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Poems and Translation (from Spanish to English)

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As a teacher of language arts for the Spanish-speaking in a bilingual program, I often have the freedom of teaching in two languages. I have frequently found myself crossing the same capricious borders of bilingualism that my students face. It's a constant battle of wits to converse solely in one language, without slips. Anyone who has the ability to speak two languages fairly well understands the dilemma of trying to explain the "inexplicable," the "untranslatable" to the less fortunate monolingual. Confusions and deliberations aside, it is certainly advantageous to wield more than one language. As a teacher, I am perhaps more sensitive, better equipped to understand when a Spanish-speaking child from Puerto Rico says, "We threw pictures at the party," because I know that in Puerto Rico, the active verb for snapping or taking a picture is "tirar," which literally means "to throw." Looking up the idiom "to take a picture" in a Spanish dictionary might confuse the neophyte, for the idiom changes from one Spanish-speaking country to another. Thus, "sacar una foto" and "tirar un retrato" mean the same in English, are understandable to all Spanish speakers, but may remain awkward to some.

Choices: Bilinguals in a monolingual world, bilinguals in a multilingual society, or in any combination of circumstances, we are constantly making linguistic choices, selections; discarding what sounds bulky, favoring that which glides along the tongue. We must assume that for a child striving for bilingualism, the confusion, choices and final decisions are frightening. Sometimes this linguistic liberty leads to an enhanced vocabulary, enriched syntax, and an individual style. Other times, this overwhelming freedom may lead to linguistic paralysis. That we are constantly translating what we see and hear from visual and thought symbols is not a new idea. But consider the child who moves between distinct linguistic spheres. As Alastair Reid points out, "Anyone who moves between languages discovers a whole nether world whose realities are often in doubt, a kind of limbo which quivers in the relativity of languages."l in fact, through the knowledge of more than one language, we become acutely aware of the gulf between words and what lies beyond them. Their position in the visible world is ambiguous at best. Imagine what happens to these thoughts/symbols/words when they are carried from one language to another: I'm concerned here with the idea that words may well get out of kilter when they are shifted. However, I am not discouraged by these givens, but rather am intrigued with what one can do with language, for the student, in the presence of such linguistic ambiguities.

If we speak of language as a set of symbols for our thoughts, we realize that as we converse normally, translation is going on constantly. One person's thoughts are translated into symbols which are reprocessed into thought-images again. When we begin dealing with two languages, the confusion may be doubled. However, the advantage that translation from one language to another has over the translation of thoughts to

symbols is that when we deal with two languages, we are dealing with a more or less objective group of symbols. When children learn their first language, they imitate what they hear, soon gaining vocabulary and some understanding of grammar. Yet, it is amazing that children speak so well without a sound understanding of the complex relationships at work. When the child at last realizes that language is a system of symbols, s/he has a healthy command of the language itself. While we speak of thought/symbols/language, it is a curious phenomenon that as we learn foreign languages, we are told not to think before expressing ourselves in the new tongue. Yet, a good translator must think and feel both languages, while always being cognizant of the differences and similarities inherent in both languages.

Because I teach those who are bilingual, or on their way to that state, I must deal constantly with language shifts. I treat "purely" language questions through the study of grammar, vocabulary and syntax. However, I also teach literature. After much thinking about the process of translation in a general sense, and the more concrete question of the translation of literary forms, I realize that a lot of language learning goes on between the study of poetry as a body of knowledge, and the use of translation. Therefore, I hope to show that not only will the student's concept of poetry be enlarged, but his/her entire body of language usage can be enriched through the use of poetry and translation. In fact, the idea that the translation process can actually be used as a learning tool is a main objective of this unit.

Because of the success 1 have had earlier with teaching poetry in Spanish, I have decided to use and re-use poetry to enforce language-building. Because poetry in part adheres to certain "restrictions," and at the same time is free in its allowable interpretations, it provides the student with a perfect medium for self-expression. Poetry alone would suffice as a language teaching tool. When combined with translation and all its possible language questions, the duc is most ideal for language exploration. Because translation of poetry demands both precision and swing, knowledge and feeling, the student comes to grips with certain givens within which s/he must work, while gaining some freedom to create. Because the translation of poetry involves interesting mutations and choices of words, word order, and rhythms, it allows for growth of vocabulary, syntax and comprehension of the nature of poetry. Thus, the spirit of poetry and the process of translation will serve both as ends in themselves, to understand what happens to poetry in translation, and as a means to explore both languages.

In *Beyond Words* , a treatise on mystical language in children's literature, James Higgens justifies the teaching of literature on the grounds that "Literature, perhaps better than any other discipline within the curricular spectrum, integrates the spiritual and the material into a unified whole. Literature accepts the imagination of the child as a legitimate vehicle for passing beyond the differences of appearance and into the unity of truth. Literature demands that intellect and intuition join forces in seeking out knowledge." [2] These words enhance my belief that literature reduces the "big and beyond" to a manageable universe, while it inflates the narrowness of one's own reality to a universality of understanding between person and cosmos. It has been said that poetry has done more for the knowledge of human nature than has history. Poetry has been called the voice of prophecy, mythology, history, religion, national life, and of course, literature. Of all the literary forms, poetry best expresses the human soul. How can we not teach our students poetry? If on the other hand, one believes that poetry *only* serves to fulfill one's fundamental need for beauty, then that too is reason enough to present poetry to our students. If poetry creates inner circles of beauty, then our stature as human beings is enlarged as we understand it.

I have deliberately chosen poetry as the genre for language learning, without ignoring the myriad difficulties its translation entails. A translator of poetry is responsible for coming through with the music, architecture, color schemes, the light, shade and shadows which are so inherent to poetry. As Victor Proetz says in *The*

Astonishment of Words , "A good translator is in honor bound to leave no stone unturned while his endless weighings and pawings over of every conceivable linguistic trial and error are in progress." [3] A translator must guess, experiment, and make mistakes. According to Edwin Conn in *Translation: A Handbook* , except in the rarest of instances, there seem to be only two types of translation; one a "wooden version which mechanically reproduces the original with regard to its native shadings or literary style, or a more or less periphrastic rendering which represents the spirit rather than the letter of its source." [4] Yet Dryden, who may have been the most important emancipator of poetical translation, classified the translation of poetry as paraphrase, metaphrase or imitation. The fear of his challengers was that he might run to the extreme of licentiousness. Yet his followers were quick to note the ease of his poetry in his translations. "Fidelity was but a secondary object, and translation for awhile was considered as synonymous with paraphrase." [5] One may also speak of various camps of translators. There are literalists, who through emphasis on the idioms, constructions, sounds of the *original* language, produce a mirror image in the second language. And there are the free translators who emphasize the same characteristics in the language *into* which they are translating, to give a new rendition. These differences are somewhat analogous to the differences between those who prefer to translate "towards the original" by means of local language fidelity, (not translating monetary terms, etc.), and those who lean towards the production of something new in the second language.

If it is true that those who attempt to translate verse literally are liars, then we have taken this warning to heart, for many translations are very "free" indeed. Robert Lowell, poet and translator, tried to "write" or imitate the poetry he translated as if the authors were alive and writing in America. It has been said that Lowell often translated when Lowell the poet had nothing to say. An early essay by Alexander Woodhouslee states that a good translation is one " . . . in which the merit of the original work is so completely transfused into another language, as to be distinctly apprehended and as strongly felt by a native of the country which that language belongs, as it is by those who speak the language of the original work." [6]

Should the translator of poetry be highly skilled in languages or a poet? The older schools of thought felt that the translator should be allowed to modify and heighten, even change, the original. "When Homer fell, Pope veiled over his defects."7 How close Dryden comes to Lowell on imitation—the sensing of the pattern of the poet and what the poet would have written in some other age, some other place.

Attempts to translate, used not so much as a means to learn a new language, but rather as part of the enrichment of both languages, will be incorporated in this unit. Such activity comes at the end, when the student has seen some good, bad and indifferent translations. Whether the students' translations are awkward is not important. It is the groping with languages that will cause the exercising of new found language muscles.

I assume that the students involved in this unit will be somewhat comfortable in both languages. Dictionaries, which seem to be the indispensable tool of translators, will not be as heavily relied upon as will word lists, drawn up in part by students. Idioms will be translated, not transliterated. Obsolete forms and cognates are hard to avoid. However, it will soon become obvious that the student will be as unfamiliar with archaic forms in the native language as in the new one. The student will be encouraged to be bold.

The unit will consist of seven Spanish language poems, from authors representing various countries. The first two will be "Cuadrados y An gulos"/"Squares and Angles" and "Peso Ancestral"/"Inheritance" by Alfonsina Storni (Argentina). These two poems are quite simple in terms of vocabulary. The translation of "Peso Ancestral" is adequate, that of "Cuadrados y Angulos" falls somewhat short of good. 1 will present the latter and its translation with certain words underlined for replacement. We will "improve" upon the translation by

searching for better fitting words. Then, two poems by Antonio Machado (Spain) are offered, “Recuerdo Infantil”/“Memory from Childhood” and “Sobre la Tierra Amarga”/“Daydreams have Endlessly Turning Paths.” The former is appropriate in its content, for it depicts a monotonous, rainy school day. Its translation is so close to its original that its inherent lesson will be the “mirror image” theory of translation. The latter provides leeway for changes of certain adjectives. By re-writing the verses, we will try to come even closer to the original. “Agape”/ “Agape” by Cesar Vallejo (Peru) is a wonderful poem of couplets and tercets that maintains its form in the translation. This poem is very useful for the teaching of certain verb forms. The present perfect is repeated in the original and in the translation. A perfect way to study this form: Nicolas Guillen (Cuba) provides us with “Sensemaya”/ “Sensemaya” (Chant to Kill a Sanke), a sonorous, African-Cuban poem, designed to show that the musicality and sensuality of a poem can be translated. Both the original and the translation tend to concentrate the onomatopoeic into rhythmic breathing stanzas, while rather proselike verses supply the rest.

Each lesson will revolve around a poem and its translation, in the case where they are provided simultaneously. Some of the translations will be supplied only after discussion of the elements of the original has been undertaken, as with “Agape.” Language exercises will deal with synonym search, restructuring of verse, re-writing of verse into prose, and taking out all nouns or verbs etc., replacing or reordering them. During these presentations, students will attempt some translation, but will always be allowed to see, at some time, the “professional” translation. The unit’s finale will be the tackling of a complete translation of a new poem, “Tres Arboles” by Gabriela Mistral (Chile). “Tres Arboles,” though simple in its vocabulary and sensitive in its nature, carries elements of personification and imagery as well. No official translation will be supplied. After reading and discussing the original, the students (and the teacher) will be required to translate it. That from twenty students, twenty versions will be rendered is inevitable. Will there be twenty *new* poems? The students will decide this.

Though the unit is limitless in its application, it provides work for a four-to eight-week period. 1 hope that the teacher will continue the unit in some way, by searching out new poems and new translators, always keeping in mind that “only the original is the original.” We as teachers must value whatever rendition our students present us, while acknowledging that the mere processing of these language shifts is invaluable.

General Instructions for All Poems

Read all poems aloud. Reread them for their musicality and then for their thoughts. Go over each set of poems first as two distinct poems—A Spanish language poem and an English language poem. Then begin looking at them as an original poem and its translation. A last look may include taking the English translation, treating it as the original, and translating it back into Spanish for another version.

Cuadrados y Angulos

Casas enfiladas, casas enfiladas,
casas enfiladas.
Cuadrados, cuadrados, cuadrados.
Casas enfiladas.
Las gentes ya tienen el alma cuadrada,
ideas enfila
y ángulo en la espalda.
Yo misma he vertido ayer una 1ágrima,

Dios mio, cuadrada.

by Alfonsina Storni. John A. Crow, John T. Reed, John E. Englekirk, Irving A. Leonard, An *Anthology of Spanish American Literature* . New York: Meridith Corp., 1968. Squares and Angles

Houses in a line, in a line,
In a line there,
Squares, squares, squares,
Even people now have square souls,
Ideas in file, I declare,
And on their shoulders, angles wear.
Just yesterday I shed a tear and it
Oh, God, was square!

Translated by Willis Knapp Jones. *Spanish American Literature in Translation: A Selection of Poetry, Fiction, and Drama since 1888.* New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1963. (Cuadrados y Angulos/Squares and Angles) Notes: In the Spanish version, the noun/adjective pair “case enfiladas” is repeated whole, while in the English version, the prepositional phrase, “In a line there” is the repeated form. *There* is added for rhyme (declare, square). With “Even people now have square souls” the progression of time *even — now* is enforced. Somehow, I would prefer “Now even people have square souls.” I dislike “Ideas in file” as a translation for “ideas en fila.” I would choose “ideas all in a row” or “ideas in lines” to evoke a feeling of monotony or sameness. “And on their shoulders angles wear” strikes me as an awkward verse. I have written a possible substitution, “people’s souls are now quite square—upon their shoulders angles, they bear.” While the original manifests a rather imperfect rhyme (enfiladas, fila, espalda, cuadrada), the translation maintains a more sonorous scheme (there, there, declare, wear, square).

A. Exercises:.

1. Change (enfiladas)—“in a line, in a line”—to “in a row.” Make the rest of the poem rhyme. Now change “Ideas in file” to “Ideas in a line,” then to “Ideas in a row.”

What do the changes do for the poem?

Do you like it better?

2. Rewrite the English version without the rhyme. Change or leave out “there,” “I declare.” What substitutions can you find? Is the rhyme necessary?

3. What sense does “on their shoulders angles wear” give to the poem? Make that verse sound better.

4. Find another suitable word for “vertido”—in Spanish, in English. Make a list of possible synonyms for both the English and the Spanish of that form.

B. Thought Questions about the Poem:

1. What is the general tone of the poem? What feelings does it produce in you? (Happiness, anger, depression, etc.)

2. What does the constant repetition of key words (enfiladas, cuadrados, squares, in a line) evoke?

3. What does the author means by “alma cuadrada/square souls?”

4. Was the tear really square?

Peso Ancestral

Tú me dijiste: no lloró mi padre,;
tu me dijiste: no lloró me abuelo,;
no han llorado los hombres de mi raza,
eran de acero.
As’ diciendo te brotó una lágrima
ye me cayó en la boca . . . ; más veneno
yo no he bebido nunca en otro vaso asi
peque–o.
Débil mujer, pobre mujer que entiende,
dolor de siglos conoc’ al beberlo.

Oh, el alma mia soportar no puede
todo su peso. by Alfonsina Storni. Willis Knapp Jones,
Spanish American Literature in Translation: A Selection of Poetry, Fiction, and Drama since 1888 .
New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1963.
Inheritance
You said to me: “My father did not weep,
Nor my grandfather weep.” I heard you say:
“No man of all my race has ever wept,;
of steel were they.”
And thus upon my trembling mouth I felt
The poison of your bitter teardrop fall,
Worse potion than my lips have ever quaffed
From a cup so small.
Weak woman, born all grief to comprehend,
I drank the pain of ages infinite;
But oh, my wretched soul cannot support
The weight of it!

Translated by Jessie Read Wendell. Willis Knapp Jones, *Spanish American Literature in Translation: A Selection of Poetry, Fiction and Drama since 1888* . New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1963.

Peso Ancestral/Inheritance

A. Exercises:

1. Look at the Spanish and decide what rhyme scheme, if any, it has. Find the rhyme in the translation. Which appeals more directly to the ear?

2. Substitute "My father never wept" for "My father did not weep." Does the rhythm remain the same? Which do you like better?

3. Why does the translator use *all* in "No man of all my race . . . ?" Doesn't the word race denote an encompassing of all?

4. What does"quaffed" mean? What words could we substitute for quaffed? (swallow, drink, gulp, swig, guzzle)

5. Why is *poison's* position changed from its separate strength mas veneno yo no he bebido nunca . . . " to a somewhat descriptive purpose " . . . the poison of your bitter teardrop fall?" Why is potion used? Look up *potion* and tell why it is an appropriate word.

6. Which version gives you a more immediate sense of the tear? How?

7. Why does the poet say "oh, el alma mia no puede soportar todo su peso?" is it awkward? Why does the English, "But oh, my wretched soul cannot support the weight of it" sound more natural?

8. Find synonyms and substitute them in the English for: weep, steel, trembling, bitter, grief, wretched, support.

9. In the Spanish, find all the preterite form of the verbs—ex., dijiste. What impact does the use of that very definite time have on the poem? Look at the English. Are the verb forms faithful to the Spanish? Where and where not?

B. Thought Questions

1. The Spanish title "Peso Ancestral" evokes the idea of centuries of weight, guilt, or burden being transmitted through the generations. The English title "Inheritance" could mean many things. Where in the English translation do we come to understand the original title, the core of the poem?

2. Who wept? In which is this more clear to you? In which is it more evident to you that a woman wrote the poem?

3. What does the poet say about men, about women, about their differences? How does she feel towards men, women?

Recuerdo Infantil

Una tarde parda y fria
de invierno. Los colegiales
estudian. Monotonia
de lluvia tras los cristales.
Es la clase. En un cartel
se representa a Cain
fugitivo, y muerto Abel,
junto a una mancha carmin.
Con timbre sonoro y hueco
truena el maestro, un anciano
mal vestido, enjuto y seco,
que lleva un libro en la mano.
Y todo un coro infantil
va cantando la lección:
“Mil veces ciento, cien mil,
mil veces mil, un millión.”
Una tarde parda y fr’a
de invierno. Los colegiales
estudianMonoton’a

by Antonio Machado. Hardie St. Martin, de la lluvia en los cristales. *Roots and Wings: Poetry from Spain, 1900-1975* . New York: Harper and Row, 1976. Memory from Childhood

A chilly and overcast afternoon
in winter. The students
are studying. Steady boredom
of raindrops across the windowpanes.
It is time for class. In a poster
Cain is shown running
away, and Abel dead,
not far from a red spot.
The teacher, with a voice husky and hollow,
is thundering. He is an old man badly dressed
withered and dried up,
who is holding a book in his hand.
And the whole children's choir
is singing its lesson:
one thousand times one hundred is one hundred thousand
one thousand times one thousand is one million
A chilly and overcast afternoon
in winter. The students
are studying. Steady boredom
of raindrops across the window panes.

Translated by Robert Bly. Hardie St. Martin, *Roots and Wings: Poetry from Spain, 1900-1975* . New York: Harper and Row, 1976.

Recuerdo Infantil/Memory from Childhood

Notes: Both the original and the translation consist of five stanzas of four verses each. The Spanish establishes a steady rhyme pattern abab. The English has none. The Spanish keeps to a rather steady output of short verses. The English has difficulty maintaining all short verses towards the end. The English keeps up a stream of "s" sounds which evokes the very rain, monotonous splashes, of which it speaks. The later use of hard sounds, t, b, d, helps the reader hear the "thunder." The English version mimics the grammatical junctions, the commas, the periods, and the break-up of verses.

A. Exercises:

1. Read the original aloud. Look for sonorous elements—repetition of sounds, rhyme, rhythm. Read the English. Are the same sonorous elements present? Are there more? Does the translation or the original say more to you?
2. Which one brings the feeling of boredom closer through its language?
3. Does the word *monotonia* mean "steady boredom" to you? Would you have used the cognate *monotony* ? How about the word *tedium* ? Could you change "monotonia de lluvia" to "monotonous rain," " *wearisome* rain," " *dreary* rain," " *humdrum* rain?" Look up the underlined words. Which sound better to you?
4. Why is *parda* translated as *overcast* ? What synonyms can you find for *parda* , for *overcast* ? Describe the same afternoon without using *overcast* or *chilly* and without losing its flavor.
5. Do you like the word *thundering* to describe the teacher's voice? How does it fit in with the day? Do teachers thunder? Is this reverse personification?
6. Look up *husky* and *hollow* . Describe the teacher's voice using synonyms, keeping in mind that his voice is "sonoro y hueco." Does *empty* have the same ring?
7. Describe the teacher, in English, using the same words provided by the translator, but changing the order. Find a new image for the teacher by using completely different adjectives.
8. Is there really a choir? What song are they singing?

B. Essay Exercises:

1. Pick either the Spanish or the English and rewrite it as prose. Add verbs such as " *Es* una tarde parda . . . " etc. Use the same words. Does your prose stray much from the poem? What does this say about rhyme and rhythm?
2. Describe a monotonous experience of your own.
3. Describe a typical school day.
4. Write about an early memory from your childhood.

Sobre La Tierra Amarga

Sobre la tierra amarga,
caminos tiene el sueno
laberinticos, sendas tortuosas,
parques en flor y en sombra y en silencio;
criptas hondas, escalas sobre estrellas,
retablos de esperanzas y recuerdos.
Figurillas que pasan y sonrien
—jugetes me1ancó1icos de viejo—;
imágenes amigas,
a la vuelta florida del sendero,
y quimeras rosadas
que hacen camino . . . lejos . . .

by Antonio Machado. Hardie St. Martin, *Roots and Wings: Poetry from Spain, 1900- 1975.* New York: Harper and Row, 1976. Daydreams Have Endlessly Turning Paths

Daydreams have endlessly turning
paths going over the bitter
earth, winding roads,
parks flowering, in darkness and in silence;
deep vaults, ladders against the stars;
scenes of hopes and memories.
Tiny figures that walk past and smile
—sad playthings for an old man—;,
friends we think we can see
at the flowery turn in the road

and imaginary creatures
that show us roads . . . far off . . .

Translated by Robert Bly. Hardie St. Martin, *Roots and Wings: Poetry from Spain, 19001975* . New York: Harper and Row, 1976.

Sobre la Tierra Amarga/

Daydreams Have Endlessly Turning Paths

Notes: Both the Spanish and its translation carry the form of three stanzas of four verses each. The Spanish has some internal absonant rhyme, while the English has none. The Spanish has some alliteration of the s, a, and o sounds. There is much repetition of the S sound in the English. There is some emphasis on the “ing” form in the English.

There are big structural changes in the first stanza. Students will have to sort out referents in the first stanza of the Spanish.

A. Questions:
1. Why does the translator change the word order so in the first stanza? Is it easier to understand in Spanish or English? Try translating the first stanza literally.
2. What images surge with “criptas hondas/deep vaults?” What are kept in these vaults?
3. Who are the “figurillas/tiny figures” that walk by? Why are they referred to as “juguetes melancólicos/sad playthings” for an old man?
4. The poet often uses roads as a metaphor. What could these roads symbolize? Where are these roads?
5. What words in both the Spanish and the English speak of fantasy, imagination?
6. What does the motion of the “ing” form do for the poem?

7. What is the overall tone of the poem?

B. Exercises:

1. Match the following nouns from the Spanish to their adjectives:

Nouns	*Adjectives*
tierra	me1ancó1icos
sendas	laberinticos
caminos	amarga
criptas	florida
juguetes	tortuosas
amigas	imágenes
vuelta	rosadas
quimera	hondas

Now mix up the nouns and adjectives. Make sure the forms are correct and plug them back in the poem. What is the result? Have you created a new poem?

2. Look up: laberintico, tortuosa, retablos, criptas, figurillas, quimera—in the Spanish-English dictionary. Find one other English word that would fit for each.

3. Would this poem lend itself to a circular writing? What words are appropriate for a possible visual rendition? Where would you start? Try it.

Agape

Hoy no ha venido nadie a preguntar;
ni me han pedido en esta tarde nada.
No he visto ni una flor de cementario
en tan alegre procesión de luces.
En esta tarde todos, todos pasan
sin preguntarme ni pedirme nada.
Y no sé qué se olvidan y se queda
mal en mis manos, como cosa ajena.
He salido a la puerta,
y me da ganas de gritar a todos:

Si echan de menos algo, aqui se queda!
Porque en todas las tardes de esta vida,
yo no sé con qué puertas dan a un rostro,
y algo ajeno se toma el alma mia.
Hoy no ha venido nadie;
y hoy he muerto qué poco en esta tarde!

by Cesar Vallejo. Hortense Carpentier and Janet Brof, *Doors and Mirrors: Fiction and Poetry from Spanish America.* New York: The Viking Press, 1972.

Agape
Today no one has come to inquire,
nor have they wanted anything from me this afternoon.
I have not seen a single cemetery flower
in so happy a procession of lights.
Forgive me, Lord! I have died so little!
This afternoon everyone, everyone goes by
without asking or begging me anything.
And I do not know what it is they forget, and it is
heavy in my hands like something stolen.

I have come to the door,
and I want to shout at everyone:
—If you miss something, here it is!
Because in all the afternoons of this life,
I do not know how many doors are slammed on a face,
and my soul takes something that belongs to another.
Today nobody has come;
and today I have died so little in the afternoon!

Translated by John Knoepfle, Hortense Carpentier and Janet Brof, *Doors and Mirrors: Fiction and Poetry from Spanish America* . New York: The Viking Press, 1972.

Agape/Agape

Notes: The translation maintains the couplet/tercet form in English. In the Spanish, the rhyme is loosely absonant,while tercets follow an aba scheme. The English has no rhyme. Both use very simple vocabulary, though the symbolism may be hard for the student to grasp.

A. Questions/Exercises:

1. For *preguntar* in the first verse, the translator has chosen *inquire* . What does *inquire* imply that *ask for* wouldn't? What could you substitute for *pedir* ? (wanted, asked for, begged, desired, needed, etc.)

2. The second stanza is so close a translation of the original.

What words could we change? What flower's name could we substitute for *cemetery flower* that would automatically be recognized as a cemetery flower? What does *procession* bring to mind that *parade* doesn't? How else could you say, "I have died so little!"

3. In the third stanza the verb forms gather motion in the translation, "todos *pasan* sin *preguntarme* ni *pedirme* nada" becomes "everyone goes by without *asking* or *begging* me anything." How can we eliminate some of this excess motion? Should we? Can we break up this stanza? (This afternoon everyone, everyone goes by. They neither ask or beg anything from me) or (They ask nothing of me). Do you like these changes?

4. Substitute *left behind* for forget. Does "it" still feel heavy in my hands? if you substitute *something from afar* or *something that is not mine* for *cosa ajena* , is the rhythm thrown off?

5. *Darse ganas* , " *y me da ganas* de gritar a todos," is a very difficult expression to translate. *Want* seems weak, yet other expressions (have a yen for) sound awkward. How could you change that verse to satisfy that expression?

Possibilities: It makes me want to shout at everyone.

My impulse is to shout at everyone.

I'd like to scream at the whole world.

6. "If you miss something, here it is!" is a very literal translation. How can we change it (order, perhaps) to relieve the tension?

Possibilities If something is missing, it's here!

If you need something, here it is!

If you need something, I have it!

If something has been taken, it's here!

7. *Cosa ajena* is translated as *something stolen* . *Algo ajeno* is now something "that belongs to another." Could we use "steal" for *algo ajeno* ? "And my soul steals something away from another."

8. Is "and today I have died so little in the afternoon!" the only way to write this? Change *today* and *afternoon* . What happens?

B. Thought Questions about the Poem:

1. What atmosphere does the poet create? Where could the poem have been written? (in a church, store, cemetery, house, etc.)

2. Which words/expressions are repeated to give a sense of time? How much time passes from the beginning to the end of the poem?

3. Nothing is ever named in the poem. Which words/expressions (in both) give a sense of vagueness, ambiguity to the poem? Why would the author want such ambiguity?

4. What does *agape* mean? What language is at its root? Why do you think the poet chose this title?

5. What is the tone of the poem? Does it makes you sad, mad, or what?

canto para matar una culebra
¡Mayombe-bombe-mayombé!
¡Mayombe-bombe-mayombé!
¡Mayombe-bombe-mayombé!
La culebra tiene los ojos de vidrio;
la culebra viene y se enreda en un palo;
con sus ojos de vidrio, en un palo;
con sus ojos do vidrio.
La culebra camina sin patas,;
la culebra se esconde en la yerba;
caminando se esconde en la yerba,
caminando sin patas.
¡Mayombe-bombe-mayombe!
¡Mayombe-bombe-mayombé!
¡Mayombe-bombe-mayombé!

Tú le das con el hacha, y se muere:
¡dale ya!
¡No le des con el pie, que te muerde,
no le des con el pie, que se va!
Sensemayá, la culebra,
sensemayá,

Sensemayá, con sus ojos,
sensemaya.
Sensemayá, con su lengua,
sensemayá.
Sensemayá, con su boca,
sensemaya . . .
¡La culebra muerta no puede comer;
la culebra muerta no puede silbar;,
no puede caminar,
no puede correr!
¡La culebra muerta no puede mirar;
la culebra muerta no puede beber;
no puede respirar,
no puede morder!
¡Mayombe-bombe-mayombé!
Sensemayá, la culebra . . .
¡Mayombe-bombe-mayombé!
Sensemayá, no se mueve . . .
¡Mayombe-bombe-mayombé!
Sensemayá, Za culebra . . .
¡Mayombe-bombe-mayombé!

¡ *Sensemayá, se murió!* by Nicolás Guillén John A Crow, John T. Reed, John E. Englekirk, Irving A. Leonard, *An Anthology of Spanish-American Literature.* New York: Meridith Corp., 1968. Sensemaya

(Chant to kill a snake)
¡Mayombe-bombe-mayombé!
¡Mayombe-bombe-mayombé!
¡Mayombe-bombe-mayombé!
The snake has eyes of glass;,
The snake coils on a stick;,
With his eyes of glass on a stick,
With his eyes of glass.
The snake can move without feet;
The snake can hide in the grass;
Crawling he hides in the grass,
Moving without feet.
¡Mayombe-bombe-mayombe.!
Hit him with an ax and he dies;
Hit him! Go on, hit him!
Don't hit him with your foot or he'll bite;,
Don't hit him with your foot, or he'll get away.
Sensemayá, the snake,
sensemayá.
Sensemayá, with his eyes,
sensemayá.
Sensemayá, with his tongue,
sensemayá.
Sensemayá, with his mouth,
sensemayá.
The dead snake cannot eat;
the dead snake cannot hiss;
he cannot move,
he cannot run!
The dead snake cannot look;,
the dead snake cannot drink,;
he cannot breathe,
he cannot bite.
¡Mayombe-bombe-mayombé!
Sensemayá, the snake . . .

¡Mayombe-bombe-mayombé!

Sensemayá, does not move . . .

¡Mayombe-bombe-mayombé!

Sensemayá, the snake . . .

¡Mayombe-bombe-mayombé!

Sensemayá, he died!

Translated by Willis Knapp Jones. *Spanish American Literature in Translation: A Selection of Poetry, Fiction, and Drama since 1888.* New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1963.

Sensemaya/Sensemaya

Notes: Sensemayá, mayombe, bombe, mayombé are all in a sense onomatopoeic words. Sensemayá is thought to be an African word, while Mayombé is a distortion of geographic name. Both the Spanish and English sway with the musicality of the chant. The refrain, interspersed with verses, brings to mind the slithering of the very snake described here. One senses the snake moving in and out of the poem. The Spanish is filled with "s" sounds which mimic the snake's hissing. The English contains the same onomatopoeic words, though the verses lose some force in the translation. Somehow, the onomatopoeic words blend better with the Spanish.

A. Questions/Exercises

1. Why are the words Mayombe-bombe-mayombé! not translated? Could we change them at all?
2. The Spanish construction "ojos de vidrio" is normal. The English "eyes of glass" could be written "glass eyes." Why do you think the translator chose the construction he did?
3. Rewrite the third stanza without *can* . (The snake moves without feet). Switch *moving* with *crawling* . What happens? Find synonyms for *moving* and *crawling* .
4. Can you suggest a substitute for *hit him* ? (Smash him, get him, kill him, stomp on him). Use different ones. Do you like the result?
5. *Silbar* -Whistle-hiss are all so snake-like. What other words would be appropriate for what a snake does?
6. Using the same onomatopoeic words, change the animal, his actions, sounds.
7. Using four made-up or other onomatopoeic words, rewrite the refrain, keeping the snake image.
8. Should *palo* be *tree* and not *stick* ?

B. Thought Questions:

1. Does this poem appear to be a real chant? What makes it seem so? What words add to the chant-like effect?
2. Does the musicality of the poem come through in the translation? Where and where not?
3. What instrument(s) should be played while reciting this poem?

4. Is there a message with this poem?

Tres Arboles

Tres árbo1es caidos
quedaron en la orilla del sendero.
El lenador los o1vidó, y conversan,
apretados de amor, como tres ciegos.
El sol de ocaso pone
Su sangre viva en los hendidos lenos
¡Y se llevan los vientos la fragancia
de su costado abierto!
Uno, torcido, tiende
Su brazo immenso y de follaje trémulo
Lacia otro, y sus heridas
Como dos ojos son, llenos de reugo.
El lenador los o1vidó. La noche
vendrá. Estaré con ellos.
Recibiré en mi corazón sus mansas
Resinas. Me serán como de fuego.
Y mudos y cenidos
Nos halle el dia en un montón de duelo.

by Gabriela Mistral. John A. Crow, John T. Reed, John E. Englekirk, Irving A. Leonard, *An Anthology of Spanish-American Literature* . New York: Meridith Corp., 1968. This poem offers the student a chance to translate. The vocabulary is simple, yet many synonyms are possible. There is no rhyme. Working in big chunks is advisable. Exploring all the possibilities for each verse or stanza, and then choosing the best combinations is one method. I offer my translation as only one of the many possible.

Three Trees
Three trees, struck down, were left by the
edge of the road.
The woodsman forgot them, so, they spoke,
clutching one and other out of love, like three blind men.

The dying sun spills its fiery blood
on the wounded logs,
While the fragrance of their open sides
is lifted away by the winds!
One, twisted, extends its mightly arm
with trembling leaves toward another,
and its wounds beg like
two pleading eyes.
They woodsman forgot them. Night is coming.
I will be one with them. Their mild resins
will flow into my heart. To me they'll burn like fire.
And—day will find us, silent and clinging
together, in a heap of sorrow.

Translated by Jill Savitt

STUDENT READING LIST

1. *Borinquen* : *An Anthology of Puerto Rican Literature* , Maria Teresa Babin, and Stan Steiner (bilingual).
2. *Doors and Mirrors—Fiction and Poetry from Spanish America* , Hortense Carpentier and Janet Brof (bilingual).
3. *Poetry: A Closer Look:Programmed Instruction with Selected Poems* , Laurence Perrine, James M. Reid, John Ciardi.
4. *Roots and Wings:Poetry from Spain 1900-1975* , Hardie St. Martin (bilingual).
5. *Spanish American Literature in Translation* —(A Selection of Poetry, Fiction, and Drama since 1888), Willis Knapp Jones.
Dictionaries, Reference Tools, Materials
1. *Diccionario Abreviado de Sinónimos* , Fernando Corripio, Editorial Bruguera, S.A., 1976 (Spanish).
2. *A Dictionary of Synonyms and Antonyms* , Joseph Devlin, World Publishing Company, 1961.
3. *Diccionario Escolar de la Lengua Escolar—VOX* , Biblograf, S.A., 1971 (Spanish).
4. *Cassell's SPANISH DICTIONARY* , (Spanish-English-Spanish), Funk and Wagnalls, 1960.
5. *Pequeno Larousse Ilustrado* , D.C. Heath and Company.

Notes

1. Alastair Reid Forward to *The Astonishment of Words* by Victor Proetz (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971), p. XII.
2. James Higgens, *Beyond Words* (New York: Columbia University, 1970), pp. 51-52.

3. Victor Proetz, Forward to *The Astonishment of Words* , p. 39.
4. Edwin Conn, *Translation* : *A Handbook* (New York: Capital Publishing Institute, 1941), pp. 19-20.
5. Alexander Woodhouslee, *Essay on the Principles of Translation* , (London: T. Cadell, and W. Creech, 1791), pp. 57-58.
6. Alexander Woodhouslee, *Essay on the Principles of Translation* , p. 13.
7. Alexander Woodhouslee, *Essay on the Principles of Translation* , pp. 59-60.

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Kreuzer, James R. *Elements of Poetry* . New York: The Macmillan Co., 1955.

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Perrine, Laurence; Reid, James; and Ciardi, John. *Poetry* : *A Closer Look* . New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, inc., 1963.

Pound, Ezra. *The ABC of Reading* . New York: New Directions Books, 1934.

Proetz, Victor. *The Astonishment of Words* . Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971.

Raffell, Burton. *The Forked Tongue* . The Hague, Netherlands: Mouton and Co., 1971.

Shapiro, Karl and Beum, Robert. *A Prosody Handbook* . New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1965.

St. Martin, Hardie. *Roots and Wings* : *Poetry from* Spain 1900-1975. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1976.

Stevens, Wallace. *The Necessary Angel: Essays on Reality and* the *Imagination* . New York: Knopf, 1951.

Stock, Collard J. *Translations in Verse* . London: Elliot Stock, 1891.

Walter, Nina Willis. *Let Them Write Poetry* . New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962.

Woodhouslee, Alexander Fraser Tytler. *Essay on the Principles* of *Translation* . London: T. Cadell, 1791.

Annotations on the Bibliography

The following books were used for the selection of materials:. Bori *nquen: An Anthology of Puerto Rican Literature* , *Doors and Mirrors* , *Roots and Wings* , *Spanish-American Literature in Translation* , and *Translations in Verse* . Of these five, *Doors and Mirrors* and *Roots and Wings* are bilingual (Spanish-English) editions, while the rest are translations in English only. I especially liked *Roots and Wings.*

Of the books that deal with translation, Edwin Conn's *Handbook* is helpful, with practical information for the translator. He also discusses the various schools of translation. *The Astonishment of Words* is a fun book to read, even if you don't understand the translation of your favorite Irving Berlin song. Basically, the author offers translations of pieces he wanted to have in translation. The *Forked Tongue* is a more scholarly work dealing with the somewhat arduous task of translating Indonesian poetry into English. It also contains a lot of correspondence that revolved around certain translations. Skip the correspondence. Woodhouslee's book is a very substantial early essay on the principles of translation, many of which are maintained today.

Of the books dealing with literature/poetry, Higgen's book, *Beyond Words* , brings children's literature into a new light—useful for those who deal with works designed for children. *Wishes, Lies and Dreams* is an especially valuable tool for poetry generation in the classroom. *The Elements of Poetry* and *Sound and Sense* are both very helpful for the teacher of poetry, giving wonderful explanations of the elements of poetry. *Let Them Write Poetry* is somewhat like Koch's book in ideas and ideals, though older and less urbane. *Poetry* : *A Closer Look* offers some good programmed exercises for getting through the poem. *A Prosody Handbook* takes *Sound and Sense* and *The Elements of Poetry* one step beyond—a comprehensive book that gets back to the basics of poetics.

The Necessary Angel is enlightening for side reading. *The ABC of Reading* is irreverent and delightful. It contains some helpful exercises for the classroom. Read the whole book, but see Chapter 8, pp. 63-70 especially.

Milic's article on the possibility of poetry generation by the computer is fascinating. Read also Leighton's

article on “Sonnets and Computers” in the same volume.

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