

# PRISM

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SPECIAL ISSUE –  
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*Last year the faculty of the Department of Languages and Literatures published the first issue of Shadows and Echoes, a new journal devoted to the impossible task of literary translation. This spring the faculty of the Division of Humanities elected to devote the bulk of its annual publication, Prism, to Volume 2, Number 1 of Shadows and Echoes. Prism will return to its normal format next year.*

## SHADOWS AND ECHOES

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### From the Dean

It is with pride and pleasure that the Division of Humanities brings to you this year’s volume of *Prism*. The Department of Languages and Literatures launched a new publication last year, and the Division decided to honor that achievement by devoting most of this year’s *Prism* to the most recent issue of *Shadows and Echoes*.

The topic of translation – the focus of this issue – is central to the endeavors of the Humanities as a whole. All departments – English, Languages and Literatures, Philosophy, and Religion – are engaged with interpreting, or translating, texts. Language is a code. To communicate, we must translate in one way or another, either within the same tongue or between foreign tongues. Translation is a fundamental state of human affairs.

Christiane Nord has written that “translation is an intentional interaction intending to change an existing state of affairs.” It is manifestly the case that communication among nations, linguistically and culturally different, has become more imperative than ever in our contemporary world, for misunderstandings can generate escalating violence and war.

The Division of Humanities seeks common bonds among the world’s peoples. In its support for the study of languages, world religions, philosophies, and literary points of view, it seeks to promote what is best and most noble about human life. At the center of its work in a globalized world are the broad notions of translation, communication, and understanding.

Salman Rushdie recognized the worth of translation in today’s hybrid world when he

wrote: “Having been borne across the world, we are translated men. It is normally supposed that something always gets lost in translation; I cling obstinately to the notion that something can also be gained.” We, too, are committed to this gain.

Faculty achievements that pertain to this area include the university’s \$2 million grant from the Lilly Endowment for the Wild Hope Project, which aims to improve at PLU the quality of our reflection on vocation. But this is only one example of the fruits of our teaching, scholarship, and service. Two others are a successful retreat this spring bringing together Humanities faculty to clarify how we contribute to the global education of our students through curricular offerings connecting with opportunities for study and research abroad, and our participation in the new Hong International Hall opening in September 2004. As a Division we are committed to the study of foreign languages, for we know that in learning about the other we come to know ourselves.

Nelson Mandela, when asked why he wanted his autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom*, to be published in all eleven of South Africa’s official languages (Afrikaans, English, Zulu, Xhosa, Ndebele, Venda, Swati, Sesotho, Sepedi, Tsonga, and Tswana), said: “This book has been translated into practically all the languages in the world. I can go to any place on earth and my story can be found there in that language. I want to be part of all the languages of my country. One’s language should never be a dead end. That is why I believe in translation: for us to be able to live together.”

Barbara Temple-Thurston  
Dean of the Division of Humanities

# Lost and Found in Translation

In what *Shadows and Echoes* hopes will be an annual feature, *Lost and Found in Translation* takes a poem by Emily Dickinson and translates it through a number of languages (German, French, Catalan, Spanish, and Latin) before bringing it (or something!) back into English. Each of the translators worked only from the text immediately preceding. Prof. Richard Jones of the Department of English agreed to comment on the project. His essay, entitled “Found in Translation,” begins on page 3.

1 Wild Nights – Wild Nights!  
Were I with thee  
Wild Nights should be  
Our luxury!

Futile – the Winds –  
To a Heart in port –  
Done with the Compass –  
Done with the Chart!

Rowing in Eden –  
Ah, the Sea!  
Might I but moor – Tonight –  
In Thee!

– Emily Dickinson

2 Wilde Nächte – Wilde Nächte!  
Wär’ ich doch mit euch  
Dann wären wilde Nächte,  
Unsere Freud’!

Nutzlos – die Winde –  
Für ein Herz im Hafen –  
Am Ende des Suchens –  
Am Ende des Planens!

Rudern im Eden –  
Oh, die See!  
Könn’ ich nur ankern – Heute –  
In ihr!

– Translated by Christine Newcomb

3 Nuits sauvages, nuits d’orages  
Quelle douceur serait nôtre  
Si auprès de vous  
Je m’y figurais

Nulle rafale n’atteint  
Le coeur ancré au port  
Fini les voyages  
Fini les transports

Naviguant au paradis  
Ô la mer  
Rivée à ton coeur  
Puisse je m’apaiser

– Translated by Helen Williams-Ginsberg

7 O wild nights, tempestuous nights!  
For us, how sweet, should I see me  
Sitting with you.

No hurricane threatens a heart  
At anchor, secured in port  
Its journey complete.

Rise to the highest heavens, O Sea!  
Bound by your heart I could become  
Tranquil in mind.

– Translated by Eric Nelson

4 Nits salvatges, nits de tempesta  
Quina dolçor seria la nostra  
si a prop teu,  
amb tu jo m’imaginés.

Cap ràfega no traspals  
el cor fondejat a port  
finalitzats els viatges  
finalitzats els transports.

Navegant cap al paradís.  
Oh, mar  
llogada al teu cor  
em pugui jo asserenar.

– Translated by Maria Lightner-Ferrer

6 O noctes truces, noctes tempestatum  
Nobis quam dulce sit si videam me  
Ad te sedere.

Nulla procella molesta, aliquando  
Animus ancoris stetit in portu,  
Cursu confecto.

Vecta ad extrema caelestium, o mare,  
Capta animo tuo possem fieri  
Tranquilla mente.

– Translated by Rochelle Snee

5 Noches salvajes, noches de tormenta,  
Qué dulzura sería la nuestra  
Si cerca de ti  
Me viera yo.

Ninguna ráfaga molesta,  
Fondeado el corazón en puerto,  
Acabados los viajes,  
Concluidas las singladuras.

Navegando hacia el paraíso,  
Oh, mar,  
Ligada a tu corazón,  
Pueda yo serenarme.

– Translated by Paloma Martínez-Carbajo

# Found in Translation

R. P. Jones

## *The woe that is translation*

Literary translation is an odd and unnatural act—all but impossible. Translation normally tries to take meaning from one language and put it in another. Even at its most simple it is neither easy nor exact—even when working with language that tries to be mono-dimensional and factual, language trying to say one thing and one thing only, it often fails.

The language of poetry is not like that; it's worse; it's more difficult. Poetry tries to express complex thoughts and feelings, with all their contradictions, hopes, fears, doubts and certainties, projections and conjectures—all at once. It is a language beginning in fact but always trying to move beyond that to a more complete, emotional truth.

As a poem tries to do all this, it uses every resource of language it can find. It appeals to as many of our senses as the subject might involve, the old “show, don't tell” bit. But a poem includes more than the visual; it includes sounds: hard and soft, fast and slow, strident or soothing, all to help evoke a mood. It often relies on the histories words carry with them, and our familiarity with those words and their histories to surround us with associations and memories. Beyond that, poems sometimes use traditional forms to set up expectations—either to fulfill them or to counter and subvert them [“my mistress' eyes are very like the sun;” would be expected; “my mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun” was a nice twist] Such formal expectations are context sensitive; they rely on cultural expectations and histories, the familiarities of a writer's contemporary audience.

## *Types of translation*

A translation may try to do a number of different things, sometimes exclusively, sometimes simultaneously. In school we were taught first to construe our way through a text to be sure we understood the structure of the original, the relationship of the words and phrases to each other. Then we tried to turn that awkward phrasing into more fluent, but still accurate, sentences. The goal was to be as true to the original meaning as possible. Sometimes the tone or mood of the original got lost, but the “meaning” remained.

A freer translation, perhaps more accurately an imitation, might try to take the original and rephrase it in the new language the way the author might. “How would Homer say that in English now?” Robert Lowell's *Imitations* (1967) worked along those lines:

“I have been reckless with literal meaning, and labored hard to get *the* tone. Most often this has been a tone, for the tone is something that will always more or less escape transference to another language and cultural moment. I have tried to write a live English and to do what my authors might have done if they were writing their poems now and in America.”

In the early sixties Louis and Celia Zukofsky tried an interesting experiment: they all but abandoned accurate meaning in favor of imitating the sound of the original. So far as we know Zukofsky's “homophonic translations” are the first to emphasize phonetic similarity rather than original meaning.

## Catullus

Canto 27, original version:

Minister uetuli puer Falerni  
inger mi calices amariores,  
ut lex Postumiae iubet magistrae  
ebrioso acino ebriosioris.  
at uos quo lubet hinc abite, lymphae,  
uini pernicles, et ad seueros  
migrate. hic merus est Thyonianus.

Minister wet to lee, pour the Falernian  
and gear me chalices, ah by bitterest,  
the law's Postumia, you bet magistral,  
eh breezy kin a grape-loving breeziness.  
Adieu qualifying between water and  
wine are pernicious, let the odd serious  
migrate: high! pure the thing on us 's the wine god's.

— Louis and Celia Zukofsky  
(London: Cape Golliard, 1969), and in *Collected Shorter Poems*.

Strict metrical translation is yet another approach, but it mostly fails since the measures appropriate for one language are seldom suitable for another. The Greek meters worked well enough for the Roman poets, but the old hexameters failed to come across well in English and were shortened to pentameters when Surrey published part of Book IV of the *Aeneid* in 1554. Most poetry translated into English recently has come through as free or otherwise irregular verse.

Seamus Haney's translation of *Beowulf*, while not slavishly metric, seems to catch the tone of the original along with a good dose of its alliterative sounds.

[Grendel] struck suddenly and started in;  
he grabbed and mauled a man on his bench,  
bit into his bone-lappings, bolted down his blood  
and gorged on him in lumps, leaving the body  
utterly lifeless, eaten up  
hand and foot.

Translation indulges in compromise. Tone gets sacrificed for literal meaning or meaning gets mauled by tone. Incompatible metrics hobble the image and the music of language gets lost. Yet we try, generation after generation, to re-translate the classics, trying to keep them alive.

### *The currents of change*

Our trip starts with Emily Dickinson's "Wild Nights" (# 249) in the American idiom of Amherst, Massachusetts, around 1860. The poem moves next to German, then to the neighboring French, crossing a southern boarder it becomes Catalan, then moving further south--perhaps—it changes to Spanish. The poem's next trip is back in time to Latin. Finally it returns, almost home, to the American idiom—but a century and a half later. I'd like to think Dickinson would be pleased with this experiment. After all, she told us: "There is no Frigate like a Book/To take us Lands away...." Her twenty-four foot dory has crossed the Atlantic, paddled around the Mediterranean, and crossed the Atlantic again. "Port," "compass," "chart" "rowing," "sea," and "moor" change accents throughout their travels, but carry on the nautical metaphors of the original. "Wild Nights" carries through with some variation, but I wonder whether the winds of nineteenth century American romanticism, with their suggestion of the sublime, are quite as prevailing in these translations into their several modern tongues. And the Romans seem too practical and controlled for such wild indulgences.

Stylistically, the Dickinson dash—and its suggested pause and shift of voice—runs through the German, but loses its wind and isn't seen again. And while the German keeps a good bit of the breathless tone, something changes when the original "Ah, the Sea!" becomes "Oh, die See!" The open yearning "Ah" closes down in the rounder, slightly tighter, "Oh." It's such a slight change that it didn't seem important at first, but the "Oh" never changes back. They are not quite interchangeable.

Donald Hall tells us there are no synonyms; no two words mean exactly the same thing, carry the same connotations. Dickinson's "Wild Nights" stay "Wilde Nächte" about as close as you can get, but two light

syllables longer in German, still, that's where American romanticism had its early roots, so I suspect the "wild(e)" both express the romantic sublime. The French changes to "sauvages" and "orages" which are close, but seem just a bit afiel. As the words head south they become "salvages" and "tempesta" in Catalan, then "salvajes" and "tormenta" in Spanish. The shift to "tormenta" probably suggests "truces" (trux, trucis, threatening, stern) in the idiom of Horace, say, 30 B.C. near Tivoli. The tone has gotten more serious, or slightly threatening. "Ah, the Sea" has changed to "o mare" and "Wild Nights" to "O noctes truces, noctes tempestatum." The suggestion of awe in "Ah" has changed to a more ominous "oh."

But there's another change when Dickinson's poem rows back in time, a change of form. Dickinson's poems, most of them, can be hammered out to the tune of "Oh, God our help in ages past," a popular Isaac Watts hymn she must have heard floating down and across the street from the nearby church near the square in Amherst. Just as she savaged the hymn's strong beat by changing its rhythms with pauses dropped—sometimes twice—in a single tetrameter line, she plays free with the formal line structure in "Wild Nights." With some variation, mostly in the middle stanza, she writes a four syllable, two beat, mostly iambic line. The second to last line "Might I but moor—Tonight—" seems to pirate its last word from the final line (where form would have it).

Rowing in Eden—  
Ah, the Sea!  
Might I but moor—  
Tonight—In Thee!

– Various "edited" versions.

Rowing in Eden—  
Ah, the Sea!  
Might I but moor—Tonight—  
In Thee!

– As it appears in both the Thomas H. Johnson and R. W. Franklin editions.

Perhaps she wanted the idea of mooring and tonight in closer proximity that a line break would leave them, leaving the line break to extend the pause, set up with by dash at the end of the penultimate line, to heighten the effect, the surprise, of her ultimate "In Thee!"

That's her form and a bit of what she did to it, but how would she have used form had she been a Roman living not far from Horace's villa in Tivoli?

The Latin version answers that. Since Isaac Watts hadn't yet written his several hundred hymns, and the ballad stanza (same measure) wasn't yet a gleam in a minstrel's eye, what was a poet to do? I'd like to think Dickinson would have chosen Sappho as her model for this romantic yearning. Horace borrowed the Greek measure from Sappho; Dickinson—whose craft was equal to his—would have done the same—but changed it some to make it hers. The Latin version does that. The traditional Sapphic has two different verses, the first (the lesser Sapphic) repeated three times, the final (a five syllable line) called the Adonic used once brings the stanza to a tight, curt end. Dickinson's poem is too terse for the four lines, so the Latin version has only two lesser Sapphics and an Adonic—perhaps a new meter after all these years: the least Sapphic. So just as Dickinson's poem takes its own metric liberties; its Latin incarnation plays—likewise—with its own chosen form.

And finally, as the well traveled frigate—or dory—comes back to its almost original moorage, what remains of its cargo? The wild romanticism has been mostly jettisoned. "No" has a stronger blunt sense than "futile." But for some incomprehensible reason the mood of the original "were" and "might" come through—a little wetter for the wear—as "should" and "could." The not-exactly-assertions of the original remain, as yearnings or apprehensions, something to want or something that just isn't, optative or subjunctive. Sometimes



when the structure of language gets simpler, it gets less precise.

There's more and there's more and there's more, but what I want to do here is suggest how rich this exercise is in its implications. I've only had a few days to read and think about the translations and what this all amounts to. And from the notes I've seen on the photocopies of the manuscripts, no one else had much more time. This happened almost as fast as a parlor game proposed to make a long evening go quickly. It's an old game, known by various names: "telephone," "gossip," "rumor"—depending who you ask. Or as Virgil might whisper into whomever's ear was next: "Fama est ut...."

So—

My fifth grade teacher Mr. Fair, who also taught Latin and took me to see Coriolanus because I conjugated some verb correctly, and who didn't have a first name because no fifth grade teachers had first names then, said: "An educated man is never bored." That was some fifty years ago when teachers didn't have first names, sex was no more than gender, and being politically correct had something to do with being a registered voter.

So what? So I have liked doing this. I have been able to call on things I've learned from Mr. Fair to the present. I have engaged in an intellectual exchange with a number of intelligent people, some of whom I have known, some of whom I hope to. In all this I have been the lucky one; their tasks were circumscribed: each to translate the translation handed down. They had to look at a poem in one language and try to make it exist in another, not an enviable task—all but impossible with Dickinson. All I was asked was make a few notes on what I noticed them doing.

As I take a final look at my

photocopies of what each translator passed on to the next, I see: "Have fun!" "Have fun..." "éste es el poema..." "enjoy!" "This was actually fun!" and "We had fun with this." And "I think you'll enjoy this." And at my end I add :

"Thanks, I did."

Perhaps this is why we keep trying, generation after generation, to re-translate the classics, to keep them alive. And—because of these sorts of games—they still are.

## Texts in Translation

### Abuela en los recuerdos

Luz Mary Giraldo

Doblas y desdoblas camisas  
Como atando y desatando el tiempo.  
Aquí las medias y la caja de zapatos  
A este lado el sacón para el frío de la tarde  
El traje oscuro en la fiesta de sombras  
Y el rojo para suavizar la pena.  
En el baúl duermen  
El velo de la infancia  
Y el terciopelo de los años.  
El camión bordado hace la siesta entre las  
sábanas  
Y el pañuelo de seda guarda reliquias de  
un desvelo.

La casa que tú llevas  
Contigo arrebujada  
Es un solar de tiempo  
Y un patio de cerezos  
Es la cena servida en la noche de todos  
Niños en los jardines  
Y un oculto secreto.  
Páginas donde hay versos  
Oraciones y sueños.  
Un ramo de violetas  
Con olor a jazmín  
A yerbabuena  
A viento.

Un ícono de fondo luminoso  
Duerme en la sala  
Y la palabra  
Espera en la puerta de la entrada  
Con la copa de vino  
Un mantel de dos letras  
Y la campana que tañe al recordar los  
muertos.

La casa que tú llevas  
Tejida en el silencio  
Dobla y desdobla  
Tu sueño y tu desvelo.

### Grandma in My Memory

Luz Mary Giraldo

Folding and unfolding shirts  
Like tying and untying time.  
Here, the stockings and the shoe box,  
There, the coat for the evening cold,  
The dark suit in the fiesta of the shadows,  
And the red one to soothe the pain.  
In the trunk sleep  
The veil of childhood  
And the velvet of all the years.  
The embroidered gown naps between the  
sheets,  
And the silk scarf keeps mementos of a  
restless night.

The house that you carry  
Clutched to you  
Is a waste land of time  
And a terrace of cherry trees;  
It is dinner served in everyone's night,  
Children in the garden,  
And a hidden secret.  
Pages where there are verses,  
Prayers and dreams.  
A bouquet of violets  
Scented of jasmine,  
Peppermint,  
Wind.

An icon with a luminous background  
Sleeps in the parlor,  
And the word  
Waits at the front door  
With the glass of wine,  
A two-lettered tablecloth,  
And the bell that tolls upon remembering  
the dead.

The house that you carry  
Woven in silence  
Folds and unfolds  
Your sleep and your restlessness.

— Translated by Paloma Martínez-Carbajo

Cuando me falta el aire  
 Pregunto si Marcel  
 Recorre su habitación  
 Como un refugio de silencio  
 Y escribe en las paredes  
 Las líneas perdidas de los sueños.  
 O si Lezama saca del fondo del espejo  
 Su ahogado Narciso  
 Del “tiempo dorado por el Nilo”  
 Y ve caer las hojas de los árboles  
 Como libros abiertos.

Pregunto si Nerval  
 Busca en el fantasma de Aurelia  
 Un plácido rumor de golondrina  
 Y si en las noches Mozart  
 Convoca el ajedrez de un piano  
 Hasta que nace un réquiem o un presagio.  
 Veo una calle de memorias  
 Veo un aleph  
 Los ojos  
 La sombra de los nombres  
 Veo paisajes solitarios.

Cuando me falta el aire  
 Pregunto si en el tiempo perdido  
 Quedó un camino de cerezos  
 Una copa de vino derramado  
 Algún amor al borde de la puerta  
 O un girasol en la ventana.  
 Me pregunto si los tristes arlequines de  
 Picasso  
 Están en la memoria persistente  
 Y si ese dios que sueña  
 Baja de los altares  
 A soplar el aliento  
 Hasta que vuelva a la vida  
 Con su canto de ciegos  
 Y su andar errabundo y de sorpresas.

Cuando se pierde el aire  
 Tejo una colcha de voces  
 Que vienen desde el día en que Ulises  
 Hizo su viaje de vencer el miedo  
 Y pasa por Werther  
 Por Ema  
 Por Alicia

Por el nombre sin nombre  
 Por la rosa  
 Por la copla de Orfeo  
 Por la danza  
 Por la angustia secreta del infierno  
 Por el paraíso y sus delicias.

Y como un camaleón sobre la hierba  
 Veo pasar las horas con el viento  
 Y me cambia la piel  
 Los sueños  
 La música es distinta  
 La habitación se aleja  
 Y me trae a Marcel  
 A Lezama  
 A mi padre  
 A la sombra  
 Y al cansado bufón de algún poema.

### **Lezama and Proust in the Shadow** **Luz Mary Giraldo**

When I'm out of breath  
 I wonder if Marcel  
 Paces his room,  
 Like a refuge of silence,  
 And if on his walls he writes  
 The lost lines of dreams.  
 Or if Lezama pulls from the depths of  
 the mirror  
 His drowned Narcissus  
 From the “golden age on the Nile”  
 And sees the leaves fall from the trees like  
 open books.

I wonder if Nerval  
 Searches for a placid whisper of a shallow  
 In Aurélia's ghost,  
 And if at night Mozart  
 Summons the chessboard of a piano  
 Until a requiem or an omen are born.  
 I see a street of memories,  
 I see an aleph,  
 The eyes,  
 The shadow of names,  
 I see solitary landscapes.

When I'm out of breath,  
 I wonder if in the lost time  
 A cherry path remained,  
 A spilled glass of wine,  
 Some love at the doorstep,  
 Or a sunflower in the window.  
 I wonder if Picasso's sad harlequins  
 Are in the persistent memory,  
 And if that god who dreams  
 Comes down from the altars  
 To exhale breath  
 Until life returns with its blind man's  
 chant  
 And its surprising wandering step.

When one is out of breath,  
 I weave a quilt of voices  
 That have been coming since the day  
 Ulysses  
 Took his trip to overcome fear  
 And passes by Werther,  
 By Emma,  
 By Alice,

By an unnamed name,  
 By the rose,  
 By Orpheus's rhyme,  
 By the dance,  
 By the secret anguish of inferno,  
 By the paradise lost and its pleasures.

And, like a chameleon on the grass,  
 I see hours pass the wind,  
 And it changes my skin,  
 Dreams,  
 Music is different,  
 The room drifts away  
 And brings me Marcel,  
 Lezama,  
 My father,  
 The shadow,  
 And the tired buffoon of some poem.

– *Translated by Paloma Martínez-Carbajo*

## On est Tibère, on est Judas, on est Dracon

[*Les Châtiments*, V, vi]

Victor Hugo

On est Tibère, on est Judas, on est Dracon ;  
Et l'on a Lambessa, n'ayant plus Montfaucon.  
On forge pour le peuple une chaîne ; on enferme,  
On exile, on proscriit le penseur libre et ferme ;  
Tout succombe. On comprime élans, espoirs, regrets,  
La liberté, le droit, l'avenir, le progrès,  
Comme faisait Séjan, comme fit Louis onze,  
Avec des lois de fer et des juges de bronze.  
Puis, – c'est bien, – on s'endort, et le maître joyeux  
Dit : l'homme n'a plus d'âme et le ciel n'a plus d'yeux.  
O rêve des tyrans ! l'heure fuit, le temps marche,  
Le grain croît dans la terre et l'eau coule sous l'arche.  
Un jour vient où ces lois de silence et de mort  
Se rompant tout à coup, comme, sous un effort,  
Se rouvrent à grand bruit des portes mal fermées,  
Emplissent la cité de torches enflammées.

17 janvier 1853.

## Who are they? Judas. Tiberius. Draco.

Victor Hugo

Who are they? Judas. Tiberius. Draco.  
If not Montfaucon, they have Guantánamo.  
They forge a chain and lock the people up,  
They exile and proscribe those who speak up;  
They crush enthusiasm, hope, the best --  
Freedom, justice, the future, and progress,  
The way Sejanus did, or Louis Onze,  
With iron laws and sentences of bronze.  
Then – satisfied – they go to sleep, content:  
“There is no soul, we are the government.”  
O dream of tyrants! Time is on the march,  
Seeds grow, and waters flow beneath the arch.  
A day will come when their dark laws of death  
Will all give way, like one outrushing breath,  
And all the doors they tried to close will ope,  
Flooding our city with fire, light and hope.

January 17, 1853.

– Translated by Mark K. Jensen

# Texts in Translation With Commentary

## On Translating Two Poems by Langston Hughes: *Letter from Spain* and *Postcard from Spain*.\*

Maria Lightner-Ferrer

This essay serves as an introduction and commentary to a translation into Spanish of two poems by Langston Hughes. The poems' appeal relies on the link the poet establishes between the Spain in Civil War (1936-1939) and his own social problems at home in America. The poet conveys in a few lines an analysis of the universal situation of colored men and women, told within the context of the fight against fascism in Spain, while at the same time evaluating Europe's colonial legacy in Africa and America.

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\* “Letter from Spain” and “Postcard from Spain” appear in Rampersad, Arnold, ed., *The Collected Works of Langston Hughes*, vol. 1, *The Poems: 1921-1940* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1984), 252-54.

Langston Hughes was in Spain for a period of approximately six months. He crossed the Spanish border from France on July 24, 1937, with his good friend the Cuban poet, Nicolás Guillén, after first visiting Paris for a week. Then he recrossed it again in mid-December 1937, when he left the country still submerged in the civil war, knowing that the official government and its loyalist peoples were about to be defeated. Both men were sent to Spain by their respective newspapers to write articles on the civil war and to give an account of what was going on in Spain to the American and Cuban publics. There was one main objective in Hughes' mind when he agreed to go to Spain in those difficult times, namely, to investigate and to report on the colored people who were participating on each side of the fight. Arnold Rampersad cites him in

his book *The Life of Langston Hughes*:

I knew that Spain once belonged to the Moors, a colored people ranging from light dark to dark white. Now the Moors have come again to Spain with the fascist armies as cannon fodder for Franco. But, on the loyalist side, there are many Negroes of various nationalities in the International Brigades. I want to write about both Moors and Negroes. (349)

And this is what he did. He wrote about these complete strangers who fought against each other. Some of them knew very well what they were fighting for, while others were unaware of the reason, they went simply because they had been ordered to the battlefield.

As Langston Hughes states, the presence of Moors in Spain was nothing new. What was new in the second part of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century was the presence of the Spanish in Morocco, as part of Spain's efforts to figure as a colonial power among the European countries. In spite of the frequent incursions, rebellions, power struggles, inflated patriotism, the colonial subjects were seen as part of an African mission with tones of an old time religious crusade against the Moors (Carr 257).

The Colony acted as a back yard, training camp, livelihood, etc. for the Spanish army. The Spanish government created a body of Foreign Legion fighters in the Colony who later along with the Moroccan "regulares" soldiers, played a big role in the early days of the Civil War.

On the other hand, the Fifteenth International Brigade was created in January 1937 in Albacete and, according to Rampersad, "comprised separate British, Canadian, Hispanic (from Cuba, Mexico, Puerto Rico and Latin America), and United States Battalions. The Americans, over 3,300 in number, of whom between 80 and 100 were black, formed mostly the Abraham Lincoln Battalion and a subsidiary outfit, the Washington Battalion" (347).

It was in this Brigade that Langston Hughes sought out colored soldiers fighting against fascism. During the six months he spent in Spain, he had a chance to meet all kinds of colored soldiers, volunteers, fighters, cooks, ambulance drivers, doctors, baseball players, nurses, etc. whom he had a chance to interview, and from whom he heard about others who had died already on the battlefield before he could reach them.

In his memoirs, *I Wonder as I Wander*, Hughes dedicates a whole chapter to the time he spent in Spain. In reading it, one sees the vision he had in regard to his situation as a black man in the United

## Letter from Spain Langston Hughes

Addressed to Alabama

Lincoln Battalion,  
International Brigades,  
November Something, 1937.

Dear Brother at home:

We captured a wounded Moor today.  
He was just as dark as me.  
I said, Boy, what you been doin' here  
Fightin' against the free?

He answered something in a language  
I couldn't understand  
But somebody told me he was sayin'  
They nabbed him in his land

And made him join the fascist army  
And come across to Spain  
And he said he had a feelin'  
He'd never get back home again.

He said he had a feelin'  
This whole thing wasn't right.  
He said he didn't know  
The folks he had to fight.

And as he lay there dying  
In a village we had taken,  
I looked across to Africa  
And seed foundations shakin'.

Cause if a free Spain wins this war,  
The colonies, too, are free –  
Then something wonderful'll happen  
To them Moors as dark as me.

I said, I guess that's why old England  
And I reckon Italy, too,  
Is afraid to let a workers' Spain  
Be too good to me and you –

Cause they got slaves in Africa –  
And they don't want 'em to be free.  
Listen, Moorish prisoner, hell!  
Here, shake hands with me!

I knelt down there beside him,  
And I took his hand –  
But the wounded Moor was dyin'  
And he didn't understand.

Salud,  
Johnny

## Carta desde España Langston Hughes

Drigido a Alabama

Batallón Lincoln,  
Brigadas Internacionales,  
Algún día de noviembre de 1937

Querido hermano que stás en casa:

Hoy capturamos a un moro herido.  
Era tan oscuro como yo.  
Le dije: chico, ¿qué stás haciendo aquí  
luchando contra la libertad?

Me contestó algo en una lengua  
que no pude entender.  
Pero alguien me dijo que decía  
que lo habían agarrao en su villa

y le obligaron a unirse a los fascistas  
y a cruzar el estrecho a España.  
Y me dijo que presentía  
ca su tierra jamás regresaría.

Me dijo que presentía  
calgo malo iba a pasar  
Me dijo que no conocía  
a la gente qui ba a matar.

Y cuando en mi presencia moría  
allí en donde lo habían apresao,  
miré buscando a Africa  
y vi sus cementos agitaos.

Ya que si gana esta guerra la España libre,  
también las colonias lo serán –  
y algo maravilloso les sucederá  
a los moros tan oscuros como yo.

Le dije: por eso la vieja Inglaterra  
e Italia mimagino, también,  
tiene miedo que la España de los trabajadores  
sea con nosotros dos tan fiel -

Ya cay esclavos en África-  
y no quieren que sean libres.  
¡Oye!, moro, prisionero, ¡joder!  
¡estréchame la mano!

Me arrodillé a su lado,  
y le tomé la mano -  
pero el moro herido se moría  
sin saber qué le decía.

Salud,  
Johnny

– Translated by Maria Lightner-Ferrer



States of America. His objective was universalizing colored men and women, and creating a common front and a common fight against all forms of fascism, which he saw as the force that was keeping black men and women in America from achieving their natural rights. In his mind, the Brigades, in Spain, were fighting a double battle, namely, a battle against the rebels who were trying to overthrow Spain's elected Republic, and a battle against fascism, which was perpetuating the racist, class, and other differences among human beings.

In his memoirs, he states that he felt very comfortable in Spain regarding his race. He writes: "I was well received everywhere I went, and the Negroes in the International Brigade reported a similar reception" (*I Wonder* 351).

One day, he faces a young black Arab man wounded in the hospital in Madrid. He is a prisoner from Africa, a thirteen-year-old boy who had been wounded in the battle of Brunete. His mother had died there. Hughes writes:

The rebels, I learned later, imported women and men – women to accompany the troops, to wash and cook for them behind the lines. The Moorish troops were colonial conscripts, or men from the Moroccan villages enticed into the army by offers of what seemed to them very good pay. Franco's personal bodyguard consisted of Morocco soldiers, tall picturesque fellows in flowing robes and winding turbans. (350)

Hughes cannot help commenting on the paradoxical situation in which these foreign fighters are submerged. While they are victims of a colonial status themselves, they are at the same time fighting for the imposition of a traditional, old-fashioned Catholic government, one that is ironically attempting to overthrow a liberal government that according to Hughes "has been seeking to work out a liberal

policy toward Morocco" (353).

In short, this nonsensical situation creates an image that borders on the absurd. It brings up the analysis of the Colonial discourse that years before Spanish writers pertaining to the "Generación del 98" had written about.<sup>1</sup> Moroccan soldiers fought on the side of the strong, and this gave them a social status that otherwise they never would have had in the Spanish society. But as soon as they were wounded or died, they would return to their real world, the world in which they were colonial subjects. It was a world that did not offer them full credit for their actions, one that would place them in the last seats of a theatre, behind the Italian troops, and even further behind the Germans, close to the leftist war prisoners, as seen in the film version of

the Spanish play *!Ay, Carmela!* (1986) by José Sanchís Sinisterra.<sup>2</sup>

Regarding the translation I have undertaken of these two poems, the main objective and the most challenging in the process of translation, has been trying to be accurate with the linguistic register Hughes uses in his poems. On more than one occasion, Hughes was criticized for his use of slang and misspelling in his poems. He explains in *I Wonder as I Wander*: "I gave a program of my poems for a group of Brigadiers, and I read some of the "Letters from Spain" in verse that I had written. Afterwards there was a discussion. Some of the Internationals objected to the lack of correct grammar and the slightly broken English that I had used in these Letters" (378). They complained that they were well educated,

### Postcard from Spain Langston Hughes

Adressed to Alabama

Lincoln-Washington Battalion  
April, 1938

Dear Folks at Home:

I went out this mornin'  
Old shells was a-fallin'  
Whistlin' and a-fallin'  
When I went out this mornin'.

I'm way over here  
A long ways from home,  
Over here in Spanish country  
But I don't feel alone.

Folks over here don't treat me  
Like white folks used to do.  
When I was home they treated me  
Just like they treatin' you.

I don't think things'll ever  
Be like that again:  
I done met up with folks  
Who'll fight for me now  
Like I'm fightin' now for Spain.

Salud,  
Johnny

### Postal desde España Langston Hughes

Dirigida a Alabama

Batallón Lincoln-Washington,  
Abril de 1938

Queridos amigos que stáis en casa:

Esta mañana al salir,  
la metralla me llovía,  
silbando y cayéndome encima  
esta mañana al salir.

Y hasta aquí he llegado  
tan lejos de casa,  
aquí en este país de España  
pero no me siento aislao.

La gente da quí no me trata  
como los blancos lo hacían allí.  
Cuando estaba en casa me trataban  
Como hora te tratan a ti.

No creo que las cosas  
vuelvan a ser como antes:  
pues me topao con gentes  
ca hora lucharán por mí  
como hora yo lucho por su España.

Salud,  
Johnny

– Translated by Maria Lightner-Ferrer

and that he “might mistakenly be aiding in perpetuating a stereotype” (378). He continues:

One of the things I was trying to show in my poems was that even the least privileged of Americans, the Southern Negroes, were represented in the International Brigades, fighting on the side of the Spanish peasants and workers to help them preserve a government that would give the peasants and workers – as were most Negroes, too – a chance at schools and the learning of grammar. (379)

Cary Nelson’s essay, “On ‘Letter from Spain,’” suggests that Hughes was actually making a political point when he used a “rather mild form of dialect: that the common sense of oppressed people gives them an appropriate experiential basis for understanding international politics.” In my opinion, Hughes uses his broken English and his lack of correct grammar as a form of subversion. Nathalie Kasselis in her book, *The Game(s) of Love and Language in Antón de Montoro, Rodrigo de Cota y Fernando de Rojas*, elaborates on the importance of the manipulation of language as a means of expression, and she comments: “language . . . becomes a means of self reflection.” In Hughes’ poems, language and its use play a very important role in creating its context. He is inviting the reader to participate in his denunciation of a situation, and he does so through the manipulation of its vehicle of expression. Language in this case allows him to emphasize his message through its deconstruction.<sup>3</sup> Hughes’s approach to language runs parallel to his theme, both of which reflect upon each other.

In an essay entitled “Certain Difficulties in Translating Poetry,” Ivan Elagin comments on some of the difficulties he had when translating African-American linguistic expressions into Russian. From the very beginning he confesses, “I was killed during an attempt to translate Negro dialect into Russian.”

In my case, my job with Langston Hughes is much easier because the linguistic register Hughes uses, as he says, is reduced to few cases of incorrect grammar and some slightly broken English. Regarding special cases such as the translation of names, puns, play on words, etc., Elagin comments, “Proverbs, sayings, songs, rhymes and abbreviations make up a special category of stumbling blocks in literary translation. Every case in this category has to be solved individually” (177). In Hughes’s poems, the pattern of incorrectness is basically phonetic and is constant throughout the poem, e.g. (present participle endings – ing or in’) doin’, fightin’, sayin’, feelin’.

The translator has decisions to make when translating a text. The process of translation always involves certain text losses, changes, substitutions, additions, and compensations. When the original text is written in a certain linguistic register, the translator has to decide what type of register to use in the target language in order to reproduce the same effect as in the source text. There is not one right way to do it. Translators see this act of decision making as an individual act, for which one takes in consideration the source text and its effects on the reader. Ivan Elagin suggests that special cases need individual solutions. He adds: “I was very much tempted at first to translate all the peculiarities of the Negro speech by means of Russian peasant idioms. I have managed to resist this temptation, realizing that it would be . . . incongruous to represent nineteenth century black slaves conversing in Nijnii Novgorod accents...” (184).

On the other hand, he also realizes that the method of rendering African-American speech by asking the characters to speak with as many grammatical mistakes as it is possible to fit into a sentence is unsuccessful “because, for one thing, the distinctive quality of Negro speech lies on the pronunciation rather than in the grammar” (184).

For this reason, my translation of the poems’ inaccuracies has attempted to follow the phonetic pattern more than the adaptation of grammatical errors. I have already mentioned the use of present participles and other words ending in –ing in Hughes’s two poems. My choice in this case for the translation has been mainly to change the past participles’ endings. There are two regular ending forms: –ado, and –ido. It is a very common thing in an extended area of Spain not to pronounce the –d- in between vowels for these kind of endings in oral speech; therefore, the sound produced ends up being /ao/. Usually, skipping the /d/ sound in the –ado form is more common than in the –ido one, which is only done in certain areas of the country. In addition, Hughes creates elision between a word ending in a consonant and another beginning with a vowel sound, i.e., “want ‘em”; also, “wonderful’ll happen.” I have recreated this by reproducing a similar effect, i.e., “ca hora lucharán por mí”; “cay esclavos.” However, I have tried not to abuse it but rather use it as an example of a writing style, following Langston Hughes’s ideal.

My Spanish version does not target an ethnic group like his, but to some extent, it does target a wide group of people who, during those years of civil war and early post-war, did not have a chance to finish school. Spaniards who saw their childhood and teen years interrupted and their futures limited. Some years ago, I taught in a school for Adult Education in Spain. This school was part of an old campaign to abolish illiteracy in the country. The group of men and, mostly, women I worked with read and wrote Spanish with great difficulty, even in the best cases. I think that Hughes would have liked to share his own experience of Spain with them. I always keep these students’ class work in mind and, therefore, I tried to use some of their most common misspellings and other errors in my translation of these poems.

On the other hand, when I was searching for information on Hughes’ “Letter

from Spain,” I encountered two different versions of the poem. One in his memoirs, *I Wonder as I Wander*, published in 1956, and the other in Rampersad’s *Collected Works of Langston Hughes*, 1984. There are some differences between the two versions that in my opinion may affect the tone of the poem. One of them is located in the fourth line of the fifth stanza. The first edition reads “And seen foundations shakin.” In Rampersad’s we read: “And seed foundations shakin.” Cary Nelson in his essay elaborates on the pun and play in words of the image that is being represented on this latest version. My translation of this specific word – based on Rampersad’s version – tries to reproduce a similar lack of correctness by using the word “cementos” (cement) instead of “cimientos” (base).

This pun plays with the idea of a “solid base” for Africa at the same time as it mispronounces the word “cimientos.”

Léon-Gontran Damas, in his essay “On the Poetry of Négritude,” expresses his sharp opinion on the work of the translator. He comments: “For what is translating if not carrying over the meaning and context of a work from one language to another, without the claim of making it a literary creation of the translator, as if his own language contained the sum of all wisdom?” (165).

He adds to his opinions, “Words have a power over the mind not unlike the power of music,” leaving to the translator the responsibility of being loyal to the source text but also asking him or her

to be creative in his or her choice. In one regard, the writer conveys Langston Hughes’s opinion: “The African is born a poet and is quick to improvise a song: he does not write for the benefit of scholars but in order to be understood by his people. This explains the puns, the plays on words, the humor, and the simplicity” (166).

Langston Hughes explains that he wrote “Letter from Spain” because he wanted to express “the feelings of some of the Negro men fighting.” Johnny is the fictitious sender of both Letter and Postcard, and he says goodbye in the fashion leftist fighters did in Spanish, saying “Salud,” a password to solidarity and to freedom.

## Notes

1. Authors such as Antonio Machado, Unamuno, Pío Baroja, etc.
2. *!Ay, Carmela!* Film version of the play, directed by Carlos Saura (1990).
3. A concept elaborated by Jacques Derrida in *L’Écriture et la différence* (1967) and other works, cited by Nathalie Kasselis in her book *The Game(s) of Love and Language in Antón de Montoro, Rodrigo de Cota, and Fernando de Rojas*.

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## Agreeable Meals – Hard to Digest: On a Poem by August Wilhelm Schlegel

Christine Newcomb

August Wilhelm Schlegel is known for having propagated the Romantic theory of literature. However, several volumes of poetry are testimony to his real passion but have been rarely included in the canon of poetry. The following poem gives a glimpse into his works of poetic creativity.

A collection of poetic jests and jokes, *Auf Veranlassung des Briefwechsels zwischen Goethe und Schiller* [Upon the Correspondence between Goethe and Schiller], was published in 1830 by August Wilhelm Schlegel in response to the publicized letters of Goethe and Schiller and their relationship to Schlegel.

August Wilhelm Schlegel lampooned Schiller in response to the published letters in a series of comical poems. *Auf Veranlassung des Briefwechsels zwischen Goethe und Schiller* includes a collection of ten poems of various lengths, different rhyming patterns and each with a number and an individual title. The humor in these poems is biting, throwing sharp arrows at their prey. These poems, or a selection of them, wittily depict the philosophical beliefs and personal attitudes of the two famous German authors, Goethe and Schiller.

The second poem of this collection, *Gegenseitige Bewirtung* [Eating together], jokes about Schiller and Goethe's poetical repast as intellectual conversation-alists and Epicureans or gourmands. Schlegel mockingly mixed hard-to-eat food with intellectual theories that eventually have to be digested by the readers. Comparing the two authors, Goethe and Schiller, and their disparate philosophies, he also contrasted their physical health and mocked the relationship of their two dissimilar personalities. Schlegel's humor changes from irony to satire, directed at the antagonism between

### Gegenseitige Bewirtung August Wilhelm Schlegel

Erst brachte seinem Schiller Goethe  
Das derb materiell Concrete:  
Das sollt' ihm stärken Leib und Seele;  
Doch würgt es hart ihn in der Kehle,  
Was Niemand leichtlich wohl vermeidet,  
Wenn er die Krebs' in Viertel schneidet.

Dann brachte Schiller das Abstracte,  
Auch das Verwickelte, das Vertrakte.  
Da schnitt nun Goethe viel Grimassen:  
Doch wußt' er sich ein Herz zu faßen.  
Konnt' es dem Gaumen nicht behagen,  
Verdaut' er's doch mit tapferm Magen.

So lebten sie, in solchem Handel,  
Friedlich beisammen ohne Wandel:  
Nie sah man zu der Welt Gedeihen  
Sich edle Geister so casteien.  
Laß, Publicum, dich's nicht verdrießen!  
Du mußt die Qual nun mitgenießen<sup>[1]</sup>.

Schiller's and Goethe's ideas and ideals.

The rhyming structure and patterns of the poem get lost at times in the English translation. Therefore my discussion of Schlegel's poem is based upon the German original.

The poem's six-line stanza organization corresponds to the thematic structure, and the rhyming pattern of the couplets to its ironic and even satirical nature, which are "relying on comical double (or "feminine") rhymes" according to Paul Fussell<sup>[2]</sup>. Each of the epigrammatic couplets presents distinctly a separate thought or a jest that is loosely, yet masterfully connected to the

### Agreeable Meals – Hard to Digest August Wilhelm Schlegel

First brought Goethe to his Schiller  
All that's rough and sturdy – what a chiller:  
Supposed to strengthen his body and soul;  
It firmly stuck in his throat – whole,  
Which no one can really avoid,  
When crabs in quarters are enjoyed.

Then Schiller came in with the abstract,  
All so complicated, odd and wisecracked.  
And Goethe made grimaces and a wry face:  
But knew how to take heart with much grace.  
Though it did not delight his palate,  
He digests it bravely in his stomach.

So they lived with such dealings long range,  
Harmoniously together without change:  
Never before one saw for better or worse  
Noble minds so strangely adverse.  
Be not discouraged, dear audience!  
Just suffer along – with joy intense.

– Translated by Christine Newcomb

next couplet. These fragile boundaries between each couplet amplify Schlegel's humorous presentation. The same or similar sounding rhymes occurring in sequence add to the comic effect of the subject.

Goethe and his philosophy are introduced in the first two verses. His beliefs are rooted in the concrete, the nature, or the law of nature that is represented in the organic unity of the work of art growing out of a logical and inner order: "Erst brachte seinem Schiller Goethe/Das derb matriell Concrete." The concrete, pragmatic, and empirical thoughts should strengthen Schiller's body and soul, "Das soll ihm stärken Leib und

Seele,” but Schiller cannot easily swallow it: “Doch würgt’ es hart ihn in der Kehle.” The last couplet of the first stanza presents the images of food that have to be cut into small bites to be edible and digestible. Schiller tried to eat the hard-shelled food, dividing the crab into fourths, but the big morsels are becoming stuck in his throat: “Was Niemand leichtlich wohl vermeidet,/Wenn er die Krebs’ in Viertel schneidet.” Schiller worked hard at Goethe’s meal, implying that he appreciated Goethe’s ideas without being completely influenced by them. The crab, tough and hard-shelled and difficult to eat is another allegorical expression for a difficult idea that is not easily absorbed or digested. Goethe’s ideas about art correspond with the universal law of nature that is based on an eternal rhythm of becoming and changing. Every little entity is part of the great universe, the whole that represents harmony. Mankind and art are part of this harmonious whole. Schiller’s philosophy, however, was deeply rooted in speculative ideas and the ideal.

In the second stanza some of Schiller’s literary theories are depicted. Schiller, in contrast to Goethe, dealt with the abstract, the complicated and intricate, and served Goethe as well – something hard to stomach, the crabbed: “Dann brachte Schiller das Abstracte,/Auch das Verzwickte, das Vertrakte.” Schlegel played with the sound and the meanings of the words “Krebs” and “Verzwickte,” implying something hard and crusty, pinching and even tormenting, physically or mentally. While Schiller had difficulty eating Goethe’s crab, he likewise served

Goethe crabbed and crusty food, equally difficult to swallow or understand. Goethe only makes a few grimaces, but takes heart and swallows and digests the food despite its disagreeable taste “Da schnitt nun Goethe viel Grimassen:/Doch wußt’ er sich ein Herz zu faßen.” Grimace can indicate a strange or fierce face, a smirk, or a mask, that hides the true face and feelings. Schlegel used the phrase “viele Grimassen,” many grimaces to play on the different meanings of the word. He might have hinted at an earlier observation, which he expressed in a letter to Tieck, that Goethe did not express openly his dislike for people as Schiller did, and was either more open to new and different ideas and opinions, or was able to hide his true feelings better; “Konnt’ es dem Gaumen nicht behagen,/Verdaut’ er’s doch mit tapferm Magen.”

The third stanza concludes the poem, bringing both authors together. Goethe and Schiller lived peacefully together without any intentions of changing their relationship or changing themselves: “So lebten sie, in solchem Handel,/Friedlich beisammen ohne Wandel.” Goethe’s writing and life represented a worldly harmony that developed and organically grew from an eternal order that depended on a natural law. Schiller struggled in his works between reality and the ideal of unity and harmony. His poetic process was built upon an ideal of an idea that was supported by the highest morals and metaphysical values. Fritz Martini wrote in *Deutsche Literaturgeschichte*: “Goethe führte Schiller zur Wirklichkeit, zur Welt, zur Dichtung; Schiller führte Goethe zum geistigen Bewußtsein seiner

überpersönlichen Sendung.”<sup>[3]</sup> Jokingly, Schlegel interspersed the comment that never before in the progress of the world had such a relationship existed, never before had such noble spirits restrained and chastised themselves in such a way, “Nie sah man zu der Welt Gedeihen/Sich edle Geister so casteien.”

In the last couplet Schlegel included and played with the readers, inviting them to share his joke. Furthermore, he persuaded them to rejoice in the agony of reading about Goethe and Schiller’s awkward relationship and their correspondence: “Laß, Publicum, dich’s nicht verdrießen!/Du mußt die Qual nun mitgenießen.” Comically and with irony, the poet encourages his audience not to despair, and gives advice how to enjoy this feast, literally and physically, the amusements and pleasantries of Goethe and Schiller.

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## Notes

1. August Wilhelm Schlegel, *August Wilhelm von Schlegel’s Poetische Werke*, vol. 2, ed. Eduard Böcking (Leipzig: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1846), 204.
2. Paul Fussell, Jr., *Poetic Meter and Poetic Form* (New York: Random House, 1965), 137.
3. Fritz Martini, *Deutsche Literaturgeschichte*, (Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 1977), 256.



# Articles

## Translating Humorous Poetry: *Re-Inventing Tim Burton's Gloomy Shop of Horrors*

Carmen Fernández Martín

This short book is a collection of poems in which the miserable lives of weird creatures are depicted. Written by Tim Burton, the twenty-three poems reflect his oneiric world, where the secret passions of adults engender “freakish” children. Most of the Website reviews agree that the poems pay homage to Edward Gorey (Kidney, 3pr.), as well as following the tradition of the *Book of Nonsense*[1]. Burton creates a nonsensical reality that oozes with both macabre and tender elements.

The book was published in 1997 and translated in 1999 by *Anagrama*. This Spanish edition includes an appendix with the original poems in English. *Círculo de Lectores*, a Spanish book club, has also published the book in a bilingual edition. Whereas, Burton combines his drawings and the lines of each poem to form a well-knit story, the layout of the edition by *Círculo* is very different. Instead of having the illustrations match the verses, the translation of each poem mingles with the original poem and with the illustrations, which results in a loss of cohesion between the images and the writing. One of the main disadvantages when publishing a bilingual book is that the translator is exposed to criticisms. For those non-native speakers who know the language well, they can both enjoy the source text (ST), and furthermore take advantage of the opportunity to analyse the target text (TT) with a sharp eye. As one reader's opinion found on the Web asserts: “[...] Burton consigue un equilibrio perfecto entre texto e ilustración, que lamentablemente el castizo traductor ignora: en su esfuerzo por conservar la rima no sólo inserta términos como churumbel, y nombres como Paquito Serra, sino que trastoca a menudo el sentido del texto” (Blanco). This reader concludes that the Spanish publishers, out of a sense of guilt, included the text in English[2].

When translating poetry, the translator is trying to re-create the original to achieve the same aesthetic response that the original produced in its readers. In this respect form plays a vital role, and the never-ending debate about a free versus a literal or loyal translation is once more attested. In this book the translator tries to focus on the form rather than the sense following Reiss' functional approach. According to Reiss each text could be categorized depending on the main function it has (108-9). Such a function will determine the type of translation. She points out that, for example, it is more important to keep a metaphor when translating an expressive text than when the text has an informative function (69[3]). Thus, the rhyme, the style, the metaphors, the idiomatic expressions should come to the foreground in *La melacólica muerte de Chico Ostra*. This TT is, indeed, form-focused, but the translator should not elude the original author and his perspective. Tim Burton is well-known for his murky characters that spring from his troubled childhood. His films have revealed Burton's dark world, yet, humour and tenderness ease the reader. Black humour and delicateness are present all throughout the book and should be felt in the TT.

The TT abounds in omissions which are obligatory to produce a communicative text and which do not vary the original sense. For example, in the poem that gives its title to the book – *The Melancholy Death of Oyster Boy* (TMDOB) – Oyster boy's parents are on their honey moon: “Their nine-day-long honey moon” and the translation simply says “su larga luna de miel” (39) with no reference to the number of days. Here, the translator implies that nine days is a long time and so it is not necessary to state the number. However, there are other omissions which produce a different effect than that which the

original intended. During that honey moon: “...while he (the father) savored the broth,/ her bride's (the mother) heart made a wish”; the connection between the husband's gluttony and his wife's desire to have a baby is clearly seen. In the translation there is no mentioning of the husband savouring the stew, so the last line of the stanza stands alone: “La novia pidió un deseo” (39). The father's lust towards seafood is a dark premonition absent in the TT.

Other omissions simply miss the point. In the same poem, when the wife recriminates her husband for not fulfilling his marital duties, – the illustration shows them in bed – he tried so many remedies: “that turned everything red” (48), with a clear allusion to his penis. In the TT the translator specifies that his body was red, so the “double entendré” is not kept.

As regards black humour most of the ST's images are more tenebrous than the corresponding ones in the target text. At the end of TMDOB, Burton portrays a merciless father: “With the shell to his lips/Sam slipped down his throat” (53). However, in the TT “Sam” is replaced by the term “valva” (valve): “Y en su boca ya la valva/se escurrió por la garganta,” turning the little oyster child into a non human being, a mollusk. Burton's macabre universe is darkly envisaged in verses like: “The final gasp of his short life/was sickly with despair” in which we sadly witness the death of *Toxic Boy*. However, the Spanish TT has not kept the original sense, it is more humorous, almost like a caricature: “Tieso y duro, sí, muy duro.” The TT reader must look at the drawing to see *Toxic Boy's* horrible end.

Indeed, the Spanish version displays a more comical mood. In the brief poem *The Pin Cushion Queen*, the source reader feels sorry for the character: “Life isn't easy.../When she sits on her throne/pins push through her spleen” (101);

whereas the TT is clearly mocking: “ay, la vida es un coñazo./Siempre que quiere poner sobre su trono el trasero.” Another example is in *Stick Boy’s Festive Season*: “Stick Boy noticed that his Christmas tree looked healthier than he did (pg 81). The TT personifies the tree employing the humorous term “churumbel”[4] which adds new sense to the TT.

Although the TT in general, does transmit the author’s unreal world; it fails to convey that gloomy frame tinted with black humour and sprinkled with tender images. For De Cabo Pérez: “El texto traducido ha de evocar las mismas imágenes y pensamientos que el texto original. El efecto del poema traducido en el lector meta ha de ser equivalente a aquel que el texto origen ha producido en el lector origen” (117).

Translating proper names has always been an open and controversial debate. Theo Hermans distinguishes between “conventional names,” i.e., those that lack a semantic load and “loaded names,” which refer to proper names. The latter: “are somehow “motivated;” they range from faintly “suggestive” to overtly “expressive names” around which historical or cultural associations have accrued in the context of a particular culture” (13)[5].

Some of the proper names that Tim Burton has given to his characters are “loaded”. Two clear examples are in *TMDOB* and in *Sue*. In the first one, Oyster Boy is called Sam to produce a phonetic similitude with clam: “Not knowing what to name him,/they just call him Sam,/or, sometimes,/“that thing that looks like a clam.” In addition to the obvious rhyme the writer has picked a name very similar to the term “clam” to reinforce the idea that the protagonist was half human, half a sea-creature. In the TT, Sam becomes Carlo to keep the rhyme: “No sabían como llamarlo./A veces le decían Carlo.../“eso que parece una almeja”(45), with no link between the name and the word “almeja.” Spanish, not being so onomatopoeic, finds it difficult to keep these plays on words. A possibility could be to employ the name

César which has assonant rhyme with “almeja.” We could, also, introduce the proper Spanish name “Óscar” which sounds somewhat similar to “ostra”, it reinforces this connection and also there is an added link to the title: *La melancólica muerte de Chico Ostra*. In the poem Sue the protagonist is a girl “who likes/to sniff lots of glue” and so “To avoid a lawsuit,/we’ll just call her Sue (105). Again, the rhyme establishes a strong link between “lawsuit” and “Sue,” but more important between “Sue” and “glue.” In the TT the link is between the word “demanda” and the proper name “Amanda” without any reference to her addiction: “pegamento.” Being almost impossible to find a name rhyming with both words, it would be preferable to maintain the link between “glue” and “Sue.” A name that rhymes is María Sacramento; or the word “pegamento” could be exchanged to “cola” and we could pick the name “Manola.” The cultural association, perhaps, is not so evident for the surname “Smith” in *Robot Boy*. Mr and Mrs Smith have a baby who is a robot. The word Smith, apart from being a very common name in English, makes reference to a profession: “a person who works in metal”[6]. In the TT the name selected is quite unusual: “señores Bastida,” so the translator has to specify that they were a common couple: “Eran gente común los señores de Bastida.” In English the name conveys that information for the ST reader. As regards the reference to the old crafter, it is lost. If we want to emphasise that link we could have opted for “Los señores de Hierro.”

The rest of the proper names are not loaded; they just serve the purpose of the rhyme, like “Roy” the “Toxic Boy” (*Roy, the Toxic Boy*), Max in the TT, to rhyme with the word “demás” (71), or “Stan” “the garbage man” (*in Junk Girl*) – which is omitted in the TT (98). Particular interesting is the change from Walker “who played in a band”(113) in (*Anchor Baby*), to Paquito Serra in the TT. The last name “Serra” rhymes with “Por el se iría a la tierra,” but choosing the diminutive name “Paquito” – from

“Paco” – unquestionably, and again, adds a comical tone not present in the ST.

Some translation theorists advocate for the translator’s active role: “[...] queda atrás la sumisión al TO, la transparencia del discurso, la invisibilidad en los textos traducidos. Ha llegado la hora de conceder ciertas libertades al traductor, de dejar oír su voz y permitirle aplicar las estrategias y adaptaciones que considere oportunas, muchas veces inevitables y necesarias” (Pascua Febles 44). We may wonder if that means being visible to the TT recipients or to manipulate the ST. We can identify in some of the TT poems a negative attitude towards women, not identifiable in the ST. In *TMDOB* Oyster Boy’s mother says: “I do not like to say this, but it must be said”; whereas in Spanish: “Y aunque dicen que una dama debe callarse estas cosas” (49), the translator has employed a not very politically correct line absent in the ST. In *Anchor Boy*, the girl “who came from the sea” fell in love: “He was the one that she wanted the most./And she tried everything to capture this ghost;” the TT portrays a womanizer: “Porque él y solo él le había quitado la calma./Y por eso ella quería robarle el alma” (113). This manipulation in the TT functions in a converse manner in *Desperdicia – Junk Girl*. The garbage man is described as a demon who brings on the protagonist’s suicide: “Él amaba su rareza/y le ofreció matrimonio./Ella vio en él al demonio/y se lanzó de cabeza/.../al molino de basura. In the ST there is no demon, he “made a marriage proposal,/but she’d already thrown herself/down a garbage disposal” (99).

The transfer of metaphors and idiomatic expressions also fails at times: “but something smells fishy” renders literally “Cariño huele a pescado” (*TMDOB*, 48). Yet, the TT solves the problem, in general, quite efficiently: “A nice Chardonnay” is substituted by “un tinto de la Rioja” (*Brie Boy*, 83). Nevertheless, where the TT falls short is in recreating Burton’s nonsensical universe where the tragic endeavours of the characters are depicted with a sensitive brush.

## Notes

1. The illustrator Edward Lear (1812-1888), making use of medieval riddles and nursery rhymes, inaugurated a new period in children's literature in the *Book of Nonsense*, described as "surrealistically absurd narrative poems" with "a note of unease, almost panic" and whose "black-and-white drawings often display adults as amusing eccentrics rather than figures to be respected." "There was an old lady of Chertsey,/Who made a remarkable curtsey;/She twirled round and round,/Till she sank underground..." (Hunt 94-95).
2. For this article we are using the edition by Círculo.
3. Jeremy Munday, *Introducing Translation Studies: Theories and Applications* (London: Routledge, 2001), 75.
4. In Gipsy it means a young boy and in Spanish it has humoristic connotations.
5. The quotation is taken from Rodríguez Espinosa 104-5.
6. *The Penguin English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (London: Penguin, 2003), 1321.

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## Does the English-Speaking World Need Yet Another Translation of *Don Quixote*?

María Luisa R. Lacabe

If it comes from the pen of Edith Grossman, the answer is certainly in the affirmative. Her new and excellent translation of Cervantes' masterpiece has elicited well-deserved praise from prestigious critics, among them Carlos Fuentes, Terry Castle, James Wood, and Richard Eder. All these critics corroborate the excellence of her work and then, instead of offering examples of the merits of the translation, immerse themselves in the vicissitudes, perspectives, and interpretation of the novel. The magnetic attraction is such that, not only they, but all of us, are helpless to resist its alluring power.

Carlos Fuentes in "The Errant Knight

Rides Again" considers Grossman's translation "great." He asserts that "there is not a single moment in which, in forthright English, we are not reading a 17<sup>th</sup>-century novel. This is truly masterly: the contemporaneous and the original co-exist. [...] To make the classic contemporary: this is the achievement." For Carlos Fuentes "the quality of her translation is evident in the opening line" which he quotes; yet, the rest of the three-page article is dedicated to Cervantes' masterpiece.

Terry Castle, in her excellent article, "High Plains Drifter," defines Edith

Grossman's new English version as "superb" and "the most agreeable *Don Quixote* ever." Castle finds that she not only succeeds in convincing the reader of the extraordinary quality of the novel, but exudes such enthusiasm that it is contagious. She compares her first reading of *Don Quixote* in her early teens with her second reading now "at the age of almost fifty." Based on this experience, she tells her reader: "[G]et hold of *Don Quixote* and make time for it. It will be worth the television sitcoms you skip, the thirty or so quiet evenings you spend on it. Edith Grossman actually makes it easy for you, O frazzled reader." Like Fuentes, Terry

Castle dedicates the rest of her six-page article commenting on the greatness of *Don Quixote*.

James Wood, in an excellent article entitled “Knight’s Gambit: The Sacred Profanity of *Don Quixote*,” describes the new translation by Edith Grossman as “marvelous.” He emphasizes how her “English sensitively captures these sifting registers, as we move from the Knight’s ornate, sometimes pompous diction, via the narrator’s fluent and funny recounting, to Sancho Panza and his muddier music.” According to Wood, there are at present two other “excellent” translations of *Don Quixote*: “All are scholarly and elegant; in some places they are almost indistinguishable. But Grossman, who has translated García Márquez and Vargas Llosa, has produced the most distinguished, and the most literary, of them, and those qualities are amply displayed on every page.” After this high praise for Grossman’s work, James Wood dedicates the rest of his five-page article to interpreting and analyzing Cervantes’ masterpiece.

Finally, Richard Eder, in a piece entitled “Beholding Windmills and Wisdom

from a New Vantage,” defines Grossman’s translation “as the most transparent and least impeded among more than a dozen English translations going back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century.” Eder admits that “[o]nce in a while there are odd choices and, in the translation’s 940 pages, some occasional flagging,” but he fails to give us any examples of those. Nevertheless, he concludes that “what she renders splendidly is the book’s very heart.” Like the other critics, Richard Eder dedicates the rest of his two-page article to praise the greatness of *Don Quixote*.

There is no doubt about the excellence of Grossman’s translation. She is superb, excellent, transparent, great and yes, she captures the book’s heart. In fact, she captures our hearts and we get immersed in the greatness of the masterpiece. If the lack of examples or comparison with other translations to demonstrate the merits of Edith Grossman’s new English version puzzled me when I read the above articles, now that I have read her work I agree with the critics.

When I wrote this article my intention was to offer examples of her work that would demonstrate her mastery at translation; however, I found her English

version so like the original that I kept forgetting I was reading in English. I was absorbed by the work and thus it became very difficult to separate the translation from the original. Ironically, it was her excellence that prevented me, and perhaps the critics, from creating the necessary distance to comment objectively on the merits of her translation.

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## Briefly Noted

*Star in My Forehead: Selected Poems by Else Lasker-Schüler*. Translated by Janine Canan. Duluth, Minnesota: Holy Cow! Press, 2000. 121pp. \$12.95.

Reviewed by Janet Besserer Holmgren.

**I**n *Star in My Forehead* translator Janine Canan offers Anglophones the opportunity to acquaint themselves with the lyrical legacy of one of Germany’s finest poets, Else Lasker-Schüler (1869-1945). Canan first encountered the German-Jewish avant-garde writer some thirty years ago and has been magnetized by her work ever since. Over the years Canan has gained special insight into

Lasker-Schüler’s poetry. The result is sovereign translations that capture the poetic magic of the original text and leave one with the desire to read more.

In her book Canan presents forty-three poems that span the life of Lasker-Schüler, who was a leading figure in the pre-war German cultural scene. By dividing her book of translation into four

sections that correspond chronologically to the poet’s life, Canan aims to provide a linear but by no means all-encompassing overview of Lasker-Schüler’s poetic oeuvre. The first chapter, “Songs of the Blessed (1884-1911),” contains her rendition of Lasker-Schüler’s most well known and widely translated poem, “Ein alter Tibetteppich” or “An Old Tibetan Carpet.” Here Canan’s unique skill as a



translator becomes clear, as she remains faithful to the original while simultaneously capturing the profound grace of Lasker-Schüler's work. This skill is evident in the ensuing translations in the final three chapters of the book as well. The three chapters entitled "Hebrew Ballads (1905-1920)," "Our Love Song (1913-1923)," and "My Blue Piano (1932-1945)" contain a fine blend of well translated poems most of which are less well known.

Canan prefaces her book with a "Translator's Note" and "Introduction." Both provide much insight into her

attitude toward poetic translation and the life and times of Lasker-Schüler. For example, the "Translator's Note" helps explain how Canan has been able to preserve the true art of Lasker-Schüler's poetry: "Kaleidoscopically shifting over the years, like flowers unfolding, my translations were endlessly revised. In the early years they were scrupulously literal. Later on, as my relationship to the poet deepened and I traveled further into her visionary landscape, occasional liberties were taken in the service of conveying her meaning and music" (xii). Similarly, the "Introduction" helps illuminate significant aspects of the

writer's life. Throughout the entire book the German text on the left is paralleled with its English counterpart on the right for those interested in reading both versions. Moreover the inclusion of both languages allows readers to contemplate the craft of literary translation and come to appreciate Canan's talent.

Overall Canan's innate connection and ongoing relationship to Lasker-Schüler has yielded lucidly flowing yet remarkably accurate translations. *Star in My Forehead: Selected Poems by Else Lasker-Schüler* provides much reading pleasure and is to be recommended.

## Interview

### "Equal to Writing": An Interview with Zafer Şenocak on Literary Translation

On April 3, 2003, Zafer Şenocak met with the editors of *Shadows and Echoes* to discuss literary translation. Şenocak is an award-winning poet of Turkish descent who was raised and educated in West Germany. Born in Ankara in 1961, Şenocak moved to Munich with his parents when he was eight. By his late teens he was writing poetry and essays in German that received critical acclaim. Today Şenocak is a leading voice in the German discussions on transculturalism, national and cultural identity, and a mediator between Turkish and German culture. As a widely published poet, essayist, journalist and editor, Şenocak has won several prestigious literary awards in Germany and his works have been translated into numerous languages including Turkish, English, French, and Hebrew. He is also a co-founder of the successful multi-lingual journal of literary translation, *Sirene*.

*Shadows and Echoes* – Maybe I can start, first of all, by thanking you for coming and talking to us today. And I was wondering if you could start by speaking about the inception of "Sirene," the multilingual journal that you co-founded.

**Zafer Şenocak** – I started, actually preparations, started in 1987 and the first magazine came out in 1988. We published the magazine until 2000, so twelve years, and now there is another *Neue Sirene*, a New Siren, published by one editor of our old magazine. We were a group of nine. It was a large group of publishers for a magazine. For one year we had meetings every weekend to establish the idea for the magazine, why we had to start a magazine. The main reasons are, first of all, we wanted to start

a magazine for our generation. The second thing was, we wanted to bring in the notion of translation and multilingualism for our generation, and discussion was a little poor in the 80s. The third reason was a political one. We wanted to start a magazine to show that Germany is not so homogeneously German anymore. People from different countries came, their children were born there, and now this second generation has started writing in German or other languages. So now a group of us, one writer was from Greece, three from Turkey, one from France, the others were originally German (of German origin). And for us it was also a discussion that we wanted to start for our own translations – a way to create a place for our own work, for our own translations. And it was really successful in the beginning. We had a good start, we could sell about 1,500 copies, which is a lot for a magazine without a publishing house.

We had several issues with main subjects. One was, for example, on new East European literature. It came out, I think in 1990, when this time of change came. Another issue was on Paris. Paris is a city of translators and writers coming from different backgrounds. So, this issue was very successful. Its title was *Écrire entre les langues* or *Writing between Languages*. We published also some essays on cultural issues, how culture is perceived and how cultural discussions are going on.

I started the translations, actually, earlier, in the 80s, before the magazine was started. To start a translation was actually for me a part of my work. And my notion is that translation is something equal to

writing because – literary translation – because you have to create your own language with other texts. It's very interesting.

*Shadows and Echoes* – When you said equal, what did you mean?

**Zafer Şenocak** – Equal in that there is a perception that the translator is always someone who brings an other, the role of an other, to another language. So it's not this, my eyes, it's a role. A translator's always giving his own language, or her own language to the text. So, it's like taking a text to you, to yourself, to your own place, and transporting it from there to the common place. So you are like an actor, maybe, and you have to play this role in some way. It's an artistic way to deal with the text. So, like with writing... poetry is also a sort of translation.

*Shadows and Echoes* – Is there anything about the Turkish language that makes it particularly easy or difficult to translate into German?

**Zafer Şenocak** – Oh, it is always very difficult to translate from Turkish to any language. It's related in history to Persian and Arabic but is absolutely far from them, so it's this interesting thing to have this relationship: Persian is an Indo-Germanic language, and Arabic is a Semitic language. Turkish has some Asiatic background, with a grammar that's more similar to Korean or Japanese, but it's a completely different way of thinking in language. The suffixes add another vein to create sentences. And so it's very difficult to bring Turkish texts into European languages and also the other way around.



**Shadows and Echoes** – Do you try to monitor the translation of your work?

**Zafer Şenocak** – No, no, only when the translators have questions. I try to answer questions. Very quickly. Questions about the text. I mean, I can read the English ones and the Turkish ones, a little of the French ones, but also the Turkish ones. For example, I was not engaged in any discussions, real discussions with the translator, because the translation is its own thing.

**Shadows and Echoes** – Can I ask you about your conception of translation? It seems to me – I’ve done a lot of translating myself, and reading about translation – that there are two very different schools of thought about the nature of translation. One is that – especially when it comes to poetry or literary texts – that translation is essentially impossible, and you’re doing the best you can in what is really creating a new text. The other view is that the actual translation is not really that extraordinary, that almost everything we do in the way of communication has an aspect of translation to it – that even our effort to understand each other in the same language is a sort of translation. And so the act of literary translation into another language merely increases certain problems that we face all the time in communicating. So you have on the one hand this notion that you’re involved in something impossible, and then on the other hand the notion that you’re involved in something which is quite ordinary, and that literary translation is just a special case. I don’t know whether you agree that there is this dichotomy.

**Zafer Şenocak** – Yeah, it’s a model. But I think that all communication is very difficult. It’s very close to my own thinking and writing. I think most communication is misunderstanding. We try to eliminate misunderstanding, to create an artificial understanding playground. But it’s artificial – misunderstanding is always there.

But I don’t know if this is a good starting point for bringing in poetry, because poetry is a little bit different. Poetry starts just at this point of misunderstanding and has an idea of enclosing, not excluding, this misunderstanding in language. This is also the silence of poetry.

With communication, what’s said is always important, and it’s important that you trust the communication. But in poetry, you have to trust the silence of poetry. My own thinking has also been influenced, for example, by Paul Celan, who had this idea of communication through poetry. But his poetry, especially his late work, is very, very, difficult to understand. He’s a poet who has an ideal of communication in poetry – he wrote, for example, that “poetry is a handshake” – it’s an offer to open yourself to another and accept another into yourself, an exchange.

**Shadows and Echoes** – Now you’ve translated from Turkish into German, but have you translated some of your German texts into Turkish?

**Zafer Şenocak** – No, I’ve never translated my own work. I sometimes write texts in Turkish. I never decide between languages – the language decides itself. I start with the language which is in my head, and mostly it’s German, but sometimes there is something Turkish in my head also – my ideas, and how, for example, I write poetry when the first line starts, and I can see, “Oh, this is Turkish now,” and so I write this down in Turkish. And the interesting thing is, it’s never mixed up, it’s always separated. I always separate them – it’s not like French and English! [Laughter]

**Shadows and Echoes** – *Franglais!* – What about translation and historical periods? At a symposium in Paris last summer, there was an interesting gathering of publishers, writers, translators, and academics. One of the people made the point that translation has a different character in different periods. This is what the person said: “The historical circumstances are important, they help by being favorable – for example in the Renaissance – or restrain the progress of translation when not favorable – for example China in the 1930s or after 1975.” I suppose we think a lot about this because we’re interested in the role of international things in higher education in the United States and the attitude toward the rest of the world in the United States, which seems odd at this time to a lot of us. I know for a fact that it is very difficult to publish translations from foreign languages into English because there’s a problem with the market. Publishers in the United States require publications to be profitable. But profitability is not assured for most interesting literary texts, unless there’s a reason for celebrity that makes it profitable. And those aren’t always the most important works to translate. So, in terms of translation, it seems to me that we’re in a – in the United States for a variety of reasons – a rather unfavorable climate for publishing translations. Yet we’re in a situation where culturally we have a great need for more translation.

**Zafer Şenocak** – There is also one point, maybe it plays a role, I don’t know. You have created in this country these hyphenated identities, like Chinese-American, Korean-American, and so maybe there is some notion that you don’t need anything Chinese because you have the Chinese-American. I mean, it’s a very simplistic way to say this, but it can be a psychological thing, the feeling that “oh yeah, the whole world is together here.” The whole post-colonial thing is something like this, you know – who is really at fault over India? For example, what is going on in religion? Nobody knows. But everyone knows Salman Rushdie. So this is India, Rushdie is India. Rushdie is not India, but you know, this is the problem. I am not Turkey, you know, I come from Berlin, I grew up in Germany. Well, I have a Turkish background, but I do not represent what is going on in Turkey literally. Maybe Germans think: “Oh, we have seven or eight Turkish background writers, so we don’t need any great communication with Turkish territories.” So, there is a misunderstanding like this going on, and this is a critique to multiculturalism. I think this would be a great thing to discuss here, because it’s important for cultural communica-

tion. In Europe, I think there’s always still a notion of catching something through translation, but there are also problematical moments, like in Germany with Turkish. This is very interesting.

**Shadows and Echoes** – Do you think that multiculturalism is changing its character as the world becomes more divided in terms of its communication? It seems to me there’s a more and more global character to the world, at least in the educated community, we’re more and more in contact. We have more and more things available to us through telecommunications, and we have a sort of common culture: not the culture of one culture, but sort of a common possession. A lot of it comes from popular culture, of course, but a lot of aspects of modern life transcend any cultural boundary. And any contemporary writer participates in that to some extent. Many aspects of Salman Rushdie’s work participate more in the aspects of the global culture of our time than in either Western culture or Indian culture.

**Zafer Şenocak** – Yeah. You have some symbols, so you can recognize them. I am very skeptical that we understand each other better. I think that we have a lot of information, but there is also a huge potential for misunderstanding, because you have the surface, but beyond the surface we are losing our capacity to recognize the backgrounds. If we are losing that, but still have the surface, we are in some trouble, I think.

**Shadows and Echoes** – Well, that’s true, but it can’t be the same thing that happens with any single culture. I mean with counterculture and we discover we don’t understand this other person at all. What we thought they were thinking isn’t what they were thinking at all.

**Zafer Şenocak** – How we communicate with each other, you know, it’s very fast, it’s changing a lot, and it’s like remembering something – to see something is like to remember something. It’s so fast that it’s still gone if you have it. It’s a challenge for language, for communication itself, and also to meet with each other. In Germany, for example, we have a lot of anxieties coming from old concepts of culture. There is still something like to be German and to be the Other. It’s not over, so it’s there, it’s something. It’s a little over in everyday life because there are other connections, but it’s not over in the heads of the people. So, you have these contradictions in the society all the time.

**Shadows and Echoes** – So, poetry is a handshake, from one individual to another, and the boundaries are not so clear, actually.

**Zafer Şenocak** – Yes that’s right.

**Shadows and Echoes** – So you reach out and discover – the other person is already a part of you. [Laughter] Well, we could go on for hours, but time is running out, so that will be our final question. Thank you very much!



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