

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT AND TRANSLATIONS OF OTHER SHORT
STORIES BY ROCÍO QESPI

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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Rocío Qespi is a Peruvian author who writes short stories that center around the themes of love, chess, and personal experiences. Her prose is a rich tapestry of allusions to the work of other Latin American authors and artists as well as a reference to events from her own life. As her translator, I had the opportunity to work closely with the author as I resolved problems encountered during the process of translating her prose. Following a brief introduction that describes these problems and their solutions, is a selection of the translated stories taken from the collection El cuarto mandamiento, which has been published by Mundo Ajeno in Peru.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Bogda and Wojtek.

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INTRODUCTION

Rocío Qespi, a professor of Colonial Spanish American Literatures and Post Colonial Studies and Peruvian author whose name in Quechua means “light, reflection, mirror,” started writing short stories at the age of seventeen. The themes of love and chess resonate throughout her stories, intertwined with personal experiences and preferences. Her writing style draws readers into the story, allowing them to live vicariously through the same moments, in turn providing the author-protagonist’s perspective. Furthermore, Qespi alludes to other works, thereby heightening the readers’ sense of aesthetic pleasure.

As her translator, I had the privilege of gaining entry into the “author’s head” and accessing the experiences and allusions to an even greater degree. By keeping in touch with her, I learned that she enjoys traveling, visiting museums, and reading Cortázar and Borges, all experiences which have influenced her stories. However, it is the cooperation that Rocío Qespi extended to me when I first contacted her about a class project that initially inspired me to translate more of her stories.

While completing graduate coursework, I enrolled in a translation workshop in which I translated an excerpt from Qespi’s “El cementerio de Acarí.” Throughout my research, I learned a great deal about the Peruvian cultural references such as food, dress, speech, and geography, included in the story. Furthermore, I was captivated by the colloquial style of the narrative, and felt as if I were at the narrator’s side while she shared the flashback. I decided to translate the rest of the story for the final project in the class and contacted Rocío Qespi to obtain permission and answers to questions I had regarding the translation of geographical names. Her immediate response and enthusiasm

about my project led me to choose her stories for my translation thesis. Subsequently, she and I collaborated in submitting the translation of “El cementerio de Acarí,” to the literary translation journal Metamorphoses where it will be published in the Spring of 2008.

“El cementerio de Acarí” received the Atenea literary award for short story in Spanish (Salamanca, Spain 1999) and was the first runner-up in the Ana María Matute Literary Competition (Madrid, Spain 1999). It has been published in the collection *Ellas también cuentan* (Madrid: Torremozas, 2001). Another story, “El cuarto mandamiento” received La Regenta literary award for short fiction (Salamanca 1999) and it has been published in *Writing Towards Hope* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2006). Mundo Ajeno (Peru) is publishing Rocío Qespi’s collection of short stories, titled *Durmiendo en el agua*, in June 2008.

The stories from the Mundo Ajeno collection that I have translated are: “El cementerio de Acarí” (“The Cemetery of Acari”), “Federico” (“Federico”), “Para visitar museos” (“On Visiting Museums”), “Guitarra en riendas” (“Getting a Handle on the Guitar”), “El cuarto mandamiento” (“The Fifth Commandment”), “La isla de sal” (“The Island of Salt”), and “Durmiendo en el agua” (“Sleeping in the Water”). Each story presented specific challenges but I applied translation theory to resolve them.

“The Cemetery of Acari” tells, in flashback form, about the life, times, and death of the narrator’s Grandma Emilia, for whose grave the narrator is looking. The main challenge in the translation of this story lay in the dialogues and in the references to Peruvian food. The dialogues in the story where black servants were involved, posed a problem because the speech was of a “broken,” colloquial Spanish spoken in the mid 19th

century when slavery still existed in Peru. For example, Teodoro, one of the servants, says:

--Tómeselo, amita, é bueno pa las tripas. Uté viene de a caballo y se come eta carne. Tómese el vinito pa que la ayude a bajarla.

I had to reflect the colloquial speech of that specific time period and group in the English version without conjuring up unwanted stereotypes or associations of African-Americans or of a different time period. Researching dialogues from 19th century American fiction, such as *Gone With the Wind* and *Roots*, revealed how blacks spoke and duplicating the style of speech found in those works of fiction in the translation resulted in a type of cultural transposition. Cultural transposition involves avoiding a literal translation of culturally specific source text (ST) components by transferring them into the context of the target culture (Hervey, Higgins, and Haywood 20). Thus, the translation of Teodoro's utterance became:

Drink up ma'am, it be good fer da belly. You's comin' frum herse ridin' n' you be eatin' dis meat. Drink up da wine so's it help ya'll diges'.

This is very similar to the dialogue found in *Gone With the Wind* and *Roots*:

GWTW p.19: "Is ya'll aimin' ter go ter Mist' Wynder's? 'Cause ef you is, you ain' gwine git much supper...de niggers tells me she is de wustest cook in de state."
Roots p. 273: "Dey could of, an' been inside de law. Jes' like when dat white man broke my hand..."

It is interesting to note however, that when I submitted the story for publication in the literary translation journal *Metamorphoses*, the editors suggested that I change the translation in order to be more politically correct. Specifically, the editor, Thalia Pandiri wrote me the following email:

One thing that you will notice is some modification in the way servant speech is represented. This is a contested issue among schools of translation, but it is pretty widely accepted that too much "phonetic" spelling is distracting to the reader; and (depending on your beliefs) denigratory towards the represented speaker. It's enough to suggest class, race, geography and then not overdo the spelling. Another issue is importing the wrong "baggage" with dialectal representation: a sort of imitation of a slave-nanny of the American deep south in the 19th century carries all sorts of connotations with it. And it seems that the Spanish is not nearly as exaggerated as the English.

The translation suggested by the editors of *Metamorphoses* was:

Drink up ma'am, it be good fer the belly. You's comin' from horse ridin' and you be eatin' this meat. Drink up the wine, it'll help you digest'.

I agreed to this change, and this is how the black servant speech will be represented in the published version of the short story.

The translation of "The Cemetery of Acari" also posed a lexical problem in terms of Peruvian food. *Turrones de miel, los dulces de chancaca, los alfajores de manjarblanco, los ranfañotes con queso fresco, la mazamorra morada, chicha de jora* and *chicha morada* may be transparent words to a Peruvian, but they will remain opaque for an English speaker. To make them transparent to the English reader without resorting to cultural transplantation, where they would be completely changed to party foods typical of American culture like pie, beer, cookies, etc., I included what Harvey, Higgins, and Haywood (HHH 23) define as descriptive glosses so that the English reader could get an idea of the types of food mentioned and also learn about Peruvian culinary traditions.

caramel desserts such as *dulces de chancaca* and *alfajores de manjarblanco*, molasses pies called *turrones de miel*, fried snack mixes like *ranfañotes con queso fresco*, and a purple corn pudding called *mazamorra morada*. Bottomless gallons of *chicha de jora* and *chicha morada*, traditional alcoholic and virgin corn beers...

Such glosses would make the reader's job easier and would mimic the experience of the Spanish speaking reader, because neither one would have to look up the foods or read footnotes. Sometimes translators use footnotes to explain cultural or historical concepts, however, this can be awkward and annoying for the reader. Furthermore, literary magazines do not usually accept footnotes because they occupy too much space in the publication. However, in the opinion of the *Metamorphoses* editors, footnotes seemed to be a better option than glosses, as the email written by Thalia Pandiri illustrates:

How much glossing goes into the text, vs. none or vs. footnotes, is another moot issue. It seemed less disruptive not to have so many glosses breaking up the narrative and to have a footnote at the end for those who need it.

In the end, footnotes were included in the to-be-published version of the short story because otherwise, the story would not have been published.

“On Visiting Museums” also presented challenges. It is a short story that provides instructions, in the form of rules which it explains and elaborates, on how one should visit a museum. In the end, the reader finds out that upon following these rules, he or she will become part of the museum collection and see the world through the showcase glass. The main problem posed in this translation was the presence of allusions, defined below:

...a device used to bring in other texts to a literary text. Allusion works by activating connotations of those other texts, which may range from history to literature and from popular culture to proverbs. We usually assume that allusions are typically recognizable to some segment of readers, but not to all, while translators, who may be assumed to be competent readers of the texts they translate, can be expected to recognize allusions in order to translate them satisfactorily (Mari Salo-oja).

The first problem is recognizing the allusion, if there is one. In order to be able to

recognize allusions in literary pieces, the translator has to have thorough familiarity with ST literature and culture. The translator doing a technical translation about dangerous chemicals in the workplace would have to be familiar with the field; similarly, the literary translator has to be familiar with literature. If not, he or she at least has to have access to “experts” who could help recognize these allusions. In “On Visiting Museums”, several of these issues came up.

The first issue is the possible allusion to Cortázar’s “Axolotl,” in which the narrator goes to look at a fish in an aquarium and then becomes the fish inside the glass looking out, instead of being outside looking in. In “On Visiting Museums”, the person visiting the museum becomes part of it and looks out at the people looking at him through the museum case. The story could also possibly allude to Cortázar’s *Historias de cronopios y famas* which includes instructions for various actions, such as climbing a staircase.

Secondly, if an allusion exists, does it really matter? The answer is that it depends. It matters if the allusion was intended as such by the author and the average ST reader is expected to be aware of it because it enhances his appreciation and makes him feel intelligent. The same is true if the readership of this story is supposed to “get” the allusion and appreciate it or, if the allusion is important to the understanding of the story, like Cortázar’s allusions to other works are important in understanding some parts of *Rayuela*. In this case, the translator should somehow attempt to include reference to the allusion, whether it is via a translator’s note, footnote, gloss, or the use of language (characteristic of Cortázar for example) that will conjure up that allusion. However, there are problems with each of the above. Using a footnote, translator’s note, gloss, etc. is perhaps one of the best strategies because it does not require changing the story but the reader can still, to some extent, appreciate the allusion. He may even

be inspired to read Cortázar's story. If the translation is published, however, the publisher may have his own policy on use of such devices. Also, the target text (TT) reader will not get the same satisfaction as the ST reader because he will not have discovered the allusion himself. Another solution would be to recreate the allusion using a target language (TL) story, but one would have to find such a story and then also change the original story considerably (ending might be different), unless, of course, Cortázar's story "Axolotl" is based on or alludes to a different story with which the English speaker is familiar. Such a solution would be a form of cultural transposition, or more specifically, cultural transplantation. However, it is unlikely that there is such a story, making this solution also unlikely. Another problem that arises if the story is indeed an allusion to Cortázar's "Axolotl" is that a publisher or magazine may not want to publish this story because it will not be considered very original.

If the allusion was not intended, but just something that some readers may think of based on their background, then no, it may not be that important, because readers are free to have whatever associations they please when reading a story and interpret these associations (which are more personal than allusions) as they see fit in their overall personal understanding of the story. For example, if someone had the association of the movie "A Night at the Museum" when reading this story, then that's something that may make that person laugh, but it would surely not be something every reader thought of, and one certainly wouldn't expect literary critics to mention it. In this case, the allusion wouldn't matter and the content of the story could be translated more or less literally. Before one finds out whether an allusion is intended or not, a lot of analyzing and time goes into the research process, and it is disappointing to find out that the allusion wasn't intended. That's the life of a translator! However, the allusion can still be important if enough ST readers recognize it.

In the case of “On Visiting Museums” I found out that the allusion was not intended by the author, but a significant percentage of SL readers did think of Cortázar after reading it and I opted to include a translator’s note in order to conserve a parallel dynamic effect on the TL readers in terms of a transparent allusion to Cortázar’s story being present.

Another one of the stories, “Guitarra en riendas”, also presented challenges related to allusions. This is a short story about a woman who has a boyfriend named Joe who is an English paleontologist. When they have sex, she likes to listen to music by Jose Luis and becomes obsessed with this musician, but isn’t entirely sure if it’s with him or his music. She goes to see him play the guitar and sing two times and gets very excited just listening to the music. Joe, her boyfriend gets upset that they listen to Jose Luis so much, and they break up for a while because the woman prefers the CD over him. Eventually, she ends up sleeping with singer Jose Luis, but it’s not as great as she thought it would be and she realizes that the real Joe is better than Jose Luis. She ends up going back to Joe and leaving Jose Luis’s music for when Joe is traveling. Throughout the story, a musical allusion is present because the author incorporates lyrics of four songs, all from the 70’s and 80’s and from rock and folk-type genres: “De que callada manera” by Pablo Milanés (Cuban) (this song is based on Nicolás Guillén’s poem, “Canción”), “Mírame” and “Querer tener riendas” by Sara González (Cuban) (sung with Silvio Rodríguez), and “Cantar, cantar, cantar” by Juan Carlos Baglietto (Argentinean). These songs reflect feelings associated with being in love, losing control, and feeling as if one is the music or a guitar. The artists are known in their respective countries, especially among the intellectual crowd, and the Cuban artists are also tied to politics in Cuba (Wikipedia 2007).

There are various options for approaching the issue of these song lyrics. First, they could be translated literally, but this would result in the loss of the allusion to the artist and song and deprive the TL readers of the experience that the source language (SL) readers have upon reading the lyrics incorporated into the story. Including a gloss with the literal translation of the lyrics would explain the allusion but the parallel dynamic effect on TL readers would still be lost. Finding song lyrics in English that would parallel the song lyrics in ST in terms of meaning and importance in story and have similar dynamic effect on TT readers in terms of conjuring up the song would seem like the best option, but there are problems that need to be considered.

First of all, English songs should be similar in genre to the songs in ST to be congruent with references to the Latino aspects in the story and to rumba and boleros. Second of all, the English songs should be very popular as well, to be easily recognizable by TL readers (since ST readers will be familiar with ST lyrics). Third of all, the English songs should be sung by a male (like Jose Luis). Ideally, as in the ST, they would come from four different artists. Even more ideally, these artists would be tied to politics as well. An artist like Marc Anthony would work well because he is bilingual, popular, and Latino. Finding such songs proved to be extremely difficult.

In the end, I translated the song lyrics, conserving their message and imagery as closely as possible, since this imagery was tied to the overall meanings included in the story. However, in order to still conjure up the idea that the italicized text was a song, I tried to keep the number of syllables and rhythm in the translation as close as possible to the original lyrics. This was a type of compensation in kind because a different song lyric was substituted in the TT. During this process, I contacted the author, Jeff Saxon, a professional songwriter whom I read about in

my local paper, and Mary Katherine Hogan, a musician. The author preferred the translations based on meaning and imagery and was not concerned about preserving the rhythm of the original songs. However, working with Jeff Saxon proved to be extremely helpful because he endowed my communicative translations with the rhythm of the original songs. He also advised that I keep the translations simple, since English song lyrics are not usually very poetic. Along with the lyrics consultation, he provided me with copyright advice, in case I ever wanted the story to be published. The only song I did not translate was Pablo Milanés's, because a translation by Keith Ellis of Nicolás Guillén's poem, "Canción (on which the song is based)," exists; I found it by contacting the Nicolás Guillén Foundation. Some examples follow:

Nicolás Guillén's poem:

*De que callada manera se me adentra usted sonriendo
In what a quiet way you come touching my heart smiling*

One of the most interesting issues encountered in "The Fifth Commandment", was its title. The story is about a little girl who has an abusive father and wishes he would be gone. She enjoys reading fairy tales and also reads the Catechism once in a while, but does not really believe in God because she is not sure if he exists since she has never seen him. However, upon reading the Ten Commandments, the idea of killing her father occurs to her because instead of "Honor your Father and your Mother," she thinks "Murder your Father..." and indeed, this is what ends up happening. Thus, the aforementioned commandment, and title, become an important part of the story. When researching the commandments in order to find their standard version in English to provide a communicative translation, I found that "Honor your Father and your Mother" was the fifth commandment in the Standard Revised version of the Bible, and

not the fourth as is the case in Spanish language Bibles. Researching this issue prevented the major error of translating the title as “The Fourth Commandment.”

In the story “The Island of Salt”, the greatest challenge was the translation of the main character’s name. The protagonist of the story is Chiqui, a boy whose father works as a jailer on the Island of Salt, and who later becomes the mayor of the nearby town. As a boy, he seeks work at the mayor’s office but the mayor ridicules him and denies his request. Later on, the tables turn and when the former mayor comes to the new mayor (Chiqui) with a proposition of building a resort on the Island of Salt, it is Chiqui who ridicules him. Chiqui’s name is important because it comes from the word “chiquillo,” a diminutive form of “boy” and means “kid” or “youngster,” the author informed me. The idea of Chiqui having a name that connotes qualities inherent in kids is important because it goes along with themes in the story. A Spanish speaker would immediately recognize these connotations. An English speaker, however, would miss them and would be deprived of the richer experience that comes from reading literature and recognizing certain connotations or allusions. In order to compensate for the inevitable translation loss if the name were to be left as Chiqui in the target text, I employed compensation in kind and cultural transposition, changing the name to “Chico.” Compensation in kind entails “making up for one type of textual effect in the ST by another type in the target text (TT)” (HHH 28). Given the large Spanish speaking population in the US, most English readers would be familiar with that word, which also connotes “boy” but at the same time preserves the foreignness, Latino origins, and part of the original name. Previously, I considered completely domesticating, (translating in a “transparent, fluent, ‘invisible’ style in order to minimize the foreignness of the TT”) (Munday 146) the name to “Junior,” but upon

suggestions from others, decided that such an extreme measure was unnecessary since the option of “Chico” existed.

The process of translating the story “Sleeping in the Water” illustrates the type of involved research a translator must do in order to accurately translate a text. It is a story about the relationship between Benjamin and Alina and the problems they have as a couple. Throughout the story, a metaphor of being in the water and of being a fish is incorporated. There are also several references to the movie “Rambo” since Benjamin and his roommate are fans. In order to avoid errors and to accurately translate these references, I had to do research on the Internet and find the movie script. For example, in the Spanish, there was a reference to “ojos rasgados,” and when I looked up these words on www.wordreference.com, I found that a literal translation would be “almond-shaped eyes.” This seemed too literal and I thought that a better, more communicative, and natural sounding translation would be “slanted eyes.” However, after finding the movie script online, I opted for the first, literal option, “almond-shaped eyes,” because this was the phrase used in the script for “Rambo: First Blood II: The Mission”:

*TIGHT ON **RAMBO** his **eyes** cold, looking at Co. She advances on him. Her black **almond-shaped eyes** glitter, alien as the depths of space. She spits in his face. ...*

Another example was finding how to translate the following metaphor of being in the water among other fish and aquatic animals:

*Su cuerpo avanza sigiloso por el fondo marino y su mirada ya no se complace en los **animales densos** que se le acercan ni en las piedras caprichosas y porosas que esconden tesoros pasados.*

The words “animales densos” posed the biggest problem because it did not make much sense to translate them literally as “dense animals”. However, upon doing research on the Internet, I

found a text in English, along with the Spanish translation, that used that exact phrase (“animales densos” and “dense animals”) in a 1980 scientific article by Christopher Gregory Weber.

*Un diluvio lo bastante fuerte como para mover todos los sedimentos de la tierra, tendería a mezclar los diferentes tipos de animales y plantas en un gran revoltijo... Los fósiles están en el orden correcto para la evolución pero no para la selección hidráulica. Los animales ligeros se niegan a quedarse en las rocas poco profundas, y **los animales densos** se niegan a quedarse en las rocas profundas, a donde ellos pertenecen, según el creacionismo. Por ejemplo, los trilobites, criaturas frágiles que se parecen a bichos, sólo se pueden encontrar en las rocas más profundas...*

*A flood strong enough to move all the sediments of the earth would tend to mix the different types of animals and plants into one big mishmash... The fossils are in the right order for evolution but not for hydraulic selection. The light animals refuse to stay in the shallow rocks, and **the dense animals** refuse to stay in the deep rocks, where they belong according to creationism. For instance, trilobites, light, fragile creatures resembling pill bugs, tend to be found only in the deepest rocks... The rocks show that each distinct species usually has its own horizon absolutely distinct from the horizons of other species of the same size, shape, and weight.*

I also found other texts that had to do with creationism versus evolution, and in these texts, the term “dense animals” was used often to refer to animals that had a density greater than water (for example, turtles). Thus, the translation was rendered as:

His body glides stealthily along the marine bottom and neither the dense animals that swim up to him nor the amorphous and porous rocks that harbor old treasures satisfy his gaze anymore.

In the story “Federico”, which reveals the stream of consciousness thought process of two students who are obsessed with each other, the greatest challenge was finding out who *la viuda Colina* (literally, the Colina widow) was in order to provide the English reader with a gloss, footnote, or translator’s note. I researched the widow on the Internet; however, the only information I found was that there was a widow whose husband, Pedro Huillica, was

supposedly murdered by Grupo Colina during Fujimori's regime. I then asked the author about the reference and to my surprise, she revealed that *la viuda Colina* was a fictional name meant to cover up the real identity of a famous Peruvian poet's widow who became eccentric after his death and lived in a house full of cats:

This is a reference to a real character who already passed away. I changed the name intentionally, so there is no way you will find her. Her last name is not "Colina". She was the widow of one of the most known Peruvian poets of the 20th century. Peruvians thought that she was quite eccentric and lived many years alone --after he died-- with many cats in her house. I would like not to give more information, although any Peruvian reader can guess who it was. (January 2008)

In order to respect the author's wishes and to maintain dynamic equivalence, or reproduce the same effect on the TT reader as the original had on the ST reader, I did not include any footnotes, glosses, or translator's notes in the translation (López Guix and Minett Wilkinson 224). However, I did research the clues provided by the author, and it seems that the widow to whom Qespi refers in the story is Georgette de Vallejo, the Peruvian poet Cesar Vallejo's wife. After the poet's death, she withheld his work from the community of writers and also locked herself up in her house with about seventeen cats.

While translating Rocío Qespi's stories, I learned a great deal about the author, literature, music, Peruvian culture, and the process of submitting work to a translation magazine. I also had the opportunity to employ the translation theory and techniques I studied in translation courses to resolve challenges posed in the translation of the stories. Encouraged by the fact that one translation has been accepted for publication, I plan on submitting the rest of them for publication in various literary translation magazines and hope that I will be successful. The translation of these stories proved to be a challenging yet enjoyable and rewarding process.

ON VISITING MUSEUMS

We assume that people go mad in museums, if they aren't already mad by the mere act of visiting them. In some cases, the likelihood is greater than others. The time period in which the museum visit takes place is a contributing factor in this matter. In the winter time, the situation is more critical because as a result of the constant rains, the heavy snow, and never-ending cold of this continent, people prefer to spend more time at the museum; not because of what they are going to see but rather because they will keep warm. There are plenty of big museums in sad, gray cities, cities with sad, gray streets, I mean. That Munich is a city of museums is no historical coincidence. In cheerful cities, where there's plenty of sun and warmth year round, there are no museums. If there are museums, they are tiny, as if only for ducking in and out to assuage the guilt of a lack of cultural consciousness. If, however, we are destined to be stuck in a cold, overcast city, with no other option than to go to a museum, it is advisable to follow a certain plan during the visit. I'm not referring to the plan of maps or guides whose only planning lies in their name, but instead to a set of little rules, somewhat magical, that will make the visit more enjoyable and in fact, unforgettable. Here they are.

Rule number one: absolutely no visiting a museum in the company of someone else; such an idea is crazy in and of itself, and it does not speak well of, say, your intellectual aspirations, not to mention cultural ones. Wanting to drag innocent people into our insanity involves a vast responsibility that cannot be justified. The decision to visit a museum is a personal and adult one, and this means accepting the consequences of

the visit without sharing it with others who have not taken the time to think it all through as well as you have. If you embark on this adventure, do it alone and don't offer to others something that you're not sure how much you'll enjoy yourself.

Rule two: make absolutely no plans the day of the museum excursion. The reason is very simple: most likely, you'll never leave the museum. If we know how to visit it as we intend to, we will quickly become part of it without realizing at what point the fusion occurred. And why make a bad impression on others or keep them waiting on their coffee break without even being able to offer them any kind of apology; that would be considered very rude, wouldn't it? Especially since people are so punctual and polite around here.

Golden rule number three: Absolutely no watches allowed. It's very important, almost vital to lose one's sense of time. It'd be absurd to keep track of time if we are to enter a world that is specifically timeless, where all the time periods come together, overlap, cross, and intersect. Our watch, and with it, our naïve attempt would resemble a tiny ant, trampled by a crowd at a rock concert at Zeppelin Field. It even sounds pathetic.

Rule four: absolutely no buying post cards, key chains, ashtrays, little bells or any such junk designed purely for kitsch and to weasel money from the regular museum goer who buys them, eager to declare "I was there." The same pertains to guides, maps, plans or any other related publication. Why, upon entering that maze labeled museum and ready to lose ourselves without finding a way out, should we get buried in so many papers? Why exert control over the museum space if soon, we won't be able to figure out where we are? It's the tourists who purchase these things, because deep down, they are afraid of

the museum and think that it is a way of getting a grasp on it. But that's not our case; we aren't like that.

Logically, rule five stems from the fourth: Absolutely no following guided tours. Nothing that the guide may say will be farther from the truth. Not even our own imaginations stray as far from it as the voice of the guide who earns his monthly pay telling a string of lies that others accept because they don't feel like thinking or reading the little signs, increasingly printed in smaller and smaller font, so that people get worn out and therefore go on these very guided tours. Nothing could be tackier.

These rules are sacred if we want to reach the aforementioned goal. Of course we must add that time can't be wasted on trips to the museum cafeteria or restaurant. First of all, one has gone there to look, not to eat. Second, no one starves to death from not eating for a few hours, so on with the intellectual diet that surely won't do us any harm. Nor should the sanctity of the museum be violated by observing other people or trying to start a conversation. This isn't a club, a singles group mixer, or a place to work out and stay in shape. That people in these countries have so many problems making friends doesn't give them the right to spoil our visit. That's what the personal ads in the paper, the announcements on the radio, and the television dating shows are for. No, no, no. If that's what you think, we are sorry to inform you that you're making a huge mistake if you think that you'll be able to meet someone at the museum. Did you all notice that they never put *visit a museum* together in the personal ads? The so-called intellectuals or educated people of this country don't go to museums to meet people they don't already know, so don't get your hopes up. In any case, if this is your compelling need, please go make a fool of yourself at the places we have mentioned and not at the museum. If it's the

others who waste time observing us or trying to strike up a conversation, too bad for them, not for us. But if they insist, despite our efforts, indifference and required rejection, then there's nothing left to do but to take them along on our future museum outings but on our own terms. This way, after the obligatory visits, without realizing it, they'll stay with us at the museum of their choice of their own free will. This could happen, for example, around Moctezuma's Headdress at the Museum of Ethnology in Vienna. Yes, we already know that they now say that it's not Moctezuma's Headdress but an Aztec priest's, but what's the difference? The quetzal feathers are so beautiful that it's worth it to be able to take a closer look. Surely one could also be amongst the gods of the Pergamon Museum in Berlin. The battle scenes give a sense of on-going action which will keep you engrossed for the indefinite amount of time you may spend there. A toy museum isn't bad either, since the majority of its visitors are children and if one is very sensitive, it is a real treat to watch childish awe and impatient hands leaning on the showcases. In the end, it doesn't matter. What's important is that at one point, they will become part of our family and will stand still in their assigned places. Then, they will see the world go by through the showcase windows that will surround them, yes that will enclose them like an invisible box that they can't touch but that those outside can, and they, along with us, will witness the world go by through all kinds of faces, gestures, grimaces, and eyes that often get too close and flatten themselves against the glass since they can't touch us to find out if we're real or in any case, to touch our reality. When this happens, they'll realize that they can't leave anymore, that they now form part of the museum collection just like we have now for countless years and from which only a madman or a foolish thief that steals us or sets us on fire will be able to free us.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Many Spanish speaking readers detect an allusion to Cortázar's "Axolotl" and Historias de cronopios y de famas in this story.

FEDERICO*

"Federico" was published for the first time in the journal **Letras Femeninas 24 (1998) (258-67).*

He was less than a few centimeters away from me, I could brush his elbows with my fingers. Federico, Federico I can't even believe he caught my eye. And yesterday, at the usual gathering at Henri's house, I have him sitting right in front of me, seated in one of the comfortable wicker chairs, experiencing, on his back and below, the same bodily sensations I am, along with everyone who is seated in a wicker chair, like ours, like "ours", we can share something, although it may be an insignificant, physical sensation, I have been able to say "ours." Federico, I had you before me and I could look at you whenever I wanted, even though I only managed to see your shoulders and your back, which was cut in half by the horizontal line of my folder. And I looked at you with delight. They talked about the pleasure of the text, of the reader's enjoyment, of their classic texts. At that moment you were my source of delight, you could have turned into my classic text, you were my symbol of pleasure then, pleasure in looking at you, pleasure in the sudden possibility that you would tuck in your legs and your feet would come into contact with mine, which were hidden, waiting for you to stretch out. None of this would be possible, I tucked them in as well to avoid precisely any "later he'll think I'm clumsy," wanting to make a good impression on a crush. The other that does not incite any feelings yet, not even a current of friendliness, especially after what you said

yesterday, “That’s a girl who when I lend her a book, she covers it for me.” I suppose I became embarrassed, that my cheeks got hot. Fortunately, no one noticed, they were all listening to Henri’s explanations, Henri, who was increasingly losing his voice. It then seemed so pedantic to me, that I had the urge to get up and rip the cover off of Barthes’ *Fragments from A Lover’s Discourse*. But I remained sunken in my chair, forcing a smile, in order to strip the comment of any importance. Federico had touched my sore spot.

That day of class, Henri’s last class at the university – Henri’s throat was getting worse, of course the exertion from Saturday must have wiped him out - or was it the next to last? I came in late for a change, and without realizing it, sat down next to someone but behind Federico. His skin is too light to be able to stop looking at it, I had to make an effort to keep my hands from running over his back, whiter than usual because of the clothes he had on, and running them through his hair, it looks like it wants to be stroked, come on! His hair was really alluring! Had I lost control of my hand, it would have been completely justified. And why should I look for justification? What would the people there, including Henri himself and even more so Federico himself, have mattered to me? No, it wasn’t because of that. It was a combination of pride and fear that we all feel when we find someone attractive and we don’t want him to realize it, we want him to realize that we exist, of course, but we also want that person to realize that we don’t realize that he even exists, especially if he is seated right in front of me, his back towards me in Henri’s class, or facing me, at Henri’s house a little later on. Suddenly Henri’s throat bothers him too much, someone has asked an unrelated question and Federico gets set to answer. Seated in his wicker chair in Henri’s house, he now picks up the baton and

responds in a manner that is feline aggressive but at the same time, so smooth, that inside, we celebrate his subtlety of expression. Henri looks at him, unable to hold back a slight smile; Aha! This is indeed his disciple! But I have never seen Federico join in like this. When Henri invited me to come to the gatherings at his house, I was apprehensive because I hardly knew anything about Barthes, but he insisted and encouraged me, after all, nobody had anything to lose. He told me that only he, Federico, and one girl talked a lot. Good, if it's like that and I'm not obligated... But Federico rarely participated, he was distant, uninterested, perhaps thinking about Eileen, and I suppose that everyone would think the same at some point. I thought he was still going out with her, but Henri dispelled my beliefs one afternoon when he was telling me about Federico and let me into some higher circle of Purgatory.

Federico was facing sideways. I could look at his cheeks, the rising profile of his imperfect nose, yes, because I don't like his nose at all, as opposed to how attracted I am to his hair. And I don't know if he realized that I was looking at him, maybe from the corner of his eye. And shamelessly, I kept looking at him, but once in a while I would turn my eyes to look at Henri, I didn't want him to take notice, I don't know why but that would be embarrassing. Perhaps because Henri knew about Miguel. I had told him so much about Miguel when I thought that Federico was still going out with Eileen. But, you idiot, why worry? Federico wouldn't be more than a crush, but what do you want me to do, here and now I like him a lot ...and I shouldn't, I love Miguel so much, so much that I shouldn't even need to mention the so much.

Federico is attractive, he admitted it himself when he said the thing about the covers and the books in such an impertinent and pedantic manner. And this only seemed

pedantic to me, because I described the situation to several people and it did not seem pedantic to anyone, not even weird, to anyone. I am the only one who saw it that way. It's like when you throw a stone up into the air and later feel bad because you know that you are the one who did it. I shouldn't have turned red, that only gave me away. But I don't think anyone heard my scream, thank goodness. I was looking at Federico's profile and I liked the risk of him thinking that I was looking at him and not at Henri.

But she could be looking at the board, since Henri has written the outline right there, and one has to refer to it in order to follow the lecture. No, it's not me she's looking at. It's at the outline or at Henri who sat down at the desk and is noticing his sore throat. I shouldn't have taken him to the evening movie. Poor Henri. And Eileen? Eileen, Eileen, fake, easy girl.

Ah! How I'd love him to think like that! No, Federico will never think like that. Everything is influenced by my dreams. Miguel is the one who is in my dreams. There is no room for Federico. No Federico. Federico.

I play the game several times. Only I am aware that I'm playing it. I don't think that there is any risk involved, if Federico suspected anything he would soon find out about Miguel and would rule out the entire possibility. Federico has taken over at Henri's house, he answers the guy who has asked the irrelevant question, I repeat that I've never seen him this excited by a question in months. Alright, from the little that I have seen of him, just at the gatherings at Henri's house, and when he didn't go, I thought that he was with Eileen. One day he came and asked to use the telephone, I thought that he would call her, but no, he arranged to meet for lunch with some friends the next day. I felt a sense of relief, a dumb sense of relief, he could have come back from being with her. And I have

Miguel. Sometimes I was the one who had just been with him or I would go see him afterwards. That was until the day I found out that there was no more Eileen. And forgive me Miguel, but I wished that you didn't exist. But, what for? Federico has nothing to do with me, he doesn't even know that I exist.

I don't know how I dragged Henri's dining room chair and sat down right in front of her. I arrived late to make an entrance, like she does each time she goes to class at the university. I don't know how she manages to arrive late and of course, since the door is there in the front, everyone looks at her. Because it's a movement unrelated to the class and she interrupts it briefly. I then take advantage to look at her as well, like any newcomer to the bunch of people who are actually listening to the lecture. The last or was it the next to last time, she sat behind me and I got my hopes up that she was looking at me. Then, firmly believing it, I turned my head a little and tried to observe her out of the corner of my eye, but she looked at the board or at Henri or talked something over with the girl with the messy hair who sat next to her and who spouted colloquial phrases in German. She got a haircut, she seems even younger, how old could she be? Maybe she's just a teenager ...she couldn't be that young ...she's in Henri's class and something tells me he works with her. She's so quiet, she hardly participates. She's so tiny, so small, it seems as if she could break. She's not pretty, no, no she's not. She's with someone. I know it, I don't know how but I know it. Another kid who sometimes waits for her on the way out of class. Another boy exactly like the Argentinean Felipe who always walks around with a bag full of books that she appreciated and showed interest in sometimes. One day she rode in the car with us, the kid hadn't waited for her, at least that's what I think, and she got in the car, but I couldn't even drop her off at her house, a professor got

out and she went with her and started walking. I had the car full of people and Henri was there. Let's not even go there. Complete indifference. Furthermore, she would have found a big show of friendliness strange, particularly coming from a stranger. I had to watch her go. No, she is definitely not as pretty as Eileen. She has a strange last name that I've seen on her notebook one of the times she came early--of the few times she came early. Henri can confirm it for me later. I let her borrow *Fragments*...and she gave it back in book covers. One by one, all of the *Fragments*. I haven't lent that book again and won't, at least for some time, until the scent that has seeped into it fades. Hopefully she won't buy it, this way she'll ask to borrow it from me again. I was so annoyed when Henri announced that the Barthes had arrived at the bookstore downtown. Hopefully she'll never get around to buying it. Where was I? Oh, I don't know how I became involved in answering, I began talking about the text, the texture, Barthes. She was looking at me, well, everyone was looking at me, it was logical, I was the center of attention. I was the one who was talking. Suddenly I turned to the girl next to her, and then I gradually glanced over at her. She was looking into my eyes, directly into my eyes.

Federico answers brilliantly, of course, that's how he is... The guy wants to question him but Federico responds confidently and Henri nods his head in agreement. Henri can't stand his throat anymore, he covers his mouth with a handkerchief. Federico keeps on talking, suddenly he stops looking at the guy and he directs his gaze at Elsa who is next to me, I think that he's winding down just at that moment and that he won't look at me, not even due to inertia. But he doesn't wind down and a fascinating moment transpires: as he talks he looks at me and I look intently into his eyes. I don't think anything, I just look at him. It's beautiful to look at someone like this. Besides, it's the

first time that we are looking into each other's eyes, longer than a minute, it seems to me a timeless time. But I don't know what happens, I don't know which one of us turns away first, I don't know if he looks over to Bea or if I go from looking into his eyes to looking at his mouth with thick lips, his lips that I'd love to bite. Miguel's mouth is so delicate and thin, it's esthetically beautiful. Federico has big, thick lips, even more so when he laughs, one is tempted to bite them. Perhaps he looks away first and looks over at Bea. After all, I think I've seen a certain enthusiasm for Bea since, without her asking, he started explaining a painting from a thesis he has been flipping through. Bea, with her intellectual airs, seems to be following the explanation and not looking at his lips, I try to ignore it. Henri is talking to those on the other side and I am in the middle of both discussions without participating in either one of them. I withdraw from both and grab a book on abstract painting to flip through. It takes me quite a while to finish. All of this before Federico and I look into each other's eyes. But what am I talking about? Federico can't think or feel a thing, he'll see empty sockets, he'd like to be with Eileen instead of being here looking at God knows who, helping out because Henri has a sore throat and can barely talk. I am upset because of Bea, she's as striking as Eileen, and she has already been asking me about what "that guy who audits the professor's classes" was studying. I tell Bea that he is very intelligent, that he knows a lot, that he's focused on a certain field, that he is very unpretentious and friendly. I express a series of barely supported judgments, I have never spoken to Federico about anything, the little that I know is from Henri. But what I've said to Bea, I've said with pride, as if Federico were Miguel.

The game repeats itself. Federico takes the floor several times and each time his eyes begin to wander over each one of us, I pray that he doesn't finish speaking so that he

gets to me. And when he gets to me, I hold his gaze and my mind spins ahead. I look into his eyes, and repeat his name to myself. But the game doesn't last long, Federico goes on to Bea and I look towards the other side of the classroom. Henri recovers his position and in spite of the pain, begins to speak again, Federico grows quiet and yields the floor. I lean forward, still seated in the wicker chair, clasp my hands together, my eyes look at the rug now. I manage to glimpse a part of Federico's shoe. I think I can look at him and when he looks at me unexpectedly, I can scurry away, self-conscious and shy. I imagine Federico is an easy-going guy and that he'll know how to interpret that, but I remember my terrible sense of intuition when it comes to people. Federico is most likely not a laid-back guy, he must be full of prejudice, he must be a Casanova since he knows he's very attractive, and he must look for pretty girls with last names that rhyme with his. It's better to expect the worst especially if I know that I don't stand the slightest chance with him. I remember how it all started with Miguel, more than a year and a half ago in Latin class. Miguel didn't pay attention to me, it was very difficult at the beginning. And now, you should see him. I liked Miguel a lot. But...if I love Miguel...Henri knows how much and if he ever talks about me, he must have mentioned it.

I've clasped my hands together, we listen to Henri religiously. At that moment, I think about the possibility of mental telepathy. I'd like to do it with Federico. Nonsense! I have my hands clasped together, my head leaning towards the floor. Suddenly, I look up, Federico has been observing me, I look up and I look at him. It's hardly a second, but I hold his gaze. Again, I lower my eyes with a sense of shame. I can't suppress a smile.

I cannot talk and look straight into those eyes. She is looking at me in an incredible way. I have been carried away laying out a model answer and crushing the guy

who asked the irrelevant question and I suddenly meet small, dark eyes that stare at me intently, as if they'd like to tell me something but I can't find out what it is. I pray not to trip up and I keep going. I don't know if she has lowered her eyes or if I have moved on to look at the girl next to her. I don't know which one of us initiated this and which one ended it. Perhaps everything is in my head. But I feel like doing the same thing again. She likes painting but not tinted glasses. To avoid any type of suspicion, I am extremely nice to the girl that is between us. I explain some paintings that she has not even asked about. It doesn't matter, I go on anyway. She takes a rather large book and leafs through it. She's absorbed in looking at paintings, in a trance, gently turning the pages. She doesn't notice me at all. Even when I start speaking again, all worked up, she plays the same game with me. I think I'm beginning to decode what she wants to tell me. I also repeat your name to myself. She must be thinking about Miguel or about the kid that sometimes waits for her. Henri starts talking again, I let him speak. She leans towards him, her feet are small like those of a doll. She has clasped her hands together and looks at the floor. She listens, absorbed, to what Henri says, it's my opportunity. I begin to scan her feet, her knees, her hands, her body, her head. I look at her. Suddenly, something, someone gives me away. She, a traitor, quickly turns and nails me looking at her. She is surprised and lowers her gaze while mine has tried to flee somehow. *Tarde piaci*, too late, she has noticed. Perhaps it's all in my head. She can't be looking at me like this, no way.

Someone new comes to Henri's gatherings. It's nobody important. Eileen, why are you like this? If you tried a little harder we would understand each other. The girl who comes is insignificant. Furthermore, she is quiet and shy, sometimes she looks with frightened eyes, she must think we are *non plus ultra*, the best of the best. It's better like

that, that way she is not pedantic, at least not yet. Henri has told me very little about her, I talk more about Eileen with him. Eileen again, when will she finally go away?

Very intelligent people go to the gatherings, at least that's what I think. There's one girl who is a feminist and also a union leader. Another guy, Federico, teases her and the girl gets kind of annoyed. Other modest people go but they seem to be well-informed. Miguel has come to drop me off. Last week I didn't go to the gathering because we were in the middle of an argument. Miguel and I are not doing well. Sometimes I wonder if it isn't time for a change but then I take it back. Miguel is something definite, we have made plans together, the bond of shared dreams unites us. We are up to our ears in this, I hope that neither Miguel nor I suffocate. That guy Federico is likeable although the girl he's seeing is rather arrogant and fake. Sometimes I think it's odd that a guy like Federico should be with a girl like Eileen. Surely the two communicate on the same wavelength. There's a reason why they're together, his parents must be thrilled, just like Miguel's mom is with me.

I came from a luncheon and I had had a couple of beers. It was because of that, that I was so fresh when I got to Henri's house and found them in his library, seated in a circle and listening to the teacher. I suggested that we go to the living room but she said that it was very hot there, Henri then suggested staying there but she added that there was no room for him. Easy, I'll bring myself a chair from the dining room. She had fussed over me. Nonsense. That can't be. I remember a few weeks ago when I was waiting for Henri's class and I was outside the classroom, in the corridor next to the railing, looking out at the patio. I saw her come earlier than usual. We would have been alone if that loser who would later ask Henri irrelevant questions, questions that I would answer brilliantly,

hadn't kept standing there. I inched away a little from the railing and when she passed by, I faintly flashed my best smile. She hardly looked at me. I said hi really loudly and it was only then that she stopped looking at the ground and smiled, returning my greeting, but she slipped away into the classroom. I stayed outside a bit lost, she wasn't coming out. Finally she did, alone, and she leaned against the railing, but I was already offended, besides that guy who had already started to talk about politics was there, she was following his train of thought. Silent, next to the railing, she waited a bit and then she went back inside.

What an idiot, I come out of the classroom, I position myself near him and nothing. Then the greeting was nothing more than coincidence, a courtesy. He must be looking out towards the patio searching for girls who resemble Eileen. He doesn't notice me at all. Miguel was so loving yesterday, he remembered that the day marked eleven months of being together. I can't wait any longer, of course he must feel embarrassed with that idiot from Psychology standing there. Besides, what was I going to ask him? How do I start a conversation? Talk about the weather? Ask him what time it is? I don't want him to take me for an idiot. It's best if I go back inside, I am exposing myself too much here.

When Henri spoke about the Colina widow, everybody was amazed by his story. It was incredible to hear about a widow finishing her husband's work like that. She asked why and I hastily answered, "Well, woman, she was nuts," Woman, woman, he had called me woman. And he said it with sensuality. But no, no, it's just an expression.

I said it looking into her eyes, now I was the one who was initiating the game, but she didn't play along, she had looked at me angrily. I rummaged around in my thoughts

for a reason why she had looked at me with that expression, it must be because of what I said about the book covers. How could I have said that? Luckily Henri remedied the situation making it into a joke, but I noticed that her attitude towards me had changed. She didn't smile again, she didn't play with her eyes again. Perhaps everything has been in my head. She must be thinking about Miguel. She's not thinking about me, no, she isn't.

When he was leaving, he made a very absurd joke about the rain and buttoned up his shirt, which, up until that point, he had left unbuttoned halfway down his chest. I don't know what he wanted to prove, his chest was very pale and it's not out of this world, he's very thin. So is Miguel but he's tan. Besides, I think he had something to drink somewhere, perhaps at Eileen's house. Miguel, Miguel, you should have come to pick me up.

A week has passed and there is no trace of her. Henri has a sore throat and the doctor isn't allowing him to hold class. I am beside myself because I don't know when I am going to see her. Enough. Not seeing her for this amount of time has been more than sufficient. The first chance I get, I will talk to her, I will offer her a book that she won't cover anymore, I'll ask her what time it is-- that day I won't wear a watch-- anything to have a conversation. And if she goes in the car with us, I will drive her home, it doesn't matter what the others may think. After all, I also drive Henri home. What would be weird about it?

It's been a while since I had class with Henri, I know he's not doing very well, I make sure to call him and ask about his health. That guy Federico...what nonsense...I

don't feel anything for him anymore. I don't even feel like playing the eye game. Soon, Federico will be a thing of the past. Federico, if you...

I'm waiting for her, Henri is holding class again. But she goes back to arriving late. I don't think she has done it on purpose, surely she had a class beforehand and they weren't letting her out. She sat down behind me and I can't look at her, perhaps she looks at me. Is she looking at me? Why don't you touch my back with your fingers? Why don't you stretch your feet so that they bump into mine and then I can apologize? And so that my excuses for having made you wait so long may go along with that apology as well. A little more patience and we might get something started. First a friendship, a closer relationship. I feel like hugging you and breaking you. Perhaps hugging you would feel like being a god, you're so small that anyone feels like a giant next to you. Eileen cuts her hair, she tries to imitate you but she can't, it doesn't work for her like it does for you. Henri is about to finish. You'll then go up to him to ask him to advise you, I will offer to drive you home, just to get things off the ground.

A thin boy with light eyes, who is not the Argentinean Felipe, is waiting for you. You have come out and he has kissed you. Why, why didn't you wait, I always knew there had been a certain Miguel. I don't know why I had ruled him out. He is still kissing you and you turn around to look at me. Today marks a year that Miguel and I have been together. Surprisingly, he has come to pick me up after class. I can't even say goodbye to Henri, Miguel is impatient and wants to go immediately. Federico, that one doesn't notice anything. When Miguel kissed me, I turned to look towards the classroom but Federico had put on those horrible tinted glasses that only make him look more fake than ever. Miguel's embrace reminded me of our bond of futuristic and latent dreams. With

Federico, I never had plans, nothing, and because of that, it's easy for me to go off with Miguel. Besides, Federico must be waiting for Eileen or some girl who resembles her.

Everyone is gone. She has gone as well. Henri comes out of the class, he coughs a little, he gives me a little pat on the back. I can't take off the tinted glasses. I can't. He would notice. Henri and I start going down the stairs.

THE ISLAND OF SALT

It has been two weeks since the new mayor has been occupying the embossed leather chair and another secretary, who replaced the plump woman with polished claws, answers the phone. It has been years since Gorgona stopped being an inaccessible penitentiary, years have been allowed to go by so that the island could wash away its salt and polish its name, so that people could forget and start pouring into the new *Caribbean Riviera* that old Mendieta wants to build off the coast of Colombia. The prison has been demolished; the inmates who refused to die have been parceled out across the entire country to other prisons, some better, some worse, but without that salty air that would seep into their bones, swelling up their legs, legs where swarming mosquitoes, attracted to the warm blood and humidity, laid eggs and left bites. When they vacated Gorgona, there were only fourteen prisoners left, along with a jailer so numb with tuberculosis that he could barely move. The other inmates had died of this lung wrenching disease and of the infections caused by the never-ending plagues of insects, none of which were treated because no doctor or aide would agree to travel to Gorgona to provide even the most basic treatment. The other jailer, the oldest one, had died years ago, swollen with water. The fish that feasted on his body lived among the reefs that protected Gorgona. The island, named after a mythological animal, would soon give way to commercial development. Where there once used to be unexplored rocks, there now figured diving boards, raised over the water, catering to the tourists who couldn't stay away from experiencing the new *Caribbean Riviera* at the island of salt. No one remembers the

prison anymore, or the inmates' tuberculosis, or their legs swollen from liquid and salt, full of water. Following a thorough disinfecting designed to eradicate any lingering disease, and after quenching the thirst of salt present in the atmosphere, the island of salt will become the new target destination for foreign tourists. The locals themselves won't go, shaken by the infamy of Gorgona. But the local tourists, if they exist, don't know how to appreciate nor enjoy anything, Mendieta maintains. On the other hand, foreigners are a different story. These people don't mind paying for good service, a lush marine landscape, and exquisite warm weather that draws them away from their countries of eternal snow.

"For an island infested with the traces of tuberculosis, salty air, and bloodsucking insects," his assistant clarified in a barely audible tone.

"Ah, Romero, you don't know a thing about this. The foreign tourists will be grateful for the mosquitoes that will bite them and make them feel alive, just as long as they have been vaccinated against all the tropical fevers. You just do as I say, that's what I pay you for."

The fields are burning up and there is less and less to do. The water is murky and even the swine refuse to drink it. The people of Las Cruces look for whatever they can find under the stones because increasingly, there is less to eat, less to drink, and less to subsist on. Chico watches his father pacing around the house, squinting at the spots of light that appear as a result of too much sun. Instead of going to school, Chico keeps himself busy searching for something that can't be found underneath the stones. Chico cuts classes and bends over backwards so his father won't find out, but he doesn't go down to the river to cool off or to chase the birds in the air with stones from its depths.

The boy is looking for something to do so that his father stops wandering about the house like the living dead and so that the expression of sadness disappears from his mother's face. "Mendieta Wants YOU" can be read all over the town of Las Cruces, as the mayor's greedy smile stretches across the campaign poster that advertises him. "There's a lot to be done," Chico has heard everywhere. "There's a lot to be done and everyone can help, everyone should help so that Las Cruces can be what it was before. And you can make it happen if you join me." The loudspeakers on Mendieta's vehicles go around town injecting a dose of optimism into the blood of Las Cruces which, once again, is drying up from the heat and lack of rain. Chico believes it all, Mendieta needs me, I'll make it happen with Mendieta. I'll help Mendieta and he'll help my father. The boy silently recites the pamphlets over and over in his head while he heads for the mayor's office, which is opposite the main square and next to the post office. Chico pauses outside the door and gives himself a once-over. He has donned his Sunday shirt and a pair of his father's pants in order to appear older and impress Mendieta. He musters up the courage to set foot on the floorboards in the doorway, and they tremble responding to his nerves. A plump woman, with her dyed hair pulled up high, with long, artificial eyelashes, and fascinated with her claw-like nails which she examines over and over, lets him in, looking him up and down from head to toe, as if she were performing a military inspection.

"What do you want, sweetie?" asks the woman while the boy rocks back and forth before responding. "Mendieta...the mayor. I want to see the mayor..." "You want to see the mayor?" the woman echoes with a mocking voice while undressing him with her eyes because the boy isn't too shabby...in a few years he'll be just as she likes them, the

plump woman licks her lips. Chico nods his head without daring to utter another word and he stares at the ground. Without taking her eyes off him, the woman asks, “Are you 18?” “In two months,” Chico lies. “In two months or two years?” the woman presses, skeptical. “In two months,” the boy repeats, swallowing his shyness and depositing it in the pit of his stomach. “Alright, let’s see, wait.” Chico has his heart in his throat when the woman comes out of Mendieta’s office, Mendieta who needs them all more than anybody. She looks at him, smiling. “Go ahead, young man. The mayor is waiting for you.”

The boy enters wide-eyed as if he were on sacred ground, full of papers piled up high from the floor right up to the ceiling. They’ll have to be sorted, organized, and handled, this will be his first task, Chico imagines, to put everything in order so that Mendieta has time to help all of us. Mendieta appears behind a wooden desk and an impressive leather chair that swivels, a curtain of smoke shields him like a bodyguard and a great window rises up behind him, giving him the aura of a holy man.

“What do you want, young man?” Mendieta asks impatiently.

“Sir...”

“Come again? Speak up,” the mayor again, asks mockingly.

“I’m here to be at your service, Mr. Mayor.”

“Cut the formality, young man. Go ahead, tell me what you want and get out of here.”

“To help you, sir.”

“Excuse me?”

“To help you...”

“To help me? And how is it that you can help me?”

“By working, sir.”

“Mmm...by working...with pay or without the luxury of such?” he replies sarcastically.

“Paid employment, Mr. Mayor, as it should be.”

“As it should be? You’re telling me what should be done, you little pipsqueak? Get out of here, go, I don’t have time to waste.”

“I’m asking you for a job, sir. No one works as hard as I do...”

“Look, squirt, you either go or I’ll ask the policeman to kick your butt out of here.”

“But, sir...”

“Enough, boy, go on home or I’ll throw you in the slammer for harassing a figure of authority.”

Chico gets up, shaken, and stares into space. And what now? What’ll happen to his father? The mayor won’t help as promised. The boy doesn’t know what to do. He freezes in the doorway and Mendieta finally throws him out by shouting: “Get out of here already, you pipsqueak, and I don’t want to see you around or you’ll end up in the slammer!” Chico leaves, crestfallen. The plump woman watches him and, like a serpent, licks her lips with her long, reddish tongue. Chico doesn’t even want to look at her. He goes out into the dusty street and walks in the opposite direction from his house. There’s an hour left before school lets out and he can’t go back home so early, or they’d catch on. In a couple of weeks his father won’t monitor his school schedule anymore. He’ll be on his way to the island.

Dad is far away, farther away than ever, over on the island, which, surrounded by a magnificent sea, resembles paintings depicting pitched battles fought in the midst of a storm. The island that emerges like the tip of a lone iceberg surrounded by choppy, dark waves, a lifeless, salt laden island that bears the sinister name, Gorgona. My father had always told us mythological tales from his salty, salaried prison. Tales of pirates, of sea monsters with enormous jaws, of mesmerizing mermaids with two tails, of tritons with lust in their eyes, of electric eels that are impossible to catch because they burn the fishing nets, of worlds sunken at the bottom of the ocean that he rules from his island, as he used to call it. His eternal island, full of salt and depleted of life, a punishment for many, food for us. My father is the island jailer but he's just as much a prisoner as those who are crowded together there behind bars. My mother punctually picks up my father's paycheck and this is what we live off of in Las Cruces. One day, my mother goes to fetch the paycheck and instead, they hand her a blue paper she has to sign, the notification of a government pension. For a couple of days now, my father's body has been laying permanently anchored at the bottom of the sea that surrounds Gorgona. My father has died without us knowing, far away, surrounded by non-existent marine life, his body stuffed with salt and with mythological tales clamoring to escape his mouth.

"You'll decide, Don Julian," Mendoza offers up from his embossed leather chair that spins like a top at whim, "you'll decide."

"Great day to bask in the sun," Mendieta replies, "Would you like to accompany me to the bar across the street and have a drink, Mr. Mayor? It's on me."

"Thank you, Don Julian. Right now I can't. Let me know what I can do for you."

Mendieta and Mendoza talk, gesticulating, clapping, knitting their brows, bursting out in laughter here and there. Mendoza closely observes Don Julian while he listens to his project of converting Gorgona into a new island of salt, as he has rechristened it, a *Caribbean Riviera* for foreign tourists. A handshake at the end locks in the deal between the two men. The last step will be a visit to the island of salt, to assess its potential from up close.

On the horizon the choppy sea crashes into the rocks. Three figures move slowly, trying to avoid the rugged parts of the path. Bits of railing, bars, pad locks, keys, and locks are scattered before them, revealing Gorgona's past. The salt eats away at everything and rust colors the stone, while the men's noses become irritated by the salt they breathe in from the winds that batter the island. Mendieta transforms Gorgona's wretched horrors into tourist attractions on the island of salt, while a smile tries to force itself upon Mendoza's lips, and Romero silently witnesses his boss's crazy reasoning. Finally they approach the western part of the island where great, majestic cliffs stand tall before a sea that painfully comes and laps up against their walls, like a lover seeking refuge in the arms of his disdainful beloved. Romero looks on from afar since the two men are at the edge of the cliffs, calmly discussing a possible diving show that would delight the tourists and attract even more clientele to the island of salt. The screech of a cormorant diverts Romero's attention; he shivers from the cold, salty wind that strikes his body like lightening bolts in a storm. When the cormorant screeches once again, circling closer and closer to him, Romero realizes that something must have happened. The two men have gone from discussing business to a heated argument. Mendieta paces from side to side waving his arms, gesticulating while Mendoza remains unmoved before him,

keeping his hands in his pockets the entire time. Romero thinks he sees Mendoza amused by old Mendieta's litany and lets him have his tantrum. He'll get over it, thinks Romero, while the screech of the cormorant diverts his attention again, because the bird is almost flying over his head as if it were a bird of prey closing in on its kill.

"Life is strange isn't it, Don Julian? What goes around comes around," Mendoza comments, looking far back where the sun is beginning to set.

"I don't understand, Dr. Mendoza. What are you talking about?"

"Now you even call me Doctor, Don Julian, and seventeen years ago you threw me out of your office as if I were a mangy dog," Mendoza replies, squeezing his lips together to keep smiling.

"That was such a long time ago; you were just a boy, Dr. Mendoza. God only knows what stunt you would have pulled to get me to notice you."

Mendoza remained silent and smiling, while in the space visible in the abyss, a current of water pooled up and retreated, dragged along with a whine.

"Even the sea objects, Don Julian. I didn't pull any stunts, as you claim. I came to ask you for a job because the fields were dried up and there was nothing to eat, not even twigs."

"Dr. Mendoza, these are things of the past. No one remembers them now."

"I remember, and so do the prisoners of Gorgona, Don Julian."

"What do the prisoners from the island of salt have to do with all of this, Mr. Mayor?"

Another current of water roared under his feet, causing the rocks of the reefs that spread out at the bottom of the cliffs to shake. Mendieta, shaken and confused, waited for an answer that Mendoza did not give.

“Don Julian, you say that you would put on a cliff diving show here?”

“Now, I don’t understand anything, sir, not a thing.”

“And why don’t you test it out, Don Julian? Can’t you hear?”

“Hear what?”

“They’re calling you, Don Julian, they’re calling you.”

“I don’t hear anything, Dr. Mendoza, and stop with this word play already,”

Mendieta replied, exasperated.

A long silence crept in between the two mayors, and Mendieta began to feel strange. In the next current of water, Don Julian felt that a force stronger than his, together with the wind, was dragging him. In the midst of the force caused by the air, it seemed as if his feet were becoming detached from the ground. He felt that someone or something was lifting him over Mendoza’s head. Suddenly, he saw it from an unimaginable height.

Mendoza was observing him with his arms crossed and with a slight smile etched on his face. For a moment he didn’t believe what was happening, he thought that it was the brandy taking effect that was making him spin. But Mendoza’s head, tilted back, brought him back to reality. Mendieta remained hovering in the air over Mendoza, totally out of control. The same force then carried him to the edge of the cliff. Once again, he turned to look at Mendoza who was following his trajectory with his eyes. Mendoza’s

gaze mirrored the emptiness of the abyss. The current of water crashed against the rocks again, shaking him. Mendoza, without averting his gaze, repeated his words.

“Go on Don Julian, try a cliff dive, they’re waiting for you.”

I don’t like this thing with the birds, Romero thought. After hearing the cormorant’s screech again, the young man notices that there is only one silhouette instead of two on the clouded horizon. The figure shouts out his name, waves an arm calling him over, and leans over the rocks that mark the edge of the abyss. When Romero gets there, watching his step, he finds Mendoza’s stare scrutinizing the bottom of the cliff.

“Do you see him, Romero? Can you see him?”

“I don’t see anything Mr. Mayor.”

“The police will have to be notified, Romero, take care of it.”

“Yes, sir.”

Several weeks have passed since the relentless search for Mendieta’s body was performed. In his agitated state, he tripped over the sharp edges of the cliff and, frightened by the flight of a cormorant, ended up falling into the abyss. Finally, they found him, swollen by the water and eaten away by the salt. All the moisture had erased any trace of wrinkles from his face and his features had been erased completely, giving him the expressionless appearance of a mannequin. Mendieta’s was a sad ending, Romero kept thinking, I wouldn’t like to end up like that, the boy would tell himself. In the end, the mayor didn’t have anything to do with the matter. Mendieta had become hot and bothered all of a sudden, and in his bothered state, had tripped in the cracks of the cliff, falling. Mendoza couldn’t have done anything even if he had wanted to. Although maybe had he moved quickly, stretched out his hand, but what could have frightened

Mendieta? What could have angered him to the point of losing control? Why did Mendoza remain unmoved while the old man was moving around all agitated? Romero thought that it was better to stop dwelling on this and find himself a job. At the bar in the main square, while thinking of employment options, the young man squeezes lemonade to mitigate the heat that burns even in the shade. Mayor Mendoza, on his way to his office, walks by the bar and acknowledges him with a nod of his head. A plump woman, with flabby wrinkles and claw-like nails, has seated herself next to him in a suggestive manner. Romero looks at her with disdain, but she doesn't pay attention to him and moves even closer. Together they watch while Mendoza crosses the square. The woman lets out a sigh that smells of smoke and is full of liquor.

"That's him. I knew he'd grow up to be hot," the woman with roots in her pulled up hair, licks her lips without hope.

"What are you talking about?" Romero mumbles, wondering how a simple slip up could have left him without work once again.

"It's Chico, who else could it be...the new mayor, Chico."

A few minutes later, Romero is seated before Mendoza, about to ask him for a job. In response to the question regarding what he has to offer, Romero enthusiastically comments that he is very familiar with Don Julian's, may he rest in peace, ideas regarding the island of salt, a project that could bring in profits for Las Cruces.

"The island of salt, that's what it's called, right? A tourist center over the remains of a prison. The idea is a bit macabre, don't you think?"

"It was only an idea," the young man comments, crestfallen.

"We'll let its dead rest in peace, even if it's at the bottom of the sea."

“Yes, sir. Whatever you say. May I...ask you a question, sir?”

“Sure, young man. What would you like to know?”

“Don Julian, that day... on the cliff, there on the island of salt... Why did he act like that?”

“Like what?”

“The way he acted. Excited, restless, agitated...to the point that he slipped and... you know the rest.”

“I’ll tell you if you keep it a secret, Romero.”

“At your service, Mr. Mayor.”

“Mendieta didn’t fall as a result of clumsiness or agitation. They pulled Mendieta down.”

“I do not really understand, sir.”

“Mendieta went to join those he had thrown to the bottom of the sea, that’s all.”

Romero sat up in his seat and quietly echoed, without daring to look Mendoza in the eyes, “that’s all.” After an uncomfortable silence and furtive glances, Mendoza spoke:

“You start tomorrow, young man. At eight?”

“At eight, sir, yes, eight is fine.”

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

Wearing a pleated, plaid skirt, with black patent leather shoes, Cuban heel stockings and a white blouse, Martina crouches under the ethereal skirts of a young woman she's never seen before. The child feels cozy and content under these skirts that float, revealing a magical princess without legs. The imaginary fairy has long, curly black hair and dark eyes but undefined facial features. She wears a gown, a lot bluer than a clear, bright, and luminous sky, of what looks to be tulle. Its sleeves are long and narrow and the garment hugs her torso tightly. Enormous petticoats that flutter about like a tablecloth that is being aired out, fan out from the waist. Some sort of a gentle, faint breeze holds up the skirts of the magical princess. There's an abundance of light, everything is fine, Martina feels pleased and protected, even happy, like when her birthday comes around and she has a big party. It's the only time of year when the ten-year-old girl feels important. Apart from this date, she's never been important and won't ever be. Awaiting her is a life that's dark and amorphous like the chubbiness her mother curses every time they have to go clothes shopping for her. Martina shudders upon remembering the first part of the dream. She doesn't know where she is, everything is dark and menacing. The little girl gazes at a ghastly horizon, dominated by some kind of enormous snail that threatens to invade the entire space with its brown shell. Martina

imagines that the snail is a hellish machine that pulsates underneath the earth's surface, growing more and more, until it runs her over and pulls her out of her dreamland. And when she thinks she's going to die crushed under the weight of the snail, she is expelled through a tunnel that plants her underneath the floating skirts of the young woman, who is a mix of all of the princesses she has imagined when reading the collection of fairytales in the library, the ones that only she reads. The magical princess rescues her from the giant snail and offers her a luminous, warm, and protecting world. Martina feels so happy that she does not want to wake up. But they wake her up. She has to get up, get dressed, put on that horrible, gray uniform, force herself to eat breakfast even though she is not hungry, and leave for school in her father's car, that will take her and her sister before going to his office. That's how she starts every day, drinking thick cocoa, the skin of which she has to swallow even though she doesn't like it, eating French bread with butter that doesn't taste like anything because it has to be eaten so fast and she can't dunk it in anything. Finally, she and her sister are there in the garage, all fed and dressed, waiting for their father to come out. But, as usual, he is late. He, who has rushed them so much with the threat of leaving them stranded if they're not ready by the time he comes out. He who lives in such a busy world outside of the home, isn't coming. Five, ten, seventeen minutes go by and they climb in the car. The father comes running, he does everything fast.

In the city traffic, he honks the horn, gets angry, pounds the steering wheel and scares me more than ever. He turns on the radio, impatiently flips through the stations until finding one he likes. And every morning when taking us to school, he makes us listen to these military marches that remind us that a damn mestizo military officer has

overthrown the president and taken over his position. A resentful Indian who wants to make life unbearable for the rich and the whites, for all whites, even the ones who aren't rich. Overnight, being white in this country has become a stigma. The roles have reversed and they have become the despised. I am the whitest of all my siblings, the one who looks most like my mother. I was born like this, I didn't ask to be white, or Indian, or black, or a combination of all of them. I was simply born like this.

My sister and I are playing at the hotel in Chinchá, that city of mulattos, where we've come on extended vacation for Holy Week. Other children that are also at the hotel have come out and we are playing ball. Out of my parents' sight, playing spontaneously with other children who approach me even though I may be white, fat, and ugly, I feel good, even cheerful. Someone throws the ball really high, and to show off, I jump as high as I can and catch it. The other kids are surprised and in their faces, I think I can read approval for having played well. I'm happy, very happy. Again, the ball goes really high and I stretch to reach it. But the ball goes much higher than I expect and I jump with all my might. With all my might. With all my might, I fall onto the grass and my body rolls out of control until falling on top of the enormous pane of one of the hotel windows. The glass doesn't break because it is very thick but it cracks entirely. Stunned, I don't understand what is happening to me. The instant friends disappear more quickly than a rabbit in a hat trick and my sister looks at me, speechless. A gardener who has seen everything starts yelling. I see my parents coming towards me. My sister remains frozen but there is no expression on her face that would allow me to read her thoughts. I don't think she has any idea of what is going to happen. Neither do I. My mother stays about 10 feet away from the window where I continue laying glued to the glass. My father

approaches and I make an effort to sit up, I manage to do so, and I show him that I'm fine despite the impact. My father doesn't say anything, and I can't read his thoughts either. He glares at me, purses his lips together and, from his position of a big strong, adult male, he delivers such a blow to my face that again, I'm thrown to the ground, at the same time I feel completely wet and warm between the legs. My mother and sister observe the incident with indifference, neither one says anything, neither one objects, neither one defends me. I think that this is worse than my father's blow. It's more painful to determine that they are as afraid as I am. On the ground, sprawled out and soaked by my own urine, I cry. I cry bitterly, without objecting, without even mentioning that I'm not the only one to blame. I cry without mentioning that it's all of us kids, including my sister, who have been playing ball. I cry because I was hoping that they would ask me if I'm okay or not, if I've gotten scratched with the glass from the enormous window. I cry because instead of giving me TLC, they hit me, they hit me once again, in an appalling and humiliating manner. I cry because the one who is hitting me is much bigger than I am and I can't stand up to him. I cry, terrified, and I don't say anything else, because I know that if I do, I'll get yelled at some more and perhaps punched a second time for being fresh. I cry bitterly, sprawled out next to the cracked glass, my soul, my pride, and my self-respect shattered to pieces. And I'm thinking that my father resembles the resentful mestizo dictator who is now in power, and my mother, like the frightened whites who have had their estates taken away, bows down to him in a cowardly fashion. I am so ashamed that I'd like to dig a hole in the ground and crawl into it and disappear forever. I'd like to pass through a mirror like those I have read about in stories, and move into a

different world to escape his unfair blows. But my fairies, with their magical wands, only exist in the library books, and now, they are very far away.

Hours later, lying in her hotel bed, Martina continues choking back the tears brought on by the humiliation, insult, and injustice. Her grandmother has given her a little catechism book with covers that look like ivory, although they're not, and with a metal lock like those found on lock and key diaries for girls. A tiny metal cross is embossed onto the cover and a white ribbon is whimsically found between the pages with gold glitter edges. Martina's grandmother has given it to her so that she could console herself by praying to God. God, where are you when you let these things happen? Did I break the glass on purpose? No. Why do you let them mistreat me? Why didn't the sky open to let your holy light pass through and why didn't you let your deep voice be heard defending me? By the way, aren't you supposedly everywhere and don't you see everything all the time? Martina opens the little book and flips through it, disillusioned. On one page she finds the commandments of God that she had to memorize in school for the Religion exam. You shall love God above all other things (I don't care about God, to be honest. I never see him). You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain (I've never sworn to God, to other things yes, but not to God. How am I supposed to swear to someone I don't see). Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy (we always have off from school then and I'm happy). Honor your Father and your Mother, honor...Martina pauses and reads it over a couple of times to get it into her head. Honor...you shall honor...honor...murder...and if I murdered them?...honor...murder. You shall murder your Mother and your Father, of course, and then I'll honor them at their funeral. Martina

has calmed down a bit, she puts down the little book and curls up on her bed. She closes her eyes trying to disappear. Her cheeks flushed from crying, she falls asleep.

Poison? I don't know, maybe. And, if they pump his stomach and he survives? If he finds out that I put poison in the spicy *aji* seasoning that he always puts in his soup, he'll beat me to death, that's for sure. It'd be great to drain the brake fluid from his car, like in the movies. Yes, let him go out and crash to the beat of the military marches he listens to. I'd have to do it on a day when he wasn't taking us to school, a day when he was only going out to see that woman who isn't my mom. But I never know when that is. I don't know where the brakes of a car are located either. And I can't ask anyone for help. Cut his throat while he's sleeping in the afternoon? And if he opens his eyes while I'm doing it? I wouldn't dare to follow through. One time I watched a movie on TV where someone was killing someone else by putting cyanide in the candles. But we don't use candles anymore, only for birthdays and it's not enough. How do I do it? How do I kill him? What do I do in order to make him disappear? Why doesn't he go off with the other woman? Why doesn't my mom agree to a divorce when he asked her for one years ago? Why doesn't he die one of those Sundays he comes back drunk from seeing his buddies and racing like Fittipaldi? Why does he have such good luck? Why did he have to be my father? Martina thinks and thinks tirelessly about the best way to get rid of her father. Every time she finishes reading one of her stories she thinks, hidden between the yellow sofa and the curtains of the parlor of the house, a room reserved for big parties only. She finds that parlor fascinating because it is always dark, with the tulle curtains and the other thick curtains always drawn shut. The parlor has a particular smell that Martina recognizes very well, a musty smell, from the lack of light and air, a smell that for her,

smells of a safe haven. Between the great yellow sofa and the curtains, she has found a safe and comfortable spot to hide in and get away from home whenever she pleases. There, she reads, daydreams, sleeps sometimes. There are spiders but they have made space for Martina and they all coexist without bothering each other. Martina doesn't squash them and the spiders don't bite her. Spiders are good mothers, Martina thinks. They weave their own house, take care of it, prepare it, fill it with eggs. Someone told her that when the male fertilizes the female, she kills him because she doesn't need him anymore. "Why don't we learn from the spiders?" Martina thinks. A distant voice interrupts her reflection on spiders. Her mother wants something and Martina doesn't immediately respond. She lets her mother call her over and over again, until she decides to emerge from her hiding spot that no one should discover. Her mother tells her to get dressed to go to ballet class. "How revolting!" Martina thinks. What does her mother want her to take ballet for? She has to wear those tight-fitting, all pink leotards and tights that stick to her body and those ballet slippers with their hard, wooden soles. Martina is the chubbiest girl in the group and one of the shortest. The slanted eyes in her round face accentuate her mestizo features, even if according to her father she is white and because of that, good-for-nothing. Her sister, bigger than she and even more mestizo, she's fine. Cecilia is big, she was always big, she was born big. She was so big that her father thought that she would be a boy. But Cecilia was born a girl. It didn't matter much to the father in the end. She was so big and stout that she resembled a soccer player. From the moment she was born, Cecilia always exhibited a strong personality. Instead of sleeping at night, she would make weird noises. Even though there was quite a delay in her speech, she always made her wishes clearly known. Two years later, Martina arrived,

small, quiet, a sleepyhead. Martina was satisfied with her mother's milk, she slept through the night, and she never made noise. Her mother considered her a blessing after the sleepless nights with Cecilia. Her grandmother told Martina that her father wasn't at the hospital when she was born. No one knew where he was, surely with another woman. The quiet, shy girl, her sister's complete opposite, grew up proving herself to be her mother's daughter and her grandfather's granddaughter.

That's why her father didn't love her. Cecilia had turned out rough and Indian like him, she had a boy's personality. Martina was white, quiet, and surely a weakling like her mother. My grandmother also told me that my father didn't love me because he thought that I wasn't his daughter. But my virtuous and God-fearing Catholic mother, who wouldn't agree to a divorce when he went to live with another woman, was incapable of infidelity. In the end, it didn't matter. I didn't love him either, just as well. I would have liked to have had a different father, but because of bad luck I was stuck with this one. So the thing to do was to get rid of him and have only women in the house: my mother, my grandmother, Cecilia, the servants, and me. That would be paradise, like the times when my father would go off traveling and we women would be the only ones left in the house. "When the cat's away the mice will play," my grandmother would say, my grandmother who hated my father precisely because he was Indian. And he hated me because I was white. When he would go away, my mother let us, that is Cecilia and me, sleep in the bed with her. It was very nice to wake up and see my mom reading in bed or eating breakfast on a tray. I could make that paradise happen for us permanently. If I didn't do it, no one would.

Once again Martina's father's birthday is being celebrated with a dinner, which his closest friends attend. They come with their smiling wives that wear their fancy hairdos and high heels. Quickly, the men and women separate into two groups. The men drink whisky and the women drink a smooth liqueur as befits ladies. Cecilia and I, who have been dressed in our Sunday best, have to pass out the white napkins and hors d'oeuvres that complement the cocktails.

The ladies tell both of us how much we've grown, they ask us if we like school, what we want to be when we grow up. Cecilia, who is good at speaking her mind, says that she wants to go into business like her father. I don't know how to respond. I have never thought about what I would like to be when I grow up. I don't even know if I want to grow up. Because if being grown up means being like my mom or dad, then I have no desire to be a grown up. I want to be like Alice in Wonderland, to go through the looking glass of a story and be a guest at the party of some princess and see everything that happens in the story from up-close. I want to chat with dwarfs and animals, to sleep in a gingerbread house, and escape from the wicked witch before she eats me. I want to get lost in the woods and in the middle of the forest, find a palace made of ice and light, with a queen that will take me in and teach me magic tricks and tell me stories. I would stroll through the transparent walls of her palace with her. Sometimes I see men and animals trapped inside them, doomed to eternal cold. The Snow Queen tells me that they have behaved badly and this is why they are being punished. It seems fine to me. I behave myself and they punish me. What will happen when I do misbehave! I've never misbehaved intentionally. I'm so afraid that I don't know what it's like to misbehave on purpose and not by accident. The queen of the frozen, luminous palace has given me a

flask as magical as she is. It's so pretty that I look at it, fascinated, and don't take it immediately. "Take it," she tells me in a voice filled with echoes, "take it and use it when the need arises."

After dinner is over, the men, including my father, are drunk and nodding off. Their wives, with their stiff smiles, try to hold them up and follow the thread of the conversation so that they don't become violent. My father starts to talk politics and pours praise on the Indian dictator who finally makes him feel superior to the whites. Although I may be mestizo, to him I'm white and the whites are an enemy that must be trampled and humiliated like they've humiliated the Indians for almost five hundred years. At school, I'm not white, I'm Indian, and the girls in my class rub it in all the time. Even though my second last name may sound gringo, I'm Indian and fat to boot. But now that I see him drunk once again, embarrassing my mother with his foolish and resentful comments, I don't care anymore if I'm white for some people and Indian for others. I just want him to disappear, however, whenever, wherever. If only he would go away and never come back. One of his drunken friends has had the brilliant idea that everyone should express what he feels for his friend, today, on his saint's day. I hate the friend and his idea as much as I hate my father. Now everyone will have to say flowery things that to me will be nothing more than revolting lies. If we were to tell the truth, the truth that doesn't exist in this house as long as he's with us, they'd punish me and force me into the exile of my room for days. The guests start talking nonsense, bits of phrases repeated in greeting cards, words that no one believes: "He's a fine man, honorable, hard working, honest," "He's a fine family man, his children never want for anything," "He's a fine friend, there's always love in his home." Fine, fine, fine. The only "fine" thing about him

is his last name, Fino. The drunken men, including my father, with their eyes half closed and droopy smiles, nod their heads at every comment they like, even though they know that they're lies told out of fear. Fear, the fear that rules over me ever since I can remember. The fear that I want to get rid of as soon as possible. The freedom from fear that I want to bestow upon my mother, my grandmother, even my sister, in order to celebrate our everyday paradise. The fear has led me by the hand to the glass of red wine that my father is drinking, after the whisky and beer. That new glass, full of fresh wine, that I have brought for him from the kitchen, since he spilled the other one with a clumsy swat wanting to refill it himself. That's what I expected, he always did the same things when he was drunk. The alcohol would make him clumsy and he would end up staining my mother's exquisite tablecloths when attempting to pour himself more wine. The spilled and broken wineglass always had to be replaced with a new one. A new one that I brought over, with the potion that the queen of the ice palace had given me, and that I had mixed in with the red wine that my mother had asked me to pour for him. Terrified by the repulsively flattering things that would have to come out of my mouth to praise this drunken man who had taught me nothing but fear, I watched my turn approaching. I began to think of what I would have to say without my voice trembling with suppressed rage and with fresh humiliation that hurt as much as the blow in Chinchá. While I was thinking, an unmarried and well-liked aunt was repeating clichés to get off the hook and fulfill her obligation as guest. My aunt had barely started when my father turned white as a ghost and broke out in a cold sweat. A couple of convulsions rocked his body and he got up from the table violently. Before he could finish getting up, he fell to the floor writhing in pain. The guests crowded around him without knowing what to do. They

thought it was the beginning of the delirium tremens brought about by the combination of intoxication and the excitement from so much praise, even if they were just formulaic expressions. While they responded, calling a doctor or the paramedics, the poison had already taken effect. It would tear up his stomach, like he tore up my face with his blows.

My mother and sister take pains to surround him with guilty faces, probably thinking what I'm thinking, but without mentioning it. That man, my father, writhes on the floor in inexplicable pain. A siren wails in the distance, the paramedics are coming. Hopefully they won't arrive on time. I leave everything in the hands of God, if one exists. Finally they arrive, they clear out the dining room, they give him injections to stop the poison. But nothing stops. Nature and the commandments of God run their course without stopping. My father keeps writhing like a worm on a hook, lying on the floor like a sack of potatoes. A couch potato, what he would call me when he saw me watching television. Or when he saw me, drunk then too, dressed for my first communion and he commented, "Moby Dick. You're the white whale, Martina." They say that when dying, out of the blue, you recall everything that you have done in your life. Hopefully you will recall it as I now do. During one of your spasms, our eyes have met. And for the first time in ten years of fear and anxiety, our roles have been reversed. I have seen fear in the eyes of your magnificent cadaver. And in mine, you should have probably seen the hatred I harbor against you, this hatred, silently stored up ever since I realized that you were a part of my world. By mistake. You're part of my world by mistake. And I have to remove you from here. The doctors can't do anything more and they carry you out of the house. I hope you don't come back. My unmarried aunt hugs me so that I don't see how they carry you out. That night, I sleep without a sinking feeling in my stomach, which hasn't

happened very often in the past few years. I hope that when I wake up, you will be gone for good.

It's summer and we're off from school. This time, my mother has cancelled special camps due to the mourning period. She doesn't know that I don't care. Just the opposite, I hated the ballet classes where they would wrap me up like pink plastic packaging, accentuating my rolls. My mother changes things around the house while she finds a new one. She doesn't like the idea of us staying there ever since he passed away. My grandmother sews. The servant girl waters the garden. My sister listens to music shut up in our room, or she talks for hours on the phone with her girlfriends. I read hidden in the parlor, I read my magical stories and dream of writing them. I dream. The only sad thing about our female paradise is that ever since he passed away, I haven't gone back to dreaming about the magical princess that would take me in under her skirts, nor about the giant snail that would crush me mercilessly. I haven't gone back to reading the story about the Snow Queen either. I have kept it just in case. Let's hope that I will not need it again and that none of my children will need it.

SLEEPING IN THE WATER

My movements become lethargic. I've gone back to sleep submerged in a tank of water. Faint light passes through the density of the liquid and presents me with an unsettled surface. My skin scales off and begins to tear into shreds. I have to come up to the surface, leaving behind the weight of the water that makes me pleasantly slow. When I come back, Alina has cried once again, she has screamed like the Santander gulls, criticizing me for so many things once again. I let her speak, groan, cry, sigh. I love her more than she thinks. She has helped me out of several tight spots, she has taken care of me when I've had a fever, she has licked my wounds like a cat. My poor Alina, she has tried to leave me so many times. Alina isn't secure enough to do something like that. That's why I picked her and stayed with her. That's why she's allowed to love me. Only someone as weak as Alina could stay by my side. I want to sleep in the water once again. It's hard for me to open my eyes, but I always manage to do it. I remember Alina, cuddled up against me sobbing once again. My poor Alina, I only make you suffer, despite the fact that I love you. I never told you that I'm not afraid of you, only of your unconditional and humble way of loving me. A way that became so absolute over time. So absolute that it was breaking down barriers, very strong barriers, barriers crossed by your intensity, that terribly intense love of yours. Alina, I'm not afraid of you nor of anyone, but I'm terrified of your love.

Once again, he has done it. He's gone longer, it takes him longer to come back, but he always comes back. He doesn't want to be with her, and nonetheless, when he's

away from her, he calls her, looks for her, time after time, and time after time he scratches her soul, he takes away whatever he feels like taking on impulse, he messes up her bed, he leaves the dirty plates piled up in the kitchen, he gets the bathroom floor wet because the shower has no curtain and he can only shower standing up. The girl picks up his clothes, puts them away, hangs them but doesn't iron them, she doesn't know how to do it, and even less when it comes to men's dress shirts. Her mother's cleaning lady once told her that you start with the sleeves or the collar, but no, she doesn't know how, she doesn't remember, she doesn't know how. Benjamin once again tells her that as a homemaker, she's no good, and he goes off to sleep on the tile floor in the living room because her body is too warm for him. But it's not too warm for him when he mounts her and his fingers try to get her wet so that she will sit on top of him and please him. It's not too warm for him in foreplay, nor during, but its closeness suffocates him afterwards. In that afterwards in which any Rambo show is more entertaining than hanging around with her for a few minutes. And she stays with him, she stays with him and she doesn't know why she stays with him. She, who's the worst at everything, stays with him, and she doesn't know why.

Benjamin swims the entire length of the pool underwater in one go. Alina swims on the surface and every time she dunks her head underwater, she opens her eyes, looking for him near her, but she doesn't see him. It seems as if he dissolved in the water, as if he vanished every time he disappears in her completely. She tries time and again, but she doesn't manage to get a glimpse of him. Benjamin becomes one with the water and his molecules break apart whenever he is surrounded by her. She can't catch up with him. Alina and Benjamin meet up at the other side of the pool. Like on rare occasions,

Benjamin doesn't argue, doesn't criticize, he seems to be feeling well, he closes his eyes and sighs, relieved, as if the contact with the chlorine-filled water of the pool had cured him, cured him of his thirty-eight years of emptiness, of questions, of absences. Alina softly approaches him, she tells him that she'd like to see him but that she can't make him out when he swims underwater. Benjamin smiles without opening his eyes, and flattered, asks if she'd really like to see him when he's under there. The girl keeps insisting and Benjamin gets out of the pool without saying anything else. He goes over to where his belongings are and takes out a pair of goggles from the side pocket of his knapsack. "Here, Alina, you'll be able to see me better with these." The goggles make a snapping sound upon falling and Alina picks them up. "Go to the other side and wait for me, Alina, from there you'll be able to see me better." Alina complies and floats to the other side of the pool whose bottom is becoming deeper. Finally she gets to the other side and signals Benjamin, while adjusting the goggles. Benjamin jumps into the water and dives under. Alina goes under several times and keeps her eyes wide open behind the goggles that are so tight around her head they hurt. But curiosity impels her not to notice the annoyance and she gropes for Benjamin's figure in the water. She lets a few seconds go by when she sees an undulating form that doesn't resemble Benjamin anymore, nor a human being. Benjamin transforms into an enormous fish that swims, glued to the bottom of the pool. His body bears the entire weight of the water and it doesn't seem to affect him. The fish-man has his arms flexed under his chest and propels himself with sponge fingers that stick to the surface of the pool bottom. His body remains upright and wavy, like his hair, which floats, tangled by the water. Not one bubble escapes his mouth, his sides transform into cavernous, barely visible gills. Alina tries to go down further but the weight of the

water keeps her close to the surface. Benjamin, transformed into a strange circus freak, moves through the pool, glued to the bottom, until he almost reaches the walls. She can't see his eyes, although he comes closer and closer. She's out of breath and has to come up once again. While she's taking in gulps of air, Benjamin's torso surges up before her with a splashing sound, opening its mouth like a mythological shark that jumps out to capture the prey that soars above the surface. The fact that his eyes are closed allows Alina to observe him at will. She still can't believe what she's seen, it seems unbelievable to her that Benjamin could be the fish-man she just saw underwater. Benjamin finally rubs his eyes and opens them. He looks at Alina, and smiles, proud of what he has shown her. "Were you able to see me? Yeah? What did you think?" Benjamin utters impatiently. Alina opens her eyes wide with approval, she slightly nods her head. Yes, she was able to see him, this time the girl was able to find him.

"Oh, fine, if you don't want to talk to me, I'll hang up. Give me the return ticket and you won't ever see me again. Get out of my life. How annoying, why did you wait so long to buy the return ticket? I'm going but I don't know at what time, I can't tell you, wait for me, and if you don't want to wait for me, don't, I don't care if I see you or not. No, I'm not going to go, I have a game early on tomorrow, tomorrow I want to sleep for as long as I feel like it, but if you happen to come by, buy me something yummy for breakfast, and the paper, tomorrow... You get out of here and leave me the stereo equipment, the comforter, the walkman. Oh, you're going to take it? You're not going to give it to me? You're so stingy. And why are you inviting only me? Invite my friend as well. Or didn't they teach the spoiled princess manners? You love me? Yeah? Buy me those sandals. If you change the channel for me, I love you. You want me to love you?"

Buy me those Bermudas, *shorts* as you say in your textbook English, look I don't have anything for the summer. There's the lighter, of course, since it's not wearing pants you can't find it. Go ahead, tell me the truth since I already know what it is, how many guys did you sleep with last night? How dare you ask me that? Yes, you're a dumb girl, dumb aren't you? What, don't they teach spoiled brats to think? Of course, they're spoon fed everything. You're not going swimming? There's a guy waiting for you in the pool. The same thing again? Eat the same thing? What? Spoiled princesses don't know how to cook? Of course, they don't know how to fuck either." And, nonetheless, in Santillana, when she was straddling you at the hotel she was paying for, and was devouring you however you requested, you told her that she fucked better than any other woman, that the rich girl had better moves than any tramp from your town. Because what you wanted was a girl on her high horse, just as one time she heard you say, "I like the ones who are on a high horse so that I can take them down, bro. The proud ones, the arrogant ones, the ones who are very dignified because of their money and status, the ones who think they're so great but who are really nothing, these are the ones who should be taken down, had, screwed, and dumped, so that you see how that leaves them, bro."

Benjamin has asked Alina to do a translation for him, it's just a short, thirty-page article, nothing really. A nothing really that overwhelms her now that her project deadlines are around the corner. "The thing is you don't know how to be organized, Benjamin scolds her, yes dear, you shouldn't waste so much time getting depressed. And don't you go blaming me since I have nothing to do with your depressive episodes, my darling." Alina does the translation for you but you lie down on the sofa and watch television with the volume all the way up. She asks you about the meaning of this or that,

because she doesn't know a thing about economics, but you don't answer her. She dares to call you in a louder tone of voice and you just respond with, "Woman, stop being such a pain in the ass. Can't you see I'm busy? Doesn't the spoiled princess know English? What's the point of having you around then? What was the point of daddy paying for the girl to go to a bilingual private school? For this? Oh my God. Oh my God, who have I gotten involved with?"

She insists that you help her seeing as the translation is for you, "If you don't want to do it, don't. I already know that you don't love me enough to make you want to do it. What else can I expect?" In a rebellious attempt, Alina gets up from the table and gathers up her belongings. In front of the TV, Benjamin remains oblivious, it makes no difference to him whether she stays or goes. The girl gathers her belongings, goes into his room, waits for him to stop her, so that he can tell her that everything is okay, that they'll sit down together now or later when he doesn't want to watch TV anymore, but as usual, he never gets around to it...Alina tries to go, the door bangs loudly upon slamming shut. Benjamin keeps watching how, with just one shot, Rambo finishes off a row of despicable men, all of them with almond-shaped eyes, in order to rescue his comrades, who just blew up a town without caring that, among the almond-shaped eyes, there are children who don't harm anyone.

The phone rings. Benjamin's friend, who hasn't budged either, mesmerized by Rambo's muscles, the muscles he's trying to acquire by going to the gym three times a week, picks up unhurriedly. It's for Benjamin. The friend makes a face, letting him know that it's a girl, but it's not Alina, it's a different one, she has a different accent, sounds younger. Curious, Benjamin takes the phone. His voice becomes modulated, changed,

flirtatious. The vowels become drawn out, the intonation become sweeter, “Hiiii, how are youuuu? What a surprise...yeah, nothing special, here....watching a game, finishing up some work, a translation...yeah, somewhat difficult, anyway, I’m going at it with my limited English ...What was going on with you this morning? ...Yeah, don’t tell me that nothing, you were veeerrrry quiet, tell me what’s going on with you...go ahead, yeah, I’m listening...yeah, of course, well, I don’t know...”. Like a tuned lute string, Benjamin’s face suddenly tenses up in the presence of the girl, who has emerged from the shadows of his room. His lips part slightly due to unexpected and sudden astonishment. Breathless, his eyes drown in her glare. Alina’s outrage makes the floor rattle. She stares at him like a prosecutor from all of the courts he has avoided throughout his life. Benjamin slowly stands up repeating “Don’t do anything ... everything’s fine, everything’s fine,” in a soft, hurried voice. Alina asks him for the phone but Benjamin quickly hangs up and takes her to his room. In the middle of pushing and shoving, Benjamin’s left cheek suddenly feels hot and her look of astonishment leaves him perplexed. He had expected this from his other women, but not from Alina. Alina who had learned to say nothing, not to respond to his threats, to accept his daily lies, to keep her thoughts to herself, to cry and to swallow her tears in a cycle because Benjamin had never been capable of hugging her to soothe her aching soul. Alina’s hand had risen up in rebellion against him like never before and her face, even after the punch, hadn’t lost its invading fury. In an awkward search for excuses, there was nothing left for the surprised man besides an attempt at dignity. Arguing, very offended, against this sort of unfair abuse, he told her that it was excessive for something that hadn’t occurred, that she had to get out of his life, that he never wanted to see her again, that this was the last time. Threat after threat, like wounded

animals, they confront each other with rage, looking for the most effective way to hurt one another. Again, the phone rings, Rambo's friend answers and calls Benjamin. Both of them struggle to get out of the bedroom to see who gets there first. Benjamin beats her and grabs the receiver. He hangs up immediately, without saying a word. Alina, enraged like never before, insults him again and Benjamin shoves her towards his bedroom with his lips speechless and with a disconcerted look still on his face because even the mesmerized Rambo admirer realizes what's happening. Little by little, the minutes of allegations, explanations, complaints turn into hours of silent sobbing by both of them. Alina can't believe what Benjamin is telling her. The girl on the phone has been reduced to nothing, next to Benjamin's new confessions, he who between rage and stupor has decided to tell her forever-kept secrets. Benjamin sits down lengthwise on the bed, Alina clasps her hands together, she looks at the floor, at the walls, at the window shaded by an old, hand-made curtain looking for ways out. She can't look at Benjamin, she can't, she doesn't want to. She hadn't imagined this new story, this new child whose photograph was coming out of the hiding spot Benjamin had confined it to for months, this new secret, this new edge of the abyss. Alina tries to leave him once again, but she comes back to lick his wounds. He, only rarely defeated, asks her to hug him. This time, like never before, she refuses. He asks her again, she doesn't respond. He cries bitterly, stretched out on top of her, and falls asleep like that, with his cheeks hot and wet from begging so much forgiveness. Alina, unmoved, accommodates him without hugging him, she acts as his bed without complaining, without opening her mouth. Benjamin notices his movements slowing down again. The darkness is fading and he can open his eyes. He's not in the pool anymore because in pools, the bottom feels hard and smooth. The

sand moves, rippling beneath his body, while he stretches out slowly. Curious fish place themselves at his side without touching him and green, red and purple plants burst under the touch of his fingers. For the first time in his watery dreams, Benjamin feels lonely. His body glides stealthily along the marine bottom and neither the dense animals that swim up to him nor the amorphous and porous rocks that harbor old treasures satisfy his gaze anymore. All of a sudden, a shadow invades his path and frightens his curious companions. Benjamin moves as fast as he can, but when he manages to turn, the surface reflects the light from the outside from very far away. With quick although lethargic movements of the head, he searches for the origin of the shadow on the infinite horizon of the sea that extends before him. He searches, squints, looks, strains his eyes but he can't see. A long rock that calmly rests in his vicinity reflects an obscure clue. The light doesn't shine through it like it does with the others and Benjamin suspects something. He heads towards the elongated rock and it becomes bigger and bigger. Finally he reaches it and touches its edges with his fingers. He pulls it towards him but the rock doesn't respond. Benjamin propels himself towards the other side of the rock and the space that should be empty reveals the darkness of a mass whose shapes remain undefined before his eyes. Benjamin, curious like all the fish, stretches out his hand to touch it. And at that instant, an unexpected whirlpool inevitably drags him to the surface. Benjamin opens his eyes again, he feels a pair of familiarly cold feet. Alina's body, worn out from so much crying, rests beside him. Benjamin comes up to her strangely loving and whispers in her ear, "Let's go Alina, get up. We're going to Santillana, to the beach, to the sea. Let's go, even if it's just one more time there, the water awaits us."

I sense movement in the water that surrounds my home. I think that I'm finally in the ocean. Fish, plants, ripples of water. The mass whose shadow I've seen behind the elongated rock, undulates towards me. I don't see the surface of the water anymore, at last, those tunnels that bring me back to a life of air have been sealed off. The mass gets closer and closer and lets some dark hair flow. The stubborn light has filtered in through the density of the water, illuminating a familiar form in the mass that has accompanied me from my dreams in the tank. But it only exposes a rolling back and a mysterious, tilted head. With my slow pace, I manage to get close and I try to turn it over but it resists. Finally, I succeed: this face that I've been looking for reflects Alina's placid, pain-free expression, without tears, without blame stifled by my faults, my abuse, my selfishness. Alina sleeps with me in the water of this ocean. Alina has been accompanying me forever and she keeps doing so, only that it took a long time for me to realize that it had to be her, that rich, dumb girl with whom I could do whatever I pleased. Whatever I pleased, so I thought. Now we are both here, Alina has found the entrance to my watery dreams. She snuggles up to me and I hug her in case her feet get cold. Alina has always been so lovingly obstinate and sensitive to the cold.

THE CEMETERY OF ACARI

A lot of rain has fallen in the valleys to the east of Lomas. The grounds of the Cemetery of Acari are caving in. Coffins float half-buried in the sand and the bodies are in danger of drifting away. We have to go soon. We have to identify our dead by the coffins and the clothes in which they were buried. Do you remember, Mother? Remember how they buried Grandmother Emilia? And Ramoncito? And Violetita? They were together, weren't they? The three coffins were placed side by side, although it was Violetita who died first, so young. She was only eight months old when that terrible cough started, that whooping cough that left her breathless, killing her in her little cradle lined with white lace and covered with mosquito netting. Violetita never got to see the world, or even the Acari hacienda. You told me yourself, Mother. Do you remember?

“Yes, yes. I remember it very well.”

Augusta remembered Violetita's death, which everyone else still refused to believe. The blacks from the hacienda filled their huts with magical stories and witch spells to keep Violetita from letting go of her guardian angel's hand. The servants recited the rosary with Grandmother Manonguita. But she went anyway, ethereal as she was. They dressed her in Holland lace and bundled up her feet in little booties so that they wouldn't be cold there in the damp Acari soil.

A silver rosary was placed around her neck to protect her from the devil Supay's lies. Violetita was so little; she could have believed anything and gone with Supay instead

of waiting for her guardian angel. Thank God she didn't go to wander in Limbo like so many other children from the hacienda—the children of slaves and servants who had died before, or soon after, being born. In order to save her from the heartless mists of Limbo, Violetita was baptized just after her birth.

“But the coffins are together, right?”

“Yes, yes, they're together. We buried them side by side. They have to be together.”

We came on mule and by wagon to what used to be the Cemetery of Acari. The Indians and mestizos we met at the port of Lomas didn't want to take us to the cemetery; they were afraid. They say that the dead have left their tombs and their souls float about restlessly in search of their graves. They told us horrible stories about empty coffins and human remains sunken in the sandy earth. The grave robbers didn't waste time plundering the remains—desecrating our dead and taking all the jewelry and valuables they could find.

Finally we made a deal with a mestizo who agreed to take us there for twenty *soles*. A ridiculous amount of money, but what were we going to do? We have to rescue what we can still find of Ramoncito, Violetita, and Grandmother Emilia. We don't care about the gold necklace, the silver rosary, or the elegant riding habit in which they were buried. We just want them to rest in peace forever. I would like it if my grandchildren did the same for me should the situation arise. I hope it won't, but one never knows.

The mestizo, silent and indifferent, brings the wagon to a stop without uttering a word. He assumes that we will recognize the place, but I can't. I've never been to Acari, nor to the hacienda, or to the dovecot, or on the balcony of the great house. I'm familiar

with these places from listening to Augusta's stories when she used to reminisce about the grandeur of Acari and how she was spoiled as the little girl of the household.

But my mother gazes out at the horizon and knows that we are in Acari, in the Cemetery of Acari, on the same land that Grandmother Emilia had generously offered up ninety years ago, so that the people from the town and from the hacienda could receive Christian burials and their souls would not wander between Limbo and Purgatory. This way, since she donated a cemetery, she herself would not have to wait too long to enter heaven. In the worst-case scenario—if St. Peter were taking a while with the paperwork—she would be escorted to the gate of heaven. Emilia Echeverria de Candamo couldn't care less about saving the souls of her slaves and servants or those of the people of Acari, Lomas, or Cachay. All that mattered to her was that there be a bright, demon-free place near Lord God, reserved for her beyond eternity. Augusta remembered how the black housekeeper, Sabina, talked with the other black women in the kitchen of the big house about the great lady Emilia's ill-fated gift. The blacks and Indians from Acari were convinced that their mistress, Emilia, had either signed a pact with St. Peter or with one of Lucifer's messengers since she had known when it would be her time to leave this world.

That afternoon when the sun was reddish on a horizon dominated by the sand dunes that hemmed in the world of Acari, Miss Emilia returned from her last horse ride, panting in time with the animal, a slight pain between her lower back and intestines. Emilia, proud and petite in her riding habit, did not wish to display her pain to the laborers. Near the main stable, the slaves were preparing *chicharrones*¹ in a large pan filled with hot oil. Emilia saw the meat curling upon itself in the frying oil and she asked

¹ Traditional pork rinds,

the black, Teodoro, to give her a piece. Using a sharpened stick, the obedient slave removed the piece of meat that Emilia had selected. After draining off the oil and fanning it with banana leaves to cool it, the slave offered the meat to his mistress. Having already removed her gloves, she grasped it with her hands to eat it.

“Wait ma’am, I’ll fetch you some bread. *Chicharrón* without bread ain’t good fer the bones.”

“Don’t worry, Teodoro, I’ll eat them like this.”

Emilia ate the *chicharrones* in two bites and savored the meat’s seasoned, salty, and recently fried flavor. Teodoro, still concerned, offered her a glass of wine.

“Drink up ma’am, it be good fer the belly. You’s comin’ from horse ridin’ and you be eatin’ this meat. Drink up the wine, it’ll help you digest’.”

“You black rascal, you,” replied Emilia, with a mischievous smile. “You want to get me drunk. Bring me some water; I don’t want any wine just now.”

“Whatever you say, ma’am.”

Later on, when night had settled on the Acari sky and the slaves were telling ghost stories in their huts, Emilia was doubling over in pain in her solitary, indigo-colored room in the big house. The noise that she made knocking over the bedpan and silver washbasins alerted Sabina, who went to see what was going on with Miss Emilia. Upon entering Emilia’s room she saw her mistress, who seemed to be possessed by a wandering spirit that spun her back and forth, just like children’s tops on the patio in front of the house.

“Ma’am, ma’am! What’s going on, what should I bring you, what should I do?”

But Emilia didn't seem to see or hear her. The great lady of the house wailed while reeling from one bed post to the other; she just kept gasping with a primal fear the words that Sabina had repeated to Augusta in one of her stories: "Dear Jesus, dear Jesus. Where do I hide?" She hadn't finished saying the last word when a foul-smelling, brown substance spilled from her mouth and flooded her pale breasts and night gown, drowning her mercilessly.

"She died in her own crap," Sabina would relate in the huts, taking care that no one from the big house heard her. "All covered in crap just like she was crapping on the other owners and so many blacks."

"The white doctors that come after be callin' it colic miserere," added a young, bright-eyed black boy.

"Call it what you want," said Sabina, "the thing's that she went to the other side to report to St. Peter, all covered in crap."

The chapel bells of the hacienda keep on ringing, beckoning the slaves to gather quickly on the main patio in front of the arched veranda of the great house. Today is the birthday of little Ramoncito, Master Augusto's first born child and the only heir to the great lady Emilia. It is very hot in Acari, but in order to honor little Ramoncito on his birthday, everyone from the big house and everyone from the farms surrounding the hacienda takes off from work; they all must go and pay homage to Master Augusto's first born, who turns two years old today.

The whole week has been a whirl of trips back and forth between Acari, the Port of Lomas, and the valley farthest from Cachay. The slaves have worked fewer hours on the farms, helping the overseers fetch the supplies for the great party the master, Augusto,

and the great lady of the house, Emilia, have organized. On the Acari hacienda, little Ramoncito's second year of life is being celebrated. The maids and black women have flocked to the big house, mostly to the kitchen, to prepare *dulces de chancaca* and *alfajores de manjarblanco*, *turrones de miel*, *ranfañotes con queso fresco*, and *mazamorra morada*. Bottomless gallons of *chicha de jora* and *chicha morada*² have been prepared to keep the party's guests and laborers merry. They have prepared a few calves to feed the earthen oven of the great *pachamanca* barbecue, which will begin at five in the evening with music from a band that Master Augusto had sent in from Ica, a city on the other side of the Huacachina Lagoon in the desert oasis. The blacks and Indian servants continue working without pause, and now that it is almost five, the bells call them to pay tribute to little Ramoncito.

Master Augusto has called for Sabina to come and dress the birthday boy in a snow white suit trimmed with crocheted lace and subtle organza flowers ordered specially from the capital. Sabina carries out the request, contemplating the powdered face of little Ramoncito, who smiles like an angel on a holy card. While the slave is dressing the little boy, Mama Ines stands at the window, to one side of the half drawn curtain; she looks out towards the hacienda horizon and listens to the clothing rustling against the child's little body. Master Augusto enters and, seeing that she is not ready, he swears:

“Maria Ines! It's almost five, and you haven't even gotten dressed. What disrespect!”

² *Dulces de chancaca* and *alfajores de manjarblanco* - caramel desserts

Turrones de miel - molasses pies

Ranfañotes con queso fresco - fried snack mixes

Mazamorra morada - purple corn pudding

Chicha de jora and *chicha morada* - traditional alcoholic and virgin corn beers,

“Disrespect is what you’re forcing upon me by having this kind of ceremony. I won’t go. I don’t want to be there. I’ll just watch from here.”

“It’s the presentation of Ramon, my son, my heir, my first born, the lord and master of these lands and the ones in Lomas and Cachay! What do you mean you won’t attend?”

“No Augusto, I won’t attend. I’ll watch from far away, like always. It won’t be the first time. Your mother will be there at your side. She’s the lady of the house. She’s the one who has to be there. I am nobody. I am only Mama Ines.”

Master Augusto can’t stand his wife’s trembling voice, and he leaves the room, but not before he orders Sabina:

“When the child is ready, take him to the great lady of the house.”

“Yes, sir.

The first notes played by the Ica band announce that the ceremony is about to begin. A group of workers, those in charge of seasoning and serving the *pachamanca*, are the first to pass in front of the velvet cushion where little Ramoncito has been placed. Without getting too close, the workers remove their hats and bow respectfully before the little master. Miss Emilia and Master Augusto observe the solemn act without smiling and-with a slight nod of their heads- thank all those who have come to pay homage to the child. The little one, dressed in an expensive suit from Lima, wears a thin gold chain with a medallion of the Virgin Mary around his neck. In spite of the heat, Ramoncito is covered with a little macramé blanket, handmade by the barefoot nuns of Ica. The child’s feet are bare so that the slaves and servants from the Acari hacienda may fulfill the rite of paying respect and honoring their little master. Sabina is the first one to go by, setting an

example for the young slaves who have never witnessed such a ceremony. She approaches the child who looks at her, perfectly still—thankful that she has done him up so handsomely. The black woman smiles, crosses herself, and kisses his tiny feet.

She then turns to lose herself in the crowd of slaves and servants who must imitate her performance of the rite. When she sees that neither Master Augusto nor the great lady Emilia are watching, Sabina slips away into the mansion. She goes through the kitchen, the small pantry, and the back hallways. She climbs the stairs on whose wood even an ant's crawl would resonate. She comes to Mama Ines's room and finds her just where she left her, next to the windows that look out onto the main patio.

Mama Ines— a woman robbed because of love, forced to be a mother because of love, and suffering because of love—cries once more. Sabina listens to the young woman's quiet weeping and approaches silently to avoid frightening her. When Mama Ines becomes aware of her presence, she shuts up suddenly, but does not turn her head; her gaze remains fixed on the ceremony she is witnessing through the blinds. Sabina realizes this, and goes to Mama Ines' side. She kneels on the floor, trying to comfort her.

“Cry, ma'am. Cry all you want.”

“I'm not the ma'am, Sabina, I'm just Mama Ines.”

“Okay darlin', whatever you want, but don't you be cryin' no more. Mammy Sabina's here to soak up the tears.”

“It's an atrocity what they're doing with my child, isn't it Sabina?”

“They did the same thing when Master Augusto was born. It's the custom, darlin'. You have to show the child so that the black folks and the servants can pay him homage

and start callin' him 'the lil' master'. Look how I done him up, he be just like the baby Jesus."

"Yes, Sabina. My little Ramoncito looks so precious, but he's only two years old. He can't understand at this age why so many grown-ups are kissing his feet."

"That lil' Ramoncito, he be behavin' so well, he be quiet, actin' like the great master."

"Yes, my dear, my child is quiet like one of God's little angels."

Once all of the hacienda slaves, servants, workers, and overseers had paid their tribute to little Ramoncito, the great Emilia told her son Augusto in a confidential tone that they could not wait any longer. The Acari heat, although it was almost dusk, would ruin everything if they did not hurry up and bury the child. It would not be necessary for the Lomas priest to come once again. He had already been there the night before, together with Maria Ines, watching over the child, who had been flooded by sudden fevers. At daybreak, he read the last rites.

Little Ramoncito had passed away on the dawn of the ceremony, a little after completing his second year of life. He would join in heaven his sister Violetita, who had left a few months earlier. They would even play together there. But exposing the little body during the ceremony at the hacienda on such a sweltering day sped up the burial of the little angel significantly. The *pachamanca* and birthday party would follow afterwards, though now as a funeral celebration. Augusto listened to his mother and requested that his son's body be placed in a small coffin of light-colored wood that, along with the band, he had ordered from Ica. And later they held the *pachamanca* and drank the enormous jugs of *chicha* to the last drop.

Over the uneven terrain—as if the earth had opened up and then closed after one of the earthquakes common to the region—my mother noticed some recovered coffins that had accumulated after the erosion caused by unexpected torrential rains. Those made of more resistant wood had fared better than the others, and the poor dead that simply had been buried in their shrouds had already disappeared into the rift, becoming one with the earth that welcomed them with great tenderness. Augusta, anxiety written across her face, followed the gravedigger who appeared when we arrived. He led her a few feet away from the opening and showed her some coffins made of hard wood that had remained more or less intact. Two small coffins were a good sign of what we were looking for. My mother ordered for them to be opened, but the remains of the children that had been buried there—as well as the lace, organza, macramé, and crocheted socks that had been meant to protect their little bodies—had decayed. Only the medallion and silver rosaries around what used to be their necks could help to confirm their identities.

Now we had to look at the large coffin that lay next to the two little ones. My mother and I began examining the surface of the coffins carefully, looking for any signs that would give us a clue. Feeling through the clinging, rain-dampened sand with our fingers, we were able to distinguish Grandmother Emilia's coffin by her metal initials, which were embossed on the surface.

“This is it,” said Augusta, and she ordered the gravedigger to open the coffin carefully. By the light of a clear sky after much rain, a riding habit appeared formidably before our eyes; one that was small for the adult woman who should have been Emilia Echeverria when she died. Covering what was once the tiny waist of the great lady, was a small bolero jacket embroidered with gold arabesque designs. Underneath was a white

cotton blouse whose ruffled, backstitched cuffs stuck out from the sleeves of the bolero jacket. A sash, also exquisitely embroidered, separated the bodice from what probably had been the wide, hazelnut-colored, velvet skirts. Over what remained of the bones of the feet were low-heeled riding boots, laced up to the ankles.

When Augusta saw Emilia dressed so extravagantly despite the years, the sand, the rain, and the worms, she could not refrain from calling out Grandmother's name and reaching out to touch what had been her face. Upon doing so, a fragile heap of sand collapsed, exposing the surface-between yellow and brown-of the time-battered bones.

"That was her," my mother said apologetically. "She was the same, just like when they buried her."

"No, Mother, that was the sand that's been accumulating over her bones for the past ninety years."

Augusta smiled slightly, accepting this explanation she found completely unsatisfactory.

"This riding habit is still worth a fortune, ladies," the gravedigger managed to tell us. "What are we going to do? The body has to be moved."

"And you can't do so with the riding habit on?"

"I'm sorry," the man responded, "they all go into a common grave."

"What do you mean a common grave? For my Grandmother?" my mother was outraged, distressed by her forgotten aristocracy.

"Well, one grave per family," clarified the gravedigger.

"Alright, can you move it by yourself or do you need help?" I interrupted. "The riding habit weighs a lot so it should be removed."

After numerous attempts, we realized that it would be impossible to separate the body, or what was left of it, from the riding habit. After obtaining our consent, the gravedigger cut it at the chest, ripping the fabric of the skirts and the bodice, ruining the embroidery on the sash and the gold threads of the jacket. My mother looked for the medallion with which Grandmother Emilia might have been buried, but she did not find it. Finally the gravedigger dislodged the remains of the former great lady and placed them over the bodies of the identified children.

“How much do we owe you?” I asked.

“Whatever you are willing to give, ma’am. In these matters regarding the dead and burials, I always leave it up to the will of our Lord, don’t you agree?”

“Here you go,” said my mother, handing him a bill. “Give them a proper burial.”

“Thank you ma’am...and the riding habit?”

“Throw it out,” she said. “It’s nothing but rags.”

Upon returning from what had been the lands of the Acari hacienda, Augusta asked the mestizo to steer his mules to a place she indicated. An additional fee guaranteed her this service. The mestizo tightened the reins while whistling at his animals, and turned into the worn tracks of an old dirt road.

“Go, go until I tell you, it’s not far.”

To the right of the road, although far away, the old frame of the big house-on whose main patio the ceremony honoring little Ramoncito had been performed-materialized before us.

“Wait here,” my mother ordered the mestizo.

She and I went toward the arched veranda and, at the door, rang the new electric doorbell the present owners of the big house had installed. A woman with slanted eyes and a slight accent answered. After listening to my mother's explanation, she kindly allowed us to enter the house. She then led me through the same hallways and kitchen through which Sabina had walked on her way to console Mama Ines and over the same parquets that the great mistress Emilia and Master Augusto, as the supreme owners of a forgotten Acari, had firmly trod.

We passed by the room in which Emilia had been found bathed in her own excrement from the peritonitis that killed her. During her time, the belief spread that eating pork and drinking cold water afterwards had a fatal effect. And they came to the room where Mama Ines had watched over her two small children who had failed to outlive her; the room from whose windows with the half drawn blinds she had witnessed, with the support of Sabina's hands, the spectacle of funeral rites for her child, Ramoncito.

GETTING A HANDLE ON THE GUITAR

I am immersed in the vortex of a scene where layers of smoke, patterns of music, and repressed desires, on the verge of bursting out from under the skin, crisscross. Everyone listens, enjoys themselves, claps, and appreciates the singing of the Caribbean diva, who is like one of us tonight; her audience is her family, she is bonding with her family. *In what a quiet way you come touching my heart smiling.* The night is filled with urges to listen, lazy desires, strange nostalgia, self-appointed loners, hermit-like renegades, and the marginalized posh. I'm nothing but a pawn thrust into this game of seduction that's taking place, a speck of dust floating in the midst of intersecting light among the ebbing smoke and music that completely fills the Café. *When you see me falling for you, don't kiss me, instead, pretend that we're at war, drop bombs, not roses at my door.* My head moves to the beat of the music, my eyes close voluntarily so I can enjoy the marvelous faculty of hearing, fingers and shoulders don't hesitate to move when stimulated. Sweat, clamoring, clapping hands, heavy breathing, desires, passions that are evoked and longed for once again, excitement, catharsis. People let go of their anxieties thanks to the shared music, they experience pleasure, sing, yearn, let their bodies express themselves like never before. But I don't care about the others around me. I feel one of a kind the night I discover him, and I let the fascination I feel when I look at him flow, delighted. He, who's not the center of attention of the majority, plays passionately, and I admire him just as passionately, I contemplate him, I take possession

of him, I imagine him as I please. *Look at me...and I can look you in the eyes this time, and feel at a distance but yet be convinced.* He gives me the pleasure of this music and I give him a place in my distant dreams. I'm enjoying him from a distance, even though he doesn't talk to me or stroke me. He strokes the instruments of his drum set, the body and the strings of his guitar. When he caresses it, I feel his hands wandering over the crevices of my body as if I were his guitar. *Won't you dare to be a melody you play on your guitar?* Unlike everyone else, he and I don't talk. The music that flows from him with so much desire, meets mine and we both feel pleasure although a space interspersed with chairs, bodies, and the breathing of others separates us. But I don't know if it's him I'm fantasizing about, if it's him I long to have, or if it's the music that flows from his hands and throat, or both. I don't know if I want his body or his guitar, or his eyes, crystal clear and warm like a lake in the wintertime, viewed from the fireplace of a cozy cabin, or like the glittery gleam of the cymbals. Perhaps I crave his thick, juicy lips, that are just asking to be bitten, and through them, to access the magic of his sultry voice. I don't know if I long for the stroke of his hands on my skin or for the sound that rolls from them when he strokes his sensual drums. The sound that emanates from him or from his music or from both. I don't know if it's him, his beard brushing up against my skin, or his singing, that I want to possess for a moment, I don't know. I don't know if it's to access him through his music or his music through him. He is the music he plays and the music carried on his breath is that gorgeous man I can't stop looking at.

The musicians and the female singer around Jose Luis go on a ten minute break. The artists mingle with their audience, looking for something refreshing to drink. There's no more music, but I track Jose Luis with my gaze, I track his movements, his looks, his

moods. Finally, I see him head off towards the bar as well. Good timing, I tell myself, I have to talk to him, now or never, I don't know if I'll ever see him again, these things tend to happen only once and if you don't take advantage of them, later you'll be wondering why you didn't do it, what absurd feeling of shyness could have been so strong to come over me and stop me from approaching him and talking to him. Talk to him, ask him for something, for what? I'd like to ask him for a piece of his music but he's not going to give it to me. Ask him for an autograph, lame I know, but I have no other option, I don't know what to do, I can't ask him the time or to light my cigarette, off I go.

As I approach the bar, the reddish shadow of a young woman who is chatting with him has materialized and stands in the way of my plans. Disappointment, exasperation, dismay. I can't do anything; I don't know what else to do except walk by them. Amidst shadows circumventing the smoke, I go back to my seat and finish drinking the sangria that I've been served as part of the cover charge. While the cool tartness of the oranges stings the roof of my mouth, again, I watch him from a distance, but this time there is no music. The strange fascination that Jose Luis holds for me is toned down by the exasperation of not being able to talk to him. I keep watching him, curious, alert, scrutinizing, but there's something missing, I don't know what it is. It must be the strange presence of the reddish girl. I drink my sangria, I let it go.

I come home exhausted, breathless, as if I were coming back from a long, sleepless night filled with alcohol and quenched desires. But there has only been the alcohol from one sangria and lusting after Jose Luis, which has been left hanging at the edge of an abyss. Turning the key brings me back to the routine of my life, devoid of Jose Luis's music, and back to my English paleontologist. Joe sleeps peacefully without

suspecting my musical frustration. Joe is a little darling even in his sleep, he doesn't snore, he always smells good, his skin is always smooth after the shower he takes before getting into bed, he lets me have my space so that I'm not smothered, it's no big deal if, once in a while, I go out without him. Joe is convinced that he is a good partner because he lets me fulfill myself as a person and do lots of things my own way. Joe dreams of the fossils still left for him to uncover, secretly hoping one day to be able to solve the mystery of the Loch Ness monster and convince Nessie to come up to the surface and let him tame her. Thus, he will be applauded by science and adored by kids who will ride on Nessie's back while Joe has her on a leash. I watch Joe with motherly tenderness, poor little thing, I don't know how he can stand me. But he's always there, loyal, warming the bed for me for whenever I come back.

I've introduced variety into my amorous encounters with Joe. Whenever we start getting turned on, I put on the CD with Jose Luis's music as the romantic background. There are boleros, Afro-Cuban music, salsa. Joe understands the romance behind the boleros but he finds it strange that we make love to the beat of Afro-Cuban music and salsa. I tell him that for me, it's exotic, that this music makes me excited, that it brings me to ecstasy, and makes me move more. More movement, Joe likes the idea of me moving more when he is inside me, he likes it alright. The music flows between us and gets us steamy the more we move. Joe pulls me towards him, he likes to look at me while I rock my hips with so much force that he can't control the straddling of his body and he spills over completely. My English paleontologist's bones fall on top of me panting, gasping for air to breathe. Jose Luis's music dies down along with the consummated pleasure. I don't

know if I've made love with Joe or with Jose Luis's sweet-sounding voice, but I feel good. Joe remains by my side and we fall asleep, this time without music.

"Playing that music could be fine once in a while, but not with religious devotion."

"Joe, I don't understand."

"It's that I'm already getting tired ..."

"Of me? You're getting tired of me?"

"No, of you no. I'm not tired of you. It's this music."

"What music?"

"The one we always put on when we sleep together."

"So? I thought you liked it?"

"Yes...I did like it."

"Oh! You don't like it anymore!"

"I'm tired of it, I'm tired of the music."

"Well look, that's just great. I'm the one who always comes up with new ideas so that what we have doesn't become routine and now you criticize me for putting on romantic music when we make love. You could at least be more imaginative and suggest something, another type of music if you'd like. Classical? Do you like Ravel's Bolero like in the movie? Or do you prefer something masochistic? Shall we listen to Bach when we do it? Perhaps you feel like a medieval knight, we could try Celtic music which is very popular these days ..."

"Stop being sarcastic, it's not about that."

"About what then?"

“I’m not going to make love again with that Cuban music in the background. Okay?”

“No, it’s not okay. Why should you restrict my freedom to experience pleasure using the music that I like, huh?”

“Because I’m becoming conditioned like Pavlov’s dog.”

“Pavlov’s or Nessie’s dog, my dear Joe?”

The last thing I said was a careless error on my part. Joe stared at me with English hatred in his sky blue eyes. Without uttering another word and with the customary cool used to control his outbursts of rage, he got up and went towards the shelf where the CD’s were kept. He searched until he found the one of Jose Luis’s band and, with a threatening gesture, he let it hang from his hand over the garbage can. Staring at me intently he said:

“Me or the CD?”

With infinite anger at the fact that someone else would dare tell me what to do, I bit my tongue before responding: “the CD.”

Expressionless, Joe, like a good Englishman, let it drop into the waste paper basket and left, leaving me with the urge to make love at least one more time to the beat of Afro-Cuban music and boleros.

While strolling along the street where Café Principal is located, by chance I noticed that Jose Luis’s band is performing there again, and this very night. There’s only tonight to satisfy the desires of the past months. Now that Joe isn’t around, I should go, see him, take him in through his music, drown myself in his singing, fantasize alongside his melancholy voice whenever he wants me to. I show up early to find a good spot and

to be able to look at him as I please, full-length, up close. So that he realizes I'm looking at him, and so that it gets his attention, to flaunt myself and offer myself up as an object to be conquered and entice him to play the part of conqueror. The layers of smoke settle while the bright lights are tested over the narrow stage where they will be playing. Jose Luis comes out before the others and checks the cables, plugs, connections. He's as gorgeous as when I saw him a few months ago. His skin burnt by the Havana sun, his eyes clear and deep, a disappearing into the sunset, his beard dark and thick. Jose Luis, the one whose songs turn me on, the one who caresses the guitar like a woman's body. Jose Luis is already seated at the drums and the celestial bodies go into motion in the Café heavens, while the band sings and plays with a passion accumulated over months. Again, someone has ordered time to stop while in this confined space to experience pleasure in the perfection of our flesh. I close my eyes and once again I'm a speck of dust that floats around at whim according to the fluctuation of the music and my chaotic trajectory is visible through the gusts of light that brighten the stage where Jose Luis and his crew are singing. The people sing, sway, glisten, trip. We are one, one big mass that experiences union in the ecstasy of Afro-Cuban music and boleros. Sharing this pleasant drug, we are one. *With your body and your love, you lit my whole world up so much, you lit my whole world up so much.* The female singer announces the usual break earlier than expected. The moment that made this unique summer night meaningful has arrived after waiting for several months. I closely observe Jose Luis's movements. He, unlike the others, doesn't immediately melt into the crowd. In a ritual manner, he sets things up on the stage, he changes the position of instruments, he rolls up cables and cords. I stare at him from my table so as not to lose sight of him. Finally, he heads towards the bar, and I

go with him, this time ready to approach him before any other girl of reddish demeanor may move in on him. I tap him on the back, he turns around with a friendly smile. I introduce myself, I compliment him and his music. What I like the most is the passion with which he sings. He smiles sweetly and agrees, he sings with a lot of passion in this Café, much more so than at a concert hall. We chat for a bit, early the following day they will be off again, there isn't time for much. He mentions that they'll come back here in six months or so, perhaps. So many things can happen in six months, I don't know if I'll be around in six months, who knows if we'll see each other again. I ask him to autograph my CD, and pleased, he writes something that I don't look at and prefer to read later on, when he's not within my reach anymore and I can feel his presence through the writing on his music. The break ends and they go back to playing. But this time the magic is doubled because I feel Jose Luis searching for me among the audience while he plays the drums. Finally he spots me, smiles broadly, and winks at me with one of his clear eyes that shine like a distant star. That's the sign.

Two mouths, frenzied by hunger and passion, search for one another until they come together and begin to devour each other mercilessly. Our hands hold one another's faces in order to avoid losing the intensity of kissing. *You feel the rush to fall in love, and your heart feels like it's going to overflow.* We have but a few hours left for our passionate exchange and we give it our all. What are a few hours compared to all the years in a life? Jose Luis and I roll around on the carpeted floor of his bedroom while we pull off our clothes as if they were burning us. I discover his body, tanned by the sun, covered with dark hair that heightens my desire of having my way with him. The background music ends up creating the mood for our bodies to become intertwined like the trunks of two

trees that had grown together. *But when your body climbs on top of mine, make sure it's awake with you the whole time.* Jose Luis carries me over to the bed and his hands strum the strings of my body eliciting melodious moans. I feel like his beloved guitar onstage a few hours ago. His very desirable body succumbs to being explored by my hands, my lips, swollen with pleasure, my moist tongue and the sharp-edged graze of my teeth. *To love someone is like driving a car, tumbling down the edge of night, going too far.* Jose Luis also moans and mounts my body holding on to my curves. His desire incites me to move more and more until I hear his steamy voice, that voice from the songs that accompanied my encounters with Joe, now transformed into a never-ending groan of pleasure. *And in the face of such a danger getting a handle on the reins is human nature.* Jose Luis stops thrusting and collapses on top of me like a wounded stag; he suffocates me with all his naked weight. There's no more music, neither Afro-Cuban nor boleros. Suddenly I remember why I didn't want to be with Latin men not in bed or in life. Jose Luis has finished and, like others, has left me halfway there. The lack of music makes the situation worse. In my head, I try reproducing the Afro-Cuban music from the CD that distanced me from Joe, but the loud breathing of Jose Luis, who is already asleep at my side, interferes with my concentration. The magic has faded away with the orgasm of my disappointing artist. I think about Joe.

On the way home, after a splendid, private breakfast with Jose Luis that preceded our saying goodbye, I've remembered the CD that my darling musician had signed for me the night before. The subway car I'm riding in is almost empty, as is to be expected on a Sunday morning. In this convenient, empty space, I find the CD, flip through the liner notes booklet, I repeatedly see Jose Luis's name next to musician, arranger,

composer, vocals. I get to the last page where he has written something that I now read out of sheer curiosity: “Hopefully you’re wrong and it won’t be the last time. XOXO, Pepe.” I smile without enthusiasm and keep asking myself how I could go so rapidly from ravenously lusting after someone to being indifferent. Could it be because my curiosity has been satiated? My curiosity regarding Jose Luis, his music, or the combination of both? It’s eleven o’clock in the morning on a Sunday and I switch trains at the next station. I go to Joe’s house with Jose Luis’s CD. I know it’ll come as a surprise to him but I’m going to try. My desire for Joe has not completely faded after the first night of lovemaking, perhaps because no music comes out of Joe, as is the case with Jose Luis. Other things like bones and fossils from pre-human times come out of Joe, bringing me back to the primitive, pleasurable state of a microscopic organism. If Joe lets me in the cave of his stories about Nessie and the rest of the giant, pre-historic turtles, I’ll put Jose Luis’s music aside. I’ll keep it for when Joe has to go off on his trips to the Libyan desert or to the Brazilian jungles in search of lost beings that never experienced the melody of Afro-Cuban music and boleros. Somewhat nervous, I ring the doorbell and hide the CD in the innermost recesses of my bag, I don’t want Joe to see it, that would be in such bad taste. I hear Joe’s footsteps, he opens the door.

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APPENDIX

De: "Rocio Quispe-Agnoli" <quispeag@msu.edu>
Para: "Aleksandra Szewczyk" <aleksszew@yahoo.com>
CC: "Rocio Quispe-Agnoli" <quispeag@msu.edu>
Asunto: RE: Translation of El cementerio de Acari
Fecha: Sat, 30 Dec 2006 11:38:55 -0500

Dear Aleksandra:

Thank you for your kind words about my creative writing. "El cementerio de Acari" won the 1999 Atenea Award for Women's Writing (Salamanca) and was published initially by Atenea. And I just came back from the Philadelphia MLA where I found Marjorie Agosin's edition Writing towards Hope (Yale UP, 2006, link below) where my short story "El cuarto mandamiento" was anthologized along with the stories of other Latin American Writers (I am quite honored to have been included in this anthology). Another short story that has been translated (to German) is: "Para visitar museos" (ILA Latina 2000).

I agree with your submission (and hopefully publication) of the translation of "El cementerio de Acari". If you need a formal letter of agreement, I will provide it. I do not expect payment, but copies (even xerox of the original publication when they come out) will be welcome.

However, I would like to ask you something before you submit: I would like to read your translation just to be 100% sure that there are not misunderstandings. I do not doubt the quality of your work and the assessment of your professor, and I do it more as an assistance so you may also report in in your publication that the author agrees. I have translated scholarly work of other researchers and I have submitted my translation to their scrutiny, which has always been positive.

Please, feel free to consult this step with your professor, and I promise to do it very quick if you send it to me the next days (I will be away from home starting today until January 2).

You honor my work with your translation, I am looking forward to your reply, Rocio.

Rocío Quispe-Agnoli
 Latin American Colonial and Postcolonial Studies
 Department of Spanish and Portuguese
 342 Old Horticulture Bldg.
 Michigan State University
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 Fax: (517) 432-3844
 quispeag@msu.edu
 www.msu.edu/~quispeag

Book/Libro: <http://noticiasfondoeditorialunmsm.blogspot.com/2006/07/escritura-e-identidad.html>
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Special Issue on Colonial Women's Studies:
http://www1.uprh.edu/zjimenez/CIEHL/Vol_5.htm

Latin American Writers: <http://yalepress.yale.edu/yupbooks/book.asp?isbn=0300109423>

-----Original Message-----

From: Aleksandra Szewczyk [mailto:aleksszew@yahoo.com]
Sent: Saturday, December 30, 2006 10:55 AM
To: quispeag@msu.edu
Subject: Translation of El cementerio de Acari

Dear Prof. Quispe-Agnoli,

I hope this email finds you well and enjoying the holiday season. My name is Aleksandra Szewczyk and I am a graduate student at Rutgers, the State University of NJ. Currently, I am working on my Master's in the Spanish Translation Program and I am contacting you regarding your short story, *El cementerio de Acari*, which I read and enjoyed very much. So much, as a matter of fact, that I translated it as part of a project for one of my translation courses! Phyllis Zatlin, my professor and director of the Spanish Translation Program, considered the translation potentially publishable, and recommended that I contact you to obtain your permission to submit it for publication to several literary or translation journals and/or magazines in the United States. I would like to emphasize that these journals/magazines do not pay; they provide the author with a copy or two of the publication, the author retains copyright, and a notice is included with the translation that it indeed is a translation. The translator may or may not receive a copy of the publication. In other words, out of the translation comes a bit of fame, but no fortune! Do you agree to such an arrangement? I hope you would be as delighted as I would be to share your story with the English speaking community. Please feel free to contact me regarding this matter and let me know if there is anything else I need to do or anyone else I need to contact. Thank you for your time reading this letter, and I anxiously await your response.

Happy New Year!

Sincerely,

Aleksandra Szewczyk

He who forgives wins the argument-African Proverb

To courageously shoulder the responsibility for one's mistake is character- Fortune
Cookie

De: "Rocio Quispe-Agnoli" <quispeag@msu.edu>
Para: "Aleksandra Szewczyk" <aleksszew@yahoo.com>
Asunto: RE: Translation of El cementerio de Acari
Fecha: Tue, 2 Jan 2007 22:55:15 -0500

Hello again:

I hope you find my comments useful and do not take them as criticism. My only intention is to help and to make sure that the translation is close to what I tried to say as an author. You have done a fine job in general, and the following are a few comments/corrections that I suggest:

I send the translation with my comments and some highlights that include either (1) the corrections that I'd do based on my comments --and repeat throughout the text-- and (2) corrections such as "Huacachina". I'd rather leave the names of the food as they are, since translations do not help in this case, and add footnotes that are explanatory.
 Chicha de Jora = yellow corn beer
 Chicha morada = purple corn drink (non alcoholic).

Very important: leave "indians" as such and do not translate as "natives" which sounds so foreign. "Indians" is the common word used in Peru and is not derogatory, nor PC from the Peruvian perspective.

With "los negros" use "black slaves" or "blacks" and never "negro" or "nigger". When we say "negro" in Peruvian Spanish we mean "blacks", and not "negro" as it is used in English.

Respect these cultural conventions, and add footnotes that are explanatory. In this way the text will be closer to its original intention and message. Also review the comments that I added to your text. Thanks again, talk to your teacher and let me know, Rocio.

De: "Rocio Quispe-Agnoli" <quispeag@msu.edu>
Para: "Aleksandra Szewczyk" <aleksszew@yahoo.com>
Asunto: RE: Comments on Cementerio de Acari
Fecha: Mon, 29 Jan 2007 16:21:23 -0500

Hello, again, below my comments (when I follow your prof.'s comments):

Also, I have one question regarding the title. You would like it as The Cemetery of Acari and not Acari Cemetery. I agree that the first title sounds more intriguing and would

probably draw the reader more into the story. Acari Cemetery maybe sounds more common, as if that were the name of a real cemetery here in the USA, however, it isn't as "magnetic." Also, the first title makes it sound as if there is also more focus on not just the cemetery but also on the area of Acari. The second title seems more cemetery-focused. For the sake of curiosity, I just wanted to know whether in your story, you meant there to be more of a focus on the setting in general (as in the hacienda, Acari, the cemetery) or just on the cemetery? I was speaking to someone about the title and this issue came up and made me very curious. :)

--> Cemetery is the point of departure: they start with their dead people, and then remember their deaths. It is a way to tell family story through their death. I would call it "death narrative" (my invention of course).

Hacienda of Acari also doesn't sound right to me.

--> "hacienda" in Peru is the equivalent (not the same thing but equivalent) to plantation in southern US.

Mother may indeed be better than Mom given nature of story.

---> agreed

P. 2 demon Supay's Evil Supay?

---> Supay is the quechua name for the devil. Choose whatever is appropriate.

P. 4 I still dislike patroness enormously. This is the mistress of the hacienda, owner of the slaves.

--> agree, she is the mistress of the house, the one who rules everyone.

I don't here "little mistress" in English unless slave is speaking to a child.

---> right, but in Spanish is quite common to use diminutives in order to address affection/cariño. I don't know how to translate into English the Spanish use of the diminutive as a means of affection.

Miz Emilia instead of Madam, yes. But Missy won't do in English. For your Ma'am, ma'am I suggest Lordy, lordy, Miz Emilia...

---> agree

P. 6 Why square for patio? You use patio the first time. I doubt there is a square in front of a plantation house. There could be a patio or some other word. This concern crops up repeatedly.

---> this is a hacienda, haciendas have patios and "plazas" mean here a bigger patio. It is not a city square, but it is a BIG patio in front of the house, used for parties.

Chicha de fora The de is in the original but author says it's wrong, so do as she says!

---> OJO! the term is "Chicha de JOra" which in English is usually translated as "Corn beer"

Mr. Augusto or Master Augusto? I do hear Master (or massuh or however you spell it) and possibly little master for the child.

--> agree. It is Master Augusto.

Huacachina Should I remember what this is? If you haven't explained previously, we need a gloss.

--> Huacachina is a lagoon that still exists in Ica, maybe 200 kms. away from Acari. It is the center of an oasis in the middle of the desert.

I used to spend summers there while a child, my mom did too and my grandmother (who is the mother in this story) did too.

It is a retreat for vacation today, and it was then.

estampa How translate? It is a little picture. I was looking through my mother's obituary scrapbook and see that they are handed out in the Catholic church with death notices. Maybe you could ask what Catholics call these in English? I only know the Spanish word!

---> Cannot help, I do not know how to translate it. It is a religious image that people carry in their pockets or purses as a means of protection.

The owner and master The lord and master?

---> agree: lord and master

P. 8 paying respects Respect?

--> this means "offering respect" or "celebrating" or "giving homage". What they are doing is recognizing that this child is the future master of the house. They recognize the child's authority as the heir.

At peace gives the ending away. Implies death. How about perfectly still?

---> perfectly still is the best way to translate here.

a woman robbed? (I don't think it means it took a possession from her.)

Maybe stolen?

---> she was stolen or kidnapped by augusto, to make her his woman. Of course she was not against, but the general social image is that the woman was taken against her will.

P. 10 the last sacrament=the last rites?

---> means "los santos oleos", the rite performed by the priest when one is dying or just died, to go to heaven.

Warmly housed them? How about quietly Or maybe with the earth that welcomed them?

---> I like "with the earth that welcomed them"

Whittled waist? Do we say that or was it ever said? I'd go for tiny waist
---> tiny waist

Had watched over Velado refers to a wake. What is the verb in English?
velar = to remain with the body the first night, and pray. that is "velar el cuerpo" and then "velorio". It has to do with the fact that the body was surrounded in the past by candles (velas) while praying for the person.

Maybe same Catholic source can help with right word.

De: "Rocio Quispe-Agnoli" <quispeag@msu.edu>
Para: "Aleksandra Carbajal" <aleksszew@yahoo.com>
Asunto: RE: Other translations besides Cementerio de Acari
Fecha: Sat, 3 Feb 2007 13:53:14 -0500

Aleksandra, I feel honored by your request, and I am learning a LOT from this process. I have a BA and MA in Hispanic Linguistics with focus in Semantics and Semiotics, then I enjoyed it a lot. In addition, you are giving me many tools for a course on Literary Translation in the future. Let's go in order:

1. I did receive your last version and I have it with me, printed. I need to read it and will send you comments, as well as the other info you have requested for Beacons.

2. In addition to "El cementerio de Acari" and "El cuarto mandamiento" (that you'll receive soon) the following have been published (I can send you paper copies to the address you indicate):

"Federico" in Letras Femeninas

"Para visitar museos" (translated to German and published in ILA Latina).

3. But a new development came last weekend: the director of a brand new publishing house in Peru, "Mundo Ajeno", contacted me last Saturday to request my participation in the editorial board of a new journal on literary/critical/cultural studies. In addition, we talked about his publishing house, and as a consequence of the conversation, he asked me to submit the collection of short stories that I have almost ready for review and publication. This will be of course in Spanish. What I mean is that I have a collection that includes all these 4 texts, and other 4-5, then you could work on them (or on some of them) if you wish, with the certainty that it will be published in Spanish this year. What do you think?

I will get back to you with my input before Monday.

Thanks again! Rocio.

PS. The interaction author-translator interests me much not only for my creative writing, but also for my own research, so it is a great opportunity to do combined work. Please extend my thanks and regards to professor Zatlín.

Rocío Quispe-Agnoli
www.msu.edu/~quispeag

Latin American Writers: <http://yalepress.yale.edu/yupbooks/book.asp?isbn=0300109423>

De: "Rocio Quispe-Agnoli" <quispeag@msu.edu>
Para: "Aleksandra Szewczyk" <aleksszew@yahoo.com>
Asunto: RE: Revised Translation
Fecha: Thu, 8 Feb 2007 12:14:31 -0500

Hello, Alexsandra,
I have reviewed the final translation and I am very pleased with it. I send it back again, with 3 comments that do not affect the translation, but are intended for your records.

I want to send this now. I will send the rest of the information you asked in the next days. Please, bear with me because I am horribly busy.

Yes, definitely I will give you the entire collection that will be published in Mundo Ajeno.

Another thing: I have decided to change my name for creative writing. I do not want that my scholarly name interferes with my creative name. Then, when you submit for publication, please use Rocio Qespi instead of Rocio Quispe. The new name will be used for my publication in Mundo Ajeno as well.

I will be traveling Feb. 11-19 and will have limited access to internet. I can call you from my mobile if you need anything next week (provide a phone and convenient times to call if so). Thanks again! Rocio

From: Aleksandra Szewczyk [mailto:aleksszew@yahoo.com]
Sent: Tuesday, January 30, 2007 12:17 PM
To: Rocio Quispe-Agnoli
Subject: Revised Translation

Dear Prof. Quispe-Agnoli,

Again, thank you for your comments. Attached please find the revised translation. I have incorporated your comments as well as those of my professor and have searched for what I hope to be, good solutions to problematic parts such as estampas or velar. I welcome any other suggestions you may have.

Sincerely,

Aleksandra

De: "Rocio Quispe-Agnoli" <quispeag@msu.edu>
Para: "Aleksandra Carbajal" <aleksszew@yahoo.com>
Asunto: RE: Revised Translation
Fecha: Sun, 11 Feb 2007 12:58:15 -0500

Hello, again,

The main reason to have my name changed is the fact --we can talk about this extensively by phone-- that RQA is known as a scholar in a specific field. Then, if I publish creative writing as RQA everyone says: look the scholar writing fiction. There is a tendency to see scholar-writers as frustrated writers. Which is not the case necessarily: I started writing seriously when I was 20 y.o. But the necessity to put food on the table led me to a scholarship career. I do feel passion for my scholarship, and I believe that I can make a contribution to Andean Studies. But I want to dissociate --for the public eye-- the scholar persona from the creative persona. After discussing it with my Mundo Ajeno editor, Enrique Cortez, we came with this name, that is me and hides RQA somehow: Rocio Qespi is the name with which I publish from now on all creative works. This will be the name in Mundo Ajeno, and I wish this to be my name for your translations and all what comes after, please.

YES, please, do change my name in the bio I sent to you (I forgot that detail)

"Qespi" is the original phonetic transcription of what today is "Quispe" and it means crystal-reflection, then mirror. I wanted to eliminate my female name too, but my editor told me that, for marketing purposes, female authors are better off than male ones.

Interesting, no?

I attach the statement. You may reach me in my cel. (517) 575-7175 this week (I will be in Nevada and then California). Thanks again! Rocio.

-----Original Message-----

From: Aleksandra Carbajal [mailto:aleksszew@yahoo.com]
Sent: Sunday, February 11, 2007 11:14 AM
To: Rocio Quispe-Agnoli
Subject: RE: Revised Translation

Dear Prof. Quispe-Agnoli,

Thank you very much for your response and for sending the bio, translation, and pictures! I'm sorry I haven't been able to write back; I haven't accessed the computer this week because I just started teaching a Spanish class 3 times a week, mid-semester (the other instructor quit abruptly) and have been maybe as busy as you :). In any case, your bio and pics are exactly what the magazine is looking for, and below, I provide the statement that I wrote where you grant your permission.

I only have one question: you mention that you would like your name changed. Should that be only in the story, and should I then specify in the bio what your name is but that you use a different name for creative writing?

If you need to, you can call me at 848 459 1489 (that's my cell phone) and usually mornings (9-11) or afternoons (2-4) or late evenings (9-midnight) are fine. Otherwise I may be in a class or teaching my class. Otherwise, everything should be fine. We have all that the magazine asks for. As for the photos, I like that one of you in the blue!

If you'd like, I can send you a photo of me as well so you can place a face with the name (I am the blonde). Well, I hope you enjoy your trip and I look forward to hearing back from you. (Below is the statement).

Aleksandra

To Whom It May Concern:

I agree to the submission for publication and publication of the original story, "El cementerio de Acarí," and of its translation. I grant **Beacons First North American** serial rights to publish copies of the original text and of the translation online and in print. I also grant permission for my photo to be posted online and/or to appear in print. I understand that copyright reverts to me, the author, after this one-time publication.

Sincerely,

Rocío Quispe-Agnoli (Rocío Qespi)

Rocío Quispe-Agnoli

Rocío Quispe-Agnoli <quispeag@msu.edu> escribió:

Hello, Alessandra,

I have reviewed the final translation and I am very pleased with it. I send it back again, with 3 comments that do not affect the translation, but are intended for your records.

I want to send this now. I will send the rest of the information you asked in the next days. Please, bear with me because I am horribly busy.

Yes, definitely I will give you the entire collection that will be published in Mundo Ajeno.

Another thing: I have decided to change my name for creative writing. I do not want that my scholarly name interferes with my creative name. Then, when you submit for publication, please use Rocío Qespi instead of Rocío Quispe. The new name will be used for my publication in Mundo Ajeno as well.

I will be traveling Feb. 11-19 and will have limited access to internet. I can call you from my mobile if you need anything next week (provide a phone and convenient times to call if so). Thanks again! Rocio

From: Aleksandra Szewczyk [mailto:aleksszew@yahoo.com]

Sent: Tuesday, January 30, 2007 12:17 PM

To: Rocio Quispe-Agnoli

Subject: Revised Translation

Dear Prof. Quispe-Agnoli,

Again, thank you for your comments. Attached please find the revised translation. I have incorporated your comments as well as those of my professor and have searched for what I hope to be, good solutions to problematic parts such as estampas or velar. I welcome any other suggestions you may have.

Sincerely,

Aleksandra

De: "Rocio Quispe-Agnoli" <quispeag@msu.edu> -

Para: "Aleksandra Carbajal" <aleksszew@yahoo.com>

Asunto: Re: Saludos

Fecha: Tue, 18 Sep 2007 20:18:12 -0400

Hola, Aleksandra:

Tu bebe es preciosa, y tu estas muy guapa tambien. Felicitaciones. Si hablas de los personajes de "La isla de Sal" el nombre de "Chiqui" es el apodo de una persona real que me conto parte de esta historia. OJO, solo parte de esta historia, ya que la he alterado mucho para ajustarla al objetivo de mi cuento --el cual nunca conozco a fondo hasta que lo termino de escribir.

Los otros nombres son simplemente fortuitos, busque nombres y apellidos

comunes del espanol, que se asociaran --en mi mente individual-- a empleados

publicos. Imagino que en esto interviene mi "background" de vida, los empleados publicos que he visto y con los que he tenido que tratar.

Si me preguntas sobre nombres de otros cuentos, depende del cuento.

Cada

cuento es distinto.
En que conferencia lees?

Sabes que ahora tengo un nuevo puesto en MSU, mira mi pagina web para ver la nueva direccion/telf de contacto www.msu.edu/~quispeag

Se me ocurre si alguna vez quisieras que hicieramos una presentacion juntas.
Cuando dialogamos para la traduccion de "El cementerio de Acari" salieron muchas cosas interesantes que son muy largas de escribir en el correo electronico. Un workshop de traduccion o algo asi en que ambas pudierams dialogar con otros colegas (traductores y escritores) y el publico.
Solo una idea, cuidate y mucha, mucha suerte (y la suerte no viene sola, se presenta con la disciplina)
Rocio

De: "Rocio Quispe-Agnoli" <quispeag@msu.edu>
Para: "Aleksandra Carbajal" <aleksszew@yahoo.com>
Asunto: RE: Saludos
Fecha: Wed, 26 Sep 2007 08:50:34 -0400

Otro dato: "Chiqui" es la abreviatura --no es sociolectal, OJO, es simplemente un caso particular-- de "Chiquillo"(Youngster), porque la persona a la que llaman así siempre se ve mucho más joven de lo que es. A lo mejor esto te ayuda.

El nuevo puesto es administrativo, y tiene que ver con General Education y Liberal Arts de la universidad. Si quieres compartir cualquier dato, he actualizado mi pagina web: www.msu.edu/~quispeag

Alli esta todo: research, teaching, outreach.
Nos hablamos :) Rocio

De: "Rocio Quispe-Agnoli" <quispeag@msu.edu>
Para: "Aleksandra Carbajal" <aleksszew@yahoo.com>
Asunto: Re: Para visitar museos
Fecha: Thu, 04 Oct 2007 17:51:17 -0400

Hola, Aleksandra,
no he podido ver la traduccion, pero te respondo las preguntas inmediatas:

1. Quizas hay una referencia a Axolotl, pero inconsciente. No pense ni

en
 este cuento, ni tampoco en Borges cuando hablo de laberintos. Porque
 los
 museos si que me parecen laberintos, y soy una asidua visitante.
 2. es posible que todo esto esta de forma inconsciente, ya que fui
 avida
 lectora de Borges y Cortazar, pero no ha sido hecho de manera
 consciente.

Los museos me fascinan por muchas razones, pero una de ellas es la paz
 que
 encuentro alli. Por eso, quedarse atrapado en un museo, es una vida
 utopica
 placentera --y no amenazadora como sugiere Axolotl

espero que te ayude, Rocio

De: "Rocio Quispe-Agnoli" <quispeag@msu.edu>
Para: "Aleksandra Carbajal" <aleksszew@yahoo.com>
Asunto: RE: Translations-almost done!
Fecha: Sun, 10 Feb 2008 22:05:55 -0500
 Hi Aleksandra,
 I answer your questions below:

There are just two problems I am having with two of the stories, and I was hoping that you could clear up at least one of them.

1. In "Federico," there is a reference to the Colina widow. I searched and searched and found two possible answers. One, the less likely one, is that it refers to a Hallmark movie "Widow on the Hill." Or, and more likely the case, it refers to the wife of a Pedro Huillica who was murdered in Peru during Fujimori's regime, supposedly by members of grupo Colina. I couldn't find many details about this murder, however. I would like to gloss this reference and would appreciate if you could help me out with this one :) .

--> this is a reference to a real character who already passed away. I changed the name intentionally, so there is no way you will find her. Her last name is not "Colina". She was the widow of one of the most known peruvian poets of the 20th century. Peruvians thought that she was quite eccentric and lived many years alone --after he died-- with many cats in her house. I would like not to give more information, although any peruvian reader can guess who it was. Is that ok?

2. The story, "Guitarra en riendas," is giving me lots of trouble! This is mostly due to the songs. I discussed the issue with Prof. Zatlin, and since the English speaking reader will probably not understand the lyrics (which are a key part of the story and make it unique as well) and not "hear them in their head," the best solution would be to translate the

lyrics. Now, at first we thought of finding equivalent songs in English, ideally sung by bilingual Latinos, but found that this was very hard to do since the songs of Marc Anthony, for example, do not exactly correspond to those by Sara Gonzalez/Silvio Rodriguez, Pablo Milanés (from Nicolás Guillén's poem), and Baglietto. Then I thought of incorporating parts of real songs into my translation of the lyrics but found that the rhythm didn't exactly match that of the original songs. Prof. Zaitlin suggested that I listen over and over to the original songs, and try to just translate the original lyrics into English, conserving most of the message but paying special attention to the rhythm. I did do this but I am not a person of musical and poetic talent and thus I am not satisfied with the results I obtained. I was hoping that you could perhaps help me with this issue as well, since you are familiar with the original songs and their rhythm. I will attach my attempts at translation of the lyrics just in case you'd like to see them.

The songs are the last "obstacle" I'm facing and then I will be finished with the translations! :) I will also send an email to a few Cuban-American musicians that Prof. Zaitlin knows, to see if maybe they could help me as well.

--> all the songs come from a CD by Sara Gonzalez titled "Mírame". What is important is the content of the lyrics, so if you can translate them --as prof. Zaitlin suggest-- preserving the content --more than the rhyme-- would be best. It is the content what is most important to the plot. I also use lyrics from different songs: Querer tener riendas (Silvio Rodriguez), Cancion (Nicolás Guillén & Pablo Milanés), otras de Pepe Ordaz (baterista de Sara Gonzalez).

In any case, I hope you're doing well. Did the collection of stories get published in Peru yet? Prof. Zaitlin says that maybe we could try to get the collection published here too but that it may be easier to publish individual stories at first. I also contacted the editor of Metamorphoses because I thought that Cementerio de Acari would be published in Fall of 2007 but it turns out that it's set for publication for the Fall 2008 issue. You and I are supposed to receive complimentary copies. :)

--> the book will be published in June 2008 in Peru, and will be presented in the July Feria Internacional del Libro. The contract has been signed and they are working on the edition and design.

Thanks for the update, it would be great to have it published as a collection in English too. The title in Spanish will be "Durmiendo en el agua".

Going to read your other messages now, Rocio.

De: "Rocio Quispe-Agnoli" <quispeag@msu.edu>
Para: "Aleksandra Carbajal" <aleksszew@yahoo.com>
CC: quispeag@cal.msu.edu
Asunto: Feedback sobre traducciones
Fecha: Sun, 24 Feb 2008 23:00:49 -0500

Querida Aleksandra,
 perdona la demora en contestarte. He leído tus traducciones y tengo muy

poquitos comentarios:

1. The island of salt

Ok con los comentarios 1 y 2.

2. Guitarra en riends

Entiendo que las canciones estan pendientes y de esto hemos hablado en otro mensaje.

"cuadernillo de presentacion" = booklet es correcto --es aquel que va en la caja del CD.

comentario sobre sones cubanos --> me sorprende. Todo (mi) mundo sabe lo que es un son cubano (un tipo de musica y poesia, Nicolas Guillen). No se como traducirlo.

3. Federico

el libro de Barthes aludido se titula en espanhol "Fragmentos de un discurso amoroso" que sigue bien el original en frances. Desgraciadamente la traduccion al ingles no es buena "A Lover's Discourse" pero que le vamos a hacer. El cuento juega con el titulo en frances y espanhol, y con el titulo ingles este juego verbal se pierde.

4. El cuarto mandamiento

(en espanhol): Honraras a tu padre y a tu madre. Tienes razon que en ingles es el quinto.

comentario 2: si, Chincha, al sur de Lima, es conocida por ser un distrito/ciudad mulata/afro peruana. Cuna del festejo (baile afroperuano).

comentario 3: es respeto para ella misma (for herself) y no por su padre.

comentario 4: OK

5. Durmiendo en el agua

no entiendo el comentario 1, pero no interfiere con el texto.

6. Para visitar museos

Ya discutimos esto: OJO, NO, no estaba pensando en Axolotl de Cortazar -al

menos no intencional y racionalmente.

7. El cementerio de acari
ampliamente discutido y editado.

El unico que me falta es "El diablo de Hollental"

Finalmente, el libro se va a publicar por Mundo Ajeno en Lima este
año, y
planea presentarse oficialmente en la Feria Internacional del Libro de
Lima
en Julio 2008. El titulo hasta parece ser "Durmiendo en el agua"

Un abrazo y gracias por todo tu trabajo!
Rocio

Rocio Quispe-Agnoli
Associate Professor
Acting Director
Center for Integrative Studies in the Arts & Humanities
305 Linton Hall
Michigan State University
East Lansing, MI 48824
www.cisah.msu.edu

De: "Jon Austin" <funeralmuseum@ifda.org>

Para: aleksszew@yahoo.com

Asunto: RE: Research Inquiry

Fecha: Mon, 29 Jan 2007 16:42:35 -0600

Dear Aleksandra,

Thanks for visiting the Museum's web site and for your inquiry.

My Spanish-English dictionary is at home, and it's been more than
twenty
years since I've spoken the language. My recollection is that
"estampa"
can mean several things.

I believe that the item you've described would be called a "Holy Card"
or "Mass Card" or "Spiritual Bouquet" in the US. Typically, these
cards
have a holy picture (painting, drawing, or artwork) of the Virgin Mary,
Madonna and child, Jesus Christ, or a patron saint with a suitable
motto, Biblical verse, or prayer. They're usually very colorful and
may

also be printed in gold ink. On the reverse, you'd find the name of the deceased, the person's birth and death dates, sometimes a short biography, and maybe another prayer. We've also seen some from Europe that have a portrait of the deceased from life with the above information. I believe that these cards are still an active part of Roman Catholic funeral traditions as well as the funeral traditions of the Eastern Orthodox Church.

I hope that this is helpful.

Best regards,

Jon Austin, Executive Director
Museum of Funeral Customs

Tue, 24 Jul 2007 14:36:30 -0400

De: "Thalia Pandiri" <tpandiri@email.smith.edu>

Para: aleksszew@yahoo.com

Asunto: Re: Submission of translation to Metamorphoses

** High Priority **

Dear Aleksandra,

Usually one sends the message without the attachment, This time I hit the wrong button and sent the attachment without the message. What I have sent you is the EDITED version of the story, which as far as we are concerned is good to go. There are a number of changes, so I would need your approval before using it.

First of all, it's been cleaned up at the level of English style. (It has also been formatted to correspond to our standard form.) One thing that you will notice is some modification in the way servant speech is represented. This is a contested issue among schools of translation, but it is pretty widely accepted that too much "phonetic" spelling is distracting to the reader, and (depending on your beliefs) denigratory towards the represented speaker. It's enough to suggest class, race, geography and then not overdo the spelling. Another issue is importing the wrong "baggage" with dialectal representation: a sort of imitation of a slave-nanny of the American deep south in the 19th century carries all sorts of connotations with it. And it seems that the Spanish is not nearly as exaggerated as the English.

How much glossing goes into the text, vs. none or vs. footnotes, is another moot issue. It seemed less disruptive not to have so many glosses breaking up the narrative and to have a food note at the end for those who need it.

Unless you can convince me that the changes are ill-advised, we

would either print it as it now stands or not use it.
 I look forward to hearing from you.
 Best, Thalia

Thalia Pandiri
 Professor of Classics and Comparative Literature
 Editor-in-chief, METAMORPHOSES
 Wright Hall 222
 Smith College
 Northampton, MA 01063
 (413)585-3485; fax (413)585-3339

tpandiri@smith.edu

Thu, 21 Feb 2008 09:37:12 -0500

De: "Alba Alvarez Augier" <albitafng@uh.cu>
Para: "Aleksandra Carbajal" <aleksszew@yahoo.com>
Asunto: Re: Traduccion de un poema de Nicolas Guillen

Estimada Aleksandra:

Esta traducción del poema Canción perteneciente al libro La Rueda
 Dentada,
 aparece en una antología de la poesía de Nicolás Guillén, publicada en
 Cuba en
 el 2002 ó 2003 y traducida por Keith Ellis, un importante estudioso de
 la obra
 de Guillén.
 Espero le sea de utilidad.
 Saludos,
 Albita

SONG

In what a quiet way
 you come touching my heart smiling,
 as if you were
 springtime!
 (I, dying.)

And in what a subtle way
 you scattered on my shirt
 all of April's flowers.

Who told you that I was

always laughter, never weeping,
 as if I were
 springtime?
 (I'm not all that.)

But oh, how touching it is
 that you offer me a rose
 from your principal rosebush!

In what a quiet way
 you come touching my heart smiling,
 as if you were
 springtime!
 (I, dying.)

1972

"Al mundo nuevo corresponde la Universidad nueva"
 UNIVERSIDAD DE LA HABANA
 280 aniversario

Thu, 06 Dec 2007 18:28:35 -0500

De: "Jan Reinhart" <jreinhar@rci.rutgers.edu>

Para: aleksszew@yahoo.com

Asunto: [Fwd: Re: Question about CD terminology]

Alex,

I queried the Music Librarian -- a man who has worked in the field for three decades -- and this is his answer. I would err to the side of overtranslation and say "I flip through the little liner notes booklet and at the last page..."

Jan R.

Mensaje reenviado [[Descargar archivo](#)]

Fecha: Thu, 06 Dec 2007 17:51:16 -0500

De: "John Shepard" <jdshep@rci.rutgers.edu>

Para: "Jan Reinhart" <jreinhar@rci.rutgers.edu>

Asunto: Re: Question about CD terminology

Archivo de Texto sin formato [[Analizar y bajar a la computadora](#)]

Jan,

My music librarian colleagues still call them "liner notes," a term left over from the LP era, but used in the English speaking world to refer to CD booklets as well.

John

Jan Reinhart wrote:
John,

Before I go heading off into cyberspace, could you answer this question: Is there a usual name for that little booklet of lyrics and information that accompanies our CDs? A friend is translating a story that mentions one of those little suckers. Here's here question in full:

Hi Jan,

How are you? How is the thesis going? I'm working on mine, mostly editing now. I stumbled upon an issue and thought that maybe you could provide me with an expert answer. In one of the stories, a singer autographs a CD for the protagonist. In Spanish the phrase is

the following:

"En este espacio propicio y vacio, encuentro el CD, hojeo el cuadernillo de la presentacion y las canciones....llego a la ultima pagina..."

I looked for translation but am not sure if it's correct.
"I find the CD, flip through the booklet of credits and lyrics..."
Since you work at the Music Library, I thought you might know if that's what that booklet is officially called? Or is there a better name for the booklet you find in a CD that lists the credits, lyrics, etc.?

Fecha: Sun, 2 Mar 2008 16:23:48 -0800 (PST)
De: "Jeff Saxon" <jeffsaxonmusic@yahoo.com>
Asunto: Re: Request for help w/ song translation
Para: "Aleksandra Carbajal" <aleksszew@yahoo.com>
Hi, Aleksandra-

I got your email request for help with the song translation modifications. I will honor it because you sound nice (as well as as prideful and conscientious) and you're a student working on a thesis, not for profit. Normally, however, something like this would fall under the category of a private songwriting consultation (and an hourly charge as it's something I make a portion of my income from).

If it was just one lyric to read or song to listen to, I could respond almost immediately, but you said you'd like me to listen to 2 songs, read the translations, compare versions, comment on each, plus watch a video. To do all this, I think I will need to allocate 2 or more hours of time, so please let me know how long I have.

Jeff

Fecha: Tue, 4 Mar 2008 06:09:56 -0800 (PST)

De: "Jeff Saxon" <jeffsaxonmusic@yahoo.com>

Asunto: Re: Request for help w/ song translation

Para: "Aleksandra Carbajal" <aleksszew@yahoo.com>

Dear Aleksandra,

I will definitely get this done for you well before the 28th. Count on it.

I don't speak or understand Spanish, so I will likely be asking for help from you with that. I have, however, had one of my songs translated into Spanish and learned a lot from that in terms of literal and interpretive translations.

I can't get to your project this week, but I plan on delving into it the following week, so I will be back in touch with you then.

Sincerely,

Jeff

Hello Aleksandra-

I started reviewing the documents you sent me and I have several questions for you.

I attach a document I created here. At the top of it is a list of the questions to which I need you to respond to. On the second page of my attachment is a paste-up that lists the source of a few of those

questions. Please review everything and get back to me.

Jeff

I need some help from you so that I can give you better input.

1-Why are you quoting from other famous American or European artists such as Pat Benatar and Donovan Leitch as well as a pop song from the film “Lyrics And Music”? I found this perplexing and distracting, so unless you have a real reason for those references, they will likely only serve to confuse your thesis professor and muddle things up. **Originally, I planned to find English songs that would be similar to the original songs in Spanish (in meaning) so that the English reader could also “hear” a tune in his head and associate it with a known song. However, this turned out to be nearly impossible (since I was also looking for songs that could pass as sounding “Latino”). Instead, I thought that if I could incorporate short segments of real songs, the English reader would get the idea that the italicized segments in the story were meant to be songs and would also “hear” a part of the song in his head. My thesis professor thought it was a good idea at first. Later on, she changed her mind and said I should just translate the songs but that I should try to keep the rhythm of the original song in the translation. This is why I have so many versions of translations. In some of the green-highlighted versions (that I thought were best), I still include segments of famous songs because the imagery still goes with the imagery of original song and sounds poetic (like Leonard Cohen’s “oh how it all became brighter” or Tracy Chapman’s “the speed’s so fast...city lights lay out of sight”). I do realize that if the story were to be published, including translations that include parts of a famous song might cause problems with copyright, even though the famous song segments are really short.**

2-It is important for you to translate the last few words in the lines you need my help in smoothing out the English interpretation (i.e. translation). This way I will know how to advise you about rhyme and content. Show me the literal English translation for the last 2-3 words of each line and indicate whether or not there is a rhyme in Spanish. It is also important for you to give me the total number of syllables in each line so I can offer you more accurate help with converting/adapting them to English. The reason I request this is because ideally you want to preserve the rhythm of the Spanish lyric when translating it into English. **I pasted the lyrics below and highlighted in gray the literal translation, number of syllables, and rhyme.**

3-At first you said you needed help converting 3 lines of lyrics, but when I pasted the green and red lines, I came up with several more lyrical lines. Please review the document I pasted these and advise. **Please see pasted text below.**

4-What does Sugerencia mean—suggestion? **yes**

5-When you put the word Rhythm before the green highlighted version, is that to indicate the number of syllables that those particular lines have in Spanish? **No, this means that**

the highlighted version where it says “rhythm” is the version I thought went along best with the rhythm of original song.

6-A lot of the green highlighted lyrics strike me as somewhat stiff (ex: words like “embodied” and ‘erupts”). These are poetic words and definitely not words that lend themselves to being sung and used as a lyric in English. Do you feel that this is necessary to leave these intact in order to preserve the tone of the Spanish original? Or do you want me to offer suggestions on how convert them into language more indigenous of the English language? Please advise. **I think that as long as the meaning of the original lyric is kept, the register of the words (i.e. whether they are very poetic or more simple) doesn’t matter. The author just wants the message preserved. (However, the thesis advisors want the rhythm to be preserved as well.) Spanish songs tend to be more poetic and “flowery” than English songs. If you have any suggestions for language more indigenous of the English language, they would be appreciated. However, the most important thing is keeping the meaning and that a singer could sing the lyrics in English but to the melody of the original music, even if the lyrics sound a little poetic. It sounds like I didn’t really answer the question ☺. But bottom line is, it doesn’t really matter as long as message and rhythm are kept intact.**

7-The last three red underlined Sugerencia’s include only the Spanish words. Please translate them for me. **Please see below.**

Rhythm: Look at me...once again I can see you in person, and feel far away but real

Sugerencia: Look at me... and I can see you again in person, and feel far away but real

Rhythm: When I fall for you, don’t you kiss me, make believe it’s a war zone, shower me with mud and with stones.

Sugerencia: When I fall for you, don’t you kiss me, think of it as a war zone, bathe me in mud and stones

Rhythm: (rock) Oh, daring to be the song and daring to be the guitar.

Sugerencia: Oh, daring to be a song and a guitar

Rhythm: Oh how it all became brighter when your love reached my eyes in your shape and form embodied

Sugerencia me parece bien lo que hiciste. Translation: I like what you wrote.

Rhythm: The urge to love erupts and the heart becomes a magical/marvelous
Vesuvius/volcano/ and the heart becomes a budding spring-time flower

Sugerencia: no se me ocurre nada con esto... limitaciones lingüísticas severas.....
Translation: I don't have any suggestions for this one....severe linguistic limitations

Rhythm of song: But when you take my body for a spin, see to it I'm not sleepin'.

Rhythm: Love, the speed's so fast, you feel you'll crash, the

Rhythm: And when you're about to lose control, it's just human to want a handle on it all.

Sugerencia: esta traducción también me gusta como está. Translation: I like this
translation as-is as well.

LINES THAT NEED TO BE TRANSLATED (AND ARE TRANSLATED BUT
POORLY) IN YELLOW BELOW (These lines appear in a story I'm translating):

Cuando me enamores no me beses...haz como si estuvieras en guerra, báñame de rocas y
de tierra.

Mírame...y volverte a mirar de frente, y sentirme lejana, pero cierta.

Aventurarse a ser canción y a ser guitarra.

Como se iluminaba todo, cuando llegaba hasta mis ojos el amor, con la forma de tu
cuerpo.

Late la prisa por amar y el corazón se vuelve un mágico volcán.

Pero cuando subas a mi cuerpo, asegura que ya esté despierto.

Amar es como rodar un coche por el precipicio de la noche.

Y ante el peligro es muy humano, querer tener riendas en las manos.

(De que callada manera, se me adentra usted sonriendo (poema de Guillén-encontrar la
traducción))

Querer tener riendas ([*Silvio Rodríguez*](#))

Cuando me enamores no me beses,
porque me han amado así mil veces.
Haz como si estuvieras en guerra:
báñame de rocas y de tierra.

Cuando me conduzcas, no me apartes
 del acantilado o el desastre.
 Déjame correr la misma suerte
 del que caminara con la muerte.

Pero cuando subas a mi cuerpo
asegura que ya esté despierto.
Amar es como rodar un coche
por el precipicio de la noche.

Y ante tal peligro es muy humano
querer tener riendas en las manos.

(1973)

<http://www.trovadores.net/nc.php?NM=1282>

CANTAR, CANTAR, CANTAR rock
 Album : Baglietto – Garré (1989)
 (Autor : J. Ordaz Aguilera)
 Juan Carlos Baglietto (Argentina)

¡Qué bueno ha sido regresar a la cosecha,
 después que el tiempo mejoró las madrugadas!
 ¡Qué bueno ha sido el despertar
 sobre la almohada que soñé
 cuando el amor y la canción nos esperaban.
 Hay que cantarle un homenaje a la sonrisa
 de aquel ancestro soñador que, en la garganta
 dejó su pétalo mejor,
 para que hiciera florecer, alguna vez,
 el corazón y la esperanza.

Cantar, cantar, cantar,
 con la necesidad de la primera vez.
 Cantar, cantar, cantar,
 para llegar a ser

como una sola voz.

Cuando sabe a realidad la maravilla
de aventurarse a ser canción y a ser guitarra,
late la prisa por amar
y el corazón se vuelve un mágico volcán
 que arranca el grito de esperanza.
 Cantar, cantar, cantar,
 con la necesidad de la primera vez.
 Cantar, cantar, cantar,
 para llegar a ser
 como una sola voz.
 Cantar, cantar, cantar,
 con la necesidad de la primera vez.

Cantar, cantar, cantar,
 para llegar a ser
 como una sola voz.

<http://lyricsplayground.com/alpha/songs/c/cantarcantarcantar.shtml>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JSkY-HRUC2w>

Fecha: Mon, 10 Mar 2008 19:17:14 -0700 (PDT)

De: "Jeff Saxon" <jeffsaxonmusic@yahoo.com>

Asunto: Re: Request for help w/ song translation

Para: "Aleksandra Carbajal" <aleksszew@yahoo.com>
 Aleksandra-

I got your replies to my questions/dilemmas and here are the lines i came up with for you (and I kept the order of them the same as they appeared in your last email...1 thru 8). Feel free to use them verbatim or alter them to suit your needs.

1-When you see me falling for you, don't kiss me
 drop bombs, not roses at my door
 OR; When you see me falling for you, don't kiss me
 but pretend that we're at war

2-If you'll look at me, I'll look at you
 even if we don't stay together
 OR: If you'll look at me, I'll look at you
 even if we don't end up together

OR: At least if you look at me and I look at you
we can try to make things right

3-Won't you dare to be a melody you play on your
guitar?

OR: Why don't you dare to be a melody you play on your
guitar?

4-With your body and your love, you lit my whole world
up so much

5-The heart is like a magical volcano that could erupt
in the quest for love

OR; The heart is like a magical volcano overflowing in
the quest for love

OR: The heart is like a magical volcano that could
erupt anytime in the quest of love

6-At night when you climb onto my body, make sure I'm
awake and completely there

OR; At night when you climb onto my body, make sure my
mind is also there

7-Love is like driving too far and crashing your car
in the darkest part of (the) night

8-And in the face of such a danger taking control is
human nature

OR;

And in the face of such a danger, to take control is
just human nature

Best of luck with your thesis--

Sincerely,

Jeff

De: "Rocio Quispe-Agnoli" <quispeag@msu.edu>

Para: "Rocio Quispe-Agnoli" <quispeag@msu.edu>

CC: "Aleksandra Carbajal" <aleksszew@yahoo.com>, quispeag@cal.msu.edu

Asunto: Re: Feedback sobre traducciones

Fecha: Sun, 02 Mar 2008 06:52:53 -0500

Querida Alexsandra,

estoy de viaje, y no tengo tu file completo sobre las canciones traducidas,
pero te envio aqui lo que --en mi opinion de autor--me parece que son las traducciones mas cercanas a lo que quise transmitir al usar esas frases en los cuentos. Hay algunas que son un NO rotundo --si lo puedo decir asi:

1. De que callada manera --ya tienes la traduccion y me gusta.
2. Cuando me enamores...haz como si estuvieras en guerra...baname de rocas y de tierra (OJO: no me gusta la traduccion que sigue el ritmo):
~When I fall for you, don't kiss me. Pretend you are at war, shower me with mud, shower me with rocks.
3. Mirame... (NO a la traduccion de ritmo)
Look at me...once again I look at you straight in the eyes, and you feel me far away, but certain (i.e real, I am there, I exist)
4. Aventurarse a ser guitarra...
(delete OH) --> el resto de la traduccion de ritmo esta bien.
5. Como se iluminaba todo....
(delete OH please and avoid using "embodied")
How it all became brighter when love reached my eyes in the shape of your body.
6. Late la prisa...
The urge to love erupts and the heart... (toda la traduccion de ritmo ok)
7. Pero cuando subas...
But when you take my body, make sure it's awake (ready for love making).
8. Amar es como rodar...
(no me gusta nada la traduccion de ritmo aqui)
Love is like falling in the abyme, the abyme of the night (abyme = abismo)

9. Y ante el peligro...

(tampoco me gusta la traducción de ritmo aquí)

And before such danger, it's human (natural?) to hold on the "riendas"

La idea es que la guitarra = cuerpo de mujer

La guitarra tiene cuerdas = riendas de un caballo

La mujer = guitarra & una yegua (mare) que el hombre monta (rides)
cuando

hace el amor.

guitarra en riendas = metáfora para la mujer en el acto de amor: la
mujer es

guitarra por la forma, la mujer es yegua que el hombre toma (monta),
las

riendas de la yegua son las cuerdas de la guitarra y, recuerda bien,
todo se

desarrolla por medio de la música: Jose Luis es un músico y ella está
obsesionada con su música. De allí la necesidad de dejar "riendas" en
el

texto.

Espero que este claro y gracias por todo tu trabajo! Rocio

> Querida Aleksandra,

> perdona la demora en contestarte. He leído tus traducciones y tengo
muy

> poquitos comentarios:

> .

> 1. The island of salt

> Ok con los comentarios 1 y 2.

>

> 2. Guitarra en riendas

> Entiendo que las canciones están pendientes y de esto hemos hablado
en

> otro mensaje.

> "cuadernillo de presentación" = booklet es correcto --es aquel que va
en

> la caja del CD.

> comentario sobre sonos cubanos --> me sorprende. Todo (mi) mundo sabe
lo

> que es un son cubano (un tipo de música y poesía, Nicolás Guillén). No

se

> como traducirlo.

>

> 3. Federico

> el libro de Barthes aludido se titula en espanhol "Fragmentos de un

> discurso amoroso" que sigue bien el original en frances.

Desgraciadamente

> la traduccion al ingles no es buena "A Lover's Discourse" pero que le

> vamos a hacer. El cuento juega con el titulo en frances y espanhol, y con

> el titulo ingles este juego verbal se pierde.

>

> 4. El cuarto mandamiento

> (en espanhol): Honraras a tu padre y a tu madre. Tienes razon que en

> ingles es el quinto.

> comentario 2: si, Chincha, al sur de Lima, es conocida por ser un

> distrito/ciudad mulata/afro peruana. Cuna del festejo (baile afroperuano).

> comentario 3: es respeto para ella misma (for herself) y no por su padre.

> comentario 4: OK

>

> 5. Durmiendo en el agua

> no entiendo el comentario 1, pero no interfiere con el texto.

>

> 6. Para visitar museos

> Ya discutimos esto: OJO, NO, no estaba pensando en Axolotl de Cortazar -al

> menos no intencional y racionalmente.

>

> 7. El cementerio de acari

> ampliamente discutido y editado.

>

> El unico que me falta es "El diablo de Hollental"

>

> Finalmente, el libro se va a publicar por Mundo Ajeno en Lima este anho, y

> planea presentarse oficialmente en la Feria Internacional del Libro de

> Lima en Julio 2008. El titulo hasta parece ser "Durmiendo en el agua"

>

> Un abrazo y gracias por todo tu trabajo!

> Rocio

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