I had a feverish curiosity to find out what object would end my life; finished by blue steel or nickel, or sharp and triangular. But on the other hand, it was impossible for me to take my eyes off of the woman who was still naked. The man finally seemed to be convinced that not taking whatever was in his pocket was for the best, and his anger turned towards his woman, who taking her robe attempted a circular escape around the table, without first stumbling on me, only to find myself falling on her clothes hanging from the wall. I fully inhaled her perfume in shameful pleasure.

I don't know if it was the chair's bang after falling, but the teenager came in and things seemed to calm down for the moment.

"I want to talk to you right away," said the man to me.

I guessed he meant outside, so I reached for my hat, while the teen made his entrance in those ragged overalls of his – they probably belonged to someone much taller and better fed than him – whose outraged tone of voice and look informed me that those people were experts in causing that kind of problem. His advice was for me to hold steady; he trusted my courage and my cleverness.

I went out of the room thinking I now had one more problem to deal with; the one about the thief and his wife became distant; the serious problem now was not to let the boy's faith down and my vanity was then concentrated on that objective.

We walked together, the thief and me, for about five blocks. I knew for sure conversation wasn't going to take place on sidewalks and I was expecting to arrive some place. While we walked, I noticed the worn-out shoes my partner was wearing; two ladies speaking in German and a newspaper seller passed us by; my friend Eduardo Uribe walked taking big steps, he'd been that way ever since I met him back in

Costa Rica; I remembered Jorge Luis Borges and Xul Solar talking about Shakespeare; I asked Xul Solar whether the cloth hanging on the wall was from Peru or Bolivia; he said it was from Germany; I thought I heard my mother's voice calling me during the afternoon, I was up in a tree and the whole picture took place during my childhood, on some other afternoon like this one in Buenos Aires, where the reddish grey puddles up in the water that had fallen a few minutes before. Traffic seemed to have quieted down; we finally reached a bar. I moved like sleepwalking. There was something in the sweetness of that sunset, something deeper than that whole operetta of a tragedy I was immersed in. I wanted it all to end at once, but I realized it was only the beginning. I was relieved to touch the solid wood of the table, I felt a little rested; the truth is that after all of those emotions I would need a little something to drink; plus, it was cold.

“What would you like to drink?” I asked my partner.

“Gin,” he answered.

I ordered the same. As soon as our glasses hit the table with a dry thud, the man I was starting to think of as a friend said: “I could've killed ya (I agreed but said nothing).”

And he added, “However, where would that get me? And besides, I really don't like the idea of dealing with cops.”

“Me too,” I said just for the sake of saying something; my own silence bothered me. This point of agreement led to another shot of gin.

“What's your name?” he asked.

I was feeling upset and humiliated, but I told him what my name was and thought myself with somewhat of a right to know his. It was during that late introduction that I realized he was proud of saying his name.

“Another.”

The waiter slammed both glasses onto the table, certainly his trademark style.

“I have to admit,” Ocampo said, “that my wife might have taken an interest in you, but I doubt you have enough money to keep her. Amalia has her whims as do I.”

“You are right,” I answered. “Poverty is my most faithful companion and I no longer care much.”

I think we were quite close to intoxication, me at least, because I saw the thief’s eyes wandering, and the bartender, the waiter and the regulars as if they had been drinking for quite a while, which also could’ve been true.

I paid. But when I made an attempt to get up, Ocampo grabbed me by the arm and explained he was fond of artists.

“My trade is also on of the most difficult arts.”

“Everything is art,” I said. “Science is art and art is art as well.”

He nodded at my nonsense to continue saying his profession was one of the most dangerous because any mistake could lead to serious consequences; not the painter, painters can make mistakes freely. Yet he continued, “I’m not trying to scare you; my job, on the other hand, offers immediate and tangible gratification, and I know a thousand ways to make money, without working like an idiot. Today, in fact, if you want in on it, I can offer a quick and excellent business. Your role in this innocent charade simply consists of talking to the lady from the grocery store. It’s simple: I’ll keep you updated. Don’t talk to me at the inn; we’ll meet here at this very same bar after supper.”

“Remember the way,” he said in a tone that was polite and threatening at the same time.

Even though there was some sincerity in what I had told Ocampo about not caring anymore, I “loved life beyond all logic,” as Ivan Karamasoff used to say to his brothers; and so I made the decision to leave the inn as soon as possible.

The boy was waiting for me at my arrival; I explained everything was okay, but I needed to get out of there right away. He said he’d pack my things and wait for me downstairs. I ran away in a cab, without direction; I told the driver to move: the air felt nice, city sounds made me secretly jubilant and I

remembered the teen wearing his sublime ragged overalls, like a scarecrow, and his violent brow, like Michelangelo's David.

That taxi runaway took me to another inn where nothing went on; I was starting to miss new things happening to me, even against me.

This time, not men but bedbugs made their appearance: they fed off me in the dark. When I turned on the lights, they would diabolically caravan through the walls. I was getting more and more tough reddish spots on my forehead, near the nose and on my wrists: they tormented me, not so much because of the itching or because they were deforming me, but because the feeling of my condition as human was being diminished; they were like a secret vice. The reddish spots depressed me like low blows and every-day vile humiliation. I stayed up all night with the lights on to defend myself from bedbugs; it seemed as if I was sleeping and had no eyelids.

On one occasion, I traded that torment for a night out; I wandered through the streets, I sat on a bench in some park to finally penetrate one of those bars on Leandro Allen; basements out of which figures emerged from a thick blue cloud of smoke coming from sailors' pipes. Those unknown faces spoke to me of other lands, of Nordic sceneries and Mediterranean suns, the Middle East and the West Indies. When the music stopped, I heard amongst the clinking glass, words spoken in exotic languages. Never had I seen such varied cosmopolitanism in that short a time. I ordered a cup of coffee. A woman from Sicily with gorgeous dark reddish skin came out of the smoke around the tables, swift, in an energetic dance resembling a sensual moan; a man immediately snatched her, and they left together.

I put my paper next to my mug and I got ready to make some notes. The noise sometimes escalated to shrilling levels and dropped right back like waves do to rise again; stained mirrors duplicated the scenes in a confusing fashion, and some men stood up and walked around holding a glass in their hands.

I had barely started sketching when a woman with her mind set to teach me how to tango sat next to me; she knew all the different dances and with her, I could re-live the whole history of that dance.

I said, "I'm not particularly interested in learning how to dance and I have two left feet when it comes down to following the rhythm of music."

It seems my words went by unheard because she gave me a card with her address for me to take "private dance lessons" with her. She also offered to teach me some Brazilian dances; she had lived in Rio for six years.

She was planning to return to Brazil at that time; at the docks, she'd seen the sailors coming from that country, and she'd heard them speaking their language; she had contemplated the art show Foujita did in Buenos Aires. Life in Brazil reached a color that was absent from the pieces brought from Paris, as if the contact with that fiery land had transmitted a chromatic accent to his palette that his retina wasn't used to seeing. That woman had such a tender and phony way of telling things, and she alternated phrases in Portuguese loaded with melody, telling me about some of the experiences that had impressed her and that she remembered with delight at that time, while she sat next to someone who listened to her with deep interest.

I never had the opportunity to go to Brazil, but years later in New Mexico I found myself asking a student from Albuquerque who spoke Portuguese to recite in that beautiful language the only two poems she knew; I bought her a coke and pastries in exchange.

That night cost me more than a night at the best hotel in Buenos Aires. I went back to my room at the inn in Tacuarí almost at dawn. Blood-craving bedbugs waited for my return. I opened my eyes and spotted a translucent crawling creature, moving around in a rush. I wasn't able to kill it and it disappeared behind the table. I thought the urban animal belonged to no zoology whatsoever but to that of my imagination. I also found it dangerous that imaginary things could crystallize to the point I could see them, so I left the place in fear of losing my mind.

I came out of my room; I couldn't be there one more second. I sat down in the park to think things over; the sounds of the railroad and the tram were the symphony of the city and vertigo kept me from stringing my thoughts together. Letting the multiple voice of the incessant city dazzle me was a break.

I ran away from Buenos Aires, where I had found friendship and understanding; yet I was sick of poverty, thieves, bed bugs and inns. During my send-off at the park, I lovingly went over the names of friends I was leaving behind. In the girls playing with hoops I saw again the drawings Nora Borges de Torre showed me. In the boy bouncing his blue ball, I saw the last piece Soldi had on his easel.

I traveled by train through the so-called "Iron Diagonal" that runs from La Plata River up to Peru, on the Pacific side of the continent. With my mind still set on Buenos Aires, I climbed the immense Andes. On the last region, vertical cactuses topped with a geometric red flower appeared, and I started seeing the colonial architecture, Indians and llamas.

This trip took place at the same time as the war between Bolivia and Paraguay, which had just began; crossing the border to enter Villazon, authorities were being difficult and I had no choice but to stay in the borderline town, visited by a train every weeks.

I stared at the engine and its cars running through the deserted plain and stopping at another station, black smoke ironically saying good-bye.

Anyone coming from Argentina who was not Bolivian was considered suspicious. I re-engaged my inn "lifestyle" and settled at the only hotel army officers had lunch in; they always threw hostile looks at me, certain of my espionage mission. Raising their voices to be heard, they talked about the severity of the consequences upon those daring to interfere with the country's matters. This unfair aversion that kept bothering me was compensated because for the first time in a very long time I enjoyed the luxury of space, in that adobe house where every morning an Indian girl broke up the ice on the water surface of the well and made her braids dance by pulling up the water bucket. At Villazón there were no housing problems either.

The population was entirely Indian; the only ones I could speak Spanish with were the officers and they wouldn't talk to me, or they'd do it indirectly, so I couldn't answer back. The two Turkish men holding up their pants with Indian colored wool belts, whose sordid job was exchanging money and running a brothel were incapable of addressing a suspected spy.

Some soldiers came from La Paz, after spending one night and two days on the train. On high plain nights I heard them sing songs in *Aymara* following a painful rhythm. They would then leave to a semi-tropical city called Tarija, and arrive two or three days later to Chaco – which was contested – a land that sometimes remained below sea level.

I estimated Villazón didn't have over three hundred inhabitants in times of peace.

The place was gorgeous if you liked Indians. The market place was located in what one could think of as a square; indigenous groups sold their products, you could hear *Aymara* in the air and multicolored native dresses, admirable when they popped out from the flat grey of the ground. But drawing was forbidden for me, and so I set my eyesight to its highest intensity, for my eyes to take all of those things, "or in my heart," as a Chinese painter once said; he must be a poet as well.

The cemetery was a less than a mile away; there were no plants, not even thorny ones. There was only an enclosure surrounded by a low clay wall and humble crosses, sometimes crafted with branches, and most of them nameless.

I started getting altitude sickness, for which Indians recommended coca leaves. I filled my sweater pockets with the dry leaves I chewed on every two hours, although the effect was too slow because I didn't dare to tear my gums with pieces of vegetable fire – *Ilipta*– as Indians used to do to speed absorption.

As a matter of fact, I felt my health had improved and so I strolled around that desert where infinity was stalking on all horizons.

The cemetery was my favorite trip; if there was a place where you'd remain perfectly dead and forgotten – I thought while standing in front of the crosses – it would have to be on those desolate heights.

During the afternoon, herds of llamas tinkling the bronze bells around their necks got lost in the distance, next to the Indian walking along with them.

I talked to an Indian who lived in Villazón but whose family was staying at Quiaca, on the other side of the border, on the Argentinean side. He didn't know to what part of the country it belonged; yet he crossed the borderline practically every day – not across the bridge where soldiers were, but across the river. He displayed no enthusiasm for war and estimated that win or lose, he would continue to receive the same fifteen cents that barely covered potato soup and coca leaves.

I crossed the bridge and had some wine in Argentina, at a Greek man's place, where Venizelos' portrait was hanging on the wall. I tried to return home early and avoid problems with the soldiers on the bridge, who took their authority way too seriously.

I think I was incarcerated there; yet, they accepted my trips, and I divided between Villazón and Quiaca the two weeks I stayed at the high plain– it was less boring that way.

I went out some nights; players at billiard halls looked at me with disdain. There were enormous Indian hookers – border hookers as people called them – who, with grotesque gestures, called out for men.

I was finally able to talk to the consul and take the train to La Paz. Among the railroad carts, Fojita rode in a sleeping car.

I remembered Gabriela Mistral, who said “in South America you either travel like a prince or you traveled like a beggar; there is no in between.” This was probably a reflection of social status. I traveled on wood benches, wrapped in a blanket, chewing on the last of my coca leaves. Other cars transported soldiers coming from the frontline, their moaning heard all during our journey.

None of them had cuts or bullet wounds; they came home with tuberculosis or their legs swollen from mosquito bites. Some gentlemen were giving money away among the ill.

I arrived at La Paz; the thin air of the altitude gave way to a great sharp vision and everything looked perfectly outlined and precise in spite of distance. An Indian with a flag yelled “Viva Bolivia”.

And I thought those people used to living four thousand meters or more above sea level could not successfully fight the unhealthy areas of Chaco, where nature became their worst enemy.

I found an Indian walking next to an officer; he said he was off to war and sold me a doll that represented some character in an Indian dance. I went to the markets; I bought an ancient weave from Bolivia in a shop behind the Cathedral. For some reason I thought the weave to be filthy rather than old.

La Paz was an extraordinary place. It had the style of my dreams. The population – mostly Indian – was overflowing in rich colors and customs, dresses and musical instruments. Their many colors highlighted their vigorous physiognomies sculpted by the telluric breath of their ever-moving land. Their faces were toasted by the high winds and burned by an ancestral grief, hidden behind their impossibility.

I was tempted to stay for some time and paint, but while riding the trams and contemplating the Illimani and its snow, some people stared right at me; a few minutes later they would ask me to go to the police station. I took my drawings and paperclips to them but back on the tram, the same archetypes would stare at me in the same way and it was back to the police station to show them the very same thing. That's why I left La Paz; I went by Tihuanaco and over Titicaca Lake to get to Peru. The Indians' *titora* boats turned gold by the sunrise crossed the blue, and the native ports of Pano were a party of color that the lake multiplied.

TAOS

“What are you doing here?” an old lady asked, while she listened through some hearing aid embedded with turquoises typical of New Mexico. I was about to explain to her that I attended the University there; that the paintings in the art exhibit were mine, and that, so far, my intentions were to stay. But raising her voice she continued, “Here in Albuquerque you are wasting your time. Go to Taos. Taos has painters and Indians. And Mr. Lawrence lived there.”

When University doors closed, so did my art show. It all became more desolate than usual, so I decided I’d move to Taos.

I always thought Albuquerque had one too many psychiatric hospitals for its size: the Baptist hospital, the Evangelist hospital, the Government’s and some others. Besides, it was a little too natural that the help explained the mister or the missus of the house – or both for that matter – were living there for health reasons. I realized Albuquerque was one huge sanatorium with dry desert weather. With the exodus of students over the holidays, it was becoming a Cemetery.

Richard Sands’ sister had come from Boston to study arts at the University and was now admitted to a clinic. As if the height and weather were not enough, losing weight and being hounded by exhaustion meant she had to rest. But physical rest is a torment when the imagination is active. It gives birth to dreams and escapes only to come back to the prison of reality, introspectively drilling the darkest places of one’s being, forcing it to confess the painful condition of her illness. Hope – farther and farther way – was barely a memory of lost faith.

She was young and felt beautiful, no need for mirrors to know that. The looks on people’s eyes and the words of those who she saw or spoke to her were enough. Birds told the story of her youth; the same birds perched on the delicate branches their songs sat on.

Joyce's body, stylized by daily fever, was sculpted by tuberculosis like an artist would on a block he wanted reduced to its minimum, and at the same time it reminded me of Lehmbruck's Gothicism. Losing weight is evaporating when you love earth, wind blowing through your hair, the cold in your bones, and the sun – friend of the ill.

Richard Sands was going to become an engineer; times required them for the war. When Joyce had to drop out of the University and intern herself in the clinic, her brother visited her periodically. He brought her flowers, fruit, books and magazines. He was strong and athletic; he had probably monopolized the whole family's health. I met him at the School of Fine Arts of New Mexico, him coming to pick up his sister.

On a Saturday that Sands and I were on our way to the Alvarado Hotel, he asked me to go with him to the clinic. His hands were full of the usual gifts. Talking with Joyce was easy for me. We talked about University professors, about my country, and about the war. Her watercolor case was open and so was the window's scenery: The park kept coming up on her paintings seen from the top looking down, covered in snow or during spring or autumn, completely alone or busy by color spots sometimes sitting on benches or down on the grass – they were the people that lived in freedom. That was the scenery her nostalgia kept repeating in her watercolors in all kinds of variations, and that matched her "states of soul."

In one of the windows, labeled bottles of color sat next to the brushes: her medication was also pictorial.

I repeated those visits, bringing her flowers and magazines like her brother did, and I loved her secluded youth. I drew her sitting on the rocking chair with her sharp hands and eyes fixed on nowhere. I abandoned all of those drawings because they were hers, like I have abandoned so many other things that I would have liked to keep but realized they no longer belonged to me.

Some times I went out to get some sun near a tree that changed colors with each season until it became bare during the winter – its vegetal skeleton was drawn against the sky. Like a patient, the tree

suffered from the very same languor as Joyce, who let her hands drop in fatigue over the half-open magazines.

When I returned to Albuquerque after a few months of absence, Joyce was no longer there. I visited the park behind what once had been her clinic. It was a red copper park during fall; I went there to find my true solitude under the trees. My only company was sometimes a gardener who removed noisy rivers of dry leaves. No one came to witness that metallic hecatomb, what once were trembling leaves.

It was weird that the park was so deserted and Love did not make an appearance. In Central America too, the romance between peasants frequently takes place in typical rooms – moist and dark – when nature, usually warm, turns the nights of pastures and coffee plantations into a poem of fireflies.

I finally made my trip to Taos. The place was familiar to me because of painting. It was vast and boundless. I found again the same cosmic sensation of Chinese paintings of high mountains, and the surrealism of ruinous adobe houses repeating themselves along all paths.

Taos is immediately appealing. The old town of Indians, studies conducted by painters, *ranchos*, the boiling pot of races, languages and customs – the history one can feel, because it has remained suspended in some places, and those everyday things that talk to us in a lowered voice, like the small barbershop on the town square or the hamburger stand, where a man of criminal physiognomy worked next to his angel-like daughter, perfect to illustrate that “good can come from evil.”

We’ve all painted the church from the Ranchos in Taos; students coming from Albuquerque, surrealist painters and innocent academics. Georgia O’Keeffe made it popular seen from the apse. However, the church is far superior to any painting and equal to itself. This means it will always be better as architecture than on canvas. I came to see it with a little bias, it being a tourist attraction and all. Yet I was marveled, not because of the glow of its construction materials, but because of the sumptuous energy of its internal expression.

Here, poverty is not cause for humility but for bragging; the Franciscans built it up as a fortress. It lacks ornamentation: it’s naked and the wind can caress it all over. Adobe curves and turns convex

immersed in melody and fullness that stops just before it's about to explode. It's a cloth church; some painters dress it up in gold using the colors of sunset. It loses some of its power this way. It is more poetic when made of gray powder; it admits no gold even as a metaphor.

This could be one of the reasons to live in Taos, I said to myself, after going around the church as if it were the statue of a woman. That is when curiosity overtook me and I became determined to find out why so many artists lived in Taos.

"It's the landscape," some told me while launching their eyes out the window to emphasize their words.

"It's the old Indian village," others said.

Some lived there because they loved the solitude, persistent in spite of tourists; they wanted to reach it after a life of fighting to make a name for themselves. And there is nothing better than isolation when one has lived an intense life.

It's the silence of still water on which the image of our deepest thoughts is clearly reflected. For an artist who has found himself, solitude is the weather in which the sincerity of his last conclusions crystallizes.

"I live in Taos," a painter told me, "because light here is sacred." However, the vital reason sometimes did not match the painting. I guess Benrimo liked living there because of his admirably located adobe house and because he could ride his black horse on which he seemed a surreal apparition. I said so when I met him down the road. Others were in Taos to listen to the noise Indian carts made; they were there due to tuberculosis, due to failed love affairs or because chance had thrown their ancestors into the desert, where they raised their houses made of clay and tree logs, during times of violence.

Among my female friends in Taos there were several older women, even though some had not declared themselves as such. They still thought of youths, instead of dedicating their time to philosophy and thoughts of death. I had spent that day with the lady painter with the hearing aid contraption, Miss

Dorothy Brett; she'd been the secretary of novelist D.H. Lawrence. She showed me her paintings with Indian archangels, their wings incrustated with small turquoise stones. She showed me her portraits of Stokowsky; some displayed only his hands in different directing postures. Then she asked me to lunch.

"I quit literature," she said. Using quill and ink is dirty and bad looking. The trade of the painter is, on the contrary, all-appealing: tight and white canvas, brushes made of exotic animal hair, shiny spatulas, walnut, aluminum and porcelain palettes, papers with all kinds of textures and all sorts of tones, materials and instruments, all of them precious. I am only missing being an artist, but one need not suffer because of that. Consider yourself as good as Picasso or Diego Rivera and you'll be okay.

"But you move among older women," she added. "Let's go find the company of young women now."

Instinctively, and out of politeness, I was about to start saying how much I enjoyed the company of aging ladies, but my babbling English saved me.

We reached a "rancho" where a young woman wearing pants opened the gate for us. She was magnificently healthy; her clean beauty could have competed with the women in ads for hair tonic, tooth paste or perfume that hung in drug stores during my adolescence, constituting my sole fascination. Once inside, her sister came out as attractive as the first; we all sat under a pleasant half-light. She told us her mother was dying of cancer, that there was nothing else to be done and that her pain was increasing. The girl in blue pants took her guitar and sung melancholic *fados* and energetic Asturias songs that were as sad. She had lived in Portugal; she told us Salazar had forbidden those songs because they drove people to commit suicide and took away the joy the country needed. He wanted to renovate the country, and would start by killing what people have been carrying in their blood throughout their history. I remembered Manolo Cuadra, a Nicaraguan poet who was moved by tangos; he used to say they were "so beautiful that they make you want to kill yourself." I felt something similar that afternoon, but the guitar music and voice generated a liberating catharsis in me.

Those fervent and virile melodies and the song shivering and moaning and yelling in the half-light, among carved New Mexico furniture did not clash with what was happening. The mother that was dying in silence found her voice in the voices of daughters singing in Spanish pain that contemporary sorrow, felt in the furniture in every corner of that room. I had heard the guitars of my home land near hammocks, love without understanding was sung, and the guitars from *pulperias* after nightfall beating deeply among barking dogs, next to moonlit dust on the road. Again, I stumbled upon that same feeling, even though deepened because of my experiences. Rough peasant hands caressed Costa Rican guitars. Those in New Mexico, in the firm exquisite hands of the girl in blue pants were an artistic vision of musician angels from Italian fresco painters, translated into the language of the South of the United States.

I met John in Taos, and a few weeks later I ran into him in Santa Fe. There, under the town square's trees, he introduced me to his beautiful wife and his mother-in-law. I continued my solitary walk; Sunday was radiant and a cheerful breeze moved the trees in the park.

John came back alone this time and asked me to have a beer with him. During our second drink, he told me about his stories and poems, showing in his enthusiastic words a true passion for literature. With out third beer he attempted reciting one of his poems, but he was barely able to remember the last three verses, in spite of his many attempts. We both concluded it was useless to force memory; verses would come back when we least expected it. In the same way a third beer produced amnesia, the fourth could make it go away. Under the influence of the last drink, John tried to tell me one of his short stories, whose title seemed to me immensely suggestive: "Dialogue between the bishop and Death." I was paying more attention as I followed less, because my limited knowledge of English kept me from following his story as close as I would have wanted to. I understood some fragments, but I was able to follow how the dialogue developed. John showed his teeth in an effort to pronounce clearly. In his desperation to make himself understood, he run a hand through his somewhat disheveled hair, showing a smile of satisfaction every time he realized his audience of one understood something.

I will try to reconstruct what we talked about based on the former clarifications.

“The archbishop didn’t want to die,” John said. “But there were reasons for that, and what he really wanted was some time to do so as serenely as possible. He was reluctant to give in to the important problems he was yet to solve.”

“Almost all of us have reasons not to die. But does your story’s death,” I remarked, “sometimes identify herself with the devil or does she go along beside him as in Durer’s prints?”

“That’s not it,” John answered. “Death has let herself be convinced, and you know from experience the power of seduction the devil has. Death is by no means outside the Devil’s domains. He has convinced her for his own benefit of the importance of her punctuality and her over-the-top sense of duty, even when she was moved by the bishop’s sincerity.

“I picture,” I said, “a Holbin carving translated into painting by the artist himself. The archbishop bathed in purple from his robes, the precious gemstone on his finger shining and Death dressed in nudity; a pure fleshless structure. But going back to content, I’m very interested in the bishop’s discussion skills. His word is clear and simple; he holds conversations as if he were naked.”

“That’s because the archbishop is me; that is, if I were an archbishop.”

“Of course, you are the archbishop, Death and also the devil,” I said. “But transformations after reaching power and rank are unpredictable.”

“That’s true, but there are cases and not only in literature – our creation and aspiration – as you suggest, but in history. Notice one thing,” John continued. “The archbishop convinced Death, because she was sensitive to the clarity of principles exposed.”

“That was not the reason,” I dared object before the young writer. “The truth is always translucent and it overcomes all. As dialectics work well to hide it, in this case the argument was one of the ways for it to manifest itself. Otherwise you’d be presenting a pagan death from the times of Pericles. Your intentions are to show a death that has converted to the Christian church.”

“That was not my intention, but if it’s so, it is due to its subtleties. In any case, the archbishop had a sumptuous burial, full of chants, torches and all rigorous ceremonies, as I have described in another of my stories. He would have rather gone away from this world without being noticed, but he had to obey ecclesiastic tradition.”

“That’s true,” I said to John. When one dies, your body belongs to the living, who usually have their way. I’ve always wished for a burial that matches my own life. What is a burial if not a fantastic procession of crazy people that wander among traffic, newspaper sellers and whores? It would be quite pleasant to have a musician friend – those who own an instrument many times enamored away from the pawn shop; those who drink alcohol for the single reason of being ill-fated – to moan and groan all the way to a monotonous sound. I don’t want to lie next to pessimists and politicians. I want to rest in the Cemetery of Escazu: the old cemetery located on the skirt of a huge mountain, where the bricklayer would prepare the walls on which I’d paint frescoes. He would go over my name with vermilion and soft blue on every November 2 – the colors peasants use to adorn their oxen carts - the colors of the sky and of the fence walls of my homeland. There I will lie among the smell of sugar mills. I hope the homes of the new rich do not get to the cemetery, or municipal improvements that replace adobe, lime and stone with cement.

“Though I write stories,” John said, “in which Death frequently is one of the main characters, I don’t care about how am I going to be buried or where.”

Our backs were facing the square, which seen in the mirror, acquired a different meaning. Everything there was more unreal. Maybe the same happens with mirrors elsewhere, but it seems as if it were a magic crystal, everything seeming to happen farther away and in great silence. It made me evoke cities, men and the indistinct.

Suddenly John perceived his wife and mother-in-law parading by in the mirror and hurried to drink the rest of his glass, with the intention of saying good-bye. He then reconsidered and said: “We have time. They always go around the square several times.”

John started talking not about his literature but about his life, because his recent experiences were not made to fit within the material of his stories. John, probably influenced by the influx of the last cups he'd drunk, started confessing to me. Maybe this had been the subconscious object of his invitation. I thought of one of those stand-asides, you are always capable of making when listening to someone else.

"In spite of Helena's assets and our mere three months of marriage," he said, "I have discovered other women."

I, who had discovered them ten years before, tried to explain to him that he was no monster and that he was experiencing a revelation that was only natural.

"I've been through the same," I said, "and even more so," I added trying to comfort him, "my interest in women only increased after marriage."

In the wordless monologue, which developed within me in a parallel way during the conversation, I figured it would be far more convenient if I didn't use myself as an example, but resort to literature. I talked to him about Somba, the black king, protagonist of some of the stories Frobenius picked up all around Africa.

"Somba, when he discovered fermented rice liquor and then women exclaimed: 'Why had no one told me about these things before?'"

"There is no point in regretting the time lost," I added, taking my part as confessor quite seriously. "Some purity and ignorance are convenient; later there will be time for all, as said in Ecclesiastes.

Before my somewhat baroque quotes that finished off in the Bible, John started to agree with me and I had the feeling that now it was he who wanted to prove me right.

I remember we kept talking about the same thing, but we agreed on the fact that love is a mystery prickled by enigmas, that could be overwhelming and – like death – unnoticed. It could come around when coming out of childhood or when our hairs were snowed like our common friend's, Ortiz Vargas.

"It comes during all stations of the soul," I told John.

And he, looking for an explanation for everything, incurred in the vital contradiction of continuing to defend the mystery of Eros. He thought psychoanalysis could bring light on to the mystery of his mother-in-law, but affirmed emphatically, “I don’t want it to fully illuminate love’s mystery; it shouldn’t and it can’t.”

He was about to continue our conversation, but he remembered his wife, from whom in essence he hadn’t been separated. He then thought of her differently, as a legal entity that then walked next to her mother, and together they represented some kind of force.

Not trusting the mirror that reduced the angle of his vision, he turned his head to see the square and nervously parted, promising to look me up at the hotel.

I watched him leave in the blue air of the mirror and I had the chance to see him get lost and disappear later in the company of his family.

I stayed there at the bar for a while longer.

While talking to John, I had been thinking that he looked like someone I had once known very well. After a few minutes, I discovered he looked like Enrique, a friend of mine from Costa Rica. Although John was tall, athletic and blonde and the Costa Rican was small and dark-skinned, there was something about the way their smiles shone that united them, as did also some of their gestures also.

The mirror was practically deserted. The people who had come out from mass and those who were scattered around the square had disappeared. It was lunchtime. The mirror collected the image of an Indian family eating on the grass.

He reminded me of Enrique. He must have been thirty the last time I ran into him, hard and trimmed mustache and all. He was a never-ending Law student undergoing endless attempts to finish his degree. When Enrique laughed, the seriousness of the future file reader abandoned him and a child-like spark came out of his light-colored eyes. It seemed his heart became clear through the mask of

professional decorum, which he was getting used to for when the superb moment of becoming a judge came.

I had met him during early youth, when he worked as a music teacher in a town lost in the mountains. Standing and playing a cheap and crooked violin, he led the rhythm in a lively manner with the same enthusiasm of a famous orchestra director. Meanwhile, children raised their voices clear in naive songs, of which their fragments are still today one of my most dear memories. Behind him, the blackboard had numbers written on it; behind it and beyond the windows, the town's green square with its trees and church looked like a child's artwork.

Then was the time when Costa Rica's teachers starved the most. Even today, art, music and crafts teachers are referred to as "Special Teachers." Yet, I believe their specialty then consisted in being the worst paid, in spite of year-end speeches in which the upper management of education spoke of the "importance of the Arts."

It was back then when Enrique made his best effort and devoted himself to unite the cry of the child with a violin with the peasants' choir, that transformed the walls of the rural schoolhouse, which only three years before had been a forest full of sounds, into a blessed carpentry workshop.

Some of the children's parents holistically made up for State deficiencies by bringing gifts to the teacher. Wrapped in plantain leaves and within certain regularity, they brought bottles of smuggled *guaro*, sugar cane liquor, outsmarting the Government that holds a monopoly on hard liquor production. The liquor those peasants produced was distilled by themselves between cliffs and streams that cried without ever being heard of, among the most poetic and lonely landscapes.

The smuggled liquor was like honey to a bear on Enrique during those eighteen months of poverty, music and didactic sincerity, for which many things will be forgiven to him.

In that green town of copper roads, looking like a Gauguin, I walked with Enrique through fields that kept the stones of Indian cemeteries, next to the creeks where children bathe while their mothers

washed clothes. The afternoon dissolved their tints in the water; when everyone left, the silence preceding the night slowly took over, and gave way to toads' reproach.

During one of those rainy nights that reminded me of a verse by Max Jimenez – Like a small town's rain, that's what my soul is like – our souls improved as we hurried some drinks of the blessed smuggled liquor, which embraces the throat. In that opportunity, under the persistence of bells and rain, I asked Enrique, "When you die, you must go to Heaven with your violin. That way, you'll get in no time. You can't let it go out of sight or out from your grandmother's colonial trunk, near the lemon tree and jasmine garden.

I can see your arrival; I see you climbing up on clouds and meeting the children who used to play with silver coins in the bottom of wells. Those are the ones you'll teach to become musician angels. You will teach again in the dayshift classrooms of eternal light, without having to sell your paycheck before the end of the month. And please remember me, for I have no little, dry and resounding violin, the 'open Sesame' to the doors of Heaven.

I never heard of Ortiz Vargas again, noble and generous Colombian poet. We suffered of the same illness: a chronic absence of money and constant enthusiasm for women and the arts. As women from the University of New Mexico went by, my friend made use of Dario's verses to express their condition by saying: "In gray hair I approach roses in the garden."

I still keep the drawing I made of his house. It is a portrait in which Ortiz Vargas – tall and angular – looks back at me with intelligent eyes, behind the pristine casing of his glasses, his hands gawky at rest – long for writing verse – while his cat jumped over the couch to pose as well, only to add a baudelaireian splash to the composition.

After living in one place and another, giving conferences in the United States about Spanish literature, he bought a winery in New Mexico, where he lived. I asked him if the wine he produced was to

export or be locally sold, to which he answered: “No way, it’s all for personal consumption, for me and my friends.”

In between the halls of the University, there were grassy areas, admirably taken care of, that kept their green all year long. Birds hopped from tree to tree, letting their songs be heard in the morning, when students were heading to class. Overcome with joy of such morning cheer, we happily talked about our inclination towards cleanliness – so typically American – and about calculated eclecticism with which he had been able to reconcile the romantic message of nature and asceticism, when suddenly Ortiz Vargas ran into a former disciple. He ended up making a date with her; at the same time he managed to ask to bring a friend of hers for me.

The former disciple asked me what kind of women I liked – blonde or brunette. The Colombian poet, who noticed my astonishment and embarrassment, came to my rescue.

“Even though my friend here is in painting, he does not mind a particular hair color, as long as the girl is young and pretty.”

He then quoted a few verses in English I wasn’t able to understand.

On Saturday, the day of our date, I met Ortiz Vargas. Nature seemed to be on our side. The horizon gave way to our matchmaker: a round and silver moon. I paid no attention to the poet because I couldn’t stop thinking about what my date was going to look like. The mystery would soon be solved, he said; at least the first phase, because women are an endless enigma. As so I told my friend, who mercifully said: “Let’s drink. There is no need to worry about all of this.”

To further convince me, he told me a few stories about his Boston years, which explained the base of his skepticism.

“But I’ve heard Bostonians are quite prudish.”

“You’ve never been?” Ortiz Vargas asked.

“I was there recently, though briefly. Besides, I never met anyone. I was there to see the pieces in the Art Museum. On my way back, I sat and waited for the Greyhound that was to drive me to New York.

Do you know about those long waits during which you get up, you sit down, you walk, and you smoke? The station held a few colorless people and squeaking children.”

Two old ladies caught my attention – they were probably spinsters. They seemed as taken out from a Grant Wood piece. Even because of the annoying and imagination lacking print of their dresses – made with dots and squares and circles. The ladies I’m talking about remained the same over an hour. They were probably sisters; they wore glasses and the seriousness of mummies.

Suddenly a drunkard came in. He moved, he talked, told jokes and laughed. The ladies started to get nervous. Immediately after, in came a woman who introduced the plenitude of her feminine shapes to the concrete cemetery. The drunkard engaged in a conversation with the girl who smiled and vivaciously answered back. He gave her chocolate and their laughter overtook the frozen silence hanging over me since my arrival. That dismal place had been suddenly invaded by life; something the Boston ladies forgave not. They simultaneously stood up with a level of energy you would have never expected from women their age; their eyes burst into sparks of steel, behind their glasses’ frames. Off key due to indignation, they announced they were going to find the police. In Boston...

“Here they come,” Ortiz Vargas interrupted me.

It wasn’t them.

Every time the bar’s crystal doors flipped open, I intensely fixed my eyes; when it was women coming in, I thought I saw in each the one that theoretically belonged to me. Softened by alcohol, I kept my hope’s restlessness; but time went by and we were still alone: the glass doors no longer opened to let anyone in.

The time came when we were the only survivors. I felt like one of those men at bars Hopper painted, and so we had to continue with our philosophy, our verses and our laments out side, because of the killer look from the owner – his stare was our first hint.

The moon had risen behind the clinics and now stood high, but autumn's cold bothered us no longer and Ortiz Vargas' gesticulations got amplified and fantastic, as they were projected in the shadows on the sidewalk. There we were also the only inhabitants on the street.

After this failure, forgetfulness that gives way to renewing experiences led us with optimism to an afternoon party at some Sorority Club.

We were welcomed by the girls in their long dresses and a courtesy I would believe had been perfected over generations, only to be displayed on such occasions.

I recognized one of the students who had been introduced to me before in Santa Fe during my art show. She was evidently surprised and charmed, as her sky-blue eyes revealed, and said: "I want to see you again so we can have a long chat."

I gave her my phone number and immediately started picturing me having dinner with her, and while taking delight in her smile; I would calculate the dollars I kept like a treasure inside "Italian Renaissance Painters" by Berenson.

As she said good-bye, she said again she'd call me.

The next morning, instead of going to the University, I stayed home and waited for her call, because the people at the inn went in and out and no one could answer the phone for me.

I went from being a painting student to the quickest of telephone operators. The lady of the house was marveled at my diligence writing down all sorts of messages. My heart beat louder and louder than the phone's ring every time I ran up the stairs like crazy. True I suffered deeply when the owners were not home, but my deepest anguish reached its climax when in the house, they remained in the living room and didn't hurry to answer the phone. It seemed weird, in such cases, running in the living room, but I did anyway claiming I was waiting for a long distance call.

After two weeks, I convinced myself the girl from the Sorority Club was just being nice with her courtesy line, even though she had underlined it with the emotion shown in her blue eyes.

I comforted myself with the idea that life teaches you essential things that the University is not capable of teaching, so I wouldn't miss my two weeks of absence at school.

In a town that small, with Indians and artists, it is presumed that all are very important, and that things that happen especially between men and women get a little big. Because life parsimoniously takes its course, you go out for coffee and to get to know each other. Over the afternoon, I went to the hotel right in front of Taos' square. There I had coffee with the owner, Mrs. Nula Caravas, and some other folks who gathered around. Mrs. Caravas was Greek and sometimes wore oriental or contemporary outfits that reminded me of Manet pieces. Several artists had made paintings of her, including Mrs. Mabel Degen, who lived in an adobe house with a tower, next to the Hardwood Foundation. I was her guest then. I'd been there for two weeks; her house had been home to the penitents. There were only the two of us in that enormous house, besides the cat and two dogs. Mrs. Degen had a drawing of her by Modigliani; he'd drawn her during her youth, in a cafe in Paris.

While returning to the hotel one time, I told Mrs. Degen:

"Here in Taos everything is gossip; painting is no longer part of the conversation."

"That's right," she said. "They are constantly aware of gossip and that is all that matters; however," she added, "you tell me, what's the latest you've heard?"

"It might not be new to you," I said. "Some think the husband of writer Mabel Dodge Lujan – who married an Indian with Lujan for his last name, like my wife's, and who drives a Cadillac, showing off his long braids - is an enigmatic figure, in whom mystery and the race's wisdom merge. Others, on the contrary, are certain that he is nothing but an unimportant and lazy Indian."

Back then, our lives were all about going from tea party to tea party and from one event to the next. When Mrs. Degen had people over and she was finishing getting ready, I opened the door for her guests, took ladies' coats and entertained them as far as my English allowed.

When Mrs. Degen had to go on a six-day trip, I was left alone in the house. The only recommendation she gave me was to feed the dogs and cat, and gave me a detailed explanation on what their routine was. Because they were incompatible, they were not to eat together. Both dogs had to remain outside, so that the cat could feed without being disturbed. It wasn't fond of the roaring joy or the voracity of the puppies that came inside in a huge fuss. When they came in before the appointed time, the cat abandoned its food; it then immediately fell under the power of the other animals. That cat was as if educated in Oxford. In Costa Rica, during my childhood, cats were kitchen thieves and walked on roofs, faces torn. But the cat I'm talking about had great dignity and when it was time to eat, it sat in near-Nirvana, slowly sticking its tongue in great style.

Once the cat had eaten, it shut its eyes to fall within its own world and not see the entrance of the two puppies. Their joyous extroversion probably seemed tacky. The cat then disappeared as a living creature and turned into an Egyptian sculpture before the dogs. The latter couldn't care less about its presence and considered him like nothing but a cat-shaped object.

To take the puppies to the garage, where they slept, their eating bowl had to be carried way up high; the animals came behind, following me and getting entangled in between my legs, running up ahead and running back. Once the bowl was on the floor of the garage, they devoured the food so fast I barely had time to shut the door. Many times I mistakenly gave the dogs' vitamin cereal to the cat and vice versa, which didn't seem to affect either of their metabolisms at all.

On one of those nights when snow was about to fall and the cold was penetrating, I crossed the yard with the coveted food; I put it down on the garage floor and shut the door. Such precipitation was terrible: my jacket got caught on a nail and the creepiest of creeks resounded in the dark. I had an L shape on my back. To understand the drama of my jacket, it's necessary to say it was my only decent suit for parties.

Back from her trip, Mrs. Degen found neither the animals nor me were thin. When I had to go to a party or attend one of the parties at the house, the true suffering caused by my jacket getting ripped began.

I always acted like a one sided medal, facing people, never giving them my back. I was like the moon that gives Earth only its lighted side; it was like I was only two-dimensional. I never gave my back to others, like courtesans from past centuries, or like tyrants from the Caribbean even when having their bodyguards around. Happily, what had to take place did and the ladies discovered my suit's ripped back. They considered it to be recent and giving hands put so much care to the jacket, not even my flesh wounds, disinfected and bandaged by sisters of the charity gave me so much moral well being as the cure of the terrible wound of my gray suit did.

I owe it to Miss Paulina Harper knowing such diverse people and places; with her I went out to paint watercolors and it was she who invited me over to listen to the concerts at Mr. Dasburg's house.

Mrs. Dasburg came on a high stage where the piano displayed its gloomy catafalque brilliance, and interpreted with passion and technique the pieces of great masters. Unfortunately, I understand music my own way, if this means understanding. I devotedly listen to the first chords that destroy silence and replace it with color and architecture of sound, and with other silences already included in music, but my endurance is quite limited.

Mrs. Dasburg flaunted quite a strange personality. Her hands became prettier on the keys; they were the live instrument that awoke brief and fugitive notes, or retained them serene or quivering for as long as indispensable. Listening to Mrs. Dasburg, I thought of the precision of comparing architecture and music. The latter turned into its sound development, mathematical substance of detained and structured time.

During those New Mexico nights, I – for whom arts have a greater reach than music – probably saw more than what I heard. Mrs. Dasburg, by sitting at the piano, increased her natural empire and acquired a magnetic radiation next to the music borne from her hands. She was so possessed by her performance that she fell into a trance quite close to madness; by forgetting about herself she presented her true being, as is. I found in Mrs. Dasburg the true joy of music, her most thorough impersonation, and

it being in essence immeasurable, became tangible for me in the shape of the artist. Her movements while performing found their true self spontaneously, by resurging from the intensity of her emotions and command of her technique.

As everyone else, I congratulated her when she came out. One night, half way through our good-bye and standing at the door, I manifested my enthusiasm about her performance of Bach. Mrs. Dasburg cordially having invited us back to perform the piece again. I'd never had Bach sound so solemn: it was like the music was creating high vault architecture, in which by inhabiting them, it hosted its own resonance.

In concerts, evoked by music, the tall figure of Mrs. Dasburg, her gorgeous arms and proud eyes still comes up.

In one of the tea parties at Miss Pauline Harper's house, I was telling her that after my arrival to New York and before the dreadfully hot weather of summer, my drawings and carvings portfolio and I went to Alfred Steiglitz at "The American Place."

He came out to open the door wearing an overcoat, and after reading the letter of recommendation I brought along with me, he said: "If I had to see all the paintings people bring, I wouldn't even have time for this; but since you come from Miss Brett and Lawrence's wife, I'll see your work."

Three days later, as convened, I came back for my portfolio. Stieglitz came out at the same place and wearing the same overcoat, and once inside, he gave me a few opinions on my drawings and started lamenting.

"Nowadays, in war time, nothing is anything; art has stepped down to a secondary level. Here I am, lonelier and lonelier. I show few painters, but those I show are worth a lot."

He showed me some oil paintings by John Marin; one of them was the sea and sea birds, a painting in whites, which I liked, more than the watercolors by him I'd seen, and for which he was known.

“But what I really have here are my wife’s paintings, Georgia O’Keeffe. People reproach her,” Steiglitz said showing me one of her paintings, “that she paints over-sized flowers, larger than natural size. She says she does for the same reason the ocean – being as big as it is – fits inside a 30 by 50 inch canvas.

Steiglitz complained again about the cold’s solitude, about indifference; I was almost forced to comfort him. Of course, there was nothing he could do for me. I was under the impression the bright elder was going through a crisis and was disconcerted.

“However, there is nothing better than a tough life,” he said while sending me off.

The second time I went through Taos I met many people and painted. I saw paintings by D.H. Lawrence that had been a part of his London show, and the police – Miss Brett said in indignation – had shut down claiming it was immoral.

I was at Mr. Imhof’s with Miss Harper to see his lithographs of Indians. We attended a party at John Hunter’s house in honor of the Mayor of Santa Fe’s arrival, and we visited his studio located one kilometer from his house. It was a space that easily fit us all and housed – among other things – an altarpiece, a 12th Century lamp and ancient saint figures from New Mexico. John Hunter was an altarpiece painter within Van Dyck’s elegant tradition; and so he explained that with that style and studio, people were charmed to pay to pose.

We were also at Barbara Lathan’s, a painter who had created admirable children’s stories illustrations. Shortly after, I met her husband Howard Cook one morning when Taos woke up covered in snow and I had gone walking, bedazzled by that unknown element I had only seen shining on top of tall South American mountains.

On Thanksgiving Day, we had dinner at a place where older New England women knew how to cook a traditional and delicious meal. Painter Victor Higgins, who had been married to and divorced from several millionaires, cultured an ulcer he forgot that night while he talked about some of the people that had been through Taos. He told us about the Russian painter that came from far away by horse, whom he

put in one of the rooms at Harwood Foundation, where they were roommates. When painting outdoors, he held a lively conversation with his painting.

“Little painting,” he said, “you are so sad, you need here a little red. Little painting, I think you are an orphan of blue, here you go. Little painting, I think you are no longer asking for anything; that means we’re finished.”

Victor Higgins painted large scale watercolors, strong and sober; they were of the Russian’s likings, and who sometimes came to visit and said: “I’ve seen smoke coming out of your chimney and figured you were here. That’s why I came.

Victor Higgins offered him bourbon, wine, brandy, gin, etc., but the Russian had a problem with being offered so many different things to drink and exclaimed: “Why are there so many things in this world that make life complicated! Bring everything.”

The Russian loved seeing the landscape of bottles on the table, their shapes, their colors and their many labels. He gave particular virtues to each kind of liquor, together with the common denominator of drunkenness, even though he invariably drank brandy.

Many strange people had gone through the town of Taos, and some paraded through during that cordial dinner, painter Victor Higgins had evoked.

On my way out, snow covered the cars. This was my last night in Taos.

HARLEM

In Riverside and right out of my window, one could see the Hudson and the anchored little steamboats. In front, Riverside church.

The Hudson sometimes had a light blue shade and resembled a river of silk because of its glow. Yet, I never experienced enough serenity to completely devote myself to aesthetic contemplation. The inn was too expensive for my pocket, and every day that went by became even more bitter than the one before. It seemed as if I were stealing a landscape I could not afford. Amazing how a sweet old lady can become a witch over night because of a few days of overdue rent.

Riverside is beautiful at night, and even on Sundays; I used to sit at the park to watch children drink out of drinking fountains and birds bathe as in an ancient Chinese painting.

“Riverside church has the largest glockenspiel in the world,” a subway sign read; but that music did not get to me. I remembered colonial churches in Guatemala and Nicaragua, single-belled over the silence of indigenous people, and the sound of glockenspiel seemed insignificant next to those bells in Costa Rican towns, crying the deaths of local countrymen.

But I was living in New York, traveling by bus next to the most beautiful women who, with their polished hair and eyes the color of gems, were a novelty to me. Many times I got off the bus before or after my stop because of them. To these women, I dedicated all of my long travels, with which I paid by contemplating them on the bus. I thought democracy had gone too far by having such dignified women – worthy of a new mythology – pay their 10-cent ticket like any other mortal.

I was living in Harlem in a 6’by 9’ foot room, with a leper mirror in which looking at my reflection, as in a poisoned well, it was as looking at a ghost. That was me! Even the mirror refused to return my image with the exact outline and volume. The sordid bed I slept in kept giving me the impression that someone had been recently murdered on it.

The landscape out of my window was composed of a piece of grey New York sky and the multicolored clothes of black people drying ‘till eternity. A Costa Rican poet once wrote:

“With windows, architects have become painters. There are houses in which windows are the only paintings hanging from the walls.”

I had a lot of artwork; that was what I had the most of. Yet none of it had enough drama for my room; not like the picture in my window.

I woke up one morning and it was raining; six hours went by and the rain was still pouring over those immensely high, dirty walls. I hadn't had breakfast, but I couldn't go out and get all wet my well-ironed suit that I used to visit galleries and all the important people. And it was then that I decided I was going to buy wine and crackers for future breakfasts on rainy days. God knows I don't like wine at dawn, but that breakfast on rainy New York days! It made the desolated filthiness of my room much more bearable and it made my belly, sick and tired of eating at bars, feel comforted.

It was not in my room where I felt the most alone, but on the streets. How nice to feel someone bump into me! Especially women, and young ones. They would say an ever-tender “Beg your pardon,” obviously without making any connection, not even the slightest glimpse.

Immersed in this loneliness, surrounded by millions of people, I was finally able to talk to someone, a black woman. I knew I had to buy her a couple of drinks immediately; this was my chance to talk to a human being for a couple of minutes. We went to Lexington Ave., where we drank whisky immersed in the loudness of a radio fighting to be heard, and the interrupted vibration of the elevator. Edna wore an over-elaborate dress and talked to me as if we knew each other since childhood. She then invited me over. It was summer; she stripped off half her clothes. With the ease of someone who is alone, she started playing solitaire, drawing the cards on top of the bed. Cards hold everything; spades, diamonds and hearts; war, love and money; the classic, the eternal, the essential.

Edna's room was almost twenty feet long, it had four windows, and one of the walls was covered by a huge mirror the door reflected on. Apparently, Edna knew everything; local history and my every thought.

“Oh,” she said, “New Yorkers were very rich people; the other rooms also have mirrors like this one here.”

And she stood up, submerging the black and white of her skin, and eyes and teeth in that silver, aged by the yellowish glow of the light bulb.

I have never visited so many churches nor worshiped so many gods as I did in New York. I always listened to religious chants in the orthodox Russian church. Sung in a language I found very exotic, these songs had a singular resonance once I let my imagination run free and start translating their meaning. There was this enormous painting of Christ and its icons, each with its little lamp, in front of which followers stood and prayed. At the church door, men kissed women’s hands hello and one of my favorite distractions was attending funerals. In Costa Rica, when you die, you ride in a hearse pulled by adorned horses or you are carried on the shoulders of relatives. Here, you go to the cemetery in the same vehicle you rode in life; a car.

Men were thin because of the pain, the paleness and the reflection of eyeglasses was clean and pure like a teardrop. Only the Pope kept that purplish tone on his skin.

I visited the churches of Gethsemane and Calvario, together with others I cannot remember, listening to the spirituals black people sang. But my favorite church was a Madison Ave. hovel, where few people went. Maybe that’s why I felt so accompanied, because my presence was immediately noticed. A fat black woman with two kids, a black man banging cymbals and another black woman who played the piano, the priest and I. We were actors and audience; those black friends lost no enthusiasm and acted desperately. A cross-eyed black man – a trait that made him seem immersed in ecstatic stupidity – was the cymbal man; the preacher shook the tambourine and the black woman was pounding on the piano keys. These all made a devilish noise. It was like an army of devoted followers: they multiplied in their fervor, and the voice and copper cymbals and the piano; they all formed a charming discordance.

They then sang the “soul stirring songs.” Heaven for blacks was more or less sketched in those songs. For black people, Heaven was white, or black that is; no rent, no cops, none of them, none of their natural enemies.

The preacher wore a filthy suit and a pristine white shirt with fine wrinkles. During his violent mimics, his tie crooked and the belt buckle shone in between his vest. That morning, he spoke of many things; he spoke about the word of God being a light to walk through the world. And he explained it was like having a light on each foot and following an imaginary path crouching.

Naturally, he spoke of the devil. He was to be kicked at his arrival. The preacher shouted, fighting with the air. Once he thought the devil was knocked out – a situation that matched his physical exhaustion – he smiled with his white teeth, happy, as God and the angels must have been while contemplating the devil’s defeat. Then it was time for confession and the accompanying moaning, which I stopped hearing, because it was shameful to stay without participating in such event.

I was obsessed with mysticism and so I went to the public library to read the life of Saint Francis of Assisi written by Saint Bonaventure; the one Giotto read to paint the frescos representing the life of the saint. I still remember that line that read “not the discretion that flesh shows, but the one Christ taught us with his holy life, example of all perfection.”

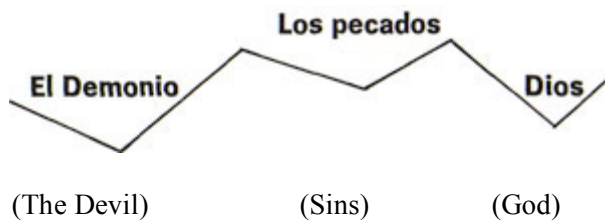
It was during those days I was reading Saint Bonaventure that I went out on an early Sunday morning, walking down Madison Ave. There I saw a black woman throwing her purse and shoes on the street, all with the same sincerity as in the church of Gethsemane. Two black women closely contemplated the scene. The police grabbed her by the arms to hold her. When I got closer there was no doubt that woman was Edna – the one person in six million inhabitants that had walked with me and had invited me to her room! So I, the reader of the life of Saint Francis, approached the police to tell Edna she was “a very nice lady” and picked up the shoes from the street. That’s how I started my first act of humility and love.

After that, I never saw Edna again. However, the last day before I left Harlem, while looking for a letter, she appeared at my door and told me she had been very sick and that she had been staying at the hospital in front of the park. She seemed very happy; she was moving to a nearby house and asked me for my picture. She wanted to enlarge it and hang it in her room.

Maybe I'm still in Harlem in a sumptuous tacky frame, and Edna, the black woman from South Carolina, who spelled my name under my only window, from time to time would dedicate one of those hounded animal looks to me.

I had to look for a cheap inn, and there I was asking around for a "single room" in English, in a Spanish-speaking neighborhood, where they spoke my mother tongue; here I visited the darkest dumps and saw the worst people.

On my way back, I ran into a preacher in the street. He was speaking in Spanish, but in his mouth, the closed and virile tongue I produced essential words with since my childhood, was an eccentric and flabby mosaic. However, he didn't lack passion. On the contrary, he was bursting with passion. He drew a broken line on the floor using white chalk and wrote,



He started a hysterical lecture to prove we have souls and that this life does not end when you die murdered in a room or blown into pieces by a fire-extinguishing pump. He wanted to save our souls no matter what. He grabbed his head and threw his arms around shouting and kicking, but I doubt the audience – a gypsy, a drunken man and a little black girl – knew exactly what this whole thing was about.

Sins should be filthy and disgusting in that overcrowded neighborhood. Oh, but in Riverside, sins – particularly those of the flesh – will take place there, behind blinds blushing by lamplights.

I finally got out of Harlem, out of that never-ending blackout. No more spiritual chants. No more Saturday night fights. When I needed to sleep the most to forget my whereabouts, I woke up startled by a Henry. He always came drunk after midnight knocking at my door shouting: “It’s me, Henry.” I never met Henry; or the woman who opened the door for him, for that matter. The night before, a black man had killed for three bucks.

While riding down Madison Ave., the bus started to get crowded with black people, and one by one started to displace white women, proving I was getting closer to my shelter.

To avoid being in my room, I went to the park. Black and more black. Where was I, New York or Africa? The dazzling Harlem that Broadway advertised was pure fiction. In that Harlem everything was shiny; black men didn’t fight over nothing and black drunk women didn’t walk along crying over sidewalks. Yet, the park became radiant in the morning, when teacher brought the little black children, and when little black girls jumped rope and sang or crazily swung themselves against the blue.

Many know what it’s like to eat at taverns to save a few pennies. Appetite – that bulging protuberance people cultivate with appetizers and strolls under the trees – can become an uncomfortable guest. To truly admire the masterpieces at the Met, hunger – that painful sensation seemingly located in the stomach, as described in my high school Physiology book – must not get in the way with its overwhelming persistence.

I visited many taverns, all identical. The smallest distraction put me on the edge of bankruptcy. In New York – tour guides said – there are all sorts of restaurants; Scandinavian, Rumanian, Italian, French, Russian, Chinese, Mexican, Spanish and Turkish; dim-lit restaurants, where beautiful women drink exotic elixirs and listen to the delicate tunes passionate violins cry.

How important is gold when it's not you who owns it and when you do as well! Why not talk about gold? Don't whole villages murder for a better life? Don't people throw themselves from buildings or in front of subways when the trains howl in the shadows of tunnels?

There is no other God but gold, I shouted in silence – useless blasphemy at sunset, hanging from skyscrapers. Could this be the reason why catholic altars are drenched in baroque profusion and Ancient Incas represented divinity with a disc of that same yellow metal? These were my thoughts while walking by Brentano Book Store, on Fifth Avenue.

Money is automatic happiness, automatic love and the automatic joints where I eat. But I have parks. I own all the parks in New York; as absurd as saying “I own all the mountains on Earth.” However, I can sit and listen to water fountains repeat my thoughts, or run my eyes through the purest edges while standing next to the bronze statues of national heroes. But during summer, finding a seat is impossible sometimes; bored humanities, almost all of them old women with dogs, plague the benches. I started to understand what ‘crowded’ meant; I heard that word everywhere. Parks have no poetry when people start fighting for a seat and they all read the paper. No one dreams in this town; it must be the instinct of self-preservation.

I went back to walking the streets and stopping in front of the windows submerged in fascination. I was a potential buyer, a platonic one; then I thought of Aladdin's magic lamp. Why not find the worn lamp in a bunch of piled up old bronzes in some oriental shop on Fifth Avenue? Whoever it is that has the lamp, he probably is a greedy old man with ruthless eyes, and he would sell that treasure for a few miserable pennies. If the lamp were almighty, it wouldn't be worth it. I would become as wretched as that King Midas, who couldn't avoid turning into gold everything he touched. I hope the lamp is halfway broken and the genie fails to perform his job from time to time, and says: “I'm sorry.”

But this is out of my reach, because otherwise I wouldn't be able to help myself. I'd send him to strangle my former landlady from Riverside, together with all the art gallery owners. Instead, I would

throw parties in Harlem; I'd give amazing alms to those churches in Gethsemane and Calvario. I'd even turn into a Messiah, because my black friends would relate miracles to divinity.

Getting back to reality though, without taking my mind off the lamp, I'll limit myself to the treasures shop windows keep for me. In spite of the power my lamp holds, I don't want so many things; it would be overwhelming. I'll ask the genie – probably some black man from Harlem with magical powers – to get me the image of Saint Olga, found somewhere on Madison Ave. I can't remember the exact address, but genies know everything. I'll ask him for the \$17.89 smoking pipe from 47th street that I hoped to buy once my little "bourgeois triumph" came; a Persian bracelet I'd send as a gift back to Costa Rica and also some colored drawings by Pascin I'd seen in the Wehle Gallery. Then I'd take the lamp and sell it for a few cents to some random store I'd never find again, to be logical and reverent with destiny.

Daydreaming in front of shop windows didn't last long; I had to keep looking for a place to stay. I didn't want to stay in one of those Greenwich Village hotels, where they charged 50 cents a night, and resembled filthy palaces, inhabited by homeless people. I didn't want to sleep at the park like my friend Bolinger, whom I met in Washington Square. He owned a watch and an impeccable suit; as I later experimented myself, the National Library Park, Washington Square, Central Park and Greyhound stations when the weather turned cold or rainy, were his hotels of choice.

I gave myself a little break and for the first time I went into a restaurant resolved not to add up or multiply a thing. The sunset invading the indoors softened the tone of all voices and the glistening silverware kept repeating a confusing but intimate message about home, sweet home. Life in New York was for me – a man who hadn't been able to penetrate the intimate human warmth of the city – a little abstract; like the work in the Museum of Non-Objective Painting, when painters and critics supposedly explain it and advertise it as the "art of tomorrow," with warmth that contrasts the cold passion of its geometry.

I finally left Harlem to never return. I found a room with two street-level windows. I then discovered how nice it was to breathe, to climb stairs illuminated by daylight, walk around your room, light your pipe and smoke your heart out.

Greenwich Village seemed peaceful, with the wide streets and discreet traffic. I found Italians who sold fruit; and every other shop or so, a Night Club; each trying to exhibit the most blood-pumping pictures, in a pornographic competition that never went beyond the legal limits of decorum. I kept a card that read: "The Night Club that made New York famous." At night, goddesses, similar to those I missed buses for, came out stumbling only to fall right inside cars.

Oh, windows! Little stages of endless action; though, window shades violently interrupted the most important acts. Through each of these windows, people's lives peeked out. Those who played cards under the lamp; the lady punctually watering the plants; the half-naked young woman combing her hair; the window in which an old woman insisted on the same pose and the same model every afternoon. There was also a window of leisure. Nothing ever happened there; when it did, the show was always the same: two people playing checkers, and a lady, sometimes present, sometimes not, bringing something or nothing, like necessary decoration, placed herself in one of the angles of the room. During the summer, the light dress she wore gave her half-naked body a very contemporary classic air. Both people played chess, smoked, pulled the shutters up and down; the next day, the same stereotyped scenes with slight variations appeared on the very same rectangle. Their poses were as wonderfully lazy as those who do nothing, those driven by leisure, legitimate leisure written in their eyes and gestures, on how they pull down the shutters and on how they look out on the street.

I only left my windows alone during those first days in Greenwich Village to go to the Museum of Modern Art. Sometimes I went to the Frick Collection, not so much as to see Fragonard, but because of the freshness of the water and plants. I thought the Museum of Modern Art to be admirable; I entered with the excitement of he who enters an enchanted crystal palace. For the first time, I was going to be in contact with the original canvases of Gauguin and Van Gogh, and I would meet the sculptures by Maillol

and Lehmbruck. However, I found so much abstract painting that I chose to return to my windows. In them, life used the concrete style of the masters.

I realized all Greenwich Village women belong to someone: to the ugly and old mother resembling a matchmaker, to the father, the husband, the beauty parlor owner, the pharmacist, the baker, the wine merchant, or the matchmaker.

I realized that each window enclosed someone, specially a young lady whose eyes never fixed on anything. They plunged into space following the sheer movement of the indeterminate. She had a true collection of plants on her window, and an old man, more or less elegant, seemed to be watching over her in fatherly fashion.

The girl and I established a friendship that started window-to-window, continued at the grocery store and culminated on the night we went to Coney Island. Because all is ill written in New York, as movies dictate, our romance couldn't go any other way. That night, among thousands of people, many of them resembled her caretaker. His obese shadow followed us and tormented us that first night the fragrance of my new life got concentrated in the perfume of her hair.

Other times we went to the parks. Then, the shade of trees made sense again. Next to the doves stood the statue of a national hero, and near by a woman and her dog rested. We talked for a long time and forgot about the devil-faced fat man.

The last time we saw each other was at the bar. We lived in fear of it all suddenly coming to an end. We knew that's how it was supposed to be, though we ignored when. And so, our dates at theaters, parks, libraries and other public places were the stage for intense good-byes that could be interrupted any second.

During one of our sweetest moments, the feared Mr. Fancy Pants busted in on us, and instead of killing us, as movies usually go, he laughed loudly, artificially and convulsively, accentuating his devilish figure.

Soon afterwards I was leaving New York. When I was about to take my Greyhound, a window busted open, and a white shadow swung her arms around from that black building, immersed in a desperate good-bye.

AREQUIPA

In Lima, the Archeology Museum had gold cups and several Cupisnique and Mochica vases on which artwork gathered customs and beliefs of ancient pre-Inca Peruvians, in the small sculpture crowning the vases or which the very same vase becomes. There were wood cups decorated with *kantutas*, and multicolored Nazca pottery on which a mythical onchilla cats devoured lovely and stylized fish with their long tongues. I was served these same fish in the restaurants outside the museum; the pre-Inca diet persists in Peru today.

Being away from Lima, I always remembered a restaurant with a tent that extended the entire way outdoors. There we drank bocks, sometimes at lunch and sometimes during the afternoon with painter Víctor Devéscovi and some other artists. We sat at the little tables in front of an extraordinarily baroque stone church, in contemplation of the dark silver light that sculpted the building. Meanwhile, my friends spoke of Incas, the Viceroyalt and of poetry. The traffic noise left the colonial church's silence intact. After a few slow beers, the baroque architecture revealed the poetry secret it held hidden in its stone. Years later, when I went by Lima, I immediately looked for Devéscovi to return to that place where the painter talked about Paris. But he had died; and when my brother took me back to that dreamy place, instead of finding the intimate square that envied nothing of the corners in Montmartre and Rome, I found nothing. Instead I bumped into the physiognomy of a Bank, wrought iron bars resembling a concrete tomb. Yet the sweet colonial church remained, defending the morning light of its beauty and its graciousness.

The last time I was in Lima I was leaving for El Callao to pursue my trip to South Peru; back then, traveling by boat was better. At El Callao sea birds flew through every place they could. I went aboard a Japanese ship from which you could see Guano Island's deserted rock mountains, overlooking nearby water I discovered gelatin polyps as if I were looking out an enchanted window display. The ship was called the *Rakuyu Marú*. During the brief but slow journey from El Callao to Moliendo, I was always given rice and fish, which tasted worse and worse. Needless to say I traveled in third class. A travel

partner and I adventured around the ship to get out of the cabins and enter the off limits world of first-class passengers. Through a window we saw the sword of a Japanese man dressed in an embroidered kimono, building a gigantic cake resembling a ship. We saw him place honey sails and almond windows as carefully as the making of an art piece. The cake was adorned from head to toe with detailed and complicated colored arabesques; from a distance, these resembled a Tobey piece. The candy ship had been made for the sight and taste of the other passengers, for those who would be able to taste it while sailing the Pacific Ocean.

Once, around Pisco, a shipwreck simulation took place. The crew hurried to get in place at given location, and sailors took the situation so seriously that, as in theater, the representation had gone beyond reality, by clarifying confusion. Lifeboats were taken down and they were placed ready to board and then lowered down into the water. Bells rang as precious alarms. The whole situation was distracting, but it also reminded me that the boat could in fact sink.

Nothing went on in third class; we were mere third-class spectators. We were not taken into account at all, nor did we exist as such. That's what I noted to my mates. A Chilean from the group answered, "When a real shipwreck comes, armed sailors will stop us from getting to first-class passengers' deck, because the boats are for them." Before the bitter words of my travel partner, I thought something similar happened in pharaohs' Egypt. Numeric supremacy of good actions was not enough on the scale on which souls are weighed; to decide immortality, wealth was indispensable to have yourself embalmed.

We gave our backs to the maneuver that was coming to an end and turned our eyes back to the sweet monotony of the sea.

We stopped at Pisco; there, after our ship diet, we rediscovered the taste of American earth in potatoes, beans and chichi, away from tea, rice and fish, which lately we only dared eat at times of true hunger.

The inn owner had a dilapidated truck that offered to take us to a place where weaves and vases could be dug out. I saw the distance in the sand desert in all directions where those marvels were probably buried.

“Chocano,” he said, “dug up precious Inca vases from there some time ago.”

For him, as for Chocano, everything was Inca.

“Besides,” he added, “you can take a mummy home if it fits in your luggage.”

My partner wasn't interested in "Inca" things, and me, concentrated on myself, I was submerged in calculating time estimates; we were staying there for five hours. I could picture my seat in the ship rocking over water and I contemplated the desert in which I'd be destined to stay with nothing but the little money I had on me, if we returned after the ship had set sail. I couldn't stop staring at the truck, calculating, based on the way it looked, the numerous possibilities of an engine failure in those deserted circumstances. And so I went back to my silence, after I had showed interest in the archeological experience. The man from the inn would take me to cemeteries and back, he would dig with me, all for a ridiculous price. He manifested his enthusiasm, certain of his future findings; he was intoxicated in advance due to the things we would eventually find. I also participated in the euphoria of the moment while wearing an undisturbed mask; the risk of going contained me, and the impotence of making the trip turned into a hidden pain. Although I had some knowledge about Ancient Peru, I was unaware of the fact that relatively close to where we were, in the Paracas Peninsula, 450 mummies had been found in 1927, wrapped in splendid weaves.

I went off to Pisco in sadness; I had lost a once in a life time opportunity, and so I slept thinking about those ancient cultures whose art laid there buried, while I traveled being rocked around by the sea, resounding that night in the hitting of the waves on the sides of the Rakuyu Maru.

At Mollendo, the Japanese boat stopped in front of the coast. There a boat took me through rocking waters; I was then lifted in some kind of basket up on shore – it rose as a wall in front of the water.

I took an old omnibus that rode for hours along labyrinth-like roads in which every curve unveiled terrifying precipices. From afar, you could see houses grouped around the intense green of each inhabited oasis. The little Indians waiting for our bus sold purple figs in baskets they'd woven themselves; these were an offering of sweetness from the desert together with the primitive art of basket weaving. When I thought I was getting used to vertigo from high curves, the "white city" started making its entrance on the horizon; Arequipa and its ashlar stones.

I wandered around for a few days, like a tourist waiting for a train that was to take me through great lands all the way to Buenos Aires. I walked through the arches on the plaza; I went to the market, over the bridge and stared at the Misti. I also immersed my eyes in monasteries and stopped in front of the flower ladies; I meant to buy some, but I had no one to give them to. Meanwhile, flowers continued to give their fire and scent away into the air. I saw the donkeys; they were all Platero. I wished I could stay there for many years; not just live there, but die there as well. However, I still depended on a train ticket on which destiny was written, on an itinerary that could be completely changed, but above all on an eagerness to get where no one is expecting you. Because of the absurd we are victims of every day, we are born anywhere, we live where we are a burden and fail to die all at the same time. I was reaching a place where I would soon start waking.

I was a tourist that had his shoes shined while staring right into the Misti – whose snow glistened over a blue porcelain sky – or I varied my contemplation with women of mixed race walking, moving around like sculptures, with their Indian-like eyes and on their way to the office, the store or the church. While I remained there without hurrying and with no purpose, Indian women went by dressed in a party of colors and movers holding that nylon rope, as if ready to hang their next enemy, sat quietly and on the steps of the church chewing coca leaves.

Whenever they were called to take in a load, they continued “chacching.” They were some kind of vagabond raggedy athletes, submerged in the past. They only stepped into the present while lifting an armoire or a piano on their shoulders.

That afternoon, in a park where a statue of General Bolognesi stood, a fight between two movers broke peace; I was the only spectator. They were two filthy giants in a kick fight; each blow seemed deadly and echoed in the silence. However, they carried on with the same vitality of misery and coca leaves, rhythmically kicking each other. A morbid curiosity kept me there watching and waiting for the outcome; I finally left the scene, still hearing the progressively distant blows, during that mystical afternoon made for contemplation.

Months later, I returned to that city and I had the chance to see it through my own experiences. This city is a poem close to my life and that is why I started writing my first words about it as follows:

There is a city in the Andes that lives in my dreams; that city is Arequipa.

In my youth I lived there for a year and wrote a few clear pages, as if I had dipped my pen in a light of lime and gold.

I painted little donkeys covered by the shadow of the Misti, flower women and Indian maternities with backgrounds full of llamas balancing their vibrating necks.

My “*marchand de tableaux*” was called Delgado. I drew at market places; my trait was painting, writing and trying to stay alive. I breathed the thin air of the high plain, a free luxury that unfortunately sometimes served as appetizer, when food was scarce, coincidental with the wear of Delgado’s shoes, product of the millenary stones all around the city through which he looked for hypothetical buyers. These sometimes –miraculously– turned real, crystallized in university professors, high-rank British company associates or tourists.

I traveled by railroad through high plateaus, the train banging on the iron over a snowy silent landscape, in regions where the voice of men became more and more strange; when the night hid the

landscape from me with its dark, star-pierced curtain, the inner environment of cars took on an immense reality for me: I recognized the pre-Inca faces I had contemplated in the “portrait vases” of the Museum of Lima. I admired the many colors of ponchos, and I was delighted by the sounds of Quechua and coca leaves. It all submerged in great isolation; I felt as if I was someone else. To recognize myself I needed to listen to the voice of my friends, the words inflected as taken from the bottom of my childhood, and a geometry that was tenderly welcomed by my retina.

But did it matter? That I dissolved in a nature I was not used to if, all of a sudden, an oasis of freshness appeared in the middle of the desert? It was the existence of water announcing its presence in the intense green verticality of trees. One could see the houses, blended in with soil –soil and stone were one. The soil and church were of the same material. It all seemed unreal: cemeteries and their crosses, and miniature animals, identifiable from afar. Sometimes a square blur emerged, faintly golden with reds, blues and oranges, which translated into a wheat field; Indian women cut off the grain, submerged in a yellow sea, dressed in colors, near a ghostly mill in the middle of the day.

On other occasions, the train went by barely touching the town. As it stopped, shivering before the sunset, I observed Indian women dancing behind the church – children tied to their backs – twitching and twirling in innate sadness. During those long journeys my thoughts sometimes went back to my painting salesman waiting for the next harvest. Paint to eat, eat to paint; paint to eat. These words whispered, playing over and over again at the same rhythm of the train wobbling down the track.

Now that I write about Arequipa after all of these years, it seems as if I were speaking of a dream. I’m not certain of recognizing the things I talked about, not because they’re missing but because I’m someone else and in me many things have died. Nothing is static, everything changes, Heraclites thought; maybe that philosopher Raphael painted at the School of Athens was right: alone among the noise of dialectics, reaching within the essence of being, he fixes his eyes on the ground he probably saw went by like a river, in his idea of a perpetual flow of all things existent. My own memories must have undergone

such a transformation that I can't hold on to what I've lived, and it slips away. Only art can turn a fleeting moment into something eternal. And so I write about what I thought to be buried, and it comes back to life hallucinating.

I now look at Arequipa again with its churches penetrating a translucent air inhabited by bells. In the Cathedral, under the pulpit and as part of it, my old friend the devil is carved into the wood. Preachers speak against him – simultaneously using him as a pedestal – with resounding voices that cover all vaults and reach the square, while that character and his sinister physiognomy, unchanged, seem to contradict Heraclites. Without a doubt, it is we who experience mutations. The devil carved in the same material of saints fed the terror of my childhood, back when psychologists were still not concerned about children's education. It still worries mourning ladies dressed in black and rose in hand, yet in me yesterday's resonance is no longer found. I'm probably used to other more authentic, more contemporary impersonations of evil; the devil must have come up with more dangerous and subtle metamorphoses.

Again, I contemplate myself, during one of those holidays I gave myself; dedicated to contemplation of the Misti from Arequipa Square, reciting poem fragments out loud in front of three old men, old as churches, punctual on their daily visit, who I considered the true inhabitants of the park.

Parks of great cities
with bronze statues and vagabonds
with Welch dogs and elegant women
with rosy nannies and harsh officers.
Parks of great cities where I loved and starved;
parks of provinces dead
in which only bells stand.

I had just repeated these verses to myself – made by me and for me – when a photographer came to the park: he was run down by misery and he reminded me so much of artists who can't sell their work, and I had just sold one. I came up with the idea of having my picture taken, sitting on my favorite bench to incubate dreams. I posed with the seriousness of a daguerreotype when Delgado found me, my sketchbook always under my arm. I am not certain whether the active light of the Andes of cheap hypophosphite followed Heraclites' theory faster than expected, because Delgado and I are two twin smudges on an insipid background. I, the big sentimentalist that I am, keep this picture as if Nadar had taken it. Besides, the two symbolic spots allow me to reconstruct two characters joined by the same destiny in a dramatic symbiosis.

That day was a splendid moment, dedicated to perfect leisure. I walked through the arches surrounding the square. I stopped without reason in front of the windows; and later on, as I was about to cross the street, I contemplated the Society of Jesus Church with new eyes, its violet stone and baroque display. I stood on that corner observing sculptors softening the solid material, twisting it and making foliage, fauna and beings that could only exist in the world of art. In the face of the country's topographic draught, a sculptor by contrast had made stones blossom with a completely tropical and theological nature.

I got lost on the streets thinking of the baroque; I could hear my steps amid the silence and I discovered the soundness of stone modulated by the sound of boxed and profound sewers at the ridge of houses in a permanent embrace of freshness. I reached the conclusion that Arequipa was a musical city when I realized the restless sounds at night and a plentiful rumor invading the whole city: water never sleeps; the sleepwalking water whose voice sounds better under the moonlight was the true music of the night.

Loneliness was starting to weigh me down and I discovered the pleasure of sharing it freeing myself from it. When I ran into Julio Mercado, the poet, we penetrated the high plain night filled with local restaurants known as *picanterias*, where Indian women danced *huaynos*. Mercado, as a true poet,

contemplated with hieratic expression the dance of his kind, impassive as if excitement turned him into a straight sculpture. Yet *chicha* and music – oh! Wise Dionysian combination able to make statues speak – made the poet recite long poems with numerous *quechua* words in between. His verses impressed me, although my ignorance of native vocabulary made me use him as a dictionary to grasp the full meaning of his words.

That night, I said good-bye to the poet at dawn and walked away listening to the monologue of my steps. On the sidewalks, shadows of prudish women jumped out at night like bats, attracted by the incandescent door of the church. Peeking in, I found the metal of chandeliers glistening; the many candles were, on the altarpiece's gold background, another lit altarpiece where the little shivering flames shook like the hands and voice of old ladies who'd found, sculpted on a block of night, a mystic door made of fire. One afternoon, I found the church door again and I entered; from the inside, I saw the day extinguish. The gold of the altarpiece kept the sun, retained it and refused to say good-bye to its glow.

Bits of life stay in the places we have been destined to go through; my memories are nothing but attempts to recover the past. Like the darkened altarpiece, greedy with its last hot charcoal, I write with the memory of things I keep quiet about and matters of little importance. But I can't help myself from going back – for the last time – to Delgado, for whom, deep down, I write these words; words I gather around an Andes city of white stone, where I continue to see my art salesman wandering about.

I went back to Arequipa thirty years later, only to face a city in which a part of my youth remained only to come in contact with an experience rich in nostalgia.

I knew Arequipa had suffered two violent earthquakes; I was to find the aftermath all over the city's stone face. I had also been through my share of tempests.

In Arequipa, time had started to demolish the old city and some cracked buildings still stood like architectural ghosts. Years had destroyed many things in me as well, except for that dream anchored to my memory with sharp outlines; the white city against the incandescent blue sky.

I left for Peru in January; I had the everlasting company of the Misti decorating the Arequipa sky and I was hoping I would find the mixed race population that reached the city on donkeys to turn over their cornucopia of basket weaves with legumes, flowers and fruit in the market where I drew every day.

Naturally, transportation had changed; I found nothing but one little donkey lost in time, carrying nothing. I saw no llamas; they continued to cross the paths in higher and more secluded regions, high – where even the hearts of motors suffer from *soroche*⁴.

I wanted to see the *picanterias* – those charming local restaurants—and their clay roofs again. I went there with painters, poets and my art merchant. We ate in the broad gardens partly covered by the golden hay Trujillo painted, partly open to the ever-blue sky. We danced *huaynos* to the rhythm of guitars, and *cholas* dressed in purple skirts swung their long braided hair. We drank *chicha* with our meals and *anis de mono* afterwards, when songs began.

Pantigoso – the painter – sung accompanied by a guitar, melancholic *yaravies*.

Grassland, why your sadness,
If the sun is there to kiss you,
And the moon to hold you.
Are you like me, by any chance?
Alone and in the world,
No family, no mother or father,
With no father or mother,
No family, no mother or father

Pantigoso continued scratching the guitar a few more seconds, and left the moaning inside the hearts of his listeners.

⁴ Altitude sickness

The *picanteria* I found was agonizing; the mechanic music of the jukebox was helping its death.

I had sought God in market places and *picanterias*; I then went to his official location – churches. I went to the Society of Jesus church, located downtown; and to the Caima and Yanhuara Churches, which were further away – white ashlar churches, small, robust; where the Andean baroque wrote on the arabesques of its mountains the anger of its faith. The same bells were there, their voice with no trace of aging; however, the houses around the church were no longer made of clay, or were humble like their parishioners. Massive, tacky mansions of the new rich infested the place.

In Arequipa, I looked up my friends: painter Teodoro Nunez, poet Guillermo Mercado, Molina, my merchant Delgado and some others. Some had gone bald and gotten fat, they spoke of local politics and their businesses; they had become important people and I saw myself in them, yet in a different style.

The park in front of the Cathedral used to be intimate and secluded, like the temple atrium in one of the poems by Lopez Velarde. There I drew the old men holding canes as crooked as their wrists, and Indian families spread the rainbow of their weaves on the lawn to sit down and eat. Now, around the Square, parked automobiles occupied streets, and drivers inhabited the park. Silence had been lost; religiously devoted ladies no longer went by dragging their feet, nor did they cross Maria Medina Park anymore.

In Arequipa, of white stone

And white moon,

Dressed in black walked

Maria Medina.

In the cemetery of Lima

There she remains, Maria.

The first time I was in Arequipa I walked to a small town named after the great Inca Pachacutec. I opened my box of paint and under the sun and wind I put on canvas the church surrounded by houses and shadowed by a few trees. The distance unified the landscape, and the amalgamation of light fused the architecture with nature.

A peasant lady that went by stopped to tell me Macias, the Arequipa artist, came to paint at that very same spot. Macias had had a show in San Jose, Costa Rica; General Volio bought a small blurred spot from him – a small street near La Soledad church. His largest canvas was called ruins near Cuzco, located near Arequipa, as I learned later from painters because he kept repeating them; he sold them in the places he passed through. He raised ruins on his canvases and submitted them to the luminescence of the West, pasting them.

That same year, 1932, a retrospective show of Macías was held in Arequipa; the painter had died. Among much of his work, some bad, some average and some good, there was this one extraordinary piece. It was the inside of the Society of Jesus church, with golden altars, glistening and multiplying the yellow light of profuse candles. It was all done with the plastering euphoria that was characteristic of Macias.

Many years later, I returned to that very same church where Maria Medina celebrated mass and prayed before altars. The church was completely uninhabited, not just of people but of all those liturgical objects that were its soul. Tourists came in and everything was white and clean; the only thing that cheered the mural ribbed vaults was volutes and baroque arabesques.

But I wasn't there as a tourist; I had come there to look for the lingering feelings of a distant passion. Altars and llamas, incense and women wearing black; it was all gone. All of those things that back in 1932 were the life of the stone in which I too submerged myself, and the Arequipa painter collected on his modest format canvas. All in all, the Society of Jesus church had died; it was a museum of itself.

That year I met the sisters of painter Vinatea Reinoso. They were in mourning due to the death of the artist, whose paintings of Arequipa vendors I first saw in the city of their models. In Vinatea's art, the graphic element was important and had a tendency towards flat colors, contrary to Macias.

I lived in front of the Square, in the arches, in Arequipa, and in the House of the Artist. I could almost say it was built for me; I was the first to live there, and the last. The first floor held the show room; upstairs was my workspace, where our gatherings took place.

A group of festive young women walked under the Square's arches; they were prostitutes, who came out at five in the afternoon in great joy, perhaps to remind men of their existence.

I met Pablo Delgado in the House of the Artist. He was the one who drank Pisco the most, the best dressed and the one who worked the least. In the opinion of the painter, I was the first to manage to make him get interested in doing something. Delgado used his time to sell my paintings. He was a tall and skinny young man; he wore a really small hat and had a really big nose. The folder full of drawings he always carried under his arm completed his characterization.

When he managed to sell something he would look for me in the market where I stoically struggled with hunger while I drew. I asked about Delgado; Molina told me he had passed away in Lima, where he had lived off of the profession I had invented for him – art merchant. During his last years he decided to be a painter as well by imitating the art of the artist from Lima and selling them for his own benefit. The painter understood Delgado's good soul and his weaknesses; when he died, he absolved him by saying "It's a pity he's gone, he had already begun to outdo me."

CENTRAL AMERICA

Guatemala is in most of the things I contemplated and lived, but some are the symbol of their most clear image. Guatemala, for example, was a huge house with halls and corridors where the garden made an entrance with its fragrance all the way to the rooms. Bird cages hung profusely from corridor beams and from their bamboo jails, birds set free the one thing they could: their song, flying from the back yard to the sky, passing through our ears.

In that house in Guatemala City, there were colonial benches, carved armoires, saints submerged in the darkness of painted cloth and an image that cried crystal tears in the dark. When everyone was sleeping, and there was room enough to move around, ancestors woke to live their lives, or live their death, that is. They drank hypothetical hot cocoa; they chatted or prayed before religious images.

The house owners, two spinsters who had come on hard times, with the same manners of my mother and grandmother, sheltered journalists, poets and painters, who got together to talk around a good cup of coffee or a nice cold bottle of beer. There, in the middle of a green shade, with exuberant vegetation that seemed to have been unleashed from a greater trail, I listened to the hearts of friends. Alfonso Orantes, with his passion for justice, poets Carlos Samayoa Aguilar, Mendez and Figueroa, and Miguel Angel Asturias, who returned from Europe to come in contact with the Earth. Fine gold was raining in the back yard during the sunset and the bronze of Spanish bells rang clearer than they did back in the XVII century.

Guatemala was also a schoolteacher from Solalá, who gave me a pre-Columbian terracotta head, which held something in its mouth; that clay made up the dark face of an old man. The modeled head has disappeared but the memory of the teacher and his gift continues to exist. Like the trail of the Greeks who chiseled the youth of those leaving this world on their marble, my good friend the teacher from Solalá, probably an old man, or just a name – Gonzalez – continues to live in my memory, joyful and young.

In the public school of Heredia, teachers were said to be light bearers. I evoked Sir Abel Fernandez, who recited verses by Martí. All of them underpaid, enlightened our consciences for free.

I have met many teachers in Central America, poor, happy and good; the same in Guatemala, El Salvador, and so they were in Costa Rica. Teachers; that's the guild I belong to, that's who I am, I used to tell Gonzalez.

I've always loved rural schools, where everything is simple and true. My teacher friend took me to the school in Solalá where he taught. Children dressed like their parents and their eyes looked like their ancestors looked at the mountains, and they stood up to pronounce the bad Spanish they barely half learned.

I painted a picture that represented a classroom with whitewashed walls, clay floor and a skeleton poster hanging from the wall. That was the only decoration that in its isolation transcended its elemental and didactic purpose.

Space in that classroom was charged with a surreal atmosphere, no tricks and no formulas from magicians from those isthmuses; without the mystery of reality. The scientific ghost took on an elegant pose before starting with his one and only step of macabre dance.

In the classroom, I mentally drew the Indian children in front of the disturbing presence of the slate-white skeleton. Some times I broke off my attention from this alternative to escape through the open window to infinity through which the shining of Lake Atitlán made its entrance. Life turned blue light, fought in motionless and explosive tension against the x-rayed man on the wall. I followed his mourning and dialogue, his silent dialectic, while Gonzalez held a discussion with the Math teacher.

Before leaving – as if I were the frightening Minister of Education, who had to be received with great honors –, teachers tormented the children one last time by addressing me with some questions.

When the bell rang and the children got back to their regular language, I said farewell to the poster who stared back at me with its shadow eyes.

I went back to Costa Rica in an English ship that set sail from a port in San José, Guatemala; I can't remember the name. I know it did coastal navigation shipping along the coasts of the Pacific and passengers were not one of its interest.

Someone else was also traveling aboard, a Philosophy student from De la Plata University; she traveled in first class. She was the disciple of Francisco Romero, the philosopher. I made a portrait of him back in Buenos Aires, a wood engraving.

The boatswain was a young, tall, blonde Spaniard who looked English, like the Captain. When we talked, I found out we had similar tastes, we both got along with the fair passenger and hated the horrible boat food that tasted like mineral fat, copper, paved wood. It never had the pristine flavor of simple foods. The most gratifying thing would have been getting off of the boat at each stop and tasting the dishes each land had to offer, and the fruit in which the sun stores all sweetness.

The Guatemalan girl, disciple of philosopher Francisco Romero, was a brunette of fine Indian features resembling a rain-softened Mayan trail; she would go on the deck and peek through the boat railing to see flying fish swim by.

The three of us were chatting in front of her small cabin, when all of a sudden she took out her wallet to show us a picture of her mother. As she did so, the wind blew away a pack of green dollar bills; some were lost in the sky, others the boatswain and I were able to catch. We speedily ran snatching bills from the swift grip of wind.

Leaning on the boat railing the boatswain told us about Spain – inland – on this, his first trip at sea. I was reciting fragments of a poem by Neruda.

– I love the love of sailors
Who kiss and leave.

.....

One night they sleep with Death
In the bed of the sea.

.....

I tried to remember other verses, but I kept falling back to those same ones, which I repeated before the plea of my conversation partner. We spent a long time this way, the sea rhythmically breaking against the ship hull, sailing to Libertad port in El Salvador.

We sat on the deck together, the captain, an officer, the boatswain, and the “beautiful passenger.” The sporadic conversation developed between the captain and the officer; we three were the Spanish-speaking trio.

The captain had a Honduran macaw with extraordinarily colored feathers, fanned against the back of his chair as a coat of arms. I had just seen them sculpted in stone, in the rings at the ball playing fields in Copan. I was devoted to contemplating the macaw – its feathers adorned the foreheads of Bonampak warriors – when I realized the captain had a bandaged hand due to a token of affection from the macaw, which also tore chunks from its master’s chair.

Given those precedents I lost the serenity I had found in the immaculate blue sky that diffused in my insides. Serenity was no longer present when the macaw got off the Captain’s chair, holding itself by its beak as it did with its claws; it walked around the deck with an aged face, inward facing feet, dragging the treasure of its multicolored feathers. It walked with the lowered head of a bull about to strike, passing by a few inches off my feet.

I saw the Captain’s injured hand while the damn bird stared at me with blood-shot eyes. In spite of my love for animals, I would have gladly stood up to kick the bloody bird away. However, it wasn’t just any macaw; that was the Captain’s totem-like animal.

The ship was at Amapala at the break of dawn, loading and unloading without ever touching a pier. Again, we reengaged our conversation next to the captain and the macaw. The boatswain showed off in front of the girl by launching himself into shark-infested waters, only to return rapidly to his safe spot.

I ate in the kitchen because I wasn't traveling first class, and that had to be justified somehow. The delicacies I ate were the same ship-tasting food the Captain bolted down, but I was forced to see how dishes were taken out of yellowish water in which they had supposedly been washed, every time food was served.

From Amapala, the ship went back to Libertad, where the same scenes repeated themselves on deck. These come and go and the prolonged stations in front of a number of ports gave the boatswain enough chance to fall in love with the beautiful passenger.

Three months later I received the wedding invitation both the boatswain and the young Philosophy student sent me.

There is an island in Granada Lake called Ometepe and it has a volcano. To make locals aware of its presence, it wakes and shakes its land from time to time.

I arrived at the island that day with Manolo Cuadra, a Nicaraguan poet, by crossing the great lake of pirates in a tiny sailboat. During the day, the glistening water made us travel with our eyes shut, which we sometimes opened as cats do. Yet at the coming of dawn, we traveled over multicolor water; the rough and filthy sail hardened by the outdoors, reflected a chestnutty golden light.

"Lower your heads," shouted the helmsman steering the boat. Together with his son, they made up the rest of the crew. The horizontal flagpole abruptly passed by nearly touching our heads, searching for the direction of wind. We then laid our faces down on the boat's wood floor and rose back up into the freshness of the night and looked at the stars.

In the sparkling morning, with no wind blowing and sun in our face, we arrived at a small port in Ometepe Island called Alta Gracia.

We stayed at the best and only hotel around, sleeping on wood benches like Saint Francis of Assisi. The owner charged a reasonable Cordoba a day; the fee included meals, adorned by several tropical fruit.

The true attraction on that island was the lake. Children rode bulls they steered by a nose ring. That's how they went to get water; however, before they returned with the precious liquid, they stayed to play a while in the lake. They rode on each other's shoulders; they battled, shouted and bathed in the foam born from their jumps. Women washing clothes suddenly made the beach turn into a white laundry room.

In the town of that paradise, a man who was nearly naked placed his ulcerated body under the shade. There were two idols of over a meter high standing nearby. Children played throwing stones at each other. They had destroyed the noses and the sculptures had lost their soul, losing live angles and light-friendly edges. What nine centuries had been unable to do, those predatory Indians and their daily afternoon game had. I approached them to tell them they were destroying the noses of the grandfathers and that sculptures were not to be destroyed. The children looked at each other in confusion and one of them said, "These old, ugly people are not family, they're the devil."

We climbed up the trails of the island and its low stone fences. From there we saw Alta Gracia wake in the morning growling. Alta Gracia stood at water's edge, adorned by the bluish black color of knives heated by flame. For two Cordobas I bought the multicolored feet of an eagle-like vase. Later on, archeologists – usually right about these things – convinced me I had bought a vulture.

Part of the trail we did on "slow-footed" oxen, as Hornero used to call them. At first, that seemed primitive and poetic to us, as in the first days of the world. Later on we understood the importance of the horse and how it introduced speed and new aesthetics. Their hooves echo near Palas Athenea, strolling on the marble of the frisé on the Panateneas.

Downhill on our way to Alta Gracia, a girl running behind us made the group stop to ask which of the two sold the "little stone."

"What little stone?" I asked.

"Well, the one that keeps love from going away."

“If I had such stone” I said, “I wouldn’t trade it; not for all the gold in the world.”

We went back to the lake; the island charm was concentrated there. On the waterfront, Manolo Cuadra threw flat stones barely touching the surface long before they sank. Either that or they recited fragments of poetry. I drew the children riding bulls and horses, and women washing while they were singing.

FIRE

I went to El Salvador to be a part of a painting jury. Locked inside the hotel I talked to intellectuals and artists; it was at their invitation that I went to contemplate Izalco. On my last outing I went to the party held by the Minister of Culture in honor of jury members. It took place in a high area, somewhere in the city's outskirts.

Once dinner was over, Honduran poet Clementina Suarez suggested that each of us speak. We started in order; they all spoke quite fluently: Alberto Velásquez, Arturo Agüero, Pablo Antonio Cuadra and others. Their words seemed deep and packed with sense, even though I can't remember them.

My turn to address my fellow mates was getting closer; next to me, Salaurré spoke exultingly of problems of the soul. My mind was blank; nay, I was struggling within. Either I kept listening to the writer or I made an effort to concentrate and plan my speech. I took another cognac, but I lacked ideas still. However, inside me I thought that idea that is not in my brain is like the light of the city: fragile like the man Pascal describes; souls vigilant through their conscience looking after the nocturnal chaos they surge from. Yet again I immediately felt the painful threat, at a given time seemingly imminent, of thousands of eyes turning on me to hear me speak. I summoned the divine providence, able to cause an earthquake in a land of volcanoes. So I asked God to have a sudden event happen to free me from what was about to happen. However, it was the Devil who heard best, because right then and among the pale city lights, enormous flames arose.

"Fire" someone yelled, and we all looked out the open terrace. Serafín Quiteño thought himself to be Nero. The Post Office building was on fire.

When I saw Izalco, a tourism-oriented park surrounded it. The tamed volcano discretely erupted, funny and representing no danger whatsoever; as if bribed by the National Board of Tourism.

I had met Izalco from the sea; it introduced itself at night wrapped in its own fire. From the deck, Izalco was a lighting nest.

“An admirable business,” said the boatswain, “announcing tours to Hell, starting for example at Etigia lagoon. Publicity would be easy,” he added. “A minimum portion of what has been written about this place by those who have never been there would be enough.”

In our group, a philosophy student noted the dangers of passing through some places. “There are things that when looked at make us change, and we are never the same person we were before,” and with a beautiful voice with a tad of indignation she continued.

“Making Hell a tourist attraction is the same as destroying it. Tourist attractions are by definition ephemeral and Hell is eternal. Plus, if you get there, you live there as a protagonist, not as a spectator.”

“Truth be told,” the boatswain said to show his sense of humor, “Earth is Hell; that’s why I live at sea.”

The boat we sailed in was a small hell and a short heaven under the shaking stars.

Informe de investigación

Francisco y los caminos; la traducción de la prosa poética

Introducción

La traducción de *Francisco y los caminos*⁵ y el análisis del proceso de traducción constituyen el presente trabajo de graduación. Como obra, *Francisco y los caminos*, junto a las otras piezas de la obra literaria del artista, constituyen representaciones importantísimas dentro del ámbito literario costarricense que, como muchos otros, continúa a la espera de su debido reconocimiento. *Francisco y los caminos* es ejemplo, dentro de muchas otras cosas, del subgénero literario de prosa poética; uno que goza del respaldo de unos y el desprecio o negación de otros.

El análisis de traducción del presente trabajo se basa en las nociones que se han creado respecto a los géneros que desencadenan y crean el concepto de prosa poética, siendo estos la poesía en prosa, la prosa y sus derivadas, tales como la crónica y la autobiografía, todo de la mano de la visión traductológica de Octavio Paz sobre la traducción literaria.

A continuación se presenta un resumen sobre el autor y artista, Francisco Amighetti Ruiz, un vistazo al contenido del texto traducido *Francisco y los caminos* (Amighetti, 1980) y el contexto literario en el que se desenvuelve la obra, así como la justificación y antecedentes, metodología, consideraciones teóricas y análisis para la realización del presente trabajo de investigación.

⁵ Amighetti, Francisco. *Francisco y los caminos*. Editorial Costa Rica. 1980.

El autor y su obra

Sobre el autor

Francisco Amighetti Ruiz, conocido por “conferir a las sensaciones más elementales el valor de un universo al alcance de todos” (Montero 1987), sea por medio de su obra plástica o literaria, nace el “1 de junio de 1907 en San José, Costa Rica, en el hogar de Juan Amighetti Petensi y Angela Ruiz Echeverría” (Montero 129). Grabador, pintor, y muralista, Amighetti es uno de los exponentes plásticos más importantes en el medio costarricense. Su formación, producto no en su totalidad de la academia sino de una necesidad visceral de buscar más allá de las corrientes existentes en su momento, sirvió de inspiración para un sinnúmero de obras plásticas y obras literarias significativas dentro de los marcos de la plástica y la literatura costarricense.

Además de su participación mediante artículos de periódico y revistas, algunas de sus publicaciones más mencionadas incluyen un pequeño poemario titulado *Poesía* (1936) y los libros *Francisco en Harlem* (1947), *Francisco y los caminos* (1963) y *Francisco en Costa Rica* (1966) (Montero p. 130-134). Producto de su aprendizaje, vivencias y porvenires, la carrera literaria de Francisco Amighetti cobra vida paralelamente a su formación artística y su vida personal. La necesidad del artista de dar a conocer su obra a la mayor cantidad de público posible era una “cuestión social” (Montero 2010) que lo hace no solo crear un fuerte lazo con el grabado y el muralismo por la posibilidad de gran difusión de dichas técnicas, sino que también quizás permitió el que plasmara en su obra literaria parte de su vida y de lo que durante sus viajes se percató, y es hoy un elemento importante en hacer aun más extenso el alcance de su obra por medio de la presente traducción.

“En Costa Rica el pueblo ha vivido mucho tiempo divorciado de las artes. Las actividades artísticas se han venido concretando a los círculos cerrados o a un mero ‘diletantismo’. Creo que tal cosa no se debe continuar y creo también que la pintura mural constituye un eficaz medio de divulgar, de popularizar las artes” (Montero p. 55).

Tras una larga y amplia carrera, durante la cual acumula exposiciones internacionales y nacionales, entre otras experiencias, Francisco Amighetti muere a sus 91 años, el jueves 12 de noviembre de 1998 en San José, Costa Rica (Montero p. 136).

Francisco y los caminos

La primera edición de *Francisco y los caminos* data de 1963 y es un híbrido que junta *Francisco en Harlem*, publicado previamente en México, y los restantes capítulos que vendría a funcionar como el resto del corpus de *Francisco y los caminos*. La edición de 1980, utilizada en esta investigación, está compuesta de ciento ochenta y ocho páginas, dividida en siete capítulos anteceditos por una pequeña presentación o prólogo que escribe el artista; la primera edición del libro carece de dicho prólogo. Ambas ediciones incluyen una serie de grabados del artista utilizadas como ilustraciones dentro el texto.

Modalidad discursiva

Para efectos de la presente investigación, *Francisco y los caminos* es catalogado como un texto dentro del subgénero o modalidad discursiva de prosa poética. La prosa poética permite identificar características similares a las del poema, como el hablante lírico, la actitud lírica, el objeto y el tema. Las diferencias con la prosa poética son varias. Tenemos la ausencia de elementos formales como la métrica y la rima; la prosa poética está escrita en prosa, pero su

propósito principal no es contar una historia. La prosa poética más bien apunta a transmitir sensaciones, impresiones, sentimientos, formas de ver el mundo (Monge, 2010).

En la escritura, como en la plástica, Francisco Amighetti trabaja con “un estilo vigoroso... y más definitivo”. En *Francisco y los caminos*, el autor “busca la precisión que la talla confiere a la sensación y a la imagen” (Montero p. 98). Existe una conexión significativa entre las sensaciones y sentimientos del artista, la elaboración de su obra plástica y la redacción sus memorias y recuerdos de aquel momento, una ilustrando más tarde a la otra. De igual forma, en que primero talla las maderas para sus grabados sobre Perú o Argentina, así escribe luego al respecto, “evocando lo vivido” (Montero p. 98).

Contenido de la obra

Francisco y los caminos es, entonces, una obra en prosa que toma aspectos de la novela y de la poesía, de la crónica y de la autobiografía, que forma un texto que pareciera darle al lector la libertad de perspectiva, desde el punto de vista del autor, de sus vivencias y maneras de percibir las mismas, en los diferentes lugares que el artista visita, sin ser el texto una continuidad o historia. Amighetti logra “pintar cuadros sensoriales” que le muestran al receptor no solo un escenario, sino, principalmente, el sentimiento que una u otra situación genera en él. Así, la obra plástica del artista realizada durante sus experiencias mencionadas en *Francisco y los caminos* o bien inspiradas en las mismas, estará directamente ligada al contenido del texto. Aquello que el artista vierte en su obra plástica tiene que ver directamente con sus percepciones y vivencias en las regiones que visita durante sus distintos recorridos, y de la misma manera expresa dichas percepciones en su obra escrita. El arte y la literatura son simplemente medios distintos de

expresar sus sentimientos y reacciones ante los mundos y gentes que conoce a lo largo del tiempo.

La unión poética entre la obra plástica del artista y su obra literaria no escapa a los ojos de quienes observan su trabajo. Echeverría (1977) describe a Amighetti como “una dualidad artística” y plantea la existencia de un elemento omnipresente (la ventana) tanto en la lírica como en la plástica del artista. De forma acertada, Echeverría dice creer que el símbolo de la ventana en la obra de Amighetti no es sino la forma del artista de “retener lo que cambia, lo que se va” (Echeverría 1977). Prueba de la afirmación de Echeverría es justamente la contraportada de *Francisco y los caminos*, donde el autor mismo afirma que la obra se titula de esta forma porque “...abarca todos [los caminos] ” (Amighetti 1980). En la contraportada de su libro, Amighetti explicita que no es relevante en donde nacen sus memorias; para él lo importante es situar sus andanzas, “retener lo que cambia”. Evocarlos es, para el artista, “devolver[se] para recuperar lo que se había hecho niebla” (Amighetti p. 9).

Amighetti impregna de poesía los hechos cotidianos, normalmente insulsos y automáticos que los hombres realizan. Es por estas cotidianeidades que el “inconciente colectivo” (RAE 2003) se forma; justamente, para Amighetti, lo poético está en las “cosas pequeñas” (Montero 2010), en los rasgos de esta colectividad (RAE, 2003). Un sinnúmero de elementos forman una unidad literaria muy particular y característica, que a su vez logra unir una variedad de géneros literarios para lograr una finalidad particular a un “nuevo subgénero” presente en la obra del artista: lo poético, la libertad expresiva, la renuncia a la narratividad, lo imaginativo, lo arbitrario, la representación de la vida moderna, el lenguaje figurado, la realidad transfigurada, el ritmo, la apariencia gráfica de la prosa (Monge, 2010). Así, pone en evidencia no solo lo relevante de la cotidianeidad, sino la visión ennegrecida del hombre ante lo esencial, ante las bases del ser.

Justificación de la selección del texto

Las razones de escogencia de este texto vienen a ser personales, profesionales y de carácter cultural. Si bien en un inicio es un enlace de familiaridad el que determina la proclividad para con el texto, es la posibilidad de dar reconocimiento al texto como exponente de un subgénero tan poco estudiado, que la decisión de traducir y analizar *Francisco y los caminos* se concreta.

Si bien la obra es interesante desde muchos puntos de vista, siendo el primero el literario, se plantea la posibilidad de traducir un texto propio de un subgénero poco estudiado. A diferencia de otros géneros y subgéneros ya establecidos en la literatura y más ampliamente estudiados por la traductología, el texto en prosa poética representa un doble desafío. El primero, comprender el subgénero, ambiguo aún dentro de su misma área de estudio; y luego intentar dar con soluciones traductológicas que ayuden a dar inicio a un estudio más elevado de ambos temas, que bien podrían desarrollarse de forma paralela.

Se toma la decisión de traducir el texto original al idioma inglés, tanto por el perfil de la traductora como por el carácter amplio comunicativo de lo que muchos llaman la lengua universal de nuestros tiempos. En el mundo globalizado actual, las tendencias en cuanto a uso de idiomas particulares en lo empresarial y comercial ha llevado a múltiples naciones alrededor del mundo a aprender una segunda o tercera lengua que les facilite interactuar con otros. Esta realidad globalizada a nivel idiomático ha trascendido también a otras áreas fuera del mundo de los negocios, llenando la necesidad social de darse a entender y comprender al otro. Las lenguas auxiliares, que aquí se entenderán como las lenguas más utilizadas a nivel mundial, debido a su popularidad, son encabezadas por el idioma inglés, entre otros. Por años, el hombre ha buscado un medio de comunicación universal entre grupos e individuos con distintas lenguas; si bien el

idioma inglés no es una lengua universal, actualmente es la lengua auxiliar más extendida (Rodríguez Díaz, 2004). Ejemplo claro de la universalidad del inglés es la inminente necesidad que tienen los profesionales costarricenses de aprender este idioma para abrir más puertas en el campo laboral en el que se desempeñan, sea este en las artes, letras o ciencias. Este ejemplo se repite en el continente americano y en otras partes del mundo, con este u otros idiomas.

Debido al creciente número de individuos con capacidad de habla inglesa, se debe considerar la amplia difusión que tendría un texto traducido a dicho idioma. Si bien el español es también un idioma hablado por miles de personas a nivel mundial, se acude a la posibilidad de aceptación por su carácter foráneo y a la vez universal de un autor hispanohablante traducido al inglés – una ventana a otra visión de mundo, si se quiere.

Antecedentes

Desde tiempos antiguos, el ser humano ha buscado la forma de comunicarse. Los cuentos orales, supuestamente originales de regiones particulares, no han hecho más que probar ser versiones de un mismo original que comparten distintos grupos con hablas distintas. Y el ser humano ha sido capaz de transmitir por años cantidades inimaginables de información de una persona a otra y de un grupo a otro.

La traducción de *Francisco y los caminos* no es sino un paso más en la interminable labor traductológica y comunicativa de los seres humanos. Como cualquier otra investigación, este informe de análisis de traducción no existe sin las investigaciones que anteceden su creación. El carácter literario, objeto del presente informe de traducción, presupone estudios de teoría literaria y literatura costarricense, sus características en la creación y traducción de estos mismos textos y de alguna manera, en la traducción de *Francisco y los caminos*.

Se entenderá la literatura costarricense como aquella creada por autores de dicha nacionalidad que apelan al uso de los distintos canales literarios, como el realismo, el costumbrismo, el realismo mágico y demás géneros. Serán así los estudios sobre literatura costarricense en el ámbito de la traducción los que vendrán a ejemplificar los trabajos realizados en torno al campo de la traducción de literatura costarricense. Los estudios literarios sobre la poesía en prosa y a su vez, un avistamiento a posibles modelos de prosa poética inician, según varios autores, con los estudios de Baudelaire sobre *Gaspard de la Nuit* (1842) de Aloysius Bertrand; es Baudelaire quien da nombre a la propuesta nueva modalidad de escritura que la época tanto buscaba, pues en la época, los escritores buscaban un nuevo vehículo que les permitiera transmitir su mensaje sin las ataduras restrictivas de los modelos ya existentes (Monge, 2010).

Anteriores a Bertrand, los ejemplos son extensos. Según Suzzane Bernard, (en Monge 2010), las traducciones en prosa de la literatura europea, la alemana e inglesa específicamente, sientan un precedente traductológico sobre las tendencias de la época y respecto al género literario naciente: la prosificación de la poesía a manera de herramienta de rescate de los efectos y características del texto original. Monge (2010) menciona, entre ellas, las connotaciones, las sugerencias, las evocaciones simbólicas, figuras retóricas y otros.

Junto a los estudios de Monge (2010) sobre el tema de la poesía en prosa y la prosa poética, se menciona a respetados autores sobre el tema. María Victoria Utrera Torremocha (1999) en España, y Jesse Fernández (1994) con su enfoque hispanoamericano contribuyen al conocimiento expreso sobre el controvertido tema de la prosa poética. Como estudio traductológico, se especula que será quizás una obra inédita por parte de Carlos Francisco Monge, el primer estudio formal sobre la poesía en prosa y prosa poética en Costa Rica.

Además, hay que recalcar como antecedente la práctica de la traducción literaria en Costa Rica y de la obra costarricense, así como la relevancia de los trabajos de traducción que se realizan en el país, y la falta de reconocimiento de los mismos dentro de la literatura costarricense. Como ejemplos renombrados tenemos la traducción de Shakespeare por Joaquín Gutiérrez y la traducción a distintos idiomas de obra costarricense, como menciona Gapper en su artículo en línea *Babel costarricense*:

“La literatura costarricense no ha quedado aislada en su propio idioma, como se podría creer. Desde los primeros años del siglo XX hay traducciones de obras de nuestros “clásicos”...El mismo Aquileo J. Echeverría, junto a Fernández Guardia y a Lisímaco Chavarría, fue traducido en 1925 al francés...Carlos Luis Fallas [con] Mamita Yunai, [que] está traducida al ruso, al italiano, al checo, al eslovaco, al alemán, al polaco y al rumano. Además, de Marcos Ramírez y de Mi madrina, hay ediciones en francés, en alemán y en polaco.” (web, 2008)

Entre otros ejemplos, Gapper también menciona a Fabián Dobles y Joaquín Gutiérrez, quienes “también vieron, en vida, traducciones de algunas de sus principales novelas”: *Years like Brief Days* (*Los años, pequeños días*) de Dobles, en 1989 y *Cocorí* , de Gutiérrez, traducidos al inglés, francés, italiano, alemán y lituano (2008).

Lamentablemente, es aún incipiente en Costa Rica el reconocimiento de la labor del traductor y de la traducción literaria costarricense. Para pesar nuestro, “las letras costarricenses... no se han difundido como lo merecen muchos destacados autores; las historias literarias apenas mencionan una escasa selección. También es cierto que poco se sabe, en nuestro medio, de una considerable cantidad de obras cimeras de la literatura nacional que se encuentran vertidas a muchos idiomas, no solo al inglés o al francés” (Gapper, 2008). Como bien lo ejemplifica Miguel Ángel Vega Cernuda en su artículo “La historia de la traducción como tarea nacional”, ni siquiera importantes editoriales como la Editorial Costa Rica han “recogido... un

solo título de traducción” (Vega 2010). A falta de dicha acción, Vega nos presenta con una realidad que vive el país y el traductor de dichas obras: al “reseñar la historia de la literatura nacional” (Vega 2010), las traducciones y sus autores no son reconocidos por su labor y se deroga importancia a la actividad traductológica como forma de expresión de la cultura y literatura nacional.

Si bien obras de reconocidos autores costarricenses han sido traducidos a otros idiomas, no es este acto de traducción uno que se lleve a cabo para ampliar el foco de recepción de la obra, sino que más bien pareciera siempre ser un acto voluntario del traductor. Robles (2004), en su análisis de *El ímpetu de las tormentas de Alberto Sibaja* anota que la literatura se traduce casi siempre por iniciativa del traductor y no debido a peticiones editoriales o del escritor mismo.

Antecedente también al presente trabajo, otros en torno a la traducción de textos literarios costarricenses, como es el caso del análisis de *La traducción alemana de Marcos Ramírez*, de Carlos Luis Fallas (Valero 2010). Este informe que escribe Pino Valero (2010) proporciona, en el resumen de su trabajo, una descripción básica del análisis que lleva a cabo de esta traducción, que incluye aspectos del entorno histórico, cultural, lingüístico, registro, modalidades discursivas y aspectos léxicos significativos cultural, histórica y geográficamente.

Otro gran antecedente a tomar en cuenta es el trabajo literario realizado por escritores costarricenses dentro del mentado subgénero. Monge (2010) menciona la presencia de escritores de poesía en prosa como Pío Víquez y Aquileo J. Echeverría; Clara Diana y Blanca Milanés también surgen en el arsenal de autores mencionados. Todos ellos, de un modo u otro, influenciados por sus antecesores, entre ellos Rubén Darío, por ejemplo, forman un posible corpus comparativo para la investigación del género y sus características. Monge plantea además,

como posible foco de estudio, el original y traducciones de Platero y yo de Juan Ramón Jiménez, pues bien podría ser este un antecedente probable de Amighetti específicamente, y de la poesía en prosa en términos generales.

Objetivos

1. Objetivo general

Este informe de traducción pretende, mediante el análisis de la teoría disponible y el análisis de *Francisco y los caminos* como obra literaria en prosa poética, *aportar una forma de comprender el género, de definirlo y de verlo dentro del campo de la traducción*. Se trabaja desde el supuesto de que *Francisco y los caminos* es un ejemplo de prosa poética y es mediante el intento de traducción de dicho texto que se logra identificar una serie de posibles características, descritas o no por los estudiosos de este tema. Proponer una definición operacional del género antes mencionado y así dar un paso más hacia su definición académica, abriendo las puertas a futuros investigadores interesados en el campo de la traducción de textos dentro de dicho género va de la mano con la idea de entendimiento profundo continuo que sigue el proceso y arte de la traducción. El trabajo de traducción se centra en producir un texto congruente con la forma y el estilo literarios del texto original, con especial interés en su tono poético y las características de la prosa poética.

Será entonces parte esencial del presente trabajo de investigación *crear una definición operacional de la prosa poética, fundamentada en lo que se identifica como las características literarias del género*. Una vez definido el concepto operacional de prosa poética, es mediante el proceso de traducción y su análisis que se intenta entresacar algunas estrategias utilizadas para

realizar la traducción de dichas particularidades del subgénero, en ejemplos extraídos del texto original y traducido que representen, a criterio del traductor, pasajes propios de la prosa poética.

De ninguna manera esta definición o estrategias de traducción utilizadas son totales y definitivas. Si bien seguimos posibles estrategias de traducción, no hay “recetas”, y esta flexibilidad en el proceso traductológico/creativo es también un aspecto que se desea rescatar y reforzar en la práctica traductológica moderna. En un género que entremezcla características de diferentes géneros literarios, cobra especial importancia crear, crear un nuevo texto enriquecido por nuestra interpretación, lo que Paz resume como creatividad equivalente de fidelidad.

Definir el concepto de prosa poética será abordado desde la perspectiva de lo que no es: poesía en prosa. Si el poema en prosa es un texto breve, una unidad, la prosa poética está inmersa dentro de una narrativa; si la poesía en prosa es de formato cerrado y controlado, la prosa poética es espontánea y parece una desvariación del autor. Básicamente, aquello que define una, define a la otra como elementos opuestos.

El poema en prosa es de extensión breve y compone una unidad por sí mismo, es cerrado, no admite otros textos dentro o alrededor de él, existe por sí mismo y en él predomina la voluntad poética y la rima. Mientras tanto, la prosa poética se encuentra inserta dentro de un texto más extenso, dentro de una narrativa, de manera espontánea y surge dentro del texto como “inapropiado” o “disvariante”, como si perdiese el hilo de la narración. La prosa poética, aun cuando conserva una cadencia y un ritmo poéticos, no hace uso de la rima para calificarse como “poético” o como “poesía” (Monge, 2010). Se especula, como bien dice Paz, que el original resurge en el texto traducido pues este siempre está mencionándolo o “lo convierte en un objeto verbal que, aunque distinto, lo reproduce: metonimia o metáfora” (Paz, p. 10). Así, sin necesidad de contener verso, la prosa poética se vuelve poesía.

2. Objetivos específicos

Del objetivo general se desprenden entonces dos objetivos específicos:

- i. Identificar y definir las características de la prosa poética presentes en el texto original; y
- ii. Crear, tomando en cuenta los resultados obtenidos en el análisis y lo rescatado de la teoría estudiada, un texto traducido, que reúna las características identificadas en el análisis y que reflejen las particularidades del texto original.
- iii. Explicar el proceso de traducción que se sigue, con el propósito de hacer evidentes los pasos y facilitar el entendimiento de los mismos

Los objetivos específicos del presente trabajo recalcan la función del objetivo general: darle al traductor una idea de qué es la prosa poética y proporcionarle una idea sobre cómo acercarse traductológicamente a un texto de prosa poética. El acercar al traductor a un entendimiento mayor de un concepto aún ambiguo académicamente, es darle una herramienta más para permitirse entender el género con miras a su traducción.

Metodología

El análisis de la traducción de *Francisco y los caminos* se divide, entonces, en dos procesos. El primero de ellos se da durante la lectura y el análisis del texto original. Con el conocimiento previo de la clasificación del texto como ejemplo de prosa poética y una idea aproximada de las características del género (Monge 2010), se procede a realizar una lectura del texto original para luego llevar a cabo una traducción “instintiva”. Para efectos de este trabajo de investigación, llamaremos “instintiva” a aquella traducción que se lleva a cabo sin previo estudio literario o de otra índole, con base solamente de la sensibilidad literaria y bagaje traductológico y literario de quien realiza la tarea.

Una vez que se realiza la lectura analítica del texto y se lleva a cabo la traducción, se procede a estudiar el género como lo definen los expertos en la materia , para crear la ya mencionada definición operacional de la prosa poética en general. De manera simultánea, se analiza la traducción y se crea una explicación del proceso traductológico seguido, para proporcionar un mayor entendimiento de las decisiones tomadas.

Organización del trabajo

Capítulo I

El capítulo I trata las consideraciones teóricas preliminares para la elaboración del presente trabajo. Dentro de los especialistas estudiados se incluye el trabajo compilador de Esteban Torre sobre las teorías de traducción y la visión literario-traductológica de Octavio Paz sobre la traducción poética. Además, se suman a estos, los estudios realizados por María Victoria Utrera Torremocha, Jesse Fernández y Carlos Francisco Monge sobre los antecedentes del subgénero prosa poética y asuntos relacionados, así como los intentos de definición y entendimiento propuestos por los mismos autores.

El capítulo I además presenta el intento de definición operacional del subgénero prosa poética, a la que se llega después de analizar el texto original y las fuentes académicas expuestas en este mismo capítulo. Se establece una primera definición de lo que es un texto en prosa poética por medio de un proceso comparativo con la teoría ya establecida sobre la poesía en prosa, observado el texto original y haciendo uso de las pocas anotaciones que tratan específicamente el tema de prosa poética.

Capítulo II

El capítulo II de este informe comprende el análisis de *Francisco y los caminos*, mediante una serie de ejemplos extraídos del texto original junto a su equivalente traducido en el texto terminal. Los ejemplos ilustran algunas de las características que se presume son parte de las que definirían la prosa poética y sirven de medio visual para la explicación del proceso traductológico llevado a cabo. Al poder observar y analizar los ejemplos originales y traducidos, es posible determinar cuales fueron las estrategias utilizadas por la traductora durante el proceso inicial de traducción. Se debe recordar que este primer proceso se da a lugar de una manera más instintiva que estudiada, en el sentido de que no se ha establecido aun una serie de parámetros o características finales.

Conclusiones

Las conclusiones de la investigación resumen las observaciones obtenidas tras realizar la traducción, el análisis y la definición operacional del género. Las recomendaciones indican los futuros pasos que podría generar la presente investigación en términos de la prosa poética, además de ahondar en el estatus de la traducción en Costa Rica, específicamente del trabajo literario de Francisco Amighetti.

Capítulo I | Consideraciones teóricas preliminares

El género literario denominado prosa poética es quizás uno de los más nuevos dentro del área de la literatura, y para su estudio es necesario tomar en cuenta las aproximaciones que estudiosos han hecho sobre la materia. Para el presente trabajo, serán claves los estudios realizados en dos áreas. Como base teórica literaria, se toman en cuenta los estudios de Carlos Francisco Monge, Jesse Fernández y Maria Victoria Utrera Torremochas. Como base teórica traductológica, Monge, junto a Esteban Torre y Octavio Paz serán las bases del presente trabajo. Además, concluye este apartado, la definición operacional que se crea a partir de los estudiosos consultados y análisis propio. La misma servirá de base para el desarrollo del presente trabajo, más no pretende ser un objetivo como tal.

Los estudios de Carlos Francisco Monge, aún inéditos, avizoran una posible definición de características de la poesía en prosa en Costa Rica. Además, el autor, al igual que Fernández y Torremocha, adelanta algunos conceptos relacionados directamente con la prosa poética. Cómo ya se ha mencionado con anterioridad, Monge también menciona a Baudelaire como el creador del concepto de poema en prosa, concepto que más tarde desencadenará la idea de la prosa poética. Para Monge (2010), Baudelaire ve en *Gaspard de la Nuit* “la voluntad de liberar la prosa de sus ataduras racionales” y una oportunidad de “vincular el arte literario (la poesía) con otras artes (en especial con las artes visuales, la pintura).” Monge nos da el primer acercamiento al concepto de prosa poética tomado de Baudelaire mismo: para Monge, el escritor “soñaba con una ‘prosa poética, musical, sin ritmo ni rima, lo suficientemente flexible y dura como para adaptarse a los movimientos líricos del alma, a las ondulaciones del ensueño y a los sobresaltos de la conciencia’.” Para Monge, existen otros antecedentes a Baudelaire en la “traducción en prosa de literatura inglesa y alemana”, en la que la “prosificación de la poesía será un recurso, a veces

inevitable, de los traductores que procuraron rescatar ciertos efectos y propiedades de los textos originales”, presumiblemente poéticos, “dejando de lado la ardua...tarea de reconstruir la versificación y...moldes métricos” en el texto meta. (2010)

Utrera Torremocha nos adentra en el mundo de la poesía en prosa como punto origen de la prosa poética, señala los antecedentes sobre este género, determina características importantes del género de poesía en prosa y da luz sobre el papel de lo cultural en este género. Por su parte Jesse Fernández da una clara visión de los antecedentes de la poesía en prosa, profundizando en el papel de este “nuevo” género en Hispanoamérica y sus características. Haciendo uso del recurso de lo opuesto, utilizado para definir la poesía en prosa, según Utrera, se lleva a cabo una definición operacional del género prosa poética, para analizar el texto de *Francisco y los caminos*, de Francisco Amighetti.

Una vez enmarcado el aspecto literario del trabajo, se recurrirá al compilado de teorías de traducción literaria de Esteban Torre y a los aportes traductológicos de Octavio Paz en cuanto a los textos literarios se refiere. Dentro de los conceptos que se tomarán en cuenta para el análisis traductológico que Torre menciona, será importante resaltar el de equivalencia formal versus equivalencia dinámica de Nida (1964) (Torre, p. 124), la traducción directa y la oblicua de Vinay y Darbelnet y los conceptos del mismo Torre sobre transposición, modulación, equivalencia, adaptación y la traducción de la metáfora.

El trabajo toma nota del concepto de “universalidad poética”, la “iniciativa del traductor” vs. “los conocimientos lingüísticos”, la “pluralidad de sentidos” y la idea de que “traducción y creación son operaciones gemelas”, refiriéndose a la permisividad creativa del traductor a la hora de traducir no solo poesía, sino que literatura.

Sobre los conceptos teóricos de traducción

Octavio Paz

Para Paz, “la traducción es el vehículo de las singularidades del hombre” (p. 8) y a la vez es “una tarea en la que, descontados los indispensables conocimientos lingüísticos, lo decisivo es la iniciativa del traductor” (p. 13). Se evalúa en torno a Paz, la capacidad traductiva en el área de la poesía, que compete, en parte, al presente trabajo. Por eso, se seguirá la idea del autor y traductor respecto a qué características tiene un buen traductor de poesía, pues de cierto modo, es necesario conservar la poeticidad del texto original para rendir un texto traducido con efecto similar: “pocas veces son los poetas buenos traductores...porque casi siempre usan el poema ajeno como punto de partida para escribir su poema” (p. 14). Y luego, Paz continúa al decir que “el buen traductor se mueve en una dirección contraria: su punto de llegada es un poema análogo, ya que no idéntico, al poema original. No se aparta del poema sino para seguirlo más de cerca” (p. 14).

Otro concepto importante de Paz será el de pluralidad de significados virtuales. Para Paz, “en el momento que la palabra se asocia a otras para construir una frase, uno de esos sentidos se actualiza y se vuelve dominante” (p. 14). Esta idea de pluralidad de significados virtuales, permitirá crear en un futuro, las estructuras que mejor recreen el TO en la lengua meta.

Paz es claro respecto al concepto que se tiene de la prosa y de la poesía por separado; la primera “tiende a ser unívoca”, mientras que la segunda tiene como característica el “preservar la pluralidad de sentidos” (p. 14). De ahí que se tome la prosa poética como un posible punto medio o área gris entre ambas.

Esteban Torre

Por su parte, Esteban Torre nos presenta un compilado explicativo de los conceptos y teorías que interesan a la traducción de textos literarios. Dentro de la amplia selección que expone, se han tomado para el presente trabajo, las ideas relacionadas a las “alternativas de traducción” (p. 121) y a la “traducción del verso” (p.159). En primera instancia, el mismo Torre, en base a un apunte de Meschonnic, ayuda ya desde un inicio a definir la poeticidad dentro de la prosa poética, al establecer que el lenguaje de la poesía no es tan distinto del lenguaje común como se nos ha hecho creer y que, además, el verso no es el único poseedor de “peculiaridades rítmica, juegos de palabras, efectos acústicos con capacidad simbólica o evocadora”, pues pueden encontrarse también dentro de la prosa (p.161).

Si bien se ha dicho que la traducción literaria debe hacerse lo más cercana al texto original, Torre hace una observación acertada: “la traducción ha de ser tan literal, tan ceñida al texto original, como sea posible, y tan libre como sea necesario”. Para él, el asunto está en saber discernir qué es lo realmente necesario y qué legitima esta libertad de “apartarse del texto que se traduce” (p. 205).

Además, de los teóricos que Torre expone, se seleccionan las observaciones de Vinay y Darbelnet por su concepto de traducción directa y oblicua; y Nida, por su concepto de equivalencia formal vs. equivalencia dinámica. Con el presente trabajo como foco principal, se encuentra un punto medio entre la equivalencia formal y la dinámica de Nida (1964), donde, si bien se trata de una “traducción literal, que tiende a reproducir el texto original” (p.124), no lo hace palabra por palabra, para que “a un sustantivo corresponda un sustantivo” (p. 124), sino que también está orientada a buscar una equivalencia de “los efectos que el TLT produce en el lector de la LT” (p. 124).

También se toma como base teórica, la referencia a los conceptos de Vinay y Darbelnet (1973) de traducción directa y oblicua (p. 126) en el compilado de Torre, donde la primera se entiende como “traducción directa o literal”, que como bien apunta, no debe ser confundida con “la traducción servil o pseudotraducción”, una “lengua sui generis” que no es ni la lengua original ni la terminal, sino lo que él llama “traductano” (p.126). La segunda, la traducción oblicua, vendrían a ser los procedimientos de transposición, modulación, equivalencia, adaptación y compensación; añadidos a estos los procedimientos de amplificación, explicitación y omisión de Vázquez-Ayora (p.126).

Sobre el concepto de prosa poética

Carlos Francisco Monge

Monge, además de plantearnos una base creadora en torno a lo emocional, tanto para el texto original como para la creación de la traducción en la poesía en prosa, y consecuentemente en la prosa poética, describe algunas posibles características del texto, independientemente de la lengua en que este vaya a ser o esté escrito.

Teniendo en cuenta que muchas veces los expertos se refieren a la prosa poética y al poema en prosa de manera equiparable, Monge dice que aun siendo éste “un texto poético, se elimina el verso”, dando como resultado una “forma literaria compuesta y abierta” que, una vez retórico, se convierte en estético-ideológico (Monge, 2010). Además hay una renuncia a la narratividad, bien por la lógica con la que se asocia el lenguaje narrativo o por la renuncia del poema en prosa (prosa poética) a la narrativa realista y documentalista. Monge apunta que “pocos son los casos en que en una lectura se percibe el ‘hilo argumental’ de un poema en prosa, pues este es ante todo ‘una imagen’ más que una narración. En el caso de la prosa poética, tendríamos

que hablar de un conjunto de imágenes. Justamente, Monge hace la aclaración de la diferencia entre prosa poética y poesía en prosa: “conviene distinguir un poema en prosa de un pasaje en prosa poética. Ésta la podemos encontrar en una novela, en un ensayo, en una crónica, y hasta en un artículo periodístico...” Para él, “el discurso poético como modalidad discursiva se infiltra, cuando no lo cubre todo con una evidente voluntad estética”(2010).

Jesse Fernández

Fernández propone algunos aspectos teóricos que tomaremos para el presente trabajo con el fin no solo de llegar a la definición operacional del género, sino también para rescatar posibles estrategias traductológicas a tomar en cuenta durante la traducción. Cortázar, (en Fernández p. 26) comenta sobre la oposición de un amigo a “alternar poemas con prosas”, calificándolo de “suicida”. Para Cortázar, este “punto de vista [pretende una vez más] situar la poesía en el pedestal privilegiado” y evidencia la tendencia de los lectores contemporáneos de alejarse cada vez más de la poesía en verso sin “rechazar...las que les llega en novelas y cuentos y canciones y películas y teatro”. Así, Cortázar deja ver que la poesía continúa vigente como género, no así la “aristocracia formal” de la poesía en verso (p. 26). A la conclusión que llega Fernández es que en realidad los términos opuestos no son poesía y prosa sino verso y prosa. Fernández nos brinda la primera definición importante para entender la prosa poética: tradicionalmente se ha aceptado, como un artículo de fe, que un poema es obligadamente una composición escrita en verso, y que todo lo demás es prosa...no es poesía (p. 26).

Para Fernández, prácticamente no existe para la literatura española e hispanoamericana una bibliografía crítica sobre el poema en prosa, y aun más ambiguo es el concepto de prosa poética que aunque muchos mencionan como términos intercambiables, conforman cada uno un

género por sí mismo: [la] crítica suele utilizar los términos “prosa poética”, “prosa poemática”, “prosa lírica”, “prosa artística” y “poemas en prosa” como si fueran expresiones sinónimas e intercambiables” (p. 27). El error es entonces “confundir un ‘procedimiento’ con lo que es en realidad una forma”. Esta forma es la que queremos definir en función del acto traductológico, y se refiere a que esta “funciona como un acto lingüístico reconocible mediante ciertos rasgos caracterizadores que le otorgan una fisonomía o entidad propia”. La diferencia que concierne a este trabajo es aquella entre poema en prosa y prosa poética. Aun cuando pueda existir dentro de una novela u otro género literario, la poesía en prosa se sostiene por sí misma fuera de un texto, este “presupone una voluntad consciente de organizar [el discurso] en forma de poema; debe ser un todo orgánico, autónomo” (Bernard, en Fernández, p. 29) para así poder distinguirlo “de la prosa poética – la cual no es más que una “*matèrie*”, una forma...a partir de la cual se pueden realizar tanto ensayos como novelas o poemas”. (Bernard, en Fernández, p. 29). Una se encontraría enmarcada dentro de las características más formales de la poesía, pero que se inclina al uso de la prosa como vehículo gráfico para su transmisión al público meta. La poesía en prosa mantiene un ritmo, una métrica, en fin, está sujeta a los patrones más formales del canon, en cuanto a estructura se refiere. Mientras tanto, la otra no se encierra dentro de una “disposición tipográfica” determinada, pues como bien lo dice Fernández, “lo poético no se encierra en una estructura externa únicamente, sino también, y sobre todo, en una tonalidad que busca una forma adecuada de expresarse” (Fernández, p. 30). Es un texto multifacético que se mimetiza constantemente con otros géneros con el fin de servir de vehículo a la liricidad de lo cotidiano.

Fernández coincide con Utrera en la presencia de lo irónico y humorístico dentro del género: “[o]tros ejemplos de esta...actitud escéptica, irónica y hasta de un cierto humor negro, aparecen en los poemas en prosa de casi todos los cultivadores del género [en Hispanoamérica]”

(p. 31). Esta característica va de la mano con el concepto de estilística del poema en prosa, incluidos el “alarde imaginativo en la expresión, estructuras rítmicas, lenguaje metafórico; pero sobre todo los elementos afectivos del texto orientado hacia la poesía...no frecuentes en una página de prosa o narrativa” (p. 31).

Fernández identifica las siguientes características como propias del género, de las cuales la prosa poética adopta algunas: rompimiento del desarrollo lineal, imágenes sensoriales, densidad temática y expresiva, musicalidad, desprendimiento de la realidad objetiva mediante la creación de un ambiente altamente sugestivo, aun cuando sea solo momentáneamente. La prosa poética hace uso del tono introspectivo de la poesía en prosa, sin hacer así uso de la forma, y como propósito único transmitir el estado anímico del poeta (p. 34).

Fernández también propone otras características que si bien no estructuran una forma para el texto en sí, dan indicios de factores externos al poema que definitivamente afectan su proceso de creación, como la relación del poema en prosa con las artes visuales y la relación que sostiene este género con su entorno social-espacial, ambas relevantes en términos de *Francisco y los caminos*, como veremos más adelante. Vuelve a introducir Fernández el concepto de poemas pictóricos, que Utrera mencionara también en sus enunciados, y que según este autor influyen la parte estética y formal que culmina con la obra de Baudelaire (p. 34). La relación de esta nueva “entidad poética”, según las teorías más nuevas al respecto, está vinculada al cuadro de pintura y al libro de arte, ambos elementos casi omnipresentes en *Francisco y los caminos*. Al final, muchos autores, incluido Fernández, coinciden en que “el poema en prosa, a partir de Baudelaire, surge de esa necesidad de encontrar un instrumento lírico más flexible que el poema en verso para registrar las experiencias de la vida moderna” y según Baudelaire, “nace sobre todo de la frecuentación de las ciudades enormes, del entrecruzamiento de sus relaciones innumerables”

(Obras 372, en Fernández, p 35). Describe a sí mismo, al “poeta ‘ambulante’ ”, como le llama él, “símbolo de alineación que la gran urbe moderna provoca en el ánimo del artista sensible,” (p. 36) rodeado de “millones de gentes que no sienten la necesidad de conocerse” (p. 37).

María Victoria Utrera Torremochas

Utrera señala que la aparición del género del poema en prosa, que más adelante desencadena la prosa poética en la literatura moderna, surge como necesidad entre los escritores de encontrar un nuevo lenguaje que renovara las convenciones líricas, para algunos ya obsoletas o limitantes. Con la “crisis del verso en el pre-romanticismo y el romanticismo”, se desata la “necesidad” inmediata de encontrar un nuevo vehículo de expresión entre los escritores europeos. El género de poesía en prosa “debe mucho...al auge que la prosa, concretamente la novela, experimenta en estos años, así como la crisis de los géneros tradicionales establecidos en la poética clasicista.” Este rompimiento con lo clásico literario se manifiesta en una progresiva mezcla de los distintos géneros, sin ser entonces el verso la más grande y elevada forma de expresión. Más bien, la prosa pasa a tomar un rol más protagónico que el que anteriormente se le habría asignado, pues el canon reconoce a la prosa, y más específicamente a la retórica y a la oratoria, como vehículo transmisor de la verdad y del mundo real, mientras que el verso pecaba, desde el punto de vista romántico, de transmitir mensajes adornados y exagerados que eran poco claros.

En Hispanoamérica, fueron los modernistas los que incorporan a la creación poética distintos elementos con el fin de “modernizar la expresión literaria al uso”; con el modernismo, “se vio favorecida la libertad del lenguaje y la flexibilidad de forma” e “incorporó al castellano palabras y giros sintácticos de otras lenguas”. (p 39)

Aun cuando dentro del género se ha establecido la presencia de una estructura formal que define al poema en prosa como un poema más libre, que no necesariamente hace uso de una métrica y verso determinados, “no todos los poemas en prosa responden a un esquema formalizado, por lo que en otros casos la aludida unidad formal y espiritual vendría determinada por una organización desde dentro, basada en la forma interior dependiente de la libertad creadora individual que no se sujeta a ninguna regla previa.” (Utrera, p 14). Utrera, entre otros, también señala la tendencia a definir el género respecto a lo que este no es. Así, tenemos que el poema en prosa “no posee la cualidad rítmica regular del verso”, pero sí mantiene “otros recursos formales rítmicos, como el ritmo del pensamiento”, evidente en *Francisco y los caminos* (Utrera, p 14). Dentro de otros elementos que menciona Utrera están: la modalidad descriptiva del elemento narrativo en la poesía en prosa; su “condición mimética proveniente de los poemas pictóricos, que asumen su naturaleza poética gracias a la visión subjetiva con que se observa la realidad” y en la que predominan motivos determinados como la ventana; la tensión, asumiendo que la poesía en prosa “supone una liberación de las formulas líricas y narrativas preconcebidas y asume en el discurso la tensión que deriva de ambas, cualidad contradictoria la que hace que definir el género sea un asunto subversivo y dificulta diferenciarlo de otros géneros (Utrera 16). Además, Utrera menciona el humor y la ironía como “códigos esenciales de confrontación que acercan a la poesía en prosa a la novela, rompiendo con el lenguaje unitario, conservador, y dogmático habitual del género lírico”(p. 17).

Básicamente, la poesía en prosa vendría a ser una destrucción de los límites genéricos y por lo tanto, señal de modernidad, según Utrera. A este conjunto de características se une la “asunción de una nueva temática...escenas urbanas, objetos cotidianos, etc.,...[f]ruto de una

rebeldía en diferentes planos, el poema en prosa se revela como la forma ideal de la lírica futura desde Baudelaire.

Sobre la definición operacional

Del estudio de los expertos antes mencionados, se desprende entonces lo que se utilizará en el presente trabajo como definición operacional de la prosa poética.

Una definición operacional “constituye el conjunto de procedimientos que describe las actividades que un observador debe realizar para recibir las impresiones sensoriales (sonidos, impresiones visuales o táctiles, etc.), que indican la existencia de un concepto teórico en mayor o menor grado (Reynolds, 1971, p. 52. Web). En simple, una definición operacional brinda una guía de los elementos que constituyen el objeto de definición.

La idea de establecer una definición operacional de la prosa poética, es definirlo en términos generales.

Tomando en cuenta los acercamientos de definición poesía en prosa de Monge, Fernández y Utrera antes brevemente citados, tomaremos los elementos menos formales en cuanto a poética se refiere, para dejar de lado el aspecto de la forma canónica de la poesía, y establecer así una definición operacional de la prosa poética.

Definición operacional

Prosa poética: género literario que, según algunas corrientes, comparte características con el más conocido poema en prosa. La prosa poética no se rige por aspectos formales de la poesía canónica y pocas veces, si es que alguna vez, utiliza fragmentos poéticos. Tiene estructuras formales dentro de un texto en prosa poética. Su extensión es indefinida, pues la prosa poética se

caracteriza por borrar las líneas fronterizas entre los géneros literarios que utiliza como herramientas de construcción. Así, un texto en prosa poética puede estar formado por elementos del cuento, la novela, la biografía, la crónica, la narrativa, la retórica, la evocación, el lirismo pictórico y tantos otros géneros y subgéneros dentro del área de la literatura (Monge, 2010). La prosa poética, mediante el lenguaje claro y directo de la prosa, da a su contenido un tono poético, implícito en las vivencias de todo ser humano. Así, la transmisión de sentimientos está por encima de la narrativa de una prosa poética, siendo esta narrativa el vehículo para la transmisión de dichos sentimientos. Un elemento no vive sin el otro.

Debido a que la transmisión de sentimientos es lo principal, es la prosa, la narrativa, el habla clara de la oratoria que desde tiempos antiguos se utilizaba para llevar mensajes específicos a las masas, un medio de mayor alcance, sin que esto signifique perder belleza en el texto. Ya lo dijo Paz, que “en la prosa la significación tiende a ser unívoca mientras que, según se ha dicho con frecuencia, una de las características de la poesía...es preservar la pluralidad de sentidos” pero en realidad, ese conservar pluralidad de sentidos se trata de una propiedad general del lenguaje; la poesía la acentúa pero, atenuada, se manifiesta también en el habla corriente y aun en la prosa” (p. 15).

En la prosa poética existe una diferencia abismal entre poesía y verso. La poesía vendría a ser justamente esa “propiedad del lenguaje” de la que habla Paz, la belleza nata en el mundo que nos rodea, en lo cotidiano que resulta maravilloso, en lo prosaico, en lo fantástico. El verso es más bien la herramienta canónica con la que la gran mayoría inmediatamente asocia lo que “es un poema”, refiriéndose a la métrica, la rima, la sonoridad, la repetición y el formato establecido, acompañado de cierto lenguaje, llamémosle elevado, siempre sobre temas igualmente divinos; nunca lo mundano.

Tras describir las distintas características que discuten los expertos, se compila la siguiente lista de características dentro de la prosa poética:

1. Carácter descriptivo, no con fin narrativo sino como vehículo de sentimientos
2. Mimetismo, se entrelazan distintos géneros literarios para brindar una visión subjetiva de la realidad
3. Humor negro e ironía, a manera de código confrontacional entre lo poético y lo prosaico
4. Lenguaje metafórico, recurso literario para poetizar la prosa
5. Rompimiento del desarrollo lineal, lectura de un texto que representa más una línea de pensamiento que una narración
6. Imágenes sensoriales, la descripción y la narrativa evocan constantemente sensaciones más que elementos
7. Densidad temática, el texto alude a distintos temas en proporciones indefinidas y sin orden alguno necesariamente
8. Desprendimiento de la realidad, la narrativa toma giros que no son necesariamente coherentes, sino más bien antojadizos
9. Tono introspectivo, el texto le sirve al artista de vehículo de exploración y no es su interés principal transmitir una historia

Estas características, creadas a partir de las propuestas teóricas estudiadas, son las que se toman en cuenta a la hora de llevar a cabo el análisis de traducción. Estas características, que pueden o no estar presentes en el texto, intentan definir a grandes rasgos, el subgénero de prosa poética. En el caso del análisis de *Francisco y los caminos*, sirven para categorizar la obra, aún cuando ésta manifieste las características generales a modo muy propio.

Capítulo II | Análisis traductológico del texto original, el texto terminal y el proceso de traducción

En este capítulo se presentan varios ejemplos de *Francisco y los caminos*, para ilustrar algunas de las características correspondientes a la prosa poética, y las respectivas soluciones traductológicas logradas.

1) *Carácter descriptivo (como vehículo de la transmisión de sentimientos)*

Dentro de las características perceptibles en el texto, una de las más evidentes es el carácter descriptivo del texto. Como se ha mencionado en repetidas ocasiones, el carácter narrativo de la prosa poética se enfoca en la transmisión de sentimientos antes que en la narratividad en sí. El objeto principal de lo narrativo descriptivo de un texto de prosa poética es transmitir al lector una concatenación de sentimientos que, de forma secundaria, se ven inmersos en una situación narrativa descriptiva determinada.

Lo descriptivo también está presente en la obra de Amighetti. Particular al texto, la descripción toma lo que Monge (2010) llama *evocación lírica* y las *referencias a la vida urbana*. En el texto, es fácil percibir como el autor se siente alienado y solo en las grandes ciudades, y se siente reconfortado con cosas tan pequeñas como un “*I beg your pardon*” de una desconocida en las incesantes calles de Nueva York, o estancado en un puesto fronterizo durante la guerra del Chaco. Sin embargo, en ninguna parte es la relación de la prosa poética con la vida urbana que en el capítulo titulado Harlem, como se logra apreciar la narración presente en el ejemplo # 1:

Ejemplo # 1		
TO	P. 111	<p>En Riverside y desde mi ventana se veía el Hudson con sus vaporcitos anclados. En frente, la iglesia de Riverside.</p> <p>El Hudson a veces era celeste y parecía un río de seda por su brillo suave, pero jamás tuve serenidad para dedicarme a la contemplación estética. La “pensión” era demasiado elevada para mi presupuesto, y cada día que pasaba era más amargo que los otros, parecía que estaba robándome un paisaje que no podía pagar. Es increíble como una anciana bondadosa por el hecho de debérsele algunos días de alquiler puede transformarse en una arpía.</p>
TM	P. 47	<p><i>In Riverside and right outside my window, one could see the Hudson and the anchored little steamboats. In front, Riverside church.</i></p> <p><i>The Hudson sometimes had a light blue shade and resembled a river of silk because of its glow. Yet, I never experienced enough serenity to completely devote myself to aesthetic contemplation. The inn was too expensive for my pocket, and every day that went by became even more bitter than the one before. It seemed as if I were stealing a landscape I could not afford. Amazing how a sweet old lady can become a witch over night because of a few days of overdue rent.</i></p>

En la obra de Amighetti, es fácil apreciar la recurrente aparición de referencias a la vida en las grandes ciudades, a la vida urbana y a la modernidad. Para el personaje principal, la vida en la ciudad, aunque sorprendente y novedosa, muchas veces le causa un sentimiento de

extrañeza que desemboca en la contemplación de lo que lo rodea. Positiva o negativa, esta contemplación a semejanza de un proceso pictórico, crea en *Francisco y los caminos* una visión de mundo que dibuja la vida urbana de aquel entonces de manera descriptiva, cual pintura en palabras que se ase de figuras literarias frecuentemente para llevar a cabo estos pequeños paisajes vivos. Lo que Amighetti hace al darnos la composición de lo que él ve desde su ventana, es que sus lectores creen un cuadro propio de la imagen que se observa. Así, la ventana enmarca la vista, compuesta por un río, vapores anclados y una iglesia. Amighetti va más allá; él le da al lector los matices del río en vez de adjudicarle un color, Amighetti le da al río textura más allá de la del agua común. Con la comparación o símil, el artista constantemente encuentra semejanzas entre un objeto y otro. El Hudson no solo es celeste sino que su caudal parecía seda por “su brillo suave”; un ejemplo de muchos que combinan la contemplación, la vida urbana y el carácter descriptivo del texto.

Para Amighetti, la vida urbana es tanto admirable como terrible. Es en su capacidad descriptiva que Amighetti logra que el lector se vea inmerso en una sinfonía cotidiana de ruidos e imágenes que lejos de perturbarles, los transporta a sentir justamente lo abrumador que es para el artista sentirse tan solo en una ciudad con tanta gente como Nueva York.

Ejemplo # 2		
TO	P. 66	<p>Donde estaba más solo no era en mi cuarto, sino en las calles. ¡Qué agradable sentir que alguien tropezara conmigo! Sobre todo una mujer, y además joven. Decía un “Beg your pardon” con infinita ternura, aunque naturalmente sin identificarse siquiera con la más leve mirada.</p> <p>En esta soledad, en medio de varios millones de habitantes pude hablar al fin con</p>

		alguien, con una negra; ya sabía que era necesario invitar inmediatamente, era la posibilidad de conversar algunos minutos con un ser humano.
TM	P. 48	<i>It was not in my room that I felt the most alone, but on the streets. How nice to feel someone bump into me! Especially women, and young ones. They would say an ever-tender “Beg your pardon,” obviously without making any connection, not even the slightest glimpse.</i> <i>Immersed in this loneliness, surrounded by millions of people, I was finally able to talk to someone, a black woman. I knew I had to buy her a couple of drinks immediately; this was my chance to talk to a human being for a couple of minutes.</i>

En el ejemplo # 2, el sentimiento de soledad es perceptible mediante lo poco que necesita para sentirse reconocido: chocar contra alguien en la calle, ojala una mujer y joven. El que estos encuentros accidentales sean suficientes para sentirse acompañado le muestran al lector el nivel de soledad que siente el artista. Rodeado por miles de personas, en una gran ciudad, es con una minoría con quien por fin logra intercambiar un par de palabras. Al continuar la lectura del texto, nos damos cuenta que no solo se trata de una mujer, negra que además es prostituta, razón por la cual él inmediatamente sobreentiende que debe “invitar inmediatamente”, es decir retribuir el tiempo de esta mujer, para que hable con él, para sentirse vivo. El cuadro cotidiano de transitar por las calles de una gran ciudad que pinta Amighetti es algo con lo que muchos podemos relacionarnos. Aun así, fue necesario explicitar el significado de “invitar” como “*buy her a couple of drinks*” para que la idea relacional del artista con la prostituta negra tenga mejor seguimiento. Se conserva el signo de exclamación final para perpetuar ese exalto irónico de

alegría con que se menciona el chocar contra alguien en la calle, adaptándolo al uso del inglés. Para exaltar la inminente mejora de estos encuentros fortuitos cuando se trata de mujeres, el texto meta adopta la forma plural del sustantivo “mujer” y el adjetivo calificativo “joven”. El adverbio “naturalmente” se traduce como “*obviously*” para insertarle al texto un poco de ironía al texto meta, pues el autor da la impresión de estar imitando de algún modo la forma de comportarse de las señoritas.

La misma reacción a la vida urbana se manifiesta en las percepciones del artista frente a otras grandes ciudades, como Buenos Aires.

Ejemplo # 3		
TO	P. 15	No conocía ciudades grandes, Buenos Aires era la primera. En algunas esquinas el transito alcanzaban proporciones de sonora catástrofe con sus tranvías desbocados. En Costa Rica eran pequeños e iban chirriando hacia el poniente, en mi ciudad rodeada de montañas.
TM	P. 5	<i>I had never been to any big city; Buenos Aires was my first. Off-track trains overtook some corners, reaching loud catastrophic proportions. In Costa Rica, they were small and squealed their way to sunset, in my little town surrounded by mountains.</i>

En el ejemplo # 3, la impresión ante su primera gran ciudad es evidente, sobre todo evidente por la mención al ruido producido por el tránsito que se asume abundante y la “sonora catástrofe” que era el tranvía. Señalar su primera experiencia en una gran ciudad y la forma de referirse al tranvía bonaerense en relación a los “pequeños” y “chirreantes” trenes de Costa Rica, y el sentimiento extranjerizante del artista en Buenos Aires nos remiten nuevamente al concepto de vida urbana. Para dar énfasis a la nueva experiencia en esta gran ciudad, se acude a un cambio

de puntuación oportuno: al cambiar la coma simple del texto original por el punto y coma en el texto meta se le imprime mayor dramatismo al hecho de ser esta la primera “gran dama” de Amighetti, su primera visita a la gran ciudad. La escogencia de los atributos sonoros de los respectivos trenes juega un importante papel en la transmisión de la imagen de vida urbana: Buenos Aires, la gran ciudad, tiene tránsito que “alcanzaba proporciones de sonora catástrofe”, mientras que en Costa Rica los trenes “chirriaban”. Así, se amplía el texto meta introduciendo el adjetivo “*loud*” a la descripción del tránsito bonaerense en lugar de algún término más cercano a “sonora”, para resaltar ese carácter “catastrófico” del que habla Amighetti. Por su parte, para describir el sonido menor y más agudo, de algún modo ridículo de los trenes costarricenses, se hace uso del adjetivo “*squeal*” para emular ese sonido agudo y poco placentero que evoca “chirreando”, de metal contra metal.

2. Humor negro e ironía

Importantes en la prosa poética y en la obra de Amighetti, el humor y la ironía se manifiestan de diversas maneras dentro de la obra. Amighetti utiliza las palabras de Baudelaire en español para comunicarle al público meta su verdadero concepto de una mujer que se hace pasar por inocente para introducirse a su habitación y pedirle que la pinte desnuda, para que el artista vea su cuerpo descubierto.

Ejemplo # 4		
TO	P. 42	“ Qué importa que no seas sabia, sé bella y triste ”, repetía en mi mente el verso de Baudelaire, que mentalmente variaba al aplicarlo – Qué importa que no seas sabia, sé bella y tonta -.

TM	P.	“ <i>Who cares if you’re not wise; be beautiful and sad,</i> ” <i>I kept repeating in my mind</i>
	16	<i>the verse by Baudelaire, which I would mentally vary when applied — Who cares if you’re not wise; be beautiful and dumb.</i>

En el ejemplo # 4, Amighetti, haciendo suyo el poema de Baudelaire, *Madrugal Triste*, se burla de dicha mujer, llamándola bella y tonta. A la vez que estereotipa a la mujer bajo estas dos características, Amighetti también parece darnos un vistazo a su bagaje literario y posible influencia redactora al hacer alusión a la estrofa original de Baudelaire (1972) que reza “*Que m’importe que tu sois sage?/Sois belle! et sois triste!*” (270). La apropiación y transformación de la estrofa sirve de vehículo para darle tono irónico al texto original. Con el respaldo del estereotipo de la reconocida “rubia tonta” o “*dumb blonde*” que el público meta bien conoce, la decisión traductológica para el adjetivo “tonta” cae como anillo al dedo. Otros términos similares como “*stupid*” o “*morron*”, que connotan diferentes grados de falta de inteligencia y representan mayores grados de agresividad al mencionar el término, podrían cambiar la percepción del público meta sobre los sentimientos del artista para con esta mujer. Así, el término “*dumb*” será bien recibido por la cultura meta y conserva el mismo grado de burla inocente para con la mujer de la que se hace mofa. Es con la transformación de esta estrofa que Amighetti, De una manera irónica, el autor utiliza las palabras de Baudelaire que pretenden restar importancia a la tristeza, que únicamente hacen del objeto del poema uno más hermoso. Amighetti, toma esa estrofa y la convierte en una frase irónica que contempla en su mente para decirle al objeto del poema que simplemente es bella y nada más.

Amighetti es capaz de reírse de sí mismo en situaciones precarias, en donde el dinero u otros elementos apremian y muchas veces escasean, como se aprecia en el ejemplo # 5.

Ejemplo # 5		
TO	P. 130	<p>Volví a caminar por las calles y a detenerme frente a las vitrinas fascinado. Yo era un comprador en potencia, un comprador platónico, cuando pensé en la lámpara de Aladino. ¿Por qué no encontrar esta lámpara patinada entre los viejos bronce amontonados, en alguna tienda oriental de la Quinta Avenida? El que la tuviera, debería ser un viejo avaro de mirar despiadado que vendería aquel tesoro por miserables centavos. Pero si la lámpara es todopoderosa no valdría la pena, me volvería tan desgraciado como aquel rey Midas que no podía evitar que todo lo que tocaba se convirtiera en oro. Ojalá la lámpara esté un poco descompuesta y el genio a veces no funcione, y me diga:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>-I am sorry.</i></p>
TM	P. 53	<p><i>I went back to walking the streets and stopping in front of the windows submerged in fascination. I was a potential buyer, a platonic one; then I thought of Aladdin's magic lamp. Why not find the worn lamp in a bunch of piled up old bronzes in some oriental shop on Fifth Avenue? Whoever it is that has the lamp, he probably is a greedy old man with ruthless eyes, and he would sell that treasure for a few miserable pennies. If the lamp were almighty, it wouldn't be worth it. I would become as wretched as that King Midas, who couldn't avoid turning into gold everything he touched. I hope the lamp is half way broken and the genie fails to perform his job from time to time, and says: "I'm sorry."</i></p>

Para destacar el proceso fantasioso que implica pasearse frente a ventanas de tiendas en las que el artista no puede comprar, se realiza un cambio de estructura oracional y una ampliación al final de la primera oración del párrafo ejemplo. La idea de estar “sumergido en fascinación” hace del sentimiento uno muy intenso y exagerado, perfecto para complementar lo fantasioso del razonamiento siguiente. Al eliminar la repetición del texto original de la palabra “comprador”, es de consideración observar si esta misma tendría alguna intencionalidad dentro del texto, a manera de reforzar la idea de el artista como comprador, primero como posibilidad y luego como imposibilidad (fantasía versus realidad). Aun cuando se pierde el elemento de repetición, la estructura utilizada en el texto meta, refuerza cual es la realidad de este “comprador”: posible, pero realmente platónico a falta de dinero. El cambio de puntuación antes de mencionar la lámpara de Aladino por primera vez es importante para impregnarle al texto esa idea de que el artista comienza de repente a sonar despierto, imaginándose como un posible comprador y de repente se interrumpe ese pensamiento por otro, aunque este Segundo sea fantasioso también.

Para acercar al lector meta al texto, se recurre al uso de coloquialismos como el uso del término “*pennies*” para traducir “centavos”. Si bien se podría haber traducido este término literalmente por “*cents*”, el término oficial que utilizan las grandes autoridades monetarias en Estados Unidos, “*pennies*” transmite un mayor sentido de cercanía para con el lector.

Parte del esfuerzo traductor recae en conservar el carácter personal de expresión del personaje principal. Este carácter se evidencia por ejemplo en la forma de referirse al rey Midas: en lugar de utilizar el artículo demostrativo “el”, Amighetti habla de “aquel rey Midas”, forma de expresión que remite a otra muy costarricense de antaño, el “mentado” rey Midas. De ahí que en el texto meta en lugar de omitir el artículo, como se pensó originalmente (“*as wretched as King*

Midas”), se utilice el demostrativo “*that*”, que le resta importancia al rango de rey y lo equipara a un vago recuerdo, aun siendo la leyenda del Rey Midas una ampliamente conocida. Este tipo de elementos presentes en la prosa poética de Amighetti, aunque sutiles le inyectan una picardía poética muy propia de este recurso literario.

Sñar despierto frente a la ventana de una tienda, fantaseando sobre la posibilidad de encontrar la lámpara del genio, cual Aladino, no es sino una forma de reírse de su situación monetaria, pues no solo fantasea con encontrarla sino que además expresa su deseo de que la lámpara esté rota y funcione solo ocasionalmente, para así no sufrir las desdichas del Rey Midas. Todo este proceso imaginativo sobre encontrar la lámpara y hacer referencia al cuento de Aladino y al del Rey Midas, muestran el lado más fantasioso del artista, evocando casi el pensamiento de un niño, pero en torno a una realidad de economía precaria, donde le es imposible tan siquiera pensar en comprar algo de alguna de las tiendas frente a las que se pasea.

4. *Desprendimiento de la realidad objetiva*

De los recursos empleados para crear una prosa poética, presente significativamente en Amighetti, tenemos también el desprendimiento de la realidad objetiva. Este no es más que un desapego de la situación real que el personaje principal esta viviendo, y el inicio de un pensamiento antojadizo, si se quiere, sobre algún otro tema sin relación con la situación que acontece en la narración.

Ejemplo # 6		
TO	P. 32	Caminé de noche por Buenos Aires y vi gentes que dormían en Leandro Allen envueltas en periódicos, y niños que tenían una mirada de hombre porque nacieron sin

		<p>infancia, y habían aprendido antes de tiempo lo que la carne sólo alcanza a comprender crucificada por los años; mujeres que regresaban de los bares en la madrugada, en el mismo tranvía en que los obreros se trasladaban para iniciar su trabajo. Contrastaba el maquillaje marchito de las mujeres, con las caras sonrosadas de los hombres.</p> <p>Mi infancia, como la de cualquiera, posee un silabario de dolor; pero como me faltaban páginas y capítulos esenciales; había tiempo de deletrearlas en el abecedario de las estrellas, en la geometría de los millares de ventanas iluminadas de la gran ciudad palpitando en aquellos rectangulares corazones de oro, y llegué también a comprender otras cosas al dibujarlas o escribirlas más tarde. Con todas ellas elaboro este ex-libris del libro único de mi propia vida, en que una x de incógnita cruza sus dos huesos sobre la calvicie de una calavera, cuyos ojos, dos manchas de tinta china, constituyen su nocturna mirada sin luceros en el fondo.</p>
TM	P. 12	<p><i>I walked through Buenos Aires at night and saw people sleeping on Leandro Allen street, wrapped in newspaper, and children with eyes of grown men, because they had been born with no childhood, who learned before their time what the flesh can only get to understand crucified by years; women coming from bars at dawn, on the “same tram workers took to start their workdays.” The women’s faded makeup contrasted with the men’s blushed faces.</i></p> <p><i>My childhood, like anyone else’s, has a syllabus of pain; but I was missing essential pages and chapters; there was time to spell them in the abc’s of the stars, in the</i></p>

	<p><i>geometry of the millions of lighted windows in the city beating in those square hearts of gold. I also got to understand other things by drawing them or writing about them later on. With them all I put together this ex-libris of the only book about my life, in which a mystery marked by an x crosses its two bones over the baldness of a skull, whose eyes, two smudges of ink, stand for its nightly look with no bright stars in the background.</i></p>
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En el ejemplo # 6, se puede observar como en *Francisco y los caminos* es frecuente encontrar dos párrafos que en apariencia cortan la idea que se venía tratando, en el paso de uno al otro. Muchas veces es fácil caer en el juicio de que se da un rompimiento de la idea desarrollada. Sin embargo, este tipo de “desvariación” o “reflexión” es justamente a lo que se refieren los expertos en cuanto a desprendimiento de la realidad objetiva. Vemos en el ejemplo anterior, que una descripción panorámica de una madrugada en las calles de Buenos Aires pasa a una reflexión sobre la niñez del artista. Aunque en apariencia no exista un elemento relacional entre las partes y de la impresión que el artista simplemente se desprende de la realidad, hay un vínculo relacional entre lo observado y la propia experiencia; es decir que los cuadros que observa en el presente en repetidas ocasiones evocan imágenes pasadas que invitan a la reflexión.

Lo que Amighetti hace es crear el contraste del primer “cuadro” con imágenes de excesos y de lo grotesco, de la humanidad en su estado más acabado: mujeres con el maquillaje marchito, niños con ojos de hombre adulto, gentes envueltas en periódicos durmiendo en las calles, versus los hombres que van a trabajar por la mañana y su infancia propia, que introduce en el siguiente párrafo. Lo no vivido en carne propia lo experimenta en cabeza ajena, en las ventanas de la vida.

A manera de ubicar al lector, se recurre a la explicitación en el texto meta, en cuanto al nombre de la calle Ricardo Allen. Así, se refuerza además el entorno degenerado de las gentes durmiendo en esta calle específica y le permite al lector meta identificarla con las prostitutas que vuelven a sus aposentos de madrugada. Para enfatizar la diferencia entre el rubor añejo de las mujeres en el tranvía versus los trabajadores frescos, con mejillas sonrosadas por el frío de la madrugada y la vergüenza de semejante vista, se explicita en el texto meta introduciendo el verbo *contrasted*.

Para adjudicar protagonismo a cada reflexión que hace el artista, se cambia la puntuación del original y se crean más oraciones independientes unidas por punto y seguido. Así, cada idea transmitida tiene su lugar y se aumenta el sentido de reflexión del pasaje ejemplo.

Muchas veces, el mayor reto es lograr recrear los elementos más abstractos de los episodios de desprendimiento. Si vemos la última oración del ejemplo en el texto original, la idea de un símbolo de calavera y huesos entrecruzados al mejor estilo pirata, simbolizan y auguran la interrogante del momento de la muerte, episodio que su libro, su vida, no incluyen aún, pues es imposible para el ser humano saber el día en que morirá. De ahí, que se adopta la estrategia de traducir con el mismo orden del original. Sin embargo, algunos cambios importantes en la estructura del texto meta aportan a una lectura más natural de tan intrincado pensamiento: una “x de incógnita”, pasa a ser un misterio o “*mystery marked by an x*”. Así se retoma la imagen de la bandera pirata, la búsqueda del tesoro, que en este caso no es más que la llegada de la muerte. Se simplifican también materiales artísticos como lo es la “tinta china”. Así, el simplificado “*ink*” se complementa con el calificativo “*smudges*” para darle esa idea descuidada y engorrosa de una mancha. Sin embargo, al devolverse sobre la traducción y compararla con la traducción, no podemos dejar de pensar si existe pérdida en esta porción de la traducción, pues bien podría

estarse refiriendo el artista a las hoy conocidas manchas de tinta utilizadas por los psicólogos, para llevar a cabo los exámenes de personalidad.

5. Tono introspectivo

No se debe confundir el desprendimiento de la realidad objetiva con el tono introspectivo de la obra. Si bien estos dos elementos pueden ir de la mano, el tono introspectivo debemos entenderlos como pasajes en los que el artista se detiene a analizar lo que le sucede o le ha sucedido, sus vivencias, lo que debiera hacer con su vida o no volver a hacer. El tono introspectivo en *Francisco y los caminos*, muchas veces funciona como confesión, como aceptación del ser.

Ejemplo # 7		
TO	P.	Muchos abren los ojos en las mañanas y les nace con facilidad la plegaria en palabras o actitudes. Mis ojos se abrían entonces para acordarme de la dueña de la pensión, implacable símbolo de todas mis angustias. Si hubiera coleccionado estas fisonomías, tendría un álbum muy completo de todas las variaciones de la dureza, que puede alcanzar el rostro de una mujer. Sin embargo, en esta colección existiría un ser angelical vestido de negro, unas manos jóvenes de viuda que lloraba con el pañuelo en que lloran las reinas de los cuentos infantiles. Por ese ser único, aparece hoy en la antología de mi angustia entre rostros goyescos, el retrato de un poema verdadero.
	26	Nunca he podido abandonar del todo mi timidez, y la sentí más aún en aquella ciudad tumultuosa que necesitaba abordar de alguna manera, y volví hacia el arte mi gran introspección a la que confié mis pesares, dejando fuera aquel material abrumador de

		ignominia que me negaba a aceptar como ingrediente del universo.
TM	P. 9	<p><i>Many open their eyes in the morning and a prayer is easily born into words or attitudes. My eyes then opened to remind me of the owner of the inn, ruthless symbol of my distress. Had I saved these physiognomies, I would have a very complete album of all the harsh variations a woman's face can adopt. However, this collection would have an angelic being dressed in black, the hands of a young widow crying in the handkerchief that queens in children's stories cry in. Because of her uniqueness, the anthology of my distress today holds, among goyesque faces, the portrait of a true poem.</i></p> <p><i>I have never been able to completely get rid of my timidity, and I felt it even more strongly in that tumultuous city that I needed to approach somehow. And so I turned my introspection toward my art, to which I confessed my sorrows, not letting in the overwhelming fear of the unknown that I refused to accept as part of the universe.</i></p>

En el ejemplo # 7, lo que Amighetti nos da es un vistazo al proceso introspectivo porque el que atraviesa constantemente en el libro. De recuerdos variados, desprende una revisión interior de su forma de sentir y de su ser. Cómo de lo abrumador de una ciudad tumultuosa surge su arte como medio de sobrellevar las cosas, como escape a sus tristezas, como desahogo de sus miedos. Al revisar de donde nace su arte y las razones de cómo nace, el artista nos brinda una introspectiva sobre los miedos en la vida: cómo lidia con ellos y termina aceptándolos como un mal necesario para lograr cosas hermosas.

Los cambios traductológicos que enfrenta este pasaje incluyen reestructuración oracional. Como ejemplo, “Por ese ser único”, en la última oración del primer párrafo, se traduce en el texto meta como “*Because of her uniqueness*”. Eliminamos del español un arreglo oracional preposición + objeto + verbo + adjetivo por una forma más simple. Este cambio se toma de la capacidad del inglés de cambiar flexiblemente la categoría gramatical de una palabra mediante prefijos y sufijos, resultando en el término “*uniqueness*”. Entonces, se construye una frase explicativa en menor cantidad de palabras, en el texto meta, que equivale a “singularidad”, cual piedra preciosa perfecta.

En el segundo párrafo, que resulta en el pasaje introspectivo concretamente, se adelanta la posición del objeto (“mi timidez”), para darle mayor protagonismo, y la totalidad del acto cierra la oración. Para esclarecer el acto que se realiza en la oración siguiente (“...y volví hacia el arte mi gran introspección a la que confié mis pesares,...”), también se recurrió a la reestructuración oracional. La “gran introspección” del artista pasa a ser el objeto de la oración en vez del “arte”. Así, es más fácil relacionar “arte” con a quien el artista le confía sus pesares.

Lenguaje metafórico (ejemplos de esteticismo a través del arte)

6. *Lenguaje metafórico*

La prosa poética *Francisco y los caminos* perdería su “poeticidad” de no ser por el **lenguaje metafórico** y demás formas literarias que se asen de lo artístico, por ejemplo, para expresar la percepción y sentimientos del artista para con sus circunstancias. Si bien metáforas y demás figuras literarias abundan también en otros géneros literarios, en la prosa poética, y específicamente en *Francisco y los caminos*, logra, gracias al uso que se les da, poetizar la prosa en la que existen.

Una característica muy particular de *Francisco y los caminos* es el uso de lo estético, pues el autor logra integrar el arte de múltiples formas con la literatura, y crear un texto rico en lenguaje metafórico artístico, como en ejemplo # 8:

Ejemplo # 8		
TO	P. 9	Algunas de las gentes que encontré en mis viajes, tenían una vida con más color y claroscuro, con más drama que mi pálida existencia.
TM	P. 3	<i>Some of the people I met during my trips had more color and chiaroscuro in their lives, more drama than my pale existence had ever experienced.</i>

Ya desde el inicio del texto, Amighetti presenta lo que será la constante más fuerte dentro de su libro. Para referirse a la intensidad y complejidad de las vidas de las gentes que encontró en sus viajes, el autor recurre a aspectos artísticos relacionados con la luz en el arte: color, claroscuro y palidez. Quizás, la idea de color no resulte, a simple vista, un término difícil de traducir. Sin embargo, dentro del conjunto de esta oración, el texto de Amighetti está haciendo uso de las referencias meramente artísticas, de la palabra claroscuro, para indicarnos que no se trata de una persona cualquier hablando de color, sino de un artista. El término claroscuro junto a los otros términos sobre color, luz e intensidad (color, drama, pálida), hace que esa oración tenga una finalidad específica: transmitir las diferencias entre la vida de Amighetti y la vida de las gentes que fue conociendo a lo largo de sus viajes. Así, a la hora de traducir, el término claroscuro no puede pasar a ser un simple *light and dark*, sino que se utiliza un equivalente técnico, propio de un artista o un especialista en arte, que resulte en el mismo efecto. De ahí que se traduzca “claroscuro” con el término prestado del italiano, *chiaroscuro*.

Ejemplo # 9		
TO	P. 12	La piel violácea barnizada por el sudor , los árboles ahogados en el gris metálico , los tatuajes sobre la carne con símbolos de una magia primitiva, y aquel clima de infierno pesando sobre el alma, me daban la clave para penetrar el país y su historia viva, en la efigie de aquel trabajador dormido y su paisaje.
TM	P. 4	<i>The purplish skin varnished in sweat; trees drowned in metal grey; tattoos over flesh, symbols of primitive magic; that damn weather weighing souls down; for me these were all keys to penetrate the country and its live history in the effigy of the sleeping worker and his scenery.</i>

En el ejemplo # 9, el autor se refiere al color de la piel de un hombre negro que viaja frente a él en un carro de tren de clase obrera. Con el color de piel del hombre se pinta no solo la imagen del hombre que viaja en el mismo carro de tren con el personaje principal, sino que muestra además el acabado de esa pintura que crea. Si bien el elemento de barnizado se traduce de forma literal, pues *varnished* sería el equivalente literario de ‘barnizada’, es el reconocimiento de estos elementos en el texto lo que forma parte del proceso traductológico de la prosa poética de Amighetti. Además, con la descripción del color violáceo de la piel del hombre podríamos especular la visión del personaje principal respecto a la clase obrera marginal, la división de las clases sociales y raciales, la religión y la época histórica en el país en el que se encuentra o al que viaja Amighetti. El color de la piel bajo el barniz de su sudor hacen del hombre un lienzo andante para el autor; con tatuajes como símbolo de una magia primitiva. La traducción del color de la piel del hombre negro logrará transmitir al lector la intensidad del color de su piel, que con

mayor pigmentación hace que su piel no sea café oscuro sino más bien morada, de un tono más intenso e intensificado por el sudor que la cubre, un color más brillante. De ahí que *light purple skin* o *violet skin* no logran contener todo ese significado. Para su traducción, se remite no solo a la base del color en cuestión y se observa el uso del sufijo que logre el efecto ambiguo y quizá despreciativo de la palabra “violácea”. Cuando bien podría haber utilizado “morada” o “violeta”, el autor recurre al derogador “violácea” con este fin. Los equivalentes literales en inglés como *violetish* o *light purplish* resultan además de extrañas poco apropiadas y faltas del significado que conlleva el uso de “violácea” como color descriptor de la piel del hombre negro que el autor observa. Sabiendo que dentro de la raza negra existen tonos más y menos intensos con tintes azulados o amarillos, el TM transmite la intensidad del color de piel que presenta el TO. Así se recurre al sufijo *-ish* junto al color fuente del color violeta, es decir el morado, combinándolos para producir el efecto que “violácea” genera en el lector. El sufijo *-ish* le da al color morado en inglés, es decir *purple*, esa ambigüedad y carácter derogativo del que se discutió anteriormente.

Como conjunto, la imagen de los aspectos artísticos, la piel violácea barnizada en sudor y los árboles ahogados en el gris metálico logran un efecto visual oscuro y de bochorno extremo en el imaginario del lector. Habiendo logrado el efecto deseado con la traducción del color de piel del hombre negro, se hace uso de un sustantivo adjetivado en lugar de adjetivarlos con el sufijo *-ic* en inglés. *Metal grey* le da mayor peso al imaginario sombrío que el autor quiere transmitir en el TO, pues *metallic grey* resulta más afín con el brillo metálico, con una imagen aséptica y con mayor luminosidad. El uso de “metal” como adjetivo para el color gris en inglés da mayor énfasis al gran peso del elemento, a su imponente y su poca sino nula capacidad de reflejar o dejar pasar luz. Para la traducción de *Francisco y los caminos* se vuelve necesario ir más allá de lo evidente en la página, pues aunque la traducción resulte literal, el entender esos matices detrás de

lo evidente en el texto le permiten al traductor comprender el texto en un nivel diferente – el traductor, en el momento que comprende los matices del texto, se convierte en creador del texto, pues está en propiedad de tomar decisiones sobre él. Para continuar la idea de Amighetti de comparar lo cotidiano con el arte, no es sino hasta que el estudiante de arte logra dominar las habilidades clásicas de dibujo anatómico, diseño básico y demás que este puede darse el lujo de deconstruir durante su proceso de creación. Habiendo una base de conocimiento de lo básico se obtiene propiedad para ir en contra de lo establecido y tomar decisiones propias.

7. *Imágenes sensoriales*

Los aspectos artísticos juegan un papel importantísimo en la construcción de la imagen sensorial que el texto genera en el lector a medida que avanza en la lectura del texto. Lo estético se combina con el dramatismo de una imagen para llenar al lector de una serie de sensaciones que comparte con el artista y autor. En el ejemplo # 8, es posible apreciar una estructura metafórica que compara la vida de gentes distintas con niveles de iluminación y por tanto el dramatismo de la imagen sensorial y visual que estos colores causan en el imaginario del espectador; el texto poetiza la percepción de una imagen que bien podría haber sido expresada en términos directos y sencillos.

Además de recurrir al cambio de puntuación para darle mayor fluidez a la idea en el idioma meta, se resaltan los aspectos artísticos convirtiéndolos en el elemento principal del complemento oracional. La puntuación en el segundo quiebre de la oración original se conserva; sin embargo, se elimina el uso de la preposición en el TM, presente en el TO. A la coma precede simplemente un artículo calificativo que simplifica la estructura de la oración sin necesidad de utilizar la preposición equivalente literal *with*. En su lugar, la traductora amplía la oración,

explicitando el bagaje del autor, tácito en el TO. Al convertir “mi pálida existencia” en sujeto del complemento oracional, “la pálida existencia” del autor toma protagonismo por medio de la personificación y le da al texto mayor valor literario.

Los ejemplos de “esteticismo” (Monge, 2010) dentro del texto de Amighetti, más que recurrentes son característicos del texto, como los ejemplos # 10, # 11 y # 12:

Ejemplo # 10		
TO	P. 50	Salí huyendo en un taxi, sin saber hacia dónde; le dije al chofer que caminara: sentía tan grato el aire, los ruidos de la ciudad me llenaban de secreto júbilo, y recordaba al adolescente con su sublime sobretodo raído, con el que parecía un espantapájaros, y su ceño violento, el del David de Miguel Ángel.
TM	P. 19	<i>I ran away in a cab, without direction; I told the driver to move: the air felt nice, city sounds made me secretly jubilant and I remembered the teen wearing his sublime ragged overalls, like a scarecrow, and his violent brow, like Micheangelo’s David.</i>

Para lograr el mismo efecto comparativo entre este personaje del que habla el autor y el David de Migue Ángel, se recurre a la partícula comparativa *like*, que simplifica por completo el símil que presenta el TO, haciendo de éste uno más directo y sencillo. El simplificar el símil no afecta el valor estético del texto: la comparación extrema entre un personaje de figura pobre y aspecto trágico versus la famosa obra de Miguel Ángel que glorifica la figura masculina y la representa como un estado de perfección físico-estética.

El artista parece ver la belleza del David en un joven de sobretodo raído, cuya imagen evoca a un hombrecillo desnutrido y de no muy buen ver. Y a la vez, la similitud comparativa que hace el autor pareciera tener un tono irónico que revela lo distante que está el joven de

parecerse al David, excepto por su semblante. La observación pone en evidencia la capacidad de ver el arte a través de los ojos de lo cotidiano, e inclusive de lo grotesco.

Estas muestras de estética perceptual se repiten a lo largo y ancho del texto, muestran la visión del autor respecto a la figura femenina en distintos espectros, no solo el de la belleza tradicional, de la que es objeto el enamoramiento, la pasión o la admiración.

Ejemplo # 11		
TO	P. 30	De vez en cuando veía transitar a la señora de la pensión, con su viudez, sus manos del Greco y su pañuelo como aquellos en que lloraban las reinas de los libros de cuentos.
TM	P. 10	<i>From time to time I saw the inn's landlady go by, in her widowhood, carrying her hands painted by El Greco and a tissue like the handkerchiefs queens from children's stories cried on.</i>

En múltiples ocasiones, lo fantasioso de las referencias comparativas que Amighetti usa para sus metáforas crea ambientes esporádicos poéticos que sacan al lector de la realidad objetiva de la historia que sirve de vehículo a la prosa poética. En el ejemplo # 11, vemos claramente como Amighetti se encarga de entremezclar dos aspectos de la prosa poética de manera sencilla y desenfadada. La referencia a El Greco le da inmediatamente una imagen al lector educado de cómo son las manos de la señora de la posada donde se encuentra; sin explicitar, se conserva el referente al artista, asunto que se relaciona directamente con el elemento que las manos contienen: un pañuelo propio de las reinas de cuentos de hadas hace alusión a uno muy delicado, casi mágico. Y ambos elementos, las manos alongadas, realistas pero idealizadas del Greco, se unen al pañuelo mágico y delicado de las reinas de fantasía para sacar al lector de la realidad de

la historia que venía siguiendo, para transportarlo a un mundo mágico, al menos por unos segundos. Es mediante la ampliación en el TM con el verbo *carrying* que se le da al texto la idea de que sus manos son algo precioso que lleva con cuidado, equivalente al pañuelo “encantado” que porta con aparente gracia y fantasía.

Ejemplo # 12		
TO	P. 162	Caminé por las arcadas que rodean la plaza; me detuve sin motivo frente a las vitrinas y más tarde, antes de atravesar la calle, contemplé con ojos nuevos la Iglesia de la Compañía de Jesús con sus piedras violetas y su despliegue barroco .
TM	P. 65	<i>I walked through the arches surrounding the square. I stopped without reason in front of the windows; and later on, as I was about to cross the street, I contemplated the Society of Jesus Church with new eyes, its violet stone and baroque display.</i>

Aun cuando la presencia de elementos fantasiosos de la literatura y los cuentos de hadas es recurrente dentro de la obra, pues Amighetti hace referencia a varios como Aladino y el Rey Midas (Amighetti p 130), *Romeo y Julieta* (p. 142), *Platero y yo* (p. 152) entre otros referentes literarios, no son estos los únicos que acompañan los factores de esteticismo dentro del texto. En ocasiones, es simplemente la referencia al aspecto físico de una cosa o persona lo que el autor ata al concepto artístico de su elección, y da así una imagen a quien lee el texto. Tal es el caso del ejemplo anterior, en el que la referencia a lo barroco describe la apariencia de una iglesia. La estructura de la oración es alterada en el TM para enfatizar el color y apariencia de esta “nueva contemplación”, es decir, una nueva visión de mundo de una edificación más, de lo mundano.

Aunque las iglesias son edificaciones particulares que muchas veces presentan aspectos artísticos por su arquitectura, siguen siendo parte de lo diario y de lo común, pues comparten las

vidas de gentes que las transitan y pasan junto a ellas todos los días – un edificio más. En lugar de continuar la larga estructura oracional del original, se recurre a una reestructuración en la que los signos de puntuación pasan a formar nuevas frases independientes, por medio de punto y seguido, para darle independencia y notoriedad a la segunda porción del fragmento en español. En la nueva segunda oración del TM, el uso del punto y coma crea protagonismo para lo que sucederá después: la contemplación y la imagen hablada que crea el autor. Se realiza una rápida investigación además para determinar el nombre de la iglesia mencionada, para que sea lo más cercano al inglés posible. Aunque muchos sitios turísticos en Internet (tripadvisor.com y otros) dan una traducción literal del nombre (*Company of Jesus Church*), es por medio del sitio jesuita, www.jesuit.org, que se logra dar con el nombre en inglés *Society of Jesus Church*.

Por supuesto, no falta en la prosa poética de Amighetti el esteticismo para con el ser amado que antes mencionábamos, presente en el ejemplo # 13. Si lo poético es a la figura femenina lo que el aire es al hombre, podríamos aventurarnos a decir que ninguna obra estará completa sin alguna alusión, contemplación u evocación al ser amado, a lo femenino. El TO no es la excepción y así somos partícipes de este fenómeno, logrado una vez más por el factor estético, que transmite al lector lo deteriorado del cuerpo de una joven enferma con los lánguidos y melancólicos rasgos góticos de la obra de Lehbruck.

Ejemplo # 13		
TO	P. 66	El cuerpo de Joyce, estilizado por la fiebre diaria, era trabajado por la tisis como un escultor que quisiera reducir el bloque al mínimo y me recordaba el goticismo expresionista de Lehbruck .
TM	P.	<i>Joyce's body, stylized by daily fever, was sculpted by tuberculosis like an artist</i>

27	<i>would on a block he wanted reduced to its minimum, and at the same time it reminded me of Lehmbruck's Gothicism.</i>
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Para lograr la traducción del TO, se recurre a la misma estructura pasiva en la primera oración, pero se adapta el verbo “trabajado” en español por “*sculpted*” en inglés. Al hacer esto se hace más pronto la alusión al acto de esculpir, de remover partes de una pieza de manera violenta, y se vuelve necesario buscar un término general que transmita la idea de escultor, sin caer en la repetición ni crear estructuras cacofónicas con el verbo utilizado en inglés “*sculpted*”. De ahí que la palabra “escultor” pase a transformarse en “artista”, es decir “*artist*”; un término que, aunque más genérico, complementa semánticamente a la perfección el verbo “*sculpt*” y transmite la idea original. Aquí, el esteticismo se ve no solo en el concepto de la enfermedad que esculpe el cuerpo como el artista esculpe una estatua, sino que la referencia a Lehmbruck, reforzada por el adjetivo “goticismo” evoca inmediatamente a una figura cadavérica, alongada, y definitivamente enferma. Es la combinación perfecta de dos conceptos opuestos (lo grotesco versus lo bello), dentro de la obra equiparables y equivalentes, pues ambos pueden ser percibidos como arte.

Así, con estos ejemplos, es posible apreciar algunos de los procesos traductológico llevados a cabo durante la traducción de *Francisco y los caminos*. Si bien estos no pretenden ejemplificar todos y cada uno de los aspectos de la prosa poética, si pueden servir como referente sobre posibles situaciones y soluciones a las múltiples peculiaridades de este subgénero.

Conclusiones

El presente informe de investigación muestra que el análisis de la traducción de un texto literario novedoso en el contexto costarricense, como la prosa poética, puede tener incumbencia dentro de una nueva corriente de estudio sobre la cual expandir conocimiento en las respectivas áreas. Si bien la prosa poética es quizás uno de los discursos literarios menos establecidos y más novedosos en el campo de la literatura, su novedad es aún mayor en el campo de la traducción, pues poca bibliografía y referencias se encuentran disponibles respecto a este tema.

Dado su carácter multifacético, cabe pensar cuántas veces se ha traducido textos de prosa poética sin tener en cuenta sus características, sino más bien siguiendo modelos de otros subgéneros, como la novela crónica u otros. Aún cuando la validez de dichos procesos existe, es probable que muchas de las obras de prosas poéticas traducidas hasta la fecha, bajo un modelo traductológico-literario distinto al del género equivalente, nos indican una carencia.

Con el presente trabajo, se retoma la discusión sobre la existencia del subgénero, sobre sus peculiaridades según algunos autores que se adentraron en este campo relativamente desconocido, y además, se intenta arrojar luz sobre la práctica traductológica relacionada con este tipo discursivo tan particular.

Este informe de investigación se ha centrado en estudiar, señalar y ejemplificar las posibles características que definen el subgénero de prosa poética, con base en la teoría literaria existente y la lectura crítica del texto traducido. Si bien la práctica traductológica es siempre con respecto a la literatura, la traductora se apoya en la conexión emocional y la sensibilidad literaria para lograr el desarrollo traductológico final.

A continuación, se especifican las conclusiones sobre cada uno de los aspectos principales del análisis, a saber: el proceso de investigación, las características del texto traducido y las estrategias desarrolladas para llevar a cabo la traducción.

1. Sobre el proceso de investigación

Después de llevar a cabo el estudio teórico literario, es posible resaltar lo siguiente:

- Aunque escasamente definidas, si no es que nulas, es posible encontrar en el material teórico disponible, ideas y conceptos que promueven el intento de definición de la prosa poética como subgénero concreto.
- De los autores estudiados, es posible notar una tendencia a oscurecer la diferencia en el uso aparentemente intercambiable, en ocasiones, del término poesía en prosa y el de prosa poética.
- El oscurecer la diferencia entre uno y otro pareciera deberse justamente a la falta de material más concreto que defina a cada uno por separado.
- Existe una tendencia aparente entre los teóricos estudiados que parece dar a entender que la prosa poética nace de la poesía en prosa.

2. Sobre las características de la prosa poética de Francisco Amighetti

Tomando como punto de partida el texto *Francisco y los caminos* como un ejemplo de prosa poética, no solo es posible afirmar que las características generales que se desprenden de la teoría están presentes en texto original, sino que además, dentro del texto de Amighetti, existen recursos particulares a su obra que logran ese tono poético en prosa. Dentro de dichos recursos, se rescatan los siguientes:

- La imagen de la ventana como símbolo recurrente y vehículo portador de las imágenes literarias del texto;
- La palabra como medio de composición artística;
- Lo artístico como vehículo metafórico;
- Los personajes y escenarios fantásticos universales dentro del mundo occidental que no solo añaden el carácter fantástico al texto, sino que le sirven al receptor como enlace relacional para con el texto, como las referencias al Rey Midas, Aladino, *Romeo y Julieta*, *Platero y yo*, los cuentos de hadas, las reinas y princesas, y otros;
- La contemplación de la mujer como imagen reconfortante y valiosa (física o espiritualmente hablando);
- El sentimiento abrumador causado por las grandes ciudades, incluido el sentimiento de soledad aún rodeado por miles de personas, por tránsito frenético u otros elementos de actividad y movimiento exacerbados;
- La percepción del mal como realidad del mundo, reflejado en su relación con la enfermedad hecha belleza (recordemos a la hermana de Richard Sands, Joyce, en *Taos*, “esculpida” al mínimo por su enfermedad), y en encontrar confort en compañía de lo grotesco y lo corrupto (como su relación con prostitutas o personas de la calle);

Si bien no se ha concluido aún si estas son o no características propias de otras obras en prosa poética, éstas, en definitiva, marcan la “personalidad” de *Francisco y los caminos* y funcionan como herramientas para ejecutar aquellas características más generales de esta modalidad discursiva.

3. Sobre la traducción de Francisco y los caminos

Se logró identificar las distintas características generales planteadas de la prosa poética en el texto original y también fue posible traducirlas al texto meta. La traducción del *Francisco y los caminos* resulta literal ya que sigue muy de cerca la estructura del texto original y se apega, en su mayoría, a las referencias, sin intentar adaptarse completamente a la cultura receptora del texto traducido. Sin embargo, este apego literal al texto no hace menos intrincado el proceso traductológico, ni quiere decir se haya hecho una traducción palabra por palabra, sin tener en cuenta que el resultado en la lengua meta sea coherente, interesante y sobre todo literaria. El adoptar esta forma de traducir el texto es la estrategia traductológica utilizada; sin embargo, el apego literal para con el texto no restringió en ningún momento el proceso de traducción. Se utiliza como herramientas creativas el uso esporádico de referentes culturales en la cultura meta, la simplificación de las estructuras oracionales en español y se compensa esta última con el uso ya presente de alusiones artísticas, figuras literarias y estructuras oracionales poco comunes en la lengua meta.

La traducción predominantemente literal de esta obra no hace caso omiso a los recursos peculiares del texto, los cuales al permanecer en el texto traducido, ayudan a conservar la esencia del original. El proceso de traducción es, más bien, uno que racionalizar la presencia de características particulares al texto, para luego definir cómo se van a traducir al texto meta. El que el resultado final sea en apariencia literal, no quiere decir que detrás no exista un proceso analítico y traductológico pensado, durante el cual se han tomado en cuenta múltiples alternativas. La creatividad está saber cuándo realizar los cambios, en tener el poder de decisión de conservar las estructuras que sirvan al propósito del texto traducido y en identificar aquellas estructuras, sean estas palabras, oraciones, párrafos o secciones completas, que logren el efecto

deseado, sin que necesariamente sean estos un reflejo exacto del original. De aspectos artísticos que, separados quizás no parezcan representar mayor reto a la hora de traducir, pero en conjunto, guardan un significado que va más allá de la palabra escrita, a pequeños cambios en la escogencia de palabras con carga cultural (como es el caso de la traducción de cal en el TO como *snow* en el TM), a fin de acercar a la cultura meta al texto traducido, todo influye en el proceso de traducción. Aún cuando es posible traducir las palabras literalmente al idioma meta, es necesario ir más allá de lo simple y aparente del texto – debemos recordar que aunque la forma aparentemente predominante de la prosa poética, es decir la prosa, continúa siendo vehículo de lo intrincado del aspecto poético. En la traducción de *Francisco y los caminos*, y quizás en otros textos en prosa poética, los significados menos aparentes de las palabras están siempre presentes y el descifrar su intencionalidad en el texto representa un gran desafío para el traductor.

La prosa poética y su traducción son, en definitiva, un campo amplísimo para desarrollar múltiples investigaciones ricas y novedosas. Sea la prosa poética en general, o aquella específica a una región o país, el desarrollo de caracterización y entendimiento de este subgénero puede ampliar, aun más, el campo de conocimiento y especialización del traductor. *Francisco y los caminos*, aunque una muestra, indica ya lo complejo del campo y lo variado de sus estructuras.

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Apéndice

Texto Original