University of Oxford

Rediscovering Rubén Darío through Translation

Carlos F. Grigsby

St. Anne's College

Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Short Abstract

Despite being widely considered one of the most important writers of the Spanish language, Rubén Darío is scarcely known in the English-speaking world. This thesis addresses the question of his obscurity. By approaching Darío's oeuvre through translation, it sheds light on the history of his reception in English and on the multilingualism of his writing. In addition, it offers new renderings of the *modernista*'s poetry alongside a critical discussion of the translation of poetry with a view to improving its practice.

The thesis is divided into three different sections which correspond to three different ways of applying translation to the study of Darío's oeuvre. Section I offers a reading of Darío's work with an emphasis on his use of translation in his writing, thereby revealing its multilingualism. Section II centres on translation as a critical issue: it analyses the history of Darío's reception in English by considering historical, cultural, and poetic differences between Spanish- and English-language literature from the turn of the nineteenth century to the present. In addition, it offers a critical discussion of the theory of the translation of poetry vis-à-vis Darío's writing. Section III puts translation into practice both by offering new renderings of the Nicaraguan's poetry as well as discussing the issues that arise when looking at existing versions.

This thesis argues that the translation of poetry is by and large literary imitation across languages. In this regard, some of the key elements of Darío's poetry, notably its prosody, have not been rendered successfully into English; nevertheless, cultural and

historical differences between Spanish- and English-language literary traditions, rather than linguistic, have impacted on its reception more heavily.

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Long Abstract

Despite being widely considered one of the most important writers of the Spanish language, unlike other Hispanic poets such as Pablo Neruda, Federico García Lorca, and César Vallejo, Rubén Darío is scarcely known in the Anglophone world. By and large, the availability of an author's work translated to English – the language in which the canon of world literature is articulated – reflects the global standing held by the language and literary tradition in which said work was written originally. While Spanish American literature in particular has increasingly garnered international interest since the so-called 'Boom' in the 1960s and 70s, significant absences or imbalances in its representation persist, such as in the case of Darío's oeuvre. This thesis addresses the question of Rubén Darío's obscurity in the English-speaking world.

While I initially set out to analyse and discuss the ways in which the *modernista*'s writing has been translated into English with a view to offering my own renderings of his writing, over the course of this research translation has revealed itself to be a critical tool that can offer new insights into a literary oeuvre, however canonical or well-studied. As discussed in the Introduction, the corpus of Darío studies is one of the largest ever inspired by a Hispanic writer, alongside those of Cervantes and Borges; any significant breakthrough in the understanding of his oeuvre would seem unlikely. Nevertheless, despite the unanimity of his current canonical status, the Nicaraguan's own status within the Spanish language has shifted over time. In the Introduction I chart how that status has indeed changed, situating this thesis within a vast critical corpus, and elucidating the role of translation in arriving to a new perspective of Darío's writing.

As I show in Chapters 1 and 2, reading Darío as a translator – that is, reading Darío as a translator would read him, on the one hand, and reading the work of Rubén Darío the translator, on the other – sheds light on the multilingualism of Darío's poetry, given that reading as a translator implies reading a text with at least one other language in mind. As a result, the way Darío translates, glosses, rewrites, annotates, and expands on French writers in his own poetry comes to the fore. In discussing the *modernista*'s rich engagement with his French sources, I offer a critique of the ways in which the notions of literary imitation and originality have been traditionally understood by Darío scholars. I argue that it is due to their conceptual limitations that the sophistication of the poetic dialogue which Darío sustains with his French counterparts has gone unnoticed. In addition, by focusing on the presence of other languages in his writing, the Nicaraguan's use of Provençal, Early Modern Spanish, and Latin comes to light. While his engagement with the latter languages is less intense than with French, they all fill his writing with echoes or resonances from other authors and traditions. The multilingualism of the Nicaraguan's writing is an aspect that has remained completely overlooked in Darío studies, largely owing to the monolingualism of Spanish American criticism.

Over the course of this study it has also become clear how translation as a critical tool can highlight historical and cultural differences between literary traditions that would otherwise remain hidden. If my initial intuition was that Darío's obscurity in the Anglophone world could be mostly attributed to the low quality of the translations available, a detailed examination of the matter, as I present it in Chapter 3, shows a more complex picture. Rather, cultural and historical differences – namely the scarce knowledge of Spanish America that existed in the Anglophone world prior to the Cuban Revolution; the literary and cultural differences between *Modernismo* and Modernism vis-à-vis the French *fin de siècle*; the extent to which the practice of translation has changed over the

course of the twentieth century; the academisation of Spanish American literature in the Anglophone world – have had a larger bearing on the reception of Darío in the English-speaking world. Nevertheless, that does not imply that the existing translations of Darío's writing are without shortcomings. In this regard, thinking about the translation of Darío not only touches upon the history of Spanish American literature vis-à-vis world literature and the Anglophone literary world at large; it also touches upon the limitations of our own translation practices.

The significance that prosody and rhythm and rhyme have in Darío's poetry pushes a translator to reconsider the traditional translation practices which have hitherto failed to render the main qualities of the Nicaraguan's writing. Accordingly, I offer a critical discussion of the translation of poetry in Chapter 4, engaging with the theories of the main scholars of the field of translation studies, as well as with the statements of prominent translators and writers regarding the craft of translation. I argue that translation which aims to recreate the effects of the original is best understood as a literary imitation across languages. I tease out the consequences that this has for our translation practices with regard to poetry, citing various examples from different languages as illustration, before applying them to the rendering of Darío. As such, I hope that this thesis can be a contribution not only to Darío studies, but also to the translation of poetry more generally.

Lastly, in Chapter 5 Section III, I offer a practical counterpart to the hitherto theoretical discussion of translation. I closely read, analyse, and discuss the strengths and shortcomings of existing versions of Darío in English, while offering my own renderings of the poems in question. I aim to show how scholarship can inform translation and *vice versa*, in addition to putting the arguments and ideas elucidated in Section II into practice. Furthermore, the entirety of the last section is meant to illustrate how creativity and scholarship need not be mutually exclusive, especially regarding translation.

The translation of an author represents an opportunity for its revaluation from a new angle or vantage point, which takes the shape of the language and tradition into which the work will be translated. In this sense, both Sections II and III discuss the degree to which Darío is translatable at all. It also asks what the English-language reader of poetry gains from having a representation of the *modernista*'s poetry in their own language. Following the Conclusion, which also points to future changes in the afterlife of Darío in English, I have appended the complete versions of my own renderings.

Ningún problema tan consustancial con las letras y con su modesto misterio como el que propone una traducción.

Discusión, Jorge Luis Borges

Introduction

Rubén Darío (1867–1916) is a classic of Hispanic literature. As critic Pedro Henríquez Ureña puts it: 'Of any poem written in Spanish it can be told with certainty whether it was written before or after him.'[1] The story is commonplace in Hispanic literary history: Rubén Darío shook the Spanish language out of its sopor at the end of the nineteenth century and put it back in conversation with the modern literatures of the West. As such, he broke ground for metrical experimentation, opening the way for free verse and spearheading *Modernismo*, the movement which inaugurated the tradition of modern Spanish American literature.

And yet, the Nicaraguan poet is scarcely known in the English-speaking world; his writing remains largely confined within the boundaries of the Spanish language. According to *The Oxford Guide to Literature in English Translation*, 'Interest in Latin American poetry emerged in the 1960s. Before that decade, readership was limited and highly specialized'.[2] After reading that Neruda, Vallejo, and Paz went on to be translated in the 70s, we are told the following:

> However, several of the best-known Latin American poets have failed to find English translators of much worth. Besides Gabriela Mistral, the great modernist poets like Rubén Dario and José Martí, the surrealist Vicente Huidobro, the Cuban rhythm poet Nicolás Guillén, or the Christian Marxist Ernesto Cardenal remain relatively unknown in English, despite the occasional attempt at translating some of their works by gifted, enthusiastic translators working with small presses.[3]

Tom Boll's analysis of Penguin's Latin American translations in the 50s, 60s, and 70s confirms this: 'With Paz, Penguin completed a list of canonical twentieth-century poets that included Jiménez, Machado, Lorca, Neruda, and Vallejo'.[4] To be sure, there is no

[1] Pedro Henríquez Ureña, *Literary Currents in Hispanic America* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1945), p. 169.
[2] Peter France, *The Oxford Guide to Literature in English Translation* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000), p. 431.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Tom Boll, 'Penguin Books and the Translation of Spanish and Latin American Poetry, 1956–1979', *Translation & Literature*, 25.1 (2016), 28–57 (p. 56). Boll provides dates for each edition: Lorca (1960), Machado with Jiménez (1974), Neruda (1975), Vallejo (1976), and Paz (1979).

mention of Darío, despite the fact that those writers who were successfully translated openly recognise his influence on their writing.

Let us start with the Peruvian poet César Vallejo. In the following passage, Vallejo is rejecting the generation of *posmodernista* writers that precedes him; in doing so, however, he rescues *la gran voz inmortal* of one poet:

> De la generación que nos precede no tenemos nada que esperar. Ella es un fracaso para nosotros y para todos los tiempos. Si nuestra generación logra abrirse un camino, su obra aplastará a la anterior. Entonces, la historia de la literatura española saltará sobre los últimos treinta años, como por un abismo Rubén Darío elevará su gran voz inmortal sobre la orilla opuesta y de esta otra, la juventud sabrá qué responder.[5] (qtd. in Zanetti 139)

When the Chilean poet Pablo Neruda and the Spanish writer Federico García Lorca were honoured in 1933 at the Argentine PEN Club in Buenos Aires, both performed a speech in honour of Darío called 'Discurso al alimón', which ended with these words:

Neruda:	Federico García Lorca, español, y yo, chileno, declinamos la responsabilidad de esta noche de camaradas, hacia esa gran sombra que cantó más altamente que nosotros, y saludó con voz inusitada a la tierra argentina que pisamos.
Lorca:	Pablo Neruda, chileno, y yo, español, coincidimos en el idioma y en el gran poeta, nicaragüense, argentino, chileno y español, Rubén Darío.
N. & L.:	Por cuyo homenaje y gloria levantamos nuestro vaso.[6]

Finally, here is Borges summing up Darío's contribution to literature in Spanish:

> Todo lo renovó Darío: la materia, el vocabulario, la métrica, la magia peculiar de ciertas palabras, la sensibilidad del poeta y de sus lectores. Su labor no ha cesado y no cesará; quienes alguna vez lo combatimos, comprendemos hoy que lo continuamos. Lo podemos llamar El Libertador.[7]

[5] *Las Cenizas de la Huella: linajes y figuras de artista en torno al modernismo*, ed. by Susana Zanetti (Rosario: Viterbo Editora, 1997), p. 139. See also Vallejo's homage to Darío in 'Retablo' included *in Los Heraldos Negros* (Madrid: Cátedra, 1998).
[6] Pablo Neruda, *Confieso que he vivido. Memorias* (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1974), p. 161. See also Neruda's homage to Darío in 'R.D.' included in *Barcarola* (Buenos Aires: Losada, 1967).
[7] *Estudios sobre Rubén Darío*, ed. by Ernesto Mejía Sánchez (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1968), p. 13.

Borges borrows the idea of calling Darío 'El Libertador' from Leopoldo Lugones's obituary for the Nicaraguan, in which the latter elaborates the idea at length by comparing Darío's legacy with the enterprise of historical figures such as Bolívar and Sarmiento.[8]

Another way of gauging Darío's influence is through the power of numbers. Tomás Navarro Tomás pointed out that Darío's oeuvre displays 37 different metrical lines and 136 different stanza forms.[9] The sheer number of scholarly works inspired by Darío's work is daunting,[10] as Alberto Acereda and Will Derusha remind us: 'Since his death, the volume of works devoted to him is probably greater than that given to any other writer in the history of Spanish and Spanish American literature, with the exception of Cervantes'.[11]

Why, then, is a poet whose work is inescapable in one language almost completely ignored in another, even after being translated several times? Or, to put it more precisely: Why is Darío so scarcely known in the English-speaking world if he is unanimously acclaimed by his successors who, in contrast to him, are in turn praised by English-language readers? This is one of the questions to which this thesis gives an answer. Throughout its pages I 'use' translation as a critical tool to read Darío's poetic oeuvre alongside its afterlife in English. I argue that Darío's poetry is multilingual, an aspect of his writing which has been hitherto overlooked, while also offering a new rendering of the Nicaraguan's poems that aims to address the issues that have contributed to its obscurity. In the next section I

[8] See Leopoldo Lugones, *Rubén Darío* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Selectas América, 1916).
[9] Tomás Navarro Tomás, *Métrica española: reseña histórica y descriptiva* (N.Y.: Las Américas, 1966), p. 201.
[10] See Keith Ellis's assertion from 1974: 'Literary criticism on Rubén Darío's work first appeared in 1884 when he was seventeen years old. Since that time the volume of writings devoted to his work has probably become greater than that dealing with any other figure in the history of Spanish American literature' in Keith Ellis, *Critical Approaches to Rubén Darío* (Toronto: Toronto UP, 1974), p. ix. See also Woodbridge's remark from 1975: 'I feel that the work and the critical studies of Darío are so numerous that a group of scholars ought to work on a bibliography of the poet' in Charles Hensley Woodbridge, *Rubén Darío, a Selective Classified and Annotated Bibliography* (Metuchan, NJ: Scarecrow, 1975), p. 201.
[11] Rubén Darío, *Songs of Life and Hope*, trans. by Will Derusha and Alberto Acereda (North Carolina: Duke UP, 2004), p. 12.

consider the evolution of Darío scholarship over the years and elucidate the place of this thesis within the corpus.

Rubén Darío Studies, Past and Present

As suggested above, a comprehensive survey of the scholarship published on Darío would demand a doctoral thesis of its own.[12] It would also have to cover the various studies on *Modernismo* with a postcolonial, world-literary, or comparative focus which have recently emerged as part of a larger methodological shift that aims to be transnational.[13] What I offer here is a necessarily broad picture. My aim is to show how the scholarship on Darío's writing has evolved over the years so that the place of this thesis within that corpus can be better understood. At the same time, after three years of intense study of the Nicaraguan's oeuvre, it is only logical that this thesis offer a map, as it were, or a user's manual to aid the future scholar in finding their way through this *bosque espeso*, as Darío once called his own writings published in the Buenos Aires newspaper *La Nación*.

Without considering his detractors – who have been numerous over the decades – it is not an exaggeration to say that, by his own hand, Darío largely influenced the reception of his work.[14] To be sure, comments offered by authors on their own work – in the form of remarks on the circumstances of composition, design, and motives – have been taken at

[12] For more comprehensive, if somewhat outdated, surveys and bibliographies, see: Arnold Armand del Greco, *Repertorio bibliográfico del mundo de Rubén Darío* (New York: Las Américas, 1969); José Jirón Terán, *Bibliografía general de Rubén Darío (julio 1883-enero 1967)* (Managua: Comisión Nacional del Centenario, 1967); in addition to Ellis and Woodbridge.

[13] For example see Evelyn Picón Garfield and Iván A. Schulman, *'Las entrañas del vacío': ensayos sobre la modernidad hispanoamericana* (Mexico: Ediciones Cuadernos Americanos, 1984); Alejandro Mejías-López, *The Inverted Conquest: the Myth of Modernity and the Transatlantic Onset of Modernism* (Nashville: Vanderbilt UP, 2009); Mariano Siskind, *Cosmopolitan Desires: Global Modernity and World Literature in Latin America* (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 2014); among others.

[14] Darío had many detractors during his lifetime (one of the most notable being Leopoldo Alas 'Clarín'). Later detractors include Mario Benedetti and Enrique Lihn, who, at the height of the Cuban Revolution, read Darío's work as escapist and Europeanised (Ellis, p. 36). Luis Cernuda heavily criticised Darío's work too, though he showed scant knowledge of it. For details of this controversy see C.M. Bowra, *Rubén Darío en Oxford* (Managua: Academia nicaragüense de la lengua, 1966). For the ambivalent relation of other Spanish American writers to Darío, such as José Emilio Pacheco and Juan José Saer, see Gwen Kirkpatrick, 'Forgiving Rubén Darío', *Review: Literature and Arts of the Americas*, vol. 51, no. 2 (2018), pp. 180–87.

face value by critics in the past. In reality, however, authors are often aware of the effects that their statements have, as well as of their own place in their literary field. Darío, as one of the first professional Spanish American writers to problematise the place of literature in modern society – and as one who was critically aware of his own place in history – deliberately shaped *Modernismo*'s reception and remembrance. He was the first to name the movement in a chronicle from 1890 describing his visit to the Peruvian writer Ricardo Palma two years earlier, and in doing so describes it as 'un espíritu nuevo que anima a un pequeño pero triunfante y soberbio grupo de escritores y poetas de la América española'.[15] He openly called himself the initiator of *Modernismo* in his rejoinder to the Franco-Argentine writer Paul Groussac in 'Los colores del estandarte' (1896), a claim he would repeat in prefaces and critical writings published afterwards, effectively becoming one of the first literary historians of the movement. At other times in his career, as I explore in Chapters 1 and 2, he cast his literary persona as a writer 'who thinks in French', before recasting himself – after the Spanish–American war in 1898 – as an eminently pan-Hispanic writer. Relatedly, the Nicaraguan scholar Leonel Delgado has discussed how Darío's framing of his autobiography sets the tone to which his life story was to be read.[16] Darío's tales about his life and writings have influenced too the hagiographic penchant of his biographers,[17] while his own narrative of *Modernismo* indirectly led to the narrow understanding of the movement as one that essentially began and ended with the Nicaraguan.[18]

[15] Rubén Darío, *Obras completas*, 5 vols (Madrid: A. Aguado, 1950–55), II, p. 19.
[16] See Leonel Delgado, 'La vida de Rubén Darío escrita por él mismo. Escritura autobiográfica y políticas del nombre', *Istmo*, 10 (enero–junio 2005) http://istmo.denison.edu/n10/articulos/vida.html#end3 [accessed 2 June 2019].
[17] I have been critical of biographies of Darío in Carlos F. Grigsby, 'El fracaso de París: Rubén Darío's Modernista Campaign in France', *MLR* 114.4 (October) 2019, pp. 614–33.
[18] It would take a few decades after Darío's death for this view to lose sway. For instance, Max Henríquez Ureña's history of the movement, which gives José Martí his due place in its development, was not published until 1954. Likewise, Iván Schulman's study of the importance of the *modernistas* who preceded Darío (namely José Martí, Manuel Gutiérrez Nájera, José Asunción Silva, and Julián del Casal) was not published until 1966. In this regard, it is no coincidence that Paz makes no mention of Martí in his essay on Darío.

That said, two of his contemporaries greatly influenced the way Darío's writing was read in his lifetime: the Uruguayan José Enrique Rodó and the Dominican Pedro Henríquez Ureña (the latter of whom was quoted earlier). The former's review of *Prosas profanas* published in 1899 was widely read in its day; it remains an essential text to understand Darío's reception and place in Spanish American literature. While it is a praiseful review on the whole – to the extent that the author was compelled to write it in an inspired *modernista* style himself – Rodó seems to have sensed that what Spanish American literary circles of the time wanted to hear was whether Darío was the poet for whom the Americas had been waiting. Thus, the Uruguayan cunningly begins his text by stating: 'Indudablemente, Rubén Darío no es el poeta de América.'[19] The phrase resonates more than the rest of the article, in which Rodó lauds Darío for being an exquisite innovator while criticising him for writing poems whose form, if marmoreally accomplished, is lacking in outpourings of the heart. As I discuss in Chapter 5, Darío would answer Rodó's criticism with the confessional lyricism of some of the best-known poems of *Cantos de vida y esperanza* (1905). The latter collection was lucidly reviewed upon its publication by Henríquez Ureña, who comments on the previous evolution of Darío's poetry and perceptively grasps the long-lasting influence it would have on Spanish American literature. He would go on to make a valuable contribution to the study of the sources of Darío (discussed in Chapter 2); write the introduction for the first book-length translation of Darío into English (discussed in Chapter 3); and become an important historian of *Modernismo* with his *Literary Currents of Hispanic America* published in 1945.

After Darío's death in 1916, which seems to have plunged writers from across the Hispanic world into a state of general mourning, two especially significant contributions to

[19] José Enrique Rodó*, José Enrique Rodó: crítico literario,* ed. by Jorge Rufinelli (Alicante: Instituto de Cultura Juan Gil-Albert, 1995), p. 49.

the study of Darío's sources were published: Erwin K. Mapes's *L'influence française dans l'œuvre de Rubén Darío* (1925) and Arturo Marasso's *Rubén Darío y su creación poética* (1934). Mapes's monograph remains the best work on the subject of Darío's relationship to French, whereas Marasso's vast study is the most comprehensive work on the *modernista*'s sources in general. As I will explain, while this thesis owes much to both monographs, it questions their understanding of the notions of literary influence and imitation, trying to move beyond them in better understanding the sophistication of Darío's engagement with his sources. Mapes went on to edit a number of hitherto uncollected articles by Darío: *Escritos inéditos de Rubén Darío* (1938). In the same decade, Arturo Torres-Rioseco published *Rubén Darío: casticismo y americanismo* (1931), a work which, though limited in its scope, provided ample evidence of Darío's engagement with Spanish and Spanish American sources through his own poetry.[20] Three years later, Raúl Silva Castro published *Obras desconocidas de Rubén Darío (*1934), an ample number of uncollected writings by Darío dating from his stay in Chile, thus enlarging the understanding of the Nicaraguan's time there.

In 1948 the Spanish writer Pedro Salinas published one of the essential books of the corpus: *La poesía de Rubén Darío: ensayo sobre el tema y los temas del poeta* (1948). It is a thematic study that analyses Darío's oeuvre as a composite of several subthemes dominated by one overarching theme, which, in Salinas's view, is related to eroticism. While the study offers a sweeping view of Darío's body of poetic work – felicitously naming, among other things, the different representations of French culture in the Nicaraguan's poetry *paisajes de cultura*[21] – at times the author seems to subsume texts that require greater nuance and elaboration into his overarching theme. While the result is

[20] The monograph was partially published as a reaction to Mapes's work mentioned earlier, which in Rioseco's opinion exaggerated the French origin of Darío's sources.
[21] Pedro Salinas, *La poesía de Rubén Darío: ensayo sobre el tema y los temas del poeta* (Buenos Aires: Losada, 1948), p. 124.

beneficial for the monograph's internal coherence, it comes at the cost of critical nuance and penetration. In the same decade, Diego Manuel Sequeira published *Rubén Darío, criollo; o, raíz y médula de su creación poética* (1945), a well-researched study that sheds light on Darío's formative years in Central America, detailing his first contact with French literature.

In 1956 Francisca Sánchez, Darío's widow, donated eighty of Darío's folders and nearly 5,000 other documents to the Universidad Complutense of Madrid. This led to the creation of the *Archivo Rubén Darío*, giving rise to a number of publications, notably a biography of Darío by Antonio Oliver Belmás *Este otro Rubén Darío* (1960) and hitherto unpublished letters edited by Dietino Álvarez as *Cartas de Rubén Darío: Epistolario inédito del poeta con sus amigos españoles* (1963). By and large, the new documents shed light on Darío's relation to Spanish writers and intellectuals, as well as his years spent in Spain. It opened a window onto his private life, which had hitherto remained somewhat elusive given that its portrayal had been usually mediated by Darío himself or his contemporaries.[22] Five years earlier, the Nicaraguan poet-scholar Ernesto Mejía Sánchez edited Darío's *Cuentos completos* (1951), in an edition brilliantly prefaced by Raimundo Lida in what remains one of the best studies of the *modernista*'s short stories.[23] The edition reasserted the historical value of Darío's treatment of the short story, which effectively signalled the introduction of the fantastical genre in Argentina, paving the way for authors like Lugones and Borges. In the same decade Marasso expanded his tome by publishing a second edition of *Rubén Darío y su creación poética* (1954).

Historically, centennial celebrations seem to spur Darío scholars toward critical breakthroughs in the study of the Nicaraguan's oeuvre. The decade of the 1960s marked

[22] For more on the findings of the *archivo*, see Luis Sáinz de Medrano, 'El Seminario-Archivo «Rubén Darío» de la Universidad Complutense de Madrid', *Anales de Literatura Hispanoamericana* (2003), 32, pp. 99–102.
[23] It is now collected alongside other works in Raimundo Lida, *Rubén Darío, modernismo* (Caracas: Monte Ávila, 1984).

the centenary of the Nicaraguan's birth; as a result, perhaps, penetrating work was published in those years, in particular: Octavio Paz's essay 'El caracol y la sirena' (1965), Enrique Anderson Imbert's *La originalidad de Rubén Darío* (1967), and Ángel Rama's *Rubén Darío y el modernismo* (1970). Pedro Luis Barcia edited the first volume of hitherto uncollected articles by Darío, publishing it in 1968 as *Escritos dispersos de Rubén Darío (recogidos de periódicos de Buenos Aires)*, the second volume of which would come out in 1977. Together with Mapes's collection, Barcia's work led the way for Günter Schmigalle's recent editorial work on Darío's journalistic prose, which has been historically ignored despite its immense cultural value for the study of the history and development of Spanish American literature.

Perhaps no two critics have helped more than Paz and Rama in lifting Darío's oeuvre beyond the reach of its detractors and cementing its canonical status. Alongside Anderson Imbert, their writings offer powerful counterarguments to the notion of the *modernista*'s writing as escapist and affected, opening thus a number of critical avenues subsequently explored by critics in ensuing years. Whereas Paz did not publish much else on Darío, Rama thoroughly transformed the way the Nicaraguan's work is read thanks to his *El mundo de los sueños* (1973) and *Las máscaras democráticas del modernismo* (1985). The influence of these authors' work is well known; their names can be found in the bibliography of any work on the Nicaraguan published since.[24] However, Anderson Imbert's work has not been given the same attention. While it is not innovative in its approach and is less bold in its claims, it is one of the few monographs that covers the entirety of Darío's oeuvre. It offers a comprehensive analysis of the many facets of the Nicaraguan's writing, such as the intertwinement of his prose and poetry, and includes

[24] To cite an example of particular relevance, Paz inspired studies on the influence of esoteric beliefs in Darío's poetry, which I explore in Chapter 5.

perceptive readings of his journalistic and critical writings. Other important studies published in the years that followed include Francisco López Estrada's *Rubén Darío y la edad media* (1971) and Ernesto Mejía Sánchez's *Cuestiones rubendarianas* (1970), alongside the first authoritative edition of Darío's *Poesía* (1970), superbly prefaced by Rama. The poor quality of the editions of Darío's writing is a long-standing issue that I discuss further in Chapter 5; suffice it to note that it reflects the precariousness of the conditions in which Spanish American scholarship historically has been carried out.

The centenary of the publication of *Los raros* and *Prosas profanas* drew near during the 1990s, a decade which saw another wave of important publications for the critical corpus. Among them, it is worth singling out two fresh perspectives on *Modernismo*, both with different focuses, Graciela Montaldo's *La sensibilidad amenazada: tendencias del modernismo latinoamericano* (1995) and Gerard Aching's *The Politics of Spanish American Modernismo: By Exquisite Design* (1997). Both authors touch upon Darío's work with an original focus. The former looks at the shift of cultural values in the Latin American *fin de siècle* from a wider ideological perspective, aiming to encompass the many social and cultural transformations of the epoch. The latter offers insightful analyses of the political dimensions of *Modernismo* and closely reads specific texts by the Nicaraguan. In a way, they further Rama's work from the 1970s. In addition, an excellent collection of essays that revaluated the complexity of *Los raros* and *Prosas profanas* was edited by Alfonso García Morales and published as *Rubén Darío: Estudios en el centenario de* Los raros *y* Prosas profanas (1998).

The turn of the century brought Darío scholars closer to the centennial anniversary of the poet's death to be celebrated in 2016, the occasion of which reflected the far-reaching effects of Paz and Rama's investigations mentioned earlier. Darío was now undoubtedly considered a classic of the Spanish language, as is attested by the RAE (Real Academia

Española) edition of his selected works published by Alfaguara, *Del símbolo a la realidad: Obra selecta. Edición conmemorativa I centenario Rubén Darí*o (2016), and the first volume of his complete works published by Galaxia Gutenberg and prepared by Julio Ortega, *Obras completas* (2007). The latter includes one of the most lucid introductions to the Nicaraguan's oeuvre to date, an essay by the Mexican poet José Emilio Pacheco.

The increasing digitalisation of scholarly output from the 1990s onwards seems to have increased the frequency at which scholars publish their work – a change which is also reflected in Darío studies. A detailed commentary on the scholarly output of the past two decades exceeds the possibilities of these pages. Nevertheless, among its teeming foliage it is worth singling out Julio Ortega's heterodox biography of Darío published in 2003: a thought-provoking text that proposes new ways of thinking about the *modernista*'s work. Moreover, the Spanish scholar José María Martínez has made valuable contributions to the study of Darío's sources and collaborations with other poets, as can be read in his *Addenda* (2000) and in recent articles quoted throughout this thesis. Beatriz Colombi and Susana Zanetti's analysis on Darío's writing for *La Nación*, published in *Rubén Darío en La Nación de Buenos Aires, 1892-1916* (2004), is an invaluable resource thanks to its rigorous documentation and perceptive analysis of Darío's role as journalist for the Buenos Aires daily. In addition, Günter Schmigalle's unrelenting labour as editor of Darío's prose continues the work begun decades earlier by Mapes, Barcia, and Rama: he has edited new editions of *Los raros* (2015); *La caravana pasa* (2006); and dozens of hitherto uncollected articles published in two volumes as *Crónicas desconocidas* (2006, 2011); lastly, he also published a selection of articles on the city of Paris *¿Va a arder París?: crónicas cosmopolitas, 1892–1912* (2008). The most notable recent development is the collaborative program AR.DOC (Archivo Rubén Darío Ordenado y Centralizado), which is currently preparing a digital corpus of Darío-related documents, in addition to an authoritative edition

of Darío's complete works in twenty volumes to be published by 2026. The project is spearheaded by scholars Rodrigo Caresani and Daniel Link of the National University of Tres de Febrero in Argentina, in collaboration with other researchers from institutions such as Harvard University and the *Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut* of Berlin, bringing together Darío scholars from across the globe.

As a whole, the scholarship discussed above offers a vision of the Nicaraguan as a man of letters writ large, not solely a poet. Over the course of the twentieth century, the vision of Darío as an eminently Francophile poet gradually gave way to an understanding of his writing that included his engagement with literature from the Americas, alongside Early Modern, Medieval, and Classical (European) Literature. Darío's work as a short-story writer was brought to the fore. Then, in the 60s and 70s, Darío as the first modern Spanish American writer who suffered from, and wrote about, all the cultural anxieties of his time came to prominence: Darío the professional writer, the literary critic, the cultural commentator. This perspective was complemented by later studies that further probed the political and cultural dimensions of his writings, facilitating the availability of works that had otherwise remained in obscurity. From the 2000s onwards, the focus has shifted onto Darío as cosmopolitan traveller.

Unlike many of the works listed above, this thesis proposes that a more meaningful return to Darío's poetry is now overdue. It presents a comprehensive analysis of Darío's afterlife in English, seeking to answer the question of a canonical writer's obscurity in the Anglophone world. In doing so, it uncovers something that has been overlooked: the multilingualism of Darío's poetry. What I mean by multilingualism is the presence of languages other than Spanish in Darío's oeuvre, both in the shape of the poems he wrote in French, as well as in the use of aspects of other languages which he instilled into his poetry (namely a wide use of Gallicisms, Latinate Spanish words, Provençal poetic forms, etc.)

Multilingualism is by no means something radical or groundbreaking in literature.[25] From the times of the Augustan poets to our days, writers have cultivated more than one language to different ends.[26] If it might not seem that way it is for ideological reasons which are summarised with precision by Claudio Guillén:

> Sentada por una parte en el nacionalismo excluyente y centralizador, y por otra en el concepto romántico del alma o genio inconfundible de cada idioma, [la literatura comparada] no atendió con suficiente simpatía a los fenómenos de multilingüismo, tan importantes a lo largo de toda la historia literaria de Occidente.[27]

Surprisingly, the first contemporary approaches to multilingualism in literature can be found in two articles from the 1960s.[28] However, as we move further away from Romanticist notions of literature, and globalisation follows its course, multilingualism in literature is increasingly coming to the fore.[29]

Joining theory and practice, this thesis offers new translations of the Nicaraguan's poems, hoping that in time they will contribute to redressing the widespread ignorance of the *modernista*'s oeuvre among English-speaking literary circles. In addition to the rise of translation studies over the past decades, translation is going through something of a boom today; this is reflected in the Anglophone literary market: notably, several independent publishing houses exclusively dedicated to translation have emerged in the past years.[30]

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[25] For more on the topic see Leonard Forster, *The Poet's Tongues: Multilingualism in Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009). Also, for an up-to-date overview of the studies into literary multilingualism since, see Albert Rossich, 'An Overview of Literary Multilingualism', *Comparative Critical Studies*, vol. 15, no. 1 (2018), pp. 47–67.

[26] During the nineteenth century, to write in French alongside one's own language was a common ambition. Notable *fin-de-siècle* writers who cultivated French as a literary language include: the Greek Jean Moréas, the U.S. writers Stuart Merrill and Francis Viélé-Griffin, the Cuban Augusto de Armas, the German Stefan George, the Italian Gabriele D'Annunzio, among others (and, of course, Darío).

[27] Claudio Guillén, *Entre lo uno y lo diverso* (Barcelona: Crítica, 1985), p. 327.

[28] See W. T. Elwert, 'L'emploi de langues étrangères comme procédé stylistique', *Revue de littérature comparée*, XXXIV/3 (1960), pp. 409–437; and Paul Zumthor, 'Un problème d'esthétique médiévale: l'utilisation poétique du bilinguisme', *Le Moyen Age*, XV (1960), pp. 301–336; 561–594.

[29] See Steven Kellman, *The Translingual Imagination* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000); Michael Cronin, *Translation and Globalization* (London: Routledge, 2003); Yasemin Yildiz, *Beyond the mother tongue: the postmonolingual condition* (New York: Fordham UP, 2012).

[30] To give one example: Charco Press in the U.K. exclusively publishes Latin American fiction in translation.

In the increasingly globalised world of academe, over the past decades the term 'translation' has taken centre stage in literary debates of various kinds: comparative literature, postcolonial literature, world literature, cultural studies, intermedia studies, etc.[31] It has proved to be exceptionally flexible for metaphoric purposes, particularly when the term is used with a focus on its etymology – from the Latin *translatio,* which denotes a carrying or moving across of something – since it emphasises movement across space or time, facilitating a wider use of the concept. Ironically, this etymological construal of the term does not consider the ways in which 'translation' itself translates in other languages. In the case of Spanish and French, the two other main languages used in this thesis, the etymology of the term is slightly different: *traducción* and *traduction* come from the Latin *traductio*, which mainly denotes to pass or to cross from one place to another, as opposed to moving something across.[32] Interestingly, *traductio* also denotes the public shaming of someone or the exposure of someone to public ridicule (a meaning which is partially preserved in the English verb 'to traduce'). Whereas the first denotation is close enough to the English etymology, the same cannot be said for most of the languages of the world, such as Finnish, Tamil, or Japanese, to name a few.[33] While notions of cultural 'translation' can certainly be useful in identifying traits or patterns among cultures that would otherwise remain unseen, they run the risk of ignoring the complexities of translation 'proper'.[34] As I aim to

[31] Some recent monographs that use translation as their main focus include: Rebecca L. Walkowitz, *Born Translated: The Contemporary Novel in an Age of World Literature* (New York: Columbia UP, 2015); Ignacio Infante, *After Translation: The Transfer and Circulation of Modern Poetics across the Atlantic* (New York: Fordham UP, 2013); Emily Apter, *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature*. (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 2006).

[32] By contrast, *translatio* morphed in Spanish as *trasladar.*

[33] For a detailed discussion of the etymologies, see Andrew Chesterman, 'Interpreting the meaning of translation', *A Man of Measure. Festschrift in honour of Fred Karlsson on his 60th birthday*, ed. Mickael Suominen et al (Turku: The Linguistic Association of Finland, 2006), pp. 3–11.

[34] For one example among many of this wider use of the term, see James Clifford's influential anthropological application of the term in James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard UP, 1997). For a more influential work in literary studies with a similar

show, the role of translation solely within literature is multifarious and complex. As the chosen epigraph by Borges suggests, thinking about literary translation touches on issues that are at the heart of literature itself. In the case of the study of Darío, such issues reveal aspects of his writing which have been hitherto overlooked; namely, its multilingualism and the particular historical and cultural questions that it raises regarding the shifting status of Spanish American literature in English.

As the title indicates, in this thesis I 'use' translation to read Darío's poetry. This implies a use of the term that goes beyond merely looking at how Darío has been translated (which I also do in Chapters 3 and 5).[35] Rather, it means reading Darío as a translator in a twofold sense: it implies reading Darío as a translator would read him, as well as reading the work of Rubén Darío the translator. To read like a translator is to read a text with another language in mind: imagining the linguistic possibilities, sounding out the echoes of a future target text. In this sense, a translator is a reader who is especially cognizant of language – usually of two languages. Yet, often the writer to be translated has a relationship of their own with other languages, which in turn shapes their writing. In the case of Darío, it is well known that he was greatly influenced by French language and literature. Thus, to read Darío as a translator also means being cognizant of his relationship to French in order to understand how it shaped his Spanish. As I explain in Chapters 1 and 2, reading with this focus in mind reveals not only how Darío translates, but how he glosses, rewrites, annotates, and expands on French writers in his own poetry. What is more, it shows how the Nicaraguan uses other languages or dialects in his writing, namely Provençal, Early

metaphorical application of the term, see Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 2004).

[35] For other works with this focus, see María Roof, 'Rubén Darío en inglés: la poesía', *Revista Casa de las Américas* No. 282 (enero-marzo/2016), pp. 10–33; Roberto González Echevarría, 'The Master of Modernismo', *The Nation*, 25 January 2006, https://www.thenation.com/article/master-modernismo/ [accessed 10 May 2019]; Isabel Díaz, 'Traducciones de la obra de Rubén Darío a la lengua inglesa', in *Miradas críticas sobre Rubén Darío*, ed. by Nicasio Urbina (Managua: PAVSA, 2005); all of which point out the poor quality of existing translations.

Modern Spanish, and Latin. While his engagement with these languages is less intense than it is with French, they all fill his writing with echoes or resonances from other authors and traditions.

Owing to the monolingualism of Spanish American criticism by and large, the multilingualism of Darío's writing has gone unremarked over the years, despite the vast amount of scholarship his writing has inspired. No one has looked at how the presence of several languages can be found in Darío's writing. When his relation to another language has indeed been studied, critics have focused on the relation between Darío's writing and solely one language, as in the case of Erwin K. Mapes's *L'influence française dans l'œuvre de Rubén Darío*. But even then, due to conceptual limitations inherent in notions such as that of literary influence, and an understanding of imitation as something opposed to originality, the complexity and sophistication of Darío's engagement with French writers has not been adequately studied. The 'influence' of French literature on Darío escapes the Bloomian model in which one 'strong' poet influences 'weaker' ones, since the Nicaraguan's use of his French counterparts is deliberate and, moreover, strategic. As I specify in Chapter 1, Darío chooses his influences to perform a literary persona that acquires prestige from the names to which it alludes, thereby creating a genealogy that corresponds to his vision of Spanish American literature. The ways he borrows, translates, rewrites, combines, abridges, and expands on his sources show how the originality of Darío's style is inextricable from imitation. As he himself avers in a passage to which I come back throughout this thesis:

> *Qui pourrais-je imiter pour être original ?* me decía yo. Pues a todos. A cada cual le aprendía lo que me agradaba, lo que cuadraba a mi sed de novedad y a mi delirio de arte: los elementos que constituirían después un medio de manifestación individual. Y el caso es que resulté original.[36]

[36] Rubén Darío, *Escritos inéditos de Rubén Darío*, ed. by Erwin K. Mapes (New York: Instituto de las Españas, 1938), p. 121.

The passage comes from Darío's response to the Franco-Argentine writer Paul Groussac, who had criticised him for his lack of originality in relation to his French sources. Groussac ends his own article in an ironic tone, using the French quotation above – *Qui pourrais-je imiter pour être original ?* taken from the French writer Francois Coppée – to deride the Nicaraguan's alleged lack of originality, which Darío answers by turning the question on its head, recasting it as the departure point for any writer's quest for originality. In an almost proto-Borgesian sense, for Darío the only originality possible is in the way we imitate.[37] The former does not exist outside the latter; any opposition between the two, therefore, is false.

Reading Darío as a translator evidently also means looking at other translations of his writing published to date. In this sense, the rendering of any author leads a translator to engage with previous translations. Over time, such renderings come to consolidate a tradition unto themselves, constituting a micro-canon of sorts, which in turn can be read for traces or reflections of the predominant poetics of the epoch in which they were produced. As I explain in Chapter 3, in this thesis I focus on book-length translations of Darío in English, as it is the lingua franca of our times. Many of the world's most influential universities are located in predominantly Anglophone countries, and the canon of world literature is articulated in English. While undeniable, this fact is deeply problematic for the inherent diversity of the literature of the world. One way of addressing this imbalance is to raise questions regarding the invisibility of certain works and to inquire into their relation to translation, not least when the work is that of a canonical writer from a major literary tradition. Nevertheless, a rigorous approach to the question of Darío's obscurity in English reveals that it is not enough to look at the quality of certain translations and assess their

[37] It is worth noting that beyond Borges's characteristic statements along these lines, such an understanding of originality is essentially a classicist one.

success in rendering the Nicaraguan's texts. To answer the question thoroughly, one must look not only into the history of the translation of poetry in English, but also into the history of Spanish American literature in English. In this sense, the question of translating Darío is also a historical one.

In Chapter 3, I look at Darío's work vis-à-vis the translation of Spanish American literature, which leads me to the analysis of the differences between Modernism and *Modernismo*, the latter of which has often been problematically called Hispanic Modernism or, in some cases, Modernism *tout court*.[38] This is tantamount to suggesting that they are roughly equivalent literary movements – a notion that fails to account for the historical and cultural nuances that distinguish them, the consequences of which bear heavily on the reception of authors like Darío. To flesh out these nuances, I discuss Arthur Symons's reading of the *fin de siècle* in *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1899) and compare it to Darío's in *Los raros* (1898) – two works by authors who were among the most important cultural mediators of their time – with the aim of drawing the consequences for how poetics in English and Spanish would develop differently thereafter. I analyse how Darío reacts to certain avant-garde or proto-avant-garde works by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, Arthur Rimbaud, and Auguste Rodin. As I explain in the chapter, Darío's rejection or puzzlement in looking at the work of these artists illustrates what Beatriz Colombi, following Homi K. Bhabha, calls *modernidades desfasadas.* The discussion of Modernism and *Modernismo* as two expressions of modernity separated by a *desfasamiento* or historical lag – both as a result of cultural differences as well as the various and uneven processes of modernisation which each context underwent – serves the purpose of illuminating the literary evolution that led to the nearly non-existent reception of Salomón de la Selva and Thomas Walsh's *Eleven Poems* (1916), the first book-length translation of Darío in English.

[38] To name but two examples: this is the way Jrade and Ellis refer to it in their respective works cited *passim*.

I then chart the changes that such poetics underwent over the course of the twentieth century, touching upon how they are reflected in later translations of the Nicaraguan's writing, notably in Lysander Kemp's *Selected Poems of Rubén Darío* (1965). The analysis of the context of Kemp's reception inevitably touches upon the influence of the 'Boom' of Spanish American literature from the 1960s onward. As I explain, the manner in which Darío is received in those years can be seen as illustrative of the preconceptions and expectations on the part of Anglophone readers of what Spanish American literature looks like. I then focus on the scholarly translations that have appeared, after a hiatus of almost forty years, in the last two decades: Will Derusha and Alberto Acereda's *Selected Poems of Rubén Darío: A Bilingual Anthology* (2001); Stanley Appelbaum's *Stories and Poems/Cuentos y Poesías: A Dual-Language Book* (2002); Derusha and Acereda's full translation of Darío's *Cantos de vida y esperanza*, rendered as *Songs of Life and Hope* (2004); finally, *Rubén Darío: Selected Writings* (2006) translated by Andrew Hurley, Greg Simon, and Steven White, as part of the Penguin Classics series.[39] I look at what these translators have to say about translation and specifically about their approach to translating Darío in order to elucidate their choices and strategies. Unfortunately, only Derusha and Acereda discuss these issues at length, for which reason I dedicate more space to their ideas than to others. At the end of the chapter I cite the different ways by which these translators have rendered the same poem, so as to give concrete examples of their approaches. Ultimately, what can be concluded from this chapter is that the translation of literature is

[39] An uneven selection of Darío's poems have always appeared in anthologies of Spanish American poetry since the time of his death; in some cases, in prose; in other cases, taken from the previously mentioned editions. Likewise, translations of select poems have also appeared in some English-language literary magazines of varying influence and at different times. Kathleen Therese O'Conor-Bater recently published a book-length edition of her translations of Darío which has not been included in this study for reasons of accessibility and circulation. See Kathleen Therese O'Conor-Bater, *A Bilingual Antholoy of Poems by Rubén Darío (1867–1916)* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2015).

only superficially about language. As I will argue, cultural and historical differences between literary cultures bear more heavily on the act of translation.

Whereas I end Chapter 3 with examples and an analysis of what the translators of Darío say about their approach to rendering the *modernista*, in Chapter 4 I put forth my own views on the translation of poetry. I engage with what notable translators say about their craft (such as the German–English translator Susan Bernofksy and French–English translator Alice Kaplan) and with the work of influential translation theorists, among them Anthony Pym, Theo Hermans, Ernst-August Gutt, Gideon Toury, and Andrew Chesterman. In my critical discussion of their work, I argue that thinking about translation should not only draw lessons from the practice of the craft, but also through the engagement with what theorists and practitioners alike have to say about it. To that end, I also consider these arguments and theories in relation to the practice and views of contemporary poets and writers who also translate. Such discussion of poetics inevitably entails a comparative analysis of Darío's *modernista* poetics in relation to contemporary English-language poetics, whereby issues of morphology, prosody, and contrastive stylistics come to the fore. In this chapter I therefore show how thinking about translation can go beyond the field's historical binary oppositions which I discuss (faithful vs. free; domesticating vs. foreignizing; covert vs. overt; instrumental vs. documental; appropriate vs. adequate; etc.). Also, I propose that creativity and fidelity are not mutually exclusive terms. In the particular case of translating Darío, I argue that any attempt to render the prosodic richness of his poetry requires a creative use of language on the part of the translator. This means that not only must the translator often diverge from the semantic meaning of a line of poetry, but they should go beyond the dictionary meaning of the phrase and engage with the target language's connotations and poetic conventions. Otherwise, a large part of the value and meaning of Darío's poetry is lost. Aside from offering a discussion of how the translation

of poetry can be improved, I hope that my approach to translating Darío can be applied to other poets whose works remain scarcely known due to the particular poetic challenges that they present.

In Chapter 5, the final chapter of the thesis, I present my own renderings of Darío alongside the versions of the translators hitherto discussed; these include poems 'Ama tu ritmo…', 'Sonatina', 'Marcha triunfal', 'Yo persigo una forma…', 'La página blanca', 'A Roosevelt', 'Yo soy aquél', 'Canción de otoño en primavera', 'Lo fatal', and the two *nocturnos* that appear in *Cantos de vida y esperanza*. There are several reasons behind the selection of these specific poems: to begin with, they are meant to illustrate the importance that the knowledge of a writer's poetics can have in informing the decision-making that every translator must undertake in rendering a work in a different language. I therefore discuss Darío's poetics of 'armonía', engaging with previous scholarship on the topic (Guillermo Sucre, Raymond Skyrme, Catherine Jrade, Alberto Julián Pérez, among others), aiming to show how scholarship can be applied creatively in translation. Second, this selection of poems showcases the different challenges which the poetry of Darío poses when it comes to its rendering, as well as how they call for distinct approaches: for example, 'Sonatina' and 'Marcha triunfal' are discussed as virtuosic exercises in prosody, where it is not as important to follow the exact lexical meaning of the words as it is to achieve the overall sonorous effect of the poem. By contrast, 'La página blanca' and 'A Roosevelt', two poems in which rhyme is a slight feature in comparison to most poems by Darío, demand a different approach: both the images and the critique their words carry gain precedence. Being the former a symbolist poem and the latter an anticolonial one, their style is more readily legible to an Anglophone reader by virtue of their proximity to readerly expectations. In this sense, throughout the chapter it becomes clear that the act of translation, insofar as it is an act of interpretation by which a text is read through a different

literary code, can give rise to reinterpretations and revaluations of a body of work that otherwise would be unlikely.

Returning to the question of how one 'uses' translation, Chapter 5 also illustrates how translation can be a critical reading tool that gives the translator a knowledge of a text that goes beyond hermeneutics (i.e. beyond interpretation) because it also gives them an insight into the workings of its textuality – that is to say, how the text was likely written, what it most likely means, what it could otherwise mean, the nature of its shortcomings, its strengths, and so forth. I explore what reading as a translator implies and how it might be likened to the notion of reading as a writer, as suggested by Argentine writer Ricardo Piglia. The chapter also gives a detailed account of how renderings that would seem 'unfaithful' or 'free' according to binary understandings of translation can, in reality, be underpinned by careful consideration of style. In particular, the more challenging it is to translate a poem by Darío, the greater the weight of creativity in the process; this point comes to the fore in the cases of the *nocturnos* and 'Lo fatal'. The thesis's appendix comprises the complete text of my renderings of the poems.

Overview

As has been elucidated over the course of this Introduction, in this thesis I apply the notion of translation to the reading of Rubén Darío's poetry in multiple ways. Accordingly, I have divided it into three sections for a combined total of five chapters. The first section 'Reading through Translation: Multilingualism in the Poetry of Rubén Darío' focuses on reading the work of the Nicaraguan while being cognizant of the ways in which other languages shaped his writing, thereby revealing the uses Rubén Darío made of translation in his own poetry. It is comprised of two chapters: Chapter 1 'Thinking in French and Writing in Spanish' focuses on Darío's engagement with French writers; Chapter 2 'Not only from the Roses

of Paris' looks at Darío's use of Early Modern Spanish, Provençal, and Latin. To my knowledge, this is the first work to study Rubén Darío as a multilingual writer.

The second section 'Thinking through Translation' focuses on translation as a critical problem: Chapter 3 'English Translations of Rubén Darío' looks at translation as a historical issue by analysing existing translations of Rubén Darío and discussing the circumstances of their reception; Chapter 4 'The Translation of Poetry' discusses translation as a theoretical issue, in which I lay out my own views on translation and discuss them vis-à-vis the translation of Darío.

'Translating', the last section of the thesis, is comprised of a sole chapter in which what is hitherto discussed is put into practice: Chapter 5 'Towards a New Translation of Rubén Darío' presents, comments, and analyses the poems mentioned earlier alongside selected renderings of them. The Appendix with the complete renderings of the poems, alongside their originals, can be found in the pages after the Conclusion.

Section I

Reading through Translation:

Multilingualism in the Poetry of Rubén Darío

Chapter 1: Thinking in French and Writing in Spanish

French Language in Rubén Darío's Writing

Quite literally, Rubén Darío wanted to write in French. In an elegiac book called *A. de Gilbert*, written in 1889 for a deceased friend, he writes:

> Oh, cuántas veces en aquel cuarto, en aquellas heladas noches, él y yo, los dos soñadores, unidos por un afecto razonado y hondo, nos entregábamos al mundo de nuestros castillos aéreos! Iríamos á París, seríamos amigos de Armand Silvestre, de Daudet, de Catulle Mendes; le preguntaríamos á éste por qué se deja en la frente un mechón de su rubia cabellera; oiríamos á Renán en la Sorbona y trataríamos de ser asiduos contertulios de madama Adam; y escribiríamos libros franceses! eso sí.[40]

One year later, after the first edition of *Azul…* had sold out, a second edition appeared in Guatemala with added corrections and new writings. It now included Juan Valera's famous letters to Darío from 1888, which had conferred on the book and its author some renown. The true novelty, however, lay in that the second edition included three poems in French, presented under the section 'Echos': 'Chanson Crépusculaire', 'A Mademoiselle', and 'Pensée'. Unfortunately, Darío had made more than one metrical mistake in the poems, as he recognises in his autobiography:

> Yo ignoraba cuando los escribí muchas nociones de poética francesa. Entre ellas, pongo por caso, el buen uso de la "e" muda, que, aunque no se pronuncia en la conversación, o es pronunciada escasamente según el sistema de algunos declamadores, cuenta como sílaba para la medida del verso.[41]

They were therefore suppressed from subsequent editions. However, despite the failure those three poems represented in Darío's endeavour to write in the language of Hugo, in 1896 (about six years later) he would argue against Paul Groussac that 'Azul es un libro parnasiano, y por lo tanto, francés', after acknowledging that 'mi sueño era escribir en lengua francesa. Y aún [*sic*] versos cometí en ella que merecen perdón porque no se ha

[40] Rubén Darío, *A. de Gilbert: biografía de Pedro Balmaceda*, in *Obras completas*, II, p. 163.
[41] Rubén Darío, *Autobiografía* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Universitaria, 1968), p. 98.

vuelto a repetir'.[42] Clearly, Darío suggests that his mistakes in French verse dissuaded him from further attempts to write in the language.

He would not publish in French again until 1907, after more than seven years in Paris, when a poem called '«Helda»' came out as part of the collection *El canto errante*. Afterwards, he would only do so seven years later in 1914, when the poem 'France-Amérique' was published in *Mundial*, the magazine he edited, and was later included in the collection of the same year, *Canto a la Argentina y otros poemas.* As Mariano Siskind notes, the poem 'has been utterly ignored by critics of *modernismo*'.[43] The poem is noteworthy because it associates France with translation:

> Marseillaises de bronze et d'or qui vont dans l'air
> Sont pour nos cœurs ardents le chant de l'espérance.
> En entendant du coq gaulois le clairon clair
> On clame : Liberté ! Et nous traduisons : France ![44] (ll. 13–16)

For Siskind, the use of the term *traduisons* in the poem reveals how French translation is, in Darío's poetics, a condition for aesthetic modernity:

> Of course, Darío is not a French poet, and *Azul* and *Prosas profanas* are not, literally, French books. Their Frenchness results from an operation of translation. If France is immediately modern, in and for itself, in Darío's books of the 1890s […] Latin America is modern *through* France—France as mediation, as the instance that enables a Latin American translation of modern forms, images, and desires. Darío's literature is *Latin Americanly French* […] Darío returned to this idea of French translation as the condition that makes aesthetic modernity possible in Latin America toward the end of his life, after he had made Paris his adopted home, in a poem he wrote in French, "France-Amérique".[45]

While much of what Siskind argues is true when it comes to Darío's poetic aims of the 1890s, he overinterprets the term *traduisons.* If we read the whole text, it becomes clear that 'France-Amérique' is an anti-war poem like many others Darío wrote late in life,

[42] *Escritos inéditos de Rubén Darío*, Mapes, p. 121.
[43] Siskind, p. 214. The poem has been discussed by Francisco Contreras and Saavedora Molina; however, it indeed has not received much attention otherwise.
[44] Rubén Darío, *Poesía*, ed. by Ernesto Mejía Sánchez (Caracas: Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1977), p. 419.
[45] Siskind, p. 214.

around the time the First World War began. Below is the stanza that immediately precedes the one above.

> Il semblerait que tous les démons du passé
> viennent de s'éveiller empoisonnant la terre.
> Si contre nous l'étendard sanglant s'est levé,
> c'est l'étendard hideux de ce tyran: la Guerre;[46] (ll. 9–12)

'Marseillaises de bronze et d'or' in line 13 turns out to be an allusion to the French Revolution, just like the mentions of 'Liberté' (l. 16) and 'Fraternité' (l. 25). Through its rhetorical flourishes painstakingly set in alexandrines, the poem suggests that the Americas and France join strengths to overcome war. The cry 'France!', which is – according to Darío – how Spanish Americans translate 'Liberté!', refers not to aesthetic but to political freedom granted by the social conquests of the French Revolution. In spite of this, Siskind interprets these lines as an aesthetic commentary on the worldview of *Modernismo*:

> "On clame: Liberté! Et nous traduisons: France!": we translate France, *for* and *in* Latin America, and we translate liberty as France, and France as liberty. Darío's translational intervention makes France and freedom interchangeable, where freedom is understood as the pillar of the discourse of modernity and, in the case of Latin American *modernismo*, points to the idea of freedom from want and from aesthetic and cultural marginality. This, in turn, makes possible the nontransparent, nonmimetic translation that constitutes the *modernista* aesthetic formation.[47]

However, according to Darío's contemporary, the Chilean writer Francisco Contreras, the poem was written to be read at a diplomatic event:

> Rubén Darío compuso estos versos para ser leídos en fiesta de una institución de carácter panamericano: el "Comité France Amérique" y acaso también en la secreta esperanza que el pobre poeta abrigaba todavía de volver a ser diplomático.[48]

Saavedra Molina explains that the poem was read on May 1914 and was then self-translated into Spanish as 'Oda a la Francia' and published in the Cuban newspaper *El Fígaro* on 4

[46] Cf. these lines from 'Canto de esperanza' in *Cantos de vida y esperanza*:
> Verdugos de ideales afligieron la tierra,
> en un pozo de sombra la humanidad se encierra
> con los rudos molosos del odio y la guerra. (ll. 10–12)

[47] Siskind, p. 216.

[48] Francisco Contreras, *Rubén Darío: su vida y su obra* (Barcelona: Agencia mundial de librería, 1930), p. 238

October 1914 (135).[49]

Still, it is curious that Darío chose the term *traduisons*. At the very least, it belies Darío's position vis-à-vis French culture and language as a Spanish-speaking immigrant in Paris who must translate the francophone world around him. We can use the term heuristically to think about Darío's relation to French. To go back to Darío's article in reply to Groussac, after having confessed that it was his dream to write in French, he writes that:

> Al penetrar en ciertos secretos de armonía, de matiz, de sugestión, que hay en la lengua de Francia, fué mi pensamiento descubrirlos en el español, o aplicarlos [...] Y he aquí como, pensando en francés y escribiendo en castellano que alabaran por lo castizo académicos de la Española, publiqué el pequeño libro que iniciaría el actual movimiento literario americano.[50]

It is revealing to look at Darío's so-called *galicismo mental* in the shadow of his failure to write in French. Not to regard it as a second-rate solution compared to writing in French proper, but to consider it in terms of literary traditions. When Darío claims that *Azul…* is a French book, despite not being written in French, more than saying that it is 'Latin Americanly French', as Siskind suggests, Darío seems to position himself within French literary tradition in spite of the language barrier. If his ambition was to live in Paris and to write in French, it is because he literally wanted to become a French-language writer; however, he failed. Instead, he wrote as if he were part of the tradition of French poetry, but did so in Spanish; that is to say, he wrote poems that engaged with French themes and motives and can be read as a direct response to them. In a letter to Miguel de Unamuno, he writes the following:

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[49] In 'France-Amérique' Darío appears to have rehashed some of the tropes of the controversial poem 'Salutación al Águila' included in *El canto errante*. Compare the following lines:

> Águila, existe el Cóndor. Es tu hermano en las grandes alturas.
> Los Andes le conocen y saben que, como tú, mira al Sol.
> *May this grand Union have no end*, dice el poeta.
> Pueden ambos juntarse, en plenitud de concordia y esfuerzo. (ll. 38–41)

> Que l'aigle plane sur notre immense Amérique
> Et que le condor soit son frère dans l'azur. (ll. 27–28)

[50] *Escritos inéditos de Rubén Darío*, Mapes, p. 121.

> Le confesaré, desde luego, que no me creo escritor *americano*. Esto lo he demostrado en cierto artículo que me vi forzado a escribir cuando Groussac me honró con una crítica. Mejor que yo ha desarrollado el asunto el señor Rodó, profesor de la Universidad de Montevideo. Le envío su trabajo. Mucho menos soy castellano. Yo ¿le confesaré con rubor? no pienso en castellano. Más bien pienso en francés. O mejor, pienso *ideográficamente*; de ahí que mi obra no sea castiza. Hablo de mis libros últimos. Pues los primeros, hasta *Azul*, proceden de innegable cepa española, al menos en la forma.[51]

The letter is remarkable despite the affectation. Darío is masquerading as someone who literally does not think in Spanish but in French – and, what is more, says he does so ideographically, echoing Valera's claim regarding his style as the result of a *galicismo mental*.[52] The somewhat theatrical claim can be construed as referring to Darío's literary intent to transpose French forms and motifs into Spanish, hence 'ideographically'. On the other hand, it is worth noting that this francophone guise was part of Darío's self-fictionalization as the hero of *Modernismo*, a literary persona he began to cultivate in the 1890s. As I will analyse in greater depth in Chapter 2, this persona changed over time. Later in his life, particularly from 1905 onwards, Darío wrote of himself as an 'hijo de América [...] nieto de España'.[53] In other words, he was not so French anymore, and fervently Hispanic instead. This was possibly a result of his failure to enter the literary milieu of Paris, which contrasted sharply with the admiration he roused, and the stimulating intellectual exchanges he found, in Spain.

In any case, if Darío's relation to French language and culture was complex and had a history of its own, what is clear is that it was defined by translation, as the poem 'France-Amérique' obliquely reveals. Naturally, before being able to read and write in French, Darío read francophone literature in translation. One of his first encounters with it was by way of a Spanish translation of Théophile Gautier made by the Nicaraguan writer Modesto Barrios. As Darío himself writes in a preface to Jesús Hernández Somoza's book *Historia*

[51] Jorge Eduardo Arellano, *Azul... de Rubén Darío: Nuevas Perspectivas* (Washington: OEA, 1993), p. 106.
[52] Rubén Darío, *Azul…* (Buenos Aires: La Nación, 1905), p. 111.
[53] *Poesía*, p. 263.

de tres años del gobierno Sacasa (1893): 'Modesto Barrios traducía a Gautier y daba las primeras nociones del modernismo', revealing the translational dimension of *Modernismo* as a movement.[54] Ernesto Mejía Sánchez explains that Barrios was director of the National Library of Nicaragua (1882–1885) when Darío was fifteen years old.[55] This suggests that it was through translation that Darío first made contact with some of the French writers who were to influence him in his career. In *Historia de mis libros*, Darío comments on another French writer whom he first read in Spanish: 'Fue Catulle Mendés mi verdadero iniciador, un Mendés traducido, pues mi francés todavía era precario'.[56]

Translation appears to have been Darío's preferred method for learning French as an autodidact. In a letter written to Juan J. Cañas in 1886, he mentions: 'El señor [Eduardo] Poirier habla con perfección francés, inglés y alemán. Yo he adelantado mucho en el francés, que hablo casi sin dificultad; y el inglés lo traduzco y sigo estudiándolo'.[57] Also, in one of the least studied books of Darío's youth, *El salmo de la pluma* (a collection of poems published in newspapers from 1883 to 1889), there is a section called 'Paráfrasis y traducciones', which includes rhymed translations of Henry Longfellow, Lord Byron, and – above all – Victor Hugo's *La Légende des siècles*. Since Hugo's presence is so prominent in all of Darío's later writings, the importance of translation can hardly be overstated. In his study of Spanish metre, Navarro Tomás states that the alexandrine in Spanish acquired different rhythms only after Darío's first translations of Hugo.[58] In addition, one of the poems included in *Azul…,* 'Pensamiento de otoño', is itself a translation of the French poet Armand Silvestre.[59]

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[54] Rubén Darío, *Quince prólogos de Rubén Darío* (Managua: Instituto nicaragüense de cultura, 1967), p. 25.
[55] Ernesto Mejía Sánchez, *Cuestiones rubendarianas* (Madrid: Ediciones de la Revista de Occidente, 1970), p. 222.
[56] Rubén Darío, 'Historia de mis libros' in *Obras completas*, I, p. 196.
[57] Arellano, p. 103.
[58] *Métrica española*, pp. 408–10.
[59] Darío also published what became the first translation of Mallarmé into Spanish in his rendering of 'Les Fleurs' as 'Las flores', a literal translation of the Frenchman's piece. See Alfonso García Morales, 'Un artículo desconocido de Rubén Darío: «Mallarmé. Notas para un ensayo futuro»', *Anales de literatura*

Were these translations only stepping stones in achieving a longed-for mastery of French, as the three poems of *Azul…* might suggest? It does not seem as simple as that. While it is certain that Darío aspired to become a French-language writer, Spanish language was a political and literary concern for him as early as 1882. At the age of fifteen, he published an article titled 'El idioma español' in the newspaper *El Porvenir de Nicaragua*. There Darío proposes some changes to the Spanish written in the Americas – 'La necesidad i el uso [*sic*] han introducido en el idioma español diferencias remarcables, especialmente aquende del Atlántico' – and goes on to say that 'muchas palabras modernas indispensables ya hasta en el estilo más elevado' lay outside 'el gremio del habla española'.[60] Therefore, what we can safely assume is that Darío wanted to become a multilingual writer who could also write from within the French tradition. After all, the second edition of *Azul…* is a bilingual book, insofar as it includes writings in Spanish and French.

As with so many of Darío's political and literary views, Martí is a key influence for his insight into the possibilities of multilingualism. When Martí wrote about the Irish-Colombian poet Diego Fallon (1882), he advised his fellow Spanish Americans as follows:

> Para hablar bien nuestra lengua, no hay como conocer otras: el contraste nos enamora de la nuestra; y el conocimiento nos habilita para tomar de las ajenas lo que a la nuestra le haga falta, y curarnos de los defectos que ella tenga y en los demás estén curados.[61]

There is a similar ring of Martí's words in Darío's 'Historia de mis libros':

> Y yo, que me sabía de memoria el «Diccionario de galicismos», de Baralt, comprendí que no sólo el galicismo oportuno sino ciertas particularidades de otros idiomas, son utilísimos y de una incomparable eficacia en un apropiado trasplante.[62]

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hispanoamericana (2006) 35, pp. 31–54. Moreover, he putatively published a translation of the Russian writer Maxim Gorky's novel *Tomás Gordeieff* (1902). The quality of this rendering – in turn a translation of the French version – is poor enough as to doubt if Darío was the actual translator. For more on the quality of the translation see George Schanzer-Boris Gaidasz, 'Rubén Darío, Traductor de Gorki', *Revista Iberoamericana*, vol. 33, no. 64 (1967), pp. 315–31. As I show in what follows, Darío's more imaginative use of translation took place in his own writing.

[60] Sequeira, pp. 65–66.

[61] José Martí, *Obras Completas: Edición Crítica, vol. 13, 1881-1882* (Habana: Centro de estudios martianos, 2010), p. 90.

[62] 'Historia de mis libros', p. 196.

However, even if we try to countenance Darío's assertion regarding Baralt's dictionary, it is clear that no one could have committed its pages to memory. Not only is it a colossal task, but a futile one from a literary point of view – it includes vast amounts of seemingly useless information. The preface, on the other hand, is interesting. Baralt warns the reader that an excessive use of Gallicisms in Spanish would lead to a new language, altogether different from both Spanish and French:

> Si continúan como hasta hoy y se van extendiendo estas y otras varias especies de galicismos; si seguimos tomando del francés palabras de buen ó mal sonido, y olvidamos por ellas las de uso corriente; si á las voces castellanas que conservemos se aplica significación que nunca tuvieron; y al formar la oración gramatical y el período distribuimos y enlazamos los términos de otra manera que la usual hasta ahora; el feliz resultado de tantas y tan graves innovaciones habrá de ser la formación de un idioma nuevo.[63]

From *Azul…* (1888) onwards, that is precisely what Darío would do. It is impossible to know whether Darío fabricated the claim above; however, if he did not, it does not seem far-fetched to posit that Darío may have read Baralt's preface motivated by his admiration for French writers; heeding Martí's words, he might have read the warning as a formula for how to come to a new style. As the fifteen-year-old Darío knew well, the Spanish language needed a change; he would find that change in French language via translation.

While Darío gave up on writing in French, he found a way of writing in Spanish that used French calques and borrowings, thereby offering what would constitute a renovation of Spanish-language literature. As we will see later, he imbued Spanish with echoes of French; his writing became, in a sense, multilingual. Because Darío wanted to be read from the vantage point of French literature, his vision of literary history goes beyond any type of national boundary. As Siskind correctly notes,

> These books [*Los raros* and *Prosas profanas*] display the desire for a literature configured around a French archive of poetic figures, syntaxes, and topics, whose

[63] Rafael María Baralt, *Diccionario de galicismos, ó sea de las voces, locuciones y frases de la lengua francesca que se han introducido en el habla castellana moderna* (Madrid: Imprenta Nacional, 1853), p. x.

> perceived universality would allow it to be inscribed in the imagined synchronicity of a global modernism that, to Darío in 1896, marginalized Latin America.[64]

However, while overtly Francophile, this 'archive of poetic figures, syntaxes, and topics' is not exclusively French. In *Los raros*, two authors who wrote in French but were born in Latin America are included alongside Poe, Ibsen, Martí, Eugénio de Castro, and Nordau: namely Lautréamont and Augusto de Armas.[65]

Because Darío's writing is multilingual, it is also multi-layered insofar as it offers at least two experiences of reading. On the one hand, we can imagine the experience of a Spanish-language reader at the turn of the century. In Darío's poetry, Spanish must have appeared odd or even uncanny; its rules were bent and its vocabulary made strange. On the other hand, if that reader also had French, certain words, tropes, metres, and themes belonging to French language and literature would come through Darío's Spanish as echoes at once familiar and new. Within the wider context of Western literature, this twofold layer corresponds to two distinct ways of representing literary history. In the former, when Darío's oeuvre is read only from the locus of Spanish-language literary tradition, it seems to emerge as a ground-breaking body of work that renewed the literature of the language. In the latter, when the reader goes beyond national and linguistic boundaries, reading the Nicaraguan's oeuvre with French literary tradition in mind, a continuity across languages and traditions comes to the fore – what Darío called el *movimiento cosmopolita*,[66] or in other words international *Symbolisme*, which at the time was spreading across France, England, Italy, Portugal, Spain, and Spanish America.[67] Traditionally, Darío's oeuvre has

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[64] Siskind, p. 199.

[65] For two recent analyses of *Los raros*, see José María Martínez, 'Los raros: arquitectura(s), jerarquías y filiaciones', *Zama,* Extraordinario: Homenaje a Rubén Darío (2016), pp. 69–91; and Carlos F. Grigsby, 'The Different Lives of Rubén Darío's Los raros', *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, 95:6 (2018), pp. 679–706.

[66] This is how Darío sometimes referred to the equivalent of what today we would call 'contemporary world literature'. See for example Rubén Darío, 'Las letras hispanoamericanas en París', in *La caravana pasa libro tercero*, ed. by Günter Schmigalle (Berlin: Edition Tranvía, 2000).

[67] For an overview written by Darío on the international outlook of *Symbolisme*, see Rubén Darío, 'Al Dr. Max Nordau', in *Crónicas desconocidas 1901–1906*, ed. by Günter Schmigalle (Berlin: Edition Tranvía, 2006) pp. 241–53.

mostly been read and represented only according to the former, even when recognizing its 'debts' to and 'influences' of French literature. The Peruvian critic Julio Ortega comments on this blind spot present in much Darío scholarship:

> Si bien Rubén Darío, como él mismo explica, se documentaba para escribir algunos poemas, el rastreo de sus fuentes ha ofrecido siempre una versión limitada de su proceso de composición. El problema de cómo leer esas fuentes, a la luz del poema, no está resuelto, ni siquiera bien planteado, y cada vez que la crítica académica ha creído demostrar las referencias de un poema suyo, ha reincidido en la simplificación y hasta en cierta pobreza conceptual [...] De modo que se puede adelantar que esa interacción con las fuentes es otro tejido de la resonancia del poema en tanto objeto de arte, figura artística y precipitado asociativo que lo convierte en texto articulado entre las artes.[68]

To be sure, the authorities on the subject of Darío's sources and influences – Arturo Marasso, Erwin K. Mapes, among others – study those sources as a means of explicating Darío's originality. Unlike them, I will explore the latter possibility of reading I have just described by closely reading a selection of poems which best illustrate the rich conversation Darío held with his French counterparts.

Darío's Poetry as a Conversation with France

Before delving into the poems, it is worth remembering Derek Attridge's definition of 'creative reading' as an articulation in words of a response to a text, 'as if the work being read demanded a new work in response'.[69] The poems in which Darío rewrites Théophile Gautier, Théodore de Banville, Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly, and Paul Verlaine seem to fall within this kind of response – spurred, no doubt, by the fact that nothing quite like what these writers were doing in French existed in Spanish. The poems analysed here appear to emerge as responses to the French literature of Darío's time. They are rewritings, rejoinders, glosses, versions, translations – displaying an engagement with their source that

[68] Julio Ortega, *Rubén Darío* (Barcelona: Omega, 2003), p. 167.
[69] Derek Attridge, *The Singularity of Literature* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 92.

is reminiscent of what was perhaps formerly understood as *imitatio*.[70] To a certain degree, one could argue that this is a trait that all poets show in their work. As the poet and critic Craig Morgan Teicher explains,

> Poetry is a conversation, an extended one, occupying, perhaps, the span of an entire life. Poets converse, first and foremost, with their language [...] and with the idea of language itself.[71]

For poets like Darío, poetry is also a conversation with other languages. Teicher elaborates on how considering the conversational dimension of poetry might bear on how we conceive of literary influence:

> We tend to define poetic influence in terms of how a later poet is shaped by an earlier one. This definition perhaps oversimplifies what poetic influence is: the internalization and adaptation of other poets' work into a new style. Poetry is a reader's art: poets make poems in response to the poems they've read. [...] Poems take place in many kinds of conversations, whether with other poems and poets, with an imagined reader, with the culture at large, or with the poet's own previous, current, or future selves. [...] Poetic influence occurs as an aspect of these conversations, a volleying between poets living and dead.[72]

Teicher's musings on poetry as a reader's art is fitting for the poems that will be explored in this chapter.

To come back to French, Darío was fascinated by the language and culture. As far as literary success goes, Paris was heaven on earth for the Nicaraguan. The following passage from his autobiography is well known:

> Yo soñaba con París, desde niño, al punto de que cuando hacía mis oraciones rogaba a Dios que no me dejase morir sin conocer París. París era para mí como un paraíso donde se respirase la esencia de la felicidad sobre la tierra. Era la ciudad del Arte, de la Belleza y de la Gloria; y, sobre todo, era la capital del Amor, el reino del Ensueño. E iba yo a conocer París, a realizar la mayor ansia de mi vida. Y cuando en la estación de Saint Lazare, pisé tierra parisiense, creí hollar suelo sagrado.[73]

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[70] I am thinking here of *imitatio* as it was understood by Horace and Seneca, and theorised by Quintilian and Dionysius of Halicarnassus. For an in-depth treatment of the subject see David West and A.J. Woodman, eds., *Creative imitation and Latin literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1979); and Gian Biagio Conte and Charles Segal, *The Rhetoric of Imitation: Genre and Poetic Memory in Virgil and Other Latin Poets* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1986).
[71] Craig Morgan Teicher, *We Begin in Gladness: How Poets Progress* (Minneapolis: Graywolf Press, 2018), p. 4.
[72] Ibid., pp. 91–2.
[73] *Autobiografía*, p. 96.

His idealization of Paris was far from unique for his time, as Latin American culture pined for the symbolic capital of France. We can find parallels between Darío's relation to French and Silviano Santiago's description of the relation between the Latin American writer and European literature:

> The Latin American writer plays with the signs of another writer and of another work. The words of the other present themselves as objects that fascinate his eyes, his fingers, and the writing of the second text [the Latin American text] becomes partially the story of a sensual experience with foreign signs […] Since the sign is often presented in a foreign language, the work of the writer becomes a kind of global translation, a pastiche, a parody or a digression rather than a literal translation.[74]

In the passage above, Santiago is thinking of Borges's Pierre Menard as an allegory of how Latin American writers approach the canon of Western literature. To make such a broad claim regarding Latin American writers far and wide is, to say the least, suspect. Still, Darío's relation to French can fruitfully be thought of as 'the story of a sensual experience with foreign signs'. As we will see later, the Nicaraguan shows a fascination with French words, to the extent of fetishizing and inscribing them into his writing as prestigious signs of cosmopolitanism. And if we are willing to broaden our notion of translation, the poems I will now analyse could effectively be thought of as a 'global translation'.

I will begin with poems from *Prosas profanas*. Although the texts of *Azul…* include elements I have mentioned as part of this second possibility of reading Darío's oeuvre, they do so to a lesser degree. Also, in *Prosas profanas* there is a clear change with regard to Darío's Spanish. Though the language of *Azul…* is already scattered with French words – *esmaragdin* appears as *esmaradigna* in 'El rey burgués'; *farandole* as *farandola* in 'El velo de la reina Mab'; *chartreuse* in 'La ninfa'; and so forth – for the most part, the vocabulary employed was already part of Spanish.[75] By contrast, a survey of *Prosas profanas* shows

[74] Silviano Santiago, *The Space In-between: Essays on Latin American Culture* (Durham: Duke UP, 2001), p. 34.
[75] Unlike the Spanish of *Prosas*, in which the lexicon is ridden with Gallicisms, the Gallicisms of *Azul…* are mostly syntactic and, as it were, stylistic. For a detailed discussion of the latter, see Mapes, pp. 39–58, and

at least 38 borrowings from the French. This does not include all the Greek words that Darío clearly borrowed from Parnassian diction (Leconte de Lisle, one of the most influential poets of *Parnasse,* was a prolific translator of Classical Greek literature). Nor does it include the many words typical of the diction of *Romantisme*, which the Nicaraguan most likely came to by way of Victor Hugo. Any reader of Darío would naturally recognise *d'or, sonore, vague, brume, harmonie, lyre, soupir, l'azur, l'aube,* and so forth, as familiar *modernista* terms. While in *Azul…* Darío is writing from within the French tradition, his ambition seems to be to write in both languages. In *Prosas profanas*, however, he has given up for the time being on the dream of writing in French, and in turn has radically transposed elements of French language and literature into the Spanish. One language is brushed against another.

The poem 'Canción de carnaval' is both a translation and a rewriting of a poem by Banville called 'Mascarades', from the collection *Odes funambulesques* (1857). The title itself is telling: 'Mascarades' is a poem about the famous carnival of Paris, a fact which sheds light on Darío's own choice of title 'Canción de carnaval'. What the majority of critics have failed to recognise is that Banville's poem is not merely a source or an influence. In Santiago's terms, it is a 'hegemonic' text that Darío, from the 'periphery', creatively reads, translates, and rewrites. The poem's epigraph is a line from 'Mascarades'. By citing Banville, the poet is pointing the reader to the French text. Furthermore, in 'Historia de mis libros' Darío acknowledges that 'La Canción de Carnaval es también a lo Banville, una oda funambulesca, de sabor argentino, bonaerense'.[76] It is a poem that is expected to be read in tandem with Banville. At the same time, Darío's text is more than a translation; it is a new poem that says things which Banville's does not. Darío freely

Juan López-Morillas, 'El "Azul" de Rubén Darío: ¿Galicismo mental o lingüístico?', *Revista Hispánica Moderna,* Año 10, No. 1/2 (Jan.-Apr., 1944), pp. 9–14.
[76] 'Historia de mis libros', p. 208.

translate many passages of Banville's poem, rewriting it with added Argentine elements and, interestingly, with Banvillesque elements that transcend 'Mascarades' and are found elsewhere in the Frenchman's poetry. Below is a parallel comparison of the corresponding fragments:

Musa, la *máscara* apresta, ensaya un aire *jovial* y goza y ríe en la fiesta del *carnava*l. (ll. 1–4)	Le *Carnaval* s'amuse ! Viens le chanter, ma *Muse*, Sur un rhythme *gaillard* Du bon Ronsard ! (ll. 1–4)
Ríe en la danza que gira, muestra la *pierna rosada*, y suene, como una lira, tu carcajada. (ll. 5–8)	Chante ton dithyrambe En laissant voir ta *jambe* Et ton sein arrosé D'un feu *rosé*. (ll. 9–12)
Mueve tu espléndido *torso* por las calles pintorescas y juega y *adorna* el corso *con rosas frescas*. (ll. 41–44)	Mets ta *ceinture*, et *plaque* *Sur le velours* d'un claque Les rubans querelleurs *Jonchés de fleurs* ! (ll. 41–44)

I have added the emphases above to render visible the most evident parallelisms between the poems. In the first stanza, both speakers refer to a Muse, inviting her to enjoy the carnival each poem celebrates. Banville's *Muse* corresponds to Darío's *Musa*; *Carnaval* to *carnaval; gaillard* to *jovial* – and in the first line, Darío inserts the word of Banville's original title, *máscara*. In the other stanzas Darío displaces the description he translates; instead of *feu rosé* he opts for *pierna rosada*; in the third he writes *torso* in lieu of *ceinture*, and *adornar* instead of *joncher*. Darío also 'translates' the metre: the Spanish lines are longer, but he keeps the abridged fourth line of each stanza to preserve the playful rhythm of Banville's *Odes funambulesques*. He also changes the rhyme scheme: while Banville's is AABB, Darío opts for ABAB.

As mentioned earlier, Darío also includes characters found in other poems by Banville: *Pierrot*, *Polchinelle* (which Darío translates as *Pulchinela*), *Colombine* (*Colombina*), *Arlequin* (*Arlequín*), and *le Clown* (*un clown*). Mapes has imaginatively described this as the result of Darío not finding Banville's poem Banvillesque enough for

his own version.[77] However, Mapes plainly considers it 'une imitation des *Mascarades',* in which Darío 'reproduit admirablement l'impression donnée par le poème de Banville, mais comme nous l'avons dit, c'est le Banville de tous les poèmes de carnaval qu'il imite, plutôt que les *Mascarades* seules.'[78] Marasso also reads it as an imitation: 'Darío imita así los nombres de poetas y contemporáneos, de cosas parisienses, que brotan a cada instante de la pluma del ilustre rimador francés, a quien tanto admira.'[79] What leads both Mapes and Marasso to read the poem as an imitation is their disregard of the Argentine elements that Darío includes in his version of Banville. For instance, in the fourth stanza we find:

> Y que en tu boca risueña
> que se une al alegre coro,
> deje la abeja porteña
> su miel de oro. (ll. 13–16)

Later on, in the tenth and twelfth stanzas:

> Sé lírica y sé bizarra
> con la cítara sé griega;
> O gaucha, con la guitarra
> de Santos Vega. (ll. 37–40)

> De perlas riega un tesoro
> de Andrade en el regio nido,
> y en la hopalanda de Guido,
> polvo de oro. (ll. 45–48)

Darío includes, on the one hand, *lo porteño*; on the other, he inserts three allusions that change the meaning of the poem. The allusion to 'la guitarra / de Santos Vega' refers to the poem 'Santos Vega' by Rafael Obligado from 1885. The allusion to Andrade refers to the poet Olegario Víctor Andrade, whereas Guido is the poet Carlos Guido Spano.[80] All three poets are important figures of Argentine Romanticism. In that sense, Darío's Banvillesque

[77] *L'influence française*, p. 70.
[78] Ibid., p. 70–1.
[79] Arturo Marasso, *Rubén Darío y su creación poética* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Kapelusz, 1954), p. 59.
[80] Max Henríquez Ureña cites a poem written by Guido Spano for Darío upon his arrival to Buenos Aires in 1893. See Max Henríquez Ureña, *Breve historia del modernismo* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1954), p. 49.

muse will not only be *griega* but *gaucha*, as the mythical Santos Vega was, and will embellish the works of Andrade and Guido with *perlas* and *polvo de oro*. Contrary to what Mapes and Marasso claim, Darío is not merely imitating Banville. The bawdy gaiety of the Frenchman's muse, which celebrates France as opposed to other nations, becomes in the hands of Darío the muse of new poetry, which carries the accents of French verse in order to improve upon its Argentine predecessors. In other words, clearly this is not purely imitation; Darío is translating and rewriting Banville in order to produce new meaning. What is more, he does so overtly, pointing the reader to the elements from the French text that are used in his own, so as to have his poem read as one which is in conversation with its French counterpart. In the poem we can also hear echoes of Banville's *Odes funambulesques*: many of its most colourful characters parade before our eyes. However, this is a Spanish-speaking Banville that does not celebrate the exquisiteness of French culture: instead, it speaks of Argentine literature to come, mixing high and popular culture.

We find another case of rewriting in the poem 'Bouquet'. Unlike 'Canción de carnaval', here Darío rewrites another poem conceptually. To begin with, the title itself is a Gallicism. As with the previous poem, in the first stanza Darío points the reader to the author whose writing he will cast anew:

> Un poeta egregio del país de Francia
> que con versos áureos alabó el amor
> formó un ramo harmónico, lleno de elegancia,
> en su *Sinfonía en Blanco Mayor*. (ll. 1–4)

He is referring to Théophile Gautier, the title of whose poem 'Symphonie en blanc majeur' he translates for the reader. Commenting on Darío's use of intertextuality in this poem, Alberto Julián Pérez notes that:

> En el poema "Bouquet" Darío […] informa al lector sobre la "escuela" poética de su texto, y crea un "entretejido" intertextual con la tradición francesa reivindicada

> por los parnasianos […] Vemos que en "Bouquet" Darío está tratando el paratexto modelador como un texto codificable, susceptible de ser continuado.[81]

Though the intertextual interweaving is undeniable, there is more to it than meets the eye. The poem continues as follows:

> Yo por ti formara, Blanca deliciosa,
> el regalo lírico de un blanco bouquet,
> con la blanca estrella, con la blanca rosa
> que en los bellos parques del azul se ve. (ll. 5–8)

As Julián Pérez notes, Darío establishes a continuity: Gautier wrote *un ramo harmónico* and he in turn will write un *blanco bouquet*. The reader is made complicit in his witnessing of this volleying between one poet and the other. However, significant differences separate the two. In his poem, Gautier explores the semantic possibilities of the colour white, seemingly covering its whole connotative spectrum. From:

> De ces femmes il en est une,
> Qui chez nous descend quelquefois,
> Blanche comme le clair de lune
> Sur les glaciers dans les cieux froids (ll. 9–12)

To:

> Sphinx enterré par l'avalanche,
> Gardien des glaciers étoilés,
> Et qui, sous sa poitrine blanche,
> Cache de blancs secrets gelés ? (ll. 68–71)

He does so not only through the repetition of the word *blanc*, but by extending it through metaphors that entail glaciers, snow, camellias, boreal regions, swans, satin, among other indicators of whiteness. It is a virtuosic display of poetic skill. Also, he uses those metaphors to describe a mythical *femme-cygne* from *les contes du Nord* (ll. 1–4). By contrast, Darío's poem is simpler, as it seems to use repetition and alliteration of a single word, namely 'blanca', as the generative force of the poem. Though the echoes of 'Symphonie en blanc majeur' can be heard in 'Bouquet', Darío's poem is notably less rich

[81] Alberto Julián Pérez, *La poética de Rubén Darío: crisis post-romántica y modelos literarios modernistas* (Madrid: Orígenes, 1992), p. 156–7.

in metaphors. However, despite the appearance of flippancy, he takes intertextuality a step further: he does not merely create poetic continuity between one poem and another, as Pérez suggests, but answers to Gautier's last stanza with a rejoinder in his own poem. Gautier's poem ends with the following lines:

> Sous la glace où calme il repose,
> Oh ! qui pourra fonder ce cœur !
> *Oh ! qui pourra mettre un ton rose*
> *Dans cette implacable blancheur !* (ll. 69–72; emphasis added)

To which Darío writes:

> Yo, al enviarte versos, de mi vida arranco
> la flor que te ofrezco, blanco serafín.
> *¡Mira cómo mancha tu corpiño blanco*
> *la más roja rosa que hay en mi jardín!* (ll. 17–20; emphasis added)

I have emphasised the last two lines of each stanza to foreground Darío's ingenious rewriting of Gautier. Clearly, only the multilingual reader who has access to both texts in their original language can be complicit in Darío's mischievous turn: while Gautier presents the whiteness of his *femme-cygne* as immaculate and unattainable for its mythic quality, rhetorically asking who could change its cold whiteness to a mellow *rose*, Darío claims that he will stain the immaculate white with his reddest *rose* – a symbol of sensuality, voluptuousness, and desire. As with 'Canción de carnaval', the term 'imitation' falls short in describing what takes place between the two texts. Darío clearly writes a less ambitious poem, taking only what most interests him from Gautier; in this case, the rhythmic qualities of repetition rather than its imagistic possibilities. However, after pointing the reader to the French text, so as to show how the poem is meant to be read, Darío inserts a rejoinder to Gautier in the ending of his poem.

The second poem of the subsection 'Verlaine' called 'El canto de la sangre', eclipsed in Darío scholarship by the pyrotechnics of 'Responso', presents a similar case. Again, because it is placed under a subsection titled 'Verlaine', the reader knows where to

turn their eye for references and allusions. As with Gautier, here Darío takes from Verlaine what he is most interested in: the structure and use of repetition in a poem from *Sagesse* (1880), called 'Voix de l'Orgueil : un cri puissant comme d'un cor.' In Verlaine's poem, each stanza begins with a different 'voice':

> Voix de l'Orgueil : un cri puissant comme d'un cor (l. 1)
> Voix de la Haine : cloche en mer, fausse, assourdie (l. 4)
> Voix de la Chair : un gros tapage fatigué (l. 8)
> Voix d'Autrui : des lointains dans des brouillards. Des noces (l. 12)

Darío uses the same structure to write a different poem:

> Sangre de Abel. Clarín de las batallas. (l. 1)
> […] Sangre del Cristo. El órgano sonoro. (l. 4)
> […] Sangro de los martirios. El salterio. (l. 8)
> […] Sangre que vierte el cazador. El cuerno. (l. 12)

He further extends the device for three stanzas more. Where Verlaine writes about different voices, Darío writes about different events of blood-spilling. Also, where the former uses a colon to structure the beginning of each stanza, the latter uses a full stop, cutting the line in two. As with 'Bouquet' and its echoes of Gautier, the echo of Verlaine here is not so much a resonance as a *déjà vu*, as it were, inspired by the form of the poem and its devices. To be sure, this kind of relation is common to all poetry, which, as Morgan Teicher explains, is a conversation of sorts. However, what is unique in Darío is both the lineage he deliberately seeks to create by likening his writings to these poets – recall his phrase 'Azul es un libro parnasiano, y por lo tanto, francés' – as well the dialogue it seeks to open with its French counterparts.

Otherwise, there are no great parallelisms between the two texts. But, it is curious to note that a poem which openly uses the structure of a Verlainean poem is included, as mentioned earlier, under a subsection titled 'Verlaine'. By being placed next to 'Responso', 'Canto de la sangre' also seems to pay homage to Verlaine; not by extolling the figure of the French poet like the former does, but by directly writing a Verlainean poem. Such

homage is telling of the reading practices of the *modernistas*: Verlaine does not only represent an influential poet, but also new poetic forms to be learned and put into practice.

Further on in the collection we find a poem titled 'Cosas del Cid'. Here Darío rewrites Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly's poem 'Le Cid' from the collection *Poussières* (1897), expanding the story that takes place therein. At this point we can see a pattern emerge: when Darío rewrites his French counterparts, he often abridges the text, aiming for synthesis. This is also the case of 'Canción de carnaval', 'Bouquet', and 'Canto de la sangre'. In this particular instance, Darío retells the story of Barbey's Cid in 25 lines, whereas Barbey's poem is 58-lines long. However, in his retelling Darío glosses on Barbey's poem and, in a way, corrects it. This is the first stanza of the poem:

> Cuenta Barbey, en versos que valen bien su prosa,
> una hazaña del Cid, fresca como una rosa,
> pura como una perla. No se oyen en la hazaña
> resonar en el viento las trompetas de España, (ll. 1–4)

Again, Darío tells the reader what his source is. After praising the poem, Darío relates how Barbey's Cid is nonetheless devoid of the Hispanic context in which the story of *El Cid* originally takes place. To correct this lack, Darío includes contextual information of *El Cantar del mio Cid* in his rewriting of Barbey's story. The poem continues as follows,

> ni el azorado moro las tiendas abandona
> al ver al sol el alma de acero de Tizona.
> Babieca, descansando del huracán guerrero,
> tranquilo pace, mientras el bravo caballero (ll. 5–8)

And then,

> Rodrigo de Vivar pasa, meditabundo,
> por una senda en donde, bajo el sol glorioso,
> tendiéndole la mano, le detiene un leproso. (ll. 12–14)

Unlike Barbey, who other than 'le Cid' only calls his hero 'Campéador', Darío includes proper names in his poem to underline El Cid's Spanishness: Tizona, the name of his

mythical sword; Babieca, his horse; and Rodrigo de Vivar, El Cid's real name. Once the retelling of Barbey's poem is complete, the Nicaraguan adds the following segue:

> Tal es el sucedido que el Condestable escancia
> como un vino precioso en su copa de Francia.
> Yo agregaré este sorbo de licor castellano: (ll. 26–28)

The poem then includes another story, now entirely Darío's creation, in which El Cid meets 'una niña que fuera un hada, o que surgiera / encarnación de la divina Primavera.' (ll. 44–45) Iris M. Zavala explains how the meaning of El Cid's heroic deed is transformed in Darío's extension of the story:

> Rubén incorpora un canto castellano: el encuentro del héroe con La Primavera, versión simbólica de aquel célebre episodio con la niña burgalesa en el primer canto del poema medieval. […] Del tema heroico, medieval, descrito con sobriedad por el francés, al superponer el suyo propio, Rubén cambia el estilo y prefiere la evocación, la sugerencia. No busca la gesta del guerrero. En su poema el Cid se convierte en *el poeta*.[82]

As with most of the previous poems, 'Cosas del Cid' is not only an original creation, but also a gloss, a translation, and a rewriting of another poem. Interestingly, it was written after the Spanish–American War (1898), during Darío's travels to Spain and France as a reporter for *La Nación*. It is no coincidence, then, that Darío is expanding his conversation with French poetry by including Spanish themes, motifs, and history in his writing.

'El reino interior' is a complex text that requires some unpacking. In the poem, the poet's soul, which is personified as a damsel in distress, is trapped inside a terrible tower that represents the poet's body. From the height of said tower she witnesses the encounter of the seven Virtues (embodied by seven princesses) and the seven deadly Sins (seven princes). Virtues and Sins do not clash, however, as one would expect, in Manichean combat; they join one another amorously in the magical woods nearby. The poet's soul then

[82] Iris Zavala, 'Sobre la elaboración de "Cosas del Cid" de Rubén Darío', *Hispanic Review* 47.2 (1979), pp. 125–47 (p. 127–8).

goes back to sleep; in her dreams she expresses a desire to have both Virtues and Sins embrace her.

The rewriting and translation here are more intricate. To begin with, the poem has a dedication to Eugénio de Castro alongside an epigraph by Edgar Allan Poe, '…with Psychis, my soul! [*sic*]', ostensibly from the poem 'Ulalume'. Both these writers' qualities are extolled in *Los raros*. Judging from what Darío writes on de Castro in that book, it is clear that given the similarities to his own writing that he finds in the Portuguese author's work, he sees in him a spiritual brother in the sacred art of poetry:

> Leí sus versos. Desde el primer momento reconocí su iniciación en el nuevo sacerdocio estético, y la influencia de maestros como Verlaine. Y en veces su voz era tan semejante a la voz verleniana, que junté en mi imaginación el recuerdo de de Castro, al del amado y malogrado Julián del Casal, un cubano que era por cierto el hijo espiritual de *Pauvre Lelian*.[83]

Darío goes on to quote extensively from de Castro's *Sagramor* (1895), a long poem in which, as in 'El reino interior', the speaker is tempted by external voices to commit sinful acts.[84] Therefore, as is habitual in Darío, by dedicating the poem to de Castro he is putting forth a lineage according to which he, along with the Portuguese, follow in the steps of Verlaine as continuers of 'el renacimiento latino'.[85] In addition to the epigraph, the personification of the poet's soul also seems to come from Poe. Three names then stand out in the poem: 'fra Doménico Cavalca' (l. 3), 'el divino Sandro' (ll. 35), and 'los satanes verlenianos de Ecbatana' (ll. 44).

Fra Domenico Cavalca, an Italian friar from the thirteenth century, like Poe and de Castro, also appears in *Los raros*.[86] In the poem, Darío tells the reader to imagine the atmosphere he is describing as similar to that of Cavalca's writing, 'cual la que pinta fra

[83] Rubén Darío, *Los raros,* ed. by Günter Schmigalle (Berlin: Verlag Walter Frey, 2015), p. 400.
[84] See Eugénio de Castro, *Obras poéticas*, 10 vols (Lisboa: Imprensa Nacional, 1923), III.
[85] 'El renacimiento latino' is the term Darío uses in *Los raros* to refer to international *Symbolisme* in so-called 'Latin' countries, namely Portugal, Italy, France, and those of Latin America. Note that, previous to the influence of *Modernismo* in the Peninsula, Spain was not included in the list. See *Los raros*, p. 380.
[86] For an analysis of how *Prosas profanas* and *Los raros* relate, see Grigsby 2018.

Doménico Cavalca / en sus Vidas de santos […]' (ll. 4-5). The poet takes what he loves most as a reader and explicitly integrates it into his writing.[87] Francisco López Estrada, in his study *Rubén Darío y la edad media* (1971), links the figure of Cavalca to the influence of Pre-Raphaelitism:

> Este mismo acercamiento de los ingleses hacia los primitivos italianos, que fue uno de los efectos del Prerrafaelismo, se encuentra también en Rubén [...] [Fra Domenico Cavalca] es como la contrapartida de Dante; la fama de Cavalca había sido minúscula, y sólo la corriente de la moda prerrafaelista pudo situarlo de pronto entre los escritores de primer rango europeo. En efecto, Darío reconoce este enlace entre literatura y poesía primitivas y el prerrafaelismo.[88]

In effect, in 'Historia de mis libros' Darío writes that in 'El reino interior' 'se siente la influencia de la poesía inglesa, de Dante Gabriel Rosétti [*sic*] y de algunos de los corifeos del simbolismo francés'.[89] The description of the author's soul in the poem is similar to that of Rosetti's damozel in 'The Blessed Damozel',

> The blessed damozel lean'd out
> From the gold bar of Heaven (ll. 1-2)
> […] She had three lilies in her hand,
> And the stars in her hair were seven (ll. 5–6).

For the sake of comparison, here are the lines from 'El reino interior':

> Mi alma frágil se asoma a la ventana obscura
> de la torre terrible en que ha treinta años sueña. (ll. 10–11)
> […] Y las manos liliales agita, como infanta
> real en los balcones del palacio paterno. (ll. 18–19)

Regarding ll. 18–19, Alfonso García Morales mentions Albert Samain's opening poem to his début collection *Au jardin de l'Infante* (1893), an author who enjoyed acclaim in France at the time and would later be a decisive influence on Darío's protégé, Leopoldo Lugones.[90] The poem's title is the same as its first line: *Mon âme est une infante en robe de parade*.

[87] 'Al acabar de leer la obra de Fra Domenico Cavalca siéntese la impresión de una blanda brisa llena de aromas paradisíacos y refrescantes. Hay algo de infantil que deleita y pone en los labios a veces una suave sonrisa.' (*Los raros*, p. 251)
[88] Francisco López Estrada, *Rubén Darío y la edad media: una perspectiva poco conocida sobre la vida y obra del escritor* (Barcelona: Planeta, 1971), p. 91.
[89] 'Historia de mis libros', p. 212.
[90] See Alfonso García Morales, 'Paralela/mente "El reino interior" como la "obra maestra" de Rubén Darío', *Anales de Literatura Española*, no. 28 (2016), pp. 99–117.

The coincidence between 'infante' and 'infanta' points to a more than likely relation. Darío takes the image from Samain and uses it in his own poem. Moreover, by replacing Rosetti's damozel with the feminine figure of his own soul, he rewrites Rosetti: 'the gold bar of Heaven' becomes 'la torre terrible' of the poet's body, while the 'three lilies in her hand' fancifully turns into 'las manos liliales' of the poet's soul, using a neologism that retains some of the original English spelling (lilies/liliales), also found in de Castro's poems. On the other hand, 'el divino Sandro' (l. 35) and 'los satanes verlenianos de Ecbatana' (l. 44) are references to Sandro Botticelli and Verlaine's poem 'Crimen amoris' from *Jadis et naguère* (1884). As will become clearer, the setting of 'El reino interior' is a hybrid of Botticelli's 'La Primavera' and Verlaine's 'Crimen amoris'. This is how Darío alludes to the former:

> La gentil Primavera, primavera le augura.
> […] Como al compás de un verso, su paso suave rigen,
> tal el divino Sandro dejara en sus figuras
> esos graciosos gestos en esas líneas puras. (l. 12; ll. 34–36)

How do we know that 'el divino Sandro' is an allusion to Botticelli? In the piece that Darío writes on Cavalca in *Los raros*, he says the following:

> No tengo conocimiento de que se haya traducido a nuestra lengua ningún libro del «primitivo» Fra Domenico Cavalca, en cuyas obras en prosa y en verso brilla la luz sencilla y adorable, la expresión milagrosa de las pinturas de un Botticelli […] Si la pintura «primitiva» ha dado vuelo a la inspiración de los prerrafaelistas, la poesía, la literatura trecentista y cuatrocentista, resuena también en el laúd de Dante Gabriel Rosetti, en la lira de Swinburne.[91]

The passage further shows how *Los raros* and *Prosas profanas* are cut from the same cloth. In both the piece on Cavalca and 'El reino interior' we find the same cluster formed by Pre-Raphaelitism, Cavalca, and Botticelli. The poem, therefore, turns out to be an interesting case of *ekphrasis*: Darío transposes onto the poem the symmetrical composition of Botticelli's painting: on one side, white-hued characters (in Botticelli, the three Graces and

[91] *Los raros*, p. 237.

Mercury; in Darío, the seven Virtues). And on the other side, contrasting characters (in Botticelli, dark Zephyr and embellished Flora; in Darío, the seven crimson Sins). In between the two, Botticelli paints Venus, while Darío 'paints' his Psyche. Marasso describes it as follows,

> La descripción de las Virtudes y Vicios es botticelliana. Es la evocación de la *Primavera.* […] La cita de Sandro Botticelli, del divino Sandro, equivale a la firma. Darío reproduce en la palabra la pintura de la Primavera. […] Darío no hubiera podido concebir tan admirablemente los Pecados si no hubiera tenido a la vista el Mercurio de Botticelli al cual envuelve, con Verlaine, de especiosa atmósfera malsana.[92]

In a rare misstep, Marasso confuses Zephyr with Mercury, who is actually on the other side of the painting depicted in a benign light next to the three Graces. Marasso also finds similarities between ll. 37–40 and the Pre-Raphaelite painting 'The Golden Stairs' by Edward Burne-Jones.

How does Verlaine's 'Crimen amoris' come into the picture? I surmise that Darío's poem begins where Verlaine's ends. One example of the closing description of the landscape in Verlaine's poem is as follows:

> Tout embaumé de mystère et de prière :
> Parfois un flot qui sauté lance un éclair.
>
> La forme molle au loin monte des collines
> Comme un amour encore mal défini (ll. 91–94)

Whereas Darío's poem begins like this:

> Una selva suntuosa
> en el azul celeste su rudo perfil calca.
> Un camino. La tierra es de color rosa, (ll. 1-3)

In other words, Verlaine's poem ends with the description of a landscape, not with the palace where most of the action of the poem takes place. The landscape, as seen in the lines above, seems to fade away into vagueness, filled with religious undertones. By contrast, Darío's poem begins with a landscape that seems to etch itself out of the vagueness

[92] Marasso, p. 140.

surrounding it – 'su rudo perfil calca'. The action then moves in reverse to that of Verlaine's poem: the focus goes from the landscape to the tower where the poet's soul is imprisoned, whose function in the poem is similar to that of the Verlainean palace. Moreover, Darío imbues his poem with echoes of Verlaine's: 'soie et or' resonates in 'oro, seda'; 'beaux démons' in 'bellamente infernales'; 'sept Péchés' in 'siete poderosos Pecados'; 'Ecbatane' in 'Ecbatana'; and 'sa couronne des fleurs' in 'ciñen las cabezas triunfantes oro y rosas'. Also, Darío surreptitiously alludes to Verlaine himself: 'y en sus manos de ambiguos príncipes decadentes' (l. 53).

Critics such as Arturo Marasso, Alfonso García Morales, and Edmundo de Chasca[93] have not paid sufficient attention to an important difference between the poems: while Darío's text sets the scene for a Manichean confrontation (which results in embrace rather than violence, subverting its Manichean disposition) Verlaine's text does not. What happens in Verlaine's text is a hecatomb that takes place outside a palace where only demons – not Virtues – have gathered. When one of those demons moves away from the group to give a speech, he *mentions* the need of a Manichean confrontation between Sins and Virtues:

> Nous avons tous trop souffert, anges et hommes,
> De ce conflit entre le Pire et le Mieux (ll. 44–45)
> […] Ô vous tous, ô tous nous, ô les pécheurs tristes,
> Ô les gais Saints, pourquoi ce schisme têtu ? (ll. 48–49)
> […] Assez et trop de ces luttes trop égales !
> *Il va falloir qu'enfin se rejoignent les*
> *Sept Péchés aux Trois Vertus Théologales* ! (ll. 52–54; emphasis added)

I have emphasised the lines where I believe we can find the origin of Darío's poem. 'El reino interior' begins where 'Crimen amoris' ends, but only to enact what the latter merely mentions as necessary. In this regard, the stanza of 'El reino interior' in which Darío alludes to Verlaine's poem is especially revealing:

[93] Chasca analyses both poems comparatively. See Edmundo Chasca, 'El "Reino interior" de Rubén Darío y "Crimen amoris" de Verlaine', *Revista Iberoamericana*, vol. 21 (1965), pp. 309–17.

Al lado izquierdo del camino y paralela-[94]
mente, siete mancebos —oro, seda, escarlata,
armas ricas de Oriente—, hermosos, parecidos
a los satanes verlenianos de Ecbatana,
vienen también […] (ll. 41–45)

Marasso calls the allusion above 'una señal de procedencia'.[95] I would add that it is also a signal of destination. The poem invites us to reread Verlaine and then come back to it to read it again alongside Darío. It converses with its counterpart, instead of merely proceeding from it. As with Barbey's 'Cosas del Cid', it expands Verlaine's poem and, from the perspective of Darío's poetics, improves on it. As seen in the lines quoted above, Verlaine's demon suggests joining the seven sins to the three theological virtues. However, unlike Verlaine – and like Botticelli and the Pre-Raphaelites – Darío opts for symmetry by joining seven sins to seven virtues. The descriptions in 'El reino interior' have a pictorial clarity to them, while those in 'Crimen amoris' are deliberately blurry and suggestive. These differences between the poems are illustrative of the extent to which Darío is not – the repetition is not idle – imitating Verlaine but is doing something altogether different. He is translating, rewriting, and annotating; he is rectifying what is not of his liking and bringing together other elements foreign to Verlaine's poetry in order to write a new text. The poem, in the end, is a tapestry of sorts in which sundry sources come together to form a whole: medieval hagiography, Verlainean moral conflict, Pre-Raphaelite representation of femininity, Poe-esque personification of the soul, and a Botticellian use of symmetry and proportion.

Strategies of Cosmopolitanism

At this point we can collate the common characteristics found in the poems analysed so far. The starting point for these poems from *Prosas profanas* often seems to be another text,

[94] *Parallèlement* (1889) is the name of a collection of poems published by Verlaine.
[95] Marasso, p. 140.

usually by a contemporary French poet. The poem is then translated and rewritten by Darío, so as to cast it in Spanish anew. This usually entails some form of synthesis or pastiche. This second text is, nonetheless, loaded with French echoes. Therefore, the monolingual reader may recognise the presence of French literature in the words, names, and allusions of the poems; however, the multilingual reader will see in it glosses, translations, rewritings, rejoinders, corrections, annotations, and so forth. This is not to say that these poems must be exclusively read with their French counterpart in sight; yet when we do read them in this way, we can uncover the multilingual aspects of Darío's poetry that have been largely ignored by critics, perhaps due to the limitations of a framework that understands the relations between literary texts only in terms of plain and simple imitation. To fully grasp the complexity of Darío's poetry, we must read it in terms of what it does with its French sources, as this usually involves operations far too rich to be solely labelled 'imitation' or 'influence'. As Santiago puts it:

> Can the work of art's originality be grasped if it is considered exclusively in terms of the artist's indebtedness to a model that was necessarily imported from the metropolis? Or, rather, would it not be more interesting to highlight the elements of the work that establish its difference?[96]

This limited framework fails to address the complex dynamics between these *modernista* poems and their French counterparts. One of the most revealing aspects of a poem by Darío is that there seems to be no desire to hide the sources that have given rise to the text. Quite the contrary: some poems seem to bear their allusions as marks of identity.[97] The reasons for this are related both to the readership Darío had in mind when he wrote his poetry, as well as to the literary tradition as part of which he wanted to be read.

[96] Santiago, p. 31–2.
[97] The single line in all Darío's oeuvre that epitomises this characteristic is 'Con Hugo fuerte y con Verlaine ambiguo' from the opening poem of *Cantos de vida y esperanza*. As a poet, Darío unabashedly defines himself according to his influences.

In the first case, it is well known that a large network of literary magazines and journals spanned Latin America in Darío's time, publishing the latest European poetry both in its original language and in translation. Gerard Aching cogently likens this network to Darío's distillation of manifold sources:

> It should be said that this distillation was not the product of Darío's genius alone; it could be found in the works of the first generation of modernistas as well as in the translations of Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Verlaine, Catulle Mendès, and others that they disseminated in Spanish American journals and magazines that began sprouting in various Spanish American cities in the 1890s. In short, this assimilation of contemporary European letters, thought, and fashions took place through a network of readership, commentary, translation, and creativity whereby the modernistas came to recognize one another as interlocutors in a cosmopolitan exchange of ideas about modern social life in capitals on both sides of the Atlantic.[98]

In *A. de Gilbert,* Darío relates how during his spell in Chile he had access to the latest French magazines: 'en todas partes libros, libros clásicos y las últimas novedades de la producción universal, en especial la francesa. Sobre una mesa diarios, las pilas azules y rojas de la Nouvelle Revue y la Revue de Deux Mondes.'[99] Therefore, as a creative reader who rewrites, translates, and annotates what he reads*,* Darío's work reflects these *modernista* reading practices from the margins. In his writing, he inscribes the names of the authors with whom the readership of his network is familiar, thereby also inscribing their lexicon, tropes, and styles. Nevertheless, Darío's ambition is not merely to appeal to a large readership with which he shares an ardent enthusiasm for the novelties of European – above all French – and North American poetry. More than that, he wants to be read on a par with Gautier, Banville, Verlaine, and Mendès.[100] As mentioned earlier, that also means being read from within the French literary tradition, and if possible, becoming a French-language writer, like Augusto de Armas, Lautreámont, or Jean Moréas managed to do.

[98] Gerard Aching, 'The Temporalities of Modernity in Spanish American Modernismo: Darío's Bourgeois King' in *The Oxford Handbook of Global Modernisms* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012), pp. 109–29 (p. 115).
[99] *A. de Gilbert*, p. 161.
[100] One could even think here of *aemulatio,* in addition to *imitatio*, in the classical sense of the word; that is, of allusions to other authors that are emulative insofar as they wish to match or surpass the model with whom they compete. For a discussion of *aemulatio* see Gian Biagio Conte and Charles Segal, pp. 26–66.

Because being read in such a way is synonymous with forming part of the Western Canon, Darío overtly links his poetry to all those poets who already inhabit that privileged space. Explicit mentions of Hugo, Verlaine, Banville, Gautier, among others, abound in his writing. Those names are not just part of a sensual experience with foreign signs; they are signs of prestige, erudition, and worldliness.

In the next chapter, I will analyse the Hispanic turn in Darío's writing, after which he would add other linguistic layers to his multilingual writing. In doing so, he will traverse the tradition of Hispanic literature all the way to its Latin roots.

Chapter 2: Not Only from the Roses of Paris

The Hispanic Turn in Darío's Writing

A shift seems to take place in Darío's oeuvre with the second edition of *Prosas profanas* (1901), in which he expanded the first one by adding over twenty poems written during the years 1898–1901. If we follow the dates on which the poems were written, it becomes clear that after 1898 (the date of the Spanish–American war) Darío begins to explore the history of Hispanic literature in his poetry, first by rewriting Provençal poetry with 'Dezires, layes y canciones' in the second edition of *Prosas profanas*, and then going as far as attempting Latin hexameters in *Cantos de vida y esperanza* and *El canto errante* – two traditions which Hispanic literature shares with French. The dates of the composition of the twenty-odd poems added also coincide with Darío's trip to chronicle post-war Spain in late 1898. Critics such as Zavala see 'Cosas del Cid', analysed in Chapter 1, as the threshold between the poetry of *Prosas* and after, given its emphasis on the Spanishness of *El Cid*.[101] This shift, however, does not mean that the French echoes fade away in Darío's writing. On the contrary, in *Cantos de vida y esperanza* Darío continues to experiment with the forms and styles of French poetry, but he does so with added layers. Critics have paid due attention to the sociopolitical themes of the collection, discussing the differences of theme and style in relation to *Prosas profanas.*[102] However, the new linguistic layers that are added to Darío's writing have been scarcely discussed; for that reason, in this chapter I will focus only on the echoes of languages other than French in Darío's oeuvre after 1898.

It is a common mistake to view Darío's anti-imperialist pan-Hispanism as an isolated shift of his erstwhile Francophilia. Just as the latter came about amidst an enthusiastic network of readers that spanned Latin America, pan-Hispanism was an

[101] Zavala, p. 127.
[102] In particular, see Mapes, Paz, and Salinas, quoted *sic passim* in this thesis.

ideology that brought together many intellectuals and writers in the wake of both the Franco–Prussian and Spanish–American wars. Writers profoundly admired by Darío (José Martí, Gaspar Núñez de Arce, Marcelino Ménendez Pelayo, Juan Valera, Paul Groussac, to name a few) were openly against U.S. imperialism, and many of them advocated for a Latinist renewal; that is to say, for the cultural unity of the so-called heirs of Greco-Roman culture, which in their view comprised France, Southern Europe, and Latin America.[103]

Before analysing the new linguistic layers, it is worth looking at an article published by Darío in the periodical *El Tiempo* of Buenos Aires in May 1898, as a way of charting the ideological shifts in the Nicaraguan's worldview. The article, titled 'El triunfo de Calibán', is a response to three lectures attended by Darío on the subject of North American intervention in Cuba, one of which was given by Paul Groussac. Most of the sociopolitical themes of *Cantos* are synthesized in the text: the brotherhood of France and Spain, the threat of North American imperialism, the noble grandeur of Hispanic culture, and so forth. It is interesting to note that Darío anticipates the reaction of his readers, who, bearing in mind his previous criticism of Spain's cultural stagnation, might have found themselves puzzled by his sudden change of heart: '«¿Y Ud. no ha atacado siempre a España?» Jamás', he writes, before waxing apologetic:

> España no es el fanático curial, ni el pedantón, ni el dómine feliz, desdeñoso de la América que no conoce; la España que yo defiendo se llama Hidalguía, Ideal, Nobleza; se llama Cervantes, Quevedo, Góngora, Gracián, Velázquez; se llama el Cid, Loyola, Isabel; se llama la Hija de Roma, la Hermana de Francia, la Madre de América.[104]

If we read the passage closely, it is clear that what Spain represents for Darío is, first, an ideal that emerges with a literature; second, it is the body of written works which constitutes said literature. The references to writers, artists, and renowned historical figures do not

[103] The evolution and main consequences of this cultural movement have been analysed in detail by Litvak. See Lily Litvak, *España 1900: modernismo, anarquismo y fin de siglo* (Barcelona: Antropos, 1990), pp. 155–92.
[104] Mapes, *Escritos inéditos*, p. 162.

include anyone contemporary to Darío; they are all canonical figures of the past. If we also look at *Cantos de vida y esperanza,* we realise that nor there do we find anything about the Spain of his day. The only trace is the epigraph to 'Al rey Óscar', which is taken from the French newspaper *Le Figaro* – even so, the poem that follows the quote has a mythical setting. Therefore, the Spain of *Cantos* is not so much a nation or a country as it is a literary tradition, which Darío conceives, as he says in the passage above, as a daughter of Rome and a sister of France.

This ideological shift had its poetic corollary: in addition to the French echoes analysed in the previous chapter, Darío added echoes of Provençal, Early Modern Spanish, and Latin. A seemingly insignificant detail in Darío's spelling serves as trace of the shift. As analysed previously, in *Prosas profanas* Darío transposed French words into Spanish, effectively converting them into Spanish-language Gallicisms. Among these words, and at the heart of Darío's poetics, was *harmonía*, which Darío deliberately spells with 'h' to resemble the French *harmonie*. In *Cantos*, however, Darío drops the 'h' and *harmonía* reverts to *armonía*. He also began to write vowels (in particular the letter 'u') with a dieresis, just as Gonzalo de Berceo and Luis de Góngora used to do centuries before him. We can see this in poems such as 'Helios', 'Marcha triunfal', 'La dulzura del Ángelus', 'El verso sutil que pasa o se posa', 'Nocturno', and 'Ibis'. He would continue to do so in his later writings. This gesture suggests a revaluation of forgotten authors. At a time when the conventions of grammar were relatively supple, the spelling of a poet obliquely reflects his vision of his language.[105]

[105] Some decades earlier, in his ground-breaking *Gramática de la lengua castellana destinada al uso de los americanos* (1847), Andrés Bello had proposed orthographical changes for Spanish American users of the language.

I will start by analysing 'Dezires, Layes y Canciones', a section that was added to *Prosas* in the second edition, in which Darío rewrites a number of Provençal poems in a *modernista* style. It is thanks to articles by Pedro Henríquez Ureña and José María de Cossío that we know the precise source for this series of poems, the *Cancionero inédito del siglo XV* published in Madrid in 1884 by Pérez Gómez Nieva.[106] Ureña describes it as follows:

> Este volumen no es muy conocido ni merece serlo, transcribe torpemente textos de trovadores castellanos y aragoneses que en su mayor parte pertenecieron a la corte de Alfonso V de Aragón en Nápoles.[107]

To be precise, the poets of the *Cancionero* were part of the courts of Alfonso V of Aragón (also king of Naples) and John II of Castile.[108] In fifteenth-century Spain, languages such as Provençal, Galician-Portuguese, and Catalan, among others, competed with Castilian Spanish as literary languages of the Peninsula; Galician-Portuguese was hitherto traditionally used for lyric, while Provençal was reserved for troubadour genres. However, as the Castilian Crown expanded its rule in the Americas, so did its linguistic dominion over the Peninsula. The poets of Nieva's *Cancionero* give us a glimpse of the multilingual past of Spanish literature, which Darío inscribes into his oeuvre through these poems.

One is tempted to think that Darío did so to prove his critics wrong regarding his *afrancesamiento* and the train of criticism that rose in the wake of José Enrique Rodó's provocative review of *Prosas profanas*. As in the poems analysed earlier, in 'Dezires, Layes y Canciones' Darío points the reader to the writers with whom he will converse. In

[106] It is worth noting that, while critics have for the most part accepted Nieva's *Cancionero* as Darío's source (José María de Cossío would build on that discovery to analyse the metre of the poems in relation to their source), Andrés Quintián cites Darío's articles 'Una nueva traducción del Dante' and 'El castellano de Víctor Hugo' as proof of the Nicaraguan's early familiarity with the history of fifteenth-century Spanish poetry and with anthologies that included some of the Provençal poets rewritten in 'Dezires'. That is to say, he points to alternative or complementary sources for the poems. See Andrés R. Quintián, *Cultura y literatura españolas en Rubén Darío* (Madrid, Gredos, 1974), pp. 138–42.
[107] Pedro Henríquez Ureña, 'Rubén Darío y el siglo XV', *Revue Hispanique*, L (1920), pp. 324–7 (p. 324–5).
[108] Quintián, p. 135.

this case, the names of the authors are at the beginning of each poem: Johan de Duenyas, Johan de Torres, Valtierra, and Santa Ffe. Darío adheres to the metre, rhyme scheme, and terminology of the poetic forms he takes from these poets (that is, 'dezir', 'lay', 'tornada', 'ffin', and so forth), suggesting that he wants to show the reader that he is renewing old forms. This archaism also includes the spelling of the poets' names, as Darío adheres to their Provençal orthography (i.e. Duenyas and not Dueñas).

In keeping a similar kind of metre and rhyme scheme, Darío manages to bear over echoes of troubadour poetry by successfully rendering the playful rhymes of nine-syllable lines and shorter; he empties the moulds of these late medieval forms and fills them with *modernista* verse. Ureña describes it as follows: '¿Qué tomó Darío de aquellos poetas menores? Apenas la versificación, y, de tarde en tarde, vagas *resonancias* de estilo, —las que suelen acompañar a toda forma métrica.'[109]

Among these poems his versions of Santa Ffe stand out for their quality. In 'Que el amor no admite cuerdas reflexiones', Darío rewrites Santa Ffe's poem while preserving echoes of his rhymes. Below are the two initial stanzas of the poems; Darío's version is on the right.

Senyora, magüer *consiento*
E quiero sofrir mi danyo,
Mas pensat por *sentimiento*
No me 'nganyo.

Senyora, si penedir
A todos bien pareçiese,
Hora es que 'l buen serbir
En ta bos lo defendiese.
Por çelar lo que en bos *siento*
Ensuenyo que no me 'nsanyo,
Más pensat por *sentimiento*
No me 'nganyo. (ll. 1–12)

Señora, Amor es *violento*;
y cuando nos transfigura
nos enciende el *pensamiento*
la locura.

No pidas paz a mis brazos,
que a los tuyos tienen presos;
son de guerra mis abrazos
y son de incendio mis besos;
y sería vano *intento*
el tornar mi mente obscura,
si me enciende el *pensamiento*
la locura. (ll. 1–12)

[109] 'Rubén Darío y el siglo XV', p. 325.

As with the previous poems, I have emphasised the words that are resonant in both texts. On the one hand, Darío is rewriting Provençal poetry into modern Spanish. On the other, he not only starts his poem in the same way as his source, but he constructs his rhymes with words that echo those of Santa Ffe. As a result, Santa Ffe's poem is improved upon in Darío's, who has heightened its rhythm through the sibilant alliteration of lines 5–8 that intensify the trope of love as war and build the tension of the poem's theme which has now become that of love dogged by madness.

His other version of Santa Ffe, 'Copla Esparça', could be placed alongside 'Cosas del Cid', 'A maestre Gonzalo de Berceo', and 'Cyrano en España' as poems in which Spain and France appear shoulder to shoulder as harmonious counterparts.[110] These are texts in which Darío's intent to bridge two traditions (French and Hispanic) is rendered visible. It is worth adding that Provençal poetry is something that both French and Hispanic literary traditions share historically, which makes Darío's choice of these poems all the more significant. In 'Copla Esparça' in particular, Darío's ever-evolving poetics is crystallized in a sonnet that makes Verlaine fit within a Provençal poem. In the *modernista* version, the original title is archaistic and therefore unchanged, as is the overall structure of the poem (eight lines plus four for the 'Tornada'), though the rhyme scheme slightly changes. Darío preserves the metrical scheme present in Santa Ffe, whose stanzas for the most part combine octosyllable lines with a final tetrasyllabic one. This makes the rhythm of his poem similar to that of its Provençal counterpart.

However, while Santa Ffe's 'Copla' sings the praises of a woman envied by others for her character and beauty, Darío's is an erotic description of a lover in the nude. It starts with an allusion to Verlaine's 'Femme et chatte' from *Poèmes saturniens* (1866). In

[110] The 'copla esparza' was a genre of Provençal poetry cultivated by Castilian, Catalan, and Aragonese poets. Around eight-lines long, they were traditionally brief and light-hearted compositions on the theme of love. For more information see Miguel Ángel Perez Priego, '"Dezires, layes y canciones" de Prosas profanas', *Anales de Literatura Española*, no. 28 (2016), pp. 171–197 (pp. 171–184.)

Verlaine's poem, woman and cat mirror each other and exchange traits: as the woman is rendered feline the cat becomes feminine. This sleight of hand is achieved through a chiaroscuro: the whiteness of both womanly hand and feline paw contrast with the shadows surrounding them:

> Elle jouait avec sa chatte,
> Et c'était merveille de voir
> La main blanche et la blanche patte
> S'ébattre dans l'ombre du soir. (ll. 1–4)

How does this make its way into Darío's poem?

> ¡La gata blanca! En el lecho
> maya, se encorva, se extiende.
> Un rojo rubí se enciende
> sobre los globos del pecho. (ll. 1–4)

Darío forgoes the subtlety of Verlaine's play of light and shade to directly describe the woman as a cat crouching and stretching upon the bed. He then describes the black tresses over her naked breasts using what will become one of the central symbols of *Cantos*, the swan:

> Los desatados cabellos
> la divina espalda aroman.
> Bajo la camisa asoman
> dos cisnes de negros cuellos. (ll. 5–8)

By contrast, Santa Ffe is moralistic:

> Tanto, senyora, baledes,
> Que las damas birtuosas,
> Biben de bos rezelosas
> Que la fama les robedes.
> A toda mujer que bal
> Si se plaz haçer buen hecho,
> Para non errar el trecho
> Tome á bos por senyal. (ll. 1–8)

As we can see above, Darío empties Santa Ffe's poem of its content to make use of its Provençal mould. The result is a version of Verlaine's 'Femme et chatte' in which ardent eroticism takes the place of umbrageous seduction.

As with the poems analysed in the previous chapter, the added poems of 1901 are written in such a way that Darío the reader is indistinguishable from Darío the writer. If names such as Hugo, Verlaine, Banville, and Gautier crowded the lines of the previous poems, now we also find names such as Quevedo, Berceo, Anacreon, and Ovid. For instance, this is the first stanza of 'A los poetas risueños':

> Anacreonte, padre de la sana alegría;
> Ovidio, sacerdote de la ciencia amorosa;
> Quevedo, en cuyo cáliz licor jovial rebosa;
> Banville, insigne orfeo de la sacra Harmonía; (ll. 1–4)

And from 'A maestre Gonzalo de Berceo',

> Amo tu delicioso alejandrino
> como el de Hugo, espíritu de España;
> éste vale una copa de champaña,
> como aquél vale «un vaso de bon vino». (ll. 1–4)

In which Darío is directly quoting from Berceo's *Vida de Santo Domingo de Silos* (1240),

> Quiero fer una prosa en román paladino,
> En qual suele ël pueblo fablar a su vecino,
> Ca non so tan letrado por fer otro latino.
> Bien valdrá, commo creo, *un vaso de bon vino*. (ll. 5–8; emphasis added)

Darío's exploration of Spanish's past does not stop here. In the poem sequence 'Trébol', he imbues his writing with echoes of early modern Spanish. The poem, a triple sonnet, could be divided into two sections: the first, comprised of the first two sonnets, is an imagined dialogue between seventeenth-century Spanish poet Luis de Góngora y Argote and painter Diego Velázquez. In the second section, comprising the third sonnet, the speaker (ostensibly Darío himself) addresses both Góngora and Velázquez to sing their praises.

The setting itself is worth commenting upon. Many of the poems of *Cantos* are dialogic pieces. Most of the time the speaker either directly addresses the addressee of his poem or is staged in a dialogue with them. Thus, in 'Al Rey Óscar', he addresses the king directly:

Así, Sire, en el aire de la Francia nos llega (l. 1);

In ‘Salutación a Leonardo’:

Maestro: Pomona levanta tu cesto […] (l. 1);

In ‘A Roosevelt’:

Es con voz de la Biblia, o verso de Walt Whitman
que habría de llegar hasta ti, Cazador’ (ll. 1–2);

In ‘«Spes»’:

Jesús, incomparable perdonador de injurias,
óyeme […]’ (ll. 1–2);

In ‘Melancolía’:

Hermano, tú que tienes la luz, dime la mía (l. 1)

It is a natural evolution from the kind of allusions analysed earlier, whereby the names of prestigious European writers are inscribed into the poems themselves so as to leap across the chasm that separates Spanish American from French literature, engaging the latter in conversation. In the case of ‘Trébol’ in particular, it is easy to see how the fantasy of a reader takes the shape of a poem: to imagine a dialogue between two admired artists and to speak to them.

According to Marasso, the models for the poem can be found in two of Cervantes’s works: *Don Quijote* (1605) and *Viaje del Parnaso* (1614).[111] Upon rereading both works side by side with Darío’s poem, only a clear presence of the former seems beyond doubt. In the case of the *Quijote*, Darío uses the sonnets from the ‘Versos preliminares’ at the beginning of the novel, where we find titles similar to the poem’s ‘De Don Luis de Góngora y Argote a Don Diego de Silva Velázquez’, such as ‘De Solisdán a don Quijote de la Mancha’ or ‘Orlando furioso a don Quijote de la Mancha’. Cervantes’s sonnets are poems in which fictional characters speak to one another, just as in Darío’s ‘Trébol’. The

[111] Marasso, pp. 230–34

similarities are so plain that if we would replace the names of Góngora and Velázquez with those of the Amadís or Orlando, Darío's poem would easily fit in that section of Cervantes's novel. Also, Marasso identifies parallelisms between the second section of Darío's poem and another of the sonnets of the *Quijote* found later in the novel.[112] Below, Cervantes's sestet is on the left and Darío's on the right.

Y si de su Amadís se precia Gaula, por cuyos bravos descendientes Grecia triunfó mil veces, y su fama ensancha, hoy a Quijote le corona el aula do Belona preside, y dél se precia más que Grecia, ni Gaula, la alta Mancha,	A Teócrito y Poussin la Fama dote con la corona del laurel supremo; que en donde da Cervantes el Quijote y yo las telas con mis luces gemo, para Don Luis de Góngora y Argote traerá una nueva palma Polifemo.

If we strip the poems of their different contexts – Cervantes is parodic while Darío is laudatory – what the sonnets say is similar. In Darío's sonnet the message is that Góngora will also achieve fame, just as Cervantes, Velázquez, Theocritus, and Poussin did.[113] Whereas in Cervantes's, the message is that, just as the Amadís achieved fame in Gaula, so will don Quijote in La Mancha. When read side by side, the tone is also similar; nevertheless, Darío is clearly not rewriting Cervantes, as he did Gautier or Banville in the previous poems. Still, the poem shares enough traits with the Spaniard's as to make it seem written within the genre of the Cervantine sonnet, similar to the position that 'Dezires, Layes, y Canciones' occupies vis-à-vis Provençal poetry.

What is more, Cervantes and his *Quijote* are explicitly mentioned in the poem, a gesture that is never gratuitous in Darío. In line 8 of the second sonnet, Darío alludes to *Angélica* and *Medoro*, two characters of Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* – an allusion which puts us squarely in the world of *don Quijote* – and of Góngora's *Romance de Angélica y Medoro*.[114] Darío finds points of contact between his writers. The third sonnet also has

[112] Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quijote de la Mancha* (Barcelona: Galaxia Gutenberg, 2004), pp. 650–51.
[113] It should be said that Darío's reappraisal of Góngora predates that of the *Generación del 27*, encouraged perhaps by the fact that both Moréas and Verlaine had shown interest in the Spanish poet.
[114] See Luis de Góngora y Argote, *Romance de Angélica y Medoro: estudio-comentario*, ed. by Dámaso Alonso (Madrid: Ediciones Acies, 1962).

elements of Ariosto. In line 2 the speaker mentions a hippogriff, the mythological creature that the *Orlando* made famous: 'y vela tu hipogrifo, Velázquez, la Fortuna' (l. 2). Later on, in a quintessentially Cervantine gesture, Darío makes Ariosto's *Angélica* meet Velázquez's *Meninas*: 'y mientras pasa Angélica sonriendo a las Meninas' (l. 13). The effect of Ariosto's presence in the poem is twofold: on the one hand, it engages with the characters and motifs of early modern Spanish literature; on the other, it coheres with the poem's setting: the imaginary of seventeenth-century Spain, the Spain of both Góngora and Velázquez. Also, the poem showcases a vocabulary deliberately taken from Early Modern Spanish. In the first sonnet we find:

> diamante parangón de la pintura (l. 4);
> Yo en equívoco altar, tú en sacro fuego (l. 9);
> con la alma luz, de tu pincel el juego
> el alma duplicó de la faz mía (ll. 13–14).

In the second:

> a preludiar el himno a tu decoro (l. 4);
> y yo las telas con mis luces gemo (l. 12).

Lastly, in the third, there is a Gongorine allusion in italics:

> En tanto *pace estrellas* el Pegaso divino (l. 1)

And finally:

> Gloriosa la península que abriga tal colonia (l. 9).

Octavio Paz is one of the few commentators to have identified this:

> Plenitud verbal, lo mismo en los poemas libres que en esas admirables recreaciones de la retórica barroca que son los sonetos de *Trébol*; soltura, fluidez, sorpresa continua de un lenguaje en perpetuo movimiento.[115]

These are not only subtle echoes of Góngora and Cervantes, but, more generally, of past moments in the history of the Spanish language, just as with 'Dezires, Layes, y Canciones'. Darío explicitly mentions this in 'Historia de mis libros':

[115] Octavio Paz, *Cuadrivio: Darío, López Velarde, Pessoa, Cernuda* (Mexico: Joaquín Mortiz, 1965), p. 45.

> Al escribir Cantos de vida y esperanza, yo había explorado no solamente el campo de poéticas extranjeras, sino también los cancioneros antiguos, la obra ya completa, ya fragmentaria, de los primitivos de la poesía española, en los cuales encontré riqueza de expresión y de gracia que en vano se buscarán en harto celebrados autores de siglos más cercanos.[116]

I should add that the presence of the *Quijote* in *Cantos* can hardly be overstated; it is alluded to in at least seven poems: 'Cyrano en España', 'XI', 'Helios', 'Los Cisnes I', 'Trébol', 'Un soneto a Cervantes', and 'Letanía de nuestro señor Don Quijote'. Sometimes in surprisingly inventive ways, such as these lines from 'Helios':

> que del alma-Quijote y el cuerpo-Sancho Panza
> vuele una psique cierta a la verdad del sueño (ll. 53–54).

This does not imply that Darío was discovering these writers. Rather, by espousing French and Hispanic traditions on the one hand, and probing the history of Hispanic literature on the other, Darío brought to life again not only Spanish but Greco-Roman classics. At the turn of the century, this exploration of the literatures of the past was in the air. As Pérez Priego explains:

> Ahora, al contacto más directo con España, parece reavivado ese interés por lo medieval, alentado también por las tendencias culturales de fin de siglo y la expansión triunfante del prerrafaelismo. No es pues solo un interés por lo medieval hispánico, de preocupación por España como los noventayochistas, sino más amplio, muy apegado también a su interés por la cultura francesa. Esas dos tradiciones, la hispánica y la francesa, explican por ejemplo la versión del Cid que ofrece en su poema, no arrancado de la vieja gesta castellana sino del poema Le Cid de Barbey d'Aurevilly.[117]

Darío was likely inspired by Jean Moréas's *L'école romane*, a movement that rejected Symbolism's obscurity in favour of a neo-classicist revival of Greco-Roman poetry. As is well known, Darío profoundly admired Moréas, praising him in *Los raros*; though critics like Marasso mention his writing as an influence on *Cantos* (202–8), others such as Mapes reject the possibility of *L'école romane* – which represented a return to the Classics – having any appeal for Darío. In Mapes's view, the Nicaraguan was ever thirsty for poetic

[116] 'Historia de mis libros', p. 215.
[117] Pérez Priego, pp. 173–74.

innovation and for that reason turned to Hispanic literature in search of new inspiration.[118] However, if one reads Moréas's *Les Stances* (1893) side by side with Darío's shorter poems of *Cantos* ('«Spes»', 'Filosofía', 'De otoño', 'Amo, amas…', 'Ibis', and 'Thanatos') their similarities become clear: they are short, wistful poems of four to eight lines long, often with a rhyme scheme of ABAB written in a straightforward and heartfelt manner. Unfortunately, critics have limited their reading of *Cantos* by and large to the context of pan-Hispanism. If, however, we take the influence of *L'école romane* on the one hand, and that of the poetry of Virgil, Horace, and Ovid on the other, the presence of Latin literature in Darío's writing of the time comes to the fore.

Darío's writing incorporated interlocutors from past and present, both fictional and historical, evolving towards a more capacious discourse that went beyond French contemporary literature and involved Classical authors as well. Not surprisingly Sylvia Molloy has defined the Nicaraguan's poetry as follows:

> Dos movimientos animan la poesía de Darío, escritor binario por excelencia: voracidad y solipsismo. Por un lado, la necesidad de penetrar y de incorporar: por el otro, la necesidad de cerrarse, de no dejarse incorporar.[119]

To elaborate on Molloy's point, what we find in Darío is, on the one hand, a voracity for women, culture, and languages; and on the other, what Molloy calls solipsism (surely in a figurative sense) since the speaker of these poems absorbs and increasingly incorporates the names and styles of others, making them his own. In consequence, Darío's writing also becomes increasingly self-referential. With this I do not mean that Darío reflects on his life in his poems, which is a truism; I mean that in certain poems the speaker explicitly reflects on the characteristics of his poetry, in a sort of internal allusion, such as in 'Yo soy aquel…'

[118] Mapes, p. 97.
[119] Sylvia Molloy, 'Voracidad y solipsismo en la poesía de Darío', *Zama*, Extraordinario: Rubén Darío (2016), pp. 311–317 (p. 311).

from *Cantos de vida y esperanza* or 'Epístola a la señora de Leopoldo Lugones' from *El canto errante*.

This shift toward the history of Spanish and the Classics coincided not only with Moréas's *L'école romane,* but with the end of *Symbolisme,* which according to Schmigalle left a void for the Nicaraguan that the emergent avant-gardes would never come to fill.[120]

Darío's Latinate Writings

Other classics of Western tradition appear alongside Cervantes, among which the most noteworthy are Ovid, Dante, the authors of the Bible, and Virgil. Ovid, who was already alluded to in the second edition of *Prosas* – and with whose *Metamorphoses* the 'Coloquio de los Centauros' is suffused – makes his appearance in the poems 'Los Cisnes I' and 'Ibis'.[121] In the former, Darío writes,

> Yo te saludo ahora como en versos latinos
> te saludara antaño Publio Ovidio Nasón.
> Los mismos ruiseñores cantan los mismos trinos,
> y en diferentes lenguas es la misma canción.
> A vosotros mi lengua no debe ser extraña.
> A Garcilaso visteis, acaso, alguna vez… (ll. 5–10)

The fragment is revealing because Darío again puts forth a lineage. The swans, mysterious symbols of a higher power, are the privileged audience of the great poets of history: Ovid, Garcilaso, and now Darío. On the other hand, what comes to the fore in this passage is the unity of this lineage beyond linguistic differences, which is part and parcel of Darío's conception of literature, mentioned in Chapter 1, as something that transcends both national and linguistic boundaries.

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[120] *Crónicas desconocidas, I,* pp. 45–46.

[121] For further details, see Marasso p. 91. For an overview of Darío's first classical readings see 'Las humanidades de Rubén Darío' in *Cuestiones rubendarianas*, pp. 141–59. For a general survey of Greco-Roman tropes in Darío's oeuvre see Dolores Ackel Fiore, *Rubén Darío in Search of Inspiration: Greco-Roman Mythology in His Stories and Poetry* (New York: Las Américas, 1963).

'Ibis', the other poem in which Ovid is openly mentioned, is also revealing. In four lines – a Moréan poem – Darío plays with the double meaning of the word at once the title of Ovid's famous poem of exile as well as the name of a bird:

> Cuidadoso estoy siempre ante el Ibis de Ovidio,
> enigma humano tan ponzoñoso y süave
> que casi no pretende su condición de ave
> cuando se ha conquistado sus terrores de ofidio. (ll. 1–4)

The pun suggests that, by force of its venom, Ovid's bitter poem is closer to a snake than to a bird. What makes this minor piece of *Cantos* interesting is that it takes us directly to Darío the reader – it seems as if it were jotted down on the margins of an edition of *Ibis*. If we read closely, the poem actually begins in line 1 by relating the activity of reading.[122]

So far I have analysed poems that show how the writing of Darío is imbued with echoes of French and other moments of Spanish and Provençal, in addition to its many references to Ovid; however, the *modernista* poet attempted to have another language wrought into his writing – namely, Latin. Before looking at his attempt to write in hexameters, it must be said that Latin phrases abound in all of Darío's oeuvre – a trait that became more and more pervasive in his later work. We find them both as titles and as lines made to rhyme with Spanish, as Darío also occasionally does with Italian and English.[123] This is yet another aspect of the multilingualism of Darío's oeuvre. 'Madrigal exaltado', for example, begins as follows:

> *Dies irae, dies illa!*
> *Solvet saeclum in favilla*
> cuando quema esa pupila! (ll. 1–3)

[122] Other poems such as 'Un soneto a Cervantes' are also texts about reading:

> Horas de pesadumbre y de tristeza
> paso en mi soledad. Pero Cervantes
> es buen amigo. Endulza mis instantes (ll. 1–3).

[123] See José Agustín Balseiro, *Seis estudios sobre Rubén Darío* (Madrid: Gredos, 1967), pp. 103–17..

Darío uses the verses from the well-known Latin hymn to begin his single-rhymed triplets, rhyming the two Latin words with a Spanish one: *illa, favilla, pupila*. Similarly, in 'Yo soy aquel...':

> Vida, luz y verdad, tal triple llama
> produce la interior llama infinita;
> el Arte puro como Cristo exclama:
> *Ego sum lux et veritas et vita!* (ll. 85–88)

Here Darío tampers with the vulgate passage 'Ego sum via, veritas et vita' (*Latin Vulgate*, John 14:6) by changing it for his own purposes, both so it can fit the metre of his stanza and so it can rhyme with *infinita*, drawing a parallelism with the *vida, luz y verdad* of line 85. Here is another example from a poem analysed earlier, 'Que el amor no admite cuerdas reflexiones':

> Mi gozo tu paladar
> rico panal conceptúa,
> como en el santo Cantar:
> *Mel et lac sub lingua tua.* (ll. 21–24)

Darío resorts to the recherché *conceptúa* in order to complete the rhyme with the line taken from the *Song of Songs.* Other examples include poems that have a Latin word as title, such as '«Spes»' and '«Charitas»' from *Cantos*. Victor Hugo's work is similarly ripe with Latin dictums and words; many of these phrases come from the Bible. Osvaldo Bazil, a Dominican writer and close friend of Darío, describes the poet's relation to languages other than Spanish as follows:

> No tuvo [Darío] facilidad para aprender idiomas. No habló ni escribió bien ningún idioma extranjero. Se defendía nada más que regularmente con su rudimentario conocimiento del francés, del inglés, del latín y del italiano. El que mejor leía era el francés. Después de veinte años de vivir en París y leer clásicos y modernos franceses, no pudo adquirir el acento parisiense ni soltura al hablarlo […] Leía la Biblia. Era casi su libro único y su única lectura en muchos años. En todos los países donde llegaba, Rubén adquiría un ejemplar de la Biblia. Exigía que fuera con el texto en latín, con la traducción española al frente. Él no hablaba ni leía latín, pero lo entendía un poco y le gustaba citar el texto en latín en sus escritos.[124]

[124] Osvaldo Bazil, 'Biografía de Rubén Darío', *Rubén Darío y sus amigos dominicanos*, ed. by Emilio Rodríguez Demorizi (Bogotá: Ediciones Espiral, 1948), pp. 131–227 (pp. 141–57).

The text is surprising for presenting a Darío who, despite his love for and vast culture of French language and literature, could never master the language.[125] Also, Bazil shows that Darío strove to incorporate Latin into his writing, in a manner that corroborates what we have mentioned thus far. This was common among French writers from Voltaire to Hugo; the practice seems to have increased after 1898 and would remain constant until his death.

There are seven poems in *Cantos* in which either the title or a line is in Latin. One could find other examples in his prose and in his earlier poetry collections; however, what sets *Cantos* apart as far as Latin goes is Darío's oeuvre is his assertion to have achieved Latin hexameters in Spanish with the collection. In the preface he says the following:

> En todos los países cultos de Europa se ha usado el hexámetro absolutamente clásico, sin que la mayoría letrada y, sobre todo, la minoría leída, se asustasen de semejante manera de cantar. En Italia ha mucho tiempo, sin citar antiguos, que Carducci ha autorizado los hexámetros; en inglés, no me atrevería casi a indicar, por respeto a la cultura de mis lectores, que la *Evangelina*, de Longfellow, está en los mismos versos en que Horacio dijo sus mejores pensares.[126]

In 'Historia de mis libros' he expands the point through what often seems like pan-Hispanist rhetoric:

> Español de América y americano de España, canté, eligiendo como instrumento el hexámetro griego y latino, mi confianza y mi fe en el renacimiento de la vieja Hispania en el propio solar y del otro lado del Océano, en el coro de naciones que hacen contrapeso en la balanza sentimental a la fuerte y osada raza del Norte. Elegí el hexámetro por ser de tradición grecolatina y porque yo creo, después de haber estudiado el asunto, que en nuestro idioma, malgré [*sic*] la opinión de tantos catedráticos, hay sílabas largas y breves, y que lo que ha faltado es un análisis más hondo y musical de nuestra prosodia. Un buen lector ha de advertir en seguida los correspondientes valores, y lo que han hecho Voss y otros en alemán, Longfellow y tantos en inglés, Carducci, D'Annunzio y otros en Italia, Villegas, el P. Martín y Eusebio Caro, el colombiano, y todos los que cita Eugenio Melé en su trabajo sobre la Poesía bárbara en España, bien podíamos continuarlo otros, aristocratizando así nuevos pensares.[127]

In the second passage we can see how Darío explicitly presents his hexameters as a cultural project within the Latinist renewal of which he feels part. But how successful is Darío in

[125] For more information on Darío's struggles with French see Grigsby 2019.
[126] *Poesía*, p. 243.
[127] 'Historia de mis libros', p. 216.

transposing hexameters into Spanish? In *Los hexámetros castellanos y en particular los de Rubén Darío* (1935), Julio Saavedra Molina points out that Darío's knowledge of hexameters was lacking, especially when (as in the passage above) he does not distinguish between Voss and Carducci's hexameters, two authors who followed distinct methods.[128] To begin with, Voss's hexameter is a strict six-feet line which is spondaic (a spondee is a foot made of two syllables that are both stressed or long). Other German writers, such as Goethe or Klopstock, favoured trochaic hexameters instead of Voss's spondaic ones; that is, lines in which the foot has one long or stressed syllable followed by one short or weak syllable. For all these writers, however, a foot can only be two- or maximum three-syllables long, but not more than that.[129] By contrast, the rules of Carducci's hexameters are lax. The unit of the foot is no longer restricted to two or three syllables. Indeed, in Carducci's version there is almost no concern for the length of a foot; the focus seems only to be on writing lines made of six stresses or six long syllables. Though this sometimes leads to lines that indeed work as hexameters, the method permits so much variety that the overall metre of the poem often ends up being altogether different. In some of Carducci's poems, we can find lines of five or seven stresses with feet five-syllables-long.[130] Needless to say, they are not hexameters.

After a close analysis of 'Salutación del optimista', Saavedra points out that Darío clearly tried to follow the laxer method, albeit did so with dubious success.[131] Carducci is the only name Darío mentions in both *Cantos* and 'Historia de mis libros' when discussing his professed hexameters, which suggests it might have been his main source for the poem. Nonetheless, of the fifty-nine lines of the poem, at least thirteen are proper hexameters in

[128] Julio Saavedra Molina, *Los hexámetros castellanos y en particular los de Rubén Darío* (Santiago: Prensas de la Universidad de Chile, 1935), p. 67.
[129] *Los hexámetros*, p. 37.
[130] Ibid., p. 62.
[131] Ibid., p. 72.

the sense in which writers such as Goethe or Klopstock thought of. Here are some examples:

> Ínclitas / razas u/bérrimas, / sangre de His/pania fe/cunda, […] (l. 1)
> mágicas / ondas de / vida / van rena/ciendo de / pronto; […] (l. 5)
> tiene su / coro de / vástagos, / altos ro/bustos y / fuertes. […] (l. 37)
> Sangre de His/pania fec/unda, / sólidas / ínclitas / razas […] (l. 40)
> Juntas las / testas an/cianas, ce/ñidas de / líricos / lauros (l. 44)

I have scanned the lines to emphasise the six stresses where the feet are no more than three-syllables long. When read aloud, the distinct rhythm of the lines should ring clear even to those unfamiliar with Latin prosody. Saavedra considers some of them irregular because of the length of the feet. For example, in the fourth foot of the first line, Saavedra would count four syllables:

> / san-gre-de-His/pania

However, if we read them with the likely elision that a Spanish speaker would make between these syllables, the foot turns out to be regular:

> / san-gre-d'is/pania

Nevertheless, there is no question that the poem as a whole is not written in hexameters proper. Even so, lines such as those quoted above undoubtedly carry echoes of the Latin hexameter. Moreover, some of the words Darío uses are deliberately redolent of Latin, as he often employs Latinate diction: for example, *Hispania* is the Roman name for Spain, and ¡*salve!* is a salutation that comes directly from the Latin *salve*. He uses *testas* from the Latin *testa* instead of *cabezas; súbito* from *subitus; ínclita* from *inclitus; ubérrimo* from *uberrimus*; and so forth. Also, in a typically Darian gesture, he openly alludes to Virgil in the poem:

> y en la caja pandórica de que tantas desgracias surgieron
> encontramos de súbito, talismánica, pura, riente,
> cual pudiera decirla en sus versos Virgilio divino,
> la divina reina de luz, ¡la celeste Esperanza! (ll. 7–10)

As mentioned earlier, this is never gratuitous when it comes to the Nicaraguan's poetry. Marasso finds correspondences between some of the lines of the poem and Virgil's fourth Eclogue.[132] The line

> se anuncia un reino Nuevo, feliz sibila sueña (l. 7)

is resonant of Virgil's

> Ultima Cumaei venit iam carminis aetas;
> Magnus ab integro saeclorum nascitur ordo (ll. 5–6)

which in Eugenio de Ochoa's translation, the version to which Darío most likely had access, appears as: 'ya llega la última edad enunciada en los versos de la Sibila de Cumas'.[133]

The hexameter would remain a form of interest for Darío in *El canto errante.* It is the metre in which he wrote his controversial 'Salutación al Águila'[134] – a poem which critics have read narrowly for the ideological contradiction it supposes, overlooking its form and metre – and '«In memoriam» Bartolomé Mitre'.[135] The latter poem's ending explicitly sums up what we have thus far pointed out: both the addition of a new linguistic layer that comes from Classics such as Horace and Virgil, as well as the incorporation of new poetic metres such as the attempted hexameter:

> Yo, que de la argentina tierra siento el influjo en mi mente,
> «llevo mi palma y canto a la fiesta del gran argentino»,
> recordando el hexámetro que vibraba en la lira de Horacio,
> y a Virgilio latino, guía excelso y amado del Dante. (ll. 33–36)

All of Darío's major poems thereafter would include at least some Latin: 'Epístola a la señora de Leopoldo Lugones', 'Poema del otoño', 'Canto a la Argentina', 'La Cartuja', even the French poem '«France-Amérique»' discussed earlier:

> Et toi, Paris! magicienne de la Race,
> reine latine, éclaire notre jour obscur.
> Donnez-nous le secret que votre pas nous trace,

[132] Marasso, pp. 186–87.
[133] Ibid., p. 187.
[134] The poem created widespread controversy for advocating a union between the U.S. and Latin America, in direct contradiction with Darío's earlier and famous anti-imperialist poem 'A Roosevelt' from *Cantos de vida y esperanza*.
[135] Saavedra omits to mention '«In memoriam» Bartolomé Mitre' in his study of Darío's hexameters.

et la force du *Fluctuat nec mergitur* ! (ll. 29–33)

Through his hexameters, his rewriting of classical sources, and his constant insertion of Latin quotations in his writing, Darío added new multilingual echoes to his poetry.

Section II

Thinking through Translation

Chapter 3: English Translations of Rubén Darío

In an article published in *The Nation* in 2006, Roberto González Echevarría laments the scarce knowledge that countries beyond the Hispanic world have of the writings of Rubén Darío and Garcilaso de la Vega, arguably the two most influential poets of the Spanish language. 'They have not traveled well', he writes, 'particularly in English-speaking countries, where they are all but unknown.' He then relates why, to his mind, this is all the more surprising in the case of Darío:

> Darío's case is the most baffling because he is nearly our contemporary, whereas Garcilaso, who lived from 1501 to 1536, can today be safely left on library shelves along with Petrarch, Ronsard and Spenser. Besides, Garcilaso has by now been so thoroughly assimilated into Spanish poetic discourse that it is easy to overlook his presence in the poetry of Neruda and Paz. Darío's innovations, style and even manner are still contemporary, however, as are the polemics that his poetry provoked among other poets, professors and critics.

González Echevarría gives an overview of Darío's life and writings, showing the extent of the Nicaraguan's influence while lucidly unpacking the context in which his work appeared. He does this to set the scene for his review of the then recent *Rubén Darío: Selected Writings* (2006), edited by Ilan Stavans and published by Penguin, which he criticises in the following terms:

> Darío's circulation and reputation in English will not be helped by the publication of this carelessly conceived and executed anthology of his prose and verse. […] The subdivisions draw their headings from the lines of a poem whose translation is particularly appalling. Greg Simon and Steven White's poetry translations are not only awkward; they make basic errors that are beyond the usual disputes about word choice.

The outrage that transpires from González Echevarría's article is telling of two gaps that immediately stand out when we look at the reception of Darío: on the one hand, the gap between Darío's canonical status in Spanish and his obscure status in English; on the other, the gap between the high quality of Darío's writing in Spanish and the low quality of the translations in English. González Echevarría continues his article in the manner of the passage above, bemoaning the mistranslations found in the first ever Penguin edition of

Rubén Darío. Unfortunately, he does not tell us why Darío is all but unknown in English-speaking countries. One of the main reasons seems to be the quality of the translations, but González Echevarría never explicitly asserts this. If he does not do so, perhaps it is because a complex array of historical, cultural, and literary factors come into play when explaining Darío's obscurity in countries not mainly Hispanic.

As mentioned earlier, the focus of this thesis is particularly on the English-speaking world, as English is the lingua franca of our times. Beyond the quality of specific translations, the particular challenges posed by the question of Darío's obscurity in English are numerous and varied. To answer the question thoroughly, the history of the translation of poetry in English as a genre in itself, which has changed considerably over time – especially in the last decades given the rise of translation studies – must be taken into account. The question also demands tracing the shifting location of Spanish American literature in English, one which was almost non-existent before the 1960s and the so-called 'Boom'. It also raises questions regarding the reception of authors in literary cultures other than their own. Lastly, it is important to remember that Darío's own canonical status within Spanish (which today seems beyond doubt) has changed over the past century.

Since many such factors come into play when disentangling the causes behind the reception of any translated author, I will start by focusing on the translation and reception of Spanish American literature in English, before moving on to consider questions of reception and the analysis of the translations of Darío to date. I am especially interested in understanding why, from a historical point of view, an author is translated in a certain way, as it sheds light on the elusive interplay between the characteristics of a certain oeuvre and those of the literary culture to which it is foreign.

The so-called 'Boom' of Spanish American literature translated into English, which came to prominence in the 1960s and 70s, and found its culmination in Gregory Rabassa's 1970 translation of García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad* (1967), represents a turning point in the history of translated literature in English. Surely, it is no coincidence that translation studies as a discipline was consolidated in the wake of those years. Likewise, the effects of the 'Boom' also impacted literature originally written in English. According to Lawrence Venuti,

> The English-language success of Latin American writing during the 1960s undoubtedly altered the canon of foreign fiction in British and American cultures, not only by introducing new texts and writers, but by validating experimentalist strategies that undermined the assumptions of classical realism, both theoretical (individualism, empiricism) and ideological (liberal humanism).[136]

Darío, however, who was born in 1868 and died in 1916, lived long before those auspicious decades. If we draw a chronology for the changing landscape of Latin American translations into English before the 1960s, the picture is one of dearth. Prior to 1890, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento's *Facundo* was the only book-length Spanish American work of literary prose translated into English.[137] It was on the year of Darío's death that the first monograph on the region's literature was published, Alfred Coester's *Literary History of Spanish American Literature*, four years before Isaac Goldberg, a pioneer in the field, published *Studies in Spanish America* (1920).[138] Two years after Darío's death, the first U.S. academic journal devoted to Spanish America, *Hispanic American Historical Review,* was founded in 1918. To be sure, before the 1930s very few Latin American works were

[136] Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: a History of Translation* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 228.
[137] *In Translation: Translators on Their Work and What It Means*, ed. by Esther Allen and Susan Bernofsky (New York: Columbia UP, 2013), pp. 83–93.
[138] Peter Hulme, *The Dinner at Gonfarone's: Salomón de La Selva and his pan-American Project in Nueva York, 1915-1919* (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2019), p. 139.

translated into English.[139] It was not until the outbreak of the Cuban Revolution in 1959 that readers' attention toward the region resulted in a flurry of translations.[140]

But even considering the 1930s as a landmark seems tenuous if we probe further. 1930 is the year that Harriet de Onís, the first truly important English-language translator of Latin American literature, published her first translation from the Spanish: *The Eagle and the Serpent* by Martín Luis Guzmán, a novel on the Mexican Revolution. However, according to Deborah Cohn, almost all commercial publishers of the time refused to publish the literature of a region that was practically unknown.[141] In truth, at any time before the 1960s very few – if any – Latin American authors were widely read in North America.[142] On the other side of the Atlantic, ties with Spanish-language literature in the United Kingdom were almost exclusively via Spain until the 1960s. At the University of Oxford, the first official lecturer in Latin American literature was D.P. Gallagher in 1968, whereas the study of Spanish within the framework of the Final Honour School in Modern Languages had begun in 1905. In spite of this, Sir Cecil Maurice Bowra, a prestigious Oxford classicist and literary critic in the years of post-war Britan, published an essay on Darío in his collection *Inspiration and Poetry* (1955). While at times he seems to commend the Nicaraguan's 'unfailing technique, excellent ear and abounding vitality',[143] the essay is marred by the author's Eurocentric racism:

> To see him in his right perspective we must remember that he was a stranger from an underdeveloped land, that he had Indian blood in his veins and lacked the complexity and the sophistication which would belong to a European of his gifts and tastes. He differs from European poets of his time because he speaks for human

[139] Among the general ignorance of the region that existed far and wide in the United States, the city of New York was an exception from the beginning of the twentieth century: it had a vibrant and active Hispanic literary community. For more information see Hulme.
[140] Jeremy Munday, *Style and Ideology in Translation: Latin American Writing in English* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 51–54.
[141] Deborah Cohn, 'A Tale of Two Translation Programs: Politics, the Market, and Rockefeller Funding for Latin American Literature in the United States during the 1960s and 1970s', *Latin American Research Review*, vol. 41, no. 2 (2006), pp. 139–64 (p. 154).
[142] See Irene Rostagno, *Searching for Recognition: The Promotion of Latin American Literature in the United States* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1997).
[143] C.M. Bowra, *Inspiration and Poetry* (London: Macmillan, 1955), p. 244.

> nature at a very simple level and takes things as they come without shaping his life to a plan.[144]

Given Bowra's influence at the time, this undoubtedly did a disservice to Darío's reception in the U.K. If we look at other landmarks in the history of Latin American literature in the country, they also seem to point to the Cuban Revolution as a turning point. The Latin American Centre at Oxford was founded in 1964 in St. Anthony's College, though its interest in the region was chiefly historical and political rather than literary, while the Centre for Latin American Studies at Cambridge was established in 1966. Similarly, the Institute of Latin American Studies at London University was founded in 1962. According to Latin Americanists Nikki Craske and David Lehmann,

> By the mid-twentieth century the UK had precious little academic expertise on the region, especially when compared to the Middle East and the former colonies. […] Latin American literature was scarcely recognized in departments of Spanish—and Rubén Darío was taught as if he was a Spanish poet who just happened to be born in Nicaragua.[145]

Like the U.S., it was not until the Cuban Revolution and the 'Boom' that there was any real interest in Latin American literature.

Despite these circumstances, Darío did not have to wait until the 1960s to be translated into English. In Sturgis E. Leavis's bibliography of translations and criticism of Spanish American literature published from 1872 to 1932 there is a handful of publications on Darío that appeared during the last years of his life and in the wake of his death, particularly between 1914 and 1919.[146] The only book-length translation among those publications – albeit more a booklet than a book – is Salomón de la Selva and Thomas Walsh's *Eleven Poems* (1916), published by the Hispanic Society of America the year of

[144] Ibid., p. 245.
[145] Nikki Craskke and David Lehmann, 'Fifty Years of Research in Latin American Studies in the UK', *Revista europea de estudios latinoamericanos y del caribe/European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, no. 72 (2002), pp. 61–80 (p. 61).
[146] See Sturgis E. Leavis, *Hispano-American Literature in the United States: A Bibliography of Translations and Criticism* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1932).

Darío's death. Nonetheless, six years later, the translator Charles McMichael published his renderings of Darío titled *Prosas profanas and other poems* (1922), also more a booklet than a book (nine poems in total). In spite of the title, McMichael included a small selection of poems taken not only from *Prosas profanas* but also from *Azul…* and *El canto errante.* Given Darío's celebrity status in the Spanish-speaking world of the time, in addition to the tour he partially carried out in the United States by invitation of the Hispanic Society, the publication of these booklets around the time of his death should be unsurprising. What is surprising, by contrast, is the extent to which they failed to produce any significant interest in his writing, as another book-length translation would not be published until 1965.

The interim period between 1916 and 1965 roughly overlaps with the rise and ensuing canonisation of Anglo-American and British Modernism. If we compare the poetics of Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, or William Carlos Williams with both McMichael's and Walsh and de la Selva's English-speaking Darío, the differences are vast. Modernism not only changed literature originally written in English, but it also brought about significant changes for the genre of translated poetry:

> The dominance of transparent discourse in English-language translation was decisively challenged at the start of the twentieth century, when modernism emerged in British and American literary cultures. The experimentation that characterized the literature of this period brought with it innovative forms of translation that avoided any notion of fluency tied to the current standard dialect by cultivating extremely heterogeneous discourses, principally in poetry translations, but also more widely in poetic composition.[147]

What Venuti calls 'the dominance of transparent discourse in English-language translation' is the predominance of certain conventions in translated literature whose origin he traces back to the early modern period, according to which translations are valued on the basis of their fluency and assimilation to local poetics (what is otherwise known as 'domestication'). As André Lefevere points out, these conventions have often led to

[147] Venuti, p. 164.

baffling contradictions, such as the insistence on the part of reviewers that classical authors such as Homer and Horace should be translated into rhyme to be rendered more faithfully, even if neither the Ancient Greeks nor the Romans wrote in rhyme. In the words of Lefevere,

> Many nineteenth-century translations of Catullus […] rhyme, even though the original does not. The need to rhyme, therefore, by no means comes out of the "structure" of the original; quite the contrary. It is imposed on translators by the "translation poetics" of their day, which in the nineteenth century held that acceptable poetry translations should make use of the illocutionary strategies of meter and rhyme. Translation poetics, like all poetics, tend to change over the years.[148]

When Modernism came about, as Venuti reminds us, it changed the dominance of that convention. Free verse became established as the conventional poetic idiom. Nevertheless, according to Venuti, instead of eradicating domestication altogether, it merely exchanged the conventions to which texts were to be assimilated:

> By the start of the 1950s modernist translation had achieved widespread acceptance in British and American literary culture—but only in part, notably the claim of aesthetic autonomy for the translated text and formal choices that were now familiar enough to insure a domestication of the foreign text, that is, free verse and precise current language.[149]

These new conventions came to be established through the success of works such as Pound's *Cathay,* published in 1915. If we take it as the backdrop against which de la Selva and Walsh's renderings of Darío were read in those decades, the latter must have come across as something belonging to the Anglo-American and British nineteenth century. The situation is further compounded by the distinct historical developments that both literary traditions, in English and in Spanish, underwent at the turn of the century.

[148] André Lefevere, *Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 99–100.
[149] Venuti, p. 178.

Caught between the throes of a declining empire and the paucity of the incipient postcolonial nations of the Americas, Spanish-language literature had stagnated in the nineteenth century. When faced with this reality, *modernistas* strove to enter the wider conversation of the West by fast-forwarding the development of their literature. As a result, several schools of poetics appear collapsed into one in *modernista* poetry: it drew not only from Romanticism (e.g. early Darío is a Romantic poet) but from *Parnasse, Décadentisme, Symbolisme*, and British Pre-Raphaelitism, along with the writings of Edgar Allan Poe and Walt Whitman. However, these precipitous changes took place at the end of the nineteenth century, before Pound and Eliot arrived in England in the early twentieth century. In truth, Modernism entered the conversation of *fin-de-siècle* literature – which was already taking place in France, in Latin America, in Spain, in Portugal, in Italy, and in Germany – rather belatedly.[150] As Peter Childs argues,

> At the time of this steady increase in outside influence on literature up to the Great War, English poetry was at one of its lowest points, according to many critics. Prior to the changes in diction and subject matter achieved by the well-known war poets, such as Isaac Rosenberg, Wilfred Owen and Edward Thomas, many of whom were not highly regarded until the 1930s, poetry was deeply conservative and insular. A large number of the prominent names of the Edwardian period are now nearly forgotten: William Watson, W.E. Henley, Laurence Binyon and Alfred Austin (Poet Laureate from 1896 to 1913). Unless it is by the Romantic-turned-modernist W.B. Yeats, the poetry of the pre-war period most likely to be studied now was written by two independent-minded and highly individualistic poets better known to the public for their fiction: Thomas Hardy (1840-1928), whose influence on modern

[150] The belatedness was already acknowledged by Arthur Symons in a note to the first edition of *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1899), which largely introduced the movement to Anglophone readers, where he discusses *Symbolisme'*s international influence at the time:

> In Germany it seems to be permeating the whole of literature, its spirit is that which is deepest in Ibsen, it has absorbed the one new force in Italy, Gabriele d'Annunzio. I am told of a group of Symbolists in Russian Literature, there is another in Dutch literature, in Portugal it has a little school of its own under Eugenio de Castro; I even saw some faint strivings that way in Spain, and the aged Spanish poet Campoamor has always fought on behalf of a 'transcendental' art in which we should recognise much of what is most essential in the doctrine of Symbolism.

See Arthur Symons, *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*, ed. by Matthew Creasy (Manchester: Carcanet, 2014), p. 3. Three years earlier, Darío had published *Los raros* and *Prosas profanas* in Argentina.

> British poetry has been as great as anyone's, and Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936), probably the most popular literary writer of the period.[151]

Nevertheless, when Modernism did enter the conversation, it did so sweepingly, with novel poetic principles and ground-breaking experimentation that would change the face of English-language literature and beyond. Chronologically, Modernism took root when the *vanguardias* were doing so in Spanish America – its proverbial *annus mirabilis*, 1922, is also the year Vallejo's *Trilce* was published, as well as Oliverio Girondo's *Veinte poemas para ser leídos en el tranvía* and Manuel Maples Arce's *Andamios interiores (poemas radiográficos)*; in addition to being the year when the magazine *Proa* was founded in Buenos Aires by Jorge Luis Borges and *Actual. Hoja de vanguardia* by the *estridentistas* in Mexico City.

Still, *Modernismo* and Modernism shared influences, such as *Décadentisme* and *Symbolisme*, and both looked to Paris as their artistic capital, not to mention their common aim to be modern and renew their respective literary traditions.[152] A long-standing debate exists as to whether *Modernismo* can be understood as a kind of Hispanic Modernism. Among the translators under discussion, Acereda and Derusha in their preface refer to *Modernismo* as Hispanic Modernism, ostensibly on the basis that as literary movements both represent each tradition's response to modernity. Other writers and critics, such as Octavio Paz, reject the equation and posit instead that the Latin American equivalent of Modernism is actually the *Vanguardias*, whereas *Modernismo* would be an equivalent of *Parnasse* and *Symbolisme*.[153] This reasoning seems overly chronological. A third position in the debate comprises an altogether different critical strand that dates back to the Spanish

[151] Peter Childs, *Modernism* (London: Routledge, 2017), pp. 99–101.
[152] To underline the commonalities, it is worth noting that Darío and Pound were both greatly influenced by Rémy de Gourmont and Théophile Gautier, besides their common interest in troubadour poetry. Another salient point of contact between *modernistas* and modernists concerns the influence of Jules Laforgue, who was a key reading for T.S. Eliot and Leopoldo Lugones.
[153] Octavio Paz, *Los hijos del limo* (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1974), p. 126.

writer Juan Ramón Jiménez; it was later developed by critics such as Federico de Onís, Iván Schulman, and Ricardo Gullón. These critics see *Modernismo* as an irrevocable change of paradigm that is almost commensurate with modernity itself, whose multiple manifestations (*Modernismo*, Modernism, *Modernité*, etc.) share the same root. According to these critics, we still have not lived through the end of *Modernismo*. While this latter view has the advantage of hinting at the global dimension of modernization (i.e. industrial capitalism), it fails to account for the differences between traditions and indeed between literary movements within the same language. Arthur Symons's influential *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* of 1899, later expanded with added essays and translations in 1908 and 1919, is perhaps the most important English-language document to attest to the commonalities between movements. As is well known, it would become formative reading for some of the most important modernist writers, namely William Butler Yeats, T.S. Eliot, and James Joyce.[154]

In the following pages, I will analyse Symons's book in detail because it gives us a glimpse at how the French *fin de siècle*, as a body of literary works, was read differently by modernists and *modernistas*. It is a key text to understand how their readings diverge significantly despite their common subject matter; in between Symons's lines we can make out omissions and emphases that would be decisive for the development of modern poetry in English, the far-reaching effects of which would bear on Darío's reception. As Creasy explains, '*The Symbolist Movement* […] does not simply mediate between French literature and English speakers; it mediates between the *fin de siècle* and Modernism.'[155] Indeed, it does so because it is idiosyncratic as literary history, something which Eliot later in his

[154] For an overview of its large impact upon these writers, see Matthew Creasy's introduction to *The Symbolist Movement*, pp. x–xxix.
[155] *The Symbolist Movement*, p. xiii.

career commented upon in his own critical writings.[156] It fashions its own image of French literature, leaving out some writers relevant for *Symbolisme* and even disdaining others who were equally relevant.

Jean Moréas is a case in point. As the author of the symbolist manifesto, Moréas was greatly influential for Darío and *Modernismo* at large, both for his early writings as well as his later classicist ones. By contrast, Symons only mentions him once in his work, and does so in the following terms:

> In this hazardous experiment [the book *Le Pèlerin passionné*] M. Jean Moréas, whose real talent lies in quite another direction, has brought nothing into literature but an example of deliberate singularity for singularity's sake. I seem to find the measure of the man in a remark I once heard him make in a café, where we were discussing the technique of metre: 'You, Verlaine!' he cried, leaning across the table, 'have only written lines of sixteen syllables; I have written lines of twenty syllables!'
>
> That is indeed the measure of the man, and it points a criticism upon not a few of the busy little *littérateurs* who are founding new *revues* every other week in Paris. These people have nothing to say, but they are resolved to say something, and to say it in the newest mode. They are Impressionists because it is the fashion, Symbolists because it is the vogue, Decadents because Decadence is in the very air of the cafés. And so, in their manner, they are mile-posts on the way of this new movement, telling how far it has gone.[157]

Elsewhere, Symons brushes *Décadentisme* aside, presenting it as nothing else than a forerunner to Symbolism:

> Meanwhile, something which is vaguely called Decadence had come into being. That name, rarely used with any precise meaning, was usually either hurled as a reproach or hurled back as a defiance. […] But a movement which in this sense might be called Decadent could but have been a straying aside from the main road of literature. […] The interlude, half a mock-interlude, of Decadence, diverted the attention of the critics while something more serious was in preparation.[158]

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[156] 'After we have read Verlaine and Laforgue and Rimbaud and return to Mr. Symons' book, we may find that our own impressions dissent from his. The book has not, perhaps, a permanent value for the one reader, but it has led to results of permanent importance for him'. See T.S. Eliot, *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (London: Metheun, 1970), p. 5.

[157] *The Symbolist Movement,* p. 177. Nor does Moréas appear in recent revaluations of the *fin de siècle*, such as in Vincent Sherry's otherwise excellent *Modernism and the Reinvention of Decadence* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2015).

[158] Ibid., p. 7.

Scholars have recently re-evaluated the importance of *Décadentisme.*[159] Murray Pittock points out that Symons's downgrade of *Décadence* as a passing phase in Symbolism's development is often wrongly assumed to be a judicious observation, ignoring that Symons's text originally discussed *Décadence* in the same terms in which he later did *Symbolisme*. Symons changed the term because of the moral implications that the word 'Decadence' had acquired in the latter half of the 1890s in the aftermath of Oscar Wilde's infamous trial.[160] Pittock sums up Symon's far-reaching influence as follows:[161]

> What he had to say made itself felt across a huge range of the subject-matter of what became Modernism: from his part in the Metaphysical revival and his idea of Donne as in a 'morbid state of body and brain and nerves' to his identification of the nature of Symbolism in literature, despite all the prejudices, apostasies, and opportunistic changes of heart of which Symons's arguments were guilty.[162]

Moreover, as Creasy points out, Symons's understanding of French *Symbolisme* was mostly retrospective. Of the writers he discussed, only Maeterlinck and Huysmans were alive when he first published his book.[163] By contrast, when Darío published *Los raros*, half of the authors he discussed were still alive. Inevitably, they both lagged behind Paris. Nonetheless, Darío had followed the vicissitudes of French literature since at least the mid-1880s, when *Azul…* (1888) was published in Chile. It is for this reason that his own image of French poetry included *Parnasse*; by contrast, in Symons's view, *Parnasse* was already something of the past. More so, Symons puts forth a narrative in which even *Décadence*, which largely overlapped with *Symbolisme* in the *fin de siècle*, was definitely superseded

[159] See David Weir, *Decadence and the Making of Modernism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995).
[160] Murray Pittock, *Spectrum of Decadence: The Literature of the 1890s* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 71.
[161] Frank Kermode discusses Symons's influence for the development of poetic image in modern poetry. His opinion of Symons is worth citing: 'That *The Symbolist Movement* is absolutely a good book I suppose nobody would suggest. It is scrappy, lacking the pertinacity we have come to expect from critics; it is often disagreeably imprecise. As a simple exposition of its subject it has of course been superseded. But it is a very good place to look if one wants to know how French Symbolism struck a well-informed, avant-garde Paterian in the nineties; and considering that the character of modern poetry has been, to a remarkable degree, formed by that contact, we may well think it worthwhile to do so.' See Frank Kermode, *Romantic Image* (London: Routledge, 2002) pp. 127–140 (pp. 128–9).
[162] Pittock, p. 77.
[163] *The Symbolist Movement,* p. xx.

by the latter.[164] As a result, a great deal of the vocabulary of forms and tropes which *Parnasse* represented for Darío would have become, in the eyes of the modernists who read Symons, rather dated. In particular, the craftsmanship that Parnassians raised against their predecessors the Romantics posited the structure of poetry as inextricable from rhyme. José María Heredia went as far as to suggest that the symbolists' incorporation of *vers libre* – one of modernist poetry's revolutionary banners – was an international conspiracy led by the poets of the movement who were foreigners:

> Tenez, Viellé-Griffin [*sic*], par exemple, qui est anglo-saxon et qui a eu, je crois, une très grosse influence dans le mouvement symboliste, eh bien ! il nous donne aujourd'hui, sous le titre de vers, une prose qui ressemble à une sorte de traduction linéaire d'un poème étranger. Mais encore une fois ce ne sont pas des vers ! […] Et que de Belges aussi ! et que de Suisses ! On dirait, ma parole, que les symbolistes de France ont pris le mot d'ordre à Bruxelles, à Liège, ou à Genève ![165]

While Darío indeed embodies the most far-reaching period of renovation in Spanish-language verse, he seldom wrote in free verse. His wide-ranging innovations, rather than *vers libre*, can be classified as *vers libéré* or *vers libres classiques*.[166] That is, as a liberated form of regular verse that plays with caesura, enjambment, line length, and rhyming structure; but which maintains the indispensability of rhyme and, more often than not, isosyllabism.[167] Coupled with his Parnassian mythological tropes, this would make Darío seem passé when read through a modernist lens. Likewise, the painters to whom he felt closest were part of the art nouveau movement, not impressionism or expressionism:

> *Sus* pintores —no precisamente porque los mencione con mayor o menor frecuencia, sino porque saturan e impregnan su prosa y poesía— son, en mi opinión, tres: Watteau, Moreau y el movimiento art nouveau, representado y dominado original y magistralmente, entre 1894 y 1898, por Aubrey Beardsley.[168]

[164] In time, as Sherry points out, 'the inventiveness of modernism [would be attached] to the theory of novelty in symbolism and detach[ed] from the mood of decadence', p. 9.
[165] Clive Scott, *Vers Libre* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1990), p. 100.
[166] This is not to discredit the importance of the *vers libre* he did write, such as in 'Heraldos' from *Prosas profanas*. Darío was one of the introducers of *vers libre* in Spanish.
[167] For more information on *vers libéré* see Scott 2012, p. 310.
[168] Carlos Martínez Rivas, 'Watteau y su siglo en Rubén Darío', *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos*, No. 212 (1967), pp. 445–53 (p. 446).

Darío's reaction to Auguste Rodin's sculpture is illustrative of his aesthetics, which can be found in two essays from *Peregrinaciones* (1901). The Nicaraguan's teetering ambivalence comes through in several passages. He is torn when it comes to taking a position before the scandals roused by Rodin's sculptures:

> Yo expondré, con toda la transparencia de que me siento capaz, este resumen: he hallado a dos Rodines: un Rodin maravilloso de fuerza y de gracia artística, que domina a la inmediata, vencedor en la luz, maestro plástico y prometeico encendedor de vida, y otro Rodin cultivador de la fealdad, torturador del movimiento, incomprensible, excesivo, ultraviolento, u obrando a veces *como entregado a esa cosa extraña que se llama la casualidad*.[169]

It is the latter Rodin, the sculptor of tortuous and lopsided statuary, who made Darío uncomfortable. Harmony and symmetry, aesthetic values that were also at the heart of Parnassian craftsmanship, gave way to the representation of the swirling violence of life in the French sculptor's later work. Groping for a model against which to measure the Frenchman's artistic value, Darío cannot help but compare him with the masters of Ancient Greece:

> Pero, ante todo, debo declarar que no concibo en Rodin un representativo del espíritu griego; Rodin no tiene de Grecia más que el concepto de la tragedia; es la máscara trágica la que le obsede. [...] Pero no hay en él la virtud olímpica de Fidias, de Praxíteles, de los antiguos maestros helenos.[170]

It is clear that, for all of what is often called its revolutionary effects, the aesthetics of *Modernismo* had a classicist root, as was inevitable when influenced by *Parnasse*.[171] As discussed in Chapter 2, once *Symbolisme* had come to an end, classical sources would figure

[169] Rubén Darío, *Peregrinaciones* (Paris: Imprenta de la Vda de Ch. Bouret, 1901), pp. 83–84.
[170] Ibid., pp. 88–89.
[171] Rivers of ink have run on the topic of the influences of *Modernismo*, whether classical, medieval, early modern or modern. In the case of Darío's classicism specifically, Marasso remains the best source on the matter, as well as Mejía Sánchez and Fiore. However, if we are to look at what Darío himself wrote, besides the evident neo-classicism of *Abrojos* (1887) and the classicism of his works from *Cantos de vida y esperanza* (1905) onwards, this passage from the preface to *El canto errante*, 'Dilucidaciones', is worth citing in full by way of illustration:

> Y mis aficiones clásicas encontraban un consuelo con la amistosa conversación de cierto joven maestro [...] Amador de la lectura clásica, me he nutrido de ella, mas siguiendo el paso de mis días. He comprendido la fuerza de las tradiciones en el pasado, y de las previsiones en lo futuro.

See *Poesía*, pp. 303–05.

more prominently in the poetry of Darío. Still, while he could not bring himself to enjoy Rodin's later work, he intuited that it was likely to break a path. The following passage discussing the Frenchman's sculpture of Balzac exemplifies his earnest effort to understand the furore roused by the piece:

> No, decididamente, después de tomar por varios caminos, no entiendo del todo. Se trata de la más plástica de las artes. ¿Para qué haber modelado de antemano con loable tenacidad [la] anatomía del autor de la Comedia Humana para venir a presentar esa cara deforme y esos grandes pies que se escapan de esa salida de baño? Miro de frente, y un profundo respeto por el genial artista no contiene la vaga sonrisa que se escurre a la violenta imposición de un aspecto de foca. ¡Deliberadas faltas de ortografía del Arte! *M'introdui en ton histoire...* [*sic*] Miro detrás y la masa inclinada clama por un puntal. Miro de lado y el dolmen elefantino se obstina en no querer revelarme su secreto. Entonces, con resolución completa, no me acepto a mí mismo, me increpo y me llamo en alemán bildungphilister, para castigarme por el lado de Nietzsche. Persisto en creer en la lealtad de Rodin. Sacerdote de la síntesis, nos habrá querido dar la esfinge moderna o la fórmula de un arte futuro.[172]

The passage is also revealing in its ironic self-admonishment for not being able to understand the work, to the extent of calling himself in Nietzschean terms *ein Bildungphilister* – a philistine of art. It also shows Darío's intuition of Rodin's potential for the future of Western art.[173]

Such intimations, which arose amid the frustration at not understanding some of the latest tendencies in European art, also appear in Darío's appraisal of Filippo Tommaso Marinetti and Arthur Rimbaud. As he did with Rodin, Darío goes back to the classics when he reviews Marinetti's futurist manifesto, debunking the Italian's claim to novelty by quoting the text and ironically glossing upon it:

> 1. «Queremos cantar el amor del peligro, el hábito de la energía y de la temeridad.» En la primera proposición paréceme que el futurismo se convierte en pasadismo. ¿No está todo eso en Homero?

[172] Ibid., p. 93.

[173] The case of the poet Rainer Maria Rilke, who actively sought to live close to Rodin and went as far as working as his secretary to that end, stands in stark contrast to the Nicaraguan. Rilke considered Rodin the embodiment of modern art. It is instructional to consider that Rilke and Darío lived in Paris at the same time, and were exposed to similar artworks, despite the vast differences between their poetic oeuvres. For more on Rilke's time working for Rodin see Donald Prater, *A Ringing Glass: The Life of Rainer Maria Rilke* (Oxford: OUP, 1994), pp. 89–133.

> 2. «Los elementos esenciales de nuestra poesía serán el valor, la audacia y la rebeldía.» ¿No está todo eso ya en todo el ciclo clásico?
> 3. «Habiendo hasta ahora magnificado la literatura la inmovilidad pensativa, el éxtasis y el sueño, queremos exaltar el movimiento agresivo, el insomnio febriciente [*sic*], el paso gimnástico, el salto peligroso, la bofetada y el puñetazo.» Creo que muchas cosas de esas están ya en el mismo Homero, y que Píndaro es un excelente poeta de los deportes.[174]

At the same time, he applauds Marinetti's enthusiasm and admires the thrust of his style:

> En su violencia, aplaudo la intención de Marinetti, porque la veo por su lado de obra de poeta, de ansioso y valiente poeta que desea conducir el sagrado caballo hacia nuevos horizontes. Encontraréis en todas esas cosas mucho de excesivo; el son de guerra es demasiado impetuoso; pero ¿quiénes sino los jóvenes, los que tienen la primera fuerza y la constante esperanza, pueden manifestar los intentos impetuosos y excesivos?[175]

Though he ultimately rejected the tenets of futurism, he still recognized its aesthetic potential. Likewise, when in 1913 Darío reviewed an Italian biography on Rimbaud written by Ardengo Soffici, he professed a bewilderment that is redolent of his reaction before Rodin's *Balzac*, along with a similar intuition of its aesthetic importance.[176]

> El talento de Rimbaud se desarrolló, escribe muchas de sus mejores poesías y las *Iluminaciones,* poema en prosa, de una inaudita concepción y de más que inaudita factura. Yo confieso que hay cosas que no comprendo en absoluto sino en sentido de sugestión musical. En veces se cree, vislumbrar el genio —y cosa bien natural—, no se asombra uno mucho, por lo tanto, en otras ocasiones, de pensar en la locura…[177]

On the one hand, the fact that Darío can only follow Rimbaud 'en sentido de sugestión musical' reveals the confines of his conception of poetry, greatly influenced by *Parnasse* as mentioned earlier, whereby musicality is the most important feature. On the other hand, the suggestion of madness in an artist whose work seemed unintelligible was commonplace

[174] Rubén Darío, *Letras*, in *Obras completas*, I, p. 618.
[175] Ibid., p. 209.
[176] This would make Darío one of Rimbaud's first commentators in Spanish, considering that his passing references to him in *Los raros* date from as early as 1896. Darío was also one of the first commentators and translators of Lautréamont. For more information on the translations of Rimbaud in Spanish, see José Francisco Ruiz Casanova, 'Arthur Rimbaud', in *Diccionario histórico de la traducción en España*, ed. by Francisco Lafarga and Luis Pegenaute (Madrid: Gredos, 2009), pp. 974–75. For information on Darío and Lautréamont, see Publio González-Rodas, 'Rubén Darío y el Conde de Lautréamont', *Revista Iberoamericana*, 37:75 (1971), pp. 375–89.
[177] Rubén Darío, 'Un nuevo libro sobre Arthur Rimbaud', in *Escritos dispersos de Rubén Darío*, ed. by Pedro Luis Barcia (La Plata: Universidad Nacional de la Plata, 1968), pp. 308–16 (p. 313).

in the *fin de siècle*. It is natural for Darío to have reacted that way. He then adds: 'Imposible analizar en estas harto limitadas líneas la extraordinaria, desbocada, hermética, relampagueante, desconcertante creación rimbaudina.'[178] Clearly, he is nevertheless enthused by Rimbaud. Curiously, one of the things that puzzled Darío of the French poet's life was his renouncement of his privileged position within French literature, a reaction which all too clearly bespeaks the cultural anxieties of the postcolonial predicament of Spanish American writers at the time:

> Ahora bien, lo prodigioso, lo portentoso de ese niño enfermo, es que en lo mejor de su juventud arrojó su talento, su genio, al olvido. Y se fue. Se fue de Francia para países extraños. Sin un céntimo. A ser comerciante, traficante, qué sé yo, en pueblos africanos, a sufrir temperaturas imposibles y a realizar esta cosa que resiste a todas las fuerzas de su voluntad: olvidar a París.[179]

What Darío cannot understand is how one can reject the cultural capital that Paris offers, for which he longed all his life. Despite these words, Verlaine remained Darío's poetic idol, not Rimbaud, as was the case of Symons and most of those who followed French poetry before Modernism would rewrite the canon of *Symbolisme*.[180] However, it is Rimbaud who has proved more influential for modern poetry. His prose poetry and his experiments in *vers libre* would go on to influence not only surrealists worldwide, but late twentieth-century poets such as John Ashbery.

It would be simplistic to conclude, as Bowra did, that Darío was not sophisticated enough to understand the innovative work of his European counterparts. In an article in which she analyses Darío's reactions to Rodin, Beatriz Colombi discusses the following:

> Y si bien ciertos motivos parecen acercar al escultor parisino y al poeta americano, como la impronta sexual y erótica, faunos y faunesas, ninfas, Venus, Adonis, Apolo,

[178] Ibid., p. 314.
[179] Ibid., 309.
[180] 'With Victor Hugo, with Baudelaire, we are still under the dominion of rhetoric. "Take eloquence, and wring its neck!" said Verlaine in his *Art Poétique*; and he showed, by writing it, that French verse could be written without rhetoric. […] There are poems of Verlaine which go as far as verse can go to become pure music, the voice of a bird with a human soul'. See *The Symbolist Movement,* pp. 45–46.

> tritones, es la idea de la forma la que los separa y coloca en evidencia esa modernidad desfasada y de tiempos discontinuos de la que ambos participan.[181]

The *desfasamiento* of modernity, or time-lag, a notion which Colombi draws from Homi K. Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* (1994), implies the existence of discontinuous historical timelines between literatures.[182] It indeed is a lag, and not just the coexistence of independent traditions, because both of them are equally caught in the wheels of the globalisation of late capitalism which tends to centralisation, so that what is modern and new in the literary powerhouses of the West is inherently superior to what is local or traditional. In this regard I am sympathetic to Frederic Jameson's thinking on the topic, for whom there is a 'single' modernity – global capitalism – which manifests itself unevenly and in irreducibly singular ways across the globe. This explains why literary cultures that share a similar ideology and cohabitate one space may develop and hold different aesthetic values at the same point in time, as the cases of Rodin and Darío exemplify.[183]

In the particular case of Spanish, after its relatively modest Romanticism and the prolonged ankylosis of its literary resources, there was much to do by way of *vers libéré*, especially regarding metrical exploration and prosodic experiments. *Vers libre* was not a priority at that point in time. In this sense, the failure to understand the circumstances particular to each literature leads to folly; the debate between the Spanish poet Luis Cernuda and the Nicaraguan poet and scholar Ernesto Mejía Sánchez is illustrative of such outcomes. In that exchange, Mejía Sánchez replies to Cernuda's contemptuous judgements

[181] Beatriz Colombi, 'Rubén Darío y Auguste Rodin: modernidades desfasadas', *CELEHIS*, No. 33 (2017), pp. 27–38 (p. 32).
[182] Likewise, Rama speaks of *una modernidad discrónica*, while Julio Ramos calls it *una modernidad desencontrada*. See Ángel Rama, *Las mascaras democráticas del modernismo* (Montevideo: Arca, 1985) and Julio Ramos, *Desencuentros de la modernidad en América Latina* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1989).
[183] On the other hand, I am less convinced by Jameson's insistence on the notion that we live in 'postmodern' times, as opposed to a late stage of modernity which may or may not be at the doorstep of a new era, as the sociologist Anthony Giddens holds. For a lucid discussion of these two theories in comparison, see Laura Lonsdale, *Multilingualism and Modernity: Barbarisms in Spanish and American Literature* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 14–15. For a specifically Latin American context, see Rama 1985.

about Darío, exposing the lacunae in the Spaniard's knowledge of *Modernismo*, as well as shedding light on the historical context in which Darío wrote:

> Entre las influencias, de mayor a menor, suelen citarse Mendés, Banville, Gautier, circunscritas a breves períodos, y otras a meras contaminaciones esporádicas: Moreas [*sic*], Du Plessis, días de la école romaine. A Baudelaire no le debe más que ciertos contactos satánicos, pero lo cita de memoria. A Mallarmé lo conoció bien, lo tradujo, hizo un pastiche muy intencionado a su muerte. Y nada más. A Rimbaud lo cita poco, como se lo citaba entonces en Francia. A qué tanto reclamo. Francia era "la Francia" en ese momento y todos los caminos conducían a ella. A través de ella se conoce a Heine, a Poe, a Whitman, a Ibsen, a Tolstoi, a D'Annunzio y a Marinetti.[184]

The *modernistas* knew full well of the existence and possibilities of *vers libre*. Still, they opted for rhyme. Discussing Jean Moréas in *Los raros*, Darío broaches the subject:

> Es innegable que la orquestación exquisita del verso libre, "la máquina del poema poliformo modernísimo", son esfuerzos que seducen; mas es irresistible aquella magia, de los vuelos de palomas, de las frescas rosas, bien rimadas en estrofas harmónicas —la consonancia dulce de los labios, luciente de los ojos, ideal y celeste de las alas y el lenguaje de la pasión y de la juventud.[185]

These poetic divergences become a problem of reception when it comes to reading Darío in English during the early twentieth century. There is no doubt that de la Selva and Walsh's Darío is outdated shortly after the moment of its publication. Both translators at the time were poets who were writing verse that was decidedly not modernist. On the one hand, Thomas Walsh was a U.S. poet who wrote Browningesque poems, the themes of which ranged from Catholic faith to the history of Spain. On the other hand, Salomón de la Selva, only twenty-three at the time, was a Nicaraguan-born poet who had moved to the United States some nine years earlier. *Eleven poems* is actually de la Selva's first published book, in which his uncertain command of English-language verse is apparent. However, as the work of a Nicaraguan living in the United States and writing in English, de la Selva's oeuvre can be viewed as embodying the discontinuity between Spanish- and English-language traditions. His first collection of poetry, *Tropical Town and Other Poems* (1918)

[184] Bowra 1966, pp. 97–98.
[185] *Los raros*, p. 78.

– which was written in English and published two years after his co-translations of Darío – is stylistically close to late *Modernismo* or so-called *Posmodernismo* in its simplicity of diction and rhyme. Pedro Henríquez Ureña describes it as follows:

> The majority of it corresponds to the norms of the nineteenth century. The truth is that, until now, one could say that Selva has not decided to break with the nineteenth century: the framework of his aspirations begins in Keats and Shelley and gets as far as Francis Thompson and Alice Meynell. Perhaps he hopes to master form before throwing himself completely into innovations.[186]

One might also add that de la Selva's first book was staunchly anti-modernist.[187] The collection was written at a time when the Nicaraguan was greatly influenced by Darío and Edna St. Vincent Millay, the latter of whom defended poetic traditionalism against the experimentalism of the modernists. De la Selva counted himself among the writers who advocated a return to the traditional forms of English poetry and opposed what he saw as an ephemeral trend in U.S. poetry.[188]

In contrast, his third collection of poetry was written in Spanish and published four years after as *El soldado desconocido* (1922),[189] which is considered one of the masterpieces of Nicaraguan poetry. Unlike his first poetry collection, this Spanish-language collection is indeed modernist; it is perhaps the first Spanish-language work written in that manner. In an article titled 'Nota sobre la otra vanguardia', the Mexican writer José Emilio Pacheco posits that there is a second *vanguardia* in the history of Spanish American literature, not so much influenced by European avantgardes, but by Modernism, or what Pacheco calls North-American 'New Poetry'. He traces this movement back to de la Selva's

[186] Steven White, 'Salomón de la Selva: Testimonial Poetry and World War I', *Modern Nicaraguan Poetry: Dialogues with France and the United States* (London: Associated University Press, 1993), pp. 119–43 (p. 120).
[187] As Hulme reminds us echoing Henríquez Ureña, 'de la Selva's poetic heroes were Francis Thompson and John Keats, his critical muses Alice Keynell and Walter Pater' (p. 242).
[188] White, pp. 120–21. For more information on de la Selva's influences at the time, see Salomón de la Selva, *Tropical Town and Other Poems*, ed. by Silvio Sirias (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1997), pp. 1–61. According to Sirias, the collection is now considered the first English-language collection of poetry written by a Hispanic writer in the United States. It also remains virtually unstudied (p. 1). See White's chapter on the poet for further discussion.
[189] Incidentally, as mentioned earlier, 1922 is also thought of as the *annus mirabilis* of Modernism.

El soldado desconocido, alongside two other works. The passage is worth citing in full so its thesis can be appreciated:

> Junto a la vanguardia que encuentra su punto de partida en la pluralidad de «ismos» europeos, aparece en la poesía hispanoamericana otra corriente: casi medio siglo después será reconocida como vanguardia y llamada «antipoesía» y «poesía conversacional», dos cosas afines, aunque no idénticas. Esta corriente, realista y no surrealista, se origina en la «New Poetry» norteamericana. Aparece de manera tan subrepticia que ni siquiera sus introductores se dan cuenta de lo que han aportado. […] Sus fundadores son un dominicano, Pedro Henriquez Ureña (1884-1946); un nicaragüense, Salomón de la Selva (1893-1959), y un mexicano, Salvador Novo (1904-1974). Sus libros claves se llaman *El soldado desconocido*, *Espejo, Poemas proletarios* y la primera Antología de la poesía norteamericana moderna, que aparece en español. […] Así, *El soldado desconocido*, al incorporar el prosaísmo de la new poetry, introduce también las antigüedades modernizadas por Ezra Pound y otros poetas del renacimiento norteamericano.[190]

Pacheco's thesis has prompted critics to begin to revaluate the significance of de la Selva's oeuvre; nevertheless, by and large, this revaluation remains to be completed. While the changes that de la Selva's poetry underwent can be thought of as successively embodying the discontinuities of the two *modernidades* between which he found himself, his troubled relationship to Modernism makes him an unlikely candidate to have ushered Darío into English successfully. That said, to come back to *Eleven Poems*, when we look at the state of Anglo-American literary culture of the time, neither of these translators is to blame for the poor reception of the renderings. In 1916 they could have not predicted the extent of the changes that Modernism would bring about to the conventions of poetry in English (and by extension to translated poetry as well). Nor were they unaware of Modernism once it did become widespread: as mentioned earlier, de la Selva's *El soldado desconocido* is now seen as one of the first modernist texts in Spanish. However, he only wrote it a few years after he had collaborated on the translations. As a reaction to the U.S. occupation of

[190] José Emilio Pacheco, 'Nota sobre la otra Vanguardia', *Revista Iberoamericana*, vol. 45, no. 106 (1979), p. 327–34 (p. 327–31).

Nicaragua in 1927, he would never write in English again after *El soldado desconocido*, in time becoming an inspired neo-classicist writer.[191]

By and large, these translators rendered Darío into rhymed poems that aimed for fluency above all. This was the conventional approach to translating poetry during the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. Nevertheless, as with all translation that overtly 'domesticates' the foreign author, the price to pay for that aimed-for fluency is steep. According to Chantal Wright, it threatens to undermine the stylistic integrity of the source text 'by ignoring the tension between the source text and source language in the process of making the text conform to the norms of the receiving language.'[192] As we will see later on, de la Selva and Walsh's translations change the source texts so much to complete their rhymes that it is often difficult to find characteristics of Darío's writing in them.[193]

Post-Boom Translations of Darío

Deborah Cohn has shed light on the different fates of two mid-twentieth-century translation programs in the United States, the AAUP (American Association of University Presses) and the CIAR (Centre of Inter-American Relations), which coincided for several years though the former ended before the 'Boom' received widespread attention. In one of her articles, Cohn lucidly analyses the different strategies taken up by the two programs, exposing their motivations and comparing their successes. The result does not only reveal the complex circuity through which the 'Boom' ran its course in the U.S. literary market, but also sheds light on the functioning of the U.S. literary field at large. Cohn explains that, by publishing translated Latin American authors in university presses, the AAUP laid the

[191] See White and Sirias for further details.
[192] Chantal Wright, *Literary Translation* (London: Routledge, 2016), p. 53.
[193] According to Hulme, the translations were all done by de la Selva except 'Pórtico' (p. 138).

groundwork for developing a market for the region's literature; however, it ultimately was not able to reach a wider readership as it did not capitalise on commercial presses, unlike the CIAR, which took advantage of publishers and translation programs to do so.[194] When comparing the different editions of an author as acclaimed as Borges, she explains the following:

> In contrast [to the CIAR program], literary works published through the AAUP program, where marketing was left to individual UP's, did not fare nearly as well. For the most part, each book only received between one and seven reviews. Even Borges's *Dream Tigers* and *Other Inquisitions, 1937-1952*, both published by the University of Texas Press, only received two and three reviews, respectively, in their first editions. (Both works were later picked up and reissued—with the same translation and copyright—by New York commercial publishers, at which point *Dream Tigers* was reviewed in seven periodicals and *Other Inquisitions, 1937-1952* in five.)[195]

The same university publisher of Borges's scarcely read first editions in English, University of Texas Press, published a translation of Darío in 1965 called *Selected Poems of Rubén Darío*, translated by Lysander Kemp, also a translator of Octavio Paz and Juan Rulfo. Almost fifty years after the publication of *Eleven poems*, the 'Boom' of Spanish American literature in translation had come to Darío, albeit through its less popular channel. As mentioned earlier, by then free verse had been consolidated as the conventional poetic idiom and translated books could be read on their own as works of literature proper.[196] Both these changes are clear in Kemp's edition, and should be unsurprising given their context. What is surprising – again – is the extent to which this translation failed to produce any further interest in Darío's writing, since another book-length translation would not be published until 2001, almost forty years afterwards.

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[194] A host of other factors, which are clearly laid out by Cohn in her article, also came into play when considering the different degrees of success of the two translation programs. See pp. 139–64.
[195] Cohn, p. 153.
[196] Just a few years earlier, Samuel Beckett's translations of Mexican Poetry, compiled by Octavio Paz, were also published in 1958 on their own – that is, monolingually. Beyond modernist beliefs in translation's autonomy, other factors might come into play regarding monolingual editions; for instance, Penguin's editions of poetry from the Far East have mostly been monolingual, given the cultural distance and the difference in scriptures, as readers would be unlikely to be able to read the poem in the original.

Why was there no new interest in one of Spanish America's major poets once a new translation was released fifty years after his death? Some of the reasons are likely to be those mentioned earlier, namely the air of outdatedness that Darío's *fin-de-siècle* poetics surely had, especially among a readership that read Spanish American writers through a modernist lens. Also, many of his poetic innovations are language-specific, not least the comprehensive expansion that Spanish-language prosody underwent in his hands. The poor editions of his works – most egregiously reflected in the fact that, to date, no authoritative and truly complete *Obras completas* of his writings exists – undoubtedly has encumbered the translation of the work. Furthermore, the narrow academic audiences to which these editions were restricted, as Cohn's article convincingly explains, would have only highlighted the distance between Darío's writing and the expectations of a post-war Anglo-American and British readership. There was also an expectation of exoticism – which without a doubt continues to this day – in the reception of Spanish American literature. As an example, Munday puts forth the reception of García Márquez in the United Kingdom, who,

> up until the publication of *El amor en los tiempos del cólera* in 1985, is consistently categorized in the reviews and in the coverage of his award of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1982 merely as a magic realist and a writer of fabulous tales and there is scant attention paid to his political writings. Each new book is compared to *Cien años de soledad* and his Caribbean is depicted as an exotic and exciting new world.[197]

The example of García Márquez, arguably the best-known of Spanish American writers, is telling of readerly expectations regarding translated literature from the region. If we consider the Parisian setting and the motifs that abound in Darío's poetry – fountains, swans, fauns, etc. – it is easy to see how the Nicaraguan would not have met those expectations. Lastly, the arguable degree of success of Kemp's translations themselves,

[197] Munday, p. 98.

which will be analysed in the following chapter, is also likely to have played an important role – though it is worth remembering that if even Borges's works published through the AAUP received scant attention, it is not surprising that Darío failed to cause a stir.

As mentioned previously, it would take almost another 40 years for the next publication of a book-length translation of Darío in English, when scholars Will Derusha and Alberto Acereda published their renderings of a large selection of poems under the title *Selected Poems of Rubén Darío: A Bilingual Anthology* (2001). Because the translators are academics who make clear in their introductions that they are concerned above all with rendering the literal meaning of Darío's words, the literary conventions discussed earlier are less important when considering the poetics of this particular translation, whereby Darío is rendered in straightforward and literal free verse. What does change for the afterlife of Darío in the English language during the first decade of the 2000s is that we see a sudden increase in publications: one year later Stanley Appelbaum published *Stories and Poems/Cuentos y Poesías: A Dual-Language Book* (2002); then Derusha and Acereda published their translation of Darío's *Cantos de vida y esperanza*, rendered as *Songs of Life and Hope* (2004); finally, the translation discussed at the beginning of this chapter, published by Penguin Classics and criticised by González Echevarría, appeared as *Rubén Darío: Selected Writings* (2006). Among the reasons for this sudden burst of translations, two in particular seem beyond doubt: the growth of the academic book market as a global market that includes both Spanish American literature and translation studies (two scholarly fields developed in their own right) led to the involvement of more academics as translators of Darío; on the other hand, the growth of the Hispanic community in the United States, as well as the consolidation of Latinx and Chicano literature, means that public figures such as Illan Stavans – who in his introduction wistfully comments on the possibility of hearing Darío in English as one of his long-held dreams as a Latinx immigrant – are nowadays

capable of mustering enough credibility and prestige so that publishers believe in the existence of a readership for authors such as Darío. Nevertheless, despite all of the foregoing, including the substantial improvement of circumstances for a reception of Darío's writing, his name is considerably less familiar to an English-speaking reader than those of Octavio Paz, Pablo Neruda, Federico García Lorca, César Vallejo, and Jorge Luis Borges.

The Difficulty of Translating Darío: Prosody and Connotation

Now that the historical and cultural factors involved in Darío's translations and their reception have been covered, I will consider the difficulties of translating his work before looking at how his translators have dealt with the matter. The degree to which Darío can be translated at all is a question that remains to be answered. According to Pacheco, 'Darío es tan intraducible como Goethe, Pushkin o Yeats. Ni su música verbal ni sus rimas pasan bien a ningún otro idioma'.[198] The Mexican's mention of 'música verbal' is not to be taken merely as a figure of speech; in the deepest sense, the challenge of translating Darío is the challenge of translating prosody. Many of the shortcomings of Darío's translators are in some way related to a failure to render those aural qualities. The Nicaraguan's poetry is thick in connotations; often a choice of word or a turn of phrase will say very little and at the same time suggest quite a lot. Upon answering a question about translation, Borges used Darío's word order to show how even translation within the same language was ostensibly impossible.

> Dentro de un mismo idioma la traducción es imposible. Shakespeare es intraducible a otro inglés que no sea el suyo. Imaginemos una traducción literal de un verso de Darío: "La princesa está pálida en su silla de oro" es literalmente igual a "En su silla de oro está pálida la princesa". En el primer caso el verso es muy lindo, ¿no?, por

[198] José Emilio Pacheco, 'Prólogo "Rubén Darío entre dos siglos"' in *Obras Completas I de Rubén Darío* (Barcelona: Galaxia Gutenberg, 2007), p. 46.

> lo menos para los fines musicales que él busca. Su traducción literal, en cambio, no es nada, no existe.[199]

Borges is referring to what is lost when the line goes from an anapaestic rhythm to an irregular one. While the literal meaning remains intact, the 'music' is somehow lost. Concerning the latter, T.S. Eliot writes that '"a musical poem" is a poem which has a musical pattern of sound and a musical pattern of the secondary meanings of the words which compose it, and that these two patterns are indissoluble and one.'[200] These secondary meanings to which Eliot makes reference are connotations, that obscure realm of language where the workings of words become increasingly difficult to perceive, as they silently engage nodes of cultural association which are often unconscious, buried in our memory, or both. For Eliot, a 'musical poem' not only has a musical pattern of sound that articulates it, but also another corresponding pattern of secondary meanings – connotations – which together compose it. Our critical vocabulary is clumsy at naming connotations; not only because it requires a highly skilled reader to identify them with some clarity, but because they are grounded in cultural identity, which changes over space and time.

As is well known, the poetry of the turn of the century gave new life to Greco-Roman mythology, was heavily influenced by the esoteric currents of the epoch, cherished ambiguity and nuance, and privileged metrical experimentation. The French poet Paul Verlaine, the Italian Gabriele D'Annunzio, the German Stefan Georg, and the Portuguese Eugénio de Castro, just like the Nicaraguan Rubén Darío, wrote a poetry rich in what Eliot calls 'a musical pattern of the secondary meanings of the words which compose it'. It was not until movements such as Imagism (1914) and Surrealism (1917) came about that imagery came to the fore in poetic creation. As an imagist himself, Pound put forth an idiosyncratic classification of poetry where he divided it into three types according to the

[199] Jorge Luis Borges, *Jorge Luis Borges en Sur (1931-1980)* (Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1999), p. 321–22.
[200] Eliot, 33.

effect words had on the reader. He called the use of words to cast images upon the eye of the reader's mind *phanopoeia* (from the Ancient Greek φαίνω, which means 'to cause to appear', and ποίησις, which means 'poetry' or 'creation'); that which ironically plays with linguistic habits, expectations, and conventions, *logopoeia* (λόγος means 'word' or 'speech'); finally, he called the use of words by which they are charged with some musical property that goes beyond their literal meaning *melopoeia*. I mention all of this because *fin-de-siècle* poetry plainly falls in the third category, about which Pound adds with characteristic hyperbole:

> The *melopoeia* can be appreciated by a foreigner with a sensitive ear, even though he be ignorant of the language in which the poem is written. It is practically impossible to transfer or translate it from one language to another, save perhaps by divine accident, and for half a line at a time.[201]

Pound's insistence on the untranslatability of the aural qualities of poetry gives us another point of view on why translations of Darío, an exceptionally 'musical' poet, have failed time and again to spur any further interest in his poetry in the English-speaking world.

But, perhaps it is not so much a matter of untranslatability as it is of an inability of our translation practices to render those aural qualities successfully, along with their connotations. As Venuti explains, behind every translation strategy there is an implicit theory of language based on which its choices are made, whether the translator be aware of it or not. So-called 'domestication', for instance, which Venuti conceives as underpinned by the desire to achieve fluency at the expense of other aspects of the source text, assumes a theory of language as communication, whereby immediate intelligibility is the priority and polysemy and ambiguities are to be avoided. Words are conceived as carriers of meaning, which in turn is considered something literal and shared by all languages, albeit in different ways.[202] This is arguably the same theory of language that underpins inventions

[201] Ezra Pound, *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, ed. by T.S. Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1954), p. 25.
[202] Venuti, pp. 49–50.

such as the dictionary and Roget's Thesaurus (even if the groupings of synonyms we find in the latter do illuminate, albeit dimly, the nodes of connotation a language may have). It would be outrageous to claim that dictionaries are simply wrong, or that literal meaning is not something that languages share – yet literal meaning is only the first or primary meaning of a word. The connotations of a word or a grouping of words are its deeper meanings. According to the *O.E.D*, etymologically the word 'denote' has its roots in the late 16th century; the prefix 'de' meant 'away, or thoroughly' and 'notare', in turn, 'to observe, to note'. Therefore, the French *dénoter* or the Latin *denotare* meant 'to be a sign of, to mark out'. Likewise, the prefix 'con' in 'connote' meant 'together with'; the Latin *connotare* meant 'to mark in addition'. According to their etymology, then, words mark something, or are a sign of it, and that is their denotation; at the same time, they mark other things in addition, and those are their connotations. Yet the latter are too fickle, too culturally and historically bound, almost unwieldy, and therefore difficult to put down in print in a way that would make them unanimous for all users of a language. Lexicographers can leave them untouched; yet translators – especially translators of poetry – cannot afford themselves that luxury.

Due to its emphasis on what its author calls 'armonía' and 'melodía', the principal qualities of Darío's poetry comprise all the things which our long-standing translation practices have struggled to grapple with: prosody, ambiguity, connotation. Is it possible to produce a credible translation while accepting the freedom that is necessary to create prosodic effects in the target language? Is one node of connotations equivalent to another if it implies using different words? The Nicaraguan's oeuvre is not alone in this sense, and one could add the same names as Pacheco in his quote cited earlier. However, the difference is that, unlike Goethe, Yeats, and Pushkin, Darío, whose stature within his language is roughly analogous to the German, British, and Russian examples, is still very much

unknown among English-speaking readers. In the following section, I turn to what Darío's translators have to say about his writing and what they offer by way of accounts of their process of translation. I will pay special attention to what Will Derusha and Alberto Acereda say about their work, as they are the translators of Darío who offer the most detailed discussion of the challenges of rendering his writing.

Translating Darío according to his translators

By and large, the translators of Darío – that is, those who have published their renderings in book-length collections – have adopted two opposing translation strategies: on the one hand, some have translated Darío's poetry into rhymed iambic pentameter; on the other hand, some have carried out literal translations of the poems in free verse, at times also adjusting them to iambic pentameter. The latter tend to be scholars who justify their decisions in a translator's note. On average, scholarly translators tend to be more conservative in their translational decisions; they seem to be less willing to stray from the literal meaning of a word or a line. Finally, occupying a kind of middle ground between the two strategies mentioned above, we have Lysander Kemp's approach, which, following Venuti, could be described as having a 'modernist fluent strategy'.[203]

Not all of the translators discuss their approach to rendering Darío. For instance, no translator's note is included in de la Selva and Walsh's *Eleven Poems*. It was Pedro Henríquez Ureña who wrote the preface for the booklet, which was clearly meant to serve as an overview of the significance of Darío's oeuvre by way of an introduction to the Anglophone reader of the time. In Kemp's case, we find only a paragraph-long note at the beginning of his edition explaining the criteria of his selection, which was based not only on the importance of the poems selected, but on the degree to which the translator felt that

[203] It is worth noting that among Darío's translators, de la Selva and Kemp were also poets themselves.

he was 'capable of rendering' them, pointing to the difficulty of translating Darío (a common trope among his translators).[204] The other translators, however, do offer a word or two on their approach to translating Darío. (The fact that their translations are meant for an academic reader is surely a relevant factor.) To begin with, Appelbaum briefly describes the criteria of his edition as follows:

> In addition to providing an accurate, "no-frills" translation (line-for-line in the poetry section) in modern American English (but striving to match the lexical level of the Spanish at all points), the present translator's biggest task was to identify the best Spanish texts of the items selected.[205]

He also comments on the many inconsistencies and poor quality of the editions of Darío in Spanish. Though the passage above would seem to communicate very little about the author's ideas on translation, the paucity of Appelbaum's description does precisely the opposite: he implies that the condition of 'accuracy' and 'lexical matching', as long as they are met, are sufficient an aim for a translation. Elsewhere he describes Darío's poetry from *Prosas profanas* in the following terms:

> In *Prosas profanas*, Darío is at his most extravagantly innovative, with recherché vocabulary, ethereally beautiful versification, and wide-ranging thought. To many, this volume is the summit of his achievement, and of modernismo in general.[206]

Ironically, the 'accurate' rendering of a writer who shares the characteristics mentioned above would surely pose formidable challenges to any translator. A striking undervaluation of the complexity of how words create those effects – extravagant innovation, recherché vocabulary, ethereal beauty, and so forth – seems to be at play here. The translator's implied theory of language seems to be relatively simple: as long as the literal meaning of words is rendered, the rest will follow.

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[204] Lysander Kemp, *Selected Poems of Rubén Darío* (Texas: University of Texas Press, 1965), p. 1.
[205] Stanley Appelbaum, *Stories and Poems/Cuentos y Poesías: A Dual-Language Book* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2002), p. xiii.
[206] Ibid., p. xii.

Unlike Appelbaum, Derusha and Acereda describe their views on translation at length in their introduction to *Cantos de vida y esperanza*. As mentioned earlier, it is the most detailed discussion on translating Darío to date. Besides offering the reader an authoritative and scholarly introduction to Darío's life and works, explaining the importance of *Modernismo* at large (which they term 'Hispanic Modernism'), and putting *Cantos de vida y esperanza* in context, the authors summarise the present state of Darío's work in the English-speaking world. They discuss the challenges his translation poses, and put forth their views on the effectiveness of the translations available. The difficulty of translating Darío appears on the first page of their introduction:

> Despite his [Darío's] significance as one of the greatest innovators of Hispanic literature, few attempts have been made to translate his works, particularly his poetry, into English. There are practical reasons for such neglect. The very ingenuity that makes Darío so important also makes him one of the most difficult poets to translate into other languages, in part because of the musicality of his rhyme and rhythm that becomes extravagantly singsong when followed too tightly and sounds curiously flat when not followed closely enough. In addition, much of the original charm of his verse depends on a craftsmanship that has gone out of style in the United States and elsewhere and may sound like affectation to the contemporary ear. The scarcity of solid, representative translations since Darío's death nearly a century ago is probably the best evidence of the difficulty in expressing a real sense of his poetry in English.[207]

The translators offer valuable insight into the challenges of rendering Darío in English, which also explains why attempts at translating his writing over the decades have been so scarce. It is no coincidence that the translators touch upon the prosodic aspects of his poetry ('the musicality of his rhyme and rhythm') as one of the main difficulties when it comes to translating Darío. They suggest it is due to a certain outdatedness of his poetics, which to contemporary Anglo-American ears might sound like affectation. Is Darío indeed an outdated author, whose time for having been rendered into English has passed?

[207] *Songs of Life and Hope*, p.1

Clearly, if in Spanish Darío has now been almost unanimously canonised, it is because he is not contemporary. Still, given the lag discussed earlier between *Modernismo* and Modernism as two *modernidades desfasadas,* it seems unlikely that such a time for his translation ever existed. Today the growth of translated literature in English can be an opening up to different aesthetics other than the predominant Anglo-American and British Modernism of the twentieth century, through which lens Darío strikes us as outdated. Poetry at the beginning of the twenty-first century has moved beyond that lens, both by embracing traditional poetic forms (such as the sestina, the aubade, and the sonnet, to name a few) and by developing a certain formalism in free verse as it reaches its maturity as poetic idiom, thanks to which more poems are tightly wrought as artefacts whereby the visual appeal of the text becomes increasingly important.[208] This opening up of the conventions of poetry, in addition to the greater interest in Spanish American literature shown in the English-language book market, makes for much more welcoming conditions for the reception of Darío – not to mention the wide-ranging reckoning of the importance of other literary traditions and languages, which has emerged as a result of the postcolonial turn in academe. In any case, Derusha and Acereda are well aware as translators of the challenges his writing poses when it comes to translation.

To come back to their introduction, after the passage mentioned earlier, the authors relate a brief history of the translations of Darío; they go on to explain the motives behind their first translation of a selection of his writing published in 2001. When explaining why they later decided to translate *Cantos de vida y esperanza*, they claim the following:

> It is our hope that scholars will again appreciate the fidelity to the Spanish originals, while the careful rendering of the verses in English will find a ready public among teachers, students, and lovers of poetry.
>
> Our own experience in reading Spanish poetry in English translation has generally been frustrating in terms of meaning, rhythm, and grammatical

[208] In English-language poetry, this turn can already be seen in the likes of John Ashbery and Elizabeth Bishop. Contemporary poets of varying ages increasingly use traditional poetic forms in striking ways – writers such as Anne Carson, Alice Oswald, Ocean Vuong, Terrence Hayes, and Ilya Kaminsky.

> construction. In teaching Spanish poetry in translation, we have often confronted texts that baffle and discourage students and, very likely, the majority of nonspecialists. We value a text that imparts some real sense of the original poetic voice in its own time and place, rather than a sense of the translator.[209]

'Fidelity' – a fraught, nearly bedevilled word in translations studies – takes the place of Appelbaum's 'accuracy', in what looks like a traditional argument in favour of translating the 'letter' over the 'spirit'. This is reasonable enough given that the aim of the translation is to be of reference for academic readers, scholars and students alike. What is problematic, on the other hand, is the notion that fidelity to the word leads to 'some real sense of the original poetic voice in its own time and place, rather than a sense of the translator'. Is poetic voice, along with its cultural and historical markers, especially related to lexicon? Can a translation ever give anything other than the sense of the translator? I will discuss these issues further in Section III; suffice it to say that it comes dangerously close to Appelbaum's claims. The authors then go on to affirm:

> We have attempted to translate Darío's poetry as meticulously as possible in order to respect his erudite tone, while also rendering much of the structural and acoustic dimensions of his language [...] Although Darío is especially adroit at crafting intricate rhymes, we have generally preferred to forgo rhyme in favor of preserving rhythm and meaning in our translations, not only in keeping with the overall scholarly aim of this volume but also due to the vagaries of the linguistic systems involved. Anyone with a minimum of study and effort can sound out the original Spanish text and appreciate the wealth of rhyme.[210]

While the passage reasserts that the aim of the translation is scholarly rather than literary, its most revealing aspect is the theory of language implicit in the translators' argumentation, which seems to overestimate the effects of literal translation. In spite of forgoing rhyme, the authors claim to have translated 'much of the structural and acoustic dimensions of [Darío's] language'. It is difficult to imagine how to render a *modernista* poem's structural and acoustic dimensions without some kind of rhyme. For a poet such as Darío, rhyme is not only his poetic idiom, but a determining factor in the way the poem is constructed.

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[209] *Songs of Life and Hope*, p. 2.
[210] Ibid., p. 3.

Derusha and Acereda comment on Darío's life and works at length, providing the English-speaking reader with a well-rounded introduction. Towards the end, they put forth two closely related arguments as to why they opt for a literal translation in their rendering: on the one hand, they claim that Spanish and English are vastly different linguistic systems whose distance encumbers the translation of Darío; on the other hand, the situation is, according to the translators, further compounded by the poet's mastery of the acoustic dimension of Spanish verse. They conclude as follows:

> And here we arrive at the true question confronting every translator: given the impossibility of transferring a multifaceted work—alive and well—from one language to another, what is the essence to be conveyed? Darío's genius never resided in one aspect or another, but in the whole. [...] We have not attempted an interpretation of Darío or our personal variation on a theme by Darío. After all, it is his poetry we want readers to be thinking about, not ours. [...] We believe it is necessary to reproduce the atmosphere of Darío's language as faithfully as possible. For the cause of textual accuracy and poetry in translation, then, may the present dual edition of Darío's *Cantos de vida y esperanza* serve as a first step toward a pressing reevaluation of Darío.[211]

Given that it sums up their ideas on translation, the passage is worth unpacking in detail. On the one hand, the translators are clear about the aims of their translation. The fact that the collection is presented bilingually in a dual edition serves the purpose of making possible a re-evaluation of Darío from within Anglo-American academe. Evidently these renderings are meant to be read side-by-side with the original poems in Spanish, as a resource to bridge the distance between the language of the poems on one side, and students of literature on the other. However, the way the translators justify this approach reveals the narrow conception of translation they have. From the outset they assert that it is impossible to translate a multifaceted work alive and well; logically, what follows from this is that translation is always a loss. Also, they assert that they have not attempted 'an interpretation of Darío' in their translation. Here the authors seem to underestimate the complexity of

[211] Ibid., pp. 43–46.

reading itself – it is a platitude that all translation is inescapably an interpretation of a text. A well-established notion in literary studies is that there is no such thing as a non-interpretative reading. One could also take the idea further, as many critics and writers indeed have done; in the words of J.M. Coetzee:

> Just like the process of translation, reading is a process of constructing a whole for oneself out of the datum of the printed text, of constructing one's own version of the poem. In a clear sense, all reading is translation, just as all translation is criticism.[212]

To be sure, one need not go as far as Coetzee to see that such a position is untenable: leafing through Derusha and Acereda's edition, one finds that the authors have rendered the title of 'Lo fatal', one of Darío's best-known poems, as 'What gets you'.[213] Considering the semantic divergence and the considerable lowering of tone and register in their rendering, is this not an interpretation of the title?

If we take a step a step back, the arguments Derusha and Acereda put forth regarding translation seem by and large questionable. Are Spanish and English actually such vastly different linguistic systems? If so, are their differences vaster than those of English and French, for instance? or indeed English and Ancient Greek? Though we still do not have enough of them, the history of literature is full of successful translations from one of these languages to the other. For example, the French translator Pierre Leyris rendered the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins into French versions which are extolled as an ideal of translation by George Steiner in *After Babel*. Translating Hopkins has often been compared to the taming of a wild beast, given the poet's highly idiosyncratic use of language.[214] The Bohemian-Austrian poet Rainer Maria Rilke also has been rendered multiple times into English, perhaps most successfully in Stephen Mitchell's acclaimed translation. Rilke's

[212] J.M. Coetzee, *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews*, ed. by David Attwell (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard UP, 1992), p. 90.
[213] *Songs of Life and Hope*, p. 231.
[214] *The Practices of Literary Translation: Constraints and Creativity*, ed. by Jean Boase-Beier and Michael Holman (Manchester: St. Jerome, 1998), p. 45.

radically original poetry, along with its particular contortions of German syntax, would make him an unlikely candidate to be successfully translated. The Mexican writer Alfonso Reyes rendered Stéphane Mallarmé into Spanish in multiple versions that, like a kaleidoscope, reflect the many shades and nuances of the French poet's difficult and intricate verse. The South African poet Roy Campbell rendered the writings of San Juan de la Cruz – in whose rhymed poems Spanish is taken to its limits to articulate an exalted religious passion – in versions later acclaimed by Eliot and Borges. If all these translations have been not only possible but exemplary, is the distance between Spanish and English really that great?

As a final point, though it is by no means a requirement to produce a successful translation, the authors scarcely engage with concepts of translation studies (the only names to come up are Lawrence Venuti and Joyce Tolliver) or with the craft of other literary translators more generally. This is, arguably, both a reflection of, and a contribution to, their scepticism about the real possibilities of translation. In spite of this, Derusha and Acereda's many claims should be read against the backdrop of previous translators' 'domesticating' translations of Darío, where the stylistic integrity of the poems was often considerably changed in their renderings. In this sense, these translators are reacting against what they see as unjustified liberties taken in the past. That said, it often seems that they discuss the complexities of verse translation only to make a case for its impossibility on any other level that is not the semantic, a sleight of hand which also serves to make a 'faithful' translation of Darío appear as a necessity.

Lastly, in the Penguin edition of Darío mentioned earlier, Greg Simon and Steven F. White include a brief translators' note preceding the poetry section of the collection. The translators sum up Darío's prosodic and metrical innovations as follows:

> Many commentators on the poetry of Rubén Darío correctly praise the Nicaraguan for introducing elements of syntactical freedom into Spanish prosody. Almost all of

> them go on to mention the other prosodic development that would become predominant with Darío's peers, and the poets who followed them: free verse. But a translator of Darío soon discovers that most of his lines were composed to meet strict metrical standards, fortified by rhyme. That his alexandrines also contained the power to liberate late-nineteenth-century poetic thinking in Spanish was a testament to Darío's aggressiveness as a poet.[215]

Like Derusha and Acereda, Darío's rhymes also seem to be a central problem for these translators. They then praise the beauty of Darío's writing and briefly delve into his poetics:

> It is undeniable that his writing shimmers with beauty and strains with verbal harmony and grace. "[E]ach word has a soul," he tells us, and to understand this "lexical aristocracy," to delve into the interior, ideal melody that words create when they are placed in conjunction with each other, Darío believed a poet must apply "a grounding in knowledge of the art to which one consecrated oneself, an indispensable erudition, and the necessary gift of good taste." Yes, the soul of a word has its mysteries, those elements of usage, spelling, and language of origin, but it is also full of history.[216]

Despite the cursory manner in which the authors treat these ideas, their note shows an awareness of Darío's poetics. In spite of this, not much is said about the translators' approach or their ideas about the translation of poetry in general:

> We relished the idea of these formal challenges, these Pythagorean proposals, as new doorways to the slightly dissonant harmonics of rhyme and slant rhyme in English. Often we found ourselves abandoning a purely rational approach to our work in favor of one that is more subjective since, in Douglas Robinson's words, "humans translate truly, restoratively, only when they hear and become a responsive part of the translating of spirit." In any event, translations are a kind of afterlife, a thick vine of souls, perhaps, from which, as Walter Benjamin says, "the life of the originals attain in them [...] its ever renewed latest and most abundant flowering"'.[217]

The curious use of the same esoteric terminology that influenced Darío's writing to describe the poems as 'Pythagorean proposals' and 'new doorways to the slightly dissonant harmonics' shows that the translators' account is more lyrical than theoretical. Still, it is problematic to assert that the difficult craft of translation is best done intuitively, 'abandoning a truly rational approach'. The citation from Douglas Robinson is opaque, as

[215] Rubén Darío, *Selected Writings*, ed. by Illan Stavans and Steven White et al (London: Penguin, 2005), p. 3.
[216] Ibid., p. 4.
[217] Ibid., p. 6.

we do not know what exactly is meant by becoming 'a responsive part of the translating of spirit'. While abandoning a rational approach in favour of a 'subjective one' can be both a creative and an intellectual process, it not only renders invisible the set of complex choices every translator is forced to make, it runs the risk of producing a translation where anything goes as long as it pleases the translator. Moreover, the authors' engagement with ideas on translation, as is made clear by the passage above, seems to be limited to the recasting of one of Benjamin's well-known dictums.

The Renderings of Two Poems by Darío

Before analysing the strategies of these translators, I will discuss a few examples that show how they render the same poem by Darío differently. This comparative reading will shine a light on how translators apply the ideas discussed previously. At the same time, it will convey a notion of the strategies and choices made by those authors who do not discuss their translation strategy at length. More important, it will allows us to compare and contrast their approaches in practice, giving us a bird's-eye view of the translations of Darío.

All of these translators have rendered the poems 'Canto de esperanza' and '¡Torres de Dios!...', which belong to the collection *Cantos de vida y esperanza*. Below are the first two stanzas from the original Spanish of 'Canto de Esperanza':

> Canto de esperanza
>
> Un gran vuelo de cuervos mancha el azul celeste.
> Un soplo milenario trae amagos de peste.
> Se asesinan los hombres en el extremo Este.
>
> ¿Ha nacido el apocalíptico Anticristo?
> Se han sabido presagios y prodigios se han visto
> y parece inminente el retorno del Cristo. (ll. 1–6)

The lines are single-rhymed Alexandrines, whose triadic rhythm gives a sense of unity to each stanza and links one with the other as the poem unfolds. Here are the renderings of those translators who, for the most part, opt for rhyme in irregular pentameter:

Song of Hope (*de la Selva & Walsh*)	Song of Hope (*Simon & White*)
Vultures a-wing have sullied the glory of the sky;	A great flock of crows is staining the sky.
The winds bear on their opinions the horror of Death's cry;	The winds of millennial plagues blow by.
Assassining [*sic*] one another, men rage and fall and die.	In the far eastern war, many men die.
Has Antichrist arisen whom John at Patmos saw?	Is this a sign of the Antichrist's birth?
Portents are seen and marvels that fill the world with awe,	Apocalyptic omens of the earth
And Christ's return seems pressing, coming to fulfil the Law.	that foreshadow Christ's imminent return?

De la Selva must take liberties to preserve the rhyme in, albeit quite irregular, pentameter. A cursory look at the first line shows vultures instead of crows and an added emphasis on the glory of the sky. Imagery and tone strike us as somewhat more pious here than in the original. Also, the translators miss out on the powerful imagery of the first line: 'un gran vuelo de cuervos mancha el azul celeste' suggests the image of an ink stain blotting the sky. The fact that they are crows in particular, and not vultures, is important; the connotations that crows rouse have to do with the colour black and bad omens, while vultures as birds of prey conjure other meanings related to death. Likewise, the omission of a flock undoes the power of the image, as the reader needs the flock for the birds to seem, at a distance, like a single blot of ink. The second line seems overwrought: where Darío creates an apocalyptic atmosphere through the image of a millennial wind, the translator personifies the wind as carrier of the horror of Death's – with a capital D – cry. The line is now less about an apocalyptic omen than about the wind as a metaphysical force of death. As said previously, the translator must take liberties if they are to preserve the rhyme; it seems that, in doing so, he has let some of the more powerful features of these initial lines go to waste.

The strange use of 'assassining' (not 'assassinating', as English would have it) in line three is worth at least a passing comment. The wording can be best explained by an

interference of Spanish in de la Selva's hand at work; the Spanish word *asesinar* might have led the translator to write 'assassinating' as 'assassining'. This also highlights de la Selva's uncertain command of English verse at the time discussed earlier. By contrast, the lines of the second translation are straightforward like the original, though they fail to keep the rhythm and rhyme at the end. Below is Kemp's rendering.

> Song of Hope (*Kemp*)
>
> A great flock of crows defiles the heavenly blue.
> A millennial blast of wind brings threats of pestilence.
> Men are being murdered in the Far East.
>
> Has the apocalyptic Antichrist been born?
> There have been omens, there have been prodigal sights,
> and it would appear the return of Christ is at hand.

Kemp translates into free verse, ostensibly seeking a balance between a certain proximity to the original and an up-to-date poetic idiom in English. However, the latter sometimes elevates Darío's language when it does not require it. In the first line, the flock of crows 'defiles', not 'stains', the heavenly blue; as in de la Selva's rendering, the translation loses the powerful imagery of the original. There are also stronger biblical overtones in the use of anaphora in line five, rendering the prophetic tone of the lines slightly more solemn and grave, which could be construed as a kind of compensation as far as rhythm goes.

It is worth adding that Kemp's collection of translations is the only book not to have the Spanish originals facing his own renderings of the poems. Unlike Darío's later translators, Kemp's book aspires to be read as a literary text on its own. This sheds light on the context in which the translation was published: as mentioned earlier, Anglo-American and British Modernism had cleared the way for translation as an autonomous genre.

Derusha/Acereda's and Appelbaum's translations, as discussed earlier, render these stanzas more or less literally:

Song of Hope (*Derusha & Acereda*)	Song of Hope (*Appelbaum*)
A great flight of crows sullies the celestial blue.	A long flight of crows blots the blue of the sky.
A millennial gust of wind smacks of pestilence.	A wind from the gulf of ages is bearing signs of plague.
Men are killing each other in the Far East.	Men are being murdered in the Far East.
Has the apocalyptic Antichrist been born?	Has the Antichrist of the Apocalypse been born?
Omens have been discovered and prodigies seen,	Omens have been learned of, and wonders have been seen,
and the return of Christ seems imminent.	and the return of the Christ seems imminent.

Derusha and Acereda follow Darío's Spanish syntax closely, while aiming to render it into natural English. On the other hand, Appelbaum seems to be the only translator to grasp the importance of the imagery of the first line, even if he seeks to convey elongated ink stains in his choice of 'a long flight of crows'. Interestingly, he resorts to repetition on the same line as Kemp did (l. 5), while aiming to render a straightforward translation of the Spanish. Like Kemp, neither of these translators preserves rhyme in his rendering; yet Derusha and Acereda do maintain a pentameter throughout.

Moving on to the second poem, here are the first two stanzas of '¡Torres de Dios!...' in the original Spanish.

> Torres de Dios! [*sic*]
> Torres de Dios! Poetas! [*sic*]
> Pararrayos celestes,
> que resistís las duras tempestades,
> como crestas escuetas,
> como picos agrestes,
> rompeolas de las eternidades!
>
> La mágica Esperanza anuncia un día
> en que sobre la roca de armonía
> expirará la pérfida sirena.
> Esperad, esperemos todavía! (ll. 1–9)

The irregular metre of the poem makes it all the more difficult to translate into rhymed verse. Below are the two rhymed translations:

Towers of God! Poets! (*de la Selva*)	Towers of God! Poets! (*Simon & White*)
Made to resist the fury of the storms	You bear the storms that are infernal
Like cliffs beside the ocean	like a jagged mountain range,
Or clouded, savage peaks!	like a heavenly lightning rod,
Masters of lightning!	breakwaters of the eternal,
Like Breakwaters of eternity!	high summits that will never change!
Hope, magic-voiced, foretells the day	Hope with its magic announces the day
When on the rock of harmony	when, thrown against the shoals of harmony,
The Siren traitorous shall die and pass away,	the treacherous mermaid will pass away.
And there shall only be	But wait, and don't lose your patience with me!
The full, frank-billowed music of the sea.	

We can gauge here how editorial carelessness leads to unintended divergences among translations. Both these renderings construe the first line 'Torres de Dios! Poetas!' as merely the title of the poem, while the title is actually 'Torres de Dios!'. Already we can appreciate the philological value of Derusha and Acereda's edition of the book. Besides this, it is understandable that the translators rearrange the order of the lines if they are to successfully complete their rhymes. De la Selva displaces line two in the original ('Pararrayos celestes') to line four, while Simon and White do likewise onto line three. The former translator also expands the second stanza by adding a line that helps him complete the rhyme; however, he seems to have been unable to make the first stanza rhyme. There are also questionable choices worth noting. De la Selva completely changes line nine, which preserves no resemblance to the original and arguably takes the poem in another direction thematically and tonally, giving greater significance to the sea and its frank-billowed music. In turn, Simon and White have changed some of the poem's allusions and added distorting connotations. Unlike the original, where poets are said to endure 'duras tempestades', in this rendering poets bear storms that are infernal – a description whose

religious overtones should be carefully weighed in the case of a poet for whom religious doubt is one of his main themes. They also write ‘mermaids’ where the original Spanish has ‘sirena’, which refer to the Homeric sirens and not the seductive woman-cum-fish of European folk. This change of wording risks distorting the poem’s depiction of the poet’s plight as a journey not unlike that of Odysseus. As in many *fin-de-siècle* poets, this is a recurrent trope in Darío and for that reason an important one. Below is Kemp’s rendition.

Towers of God! Poets! (*Kemp*)

Towers of God! Poets!
Lightning rods of Heaven
that resist the fierce storms
like solitary mountains,
like peaks in the wilderness!
Breakwaters of eternity!

Magic hope foretells
the day when the traitorous siren
will die on her musical rock.
Hope! Let us still hope!

Unlike the translators of rhyme, Kemp does not need to rearrange lines thanks to free verse. The rendering is all in all a solid one, though ‘like solitary mountains’ (l. 4) is a flat rendering of ‘como crestas escuetas’, while line 9 (in the original ‘Esperad, esperemos todavía!’) is curiously construed according to its highest register, casting out its connotations of waiting. Finally, here are the literal translations of the beginning of the poem.

Towers of God! Poets! (*Derusha & Acereda*)

Heavenly lightning rods
withstanding severe tempests,
like unadorned crests,
like rustic peaks,
breakwaters of eternities!

Towers of God! Poets! (*Appelbaum*)

Heavenly lighting rods
that withstand heavy storms,
like bare mountain crests,
like wild peaks,
breakwaters of eternity!

Magical Hope announces the day	Magical hope proclaims a day
when on the rock of harmony	when, on her musical rock,
the perfidious siren will pass away.	the treacherous siren will perish.
You must have hope, let's still hope!	Hope! Let us keep hoping!

Both translations are close to the original when it comes to syntax and semantic meaning. Unlike before, Derusha and Acereda manage to slip in one rhyme in the second strophe. Interestingly, none of these translators decides to reproduce the ambiguity of the line '¡Esperad, esperemos todavía!' (l. 9) either, where 'esperar' does not exactly mean plain hope but rather a hopeful wait for change.

Now that we have looked at samples of these translations, we can picture the translators' strategies placed along a scale where, at one end, lie the rhymed translations by de la Selva and Walsh, and Simon and White; at the opposite end of the scale lie the literal translations in free verse that follow the Spanish syntax closely, with Derusha and Acereda at the furthest extreme and Appelbaum close by; whereas Kemp's strategy falls somewhere closer to the middle than the rest, yet nevertheless closer to the end of the scale where the scholarly translators lie.

As discussed throughout the chapter, the reason behind the paucity of translations of Rubén Darío's writing goes well beyond the linguistic; it entails understanding the historical developments of the two literary cultures involved. When we chart their trajectories, as it were, there seems to be a historical time-lag or a *desfasamiento* that separates these two literary traditions as they transition into the twentieth century. Because Darío's poetry was so heavily invested in a dialogue with the literature of his time, the outdatedness of many of the values espoused by him, as well as those of many of his interlocutors – namely the Parnassians and Pre-Raphaelites – became a veritable obstacle

for the reception of his work. On the other hand, while the characteristics of his poetry certainly make it exceptionally challenging to render in English, the scarcity of translations also reflects the English-speaking world's lack of interest in Hispanic literature and culture before the 1960s. If we focus on the second half of the twentieth century, that persistent scarcity is a reflection of English-speaking preconceptions of what Spanish American literature should look like: experimental, exotic, magical, or otherwise. Darío, of course, fits into none of those categories. Last but not least, translated poetry in English as a genre has struggled to render the aural qualities which are at the heart of the writing of poets from Darío's time. In addition to the growth of the academic book market and the study of Spanish American literature in English-speaking universities, this has tilted the scale towards scholarly renderings of the Nicaraguan's poetry, whose concomitant philological work has been invaluable. Still, these translators grossly overestimate the capacity of literal renderings to convey a sense of original poems in which prosody is so important. Conversely, they also underestimate the complexities of translation and its covert interplay with the reading practices it depends upon. While scholarly translations can indeed help works circulate among universities – which in turn can help safekeep a body of work that has otherwise been edited with dubious care – they do little to find a wider audience for a writer.

This state of things calls for a different translation strategy for rendering Darío that can incorporate the lessons gleaned from the shortcomings of past translations, engaging with what scholars, writers, and professional translators have to say about the craft. In the next chapter I will take a step back from the topic at hand to discuss the theory of the translation of poetry more generally. I will use examples from other poets belonging to different traditions in order to illustrate certain notions of poetics and translation, which in turn will touch upon issues raised throughout this chapter, in particular the rendering of

prosody and connotation. In looking at the translation of poetry at large, a framework for my own rendering of Darío will be sketched out.

Chapter 4: The Translation of Poetry

In John Felstiner's rendering of Paul Celan's 'Todesfuge', certain German words are left untouched in the English translation.[218] In line five the word 'Deutschland' occurs, as does the name 'Margereta'. It would appear to be just plain English from there on, yet not before long the word 'Shulamith' occurs in the poem's refrain in line 14. When we come to the next refrain, the scattered German words now mix strangely with the English:

> your goldenes Haar Margareta
> your aschenes Haar Shulamith (ll. 22–23).

By the time we have finished the poem, it is clear that Felstiner uses these shards of German as a device: as the poem unfolds, the foreign words appear increasingly in each refrain, culminating at the end of the poem in the following three lines:

> he plays with his vipers and daydreams der Tod ist ein Meister aus Deutschland
>
> dein goldenes Haar Margarete
> dein aschenes Haar Shulamith (ll. 34–36)

The effect is a haunting one, for the ghosts that hang above this poem in English are not only those of the women mentioned above: it is also the ghost of Celan's German. It is as if the words were breaking into English, gradually and by force of some strange sorrow. For English-language readers who would otherwise read Celan in German, the device makes them feel closer to the poem's origin. The Ukrainian-American poet Ilya Kaminsky comments on the text as follows:

> In my private library, this is one of the great translations of the twentieth century. But the word "translation," to my mind, is misleading. This translation (or any great translation, for that matter) is not a mirror. While one appreciates Felstiner's haunting use of German words interspersed with English, this striking and powerful juxtaposition of languages does not happen in Celan's poem.[219]

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[218] Paul Celan, *Selected Poems and Prose of Paul Celan*, trans. by John Felstiner (London: W.W. Norton, 2001), pp. 30–33.

[219] Ilya Kaminsky, 'Of Strangeness That Wakes Us', *Poetry* (January 2003), <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/articles/69909/of-strangenessthat-wakes-us> [accessed 28 May 2019].

Kaminsky is right. The fraught juxtaposition of languages cannot be found in Celan's original poem. What is more, for Felstiner's device to be effective in its design, it must be read from within the conventions of a translation: the reader must know that the original is in German; that it is originally a poem about death; that they are reading a translation. Does that mean that Felstiner has been unfaithful to the original? Should we still consider it a translation? Kaminsky elaborates on why the term 'translation' is misleading for him:

> Translation, however faithful, is fiction. So why is Felstiner's use of German a good decision? Because Felstiner's version is only made more striking as we wake to the actual tragic meaning of the strange foreign words — it gives English readers the experience of being other, a voice alienated from language. To realize this is to see clearly that a successful translation, even a very "faithful" one, has no need to mimic the original. It is the poet's process, writes Eavan Boland, that needs to be translated.

Using Kaminsky's words as a starting point, in this chapter I will elaborate on the notion of translation – in particular the translation of poetry – as a fiction. This means that when Felstiner is said to translate Celan, he is not really reproducing the latter's poem, nor is he carrying over its meaning or transforming the text.[220] If taken literally, such proverbial descriptions of translation seem almost metaphysical: if we use different words from a different language in a different context, how can the target text be a reproduction? Would that not make it a different text altogether? If one assumes to have carried over the meaning, is meaning therefore something universal, separate from words? Likewise, if one claims that a translation transforms a text, does that transformation not imply becoming a different text? On the other hand, if we take these descriptions metaphorically, they give us little insight into what actually takes place in literary translation, eliding the difficulties posed by the historical, sociolinguistic, and cultural differences that separate texts.

[220] The idea of translation as a reproduction of a text and its carrying-over of meaning are, historically, perhaps the best-known figurations of translation in the West. By contrast, the idea of translation as transformation has been hinted at more recently, perhaps to accommodate the changes that texts undergo in translation while maintaining a shared identity.

To return to the example above, what Felstiner did in his translation was write a new poem alongside Celan's, trying to represent in English what he interpreted that Celan was doing in German. What we call translation here is actually an imitation of both the manner and matter of Celan. The originality of the rendering comes from the fact that Felstiner plays on the conventions of translation by turning the reader's lack of German into a gain. The sparse and gradual interspersion of the German proper nouns and their respective epithets adds to the poem's strength by mirroring the gradual escalation of the original's mournful atmosphere. Thematically it works seamlessly, precisely because it engages its own fictional status as a translation.

Admittedly, this account may appear to be merely a variant of the argument for the impossibility of the translation of poetry. However, my contention is different: I hold that poetic translation, understood as an act by which a text in a given language is made to exist in other languages while retaining its identity (e.g. Chapman's Homer is still Homer), is a convention of fiction. However, unlike traditional scepticism of translation, I hasten to add that it is a necessary and vital fiction, without which literature as we know it would be unimaginable.

In translation studies, the notion of translation as a fiction is not a new one. Because it is important that scholars of literary translation and translators alike engage with translation theory, both to inform their own practice as much as to bridge gaps, I will now give an overview of how the notion has been discussed in the field and how it may apply to the translation of poetry.[221]

[221] It is perhaps not otiose to reiterate that I am strictly referring to the translation of poetry, in a way that is only extensible to certain cases of other forms of literary translation. Any rigorous discussion of the translatability of natural languages more broadly would have to take into account not only translation studies, as I do here, but also linguistics and philosophy of language. Though the arguments put forth by philosophers such as W.V.O. Quine and Donald Davidson would certainly come in handy to debunk some of the theories of meaning and interpretation implicit in the prescriptive judgements of quite a number of translators, such an endeavour lies outside the scope of this work.

The Fictionality of Equivalence

Scholars have touched on the fictional dimension of translation through the indirect or direct discussion of equivalence. Anthony Pym, for instance, defines equivalence as follows:

> Equivalence […] says that the translation will have the same value as (some aspect of) the source text. Sometimes the value is on the level of form (two words translated by two words); sometimes it is reference (Friday is always the day before Saturday); sometimes it is function (the function "bad luck on 13" corresponds to Friday in English, to Tuesday in Spanish). […] Equivalence does not say exactly which kind of value is supposed to be the same in each case; it just says that equal value can be achieved on one level or another.[222] (273)

In his discussion of the topic, Pym narrates how the concept of equivalence fell out of favour in translation studies with the rise of new paradigms such as *Skopostheorie* and descriptive studies after the 1970s, pointing out how some of them approached the concept in a reductionist and ultimately wrongheaded manner. He then positions himself alongside Gideon Toury and Ernst-August Gutt as thinkers who, each in his own way, posit equivalence as a belief structure of translation or as a necessary fiction.[223] For Pym in particular, equivalence in translation is a historical and cost-effective belief, shared both by people who translate and people who commission translations: 'the translator is an equivalence producer, a professional communicator working for people who pay to believe that, on whatever level is pertinent, A is equivalent to B'.[224] For Gutt, a translation always creates a presumption of interpretative resemblance, irrespective of whether it delivers such resemblance:

[222] Anthony Pym, 'Natural and Directional Equivalence in Theories of Translation', *Target*, vol. 19, no. 2 (2007) pp. 271–94 (p. 273).
[223] Ibid., p. 272–90.
[224] Anthony Pym, 'European Translation Studies, Une science qui Dérange, and Why Equivalence Needn't Be a Dirty Word." *TTR: Traduction, Terminologie, Rédaction*, vol. 8, no. 1 (1995), pp. 153–176 (p. 167).

> The defining characteristic of direct translation is not that it *achieves* complete interpretive resemblance but rather that it *purports to achieve it*, that is, that it creates a *presumption* of complete interpretive resemblance.[225]

For Toury, by contrast, a belief in equivalence is an inherent feature of translation for it to function socially: 'Thus, when a text is offered as a translation, it is quite readily accepted bona fide as one, no further questions asked. Among other things, this is the reason why it is that easy for fictitious translations to pass as genuine ones.'[226]

In response to Pym, other scholars more recently have entered the debate. Theo Hermans picks up the discussion and likens the belief of equivalence to Coleridge's well-known suspension of disbelief:

> Users commonly assume, Pym pointed out, that translations are equivalent to the texts they claim to represent, and indeed users of translation must be able to believe in some type of equivalence pertinent to the situation if translation is to function in a social context at all [(Pym 1995: 166-7)].
>
> This belief is properly a suspension of disbelief.[227]

He builds on Pym's ideas to claim that there is no inherent difference, as far as their textuality goes, between a translation and a non-translation. According to Hermans, a translation is only considered so because someone declares it thus:

> The view I am putting forward here is that a translation comes into being when a text that has been written alongside another text is declared to be a translation of that other text. The declaration is an illocutionary speech act. If it is heeded, that is, if the speech act has its intended perlocutionary effect, it changes a text into a translation […] A text that is converted into a translation does not change outwardly, but inwardly. Its words remain the same, but it is now, in essence, another 'work'. The approach I am taking starts not from the original but from the translation, and I regard a translation as initially being merely another text until it is declared to be a translation.[228]

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[225] Ernst-August Gutt, *Translation and Relevance: Cognition and Context* (Manchester: St. Jerome, 2000), p. 186.

[226] Gideon Toury, *Descriptive Translation Studies—and Beyond* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2012), p. 26. The best-known example in English is perhaps James Macpherson's *The Works of Ossian* (1765), a pseudotranslation of the works of a purported author of a cycle of epic poems from the Scottish Highlands. At the time of its publication it became an international success and was translated widely, influencing writers as canny as Diderot and Goethe. Other well-known examples in the English language include Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) and Joseph Smith *The Book of Mormon* (1830), the latter of which gave rise to Mormonism.

[227] Theo Hermans, *The Conference of the Tongues* (Manchester: St. Jerome, 2007), p. 23–24.

[228] Ibid., p. 91.

While I agree with the gist of Herman's ideas, his use of the terminology of J.L. Austin's theory of speech acts (illocutionary, perlocutionary, etc.) obscures, and risks misrepresenting, the well-established conventions of translation in our literary culture. Translated texts are not declared as such by way of an illocutionary speech act. Rather, there is a specific way in which translations of poetry are written and then presented. At least in the West, conventionally a poetic translation is a text that is written alongside a foreign text, with a view to imitating in a different language, how and what the other text is saying.[229]

That said, I do agree with Hermans insofar as this does not imply that a translation is a text which is essentially different from any other literary text. If a translator does not tell the reader that their text is a translation, there is no way for the reader to know.[230] They might deduce that it is so by identifying instances of 'translatese' and foreign proper nouns; but these features, which ultimately say more about our conventions of translation than anything else, are becoming more and more common in literature as globalisation increases. Further, if this were false, pseudotranslations would be detectable just by virtue of their reading, as they would not possess the distinct textual features of actual translations. And yet the opposite is also true: readers often go a long time without realising that what they thought was a translation actually is not.[231] In truth, if pseudotranslations are successful at all as literary texts it is because translation is imbricated in fiction. The idea should not be

[229] Translation is a cultural institution as much as literature itself is. For the sake of contrast, here is a description of the pointedly different role translation played in Roman literature: 'Roman literary translation, as a general rule, dismembered a Greek text and scattered it within a larger work. As a result, in Rome there was rarely anything we would call faithful translation.' Siobhán McElduff, *Roman Theories of Translation: Surpassing the Source* (London: Routlege, 2013), p. 10.

[230] Tim Parks's classic *Translating Style* provides a fitting illustration of this point. As a reading experiment, Parks had his students read translations and originals of English modernist texts and Italian modernist texts without revealing their identity. Eighteen of twenty students believed that the source language of a novel by Bernard Shaw was actually Italian. See Tim Parks, *Translating Style* (London: Cassell, 1997), p. 9.

[231] Argentine poet and translator Ezequiel Zaidenwerg ingeniously plays with this in his fictional anthology of translated poets *50 estados* (2019). For academic studies of the fictionalisation of translation see Klaus Kaindl Klaus and Karlheinz Spitzl, *Transfiction: Research into the Realities of Translation Fiction* (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2014).

a radical one, as it is symptomatic of the extent to which literary conventions tend to become naturalised – a tendency reflected in discussions around the supposedly inherent linguistic differences between prose and verse.[232] To come back to the way translations are written, after they have been put down on paper or into the computer and upon the screen, once they are ready to be published, it is key that a translation be presented as such. Instead of being a mere illocutionary speech act, this assures that when they are read they will be presumed to, in Gutt's words, interpretively resemble the source text. The application of Austin's speech act theory fails to account for the social and literary conventions by which we come to call certain texts 'translations' and are able to read them accordingly.

While these scholars stress that equivalence is a necessary fiction irrespective of its result, they seem to suggest that some kind of equivalence or interpretive resemblance is indeed achievable. In this regard – and as theorists of translation are wont to do – Pym offers a typology to classify the two main types of equivalence put forth historically by theories in the field (essentially, a typology for typologies): 'natural' equivalence (with inverted commas) and dynamic equivalence.[233] In short, Pym points out that all these theories can be distinguished according to the direction they implicitly ascribe to the act of translation: those which propound that 'natural' equivalences occur between languages put forth two-way translation solutions, while the rest offer one-way equivalences which he calls 'dynamic' for their focus on the invested nature of the process on the part of the translator. Further, these two macro types of equivalence represent for Pym ideologies of

[232] Recent poetic works such as Sam Rivière's *Kim Kardashian's Marriage* (2015), Ben Lerner's *No Art* (2016), and Anne Carson's *Float* (2016) shine a stark light on the tenuous differences between prose and verse, the former of which can be as poetic as the latter can be narrative. What distinguishes them in the end is the way they are presented and read.

[233] Pym claims that most of the binary oppositions (of the either/or kind) with which the history of translation studies is riddled fall squarely within the equivalence paradigm: dynamic vs. formal; illusory vs. anti-illusory; covert vs. overt; instrumental vs. documental; appropriate vs. adequate; domesticating vs. foreignizing; and so on. They all claim to represent some aspect or function of the source text. See Pym 2007, p. 285.

translation, for which he ultimately resorts to Gutt's debunking of 'natural' equivalence.[234] That said, we can still use Pym's typology heuristically to illustrate how the translation of poetry, of all types of translation, is the least likely to lay claim to what Gutt calls full interpretive resemblance (or 'equivalence').

As mentioned above, 'natural' equivalences designate words that can be translated both ways: I can translate 'árbol' as 'tree' and, likewise, translate 'tree' back as 'árbol' without arriving at different results. 'Árbol' and 'tree', therefore, are two 'naturally' equivalent words. Nonetheless, while such 'natural' equivalences may be found in isolation (i.e. artificially), they are more difficult to establish in contexts of real language use. However, if we entertain the idea that, despite the problematic nature of the notion, it is likely that certain situations occur in which 'natural' equivalences may arise – legal translators may agree on such 'natural' equivalents, and they are surely not impossible to achieve in the translation of user manuals and administrative documents – in poetry, nevertheless, this would seldom be the case.

Consider Lorca's opening from 'Romance sonámbulo': 'Verde que te quiero verde' (l.1), which in William Logan's rendering becomes 'Green, how I want you green'. The words here seem to baulk at any notion of 'natural equivalence'. Though they can be straightforwardly translated word for word – we can translate them as 'Green how I love you green' or 'Green how I want you green' and then be able to translate them back into 'Verde que te quiero verde' without major issues – the results are not the same. Given that, in the context of a poem, words are expected to elicit an aesthetic effect, 'semantic' equivalence matters little here. In the Spanish the repetition of 'verde' creates assonance, the suggestiveness of which is amplified by the unlikely combination of words ('te quiero'

[234] In other words, following Gutt, Pym argues that what equivalence ultimately comes down to is, as mentioned earlier, only a presumption of interpretive resemblance; it 'works on the level of beliefs, of fictions, or of possible thought processes'. Ibid., p. 289.

+ ‘verde’) put forth. The reader is certainly puzzled at first, but the line scans smoothly enough to carry them on to the next line untrammelled and expectant for what is to come. As the poem unfolds, the line becomes the refrain and puts on both tonal and atmospheric shades of meaning: in its repetition it has both an eerie and wistful air that plays into the themes of the poem, among which we see both the painful separation brought about in times of social strife and the romance of the Spanish countryside seen through gypsy culture stand out. By contrast, the sounds in the English line do not connect the words in a way that may let the reader suspend their impulse to make sense of the image; on the contrary, Logan has felt the need to place a comma after the first word. The prosody of the line, as far as it suggestiveness goes, is poor, giving the reader no other stimulus than to wonder what indeed the poem is trying to say.

More generally, the ambiguity that is common to poetry makes equivalence an unlikely possibility, not to mention the different connotations that words of seemingly equal denotation have from language to language, and within the same language from one dialectal group to another.[235] If anything, as Chesterman suggests: ‘Translation equivalence, whatever it is, is better conceived of as a kind of similarity rather than as a sameness.’[236] That is why translation is best understood as an imitation of both manner and matter of a foreign text. However, when the circumstances present themselves, some of these imitations can certainly come extraordinarily close to the source text – and that might be all we need from a translation. Still, no matter how close a rendering comes to the source, equivalence is a chimera. Not least because literary cultures often (no matter how slightly) have different reading expectations and conventions – influenced, among other things, by their current conversation, namely the themes and forms in vogue among readers at the

[235] A rather crass example is the connotations that the word ‘coger’ has in Argentine Spanish as opposed to Iberian Spanish.
[236] Andrew Chesterman, *Reflections on Translation Theory: Selected Papers 1993-2014* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2017), p. 195.

time. But also because while words from different languages can share a meaning on one level, the many facets that come into play when they come together in a poem – sound, tone, register, appearance upon the page, connotations, cultural associations, history within the language and the literature, and so forth – are all virtually impossible to be shared. This implies that the translator of poetry must write a different text if they are to elicit similar poetic effects, as in the case of Reyes's Mallarmé cited in the previous chapter, a nonetheless thoroughly 'faithful' translation.

To look at the question from another angle, let us take one of the examples that George Steiner gives as near-ideals of translation: G.K. Chesterton's rendering of Du Bellay's sonnet 'Heureux qui, comme Ulysse…'. Below is the source text alongside its English rendering:

Heureux qui, comme Ulysse, a fait un beau voyage,	Happy, who like Ulysses or that lord
Ou comme cestui-là qui conquit la toison,	Who raped the fleece, returning full and sage,
Et puis est retourné, plein d'usage et raison,	With usage and the world's wide reason stored,
Vivre entre ses parents le reste de son âge !	With his own kin can wait the end of age.
Quand reverrai-je, hélas, de mon petit village	When shall I see, when shall I see, God knows!
Fumer la cheminée, et en quelle saison	My little village smoke; or pass the door,
Reverrai-je le clos de ma pauvre maison,	The old dear door of that unhappy house,
Qui m'est une province, et beaucoup davantage ?	That is to me a kingdom and much more?
Plus me plaît le séjour qu'ont bâti mes aïeux,	Mightier to me the house my fathers made,
Que des palais Romains le front audacieux,	Than your audacious heads, O Halls of Rome!
Plus que le marbre dur me plaît l'ardoise fine :	More than immortal marbles undecayed,
Plus mon Loire gaulois, que le Tibre latin,	The thin sad slates that cover up my home;
Plus mon petit Liré, que le mont Palatin,	More than your Tiber is my Loire to me,
Et plus que l'air marin la doulceur angevine.	Than Palatine my little Lyré there;
	And more than all the winds of all the sea,
	The quiet kindness of the Angevin air.[237]

Steiner comments on the translation as follows:

> Though there is, perhaps, a faltering, a nuance of sentimentalization in lines seven and eight, G. K. Chesterton's version of Du Bellay's 'Heureux qui, comme Ulysse . . .' needs no commentary. Far from being a licence, the English sixteen-line form establishes a genuine parity with the French sonnet.[238]

[237] George Steiner, *After Babel* (London: Oxford UP, 1975), p. 409.
[238] Ibid., p. 408.

Let us start by what is obvious: Chesterton's translation is an achievement, even if lines seven and eight indeed are, as Steiner recognises under his breath, rather maudlin. The second hemistich of line six, too, seems to be no more than padding; though it provides a complete rhyme for line eight, it rattles on to line seven: '…or pass the door, / The old dear door of that unhappy house' (ll. 6–7). I suppose Chesterton chose 'unhappy' for purposes of alliteration, which is fair enough, but it makes for an overworked line. Du Bellay, on the other hand, writes '…et en quelle saison / Reverrai-je le clos de ma pauvre maison', which is both factual, for it refers to the house's impoverished state, and expressive, for its undertones of endearment.

Another obvious difference is that Chesterton's text is not a sonnet. This is significant, as Du Bellay's engagement with the form of the sonnet was part of his project to enrich French language through borrowings from Greek, Latin, and Italian, the latter of which implied mastering the Petrarchan form. It is one of Du Bellay's hallmarks as a poet. Along with Ronsard's, his sonnets represent new poetic heights conquered by the French writers of *La Pléiade*. It is no coincidence that another of his sonnets, perhaps even more famous, 'Nouveau venu qui cherches Rome en Rome', was rendered both by Spenser in English and Quevedo in Spanish into sonnets, precisely for the supremacy of the form. And yet, Chesterton is not at fault for having rendered the sonnet into four quatrains – but, it has become a different poem that connects with a different tradition, especially considering the familiarity of the sonnet form in English. To come back to the remarks quoted above, it seems to me difficult to deny that the choice of a sixteen-line form is not a licence, contrary to what Steiner asserts. What is it, if not a felicitous licence? Steiner appears to feel compelled to argue this to thwart any accusation of a lack of fidelity on the part of Chesterton, which incidentally shows he is also thinking within the paradigm of equivalence.

I would also question the parity which Steiner claims that both texts share. The English version shines when it is read alongside the French source text, but if we read it as a poem on its own, it does not hold its ground quite like Du Bellay's does. The English of the first three lines turns out to be slightly gauche when read closely:

> Happy, who like Ulysses or that lord
> Who raped the fleece, returning full and sage,
> With usage and the world's wide reason stored […] (ll. 1–3)

Chesterton avoids the pronoun in the first line not to skew the rhythm ('Happy, [is he] who like Ulysses or that lord'), while Jason, to whom the Fleece alludes, is presented anachronistically as a lord in order to achieve a rhyme. The bit of 'with usage' seems to hang uncomfortably at the beginning of the third line (usage of what? The fleece or the world's wide reason?) yet it creates an internal rhyme with 'sage'. Also, the repetition in line five along with the interjection would seem to me superfluous if it were not for the rhyme it provides: 'When shall I see, when shall I see, God knows!' (l. 5) Besides the lines mentioned by Steiner and those discussed above, line 10 later stands out for its awkwardness too:

> Mightier to me the house my fathers made
> Than your audacious heads, O Halls of Rome! (ll. 9–10).

Chesterton has given us an overliteral rendering of Du Bellay's 'Que des palais Romains le front audacieux' (l. 10). In French, 'front' can mean brow or head, but also the front of a building. Chesterton seems to be thinking of statuary here; but it does not quite add up when the conceit is to compare the buildings of the speaker's provincial home with those of Rome. All of this notwithstanding, these faults in Chesterton's rendering do not make it a lesser translation. To say that the text establishes a parity with Du Bellay, however, is erroneous.

The classicist D.S. Carne-Ross had something interesting to say about how translations relate to their source texts, and if we take the example of our discussion, he seems to have been on to something:

> Translation is often saddled with an improper obligation: it is supposed to "give you the original." I don't question the attractions of this doctrine. To get enough Greek to read Homer with some sort of understanding is going to take you anything up to three months, so why not spare yourself this labor and believe, with Professor X, that Professor Y's new version of the Iliad is "a true representation," "the essential Homer," and so forth? Moreover, this belief underpins the World Lit. in Translation courses which play an important part in the teaching of the humanities in the United States. [...] The point about good translation is not that it "gives you the original." It doesn't and can't and shouldn't try to. There is one place to get Homer's Iliad and only one place: in the fifteenth thousand lines or so of the Greek text. What a translation does is to turn the original into something else (*vertit anglice*), and the interest of the operation is in the essentially critical comparison which is thereby set up between two objects. The difference may be slight (with modern prose) or very considerable (with ancient poetry), but it is always there and it is what distinguishes the translation from the literate trot designed for people who don't have the language of the original. The distinction is as nearly as absolute as such things can be, and until it is grasped the present low standard of translation is not likely to improve.[239]

This would explain why Chesterton's 'Happy who like Ulysses…' seems to improve as a text when it is read alongside its source. Still, this does not exclude the fact that, for monolingual readers, Chesterton's Du Bellay is all they have of Du Bellay. And, as mentioned earlier, perhaps this is all we need from translation. But if Chesterton had not felt obliged to follow some of the words of the source text literally for fear of 'infidelity', we would perhaps have a better imitation of Du Bellay.

Nonetheless, as is clear in the case of the translations of Darío, a poem can be translated for as many readerships as purposes, not all of which aim to recreate the poem's effects in the target language. A case in point is the Zukofskys' homophonic translation of Catullus, in which the authors aimed to render only the sounds of the source text, regardless of the semantic meaning. Though at first it may seem bizarre, their translation prioritises

[239] D.S. Carne-Ross, *Classics and Translation: Essays* (Lewisburg, P.A.: Bucknell UP, 2010), p. 152.

one aspect of the source text (in this case the sound of Catullus's Latin) over others in a way that is analogous to how word-for-word translations tend to prioritise denotative meaning. The result is an interesting experiment of translation that sheds light not only on our reading practices, but on the biases of our translation practices too. Each 'genre' of translation has a role to play within a given literary field, all of which are important for the afterlife of the author. Not to recognise this fact perpetuates the rather absurd state of the art which Theodore Savory encountered when he famously listed the contradictory rules of translation upheld by different translators and theorists in *The Art of Translation* (1957):

1. A translation must give the words of the original.
2. A translation must give the ideas of the original.
3. A translation should read like an original work.
4. A translation should read like a translation.
5. A translation should reflect the style of the original.
6. A translation should possess the style of the translator.
7. A translation should read as a contemporary of the original.
8. A translation should read as a contemporary of the translator.
9. A translation may add to or omit from the original.
10. A translation may never add to or omit from the original.
11. A translation of verse should be in prose.
12. A translation of verse should be in verse.[240]

Going beyond these 'shoulds' and 'musts' implies acknowledging that both translations which render the 'letter' and which render the 'spirit' have a role to play in the afterlife of an author. As the renderings of Darío have shown, while we still lack an adequate version that may read like an original, the existing word-for-word translations are key for the study of the Nicaraguan's work when the readers have an incomplete knowledge of the source language. Also, they can be equally useful for a reader who sets out to find pleasure in the source text but needs some help in decoding the more difficult passages. Put simply, in word-for-word renderings, translation is the writing of a new text in which the strict denotative meaning of words is imitated at the expense of other features of language. While

[240] Theodore Horace Savory, *The Art of Translation* (London: Cape, 1968), p. 49.

they may seem poor from a literary point of view, they play a vital role in providing the conditions for which the work can be studied in depth and its memory safeguarded. In this regard I see no reason not to think of translation as a form of writing that has its own schools or subgenres, as much as poetry or fiction do; one would clearly be the school of scholarly translation, the 'literate trot' as Carne-Ross disparagingly calls it, which renders the source text more or less word-for-word; another would be the school of translation that aims to represent the source text as a literary text of its own. It would also aid us in avoiding such Byzantine contradictions as those listed by Savory.[241] Moreover, translation as a mode of writing with its own set of conventions is seen clearly in the tendency shown by translators to approach a classical author, for instance Dante, with greater creativity than they would a lesser translated author, as if the rigors of fidelity became laxer the more an author was translated.[242]

At this point it is useful to recall Gutt's notion of translation as a sort of quotation: 'In this respect we might say that direct translation is the interlingual "simulation" of a direct quotation'.[243] Gutt puts the inverted commas around simulation because the so-called quotation is done in another language, which implies that the words it 'quotes' are in fact different. Despite the mild leap of the imagination this definition asks of us, I believe that part of what Gutt is trying to arrive at is that the verb 'to translate' does not refer to a unique action. When we translate from the German, we are not performing a unique linguistic action called 'translation'; we simply try to say in English what we think is being said in German. 'Translation', as the belief structure and fictional convention it is, always comes

[241] Cf. Toury's systemic take on the matter: 'In fact, as has been suggested time and again, there are often good reasons to regard translations as constituting a special system (Dressier 1972), or "genre" (James 1989: 35-36) of their own within a culture' (p. 28).
[242] Cf. The differences between two equally celebrated translations of the Inferno: Robert Pinksy's *The Inferno of Dante* (1996), which strove to preserve the *terza rima* through slant rhyme, and Mary Jo Bang's *Inferno* (2013), which add to the poem references to Bob Dylan and South Park.
[243] Gutt, p. 163.

after the fact: it is what we allow ourselves to change in what is being said; the features we decide to privilege over others; how we present the text; and so forth.

The realisation that the presumption of translation in poetry is fictional need not be a loss. On the contrary, when it involves writing a new text that may achieve similar poetic effects as its source, it stresses the creativity that inheres in such an act. It underlines the importance of the translator's interpretation of the text, as well as their command of – especially – the target language. From this point of view, it is key that the translator be a good writer and also have a sensibility for style. It also frees translators from superstitious views of translation according to which there are clear-cut ways to go about rendering a given author. The translation of a poem is always an ad-hoc act of writing given the volatility of poetic meaning. It all comes down to what the translator wants to achieve with this new text they write based on a foreign one, and to the readership for whom they are translating. Not least, being aware of its fictionality opens the door to creative solutions such as Felsinter's. Creativity is something that is already in motion in translation even before the first word of the text has been rendered. The very act of conceiving how a writer, from another language and often from another time, should appear in the translator's language and context is an act of the imagination. It is less a transformation than a reinvention – and one which always participates of the fictional insofar as it requires some suspension of disbelief.

Translating Poetry into Poetry

If we are to translate poetry more successfully it is important that we have no illusions about what we do when we translate. As regards my own translation of Darío, which seeks to produce a text that can imitate the poetic effects of the source text, the demand on the translator is considerable, particularly regarding the command of English prosody. This is

surely the reason translators of the Nicaraguan's writing have historically opted for a more conservative rendering. And yet there are other, perhaps more challenging, demands that go beyond the imitation of Darío's aural virtues. To write poems that can represent Darío's originals in the idiom of twenty-first-century poetry in English implies compromises. Reimagining Darío in English means finding the words through which the Nicaraguan's poems may speak in a way that does not follow what would be considered bad poetry in our time. This is the point at which many well-intentioned scholars fail to see how their rendering does not elicit the poetic effects they thought would come about once they got the 'meaning' of the words right. In an essay significantly titled 'A Mistaken Ambition of Exactness', Carne-Ross criticises Richard Lattimore's translations of Homer for a similar reason: 'Lattimore, with "the gods immortal and everlasting," assumes as usual that if he sets down the dictionary meaning of a word, he is absolved from thinking about what it means.'[244] The criticism shows briefly but strikingly how thinking about what a word means is much more than knowing its dictionary meaning.

Before looking at particular poems and passages of Darío in the following section, I will focus here on two related aspects that shed light both on the extent of the critical possibilities of translation and, conversely, on the challenges they entail in the case of an author like the *modernista*. The first aspect, obliquely related to Carne-Ross's point above, has to do with what C.K. Williams once remarked about the translation of French poetry: 'You don't translate French poetry into "English", but into poetry'.[245] For our present purposes, this means translating Darío in the idiom of twenty-first-century poetry in English without losing what distinguishes his work in Spanish. The second aspect is often remarked upon by seasoned translators; it concerns the instructional value of the practice of

[244] Carne-Ross, p. 134.
[245] David Bellos, *Is That a Fish in Your Ear?* (London: Penguin, 2012), p. 291.

translation for the purposes of writing. The translator Alice Kaplan, for example, describes translation as follows:

> In the act of translating, we come closer to the literary object than anyone else except the writer who has created it; and in so doing, we learn something about ourselves as writers. Writing is an open field for invention, while translation offers a limited space in which to observe and practice the rules of writing. It should come as no surprise that so many writers become translators at some point in their careers. There is no better writer's workshop.[246]

As Kaplan suggests, it is indeed no coincidence that most major poets have translated at some point in their career. In like manner, the translator Eliot Weinberger describes translation thus:

> One is operating strictly on the level of language, attempting to invent similar effects, to capture the essential, without the interference of the otherwise all-consuming ego. It is the best education in how to write, as many poets have learned.[247]

These two aspects bear on the act of translation particularly when the translator must deviate from the source text. The source writer has no need to flesh out why their line 'sounds good' or what makes a certain metaphor 'feel right', whereas the translator, when faced with something as paltry as the choice of an article or preposition, is pushed toward an awareness of the literary conventions of the target language at almost every turn of phrase. 'Why does it not work in English?' and 'What is missing?' are questions that come up as we read existing translations of Darío. The answer is always hiding in plain sight. Translating illuminates what makes good writing. Ironically, it is more often the failure of a rendering and not its success what throws this into relief. And yet translation does more: it also illuminates the differences between one literary culture and another – its conventions, its mores, its sensibility – in a way that otherwise would go unnoticed. Poetry is often said

[246] Alice Kaplan, 'Translation: The Biography of an Artform' in *Translation: Translators on Their Work and What It Means* (New York: Columbia UP, 2013), pp. 67–82 (pp. 79–80).
[247] Eliot Weinberger, 'Anonymous Sources (On Translators and Translations)' in *Translation: Translators on Their Work and What It Means* (New York: Columbia UP, 2013), pp. 17–31 (pp. 27–28).

to defy paraphrase; by the same token, its workings upon a reader's mind are difficult to observe, weigh, ponder upon, and analyse. The translator must reckon with all of it.

To elaborate on what Kaplan mentions about translation as that which brings us closer to the literary object than anyone else except the writer, I would argue that translation not only gives us knowledge of a text; more than that, it gives us an insight into its workings – how it might have been written, what it most likely means, what it could otherwise mean, what its shortcomings are, its strengths, and so forth – that is unlike the critical knowledge of a text and goes beyond hermeneutics, for it includes a literary labour. This implies an understanding of the weavings of a text that is both practical and theoretical, which places the translator-reader in a position in between languages, from whose vantage point they are able to look into a text from without, as well as look out a text from within. In this regard, it is not a surprise that so many translators set out to render a text precisely in order to understand it.

The Argentine writer Ricardo Piglia posited that there is a form of reading that is particular to writers: 'Alguien que intenta ser un escritor no quiere leer toda la literatura, quiere encontrar los libros que le interesan y le sirven y eso siempre es arbitrario'.[248] Unlike the critic or the scholar, therefore, the writer is a selfish reader, driven by their literary hedonism which stems to a large degree from the pursuit of new forms and ideas that may be useful for their own work. This distinction between forms of reading is a useful one, especially when thinking about the form of reading particular to translators, which is different from that of the critic. Unlike the latter, for the translator reading is not merely a matter of what the text means, but of how and why it was made to mean so: the translator needs to know this in order to choose one word over another when translating. This distinction between the critic as reader and the translator as reader is not literal, of course,

[248] Ricardo Piglia, *Crítica y ficción* (Santa Fe: Universidad Nacional del Litoral, 1986), p. 66.

nor is Piglia's – they are labels used archetypically, with a view to distinguishing between different forms of reading a text which roughly corresponds to different forms of writing (a critical essay, a translation, a novel, etc.) In reality any given reader switches between different focuses with regard to a text, without being limited to their role as critic, translator, writer, or casual reader. Still, by and large, the way a translator reads comes close to how a writer does: paying close attention to the minutiae of form; assessing how each turn of phrase and adjective has been wrought. However, while they share their attention to composition, the translator is the antithesis of the writer whose reading is selfish: translators open themselves up to writing that is different, to the point of embodying the other's way of writing. In this regard, translation is an exercise in literary empathy.[249]

To come back to translating Darío into English, I will lay out the general differences between his writing and that of twenty-first-century poetry in English. To expand on C.K. Williams's dictum mentioned above, poetry must always be translated into a double language: first there is the language proper into which we translate; and then there is the language of poetry, as it were, which the poets in that particular language have developed over time. In this case, the largest difference between contemporary poetry in English and Darío's poetry is one of tone. A twenty-first century Anglophone poet can seldom afford to be solemn, grand, or naively sentimental; Darío often was. At bottom, this has to do with a historical difference in the understanding of the poet's role and place in society. Darío's ideas on the matter were of his time and essentially romantic, as is clear in his preface to *El canto errante* quoted earlier: 'El poeta tiene una visión directa e introspectiva de la vida y

[249] The U.S. poet-translator Kennex Rexroth famously described the act of translation as a radical identification between translator and translatee: 'The translation of poetry into poetry is an act of sympathy—the identification of another person with oneself, the transference of his utterance to one's own utterance. The ideal translator, as we all know well, is not engaged in matching the words of a text with the words of his own language. He is hardly even a proxy, but rather an all out advocate [*sic*]. His job is one of the most extreme examples of special pleading. So the prime criterion of successful poetic translation is assimilability.' Kennex Rexroth, *World Outside the Window: the selected essays of Kennex Rexroth* (New York: New Directions, 1987), p. 22.

una supervisión que va más allá de lo que está sujeto a las leyes del general conocimiento'.[250] He presents the poet as visionary and soothsayer. In our century, one could hardly hold such vatic beliefs.

In addition, Darío wrote at a time before Mallarmé's 'Un coup de dés' and Apollinaire's *Calligrammes* became widely read – and thus before typography, margination, and blank space had widely acquired meaning in poetry. By and large, at the turn of the century verse was still written for the ear and not the eye; it was meant to be read aloud. Darío's poems are also predominantly lyrical, and not narrative or anecdotal as much of contemporary poetry in English is. What is more, contemporary poems in English are considerably more visual, as contemporary English-language poets often pattern their poems with a view to iconicity. Punctuation has also changed: while ellipses were fashionable among *fin-de-siècle* poets, today they are strictly avoided. Contemporary poets prefer to use the soft punctuation of the line or em dashes, which allow for sharper shifts in tone, mood, or thought in a poem, leading to broader experimentation with lineation along and across the page, as well as different kinds of margination. The translator of Darío, at the very least, should be aware of these conventions and devices if their translation is to have some appeal for the target readership.

Then there is the issue of the linguistic differences between Spanish and English. Though not vastly different languages by any means, as Acereda and Derusha suggest, the differences are nonetheless significant. The fact that all nouns are gendered in Spanish might seem innocuous until we run into personifications: for example, for Darío in particular and for Hispanic culture in general, Death is female. Also, compared to English, Spanish is considerably poorer in motion verbs.[251] At the same time, abstract nouns seem

[250] *Poesía*, p. 304.
[251] For an account of the greater dynamism of motion verbs in English compared to their Spanish counterparts in a corpus of literary translations, see Paula Cifuentes Ferez, 'The treatment of manner-of-motion verbs and English-Spanish translation methods for narrative texts' *Miscelánea* (2013) vol. 47, pp. 53–80.

to come more easily to Spanish. For example, it would be challenging to come up with an adequate translation for Lope's 'a mis soledades voy / de mis soledades vengo' ('La dorotea', ll. 1–2). Rarely can an abstraction such as 'loneliness' be used so supply in English in the plural. Moreover, the Germanic roots of English, which grant it its phrasal verbs and nouns, give it a layer of concreteness and sense of physicality that Spanish lacks. By contrast, the simple and open vowels of the latter render it particularly melodious to the Western ear – a melodiousness whose poetic possibilities Darío arguably took further than any other poet of the language – and are overhung, as it were, by the aura of Latin and Romance. Not least, the fact that Spanish is a syllable- and English a stress-based language utterly changes the prosody of the languages. As will become clearer in the next section, when translating Darío I decided to ignore metre and, in its stead, pay attention to voice and rhythm. On the one hand, voice seems to me to be one of the most important features of lyric: after all a poem is an utterance, a slice of speech cast in writing that is in conversation with its own poetic tradition but is also addressed to a singular reader. In the case of Darío in particular, finding the right voice is of the utmost importance given the difficulty of accommodating the idiosyncrasies of his style into twenty-first-century poetic idiom. On the other hand, it quickly became clear to me that translating Darío's fourteen-syllable alexandrine into a six-feet alexandrine was little more than a philological sleight of mind and a false equivalence. Darío's fondness for internal rhyme, alliteration, and dactylic rhythms even across different metres point to a priority of rhythm over metre, not to mention the fact that the Nicaraguan was the poet who broke ground in metrical experimentation, eventually leading the way for Spanish free verse. As he wrote in his preface to *El canto errante*: 'No gusto de «moldes», nuevos ni viejos... Mi verso ha nacido

siempre con su cuerpo y su alma, y no le he aplicado ninguna clase de ortopedia.'[252] If that is the case, how could a translation of his verse be orthopaedic?

These are merely general issues with which a translator of Darío must grapple; the finer points will be discussed in the following section. I have hitherto explained my views on the translation of poetry because the history of Darío in English shows that word-for-word or scholarly translations of an author do little to find a wider audience for their work, despite its values and benefits in other respects. It is only the writing of translations that have literary value of themselves which makes foreign authors enter the collective imagination of a certain readership, as in the cases cited in the previous chapter.[253] If I have focussed on the translation of poetic works as a fictional and necessary convention it is because its awareness leads to better translation of poetry. By translating in a manner that is unrestrained by the conceptual straitjackets which ideologies of translation impose upon translators – and according to which the act of translation always comes down to an either/or situation whose losses are unavoidable – the translator is at liberty to consciously engage with the differences of the target language in a way that does not disqualify their translation for a supposed lack of fidelity. The onus of interpretation, which not only has literary but also ethical and political consequences, is always on the translator – but without illusions or chimera. What a translator does is write a new poem that will be read as a representation of a foreign one. What kind of representation readers expect to find, and what kind of readers will seek out that representation, are two factors that will define the way the translation is carried out. Those factors are also the two main criteria according to which the success of the translation should be assessed. For all the other questions regarding whether the translation is good or bad writing, the conventions of the target context provide

[252] *Poesía,* p. 304.
[253] This holds especially true for the cases in which the translated author comes from a non-hegemonic literature. When a poet is translated from English into Spanish the stakes are likely to be different.

the answer. All a translator can do is imitate the manner and matter of a foreign text – according to their own literary conventions and the best of their abilities.

Section III

Translating

Chapter 5: Towards a New Translation of Rubén Darío

In the previous chapters, my engagement with Darío's writing and its translation into English has been mostly critical and theoretical. In contrast, this chapter is more practical than traditionally expected in a doctoral thesis: I compare, discuss, and closely read poems of Darío, along with their existing translations, with a view to explaining the thought process that led me to my own renderings, which I also present. On the one hand, this is a logical development of my thinking on translation explained in Chapter 4, whereby I argued that the translation of a text gives us not only a knowledge of it, but also insight into the workings of its textuality. Therefore, the following pages also aim to further illustrate the possibilities of translation as a critical tool. Likewise, this chapter shows how said insight can be put into practice to produce a new translation that could more effectively represent its source text than hitherto has been achieved.

The texts discussed in this chapter correspond to different facets of Darío's poetry and are grouped according to the different challenges they pose for the translator. I will first discuss 'Ama tu rimo…', a sonnet added to the second edition of *Prosas profanas*, for it is a text whose interpretation sheds light on Darío's poetics. As I demonstrate throughout this chapter, knowledge of a writer's poetics can be key in aiding the translator in dealing with the compromises that virtually all translation calls for. I then move on to discuss the translatability of 'Sonatina' and 'Marcha triunfal'. Aside from being written during Darío's time in Buenos Aires, these poems are grouped together because they are two of his most accomplished prosodic exercises and therefore pose similar translational challenges. They raise questions about the relevance of the Nicaraguan's body of work for contemporary English-language readers and demand further critical engagement on the part of the translator as reader. I will then discuss the translation of 'Yo persigo una forma', one of Darío's most celebrated poems, for it is a text that stands at the threshold, as it were,

between the Darío of *Prosas profanas* and the later Darío of *Cantos de vida y esperanza*. It is a sonnet that expresses with great craftsmanship the characteristic tropes of the Nicaraguan's oeuvre, the importance of which will stand out when I interpret and translate his later poems. In addition, it is a text in which, like those analysed previously, prosody plays a significant role. I will then discuss 'Yo soy aquél que ayer no más decía' and 'Canción de otoño en primavera', both texts from *Cantos de vida y esperanza* and to a certain extent similarly autobiographical, in which Darío's writing has evolved toward greater confessionalism and less embellishment. Unlike the previous poems whereby style seems preponderant, in these texts the ideas within the poems are as important as the style. Finally, I discuss the *nocturnos* and 'Lo fatal', three poems among those by Darío which retain their allure for contemporary Spanish-language readers, due to their existential anguish and dark imagery. For the translator of Darío, they present a consummate interweaving of sense and sound which becomes all the more challenging to translate. At the same time, they are some of the most memorable poems of Darío's later work.

Before delving into the poems, it is worth pointing out that to produce a translation of Darío that can stand on its own as a work of poetry in English the translator must render the texts according to contemporary conventions of poetry, some of which have been discussed in Chapter 4. In this sense, I strive to render Darío into a twenty-first-century English poetic idiom that preserves the essential features of the original. Deliberate archaisms or calculated anachronisms run the risk of alienating the contemporary reader. By the same token, they are less likely to elicit effects similar to those of the source text. A further argument is found in the platitude that translations age more rapidly than their originals, perhaps because they seldom become an important part of the history of their language. More important, however, is the fact that the interpretation of a translator – which is the starting point of translation – can only take place from a vantage point that is

contemporary. In other words, a translator that is producing a non-contemporary rendering of a text is always at risk of having their own contemporariness slip into their text in a turn of phrase or in the decoding of an obscure figure. Even in the extreme case of a hypothetical translator of Darío who is utterly cut off from the production of contemporary poetry, and in its stead only reads *fin-de-siècle* literature, the reading of such a translator will necessarily follow some convention or notion that belongs to their time. It is impossible to know for certain how a text was read in the past. The best we can do is imagine it based on our knowledge of its importance and the accounts of its contemporaries. Therefore, the most coherent thing to do for a translator is to bring the text they are translating fully into the present. The question of what exactly this means in the case of Darío is one that I address in what follows.

Applying Darío's Poetics to Translation

As mentioned earlier, there is an argument to be made for thoroughly understanding a writer's poetics before translating their work. Knowledge of their poetics not only throws light on stylistic choices in passages of textual ambiguity, it also provides a vision of the oeuvre as a whole, ensuring that each translational decision is an informed one. To that end, I will begin by discussing Darío's poetics, before showing how such knowledge can inform the translation of 'Ama tu ritmo'.

In his best-known poems and in the prefaces to his poetry collections, Darío elaborated on the importance that rhythm had for his writing. In 'Palabras liminares', the preface to *Prosas profanas y otros poemas* (1896), we find the following passage:

> ¿Y la cuestión métrica? ¿Y el ritmo?
> Como cada palabra tiene un alma, hay en cada verso, además de la harmonía [*sic*] verbal, una melodía ideal. La música es sólo de la idea, muchas veces.[254]

[254] *Poesía*, p. 180.

Darío would later echo these thoughts in his preface to *El canto errante* (1907), 'Dilucidaciones', quoted in the previous section:

> No gusto de moldes nuevos ni viejos... Mi verso ha nacido siempre con su cuerpo y su alma, y no le he aplicado ninguna clase de ortopedia. He, sí, cantado aires antiguos; y he querido ir hacia el porvenir, siempre bajo el divino imperio de la música —música de las ideas, música del verbo [...] el arte no es un conjunto de reglas, sino una armonía de caprichos [...] Hay una música ideal como hay una música verbal.[255]

Much has been written about the role that the modest genre of the preface had for *Modernismo* and particularly for Darío, who often wrote his own like prose poems, using them not only to elaborate on his poetics, but to provoke and criticise his fellow writers and readers. Among the scholarship on the topic, Guillermo Sucre has lucidly commented on the passage quoted previously from 'Palabras liminares' in relation to one of Darío's late poems. According to the Venezuelan writer, when Darío states 'la música es sólo de la idea, muchas veces' he is defining music not only as a system of sounds, but of relations or combinations. Therefore, for Darío musicality has a twofold nature; on the one hand, it is sensitive insofar as it pertains to the musicality of words, which is perceived through the senses; on the other, it is ideal or ideational insofar as the ideas that those musical words put forth can correspond with each other 'harmoniously' on a conceptual level. Thus, the use of musicality in *Modernismo* is predicated upon a whole rhythmic system of correspondences that works on both a conceptual and a verbal level.[256]

This 'música ideal' that also appears in the preface to *El canto errante* has its roots in an esoteric view of the world that can be traced back to Pythagoras, at which Darío arrived through the writings of prominent occultists such as Josephin Péladan and Éduoard Schuré. In his classic essay on Darío, 'El caracol y la sirena' (1964), Octavio Paz touched upon the place of the occult in the Nicaraguan's poetry, leading the way for the research of

[255] Ibid., p. 304.
[256] Guillermo Sucre, *La máscara, la transparencia: ensayos sobre poesía hispanoamericana* (Caracas: Monte Ávila, 1975), p. 41.

scholars such as Raymond Skyrme's *Rubén Darío and the Pythagorean Tradition* (1975) and Cathy L. Jade's *Rubén Darío and the Romantic Search for Unity* (1983). Both these studies consider the extent to which Darío's worldview and poetics were intimately joined at the idea of 'armonía'. In particular, Jrade explains how occult beliefs on the one hand – a mélange of Pythagoreanism, Platonism, and Neoplatonism, as found in Schuré's *Les grands initiés* (1889) – and Romantic and Symbolist writings on the other, led Darío to develop 'a poetic cosmology',[257] according to which the poet's calling is to interpret the harmonious order of the universe. For the *modernista* there is a sacred correspondence in the universe which, following Pythagoras's putative teachings, arises from the ratio that musical scales and the celestial spheres share. This was hardly original on the part of Darío, as there are ample examples of such beliefs in the writings of Nerval, Hugo, and Baudelaire, to name some of the most conspicuous French cases.[258] In his study, Skyrme elaborates on how this belief in the harmony of all things applies to Darío's poetics, not only in the obvious sense that words should create harmony through their mellifluous sound, but be semantically interconnected as well (hence 'música de la idea'):

> Words carry with them clusters of associations, which the poet, through the sound, rhythm, and disposition of the words in a given utterance, seeks to call upon the reader's mind. The semantic interrelationship of the words, reinforced by sound and rhythm, becomes the ordering force within the poem and creates its unity.[259]

Likewise, Sucre touches upon this concept in Darío's poetry, relating it to rhythm and quoting the many instances in which the word '(h)armonía' occurs in the Nicaraguan's poetry: 'El Hada Harmonía ritmaba sus vuelos', we read in the first poem of *Prosas*

[257] Catherine Jrade, *Rubén Darío and the Romantic Search for Unity* (Texas: Universit of Texas Press, 1983), p. 17.
[258] The belief was also shared by many *modernistas*: see Theodore W Jensen, 'El pitagorismo en Las fuerzas extrañas de Lugones,' in *Otros mundos otros fuegos: Fantasía y realismo mágico en Iberoamérica, Memoria del XVI Congreso Internacional de Literatura Iberoamericana*, ed. by Donald A. Yates (East Lansing: Michigan State University, 1975), pp. 299–307; Antonio Risco, *El demiurgo y su mundo: hacia un nuevo enfoque de la obra de Valle-Inclán* (Madrid: Gredos, 1997); Iván Schulman, 'Modernismo, revolución y pitagorismo en Martí', *Casa de la Américas*, No. 73 (1972), pp. 45–55.
[259] Raymond Skyrme, *Darío and the Pythagorean Tradition* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1975), pp. 91–92.

profanas. In a later poem published two decades afterwards in *El canto errante*, we read: 'El canto vuela, con sus alas: / Armonía y Eternidad' in the manner of an *ars poetica*. The examples abound. For Darío's poetics, 'armonía' is the foremost principle.[260] Alberto Julián Pérez expands on what 'armonía' implies in specifically poetic terms, tracing its presence in some of Darío's well-known poems. The passage is worth quoting in full for its sweep:

> La armonía es uno de los conceptos "musicales" relevantes que Darío repite con más frecuencia en su poesía: en "Era un aire suave..." ("el hada harmonía ritmaba sus vuelos"), "El país del Sol" ("hermana harmoniosa"), "Responso" a Verlaine ("la harmonía sideral"), "Yo soy aquél" ("...trajo de/ la sagrada selva la armonía"), etc. [...] Darío no usa la palabra en sentido puramente musical: se refiere a un ideal poético, literario, que considera a la armonía una variedad de sonidos, medidas y pausas bien concertadas y gratas. [...] Darío creía en la armonización de la palabra y la idea, en la armonización del yo poético con la existencia espiritual del todo, la divinidad [...] Su búsqueda de armonía (el equilibrio concertado en la totalidad del poema, valiéndose del ritmo, de la melodía, de la asimilación de sonidos vocálicos) es inseparable de su concepción poética idealista metafísica.[261]

Pérez underlines the importance of musical or acoustic qualities in the poetry of Darío – 'ritmo', 'melodía', 'sonidos vocálicos' – which are all related to his notion of 'armonía'. In turn, other scholars have taken these acoustic qualities as a starting point for their interpretation of Darío's writing in particular and of *Modernismo* in general: Noé Jitrik's *Las contradicciones del modernismo* (1978) and Erika Lorenz's *Bajo el divino imperio de la música* (1956) are two examples of this approach. Jitrik looks at the writing of *Modernismo* as a combinatorial system based on accent and sounds, which managed to spread across Spanish America effectively thanks to its systemic regularities. On the other hand, Lorenz analyses the wide presence of musical tropes in Darío's oeuvre and explicates the importance of music in his poetics.

[260] Sucre, p. 42.
[261] Julián Pérez, pp. 125–28.

Nevertheless, the poems themselves serve as the best illustration of Darío's musicality. Among those added to the second edition of *Prosas profanas* (1901), many under the section 'Las ánforas de Epicuro' can be read as metapoetic sonnets. In these poems the metaphors for poetry are always musical, following Darío's esoteric conception of harmony. The clearest example of this can be found in 'Ama tu ritmo':

> Ama tu ritmo y ritma tus acciones
> bajo su ley, así como tus versos;
> eres un universo de universos
> y tu alma es una fuente de canciones.
>
> La celeste unidad que presupones
> hará brotar de ti mundos diversos,
> y al resonar tus números dispersos
> pitagoriza en tus constelaciones.
>
> Escucha la retórica divina
> del pájaro del aire y la nocturna
> irradiación geométrica adivina;
>
> mata la indiferencia taciturna
> y engarza perla y perla cristalina
> en donde la verdad vuelca su urna.[262]

All aspects of Darío's poetry and beliefs discussed so far are articulated in this sonnet where ethics and aesthetics come together: poetry is song and rhythm; the poet must shape his actions after that rhythm; he shall do so by listening to the music of the universe without, discovering the universe within. From the first to the last line, sound and meaning are tightly interwoven here. The hendecasyllables written with feminine rhymes abound in assonance, internal rhyme, and an ingenious use of repetition in a way that performs the very meaning of the poem. In other words, through the text of the sonnet Darío '[ritma] sus acciones'; shows himself to be 'una fuente de canciones', which the reader can find in his 'universo de universos'; so on. Darío also does this with the rest of the sonnets of 'Las ánforas de Epicuro' – otherwise the message of 'Ama tu ritmo' would be moot. But, what

[262] *Poesía*, pp. 236–37.

happens to a poem like this one when it is translated without consideration to prosody? Here is Appelbaum's almost word-for-word translation.

> Love your rhythm and rhythm your actions
> in obedience to its law, and your poetry as well;
> you are a universe of universes,
> and your soul a fountain of song.
>
> The celestial unity that you presuppose
> will make varied worlds germinate within you,
> and as your scattered poems resound,
> philosophize like Pythagoras among your constellations.
>
> Listen to the divine rhetoric
> of the bird in the air, and divine
> the geometric radiation of the night;
>
> slay silent indifference
> and string pearl on crystalline pearl
> there where truth pours out her urn. (131)

Suddenly, all of the aural qualities of the poem – which are crucial for it to fulfil its meaning as an *ars poetica* – are absent. The unity between sense and sound, its 'armonía', is broken.

The Eye of the Poem

Boase-Beier calls that point in every poem where translators consistently diverge from the source text the 'eye of the poem' – that is, the poem's critical point. She explains that:

> The eye of the poem, then, is a crucial point in the poem, which both expresses the poem's vision and allows the reader access to the cognitive state informing the poem. In stylistic terms, I would suggest that the eye of the poem is recognisable by, firstly, a maximum of foregrounding, that is, of linguistic structures which are "made prominent" [...] and which, metaphorically speaking, attract the eye of the reader, and, secondly, by ambiguity, which allows the poem to be read in at least two different ways.[263]

Despite issues of its applicability as a concept to different styles of poetry, and how it is likely to vary from language to language, the idea of the eye of a poem is an interesting one to put to the test when looking at the renderings of Darío's works. It can help us identify

[263] Jean Boase-Beier, 'Translating the Eye of the Poem', *CTIS* Occasional Papers, No. 5 (2009), pp. 1–20 (pp. 11–12).

passages of a text where translators consistently diverge as a result of their struggle to render it. It can also be a useful tool to identify overarching patterns that emerge in similar translation strategies applied to the same text. Regarding Appelbaum's 'Love Your Rhythm...', the eye of the poem is at the end of the sonnet's octave, where,

> y al resonar tus números dispersos
> pitagoriza en tus constelaciones (ll. 7–8)

is rendered as

> and as your scattered poems resound
> philosophize like Pythagoras among your constellations. (ll. 7–8)

The choice to render 'pitagoriza' by expanding on an interpretation of the neologism ('philosophize like Pythagoras') is telling: the facing English version is almost meant to decode the Spanish text for the student who reads it. And yet it is still not clear what exactly 'philosophize like Pythagoras' means in this context. Without further information, it is as ambiguous as the verb 'pitagoriza' – which, given Darío's occultist beliefs, is likely meant to exhort the reader to find harmony between the self and the universe. Choosing to preserve the neologism in English ('pythagorise') would have been easier, not to mention that it would not have disrupted the line's rhythm or length. And since sound and meaning are so closely bound throughout the poem, Appelbaum is forced to rewrite the lines. As a result, the meaning changes slightly and the rhythm of the poem seems to stagger in the last line of the quatrain. The harmony that the source text possesses conceptually ('música ideal') and prosodically ('música verbal') has been broken. It is not outrageous, therefore, to claim that the translated poem is incomplete, even if it is a somewhat accurate rendering of the literal meaning of the source text. I say this because what is at the heart of 'Ama tu ritmo' is the performance of its message of musicality; the poem practices what it preaches. Not all of Darío's poems perform their message like this one does; however, they all are predicated upon the same ideas about poetry and rhythm.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the challenge of translating Darío often comes down to the challenge of translating prosody. Matching the lexical level of the text is not enough to convey the meaning of 'Ama tu ritmo', which largely resides in its sound. In this regard, the extent to which Appelbaum's translation reveals how the meaning of a poem by Darío is dependent upon his poetics of 'armonía' is striking. Anderson Imbert saw this clearly:

> Sin tal melodía, los paisajes y escenografías de Darío hubieran sido convencionales: el oro, el lirio, el cisne y la mujer; el lago en el jardín y el palacio en la ciudad; los objetos de arte, las alhajas y los vestidos suntuosos; el desfile de figuras míticas, etc. tenían algo de lienzo de fotógrafo o tramoya de teatro. Hubieran perjudicado irremediablemente su obra de no ser por esa música de la idea, que lo envolvía todo en ondas de emoción a un mismo tiempo nostálgicas y anhelantes.[264]

Because the work of a poet is a work upon language, merely translating the dictionary meaning of the words is rarely enough. To translate 'Ama tu ritmo' as fully as possible – that is, to write a poem in English that imitates how and what the Spanish says – the prosody of the lines must come first as we try to follow the ideas of the *ars poetica* as closely as possible. Below is my own rendering of the octave:

> Cherish your rhythm and rhythm
> your actions along, as your verses;
> you are a universe of universes,
> and your soul a many-coloured prism.
>
> Inside you there are scintillations
> surrounding buried planets within;
> make your hidden numbers ring
> and pythagorise your constellations. (ll. 1–8)

I have translated neither the 'letter' nor the 'spirit'. Indeed, there are important lexical differences between my rendering and the source text, particularly in lines 4–7. That is because I give preference to the prosodic and figurative qualities of the lines, which are more important for the poem's meaning and effect. Besides translating into rhyme, I render both the musical and astronomical motifs which come together in the celestial picture of

[264] Enrique Anderson Imbert, *La originalidad de Rubén Darío* (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1967), p. 81.

the poet's inner voice. Since much of the initial verve of the poem seems to come from the deft play between 'ritmo' and 'ritma' as noun and verb, as well as in the rich rhyme between 'versos' and 'universo de universos' – though, alas, I lose the play with 'diversos' – it seemed crucial to keep them in my version. As mentioned earlier, I find no reason not to keep the neologism 'pitagoriza', a word which brings together the poet's verbal ingenuity and his esoteric purview of the role of poetry in the world. I should stress that my rendering is not a 'free' version of the poem, despite the apparent liberties I take, nor does it oppose other kinds of 'faithful' translation. If it were free, I would take Darío's poem into a more interesting direction from a contemporary point of view; I would surely discard the rhyme or at least add a shade of irony to it. Instead, I hew close to the source as far as its 'armonía' goes.

Imitating what the sestet says, as well as how it says it, proved to be more challenging. Below is my rendering of the last lines of the sonnet.

> Open your ears and listen
> to the rhetoric of the bird of the air.
> See night's geometry glisten;
>
> slay apathy's quiet heir
> and in joining pearl with pearl fair,
> truth, like a sun, will have risen. (ll. 9–14)

Since Modernism brought about its revolution of free verse, imagery and direct speech have come to the fore in English poetic idiom. Hence, when rendering the lines above, the best choice is to further their imagistic possibilities given the opportunity they offer. For that reason 'la nocturna / irradiación geométrica adivina' becomes 'See night's geometry glisten' – which, given English-language poetics is, on the one hand, unsurprisingly more economical and direct; on the other hand, it gives Darío's line a different kind of visual power while achieving the rhyme which is crucial for the 'armonía' of the poem. The last tercet diverges further, semantically, from the source text: 'mata la indiferencia taciturna'

becomes ‘slay apathy’s quiet heir’. Still, the homophony between ‘air’ and ‘heir’ is a way of playing with English that is, in its own way, a Daríoesque gesture, and therefore a compensation in place. I would argue that it fits fully with the theme and aim of the *ars poetica*. For the last two lines, the tension that is created by the repetition of line 13, which in turn culminates in the poet’s arrival to truth in line 14, seemed to be the most important features to achieve, while keeping the rhymes without which the spell of the poem would be broken. Thus, ‘y engarza perla y perla cristalina / en donde la verdad vuelca su urna’ is imitated as ‘and in joining pearl with pearl fair / truth, like a sun, will have risen.’ Line 13 is rendered in a reasonably successful manner by following the repetition and achieving the full rhyme with a hyperbaton; however, line 14 is decidedly a lesser line of poetry than Darío’s. It does not replicate the rich associations that ‘urna’ conjures, both a vase and an urn, and the contents of which are nothing less than truth itself. My ending, on the other hand, borders on the commonplace. Still, it gets the job done by giving the reader an image of culmination with the sun that rises at the end of the poet’s long Pythagorean journey of inner discovery, while conveying that such journey leads to truth, which is key for the meaning of the *ars poetica*. It also provides an imaginative half rhyme that chimes with the two lines that appear previously in the poem: listen-glisten-risen; giving a sense of completeness to the poem on a formal level.

The foregoing discussion is meant to illustrate how being familiar with a writer’s poetics can inform our decisions when somewhat drastic compromises are called for. In my ‘Cherish your rhythm’, some things are lost and some gained when compared to its source text; but it is a poem that successfully puts the *ars poetica* into practice as much as it also preaches it. It also has harmony, in Darío’s sense, and aims to convey the Nicaraguan’s prosodic ingenuity as well as his musical and esoteric motifs.

'Marcha triunfal' and 'Sonatina'

In some poems more than others, Darío's style has aged dramatically: 'Marcha triunfal' and 'Sonatina' are two such poems. An exercise in prosody and a stretching of the limits of metre, the former is a poem that conjures with virtuosic skill the martial rhythms of a military band, while the latter is verse that approximates song.[265] They are above all historical objects. Thinking about their translation raises questions not only about Darío's relevance for Spanish language today, but about his relevance for the English language. What would Anglophone readers gain from having a 'Marcha triunfal' or a 'Sonatina' in English? Conversely, what do readers of Spanish gain? The latter question is perhaps simpler to answer.

Like 'Sonatina', 'Margarita', 'Canción de otoño en primavera', and 'Los motivos del lobo' – to name some of the best-known – 'Marcha triunfal' is one of those poems by Darío which became widely popular upon its publication and whose mnemonic musicality helped it circulate from library to library and from mouth to mouth across the Hispanic world, to the point of being widely studied in schools and recited in households to this day. Though its style now comes across as gaudy and outmoded, we can still hear the hooves of the cavalry and the pace of the marching band when we read it, which means that the poem continues to achieve what it set out to. It is, as mentioned above, a work of historical importance for the prosody of Hispanic poetry, and a display of poetic skill.

For English-language readers, however, there is not much to gain other than an understanding of Darío as a great renovator of Spanish-language metre – something which anyway can be gleaned from the many academic textbooks on the topic. Some translators might be tempted by the challenge of imitating Darío's virtuosity in Spanish to show that

[265] For a thorough analysis of the circumstances that surrounded the composition of 'Marcha triunfal', see Alfonso García Morales, '¿Qué triunfo celebra Darío en su "Marcha triunfal"? in *Zama*, Extraordinario: Homenaje a Rubén Darío (2016), pp. 48–68.

they are also virtuosos in English; but it is doubtful whether it would be relevant for contemporary readers. Still, it is worth briefly looking at the translation of the first stanza of both poems, as it can yet again illustrate how word-for-word translation often fails to convey the qualities of a poet's style. Below is the first stanza of 'Marcha triunfal':

> Ya viene el cortejo!
> Ya viene el cortejo! Ya se oyen los claros clarines.
> La espada se anuncia con vivo reflejo;
> ya viene, oro y hierro, el cortejo de los paladines! (ll. 1–4)

The principles of 'armonía' are visibly at work here, particularly in the feminine rhymes and the rich alliteration. When read aloud, the lines effortlessly impose upon us their iambic and at times anapaestic rhythm. One can follow the beat with one's foot, much like the Romans used to enjoy their poetry. Below is what remains of these lines in English when they are wrested of their rhythm:

> The procession is coming!
> The procession is coming! The clear bugles are now heard.
> The sword is announced by a vivid reflection;
> it is coming, gold and iron: the procession of the paladins. (Derusha/Acereda ll. 1–4)

Because Derusha/Acereda's translation is meant to aid the student in understanding the facing Spanish-language page, it would be specious to fault them for what they have not set out to give us. Still, it is useful to look at the rendering to see what gets lost when a word-for-word model is followed. In the stanza above, literalism leads to lines that do not scan at all, and, ironically, to failings of diction. Reading the poem as a translator, one cannot help but wonder if it is truly necessary that the instruments be 'bugles' when there is no way to alliterate the word so as to summon martial overtones. Also, would have Darío described those 'clarines' as 'claros' if both words were not so resonant when used together? The poem is reminiscent of an oft-quoted example given by Jiří Levý in his classic *Art of Translation*. The Czech scholar comments on a poem by the German poet Christian Morgenstern called 'Das ästhetische Wiese' (The aesthetic Weasel). Below is the original German poem followed by Levý's crib:

Ein Wiesel
sass auf einem Kiesel
inmitten Bachgeriesel

[A weasel
sat on a pebble
in the midst of the ripple of a brook.][266]

Morgenstern is known in Germany for his satirical nonsense poetry. According to Levý, 'the play on rhyme is more fundamental than zoological or topographical accuracy in terms of vocabulary' in this poem. He quotes Max Knight's translation into English, which reads as follows:

A weasel
perched on an easel
within a patch of teasel.[267]

Knight clearly diverges from the lexical meanings of Morgenstern's words, but his version elicits the poetic effects of the source text more successfully than otherwise. Knight lists five variations for the rendering of this poem, each with a different animal and a different setting, which he includes in the preface to his translation of Morgenstern's poems so as to show how further lexical divergence can still render the effects of a poem more effectively.[268] The case of Darío's 'Marcha triunfal' and 'Sonatina' is analogous. If one accepts the interpretation that the former text is meant to have martial overtones, as seems clearly to be the poem's conceit, achieving that effect should be a translator's priority. Bearing that in mind, below is my own attempt at the stanza:

Here comes the parade!
Here comes the parade! You can hear the clear call of the clarions.
The sheen of the swords cuts through the shade;
here they come, gold and steel, the parade and its stallions! (ll. 1–4)

This seems to come closer to what Darío conceivably had in mind: a stanza that can conjure martial undertones while it describes a military parade.

[266] Jiří Levý, *The Art of Translation* (Amsteram: John Benjamins, 2011), pp. 100–02.
[267] Ibid., p. 100.
[268] Ibid., pp. 101–02.

The case of ‘Sonatina’ is similar. While fairy-tale elements have an important place in Darío’s eclectic mythology, as we will see not only in ‘Sonatina’ but in some of the poems analysed later on as well, it seems clear that the poem is above all a formal display of virtuosity. Word order, lexical accuracy, and identity of metaphors are meaningless in this poem if they do not have a song-like musicality to go along with them. Still, like ‘Marcha triunfal’, it is worth seeing just how much of the poem resides in its prosody by looking at a translation that does not preserve the rhyme. Below is the source text’s first stanza followed by Kemp’s rendering.

> La princesa está triste… ¿qué tendrá la princesa?
> Los suspiros escapan de su boca de fresa,
> que ha perdido la risa, que ha perdido el color.
> La princesa está pálida en su silla de oro,
> está mudo el teclado en su clave sonoro,
> y en un vaso, olvidada, se desmaya una flor. (ll. 1–6)

> The Princess is sad. What ails the Princess?
> Nothing but sighs escape from her lips,
> which have lost their smile and their strawberry red.
> The Princess is pale in her golden chair,
> the keys of her harpsichord gather dust,
> and a flower, forgotten, droops in its vase. (ll. 1–6)

Though Kemp is eloquent in his solutions, the text is reduced to a children’s poem without its rhymes. However, there is more to ‘Sonatina’ than meets the eye; under all its *fin-de-siècle* bric-a-brac, it is a manifold text. There are other passages of the poem in which Darío took the Spanish language to uncharted territory – for instance, with its use of colloquialisms within a high poetic register,

> Parlanchina, la dueña dice cosas banales,
> y vestido de rojo piruetea el bufón (ll. 7–8)
> […] ¡Pobrecita princesa de los ojos azules! (l. 31)

which Kemp renders as,

> The duenna prattles of commonplace things,
> The clown pirouettes in his crimson and gold; (ll. 7–8)
> […] The poor little Princess with the wide blue eyes (l. 31)

effectively erasing Darío's seamless manipulation of register. This was one of the major innovations of *Modernismo* when it came about, as contemporaneous critics such as Baldomero Sanín Cano and Pedro Henríquez Ureña make clear in their appraisals of the significance of the movement. They are both worth quoting in full to illustrate the extent to which our historical distance has cut us off from these values of the text. Below is Sanín Cano's account:

> Leemos en Rubén Darío: "Que se humedezca el áspero hocico de la fiera/ de amor, si pasa por allí". La última frase era inaceptable para los poetas anteriores del período de que se habla. Nadie se había atrevido antes de Rubén Darío a decir en verso: "Los Estados Unidos son potentes y grandes". [...] La pompa imaginativa, la mera riqueza verbal, las exageraciones del romanticismo, las crudezas estudiadas de las escuelas naturalistas, quedaron excluidas de la nueva poesía americana.[269] (107)

And according to Henríquez Ureña:

> La revolución modernista, al derribar el pesado andamiaje de la exhausta retórica romántica, impuso un modo de expresión natural y justa, que en los mejores maestros es flexible y diáfana, enemiga de las licencias consagradas y de las imágenes clichés.[270]

As Henríquez Ureña points out, 'Sonatina' also flexibly combines these colloquial uses of language with moments of high poetry, such as the following:

> la princesa persigue por el cielo de Oriente
> la libélula vaga de una vaga ilusión. (ll. 11–12)
> […] ni los cisnes unánimes en el lago de azur. (l. 27)
> […] ¡Oh, quién fuera hipsipila que dejó la crisálida!
> (La princesa está triste. La princesa está pálida.)
> ¡Oh visión adorada de oro, rosa y marfil!
> ¡Quién volara a la tierra donde un príncipe existe,
> (La princesa está pálida. La princesa está triste.)
> más brillante que el alba, más hermoso que abril! (ll. 37–42)

which Kemp's renders as,

> the Princess traces the dragonfly course
> of a vague illusion in the eastern sky (ll. 10–12)
> […] the swans reflected on the azure lake. (l. 27)
> […] Oh, to be a butterfly leaving its cocoon!
> (The Princess is sad. The Princess is pale.)

[269] Baldomero Sanín Cano, *El Oficio de Lector* (Caracas: Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1978), p. 107.
[270] *Darío y sus amigos dominicanos*, p. 231.

> Oh adorable vision of gold, marble, and rose!
> Oh to fly to the land where there is a prince—
> (The Princess is pale. The princess is sad.)—
> more brilliant than daybreak, more handsome than April! (ll. 37–42)

Despite's Kemp's achievements, the lines above also efface the subtlety of Darío's diction in passages such as 'los cisnes unánimes en el lago de azur', which becomes 'the swans reflected on the azure lake'; or '¡Oh, quién fuera hipsipila que dejó la crisálida!' which turns into 'Oh, to be a butterfly leaving its cocoon!'. Not only is the rhyme gone, which is a key feature of this poem-song, but so is the yoking of disparate registers into a single melodious metre – in addition to the subtly cultivated symbolism that Darío inserts in the fairy-tale setting of the poem, such as the Greek Hypsypile and the Parnassian swan.

'Sonatina' is easy to cast aside for its apparently frivolous subject matter;[271] however, in addition to its ground-breaking use of register and diction highlighted above, it is a poem that is almost impossible to improve upon from a technical point of view. The use of the fairy-tale princess as protagonist of the poem, through whose ennui we see the world around her, points to an identification of the poet with a feminine speaker – an interpretation that the symbolism through which the princess is described (the swans, the Hypsypile, etc.) supports.[272] The wan princess who is world-weary and dreams of a far-away Orient could be read as a figuration of Darío himself, or indeed Spanish American poetry at the time of the publication of *Prosas profanas*, if we read the text in light of the preface to the collection. Nevertheless, this subject matter has also aged significantly, and the translator would have to turn the text into a queer poem if the content is to have

[271] The fact that the poem was glossed in Manuel Puig's last novel *Cae la noche tropical* (1988) shows unequivocally how it has entered the realm of kitsch.
[272] This exploration of gender, even if achieved through clichés and bric-a-bric, is what opened the door for later women poets such as Delmira Agustini to rewrite Darío's verse and take it as the departure point for her own writing in collections such as *Los cálices vacíos* (1913).

relevance for poetry in English today.[273] In truth, the value of 'Sonatina' is so bound up in how the Spanish language is wrought therein that, unless one sets out to do something analogous in the target language, it will translate poorly. As Navarro Tomás puts it:

> Los versos de la Sonatina, tan conocidos en todas partes donde se habla español, se recuerdan en efecto como una canción. Acaso es la poesía de más extensa popularidad de la lírica artística moderna.[274]

This is confirmed by one of Darío's biographers, the Mexican Jaime Torres Bodet (1902–1974), who gives us a picture of the impact that the poem made when it was published:

> Impresionaron mucho, a los lectores de entonces, poemas que han perdido —con el tiempo— gran parte de su encanto: la *Sonatina, Era un Aire Suave*, y otros […] ['Sonatina'] es una composición que es, para la poesía de Darío, como *La donna e mobile* del *Rigoletto:* la romanza fácil y contagiosa, irritante a los buenos conocedores, pero grata, siempre, a los no iniciados […] La *Sonatina* —que sedujo a los lectores de 1896— hastiaba a quienes querían manjares de más positiva sustancia y almíbares más sutiles.[275]

Translating 'Sonatina' comes closer to translating a song than a poem.

Reading as a translator opens up possibilities for new readings and brings into question an oeuvre's relevance. The fact that 'Marcha triunfal' and 'Sonatina' would not offer much to readers of English beyond being a feat of metre ushers in a host of other questions. Beyond the cultural distance I pointed out in Chapter 3, which concerns the differences between Modernism and *Modernismo* in relation to the time-lag of those two expressions of modernity, the translator must reckon with history. How does one render the eminent place of rhyme in Darío's work, in particular his metrical experimentation, if at all? What do we do about the abundance of mythological tropes, along with his fervent, albeit fraught and sacrilegious, Catholicism? And what about his *fin-de-siècle* interiors and *fêtes galantes*, the charm of which is rendered largely illegible in a time when Paris is no

[273] By 'queer' I mean a non-heteronormative rewriting of the poem that would re-signify many of its traditionally feminine and/or fairy tale elements. Other poems by Darío offer similarly interesting interpretive possibilities from the perspective of gender, such as 'Divagación'.
[274] Tomás Navarro Tomás*, Los poetas en sus versos* (Barcelona: Ediciones Ariel, 1973), p. 207.
[275] Jaime Torres Bodet, *Rubén Darío—Abismo y cima—* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1966) pp. 122, 131, 309.

longer the Western capital of culture? What of that romantic idea of the poet as visionary who peers into the hidden correspondences of reality? These are questions that I hope to answer in the remaining pages.

'Yo persigo una forma…'

Clive Scott has accurately captured the rationale for our prioritizing metre over rhythm in normative translation practices: the standard translational policy is, at bottom, one of preservation – that is, to preserve as much of the original as possible. Since readers perceive rhythm to varying degrees and may disagree on its nature, it is not a reliable feature to translate or preserve. Metre, on the other hand, is demonstrably and unequivocally present in a text, in a way that makes it a reliable feature to translate or preserve, even if this prevents us from engaging with the rhythmic possibilities of the source text.[276]

However, the dependency on the reliability of metre comes at a steep price. If, for example, we are always to translate a sonnet written in Spanish *endecasílabos* into an English sonnet in iambic pentameter in the belief that, since they traditionally are the most widely used metres in each language, we thereby ensure that their form is translated, we risk making a few mistakes. First, we ignore the particular relation that each metre has to the prosodic history of the source language. In the case of Darío, his French-inspired alexandrines were somewhat unusual in Spanish when he started writing them, despite the fact that authors such as Berceo, along with other poets of the *Mester de Clerecía*, centuries before him had written alexandrines of their own.[277] Rendering them into English-language alexandrines would put them in relation to poets such as Sidney or Browning, who approached the prosody of the alexandrine in a much less experimental way than Victor

[276] Clive Scott, *Literary Translation and the Rediscovery of* Reading (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2012), p. 127.
[277] For more on the *alejandrino* see Antonio Quilis, *Métrica española, edición actualizada y ampliada* (Madrid: Ariel, 1999), p. 76.

Hugo did for French, the model for Darío's innovations in the metre. One might as well translate them into any other common metre, since what the English- and Spanish-language alexandrines share, regarding their differing histories, is little more than a common name and the fact that they both first came into wide use thanks to the poets of *La Pléiade.* Second, we also ignore the rhythmic and therefore tonal possibilities that each metre grants the users of its language. For instance, while the standard pentameter in English is generally iambic, a Spanish *alejandrino* or *endecasílabo* can take up a number of different feet of varying length.[278] Third, and most important, the preoccupation with metre might get in the way of capturing voice in the target language. I touched upon this last point in the final remarks of the previous section; I will elaborate on it to discuss the translation of Darío's 'Yo persigo una forma que no encuentra mi estilo'.

'Yo persigo una forma' is a sonnet almost wholly written in alexandrines about the search for literary perfection. As a metapoetic poem within the sequence 'Las ánforas de Epicuro', it is written with a virtuosity that makes its one of Darío's most memorable poems. Below is the poem's octave.

> Yo persigo una forma que no encuentra mi estilo,
> botón de pensamiento que busca ser la rosa;
> se anuncia con un beso que en mis labios se posa
> al abrazo imposible de la Venus de Milo.
>
> Adornan verdes palmas el blanco peristilo;
> los astros me han predicho la visión de la Diosa;
> y en mi alma reposa la luz como reposa
> el ave de la luna sobre un lago tranquilo. (ll. 1–8)

[278] For example, while the *alejandrino* (or hexameter) had a predominantly trochaic rhythm throughout Spanish Romanticism, this fundamentally changed with Darío's *Prosas profanas*, giving rise to *alejandrinos polirrítmicos* or alexandrines of a varied rhythm: 'Con el ejemplo de Darío, reforzado por la influencia directa de los modelos franceses sobre los demás poetas modernistas, la competencia entre las formas trocaica y polirrítmica del alejandrino se decidió en favor de esta última. El dominio de la modalidad polirrítmica adquirió carácter exclusivo en las poesías alejandrinas de Lugones, Jaime Freyre, Juan Ramón Jiménez y Gabriela Mistral.' See Navarro Tomás, *Métrica española*, p. 410.

It certainly must be possible to successfully render this poem in iambic pentameter – after all, translation is imitation, and as such depends on the skill of the imitator. However, I believe that finding the right words for the first line, solely on the level of rhythm and voice, should come first before thinking about metre. The translator should not follow a strict rhyme scheme throughout the text if it means having to accommodate a sub-optimum solution on the level of the line. Since words in poetry acquire meaning not in isolation but alongside other words, the tone that is set in the first line is decisive for how the rest of the text will turn out.

If we were to rewrite the first line of the poem with the standard word order of Spanish today, it would read thus: 'Yo persigo una forma que mi estilo no encuentra' – which, though still compelling, halts the line's rhythm by modulating it down through the subdued vowels of 'encuentra' at the end, where the 'u' works almost as a semi-consonant. By contrast, the hyperbaton that we find in the source text, which swaps 'no encuentra' for 'mi estilo' in the word order, gives the lines an anapaestic sweep. It is significant that Darío decided on this phrasing; whether it was a conscious or unconscious decision, the energy of the line is important to it. The second line draws a parallelism with the first: it puts forth an image that represents the desire to close the gap between the work of nature, whose artistry is perfectly consummated by a divine hand, and the work of art, man-made and therefore flawed.[279] The desire is realised as an impossible one in the following two lines, by way of the conceit of embracing the armless statue of the Venus de Milo, showed then and today in the Louvre in Paris.

The second stanza transports us to a Greco-Roman landscape that is essentially Parnassian; it is perhaps suggested by the origins of the manhandled Venus, whose later

[279] The priority of the natural object was central to Romanticism, and for post-romantic poets it remained more or less unquestionable. As Paul de Man writes of Mallarmé's Platonic 'oiseau qu'on n'ouït jamais', there is still something of the warmth of the nest about it. See Paul de Man, *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia UP, 1984), p. 9.

motifs link the scene to the esoteric tradition discussed earlier, hence the 'astros' and the 'diosa'. Because the principles of Daríoesque harmony are also at work here – mellifluousness, feminine rhymes, assonance, inner rhyme, as well as 'música ideal' – it is important that the word with which the translator ends the first line opens the stanza up to a feminine rhyme later on. Below is my rendering of the octave.

> I am looking for a form my style fails to capture,
> a thought-bud that wishes it turned into a rose;
> on my lips it begins as a kiss filled with rapture
> for the phantom embrace in Venus de Milo's pose.
>
> The palm-strewn peristyle is green upon white;
> the stars have revealed the Goddess's face;
> and the light on my soul softly alights
> like the bird on the lake that drifts without trace. (ll. 1–8)

The first stanza is rendered with reasonable success, though I lose the powerful *abrazo imposible* of the Venus de Milo and must make do with 'phantom embrace'. My rendering plays with the notion of phantom limbs given the Venus de Milo's mangled arms and arrives at the same idea of impossible embrace as the original – but does so crabwise. Still, 'pose' chimes with 'rose' and the image renders well enough the impossibility of perfection in art as embodied by the Venus de Milo. What is implicit in this choice, which must assume a certain loss of meaning, is that rhythm is more important than metaphor at this point. I scan the lines above as an anapaestic tetrameter, though a case could be made for a pentameter if the emphasis is put on the beginning of the lines. For the second stanza I had to move words around. As mentioned above, the peristyle is important for the poem's conceit, and when it comes to a translation of Darío, it is also an important feature to keep as one of his hallmark Parnassian motifs. Lines 7 and 8 are mostly atmospheric and seem to be suggested by the sounds of the previous ones (the temple's peristyle, the starry night, etc.). In line 7, I render the repetition of 'reposa' through the play 'light/alights', slightly turning the connotations of calm and repose in the original into undertones of levity and

lightness, which nonetheless preserve the sense of enlightenment possessed by the speaker who awaits the Goddess.

A few lines further, in the volta at the beginning of the sestet, the sonnet truly takes flight. The speaker, ostensibly the poet himself, confesses to his failure in the search for poetic perfection, culminating in one of Darío's most enduring images: the swan bending its neck in the shape of a question mark:

> Y no hallo sino la palabra que huye,
> la iniciación melódica que de la flauta fluye
> y la barca del sueño que en el espacio boga;
>
> y bajo la ventana de mi Bella Durmiente,
> el sollozo continuo del chorro de la fuente
> y el cuello del gran cisne blanco que me interroga. (ll. 9–14)

What is most difficult about translating these lines is that the target lines cannot break rhythm or else the imitation will have failed – also, the motifs must be preserved throughout, for they are central to Darío's poetic world, namely: 'la iniciación melódica', 'la barca del sueño', 'la Bella Durmiente', 'el gran cisne blanco'. They correspond, respectively, to the importance of Daríoesque harmony; the central role of dreams and daydreams in the poet's life; the feminine ideal; the swan, which embodies the ideal of poetry itself through its elegance and beauty. These motifs have a European origin upon which the Nicaraguan left his own impress.[280] What is more, Darío has cleverly subtracted one syllable from line 9, so as to illustrate the absence of 'la palabra que huye'; unfortunately, in a rendering that is not strictly metrical, such kind of nuanced metrical design is lost. Still, the translator cannot take too many liberties here:

[280] 'La imagen del cisne […] en Darío fue obsesiva. Cisnes míticos, gratos a los clásicos: cisnes tristes, gratos a los románticos; cisnes ornamentales, gratos a los parnasianos; cisnes vagos, gratos a los simbolistas. Y grandes nombres, asociados con su historia: Homero, Ovidio, Leonardo, Wagner, Leconte de Lisle… Darío va tomando del cisne las notas que en cada ocasión le sirven mejor: elegancia, pureza, hermosura, optimismo, ensueño, sensualidad, blancor, mística inocencia, aristocrático retraimiento, aspiración al ideal, canto agónico. A ratos sus símbolos son inesperados: el cisne como confianza en el futuro de la cultura hispánica, el cisne como signo de una interrogación metafísica'. See Anderson Imbert, p. 102.

And all I find is a word slipping away,
the melody of a flute which scarcely flows,
and the boat of dreams that rows and rows;

and by the house where my Sleeping-Beauty lay
the tears of the fountain in the air draw an arc
while the neck of a swan is a white question mark. (ll. 9–14)

I have kept the same motifs, but my rendering of them is distinctly more visual than the source text. This is motivated by at least two factors. On the one hand, the 'sollozo continuo del chorro de la fuente' of line 11 would translate word-for-word as 'the continuous sob/cry/weep of the fountain stream', the options of which sound overdramatic. The Spanish already makes one's brow furrow, but the o's of 'el sollozo continuo' makes it fit well with the poem's overall mellifluousness. Darío is skilful enough to balance the line's affect by putting in a word as colloquial as 'chorro', which can be used in a number of contexts (sinks, hoses, showers, animals, etc., can all have 'chorros') unlike stream, which has bucolic undertones and therefore pushes the line's sentimentality when it should be reining it back. The translator is forced to be creative if the line, in addition, is to offer a complete rhyme. As rhythm is key here, the duplicate 'rows and rows' in line 11 is arguably justified in this context, the repetition of which gives the poem some momentum as it spills over on to the last tercet. While the rendering of the last line of the poem could be faulted for making explicit what the source text only suggests, the direct statement is at home with the imagistic bent of modern English-language poetics. The result, hopefully, is a poem in English that both has 'harmony' and does justice to Darío's sonnet.

'Yo soy aquél…' and 'Canción de otoño en primavera'

These two poems are among the most important from *Cantos de vida y esperanza* and Darío's oeuvre as a whole, and as such also showcase the evolution of Darío's style toward greater confessionalism and less ornament. In particular, 'Yo soy aquel que ayer no más decía' is one the most quoted poems of Darío's body of work for the 'poetic autobiography'

it offers therein. Its success also lies in that it is written in hendecasyllables with a light-hearted yet wistful tone, through which the Nicaraguan deftly balances an everyday register with pointedly poetic flights whose rhymes seem effortless. Below are the oft-quoted first stanzas:

> Yo soy aquel que ayer no más decía
> el verso azul y la canción profana,
> en cuya noche un ruiseñor había
> que era alondra de luz por la mañana.
>
> El dueño fui de mi jardín de sueño,
> lleno de rosas y de cisnes vagos;
> el dueño de las tórtolas, el dueño
> de góndolas y liras en los lagos;
>
> y muy siglo diez y ocho y muy antiguo
> y muy moderno; audaz, cosmopolita;
> con Hugo fuerte y con Verlaine ambiguo,
> y una sed de ilusiones infinita. (ll. 1–12)

The opening stanzas above clearly show why the poem is traditionally seen as a poetic autobiography. The narrative told here – the story of Darío's poetic persona, offered in the terms by which he wants to be remembered, while also addressing Rodó's criticism regarding the lack of human warmth in his poems – is as important as the style. On the one hand, the allusions to the author's best-known books and to his chief literary influences are transparent: they are meant to perform a literary identity.[281] On the other hand, the simple yet deft use of repetition in the third stanza, and the level aplomb with which the lines are woven together, reveal a seemingly more mature and accessible poet than that of the sonnets analysed earlier. The opening line of 'Yo soy aquel' is likely to have been inspired by a poem of Victor Hugo's *La Lègende des siècles,* 'Ibo':

> Je suis celui que rien n'arrête
> Celui qui va,
> Celui dont l'âme est toujours prête
> À Jéhovah ;

[281] For more on the poem as a figurative autobiography, see Sylvia Molly, 'Ser/decir: tácticas de un autorretrato', in *Essays on Hispanic Literature in Honor of Edmund King*, ed. by Sylvia Molloy and Luis Fernández Cifuentes (London: Tamesis Books, 1983).

Je suis le poëte farouche,
L'homme devoir,
Le souffle des douleurs, la bouche
Du clairon noir ; (ll. 97–104)

Darío translates Hugo's 'Je suis celui' into 'Yo soy aquel' and takes it in a direction of its own. The thrust that comes with the confessional 'I' who names himself assertively in the third person is what seems to have given the source text its tone. For this reason it should be taken into account when rendering the poem. Once that has been achieved, a wistful and literary register that maintains its simplicity should be kept throughout. Below is my rendering of the three initial stanzas:

I am the one who only yesterday would say
his own azure and his profane song—
who owned a lark of light during the day
which became a nightingale at nightfall.

I was the warden of my dream-garden
full of roses and vague swans;
warden of turtledoves; warden
of lyres and gondolas over the ponds;

and very eighteenth-century and very ancient
and very modern; bold, cosmopolitan;
as Hugo strong and as Verlaine ambiguous—
and a thirst for dreams that was continuous. (ll. 1–12)

The rhyme scheme is for the most part an alternate one, and, unlike Darío's, it is irregular. As mentioned above, the implicit assumption here is that rhythm is more important than metre. Where I have not managed to achieve full rhymes, I have attempted to accomplish at least half rhymes, with a view to keeping with Daríoesque harmony. Perhaps what stands out the most in this rendering is my addition of em dashes at the end of lines 2 and 11. Since it is such a widely used form of punctuation in contemporary poetry in English, I believe a translator should use it to their advantage. Why should punctuation not be translated as well? In these cases, the dashes do not take away from the tone of the poem; rather, they

let the translator follow the lines more closely and give Darío a veneer of contemporaneity. For the sake of contrast, here is Appelbaum's ostensible word-for-word translation:

> I am that man who only yesterday uttered
> the blue verses and the worldly songs,
> in whose nights there was a nightingale
> that became a lark of light in the mornings.
>
> I was the owner of my dream garden,
> filled with roses and idle swans;
> the owner of the turtle-doves, the owner
> of gondolas and lyres on the lakes;
>
> and very eighteenth-century and very Greco-Roman
> and very modern; audacious, cosmopolitan;
> powerful with Hugo and ambiguous with Verlaine,
> and with an infinite thirst for hopeful dreams. (Appelbaum ll. 1–12)

It is important to point out that Appelbaum makes two errors of interpretation: first, the 'canción profana' of line 2 should not be rendered as 'worldly songs', since it is a plain allusion to Darío's *Prosas profanas*. Second, the sense of 'vago' in line six is most likely a symbolist one, so as to say that Darío's swans are like those of Mallarmé, Baudelaire, and Sully Prudhomme – all of which were poets for whom the swan became an important symbol. Also, he unnecessary paraphrases 'antiguo' as 'Greco-Roman', giving the line an air of touristic brochure and losing the enjambed oxymoron, which is one of the most memorable features of the lines. The contrast between my version and Appelbaum's – mine having the significant advantage of coming after his – is meant to show how much is lost from the original poem when a translator is unaware of Darío's poetics, as Appelbaum clearly is. As Rama notes:

> Hay en su poesía una reiterada experiencia según la cual las palabras son elegidas por la analogía sonora mucho más que la semántica, lo que explica el continuo rizo de las aliteraciones, las rimas interiores, las repeticiones y redobles, esa sensación de inagotable fuente musical, tan poderosa como hasta autónoma del mismo autor arrastrado por el hedonismo sonoro […] Pero las palabras no viven solas en el verso y no hay alquimia que pueda atenderlas por separado. Su conexión se hace por el doble proceso: ligamen envolvente de la melodía que sume a las palabras y las

> reintegra en la corteza epidérmica de la sonoridad y arquitectura de las ideas que mima otra melodía trabajando sobre las restricciones que impone la gramática.[282]

Rama describes how the harmony of words arises from their concatenation, indirectly making a case for how a word-for-word approach is wrongheaded in the case of the Nicaraguan's poetry.

Moving on to other stanzas, if I mentioned earlier that the tone of the poem is light-hearted yet wistful, the text is nevertheless laden with the author's personal mythology, which is an eclectic mixture of the aesthetic currents of his time. This poses another challenge for the translator, for their rendering must represent the main motifs of the source text while not writing a text that seems outmoded – in addition to keeping with the principles of Daríoesque harmony. Let us consider the following stanzas from the middle of the poem. The speaker is describing a statue that lives in his dream-garden, which symbolises the poet's soul:

> En mi jardín se vio una estatua bella;
> se juzgó mármol y era carne viva;
> un alma joven habitaba en ella,
> sentimental, sensible, sensitiva.
>
> Y tímida ante el mundo, de manera
> que encerrada en silencio no salía,
> sino cuando en la dulce primavera
> era la hora de la melodía…
>
> Hora de ocaso y de discreto beso;
> hora crepuscular y de retiro;
> hora de madrigal y de embeleso;
> de "te adoro," de "ay" y de suspiro.
>
> Y entonces era en la dulzaina un juego
> de misteriosas gamas cristalinas
> un renovar de notas del Pan griego
> y un desgranar de músicas latinas,
>
> con aire tal y con ardor tan vivo,
> que a la estatua nacían de repente
> en el muslo viril patas de chivo

[282] *Poesía,* p. XXIX.

y dos cuernos de sátiro en la frente.

Como la Galatea gongorina
me encantó la marquesa verleniana,
y así juntaba a la pasión divina
una sensual hiperestesia humana (ll. 29–44)

There is something of the *fête galante* in these lines, which makes up so many passages of *Prosas profanas*. However, the Versaillesque atmosphere now spills over into the world of Greek myth and beyond, in a manner that harks back to some of the stories of *Azul*…. In this regard, there are particular allusions that should be kept in any rendering of this poem because they are significant for the poetic autobiography; for instance, the dulzaina, which is an old Spanish reed instrument that in the poem represents the Latin roots of Spanish; Pan, god of shepherds and root of the word 'panic', a central character in Darío's personal mythology known for his unbridled lust; Góngora's Galatea and Verlaine's marquise, two poets whom Darío particularly admired; and so forth. As regards technique, Darío's manipulation of tone, diction, rhyme, and economy of words here are at their prime. Below is my rendering.

In my garden lay a beautiful statue;
it was thought marble, but it was flesh.
Inside it a young soul used to live:
sensible, sentimental, sensitive.

It was shy toward the world, so that
locked away in silence it never came out
except when the spring came about
and it was time for a melody.

The time of dusk and a discreet kiss;
the twilight-hour of goodbye;
the time for madrigals and for bliss;
of 'oh!', 'I love you' and a sigh.

Then from a dulzaina came a tune
played in strange crystal-like scales:
Greek Pan's music was renewed
and Latin notes in peals wailed

with such zeal, and passion on the rise,
that from the statue suddenly outgrew
goat-like legs from the brawny thighs
and two crooked horns from the forehead.

As I did Verlaine's marquise
Gongora's Galatea too I loved,
so unto divine passion I eased
my hyperaesthesia unreproved (ll. 29–44).

Because this is a poetic autobiography – a story – the text gives the translator more leeway on the level of phrase as long as roughly the same narrative is being told. The rhymes I have arrived at are also irregular in these stanzas, but they still keep to Darío's poetics of 'armonía' outlined earlier. I render the different motifs listed above even if they might seem opaque for the contemporary reader – all things considered, they are the marrow of the poem. As regards diction, the overly technical 'hiperestesia' in line 44 is a mark of *Modernismo*'s *fin-de-siècle* sensibility, which shows its penchant for recherché words and particularly those from emerging scientific terminology.[283] A translator could well do away with it, but it seemed a meaningful word to preserve for the text.

Unlike the stanzas above, however, there are other moments of the poem that seem to transcend the signs of their epoch. The translator sometimes arrives in English at passages of powerful imagery that do not seem to depend too much on prosody. Consider the following lines toward the end of the poem:

La torre de marfil tentó mi anhelo;
quise encerrarme dentro de mí mismo,
y tuve hambre de espacio y sed de cielo
desde las sombras de mi propio abismo.

Como la esponja que la sal satura
en el jugo del mar, fue el dulce y tierno
corazón mío, henchido de amargura
por el mundo, la carne y el infierno. (ll. 49–56)

[283] In particular, the 'hyperesthesia' of great artists was theorized by the scientist Cesare Lombroso in his famous *Man of Genius* (1889), in which he theorized that madness and genius were intimately related. See Cesare Lombroso, *The Man of Genius* (London: W. Scott, 1896), p. 40.

The first stanza above is the *modernista*'s *mea culpa*, as it were, for his excesses regarding a belief in art for art's sake: the shadow of Rodó looms large behind these lines.[284] The following one is the second instance of the poem in which Darío's Catholicism appears, and the image of the speaker's heart as an underwater sponge is a memorable one. Poetry that is powerful in its imagery (Pound's *phanopoeia*) seems to survive even the most violent dislocations in translation. Even when translators such as Appelbaum and Derusha/Acereda render these lines – translators who do not seek poetic effects in their renderings – they manage to preserve some of their power. Below are their renderings for the two stanzas above.

> The ivory tower tempted my longings,
> I wished to lock myself up inside myself,
> but I hungered for space and thirsted for sky
> in the shadows of my own abyss.
>
> Like a sponge saturated by salt
> in the waters of the sea: such was my gentle,
> tender heart, swollen with bitterness
> because of society, the flesh, and hell. (Appelbaum ll. 49–56)

> The ivory tower tempted my desires;
> I tried to lock myself within me,
> and grew hungry for space and thirsty for sky
> from the shadows of my own abyss.
>
> Like a sponge saturated by salt
> in the essence of the sea, was this sweet and tender
> heart of mine, swollen with bitterness
> by the world, the flesh, and hell. (Derusha/Acereda ll. 49–56)

The latter version reads a bit more naturally, if only because the translators have avoided the awkward repetition of 'myself' in line 2 of the former version. However, their

[284] As mentioned earlier, Rodó famously described Darío as an exquisite though escapist poet, setting the tone for how the Nicaraguan's work would be read many years hence. In particular, he asserted that the *modernista*'s refinement ultimately diminished the universal reach of his writing. Of course, Rodó turned out to be wrong. Still, his critique influenced Darío's later poetry significantly, as he would dedicate the opening poem of *Cantos de vida y esperanza* to the Uruguayan critic, before writing the following lines in the preface to the collection, which read almost as a direct response to his critic: 'Yo no soy un poeta para las muchedumbres. Pero sé que indefectiblemente tengo que ir a ellas.' See *Poesía*, p. 243.

determination to follow the word order of the Spanish almost word-by-word prolongs lines 54 and 55 unnecessarily. Below is my own rendering.

> The ivory tower often tempted my eyes.
> I shut myself inside me, alone and remiss.
> But I hungered for space and thirsted for skies
> among the shadows of my own abyss.
>
> Like underwater sponges suffused with salt
> in the juices of the sea, my fresh
> and fragile heart grew swollen with grief
> for the world, for hell, and the ways of the flesh. (ll. 49–56)

As mentioned earlier, powerful images tend to survive paraphrase; despite our different translations, the ones above have remained essentially the same. What differs in rendering is the addition of rhyme, as well as the recreation of the poetic effects of the most notable lines, namely: the double parallelism of line 51 between hunger/space and thirst/sky; and the evocative diction and sibilance of lines 53 and 54. The word 'satura' in the 'como la esponja que la sal satura / en los jugos del mar' has connotations of forceful exhaustion – 'estoy saturado', one says in Spanish to express a feeling of being burnt out. And the choice of 'jugo' in the next line underlines the raw vividness of the experience: 'jugo' conjures natural liquids; it has a taste. Derusha/Acereda's choice of 'essence' acknowledges Darío's pointed stylistic choice but fails to convey the rawness of the diction. Likewise, 'saturate' does not seem to have as strong connotations as its Spanish cognate, for which reason I opted for 'suffuse', with its double fricative that strengthens the sibilance. In contrast to these examples, most of the renderings analysed earlier diverge considerably from one another given that sound is much more difficult to capture – even more so in a poetic culture that is becoming increasingly visual, such as that of contemporary Anglophone literature.

As mentioned earlier, 'Canción de otoño en primavera' is one of those poems by Darío whose musicality is such that it gives the text a mnemonic quality. If one considers that, contrary to Rodó's prediction, the Nicaraguan *modernista* was also the most famous

poet in the Hispanic world during his time, it is not difficult to see how his lines would come to enter common parlance. To give but two examples: in Argentina there is a small subgenre of tango comprised of musicalisations of poems by Darío.[285] Some of Darío's poems became so well-known in the Hispanic world that, in 1951, the title of Ingmar Bergman's first international success *Sommarlek* (literally 'Summer Games') was translated as 'Juventud, divino tesoro' – the first line of Darío's poem mentioned above – when it was dubbed for Argentine and Uruguayan audiences. In this regard, Darío's position in relation to Spanish is somewhat similar to that of Pushkin to Russian; as James Meek explains:

> It's hard to get to Pushkin. In Russia schoolchildren imbibe his writings like morning milk. His phrases and idioms, like Shakespeare's, are embedded in the modern language. Interviewed by Elif Batuman after the new translation was published, Volokhonsky talked about the expression Pushkin uses in the story 'The Blizzard', 'smertèl'no vlyublenà', which she and Pevear translate as 'mortally in love'. When Volokhonsky asked people in Russia if they used the phrase, they said they did, but that they used it because of Pushkin.[286]

Like 'smertèl'no vlyublenà' – or 'with bated breath', to mention one of myriad Shakespearean felicities – 'juventud, divino tesoro' is part of a language now. Dissociated from its source, the line has hardened into an idiom that Spanish speakers may use to remark on the passage of time. By now it has been used so many times by so many people that it is difficult to imagine what kind of impression it might have made upon readers when it was first encountered around 1905. Hence, because it has ceased to be only a line of poetry, its rendering represents an entirely different quandary for the translator. A word-for-word

[285] Many of these are parodic – such as Julián Porteño 1921 parody of 'Sonatina' called 'La percanta está triste' and Celedonio Flores's version of it in lunfardo – but others, such as Enrique Cadícamo's 1933 tango 'La novia ausente', set the 'Sonatina' in a love song. The links between *Modernismo* and tango are far-reaching. For more information see Pedro L. Barcia, *Rubén Darío: entre el tango y el lunfardo* (Buenos Aires: Consulado del Uruguay, 1997); José Alberto Barisone, 'El eco de Rubén Darío en letras de tango', *RECIAL: Revista del centro de investigaciones de la facultad de filosofía y humanidades, áreas letras*, vol. 7, no. 10 (2016) https://revistas.unc.edu.ar/index.php/recial/article/view/15342 [accessed 1 October 2019]; Daniel Balderston, 'Celedonio Flores's "Sonatina": Lunfardo Parody and Post-Modernist Esthetics', *Hispania*, vol. 72, no. 1 (1989), pp. 123–29.

[286] See James Meek, 'The Village Life', *London Review of Books*, Vol. 41, No. 11, pp. 21–26, https://www.lrb.co.uk/v41/n11/james-meek/the-village-life [accessed 15 August 2019].

translation would ignore its cultural meaning; at the same time, it is unlikely that one could find a similar felicity for the target language. The most practical solution is perhaps to go back to the text, attempt to divine what function the line performs for the whole, and try to come up with what would come closest.

In 'Canción de otoño en primavera' the opening line is also the first line of the refrain, which weaves the poem together like a chorus does for a song. In the poem, an aging speaker, who is loath to accept the passage of time, tells us the story of his past lovers. Each time the refrain appears, a different lover is eulogised in the sentimental history charted throughout the poem. The whole refrain is as follows:

> Juventud, divino tesoro,
> ya te vas para no volver!
> Cuando quiero llorar, no lloro…
> y a veces lloro sin querer… (ll. 1–4)

The charm of this stanza comes from its lilt and the euphony with which it rhymes and makes its way into our memory. The critic Julio Ortega surmises that it can be construed as a call and response, as it were, to these lines from the first of Garcilaso's *Églogas*,

> Danubio río divino
> que por fieras naciones
> vas con tus claras ondas discurriendo (ll. 1–3)

Garcilaso, moreover, has the character Salicio of the first eclogue cry out: 'Salid, sin duelo, lágrimas corriendo' (l. 70). According to Ortega, Darío's poem can be read as a poetic fable that is in line with the 'cantiga' form – a poem of alternate rhymes written in quatrains, which developed into 'la canción italianizante', introduced by Garcilaso in Spain. However, while Darío indeed set the poem in the genre of the poetic fable with a wistful and melodious tone – much in line with sixteenth-century Spanish poetry – he opts for a different metre: the 'eneasílabo' or nine-syllable line, which at the turn of the twentieth

century had fallen into disuse, and would therefore become part of Darío's wide-ranging project of metrical renovation.[287]

The veracity of Ortega's hypothesis notwithstanding, the cantiga-like qualities of the poem are undeniable when read aloud. It seems clear that, however we render the first stanza, it must first of all work as a musical refrain that conveys a wistfulness for the fleetingness of youth. Like the source text, its diction should be simple enough for it to be memorable, like song lyrics are. If we also manage to render the unpredictability of feeling that comes with aging ('cuando quiero llorar no lloro / y a veces lloro sin querer…') our target stanza will elicit similar poetic effects as the source. Below are the various ways the stanza has been rendered.

> Youth, divine treasure,
> you've already gone, never to return!
> When I want to cry, I don't cry…
> and sometimes I cry without wanting to… (Derusha/Acereda ll. 1–4)

> Youth, divine treasure,
> you are now departing, never to return!
> When I wish to weep, I cannot…
> And at times I weep without wanting to… (Appelbaum ll. 1–4)

> Treasured days of my youth and boyhood,
> you're gone and won't be back again!
> You know I'd cry if only I could,
> then tears come and I wish they'd end. (Simon/White ll. 1–4)

As mentioned before, the translators of the first two renderings above are literalists in their approach. Here, however, in the first translation by Derusha/Acereda, literalism obscures the meaning of the source text to the point of contradiction. Part of the poignancy of the poem is that the speaker feels that his youth is slipping away as he eulogises it: '¡ya te vas para no volver!' (l. 2), whereas the speaker of Derusha/Acereda's poem appears to have already entered old age: 'you've already gone, never to return!' (l. 2). Where has youth, in

[287] Ortega, p. 101.

this case, already gone? It seems strange to use ‘have’ instead of ‘are’ (i.e. to use ‘you’ve already gone’ in lieu of ‘you’re already gone’) without saying where it indeed has gone to.

On the other hand, Simon/White’s conversational rendering makes for a more idiomatic translation. They surely perceive that ‘divine treasure’ sounds hollow in contemporary English, and in its stead write ‘treasured days of my youth and boyhood’ (l. 1), which, though more natural, is over-explicative and approximates cliché. The alternate half rhymes lend a welcome musicality to the stanza, but the non-sequitur of line 4 seems to go contrariwise line 3, almost cancelling out its affect:

> You know I’d cry if only I could,
> then tears come and I wish they’d end (Simon/White ll. 3–4)

Below is my rendering of the first stanza.

> Youth, my only gold,
> this is our last goodbye!
> I lack tears when I need them—
> and then, suddenly, I cry… (ll. 1–4)

I have opted for an alternate rhyme in lines 2 and 4. I keep a simple rhyme for the reasons mentioned above: the lines are meant to feel wistful and all the while natural. The wording of line 2, while it succeeds in conveying the sense of youth slipping away as the speaker waxes nostalgic, suggests that other goodbyes have taken place. Though somewhat whimsical, this nonetheless chimes well with Darío’s own life, regarding both the autumnal melancholy of several poems from *Cantos de vida y esperanza* and after, as well as his recurring and premature sense of ageing as a result of the deterioration of his health due to alcohol abuse.

As Ortega mentions, Darío was responding to an old tradition of poetry with this text. As a result, the wording ‘divino tesoro’ (divine treasure) in particular, rings hollow in a contemporary poem in English. I therefore stay close to Darío’s figuration of youth as a treasure of sorts but stripping it of its adjective so it could have a poetic effect that did not

feel hopelessly outmoded. Because of its cantiga-like rhythm, I decided to write the subsequent stanzas of the poem in the same scheme, which results in something along the lines of: ABAC DEDF. Still, wherever I managed to have all the lines of the stanza rhyme, I did so, not finding any reason to avoid it just for the sake of schematic coherence (the reader, as in the case of Felstiner's Celan, will know they are reading a translation).

As ever, in the subsequent stanzas tone and rhythm take precedence over metre. As mentioned above, Darío's diction is simple, almost child-like in this poem-song – the nine-syllable line pushes him towards laconism. The translator, therefore, should aim to render this simplicity, while bearing in mind that the rhymes should not feel strained nor approximate cliché (even if Darío, in lines 9 and 10, comes perhaps too close in doing so). Below are the subsequent three stanzas of the source text.

> Plural ha sido la celeste
> historia de mi corazón.
> Era una dulce niña, en este
> mundo de duelo y aflicción.
>
> Miraba como el alba pura;
> sonreía como una flor.
> Era su cabellera obscura
> hecha de noche y de dolor.
>
> Yo era tímido como un niño.
> Ella, naturalmente, fue,
> para mi amor hecho de armiño,
> Herodías y Salomé… (ll. 5–16)

Unlike Derusha/Acereda and Appelbaum, who reproduce even the enjambments above though they are chiefly there for rhyming purposes, Simon/White reproduce the poem's narrative in alternate rhymes:

> The celestial history of my heart
> is best told in plural. She
> was a sweet girl playing the first part
> set in this world's great misery.
>
> The purest sunrise describes her gaze
> and she'd smile with a flower's light.

Her hair was the dark series of waves
fashioned by sorrow and by night.

I was as timid as any boy.
But she, one could easily say,
disposed of my ermine love and joy,
like Herodias and Salomé. (Simon/White ll. 5–16)

As in the case of de la Selva/Walsh, the rhymes are achieved at the expense of much else in the text. As a result, the padding in lines 7, 13, and 14, other than staggering the rhythm for the sake of rhyme, gives us a garrulous speaker in whose voice the wistful undertones have all but disappeared. By contrast, the poised rhymes that Darío achieves in places such as lines 7 and 14 show how supply he manages the nine-syllable line to tell the simple story of his speaker. Below is my own take.

My heart's myriad history
celestial has been—
she was a sweet girl, caught
in this world of suffering.

Like a flower she smiled;
her gaze was like a dawn.
Her dark hair seemed
filled with night and wan.

I was shy like a child
and she was, in a way,
for my callow love
Herodias and Salomé. (ll. 5–16)

While I am following neither syllable nor stress count, I opt for short lines whose register, diction, and imagery are roughly on the same level as the source text. Because of the sentimentality that washes over these initial lines, they were more challenging to render than the final ones, which look back on the speaker's life with a disenchanted though resilient spirit. Below are three of the final stanzas of the source text.

Y las demás! en tantos climas,
en tantas tierras, siempre son,
si no pretextos de mis rimas,
fantasmas de mi corazón.

En vano busqué a la princesa
que estaba triste de esperar.
La vida es dura. Amarga y pesa.
Ya no hay princesa que cantar!

Mas a pesar del tiempo terco,
mi sed de amor no tiene fin:
con el cabello gris, me acerco
a los rosales del jardín… (ll. 53–64)

The same qualities mentioned above are at play here: economy of words, supple syntax, poised rhymes, simple diction, and so on. Yet lines 55 and 56 in particular are more imaginative than the incipient ones. Darío's 'princesa' – the fairy-tale embodiment that also appears in 'Sonatina' – makes an appearance here, before the speaker of the poem goes on to reassert his erotic pulsion in the face of time's travails. The translator must work with all of this in mind. Below is my rendering.

And all the others! in sundry climes,
in sundry lands, they always are,
if not the pretext for my rhymes,
the hauntings of my heart.

In vain I sought the princess
who waited at her door.
Life is hard. Slow and bitter.
There's no princess anymore!

But despite stubborn time
my thirst for love knows no end—
the rose bush in the garden
with hoary hair I tend. (ll. 53–64)

I chose to render 'tantos' as 'sundry' instead of 'so many' for reasons of rhythm; both for the slight assonance it lends the stanza as well as the shortness of the lines. Likewise, I render 'amarga y pesa' (l. 59) as 'slow and bitter', and not 'bitter and it is heavy' or 'bitter and heavy/weighty/hefty', for reasons of rhythm and register – the latter options seemed both more verbose and less tuned to the original. By and large, the connotations of life being something difficult to go on with are kept. Finally, I have swapped the order of the

last two lines above to have ‘tend’ rhyme with ‘end’, as well as the welcome alliteration of ‘hoary hair’, lending the stanza a Daríoesque harmony.

‘A Roosevelt’ and ‘La Página Blanca’

As explained in Chapter 3, Darío’s writing does not exactly tally with the expectations that Anglophone readers have held for Spanish American literature over the decades. His poetry is heavily invested in a dialogue with French-language literature of his time and therefore differs from the magical realist or postcolonial discourses which might attract readers from the British and Anglo-American groves of Academe and beyond. However, some poems such as ‘A Roosevelt’ and ‘La página blanca’ can be seen as exceptions. The former poem is one of the most important anticolonial poems of Spanish American literature, while ‘La página blanca’ is essentially a symbolist poem. The latter was most likely Darío’s own take on Mallarméan poetics, and since Mallarmé has enjoyed a healthy afterlife in the English language (unlike most French symbolists), it is most likely written in a poetic language that is readily legible for Anglophone readers.[288]

‘A Roosevelt’ is Darío’s anti-imperialist diatribe whose imagined addressee is none other than Franklin D. Roosevelt, the president of the United States at the time. The poem is written in tumbling Whitmanesque lines which celebrate both the indigenous and the Hispanic (i.e. Catholic) heritage of the Americas. Written in assonant rhyme, it comes closer to free verse than Darío’s better-known consonantal poems do. There is a rhythmic undercurrent that goes through the text and halts at the point which we may call, in Boase-Beier’s words, the eye of the poem:

> Crees que la vida es incendio,
> que el progreso es erupción;
> que en donde pones la bala

[288] For more on the intertextuality of the poem, see Rodrigo Caresani, ‘Hieratismo en movimiento: Rubén Darío, Stéphane Mallarmé y “La página blanca”’, *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos*, vol. 51, no. 1 (2017), pp. 127–147.

el porvenir pones.

No. (ll. 15–19)

After that 'No' on line 19, the poem turns, tonally and thematically. It first turns to an acknowledgement of the awe-inspiring, and at the time burgeoning, power of the United States, before launching into an exalted defence of Spanish America's right to independence from foreign intervention. In keeping with his fervent pan-Latinism discussed in Chapter 2, Darío reads Spanish America as an unproblematic syncretism between the indigenous and the Hispanic, adding some ingredients from his personal mythology into the mix, namely Bacchus and Atlantis. For the *modernista*, Spanish America is above all the torchbearer of Spain, which just happens to be the former home of the Mexica emperor Moctezuma and his martyrized descendant the noble Guatemoc – whose quote in the poem, 'Yo no estoy en un lecho de rosas' (l. 42), proverbially uttered while the soles of his feet were being burnt by the Conquistadors, looms in the text as an opening of its seams, as it were, or a *ligne de fuite* to use the Deleuzean term, since its violence belies the unproblematic image of Spanish America Darío is putting forth. Still, the poem's limitations of cultural and historical understanding of the complexity of Spanish America are certainly of its time. All in all, it is a chillingly prescient take on U.S. imperialism in the Americas. Below are the different ways translators have rendered the eye of the poem quoted above.

You think that life is one big fire,
that progress is just eruption,
that wherever you put bullets,
you put the future, too.

No. (Simon/White ll. 15–19)

You believe that life is a burning building,
that progress is a volcanic eruption;
where you place your bullet
you place the future.

No. (Appelbaum ll. 15–19)

You think that life is a conflagration,
that progress is an eruption,
that where you put your bullet
you set the future.

No. (Derusha/Acereda ll. 15–19)

The differences of approach become immediately clear when the renderings of a certain passage are read in tandem. For instance, Appelbaum's tendency for overexplanatory renderings is telling: life is not a fire, but a 'burning building'; progress is not only an 'eruption', but a 'volcanic eruption'. As in previous examples, Simon/White render the passage in an almost casual, conversational register by adding a couple of adverbs in lines 15 and 16. Lastly, Derusha/Acereda hew close to the source, though they elevate 'incendio' to 'conflagration', ostensibly because 'a fire' is in too low a register for 'un incendio'. What seems rather strange in these word-for-word renderings is the use of the verb 'put' in the first and third rendering above, which is a literal translation of the source text. In order to discuss why this is so, below is my rendering of the strophe:

You think life is a fire;
progress, an eruption;
that the future begins
wherever you point your rifle.

No. (ll. 15–19)

The rhyme being assonant and thus less conspicuous, I prioritise rhythm – hence my elision of the verb in line 2, so as to lend more force to the strophe and have its rhythm come closer to the source text. Darío's work upon Spanish here, too, forces the translator to be inventive. When bullets are said to be 'put' in English, it is usually as a direct threat – bullets are 'put' to the head or in the brain. For this reason, line 18 has to be rewritten in order to convey Roosevelt's sense of omnipotence when he points his weapon from afar, believing that he can decide the future of the rest of the world in doing so – hence my choice of 'point your rifle' over 'put your bullet'.

‘A Roosevelt’ is also one of Darío’s most poorly edited poems, whose final lines in particular have often been printed erroneously, leading to many blunders of interpretation on the part of its translators. Here are the correct lines of the source text which are often misprinted.

> “Yo no estoy en un lecho de rosas”; esa América
> que tiembla de huracanes y que vive de amor;
> hombre de ojos sajones y alma bárbara, vive.
> Y sueña. Y ama, y vibra; y esa la hija del Sol.
>
> Tened cuidado. Vive la América española!
> Hay mil cachorros sueltos del León Español.
> Se necesitaría, Roosevelt, ser por Dios mismo,
> el Riflero terrible y el fuerte Cazador,
> para poder tenernos en vuestras férreas garras. (Derusha/Acereda ll. 42–50)

It should be acknowledged that Darío’s syntax is not the clearest here, and Octavio Paz seems to have had a point when he said that the first half of the poem is stronger than the second.[289] In particular, the semicolon at the end of line 43 hinders the understanding of the next line; a comma would have sufficed. Some editions reproduce line 46 as ‘¡Viva la América española!’ (essentially a hurrah in the middle of the poem) which, on the other hand, was not entirely uncommon at a time when poets coveted diplomatic offices abroad and wrote national anthems. Darío’s somewhat confusing construction on line 48 ‘Se necesitaría, Roosevelt, ser por Dios mismo’ has led more than one reader to construe it as ‘Se necesitaría, Roosevelt, ser Dios mismo’. Lastly, these two stanzas are often juxtaposed in some editions, as Simon/White and Appelbaum unwittingly do in their renderings below.

> “I’m not on a bed of roses!” Yes, that America,
> trembling from hurricanes and surviving on its Love…
> It lives with you, with your Saxon eyes and barbaric souls.
> And dreams. And loves, and vibrates; it’s the daughter of the Sun.
> Be careful. Spanish America is alive and well!
> There are myriad loose cubs now from the Spanish Lion.
> Roosevelt, you’d need to be transfigured by God himself

[289] ‘Los poemas de [Darío] son textos para ser leídos en la tribuna, ante un auditorio de fiesta cívica. Hay momentos, claro está, en que el poeta vence al orador. Por ejemplo, la primera parte de *A Roosevelt*, modelo de insolencia y hermosa desenvoltura.’ See *Cuadrivio*, p. 55.

into the dire Rifleman and the powerful Hunter
to finally capture us in your talons of iron. (Simon/White ll. 42–50)

"I'm not on a bed of roses"—that America
which is shaken by hurricanes and lives on Love:
it is alive, O man of Anglo-Saxon eyes and barbarous soul.
And it dreams. And it loves, and stirs; and is the daughter of the Sun.
Watch out! Spanish America lives!
There are a thousand cubs of the Spanish Lion on the loose.
Roosevelt, it would have to be the will of God himself,
the awesome Rifleman and the mighty Hunter,
for you to be able to hold us in your iron talons. (Applebaum ll. 42–50)

"This is no bed of roses"; that America
which shakes with hurricanes and lives on love—
men with Saxon eyes and barbarous souls, it lives.
And dreams. And loves, and quivers, and is the daughter of the Sun.

Beware. Spanish America lives!
There are a thousand cubs set loose from the Spanish Lion.
One would need to be, Roosevelt, by the grace of God,
a terrifying Sharpshooter and a mighty Hunter
to hold us in your iron claws. (Derusha/Acereda ll. 42–50)

For the reasons pointed out above, unfortunately, each translator construes line 44 and 48 differently. Derusha/Acereda, whose edition of the source text of *Cantos de vida y esperanza* is one of the most rigorous to date, get it just about right.[290] This goes to show how the editions of the Nicaraguan's oeuvre have also hindered the afterlife of his writing in other languages. Below is my own rendering.

'This is no bed of roses'—that America
which shakes with hurricanes and lives on love,
you Saxon-eyed men of barbarous souls, is alive.
And she dreams, and loves, and comes from the Sun.

Be careful: Spanish America is alive.
A thousand cubs are loose from the Spanish Lion.
By God's own will, Roosevelt, you would have to be
the terrifying Marksman and the mighty Hunter
to have us in your iron claws. (ll. 42–50)

[290] One can compare it with Ernesto Mejía Sánchez's canonical edition of *Poesía* (1977) for confirmation. It is worth pointing out that, unlike the Nicaraguan scholar, Derusha/Acereda follow Darío's punctuation marks strictly (whose original manuscripts do not show any opening exclamation and interrogation marks), which the vast majority of editions standardize.

I prefer the compound adjective in line 44, taking advantage of the Germanic suppleness of English, to underline the defiance in the speaker's voice. Instead of translating 'hija del sol' word for word, I have decided to personify America in the feminine from the beginning of the line, thus using the more suggestive 'comes from the Sun' than 'the daughter of the Sun', which sounds like fairy or folk tale.[291] Likewise, the 'tened cuidado' on line 46 has the ring of an avuncular admonishment, which the formality of 'beware' and the interjection 'watch out!' do not quite capture. I also make spare use of Darío's exclamations and ellipses, as it infringes one of the basic unwritten rules of contemporary poetry, which is not to be self-indulgent in writing. The repetitive use of ellipses was a fashionable device in the French *fin de siècle*, which was Darío's poetic school; Pound's imagistic principles, however, have since done away with its overuse. Limiting them with a view to eliciting the desired poetic effect in English is a necessary adjustment when it comes to Darío's writing.

'La página blanca' is also written in assonant rhyme. However, unlike the previous poem, it plays typographically with blank space in a way that is unique within Darío's oeuvre, creating a visual effect that suggests iconicity between its theme and form. Consider the following stanzas. They appear after the speaker of the poem has told us that, as he was peering into the blank page, he began to perceive strange visions, among whose shapes he saw camels in the train of a caravan:

> Los tardos camellos
> —como las figuras en un panorama—,
> cual si fuese un desierto de hielo,
> atraviesan la página blanca.
>
> Éste lleva
> una carga
> de dolores y angustias antiguas,
> angustias de pueblos, dolores de razas;
> ¡dolores y angustias que sufren los Cristos
> que vienen al mundo de víctimas trágicas!

[291] Both of which are important genres for Darío's oeuvre, as mentioned earlier. By and large Darío uses fairy-tale elements in his writing to touch on the impossibility of certain desires, as well as the distance between reality and fantasy; nevertheless, it is not the case in this poem.

Otro lleva
en la espalda
el cofre de ensueños, de perlas y oro,
que conduce la reina de Saba.

Otro lleva
una caja
en que va, dolorosa difunta,
como un muerto lirio la pobre Esperanza.

Y camina sobre un dromedario
la Pálida
la vestida de ropas obscuras,
la Reina invencible, la bella inviolada:
la Muerte. (ll. 15–37)

The typographic arrangement of the stanzas timidly suggests the figure of the camels trudging across the icy desert of the page. Several elements of Darío's mythology come together here: the Orient, though it is not an exoticized one but rather one that is made strange and uncanny; Biblical characters such as Christ and the Queen of Sheba, the latter of whom is well-known in the Judeo-Christian canon for her long retinues of spice-bearing camels; Death as female. Surprisingly, these familiar motifs are inflected here according to the Mallarméan trope of the blank page. Scholars have been conspicuously quiet about the sources of this poem,[292] as Caresani correctly observes in his article mentioned earlier.[293] If Alfonso García Morales has published the most comprehensive article on the influence of Mallarmé in Darío's oeuvre, surprisingly, he too omits mentioning 'La página blanca'. Caresani attributes this lacuna to a narrow understanding of literary translation and influence on the part of García Morales, and proposes instead that we think of 'La página blanca' as the first Spanish-language poem to engage with the innovations of Mallarméan poetics, decades before the *vanguardias* would do so:

> A partir de "La página blanca", entonces, la pregunta por aquello que Darío traduce de Mallarmé vuelve a adquirir visibilidad y una respuesta posible asoma en tres motivos mallarmeanos enlazados: el uso del blanco como energía de la

[292] See Marasso, p. 119, and Anderson Imbert, p. 92.
[293] Caresani, p. 145.

> composición, las formas del desdoblamiento en la instancia de la enunciación y la extensión de la escritura como jeroglífico.[294]

What Caresani calls 'desdoblamiento en la instancia de la enunciación' is Darío's use of repetition in the poem, which seems to be a generative force when it comes to how the stanzas take shape. This device works well with the overarching theme of the text, as the lines can be construed as emerging one after the other from the desert of the blank page. It is also worth pointing out that, for Mallarmé, words are not so much hieroglyphics, as Caresani suggests above, as arabesques.[295] Darío would ultimately not follow the path that led to 'Un coup de dés': his literary project, closely bound with the gaps and possibilities he saw in the literature of his native Spanish, spread out into another direction. Yet, for the reasons mentioned earlier, the orbits of these two poems seem to come closer to that of modern poetry in English, a nearness which renders them more accessible through translation. As mentioned earlier, translation is only superficially about language.

To come back to the poem's rendering, perhaps due to its surprising underrepresentation in Darío scholarship, it has not been widely rendered by the translators hitherto analysed, save for Simon/White. Below is their rendering of the stanzas above.

> And all the slow camels,
> like some tiny figures in a panorama,
> as if it were a desert made of ice,
> make their way through the blankness of the page.
>
> This one carries
> a heavy load
> of sorrow and anguish as old as time,
> the anguish of nations, the sorrow of races;
> the sorrow and anguish that any Christ suffers
> who comes into the world as some tragic victim!

[294] Ibid., pp. 136–37.
[295] Cf. Mallarmé's lecture given in Oxford *La Musique et les lettres*: '*La totale arabesque*, qui les relie, a de vertigineuses sautes en un effroi que reconnue ; d'anxieux accords'. See Stéphane Mallarmé, *OEuvres Complètes*, II (Paris: Gallimard, 1970), p. 68, emphasis added. Or his extraordinary description of a book in an essay discussing Villiers: 'ce coffret spiritual aux cent pages, entr'ouvert, avec intention fut posé, en fasse comme tomber authentiquement ses plis brodés *d'arabesques significatives* et de monstres.' (Ibid., pp. 41–42, emphasis added.)

This one carries
upon its back
coffers of reveries filled with pearls and fine gold,
proceeded by the Queen of Sheeba.

The next one carries
a coffin
that transports the disconsolate remains
of poor Hope, like a lily that has died.

And riding another dromedary,
the Pale Lady,
the one who is dressed in the darkest robes,
the invincible Queen, the inviolate beauty,
regal Death (ll. 15–37)

The translators have kept the margination of the poem, trying to follow the source text line by line. As usual, they translate the metre into free verse. Despite the dated register of their rendering, Darío seems decidedly 'modern' here, even experimental, if we consider that the poem was published in 1898. However, this impression touches on our own historical biases when it comes to experimentation: while typographical innovation like the one showcased by 'La página blanca' strikes us as bold, metrical innovation (which abounds in Darío's poetry) seems to have lost its sheen for us. This is also the case because the former is easier to translate, as any brief comparison of the quality of the renderings hitherto analysed would confirm. And yet, Darío's *modernista* diction and sensibility still require translation: if one is to render the poem afresh, certain tweaks of a more subtle nature are called for. Below is my rendering of the strophes:

the lingering camels
—like figures in a panorama—
trudge across the page
as through a desert of ice

this one
carries
a bundle
of griefs and anxieties
age-old griefs, ancient anxieties
griefs and anxieties that ail the Christs
who are of this world the victims

this other one
bears
a dream-chest
wrought with pearls and fine gold
trailing the Queen of Sheeba

another
carries
a case
inside it
a body—
it is Hope
in the shape
of a dead iris

and there on one dromedary
the Pale Lady
the one clad in darkness
the invincible Queen
the inviolate beauty:
Death (ll. 15–37).

Most of the differences with my rendering are in keeping with a more contemporary English poetic idiom. As before, this means toning down the *modernista*'s interjections as well as slightly paraphrasing certain lines. However, all that is crucial to the poem – such as its use of repetition, its typographic arrangement, and its figurations of the blank page, dreams, and death – is followed closely. As mentioned in Chapter 4, it is also important to take advantage of the morphological advantages that English offers a writer: the use of compound words where a phrase might otherwise seem old-fashioned – such as rendering 'cofre de sueños' from line 27 as 'dream-chest', as opposed to writing 'coffers of reveries' like Simon/White do. Likewise, the lexical richness of English motion verbs should not go unused: if 'los camellos […] atraviesan' the blank page, we could have them trudge across it, as they are also described as 'tardos camellos', as opposed to just have them 'mak[e] their way across' the page, which is slightly verbose. I have also taken some liberties with the lineation of this poem in particular, which seems to me warranted given the interpretation I have hitherto elucidated. Words from different languages, despite being

thought of as ‘equivalents’, look different on the page and therefore should be rearranged when necessary.

In short, to read an oeuvre from the point of view of another literary context, as translation demands, reshuffles the pieces which comprise it, draws some elements to the background, and pushes others to the fore. In this sense, a translation is always a revaluation of a work. Reading Darío with a view to translating him shines a light on poems such as ‘La página blanca’, which might otherwise remain understudied; at the same time, it discards others which might still be relevant for a different literary context – either a future one or in another language – such as poems like ‘Sonatina’ and ‘Marcha triunfal’.

‘Lo fatal’ and the Nocturnos

As we have seen time and again, translating Darío throws his prosody into relief. Nonetheless, if poems such as ‘Marcha triunfal’ and ‘Sonatina’ can plausibly be rendered by writing parallel prosodic exercises in the target language, other texts pose a greater challenge for translation. In the former case, Daríoesque harmony is taken to the utmost extent on a prosodic level, whereas in poems such as the *nocturnos* and ‘Lo fatal’, while still prosodically rich, the weight of what is said is greater. Darío has perfected his craft in these poems. For the translator, this does not mean that they have ventured into a zone of untranslatability, where sense and sound might be so intertwined that any severance would lead to disfigurement – it merely means that the role of creativity becomes all the greater. In these last pages, I will read the poems mentioned above with the intention of illustrating a way of rendering texts whose interweaving of sense and sound pushes the translator to reimagine them anew, in a manner that must still preserve the most important features of the source text.

The *nocturnos* – the two from *Cantos de vida y esperanza* – and 'Lo fatal' are poems of existential dread in which the tone of the speaker is much darker than in most poems by Darío. Thematically, they are the antithesis of the brash and hedonistic poems of *Prosas profanas*. As mentioned earlier, some of the most important Darío scholars – Anderson Imbert, Paz, Salinas, and Yúrkievich – see in them some of the Nicaraguan's most lasting works, perhaps because the *nocturnos* are clearly symbolist poems, and 'Lo fatal' breaks with the sonnet-form in a way that is striking and not entirely unlike other symbolist innovations (as found in Mallarmé and Verlaine).[296] Unlike 'A Roosevelt' and 'La página blanca', however, which are poems set in assonant rhyme, the qualities of these poems are conspicuously woven into their rhymes. As mentioned above, this makes them all the more challenging to translate – yet, by the same token, more interesting for a discussion of the complexities of translation. In my analysis, I will use Kemp's renderings as a counterbalance of sorts for my own versions. As mentioned in Chapter 3, Kemp translated Darío into a contemporary free-verse idiom. By focusing on his translations we can explore how one might walk the difficult line between rendering tone in a manner that is still contemporary while preserving the richness of rhythm and rhyme. Below is the opening stanza of the first 'Nocturno' of *Cantos de vida y esperanza*.

> Quiero expresar mi angustia en versos que abolida
> dirán mi juventud de rosas y de ensueños,
> y la desfloración amarga de mi vida
> por un vasto dolor y cuidados pequeños. (ll. 1–4)

A reader familiar with French poetry might recognise echoes of Gérard de Nerval's sonnet 'El desdichado' in the use of *abolida* in the first line: 'Le Prince d'Aquitaine à la Tour abolie' (l. 2).[297] Rhetorically, the whole stanza is anything but straightforward: the syntax

[296] See *Cuadrivio*, p. 63; Anderson Imbert, p. 131; Yúrkievich, pp. 25–49.
[297] Darío was well-acquainted with Nerval's poetry. Anderson Imbert (p. 101) and Paz, in *Cuadrivio* (p. 42), surmise that the sonnet analysed earlier 'Yo persigo una forma…' was influenced by a reading of another of Nerval's sonnets, 'Delfica', particularly because of line 5: 'Reconnais-tu le temple au peristyle immense' (l.

of Spanish is flexible enough for Darío to end the first line on ‘abolida’ while referring to his ‘juventud’. As we will see, English is not that flexible. With its echoes of Nerval, ‘abolida’ also opens up many possibilities for rhyme and is rich in connotations. On the other hand, the antithesis of line 4 is meant to underline the pathetic yet contradictory nature of his anguish, while having it all tie together through the alternate feminine rhymes. Below is Kemp’s rendering.

> I want to express my anguish in verses that speak
> of my vanished youth, a time of dreams and roses,
> and the bitter defloration of my life
> by many small cares and one vast aching sorrow. (Kemp ll. 1–4)

Kemp breaks down the hyperbaton in order to arrive at a clear rendering; despite the loss, it seems difficult to do otherwise. Still, the clause ‘a time of dreams and roses’ is unfortunately clichéd where Darío’s more complex phrasing is not. Also, ‘vanished’ (l. 2) is stylistically less notable than ‘abolished’, a choice which reflects the tendency of translations toward standardization. In line 4 Kemp seems to have felt compelled to compensate for the loss of richness in lines 1–2 by adding extra modifiers to Darío’s antithesis: ‘cuidados pequeños’ becomes ‘many small cares’ and ‘un vasto dolor’ becomes ‘one vast aching sorrow’. This compensation comes across as padding, and the overall result of the rendering is an uneven stanza. Below is my own translation of the stanza.

> I want to word my anguish in lines that can say
> that the abolished roses of my aching youth—
> and my wilted life withered away
> by dint of petty lies and a painful truth. (ll. 1–4)

For the reasons discussed above, it is important to keep the word ‘abolish’ without falling into cliché. One way of working around this was to render the longing of Darío’s ‘ensueños’ without having to openly name them and risk falling into hollow or maudlin words such as ‘dreams’, ‘daydreams’, or ‘reveries’ – hence my hypallage ‘the abolished roses of my

5), which is similar to line 5 of Darío’s own sonnet. See also Mallarmé’s ‘Sonnet en yx’: ‘Aboli bibelot d’inanité sonore’ (l. 6).

aching youth' (l. 2). 'Aching' here compensates for 'ensueños' by hinting at a feeling of longing. There is some paraphrase in the following lines, which are necessary to keep the force of the antithesis of line 4 in full rhymes, while also having as a result a stanza that is true to Darío's originality.

This first *nocturno* illustrates, perhaps to a greater extent than the poems analysed earlier, why it is so challenging to translate a poet like Darío. It pushes the translator to be bolder in their reimagining if they are to replicate the poetic effects of the source text. They must be able to shift between working on the level of the line to working on the stanza as a whole. Clear decisions must be taken in terms of what is indispensable for the target text to have – the features that are deemed essential to the source text. In the second stanza Darío lists his personal mythology with a hint of having been fooled into believing in these symbols:

> Y el viaje a un vago Oriente por entrevistos barcos,
> y el grano de oraciones que floreció en blasfemia,
> y los azoramientos del cisne entre los charcos
> y el falso azul nocturno de inquerida bohemia. (ll. 5–8)

In these lines Darío revisits the tropes that, like permutations, he time and again poeticized in different tones and metres throughout his career. What is new in this poem is that they are listed with great concision – like a small window onto Darío's literary obsessions – and with a disenchanted air of failure.[298] In this regard, while the 'azul' of line 8 could be construed as an allusion to Darío's collection *Azul…*, it actually refers to Darío's alcohol abuse and dissipation, as is made clear in his discussion of the poem in 'Historia de mis libros': 'En cuanto a la bohemia inquerida, ¿habría yo gastado tantas horas de mi vida en agitadas noches blancas, en la euforia artificial y desorbitada de los alcoholes, en el desgaste

[298] For an interpretation of the *nocturnos* in relation to Darío's failure to enter the French literary scene in Paris, see Grigsby 2019.

de una juventud demasiado robusta'[299] The 'falso azul nocturno' is the false promise that the blue night sky offers the poet. Below is my own rendering.

> And a trip to the Orient on half-sighted ships,
> and the bead of prayers that blossomed in sin,
> and the fright of a swan that across a pond slips,
> and the treacherous night-blue of bohemian din. (ll. 5–8)

These lines lend themselves more easily to be imitated in English than the first four, yet they require an interpretation that engages more openly with what the text is trying to achieve. Below is Kemp's rendering as a counter-example:

> And the voyage to a dim orient in half-seen ships,
> the seeds of prayer that flowered in blasphemies,
> the bewilderment of a swan among the puddles,
> the false nocturnal blue of a sick Bohemia. (ll. 5–8)

To come back to the importance in translation of knowing well a writer's poetics: as mentioned earlier, line 8 of the source text clearly refers to Darío's alcohol abuse, which, as it worsened toward the end of his life, became a greater root of torment for the Nicaraguan. That is to say, it is unrelated to Bohemia as a region. Likewise, on a stylistic level, 'charcos' (l. 3) is clearly chosen to complete the feminine rhyme with 'barcos' (l. 1), which thereby gives it poetic value in the stanza. It is not because the swan – which in Darío's poetry is a myriad embodiment related to poetry and beauty – specifically swims in puddles as opposed to ponds or lakes. The word-for-word approach here seems doggedly stubborn.

Toward the end, the poem escalates into a meditation on death, which is referred to in the text simply as 'Ella'. As in 'La página blanca' and elsewhere ('El coloquio de los centauros', 'Thanatos', etc.), in Darío's poetry Death is personified as a pale woman clad in darkness.

> El ánfora funesta del divino veneno
> que ha de hacer por la vida la tortura interior,

[299] 'Historia de mis libros', p. 221.

la conciencia espantable de nuestro humano cieno
y el horror de sentirse pasajero, el horror

de ir a tientas, en intermitentes espantos,
hacia lo inevitable desconocido y la
pesadilla brutal de este dormir de llantos
de la cual no hay más que Ella que nos despertará! (ll. 17–24)

The 'divino veneno', given the 'inquerida bohemia' above, can only be the alcohol due to which the poet feels tortured. The use of repetition and enjambment in lines 20 and 22 above showcase the poet's skill. However, without the rhymes they complete, there is scarce sense in keeping them in translation. Why repeat 'horror' if it is not to rhyme with 'interior'? The poem then ends abruptly, which would otherwise be jarring if it did not chime well with the fact that life, too, according to the poem, ends abruptly when 'She' wakes us from its dream.[300] In his rendering, Kemp does well not to reproduce the rhetorical figures mentioned above, even though the anaphora of line 22 is perhaps too facile a solution for the line:

And the dismal amphora with its divine poison
that causes the inner torments of this life;
the fearful knowledge of our human mire;
and the horror of knowing that we are transitory,

the horror of walking blindly, among alarms,
toward the unknowable, toward the inevitable;
and the brute nightmares that rack our weeping sleep,
from which no one but She can wake us up! (ll. 17–24)

Though Kemp's rendering here is slightly more standardised, it is on the whole accurate and canny, if somewhat overexplicit at times. And yet, the lines seemed to have lost much

[300] The trope of life as a dream from which death wakes us can be traced back to Plato. Darío most likely took it from Calderón de la Barca, whose work he knew well; proof of this is that Segismundo, the character of Calderón's best-known drama *La vida es sueño*, appears in many of Darío's poems, usually alongside prince Hamlet, such as in 'Al Rey Óscar' ('Si Segismundo siente pesar, Hamlet se inquieta' (l. 11) and in 'Letanía de nuestro señor Don Quijote' ('y antes que tu hermano vago, Segismundo, / el pálido Hamlet te ofrece una flor' (ll. 42–3). For more information see, Roberto Carlos Pérez, 'Calderón de la Barca en Rubén Darío', *La Zebra,* #17 (1 May 2017) https://lazebra.net/2017/05/01/roberto-carlos-perez-calderon-de-la-barca-en-ruben-dario-ensayo/ [accessed 8 July 2019].

of their strength without their rhymes. Below is my own rendering of the stanzas, in which I preserved as much of the rhyme as I could:

> The hollow amphora with sweet poison
> which would become a life's inner torment,
> the fearful awareness of the mire we grow in
> and the horror of feeling transient,
>
> of teetering along, with intermittent fears,
> towards the inevitable unknown, and the
> fits of brutal nightmares dampened by tears—
> from which no one but She will wake us! (ll. 17–24)

The next 'Nocturno' is perhaps even more difficult to translate because of the octave's long deferral of the main verb through which it names its intended audience:

> Los que auscultasteis el corazón de la noche,
> los que por el insomnio tenaz habéis oído
> el cerrar de una puerta, el resonar de un coche
> lejano, un eco vago, un ligero ruido…
>
> En los instantes del silencio misterioso,
> cuando surgen de su prisión los olvidados,
> en la hora de los muertos, en la hora del reposo,
> *sabréis leer* estos versos de amargor impregnados…! (ll. 1–8; emphasis added)

The verb and its modal auxiliary in the eighth line 'sabréis leer' refer to those who are named in lines 1–7. This deferral is difficult to render in English without losing the descriptive strength with which the supple use of the relative pronoun 'los que' lends Spanish (los que auscultasteis…, los que por el insomnio, etc.) English is more verbose here. Below is Kemp's rendering.

> You that have heard the heartbeat of the night,
> you that have heard, in the long, sleepless hours,
> a closing door, the rumble of distant wheels,
> a vague echo, a wandering sound from somewhere;
>
> you, in the moments of mysterious silence,
> when the forgotten ones issue from their prison—
> in the hour of the dead, in the hour of repose—
> will know how to read the bitterness in my verses. (ll. 1–8)

Because the norm of writing in English is by and large more economical than in Spanish – it demands shorter sentences and has a lower tolerance for unnecessary repetition or circumlocutions – the deferral discussed above comes across as somewhat baroque. While the lines should indeed read 'you who have heard' and not 'you that have heard', Darío is much more precise and powerful in his wordings than Kemp, who perhaps relaxes too much in his paraphrase when 'el insomnio tenaz' becomes 'the long, sleepless hours' (l. 2) and 'un ligero ruido', in turn, 'a wandering sound from somewhere' (l. 4). As mentioned in Chapter 3, Derusha/Acereda take issue with the translation of 'los que ausculasteis' as 'you that have heard the heartbeat of night' because it ostensibly dumbs down Darío's erudite language.[301] However, the fact that a cognate exists in English does not mean that it is the equivalent of its Spanish counterpart. This is perhaps one of the most insidious misconceptions held by many translators. Two cognate words – that is, two words from two different languages that share the same etymological root and mean something similar – point to a likeness of origin and not necessarily to a likeness of meaning, hence the term 'false friends'. In Spanish, Darío's use of 'auscultar', while undoubtedly a cultivated use of diction, is phonetically close enough to 'escuchar' so that the associations it conjures in a reader are more likely to approximate the denotation of the word. By contrast, in English 'auscultate' sounds merely technical, not having a phonetic resemblance to a more common word such as in Spanish. This is why 'auscultar el corazón de la noche' is a better line of poetry than 'to auscultate the heart of the night'. My own way of circumventing the loss of enunciative force that occurs in Kemp's rendering is to expand line 1 and compress line 3, while presenting the imagery of the two stanzas in the manner of a conditional:

> If, for hours, you've stayed awake
> listening for the heartbeat of night.
> If, in the grip of insomnia, you might
> have heard the thud of a door, a distant quake…

[301] *Songs of Life and Hope*, p. 44.

in silent moments we cannot explain,
when the scorned rise from their prisons—
at the hour of the dead, at the hour of visions—
you'll recognise these words steeped in pain! (ll. 1–8)

Because rendering the opening metaphor of the poem well is crucial for the whole text, it is worth compressing lines 3 and 4, so long as both the concreteness of the noises described in the poem ('el cerrar de una puerta, el resonar de un coche / lejano' in my 'the thud of a door') as well as the more mysterious, indeterminate noises that connect the poem with a metaphysical realm ('un eco vago, un ligero ruido…' in my 'a distant quake') are preserved. If there is a lesser atmosphere as a result, the opening metaphor in lines 1 and 2 offers a powerful image which the added conditional renders persuasive enough to mimic the source text: 'If, for hours, you've stayed awake / listening for the heartbeat of night.'

Darío's clashing juxtapositions in the following stanza, which play on the expressive possibilities of Spanish, are especially challenging to render:

Como en un vaso vierto en ellos mis dolores
de lejanos recuerdos y desgracias funestas,
y las tristes nostalgias de mi alma, ebria de flores,
y el duelo de mi corazón, triste de fiestas. (ll. 9–12)

Like the first one, in this 'Nocturno' the abuse of alcohol resurfaces in line 11 and 12. Pedro Salinas tells us how the oxymoron 'triste de fiestas' (l. 12) created a slight scandal in Spain when it was first published, a fact which reminds us of the inventive use of language in the text, as well as underlines our own historical distance to the reaction these poems roused upon their publication.[302] To follow Darío's syntax, Kemp feels the need to break the prosody of line 9 through a parenthetical remark that makes sense of the line:

I fill them, as one would fill a glass, with all
my grief for remote memories and black misfortunes,
the nostalgia of my flower-intoxicated soul
and the pain of a heart grown sorrowful with fêtes; (ll. 9–12)

[302] Salinas, pp. 164–66.

The result is less persuasive than the source text. Still, Kemp does what he can with Darío's wooden 'desgracias funestas', which seems to be there above all to complete the rhyme with 'triste de fiestas' in line 12, arguably the most creative line of the poem. Further, he manages the difficulties of line 11 with reasonable skill, opting for the compound adjective 'flower-intoxicated soul' (an approach which the translator Peter Bush would follow when he translated this poem in its form of an epigraph to Carmen Boullosa's *Before*). As Rabassa did with his García Márquez, and Harriet de Onís with her Carpentier, an English-translator should exploit the space for creativity that the Germanic root of English confers the language.[303] Nevertheless, Kemp's rendering of line 12 is not as successful as the previous one: while using 'fêtes' eschews both the youthful banality associated with the word 'parties' and the perfunctory solemnity of 'celebrations', the Gallicism rings hollow and far-fetched given the confessional tone of the stanza. Below is my take:

> This is the glass where I pour my sorrows
> made of fateful blows and faded memories,
> and the longings of a soul, drunk with flowers,
> and the aching of a heart, wretched with parties. (ll. 9–12)

I have added the deictic in line 9 to preserve some of the force of the source line. Fortunately, I happened on two half rhymes for the stanza, which manage to convey some of the Nicaraguan's ingenuity in the final two lines, while keeping with a diction that is more or less on the same standing as that of the source text. This is also why I did not opt for a compound modifier like Kemp does: the parallelism between lines 11 and 12 must be preserved (ebria de flores / triste de fiestas), which would imply adding a double compound modifier that the issues of diction mentioned above render difficult.[304]

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[303] For more on these translators, see Munday, pp. 85–106.

[304] As mentioned above, the translator Peter Bush picks up on the need for the parallelism and renders the stanza as follows:

> As into a glass I pour them from my sorrow
> distant memories and sombre misfortunes
> the sad nostalgias of my flower-drunk soul,
> the mourning of my party-sorrowed heart, (ll. 9–12)

Translating these *nocturnos* shows how all the more difficult it becomes to translate Darío when it concerns his more mature work, as both the prosodic and motivic aspects of the poems are usually interwoven with great craftsmanship. While he is a poet who is always challenging to imitate in another language, the prosodic exercises of 'Sonatina' and 'Marcha triunfal', albeit virtuosic, come down to prosody; and in poems with slight rhyme, such as 'La página blanca' or 'A Roosevelt', the challenges approximates those that any translator may face with most modern poets. On the other hand, in the case of 'Yo soy aquél que ayer no más decía', though it is similar to the poems discussed in this section, it is still a poem whose mode is narrative and is strewn with enough symbolism that the translator can always hold on to those passages of imagery as they work through the text trying to reinvent the sounds of the poem. By contrast, the poems discussed here, in addition to 'Lo fatal' which is the following poem I will analyse, demand an engagement on all levels of the text.

García Márquez allegedly said of 'Lo fatal' that it is the greatest poem written in the Spanish language.[305] It is one of Darío's best-known poems and perhaps one of the most challenging to translate. As a sonnet it is distinctive because it is missing the last line. After the ellipsis at the end of line 13, the poem seems to vanish, as it were, like life itself does after death. As Derusha/Acereda describe it:

> The poem concludes in shorter and shorter lines, shifting down from the established pattern of fourteen-syllable alejandrinos, first to a verse of nine syllables, and finally to a verse of seven, or half an alejandrino, which then peters out with an ellipsis; the poem literally deflates before our eyes.[306]

The stanza is, I believe, an improvement on Kemp's; however, the syntax of lines 9–10 reads somewhat stilted, while the compound 'party-sorrowed' combines two words that seem too far apart in register for it to be as felicitous as 'triste de fiestas'.

[305] See Sergio Ramírez, 'De guapos tiempos idos', *El País*, 17 January 2009. <https://elpais.com/diario/2009/01/17/babelia/1232152758_850215.html> [accessed 16 August 2019]; and, Carlos Tünnerman Bernheim, 'La tinta de Gabo', *La Prensa*, 28 May 2014 <https://www.laprensa.com.ni/2014/05/28/cultura/196060-la-tinta-de-gabo> [accessed 16 August 2019].

[306] *Songs of Life and Hope*, p. 35.

The title of the poem is already a challenge to translate. ‘Lo fatal’ translates literally as ‘What is fatal’, but while the latter sounds stilted in English, the former sounds natural in Spanish. What if it were translated as ‘What is deadly’? It is not quite right, because the poem talks about what is fatal in an abstract way – what is inevitably our fate in life, which is ultimately death, rather than discussing what is deadly per se. Perhaps for similar reasons Kemp decided to translate the title as ‘Fatality’, a garish way of forcefully spelling out what the poem is about. Appelbaum followed suit by calling his own rendering ‘Fatality’ too. One can do worse, however: Simon/White render it as ‘Destined to die’, which in addition to being overexplicit, trumps the poem’s unfolding as it already signals to the reader, through a cliché, what its thirteen lines are about.

What else could one call it? ‘The Damned’, perhaps? As mentioned in Chapter 3, Derusha/Acereda decided to render the title as ‘What Gets You’, a surprisingly colloquial rendering given the high, elegiac tone of the poem. Still, if their translation were in register with the title, it might have been an entirely adequate one. Nonetheless, there is a sharp discrepancy between title and text given that the translators follow the latter almost word for word.

Since there seems to be no clear translation of the title that would be adequate for the text purely from a linguistic point of view, one alternative that emerges is to translate it based on literary conventions – that is, to ask ourselves as readers what title would work best for the target text if we did not have to render it word for word. In my own rendering I therefore focused on translating the body of the poem first, leaving the title for last – which, incidentally, is similar to what publishers habitually do in the Anglophone book market for most works of fiction. Below is the original octave.

> Dichoso el árbol que es apenas sensitivo,
> y más la piedra dura porque ésa ya no siente,
> pues no hay dolor más grande que el dolor de ser vivo,
> ni mayor pesadumbre que la vida consciente.

Ser, y no saber nada, y ser sin rumbo cierto,
y el temor de haber sido y un futuro terror…
Y el espanto seguro de estar mañana muerto,
y sufrir por la vida y por la sombra y por (ll. 1–8)

The main difficulty with translating this poem is that without the rhymes and Darío's subtle wording – in line 3 we read 'el dolor de ser vivo' instead of 'el dolor de estar vivo', which is merely a shade different, but it is enough to avoid the line sounding clichéd – the lines seem like abstract generalizations about life which are both overexplicit and overdramatic. Also, there are echoes of Hamlet in line 5, a character who, as mentioned earlier, is alluded to several times in Darío's oeuvre.

To add to this, there is the problem of tone. While the source text is widely considered one of the most lapidary sonnets of the Spanish language, its tone is high and dramatic in a manner that is at home in the period in which this poem was written; however, it sounds ingenuous and overdramatic when put into contemporary poetic idiom in English. One should strive to strike the right note in relation to both tone and content; that is, the translator must tone down the source text if they want to avoid making his poetry sound outmoded or melodramatic.[307] Below is my own rendering of the octave.

The tree has a blessing: it's barely sensitive.
The stone's is greater: it cannot even feel.
There is no greater pain than to live—
than a waking life, no greater ordeal.

To be, to know nothing, to teeteringly tread
dogged by a lived past, and this future terror…
the guaranteed horror that tomorrow I'll be dead
and to suffer for life and for darkness and for (ll. 1–8)

[307] To be clear, as is inevitable given the historical distance between us and the *modernistas*, much of Darío's poetry indeed sounds melodramatic and outmoded in Spanish today. Whenever that is the case, however, the other qualities of his poetry, which I have been emphasising throughout this thesis as necessary to render in translation – his mastery of prosody, his metrical innovations, his subtle diction, etc. – end up outweighing the distance.

For the reasons mentioned above, I keep the rhymes while setting the poem in a tone that might come closer to the urgency the source text must have conjured upon its publication. Poems like ‘Lo fatal’, in which sound and sense seem impossible to sever without bringing down the whole edifice of the text, push the translator to wilder reimaginings of the source text. In labouring over these lines, one understands first-hand why it has been so difficult to arrive to an English-language Darío that could speak to contemporary readers. In my rendering the poem is not only toned down to that end, but some verbs are also tweaked (I added ‘teeteringly tread’ and ‘dogged by a lived past’ in lines 5 and 6, where the source text merely has ‘ser sin rumbo cierto / y el temor de haber sido…’) in keeping with English’s greater richness for verbs as opposed to Spanish. Otherwise the lines felt dry and their diction somewhat poor. Here is Kemp’s rendering:

> The tree is happy because it is scarcely sentient;
> the hard rock is happier still, it feels nothing:
> there is no pain as great as being alive,
> no burden heavier than that of conscious life.
>
> To be, and to know nothing, and to lack a way,
> and the dread of having been, and future terrors…
> And the sure terror of being dead tomorrow,
> and to suffer all through life and through the darkness, (ll. 1–8)

The first problem in Kemp’s rendering is the lack of verbal nuance; namely, his use of ‘happy’ in a poem whose theme is partly metaphysical. Lines 1 and 2 therefore read as trivializing statements about nature, which jar with the high-flown confessionalism of lines 3 and 4. However, as with the previous poem, Kemp is perceptive enough as a translator so as not to reproduce the enjambments which exist in the source text only for the sake of rhyme. Still, one feels that some sort of compensation is required not to have line 8 fall into facile paraphrase. Also, the repetition of ‘terror’ in lines 6 and 7, which is not in the source text, impoverish the stanza as a whole. Below is the truncated sestet of the source text.

> lo que no conocemos y apenas sospechamos,
> y la carne que tienta con sus frescos racimos,

y la tumba que aguarda con sus fúnebres ramos,

y no saber a dónde vamos,
ni de dónde venimos…! (ll. 9–13)

One can appreciate above how the sonnet vanishes, or, in the words of Derusha/Acereda, peters out before our eyes. The volta interestingly arrives one line late, on line 10, suggesting that the edifice of the sonnet is already falling apart. At that point the tone shifts direction and gains in urgency and despair, before ending on a note of existential uncertainty. The effortlessness in the final two rhymes – whose antithetic directions (a dónde vamos, de dónde venimos) capture, in just two half alexandrines, the poem's whole theme – is key to the poem's success as a work of literature. The urgency is gained through anaphora, in addition to the two juxtapositions by which the poem culminates: first, the juxtaposition of Eros and Thanatos, desire and death; second, the uncertainty of what comes after life alongside the uncertainty of what existed before it. These features should be borne in mind by the translator if they are to elicit similar effects in their rendering. Below is Kemp's translation.

and what we do not know and hardly suspect…
And the flesh that tempts us with bunches of cool grapes,
and the tomb that awaits us with funeral sprays,

and not to know where we go,
nor whence we came!... (ll. 9–13)

Kemp fails to keep with the momentum of the source text by lengthening lines 10 and 11 in a manner that not only encumbers the reader's engagement with the text – the ending of line 10, 'bunches of cool grapes' reads out of both register and metre – but that diminishes the force of the juxtaposition. The last couplet, which effectively works upon the reader's mind as a truncated tercet, seems like a weak ending without the complete rhymes – surely a stronger poet would have chosen other words with which to close their sonnet on such a weighty subject. Below is my rendering of the sestet.

what we do not know and can barely imagine
and the fruits of the flesh that coax us
while the tomb lies wreathed underground—

and not to know how we came thus
nor where it is we're bound…! (ll. 9–13)

I have lost the rhyme at the end of line 9, which I perhaps could have modified to end on 'confound' or 'surround' – or perhaps a half rhyme that would sound more natural – but I have decided to prioritise naturalness of idiom so the poem could then launch into its double antitheses unhampered. There is no direct translation of 'racimo' in English, and the options are 'bunches of grapes' and 'clusters of grapes', both of which seem verbose as solutions, as Kemp's rendering shows all too well. The translator must then work around the problem; 'fruits' offered the line a welcome assonance with 'flesh' that worked well with the poem as a whole. The final ellipsis could be construed as standing in for what the sonnet does not say – namely, the missing fourteenth line. For that reason it seemed important to preserve, as well as the shrinking of the final lines. After I arrived at this final version, it seemed plain to me that if this were a poem I originally had written in English I would title it 'No Greater Ordeal', as per the fourth line. It is a suggestive title, not overexplanatory, that hints at the theme of the sonnet, inviting the reader to engage with the content of the lines in order to make out what it refers to. It is also in a similar register as the rest of the poem.

The analysis and discussion of the rendering of these poems identifies and brings to the fore the aspects of Darío's poetry which make it so challenging to translate into contemporary English, partially explaining the dearth of translations of his work mentioned in the Introduction. By explaining the thought process and decision-making that takes place behind choices that carry with them both gains and losses of meaning, it illustrates how a translation can be both rigorous and creative without falling into the binary categories of either faithful or free. It also demonstrates the possibilities of translation as a critical tool

of reading. Lastly, it opens the door to similar approaches that may be undertaken to render the writing of other poets for whom prosody bears meaning.

Conclusion

The foregoing pages show how rethinking a canonical body of work, such as Darío's, from the point of view of another language and tradition can reveal traits or patterns that have hitherto remained overlooked, such as the multilingualism of the Nicaraguan's poetry. As discussed in Chapter 1, Darío wanted to become a French-language writer. Over the course of his lifelong engagement with French language and literature, he not only wrote poems in French, but translated, glossed, rewrote, annotated, and expanded on other French authors in his own writing. This filled his writing with echoes of French in the shape of myriad Gallicisms, allusions, tropes, motifs, and poetic forms. The true extent of this engagement with his sources has been underestimated, given the rather narrow notions of literary influence and imitation which Darío scholars have applied to their readings. Likewise, as discussed in Chapter 2, Darío incorporated echoes of Provençal, Latin, and early modern Spanish, as part of his wide-ranging *modernista* project of stylistic renewal of literature in Spanish. The image of Darío that emerges thereof is less that of the inspired genius in the ivory tower of *Modernismo*, and more that of an ambitious, toiling, erring, and studious autodidact who conceived literature as something multilingual and transnational.

Translation as a critical tool also sheds light on historical issues: how authors are translated changes historically, as does how they are read. While traditional accounts of translation would suggest that it is mostly a linguistic affair, the discussion in Chapter 3 proves that historical and cultural differences bear on it more heavily. The case of Darío is particularly striking because the history of the translation of his writing holds up a mirror to the history of the translation of Spanish American literature more generally. As discussed in Chapter 3, the study of the *modernista*'s afterlife in English takes us through the history of Spanish American literature in that language: from the paucity of the first half of the

twentieth century to the turning point of the Cuban Revolution; from the 'Boom' of Spanish American literature to the academisation of its study in the decades that followed; and from there on to the present. The almost total lack of knowledge of Spanish American literature which existed in the Anglophone world before the Cuban Revolution took place made the reception of Darío extremely unlikely. Afterwards, once the 'Boom' was at its zenith, the exoticism which was popularised by the success of magical realist writings, in addition to the postcolonial turn in literature, created readerly expectations regarding Spanish American literature which Darío's writing decidedly did not meet. Moreover, because of Darío's extremely skilful use of rhythm and rhyme, translators failed to produce compelling renderings of his poetry, as shown by the comparative analysis of the versions discussed at the end of the last chapter.

Through translation it also becomes clear how Darío's poetics of 'armonía' is not limited to the level of beliefs – Pythagorean, occult, or otherwise – nor to stylistic ornament: his whole poetic system is predicated upon it. Proof of this is that, by applying Daríoesque notions of harmony to the rendering of his poems, one arrives to versions that elicit similar effects as their originals. As a result, having a new and more accomplished translation of Darío may help to expand the understanding of the history of Spanish American literature in the Anglophone world. It could open the door to the translation of other poets who have so far remained in the shadows. By adding a crucial piece that has been missing from the general picture of Spanish American poetry in English, it could illuminate the context and work of *posmodernistas* and *vanguardistas* that came after the Nicaraguan, contributing to undo exoticizing tendencies in the reception of Spanish American literature and help to reshape reader expectations.

Beyond matters of literary history, translating Darío with a view to reproducing both the matter and manner of his poems pushes us to rethink our translation practices. As

stated in Chapter 4, the translation of poetry which aims to recreate the effects of the source text is a fictional form of writing; it requires a suspension of disbelief from the reader in order to accept that the target text they are reading – despite being written in a different language, at a different time, and in a different context from the source text – is more or less an equivalent one. In this sense, poetic translation is more properly understood as an imitation across languages. Contrary to providing a case for the impossibility of translation, this understanding frees the translator from binary oppositions that have historically pitted 'fidelity' against creativity. In its stead, it emphasises recreating the essential traits of a source text according to the literary conventions and strengths of the target language. As shown in Chapter 5, this framework is useful for a translation of Darío, as his writing is extremely demanding in relation to its deft and mellifluous use of prosody, in addition to its rhythm and rhyme. Nonetheless, by applying scholarship creatively to the practice of translation, similar poetic effects can be achieved in the rendering of a poet even as difficult as Darío. As I mentioned earlier, though the translation of a poetic text is always an ad-hoc act because of the volatility of poetic meaning, the framework discussed in these pages could also be used for the retranslation of other authors of similar characteristics. More effective translations of other *fin-de-siècle* poets such as Paul Verlaine, Gabriele D'Annunzio, and Stefan George would decisively improve our understanding of modern poetry before Modernism. This need not be limited to translation into English: compelling translations of Yeats and Emily Dickinson into Spanish are sorely missing, for example. Finally, it would also expand our conversation of what translation can be.

What remains for Darío's afterlife in English? Has his time to be translated into English passed? As argued in Chapter 3, it seems that such a time has never existed given the historical and cultural circumstances which have surrounded his reception. Today, however, given the increasing importance translated literature has in the Anglophone

literary market – alongside a post-boom understanding of Spanish American literature and a post-modernist understanding of modernity – the conditions now seem more favourable for new translations of Darío. Indeed, aside from my own renderings which I hope to publish soon, there is reason to be optimistic: Adam Feinstein, a biographer of Pablo Neruda, is also working on rhymed translations of Darío; and the Latinx poet and translator Francisco Aragón's forthcoming book *After Rubén* (2020) will include several versions of Rubén Darío. Perhaps the time for Darío to break into English is finally here.

APPENDIX

Ama tu ritmo…

Ama tu ritmo y ritma tus acciones
bajo su ley, así como tus versos;
eres un universo de universos
y tu alma una fuente de canciones.

La celeste unidad que presupones
hará brotar de ti mundos diversos,
y al resonar tus números dispersos
pitagoriza en tus constelaciones.

Escucha la retórica divina
del pájaro del aire y la nocturna
irradiación geométrica adivina;

mata la indiferencia taciturna
y engarza perla y perla cristalina
en donde la verdad vuelca su urna.

Cherish your rhythm…

Cherish your rhythm and rhythm
your actions along, as your verses;
you are a universe of universes
and your soul a many-coloured prism.

Inside you there are scintillations
surrounding buried planets within;
make your hidden numbers ring
and pythagorise your constellations.

Open your ears and listen
to the rhetoric of the bird of the air.
See night’s geometry glisten;

slay apathy's quiet heir
and in joining pearl with pearl fair,
truth, like a sun, will have risen.

Yo persigo una forma…

Yo persigo una forma que no encuentra mi estilo,
botón de pensamiento que busca ser la rosa;
se anuncia con un beso que en mis labios se posa
al abrazo imposible de la Venus de Milo.

Adornan verdes palmas el blanco peristilo;
los astros me han predicho la visión de la Diosa;
y en mi alma reposa la luz como reposa
el ave de la luna sobre un lago tranquilo.

Y no hallo sino la palabra que huye,
la iniciación melódica que de la flauta fluye
y la barca del sueño que en el espacio boga;

y bajo la ventana de mi Bella-Durmiente,
el sollozo continuo del chorro de la fuente
y el cuello del gran cisne blanco que me interroga.

I am looking for a form…

I am looking for a form my style fails to capture,
a thought-bud that wishes it turned into a rose;
on my lips it begins as a kiss filled with rapture
for the phantom embrace in Venus de Milo's pose.

The palm-strewn peristyle is green upon white;
the stars have revealed the Goddess's face;
and the light on my soul softly alights
like the bird on the lake that drifts without trace.

And all I find is a word slipping away,
the melody of a flute which scarcely flows,
and the boat of dreams that rows and rows;

and by the house where my Sleeping-Beauty lay
the tears of the fountain in the air draw an arc
while the neck of a swan is a white question mark.

‘I’

Yo soy aquel que ayer no más decía
el verso azul y la canción profana,
en cuya noche un ruiseñor había
que era alondra de luz por la mañana.

El dueño fui de mi jardín de sueño,
lleno de rosas y de cisnes vagos;
el dueño de las tórtolas, el dueño
de góndolas y liras en los lagos;

y muy siglo diez y ocho y muy antiguo
y muy moderno; audaz, cosmopolita;
con Hugo fuerte y con Verlaine ambiguo;
y una sed de ilusiones infinita.

Yo supe de dolor desde mi infancia,
mi juventud… ¿fue juventud la mía?
sus rosas aún me dejan su fragancia, –
una fragancia de melancolía…

Potro sin freno se lanzó mi instinto,
mi juventud montó potro sin freno;
iba embriagada y con puñal al cinto;
si no cayó, fue porque Dios es bueno.

En mi jardín se vio una estatua bella;
se juzgó mármol y era carne viva;
un alma joven habitaba en ella;
sentimental, sensible, sensitiva.

Y tímida ante el mundo, de manera
que encerrada en silencio no salía,
sino cuando en la dulce primavera
era la hora de la melodía…

Hora de ocaso y de discreto beso;
hora crepuscular y de retiro;
hora de madrigal y de embeleso,
de “te adoro,” de “ay” y de suspiro.

Y entonces era en la dulzaina un juego
de misteriosas gamas cristalinas,

un renovar de notas del Pan griego
y un desgranar de músicas latinas,

con aire tal y con ardor tan vivo,
que a la estatua nacían de repente
en el muslo viril patas de chivo
y dos cuernos de sátiro en la frente.

Como la Galatea gongorina
me encantó la marquesa verleniana,
y así juntaba a la pasión divina
una sensual hiperestesia humana;

todo ansia, todo ardor, sensación pura
y vigor natural; y sin falsía,
y sin comedia y sin literatura…:
si hay un alma sincera, ésa es la mía.

La torre de marfil tentó mi anhelo;
quise encerrarme dentro de mí mismo,
y tuve hambre de espacio y sed de cielo
desde las sombras de mi propio abismo.

Como la esponja que la sal satura
en el jugo del mar, fue el dulce y tierno
corazón mío, henchido de amargura
por el mundo, la carne y el infierno.

Mas, por gracia de Dios, en mi conciencia
el Bien supo elegir la mejor parte;
y si hubo áspera hiel en mi existencia,
melificó toda acritud el Arte.

Mi intelecto libré de pensar bajo,
bañó el agua castalia el alma mía,
peregrinó mi corazón y trajo
de la sagrada salva la armonía.

¡Oh, la selva sagrada! ¡Oh, la profunda
emanación del corazón divino
de la sagrada selva! ¡Oh, la fecunda
fuente cuya virtud vence al destino!

Bosque ideal que lo real complica,
allí el cuerpo arde y vive y Psiquis vuela;
mientras abajo el sátiro fornica,
ebria de azul deslíe Filomela

perla de ensueño y música amorosa
en la cúpula en flor del laurel verde,
Hipsipila sutil liba en la rosa,
y la boca del fauno el pezón muerde.

Allí va el dios en celo tras la hembra,
y la caña de Pan se alza del lodo;
la eterna Vida sus semillas siembra,
y brota la armonía del gran Todo.

El alma que entra allí debe ir desnuda,
temblando de deseo y fiebre santa,
sobre cardo heridor y espina aguda:
así sueña, así vibra y así canta.

Vida, luz y verdad, tal triple llama
produce la interior llama infinita;
el Arte puro como Cristo exclama:
Ego sum lux et veritas et vita!

Y la vida es misterio; la luz ciega
y la verdad inaccesible asombra;
la adusta perfección jamás se entrega,
y el secreto Ideal duerme en la sombra.

Por eso ser sincero es ser potente.
De desnuda que está, brilla la estrella;
el agua dice el alma de la fuente
en la voz de cristal que fluye d'ella.

Tal fue mi intento, hacer del alma pura
mía, una estrella, una fuente sonora,
con el horror de la literatura
y loco de crepúsculo y de aurora.

Del crepúsculo azul que da la pauta
que los celestes éxtasis inspira,
bruma y tono menor—¡toda la flauta!
y Aurora, hija del sol—¡toda la lira!

Pasó una piedra que lanzó una honda;
pasó una flecha que aguzó un violento.
La piedra de la honda fue a la onda,
y la flecha del odio fuese al viento.

La virtud está en ser tranquilo y fuerte;
con el fuego interior todo se abrasa;
se triunfa del rencor y de la muerte,
y hacia Belén… ¡la caravana pasa!

‘I’

I am the one who only yesterday would say
his own azure and his profane song—
who owned a lark of light during the day
which became a nightingale at nightfall.

I was the warden of my dream-garden
full of roses and vague swans;
warden of turtledoves; warden
of lyres and gondolas over the ponds;

and very eighteenth-century and very ancient
and very modern; bold, cosmopolitan;
as Hugo strong and as Verlaine ambiguous—
and a thirst for dreams that was continuous.

I’ve known pain since I was a child.
My youth—was it ever a youth?
I can still smell the roses riled…
The faded roses smell of truth.

My instinct ran like a wild colt.
Astride a wild colt my youth jolt-
ed forearmed for battle, drunk with speed—
if it never fell, it’s thanks to God’s heed.

In my garden lay a beautiful statue;
it was thought marble, but it was flesh.
Inside it a young soul used to live:
sensible, sentimental, sensitive.

It was shy toward the world, so that
locked away in silence it never came out
except when the spring came about
and it was time for a melody.

The time of dusk and a discreet kiss;
the twilight-hour of goodbye;
the time for madrigals and for bliss;
of ‘oh!’, ‘I love you’ and a sigh.

Then from a dulzaina came a tune
played in strange crystal-like scales:

Greek Pan's music was renewed
and Latin notes in peals wailed

with such zeal, and passion on the rise,
that from the statue suddenly outgrew
goat-like legs from the brawny thighs
and two crooked horns from the forehead.

As I did Verlaine's marquise
Góngora's Galatea too I loved,
so unto divine passion I eased
my hyperaesthesia unreproved:

all yearning and blaze and of one body
and one breath—and no deceit
and no pretence and no literature…
If there was ever an honest soul, it was mine.

The ivory tower often tempted my eyes.
I shut myself inside me, alone and remiss;
but I hungered for space and thirsted for skies
among the shadows of my own abyss.

Like underwater sponges suffused with salt
in the juices of the sea, my fresh
and fragile heart grew swollen with grief
for the world, for hell and the ways of the flesh.

But, by God's grace, in my conscience
Goodness chose the better part
and if bitter gall filled my existence
it was made sweet by Art.

My mind I freed from base thoughts.
My soul bathed in Castalian waters.
My heart made a pilgrimage and brought
from the sacred woods a harmony.

The sacred woods! O the resounding
reverberation of the heart of those
woods sacred! O the abounding
source whose virtue is stronger than fate.

Ideal forest that reality convolves, there
the body lives and burns and Psyche flies:
while below the sated satyr fornicates
Philomela, drunk on blue, separates

a dream-pearl from a song that flows
from a high laurel in bloom—
Hypsipyle sucks on the rose
while the faun pertly bites the nipple.

The god in heat is chasing the girl
while Pan's reed from the mire rises.
Eternal Life sows its seeds all about
and the harmony of Everything arises.

The soul that enters there must tread naked
over wounding thistle and smarting thorn
shaking with lust and a holy fever—
throbbing or singing or dreamborne.

Life, light, and truth, this triple flame
produces the infinite flame within.
Pure Art like Christ can then exclaim:
Ego sum lux et veritas et vita!

Life is a mystery; light, blinding;
and truth, inaccessible, confounding.
Surly perfection never gives in
and an Ideal in the shadow sleeps.

For that reason honesty is power.
Stars shine because they are bare.
The water says the soul of the fountain
in the crystal voice of its watery mountain.

Such was my attempt, that from my soul
a star, a roaring fountain would rise—
haunted by the horror of literature,
mad with sunset and sunrise.

In the blue-tinged twilight there is a route
that heavenly ecstasies inspires:
fog and a minor key—the flute!
Aurora, the Sun's daughter—the lyre!

A stone flung from afar soared by;
an arrow hissed its way into the sky.
The stone of the sling entered the swell
and the arrow of hate inside the wind fell.

True virtue lies in being calm and strong.
With the fire within everything glows.
We triumph over spite and over death
and on to Bethlehem… the caravan goes!

Canción de otoño en primavera

Juventud, divino tesoro,
ya te vas para no volver!
Cuando quiero llorar, no lloro…
y a veces lloro sin querer…

Plural ha sido la celeste
historia de mi corazón.
Era una dulce niña, en este
mundo de duelo y aflicción.

Miraba como el alba pura;
sonreía como una flor.
Era su cabellera obscura
hecha de noche y de dolor.

Yo era tímido como un niño.
Ella, naturalmente, fue,
para mi amor hecho de armiño,
Herodías y Salomé…

Juventud, divino tesoro,
ya te vas para no volver…!
Cuando quiero llorar, no lloro,
y a veces lloro sin querer…

La otra fue más sensitiva,
y más consoladora y más
halagadora y expresiva,
cual no pensé encontrar jamás.

Pues a su continua ternura
una pasión violenta unía.
En un peplo de gasa pura
una bacante se envolvía…

En sus brazos tomó mi ensueño
y lo arrulló como a un bebé…
y le mató, triste y pequeño,
falto de luz, falto de fe…

Juventud, divino tesoro,
te fuiste para no volver!

Cuando quiero llorar, no lloro,
y a veces lloro sin querer…

Otra juzgó que era mi boca
el estuche de su pasión;
y que me roería, loca,
con sus dientes el corazón,

poniendo en un amor de exceso
la mira de su voluntad,
mientras eran abrazo y beso
síntesis de la eternidad;

y de nuestra carne ligera
imaginar siempre un Edén,
sin pensar que la Primavera
y la carne acaban también…

Juventud, divino tesoro,
ya te vas para no volver!
Cuando quiero llorar, no lloro,
y a veces lloro sin querer!

Y las demás! en tantos climas,
en tantas tierras, siempre son,
si no pretextos de mis rimas,
fantasmas de mi corazón.

En vano busqué a la princesa
que estaba triste de esperar.
La vida es dura. Amarga y pesa.
Ya no hay princesa que cantar!

Mas a pesar del tiempo terco,
mi sed de amor no tiene fin;
con el cabello gris, me acerco
a los rosales del jardín…

Juventud, divino tesoro,
ya te vas para no volver…
Cuando quiero llorar, no lloro,
y a veces lloro sin querer…

Mas es mía el Alba de oro!

Autumn Song in the Springtime

Youth, my only gold,
this is our last goodbye!
I lack tears when I need them—
and then, suddenly, I cry…

My heart's myriad history
celestial has been—
she was a sweet girl, caught
in this world of suffering.

Like a flower she smiled;
her gaze was like a dawn.
Her dark hair seemed
filled with night and wan.

I was shy like a child
and she was, in a way,
for my callow love
Herodias and Salomé.

Youth, my only gold,
this is our last goodbye!
I lack tears when I need them,
and then, suddenly, I cry…

The next one was more sensitive,
more flattering to my mind;
she was kind and expressive
like I never thought to find.

Within her, constant tenderness
and roiling passion were founded.
Under a peplos made of gossamer
a bacchante was enshrouded…

In her arms she took my dreams
and rocked them like a child…
and she killed it—sad, frail,
hopeless, beguiled.

Youth, my only gold,
that was our last goodbye…!

I lack tears when I need them—
and then, suddenly, I cry!

Another one thought my mouth
her sole infatuation:
the bite-marks on my heart
still bear her aberration.

She loved with excess
as unshakable as untame
while eternity's synthesis
our soft embrace became—

and to our faint flesh forever
an Eden may we bring,
without thinking that the body
ends as does the Spring.

Youth, my only gold,
this is our last goodbye!
I lack tears when I need them
and then, suddenly, I cry!

And all the others! in sundry climes,
in sundry lands, they always are,
if not the pretext for my rhymes,
the hauntings of my heart.

In vain I sought the princess
who waited at her door.
Life is hard. Slow and bitter.
There's no princess anymore!

But despite stubborn time
my thirst for love knows no end—
the rose bush in the garden
with hoary hair I tend.

Youth, my only gold,
this is our last goodbye!
I lack tears when I need them,
and then, suddenly, I cry…

But the golden Dawn is mine!

A Roosevelt

Es con voz de la Biblia, o verso de Walt Whitman,
que habría que llegar hasta ti, Cazador!
Primitivo y moderno, sencillo y complicado,
con un algo de Washington y cuatro de Nemrod!
Eres los Estados Unidos,
eres el futuro invasor
de la América ingenua que tiene sangre indígena,
que aún reza a Jesucristo y aún habla en español.

Eres soberbio y fuerte ejemplar de tu raza;
eres culto, eres hábil; te opones a Tolstoy.
Y domando caballos, o asesinando tigres,
eres un Alejandro-Nabucodonosor.
(Eres un Profesor de Energía
como dicen los locos de hoy.)

Crees que la vida es incendio,
que el progreso es erupción;
que en donde pones la bala
el porvenir pones.
No.

Los Estados Unidos son potentes y grandes.
Cuando ellos se estremecen hay un hondo temblor
que pasa por las vértebras enormes de los Andes.
Si clamáis se oye como el rugir del león.
Ya Hugo a Grant lo dijo: Las estrellas son vuestras.
(Apenas brilla, alzándose, el argentino sol
y la estrella chilena se levanta…) Sois ricos.
Juntáis al culto de Hércules el culto de Mammón;
y alumbrando el camino de la fácil conquista,
la Libertad levanta su antorcha en Nueva-York.

Mas la América nuestra, que tenía poetas
desde los viejos tiempos de Netzahualcoyotl,
que ha guardado las huellas de los pies del gran Baco,
que el alfabeto pánico en un tiempo aprendió;
que consultó los astros, que conoció la Atlántida
cuyo nombre nos llega resonando en Platón,
que desde los remotos momentos de su vida
vive de luz, de fuego, de perfume, de amor,
la América del grande Moctezuma, del Inca,

la América fragante de Cristóbal Colón,
la América católica, la América española,
la América en que dijo el noble Guatemoc:
"Yo no estoy en un lecho de rosas"; esa América
que tiembla de huracanes y que vive de amor;
hombres de ojos sajones y alma bárbara, vive.
Y sueña. Y ama, y vibra; y es la hija del Sol.

Tened cuidado. Vive la América española!
Hay mil cachorros sueltos del León Español.
Se necesitaría, Roosevelt, ser por Dios mismo,
el Riflero terrible y el fuerte Cazador,
para poder tenernos en vuestras férreas garras.

Y, pues contáis con todo, falta una cosa: Dios!

To Roosevelt

It's through the voice of the Bible, or a line of Walt Whitman,
that I should speak to you, Hunter!
Modern and primitive, simple and complex,
with a smack of Washington and four of Nimrod.
You are the United States,
you are the future invader
of this naïve America of indigenous blood
who still believes in Christ and utters Spanish words.

You are a fine specimen of your race;
you are learned, you are skilled; you oppose Tolstoy.
And in breaking horses or murdering tigers
you are an Alexander-Nebuchadnezzar.
(A Professor of Energy,
as they say nowadays.)

You think life is a fire;
progress, an eruption;
that the future begins
wherever you point your rifle.

No.

The United States are big and powerful.
When they move a deep tremor runs
down the spine of the Andes.
If you shout it is a lion's roar.
Hugo said so to Grant: The stars are yours.
(You can barely see it, on the horizon,
the Argentinean sun and the Chilean star…)
You are rich. You sing the praises of Hercules
along with those of Mammon
and shining a light on a path of easy conquest
Liberty raises her torch in New York.

But our America, which had poets
from the time of Netzahualcoyotl,
which kept the footprints of Bacchus
who the Panic alphabet once learned;
which asked the stars and knew Atlantis—
whose name, ringing with Plato, lives on;
which from her first moments in time

lives by light, by fire, by perfume, by love;
the America of the great Moctezuma, of the Inca;
fragrant America of Christopher Columbus;
Catholic America, Spanish America;
the America where the noble Guatemoc said:
'This is no bed of roses'—that America
which shakes with hurricanes and lives on love,
you Saxon-eyed men of barbarous souls, is alive.
And she dreams, and loves, and comes from the Sun.

Be careful: Spanish America is alive.
A thousand cubs are loose from the Spanish Lion.
By God's own will, Roosevelt, you would have to be
the terrifying Marksman and the mighty Hunter
to have us in your iron claws.

And, though you have it all, you are missing one thing: God!

La Página Blanca

Mis ojos miraban en horas de ensueños
la página blanca.

Y vino el desfile de ensueños y sombras.
Y fueron mujeres de rostros de estatua,
mujeres de rostros de estatuas de mármol,
¡tan tristes, tan dulces, tan suaves, tan pálidas!

Y fueron visiones de extraños poemas,
de extraños poemas de besos y lágrimas,
¡de historias que dejan en crueles instantes
las testas viriles cubiertas de canas!

¡Qué cascos de nieve que pone la suerte!
¡Qué arrugas precoces cincela en la cara!
¡Y cómo se quiere que vayan ligeros
los tardos camellos de la caravana!

Los tardos camellos
—como las figuras en un panorama—,
cual si fuese un desierto de hielo,
atraviesan la página blanca.

Éste lleva
una carga
de dolores y angustias antiguas,
angustias de pueblos, dolores de razas;
¡dolores y angustias que sufren los Cristos
que vienen al mundo de víctimas trágicas!

Otro lleva
en la espalda
el cofre de ensueños, de perlas y oro,
que conduce la reina de Saba.

Otro lleva
una caja
en que va, dolorosa difunta,
como un muerto lirio la pobre Esperanza.

Y camina sobre un dromedario
la Pálida,

la vestida de ropas obscuras,
la Reina invencible, la bella inviolada:
la Muerte.

Y el hombre,
a quien duras visiones asaltan,
el que encuentra en los astros del cielo
prodigios que abruman y signos que espantan,
mira al dromedario
de la caravana
como el mensajero que la luz conduce,
¡en el vago desierto que forma la página blanca!

The Blank Page

Lost in dreams my eyes peered
into the blank page

and I saw shadows and dreams take shape

and women with statue-like faces
women with marble and statue-like faces
so sad, so soft, so loving, so pale

there were visions of strange poems
of strange and tear-wet and lip-stained poems
and stories that in one swoop
can grey the head of a man

Ah, the snowy dyes fate is mixing!
Ah, the hard wrinkles it is chiselling!
and how we need them to travel lightly
the lingering camels of the caravan

the lingering camels
—like figures in a panorama—
trudge across the page
as through a desert of ice

this one
carries
a bundle
of griefs and anxieties
age-old griefs, ancient anxieties
griefs and anxieties that ail the Christs
who are of this world the victims

this other one
bears
a dream-chest
wrought with pearls and fine gold
trailing the Queen of Sheeba

another
carries
a case

inside it
a body—
it is Hope
in the shape
of a dead iris

and there on one dromedary
the Pale Lady
the one clad in darkness
the invincible Queen
the inviolate beauty:
Death

and the one
to whom these visions lay siege
as he reads the stars and learns
of events earth-shattering
he looks to the dromedary
of the caravan
as to a beacon
through the vague desert of the blank page

Nocturno

Quiero expresar mi angustia en versos que abolida
dirán mi juventud de rosas y de ensueños,
y la desfloración amarga de mi vida
por un vasto dolor y cuidados pequeños.

Y el viajo a un vago Oriente por entrevistos barcos,
y el grano de oraciones que floreció en blasfemia,
y los azoramientos del cisne entre los charcos
y el falso azul nocturno de inquerida bohemia.

Lejano clavicordio que en silencio y olvido
no diste nunca al sueño la sublime sonata,
huérfano esquife, árbol insigne, obscuro nido
que suavizó la noche de dulzura de plata…

Esperanza olorosa a hierbas frescas, trino
del ruiseñor primaveral y matinal,
azucena tronchada por un fatal destino,
rebusca de la dicha, persecución del mal…

El ánfora funesta del divino veneno
que ha de hacer por la vida la tortura interior,
la conciencia espantable de nuestro humano cieno
y el horror de sentirse pasajero, el horror

de ir a tientas, en intermitentes espantos,
hacia lo inevitable desconocido y la
pesadilla brutal de este dormir de llantos
de la cual no hay más que Ella que nos despertará!

Nocturne

I want to word my anguish in lines that can say
that the abolished roses of my aching youth—
and my wilted life withered away
by dint of petty lies and a painful truth.

And a trip to the Orient on half-sighted ships,
and the bead of prayers that blossomed in sin,
and the fright of a swan that across a pond slips,
and the treacherous night-blue of bohemian din.

Faraway clavichord silent and forgotten
you never gave the dream its glorious tune—
stranded skiff, towering tree, a nest to soften
the darkness under the silver moon...

Hope and a scent of fresh herbs; in the spring
a nightingale that begins to sing;
a white lily scythed because of fate;
a rummage for joy; from evil an escape...

The hollow amphora with sweet poison
which would become a life's inner torment,
the fearful awareness of the mire we grow in
and the horror of feeling transient,

of teetering along, with intermittent fears,
towards the inevitable unknown, and the
fits of brutal nightmares dampened by tears—
from which no one but She will wake us!

Nocturno (II)

Los que auscultasteis el corazón de la noche,
los que por el insomnio tenaz habéis oído
el cerrar de una puerta, el resonar de un coche
lejano, un eco vago, un ligero ruido…

En los instantes del silencio misterioso,
cuando surgen de su prisión los olvidados,
en la hora de los muertos, en la hora del reposo,
sabréis leer estos versos de amargor impregnados…!

Como en un vaso vierto en ellos mis dolores
de lejanos recuerdos y desgracias funestas,
y las tristes nostalgias de mi alma, ebria de flores,
y el duelo de mi corazón, triste de fiestas.

Y el pesar de no ser lo que yo hubiera sido,
la pérdida del reino que estaba para mí,
el pensar que un instante pude no haber nacido,
y el sueño que es mi vida desde que yo nací!

Todo esto viene en medio del silencio profundo
en que la noche envuelve la terrena ilusión,
y siento como un eco del corazón del mundo
que penetra y conmueve mi propio corazón.

Nocturne (II)

If, for hours, you've stayed awake
listening for the heartbeat of night.
If, in the grip of insomnia, you might
have heard the thud of a door, a distant quake…

in silent moments we cannot explain,
when the scorned rise from their prisons,
at the hour of the dead, at the hour of visions—
you'll recognize these words steeped in pain!

This is the glass where I pour my sorrows
made of fateful blows and faded memories,
and the longings of a soul, drunk with flowers,
and the aching of a heart, wretched with parties.

And the pain of not being what I would've been,
and the loss of the kingdom meant for me,
and to think for an instant I might not have lived
and the lifelong dream my life has been!

All of this comes when silently the dark
swaddles faces, trees and stones.
And I feel how an echo from the world's heart
enters and ripples and stirs my own.

Lo fatal

Dichoso el árbol que es apenas sensitivo,
y más la piedra dura porque ésa ya no siente,
pues no hay dolor más grande que el dolor de ser vivo
ni mayor pesadumbre que la vida consciente.

Ser, y no saber nada, y ser sin rumbo cierto,
y el temor de haber sido y un futuro terror…
Y el espanto seguro de estar mañana muerto,
y sufrir por la vida y por la sombra y por

lo que no conocemos y apenas sospechamos,
y la carne que tienta con sus frescos racimos,
y la tumba que aguarda con sus fúnebres ramos,

y no saber a dónde vamos,
ni de dónde venimos…!

No Greater Ordeal

The tree has a blessing: it's barely sensitive.
The stone's is greater: it cannot even feel.
There is no greater pain than to live—
than a waking life, no greater ordeal.

To be, to know nothing, to teeteringly tread
dogged by a lived past, and this future terror…
the guaranteed horror that tomorrow I'll be dead
and to suffer for life and for darkness and for

what we do not know and can barely imagine
and the fruits of the flesh that coax us
while the tomb lies wreathed underground—

and not to know how we came thus
nor where it is we're bound…!

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