

The Reinvention of the Original

The Self-Translations of María Luisa Bombal and Rosario Ferré

Bo Byrkjeland



Dissertation for the degree philosophiae doctor (PhD)
at the University of Bergen

2013

Dissertation date: January 31, 2014

Til mamma

Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Acknowledgements | 6 |
| Preface | 10 |
| | |
| Chapter One | 14 |
| The History of Self-Translation | 16 |
| Towards a Different “Theory” of Self-Translation | 19 |
| Interpretative Implications | 35 |
| For Whom Is a Self-Translation Meant? | 41 |
| | |
| Chapter Two | 48 |
| Two Invisible Works | 50 |
| Bombal’s English | 60 |
| The Genesis of <i>The Shrouded Woman</i> | 62 |
| Bombal as Translator | 68 |
| Bombal’s Literary Legacy | 94 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Chapter Three | 104 |
| The Novel within the Novel | 106 |
| The Reception of the Novel | 110 |
| The Genesis of the Novel | 114 |
| Ferré’s “Translation Strategy” | 121 |
| The First House on the Lagoon | 125 |
| Forgers, Imitators, Copyists | 130 |
| Quintín’s Criticism | 138 |
| A Déjà Vu Experience | 143 |
| | |
| Chapter Four | 146 |
| Translations on the Left, Originals on the Right | 147 |
| The Function of the Bilingual Format | 149 |
| “Language Duel” | 152 |
| “Language Current” | 158 |
| “A Crack in the I” | 167 |
| “A <i>Beso</i> Is Not a Kiss” | 170 |
| The Title Revisited | 173 |

| | |
|--------------------|-----|
| Conclusion | 181 |
| Summary | 181 |
| Implications | 184 |
| Future Research | 188 |
| | |
| Works Cited | 192 |

Acknowledgements

It seems proper that this work is, in a sense, a self-translation, since some of the chapters were first written and presented as papers in either Spanish or Norwegian. I am certain that my “translations” are better than my original drafts, and I have the numerous people who have commented on my work to thank for this. First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor, Gisle Selnes, who has provided me with insightful comments, challenging questions, and useful advice during the three years it has taken to complete this project. I would also like to express my gratitude to Jon Askeland, who read the complete draft. My work owes a great deal to his comments, even though I did not involve him until quite late in the process. Special thanks go to Kari Soriano Salkjelsvik, who took the time to comment on my work at a crucial stage in the process.

Most of the chapters in this dissertation were first presented as papers at various seminars in Bergen, Berlin, Paris, and Munich, organized by the Norwegian researcher training school TBLR (Tekst Bilde Lyd Rom). Needless to say, my work owes a great deal to the comments and criticism I received from the professors and fellow PhD students who attended these seminars. I am also grateful for the opportunity to present my thoughts on Ferré to the research group KIK (Karibia: identiteter og konflikter) at the University of Bergen, whose seminars I have attended regularly and with great interest. An earlier version of Chapter Two was published in *Corrientes: Revista nórdica de estudios iberoamericanos*. I wish to thank my two anonymous peer reviewers for their helpful and enthusiastic feedback, which helped me strengthen and sharpen my arguments.

I owe a debt of gratitude to Birger Angvik, Adriana Méndez Rodenas, and Patricio Lizama for the support, advice, and encouragement they gave me in the initial stages of this project.

I would also like to extend my thanks to Eva Gentes and the other members of our research network on self-translation: Anil Pinto, Aurora Sambolín, Elizabete Manterola, Marlisa Richters, Li Ping, María Recuenco, Lyudmila Razumova, Fransiska Louwagie, and Trish Van Bolderen, among others. To be part of this network has been nothing if not inspiring and helpful. Our file sharing and frequent email discussions are greatly appreciated. The immense and rapidly growing bibliography on self-translation that Eva is now responsible for updating is an invaluable resource for anyone working on this subject.

My thanks also to Julio-César Santoyo, Sinéad Mooney, and Simona Cocco for providing me with useful information about their research on self-translation, Beckett, and Ferré.

I could not have completed my research without generous financial support from the University of Bergen. I wish to thank my colleagues at the Department of Foreign Languages, especially my fellow *hispanistas* and the various professors who have very kindly taken the time to discuss numerous passages from the work of Bombal and Ferré with me: Željka Švrljuga, Stuart Sillars, Charles Armstrong, Åse Johnsen, Christopher Sterba, and Randi Koppen.

Over the last few years a number of my colleagues have become my friends, and I owe them all a special thanks: Camilla Skalle, Håkon Tveit, Øyvind Gjerstad, Martin Paulsen, Espen Ingebrigtsen, Anje Müller Gjesdal, Margrete Dyvik Cardona, Bodil Moss, Anna Heermann, and Svenn-Arve Myklebost. Our lunch breaks and daily conversations have been a source of humor and great pleasure. They have provided a healthy escape from my academic pursuits. I also wish to thank my three best friends outside academia: Tor, Magne, and Roy. Their complete lack of interest in self-translation is, and I say this with the utmost sincerity, deeply appreciated.

Heartfelt thanks go to my parents and my brother Lasse. They mean the world to me. This work is dedicated to the person with whom I most often discuss literature, my mother, for instilling a love of books in me. Our conversations have contributed to my intellectual development in ways that are impossible to describe with any justice.

Lastly, I would like to thank my wife-to-be, Siv, who has made the past three years the loveliest of my life: Du er det kjæreste jeg har.

Bo Byrkjeland

Bergen, July 18, 2013

*To translate is to produce literature,
just as the writing of one's own works is – and it is more difficult, more rare.*

Novalis

Preface

There are things which can be gained only in translation.

Zygmunt Bauman

This dissertation examines literary self-translation, the phenomenon Anton Popovič, in his *Dictionary for the Analysis of Literary Translation* (1976), defined as “[t]he translation of an original work into another language by the author himself” (19). However, it also examines what Stephen Kellman, using a neologism, calls literary *translingualism*, which he defines as “the phenomenon of authors who write in more than one language or at least in a language other than their primary one” (ix). Self-translation, by definition, involves writing in more than one language. As an object of study it is therefore closely related to translingualism.

The aim of this study is twofold. On the one hand, it seeks to say something about the status of self-translations and texts written in a non-native language, their status within an author’s *oeuvre* as a whole but also within the history of literature, in an attempt to grasp some of the presuppositions upon which a certain value system relies, as well as their consequences for the study of literature. My main purpose, however, is to account for how María Luisa Bombal (1910-1980) and Rosario Ferré (b. 1938), the two authors on whom this investigation will focus, rework their own originals into another language. In doing so, I will also analyze the interpretative implications of their self-translating activity. In Ferré’s writings especially, I find ample material for a “critique” of the traditional hierarchy of original and translation. Bombal’s work, published several decades earlier, raises similar questions and invites us to reexamine our reasons for concentrating on the texts she wrote in her native Spanish, to the exclusion of those she produced in English during the almost thirty years she lived in the United States.

Bombal's and Ferré's bilingual *oeuvres* represent a valuable source for such an investigation, for three principal reasons. First, Bombal and Ferré have translated a substantial part of their own writing, either from Spanish into English or vice versa. Both authors also claim to have written texts directly in English, even though this is not their first language. Second, in varying degrees they both modify their texts when they rework them into another language – that is, they add, excise, and rewrite portions of the source text during the “translation process,” making it difficult to differentiate between what is “original” and what is “translated.” Third, Bombal and Ferré are both canonical hispanophone authors whose English-language production is widely considered to be significantly inferior to their works in Spanish. Throughout this study we will see numerous examples of critics who have “managed” Bombal's and Ferré's bilingual *oeuvres* by deciding that one version of a text is better or more beautiful or less consumerist than the other. They have thus effectively circumvented the problems raised by the existence of two imperfectly matched versions. However, both versions are, in my view, equally “authorized” and equally valid. This poses a serious problem for the literary critic, a problem that cannot be ignored (and much less “solved”) by dismissing one version as consumerist while elevating the other as art, which there has been a tendency to do in the literature on Bombal and Ferré.

The relative worth of one version as opposed to another cannot be the best place to start for anyone interested in Bombal or Ferré. “As for taste,” Catherine Belsey observes in a recent book, “very little light is usually shed on individual works by debates about their merits” (10). In the context of self-translation and translanguaging, such debates tend more or less to reiterate a set of stock statements about what has been lost in the translation or about what is better, richer, or more natural in the version written in the author's native tongue, such as when critic Melissa Mercado quotes a passage from Ferré's novel *The House on the Lagoon* (1995) and states that the same paragraph “reads with more emotion in the Spanish version” (31). The question scholars have not asked, or not pursued with sufficient vigor, is what may be gained by focusing on both versions of the works of Bombal and Ferré. New questions may arise and new light may be shed on their respective *oeuvres* if scholars approach them from the perspective that, for significant periods of their lives, Bombal

and Ferré divided their time between two languages and translated and rewrote their own texts. If, on the other hand, scholars choose to focus exclusively on the Spanish-language part of their work, they risk ignoring important aspects of their bilingual corpus.

In this study, however, I will openly address the question of the quality of the anglophone work of Bombal and Ferré whenever I find it opportune. Even though that is not my primary concern here, I believe that this issue cannot be ignored in an investigation such as this one, since the reception of Bombal's and Ferré's English texts seems inseparable from the debate about their merits and faults vis-à-vis those of the Spanish versions. Moreover, this question is concomitant with the question of the status of self-translations and translanguaging writing, and a study that seeks to grasp the presuppositions of a value system that tends to dismiss such texts as inferior must necessarily talk about quality at some point.

The question of status is a theoretical one, but it is also a methodological question with practical implications insofar as it determines which text(s) are read and included in the canon. An important premise of my study is that a translation cannot be dismissed *a priori* as a poor substitute for the original text, and all the more so if the author has revised and expanded the original. This has led me to draw on the writings of Jacques Derrida and Jorge Luis Borges on translation. Derrida, who seems to show no nostalgia for origins in his work, also encourages us to be skeptical of the concept of the *langue maternelle* and what this term usually connotes. "I leave to others the words 'my mother tongue'" (34), he writes in *Monolingualism of the Other* (1996). This statement suggests a repudiation of the idea, widespread ever since the Romantic period, that what is written in the *Muttersprache* is somehow more authentic, more original, a more genuine and spontaneous expression of the author's self, and thus somehow closer to the origins of the text.

I will begin by presenting a critical survey of the most important scholarly works that have contributed to the understanding of self-translation. I will consider the problems self-translation raises, its relevance for translation studies and literary studies, its long

and venerable history, and its relative ubiquity in modern literature. I suggest that, in their current form, approaches to self-translation, as well as what some call “theories of self-translation,” leave something to be desired, and I go on to sketch out an alternative way of looking at the phenomenon, drawing on insights from the work of Derrida and Borges. This discussion will occupy most of my first chapter.

Chapter Two gives an account of the textual differences between Bombal’s *La amortajada* (1938) and the author’s own translation of this novel, *The Shrouded Woman* (1948). I show that *La amortajada* and *The Shrouded Woman* are not as symmetrical as previous studies of Bombal’s work seem to take for granted, and I discuss Bombal’s reasons for making changes and additions to the translation. In doing so, I also consider the asymmetry between the two existing Spanish versions of the text. I then move on to explore some of the potential implications of these differences for the interpretation of Bombal’s work. My main contention is that, by focusing solely on Bombal’s Spanish-language texts, scholars write a form of criticism that is partial, that ignores a crucial part of the author’s writing.

In the third chapter, “Rosario Ferré in English and Spanish,” I will consider how Ferré frustrates a clear-cut dichotomy between what is original and what is derivative in her work. This chapter focuses on the novel *The House on the Lagoon* and its Spanish-language successor *La casa de la laguna* (1996). Chapter Four offers a reading of Ferré’s only bilingual collections of poems, *Language Duel / Duelo del lenguaje* (2002), and elaborates further the interpretative implications of Ferré’s critique of our propensity to give priority to a single *original text* and of the attendant desire to distinguish clearly between original and translation. This chapter ends with a consideration of the problematic relationship between source text and target text when the same individual is responsible for both versions. This is an issue that is pursued further in my Conclusion, in which I seek to review the argument of my dissertation and to reformulate the insights provided by a reading of Bombal and Ferré that takes into account both versions of their works.

Chapter One

The Problematics of Self-Translation

It seems proper that those who create art in a civilization of quasi-barbarism which has made so many homeless, which has torn up tongues and peoples by the root, should themselves be poets unhoused and wanderers across language.

George Steiner

The aim of the present chapter is to examine central problems and challenges that self-translation entails. I will examine these issues in the light of translation theory and literature on self-translation. By doing so, I hope to provide some theoretical background to the chapters that follow, while at the same time inaugurating the theoretical discussion that I intend to pursue subsequently in parallel to the analysis of specific works by Bombal and Ferré, the two writers who, as I have already pointed out, are the main focus of this study.

Bombal and Ferré are exemplary in that their work illustrates a more general issue. That is to say, their work forces us to address the kind of questions that self-translation raises. For self-translation provokes questions for any scholarly reader, particularly if one faces an author who has translated a substantial part of his or her own writing. When one studies the *oeuvre* of such a writer, the following questions impose themselves: Which texts should one read? Which version should be given textual priority? The original, because of its status as pure and singular originality, or rather the translation, which represents a subsequent, more “complete” version of the original (albeit in another language)? Or should one read both, if one can? And if one does, what happens to one’s perception of the work, or works? These questions are complicated further by the fact that sometimes we do not know which text is the original and which is the translation, and by the fact that some self-translators produce two versions of the “same” work more or less simultaneously. Many of the

scholars who have written about self-translation have pointed out the implications that an author's decision to self-translate has for the status of the original. In *Beckett and Babel* (1988), the first book-length study of Samuel Beckett's practice of self-translation, Brian Fitch emphasizes that the original "is suddenly revealed to be *unfinished*" (131) when the author produces a new version in another language. Fitch, as we shall see, goes further than most in insisting that this should have radical consequences for how one reads and studies Beckett's work. More interested in what bilingual writers have in common, Elizabeth Klosty Beaujour argues in *Alien Tongues* (1989), a study that deals with Vladimir Nabokov and other bilingual Russian émigré writers, that "self-translation and the (frequently) attendant reworking makes a text retrospectively incomplete" (112).

While such reflections abound in works on self-translation, it is remarkable that they are virtually absent from the literature on Bombal and Ferré. The self-translations of Bombal and Ferré have received scant critical attention. This is not unrelated to a more general tendency to ignore the works these two writers produced in English, regardless of whether the works in question are perceived as translations from their own Spanish or as texts originally written in English. The lack of interest in the anglophone writings of Bombal and Ferré confirms what Roberto Ignacio Díaz has observed in *Unhomely Rooms: Foreign Tongues and Spanish American Literature* (2002), namely that "the institutions guiding the study of Spanish American literature traditionally tend to focus solely on writing in Spanish" (14). Díaz also points out that the institutions in question have tended to stress reading in that language, since "even those who view heterolingual authors as possible elements within Spanish American literature tend critically to privilege translations into Spanish over foreign-tongue originals" (14-15).

Unhomely Rooms, Díaz states in his introduction, "seeks to redesign the house of Spanish American literature as a multilingual archive" (15). In other words, Díaz calls for a study of Spanish American literature in which there is room for texts written in languages other than Spanish. In a similar manner, and partly taking its cue from Díaz's rethinking of what constitutes the Spanish American canon, this

dissertation posits that self-translations deserve a place in the study of Spanish American literature. They warrant, at the very least, a closer examination, before they can be dismissed as irrelevant or uninteresting.

The History of Self-Translation

Contrary to the impression given by a work such as Enrique Anderson Imbert's *Historia de la literatura hispanoamericana* (1954, first edition), self-translation is not a rare practice among Spanish American writers, at least not in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. A roster of twentieth-century Spanish American authors who have translated some of their own work would include the names of prominent literary figures such as Victoria Ocampo, Vicente Huidobro, César Moro, José María Arguedas, Guillermo Cabrera Infante, Manuel Puig, Ariel Dorfman, and Esmeralda Santiago. Self-translation is not, however, a uniquely modern phenomenon. Earlier periods had their self-translators, too. Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, for example, translated some of her own poems between Latin and Spanish, which was not an unusual practice in the Baroque period. "It is common enough," Leonard Forster notes in *The Poet's Tongues* (1970), "to find poets translating their own Latin verses; many German poets did this, and the subtitle 'Aus meinem Lateinischen,' from my own Latin, is frequent in works of seventeenth-century poetry" (27). Forster has shown that European poets in the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the Baroque frequently translated themselves between Latin and the vernaculars. Although our knowledge of how common or uncommon self-translation has been in the history of Spanish American literature remains insufficient, Sor Juana was hardly the only early practitioner of self-translation in the New World.

In his article on self-translation in the first edition of the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* (1998), Rainier Grutman stated that self-translation "is frowned upon in literary studies," and that "[t]ranslation scholars themselves have paid little attention to the phenomenon" (17). In the revised second edition of the encyclopedia, which appeared in 2009, Grutman deleted these two sentences, presumably because

of the fact that over the preceding ten years there had been a substantial increase in activities related to self-translation. “Little work has been done on autotranslation” (13), Mark Shuttleworth and Moira Cowie observed in their *Dictionary of Translation Studies* (1997), but this no longer holds true. As Grutman himself notes in an article from 2007, “self-translation is becoming an object worthy of study” (“L’autotraduction” 219, my trans.). Self-translation is indeed emerging as an independent research area within translation studies. Several conferences and special issues of scholarly journals have been devoted to the phenomenon, and the literature on the subject is growing rapidly. In her recent book *On Self-Translation* (2012), Simona Anselmi uses the term “self-translation studies” (17) to refer to this nascent subfield. As in any embryonic field of research, however, there is still much that remains relatively unexplored. In his article “Blank Spaces in the History of Translation” (2007), Julio-César Santoyo reminds us of this fact when he describes self-translation as “another vast territory without history” (22).

Over the last ten years much research has been done on the history of self-translation, and Santoyo has been one of the pioneers in this research. As Santoyo has documented in several articles, essays, and book chapters, there is a widely held belief that only a handful of writers have translated their own work, Beckett and Nabokov being the most commonly cited examples. In his book *The Experience of the Foreign* (1984), for instance, Antoine Berman states that “self-translations are exceptions, as are the cases where a writer chooses a language other than his own” (3). Gabriel García Márquez is another case in point. In his essay “Los pobres traductores buenos” (1982), García Márquez alludes briefly to the work of Beckett and to that of the Spanish self-translator and émigré writer Jorge Semprún. He then notes, almost en passant, that it is “odd” that there are few bilingual authors who decide to translate themselves: “Es curioso, pero no se conocen muchos escritores bilingües que lo hagan” (291). Thanks to the work of Santoyo and others, we now know that this view is historically incorrect. In his article “Autotraducciones: Una perspectiva histórica” (2005), Santoyo states that even the list of authors who translated themselves between French and another language in the twentieth century is “tan larga que más parece un listín telefónico” (865). Although he is no doubt

exaggerating somewhat here, Santoyo has in effect demonstrated that literary self-translation is by no means an infrequent phenomenon. In the article from which I just quoted, he catalogues more than a hundred writers who have translated their own work, and still his list is, as he himself points out, far from exhaustive. Other scholars have also made important contributions that invalidate the claim that it is uncommon for authors to translate their own work and to write in a language other than their primary one. Steven Kellman's study *The Translingual Imagination* (2000) should be mentioned in this context. Kellman has assembled "a roster of translingual authors" (117-118). His list is not exhaustive, but it contains the names of more than two hundred authors who write in more than one language, refuting the assumption that self-translation and writing in a non-native language are unusual literary practices.

Another noteworthy contribution to the field is Jan Walsh Hokenson and Marcella Munson's *The Bilingual Text: History and Theory of Literary Self-Translation* (2007). Although much of Santoyo's research precedes their own by several years, Hokenson and Munson never refer to Santoyo's work. This is an indication that Santoyo has yet to make a significant impact within comparative literature, the academic field to which these two researchers "belong." Hokenson and Munson provide a comprehensive overview of the history of self-translation. However, they also expound a general theory of literary self-translation. More specifically, they put forward a theory that attempts to account for why authors often make radical and startling changes to the source text when they translate their own literary work. Briefly put, Hokenson and Munson's theory postulates that when authors translate themselves, "they make changes that seem almost always to arise from the need, the desire, or the delightful occasion to re-address the text to a new audience" (206). Textual differences are thus explained as a result of the need or desire to suit the translation to the receptor culture.

Towards a Different “Theory” of Self-Translation

In what follows, and later in my readings of Bombal and Ferré, I will take issue with the theory put forward by Hokenson and Munson. Both Bombal and Ferré alter their texts when they translate them into another language. They augment, omit, and revise portions of the original. The changes they make, as we shall see in the subsequent chapters of this study, are often quite substantial. There is, however, nothing exceptional about this. In his essay “Rosario Ferré: Entre dos lenguas, entre dos culturas” (2003), Santoyo notes that the way Ferré adds and takes out details, changes metaphors, and tinkers with her characters is a practice “nada ajena al ejercicio de la autotraducción en cualquier parte del mundo” (349). Other studies confirm Santoyo’s observation about the tendency of self-translators to revise the source text. In *Nabokov Translated* (1977), for example, Jane Grayson describes Nabokov as “a compulsive reviser” (3). When translating his own work, Grayson observes, Nabokov “frequently takes the opportunity to incorporate substantial modifications and reworkings” (3). Similarly, W. Glyn Jones has noted that Karen Blixen (or Isak Dinesen, which is the pseudonym she wrote under in English), who translated herself between English and Danish, “adds where she thinks it appropriate and removes where she thinks there is reason to do so” (46).

Hokenson and Munson postulate that self-translated texts often differ from their originals because they are directed toward another culture. “Textual differences,” they claim, “are primarily cultural because they are audience-oriented” (198). The kind of changes that Bombal and Ferré make when they translate themselves indicates a need to rethink this theory. To take an example, Bombal added several new chapters and introduced entirely new characters when she “translated” *La amortajada* into English. Such radical changes, to use Hokenson and Munson’s words, “defeat any effort to explain them linguistically” (198). Is it, however, accurate to say that Bombal made those changes for the sake of her new reader’s understanding and appreciation of the work? Arguably, she did not. It is by no means certain that self-translators alter their texts primarily because of a desire or need to adapt them to a new readership, with its own set of cultural and aesthetic norms. I am

not suggesting that this is never part of the reason, but I suspect that Hokenson and Munson stress the importance of “audience-oriented” textual differences beyond what is justifiable, and that their theory is therefore unable to account for the variety and the complexity of transformations that occur when authors translate themselves.

Ferré is one of a number of self-translators discussed in *The Bilingual Text*. However, the only text by Ferré that Hokenson and Munson analyze is *Sweet Diamond Dust* (1988), the author’s translation of *Maldito amor* (1986), her first novel. This particular self-translation fits well with Hokenson and Munson’s theory. As Hokenson and Munson note, Ferré “inserts whole passages explaining the history of Puerto Rico” (202), and she “amplifies the text for English-language readers unfamiliar with daily life in Puerto Rico (203). Ferré adds, for example, long passages on the indigenous Taíno people and their stone deities. She also elaborates on the island’s traditions of horsemanship and daily mass, and she changes several culture-specific references. Other scholars have made similar observations about *Sweet Diamond Dust*.¹ In *Rosario Ferré, A Search for Identity* (1995), for instance, Suzanne Hintz states that in the English translation of *Maldito amor* Ferré “treats the cultural obstacle by including great detail on the history of Puerto Rico and the sugar cane and coffee industries” (185-186).

If *Sweet Diamond Dust* supports the theory postulated by Hokenson and Munson, since it provides English-language readers with a cultural and historical framework that native Puerto Ricans probably would have deemed superfluous, something quite different seems to be going on in Ferré’s more recent self-translations. Most of the changes Ferré makes in the works that I will concentrate on in this investigation, *The House on the Lagoon* and *Language Duel* and their respective Spanish-language counterparts, do not appear to be motivated by a desire to adapt the original to the

¹ *Sweet Diamond Dust* is by far Ferré’s most widely studied self-translation. For comparison of the Spanish and the English version, see Jaffe, “Translation and Prostitution” (1995); Beatson, “Self-Translation and Re-writing” (1998); Gosser Esquilín, “Rosario Ferré” (1999); Méndez-Clark, “Reescritura” (2000); Behiels, “Las estrategias de Rosario Ferré” (2001); Allatson, *Latino Dreams* (2002), 59-108; Santoyo, “Rosario Ferré” (2003); Negrón-Muntaner, *Boricua Pop* (2004), 179-205.

needs and tastes of a culturally different audience. What seems to be at stake in these works is, among other things, an attempt to dislocate the hierarchical binary of original/copy. In *Language Duel*, where the bilingual format plays a central role, textual differences also appear to have an aesthetic function. This not only challenges the accuracy of Hokenson and Munson's theory, but prompts us to reconsider the position taken by, for example, Gema Soledad Castillo, in her essay "La mujer creadora y traductora: La escritora puertorriqueña Rosario Ferré" (2003). Referring not to one particular self-translation but to Ferré's practice of self-translation in general, Castillo argues that Ferré "manipula el texto para adaptarlo a las convenciones socioculturales de la lengua de destino" (386). Castillo, as we shall see, has put forward a theory of self-translation that is in many ways similar to Hokenson and Munson's.

If Hokenson and Munson provide an inadequate theory of why self-translated texts often differ from their originals, there are a number of translation theories that encourage another way of looking at the changes that occur when authors translate their own work. In the following, I will invoke the work of Jacques Derrida and Jorge Luis Borges. What Derrida and Borges offer us, however, is not so much coherent, systematically formulated theories of translation as dispersed, thought-provoking reflections on the nature and importance of translation. Derrida and Borges are very different as theorists, but they both challenge conventional views of translation. Some of their provocative force is obviously lost when their "theories" are applied to self-translation, since the work of self-translators is generally granted a higher degree of authority and respect than that of ordinary translators, but even so I believe that Derrida and Borges may serve as a necessary corrective to Hokenson and Munson's emphasis on audience-oriented changes.

Before we embark on a closer examination of Derrida's and Borges's respective writings on translation, an additional clarification is in order. My intent here is not to produce another exercise of what Emir Rodríguez Monegal once called the "Borges,

precursor of Derrida” variety.² This is not the place to examine Derrida’s “kinship” with Borges. In spite of some shared ideas, the differences between the two authors are more obvious than the similarities, the contradictions more evident than the areas of agreement. I will point out some of their differences and similarities, but my motivation for discussing Borges and Derrida together in this particular context is, above all, grounded in a belief that they complement each other in a way that allows for a more fruitful starting point for understanding the complex textual transformations that tend to occur when authors translate their own work.

According to Derrida and Borges, it is possible to consider any translation as an original. In “Des Tours de Babel” (1985), Derrida’s rereading of Walter Benjamin’s “The Task of the Translator” (1923), the French philosopher argues that translation ensures that the original work “lives more and better, beyond the means of its author” (179). A translation participates in the “afterlife” of the original, securing its survival by effectively becoming a new original in another language. This new original is related to the “old,” but not subordinate to it. It constitutes “a moment in the growth of the original, which will complete itself *in* enlarging itself” (188). In the translation, Derrida says somewhat enigmatically, “the original becomes larger; it grows rather than reproduces itself” (191). The metaphor of growth, which Derrida uproots from Benjamin’s text and replants in his own, suggests that translation develops, completes, enhances, and somehow augments the original. In this context, it is important to remember that a translation is normally seen as a weak substitute for the original. According to a deep-rooted conviction, the best translation is merely better than the worst. Derrida’s positive view of translation, on the other hand, regards the translator’s work as a *complement* to the original. With his claim that “if the original calls for a complement, it is because at the origin it was not there without fault, full, complete, total, identical to itself” (188), Derrida draws our attention to the

² See Rodríguez Monegal, “Borges y Derrida: boticarios” (1985). The most notable attempt to address the question of possible affinities and links between Derrida and Borges is probably Roberto González Echevarría’s essay “BdeORridaGES” (1983), which is one of the texts Rodríguez Monegal refers to in his essay.

perfectible nature of texts. Translation always gives rise to the fear of error and shortcomings, but Derrida emphasizes that originals, too, are not “without fault,” much less “complete.” According to Derrida, there is always something in the very structure of the original, some fault or lack, that makes translation necessary: “the structure of the original is marked by the requirement to be translated” (184). If a translation is to be a complement, however, it must add something, say something different, produce something new. If not, it would not be a complement. It would simply be repeating what the original text says in another language, using different signifiers to signify the same signifieds.

Derrida’s statement in “Des Tours de Babel” that “the original lives on and transforms itself” (188) through translation stresses the notion of translation as survival. However, equally important as the idea that the original *lives on* is the notion that the original survives or lives on in a *transformed* state. Derrida rejects what he in “Living On” (1979) calls “the classical model of transportable univocality” (75). That is to say, he rejects any theory that regards translation as the pure “transport” of a semantic content from one language to another. In one of the interviews published in *Positions* (1972), Derrida states: “We will never have, and in fact have never had, to do with some ‘transport’ of pure signifieds from one language to another” (19). In other words, Derrida is critical of any theory that draws its inspiration from the etymological roots of the term *translation* (which, as we know, derives from the Latin *translatio*, meaning “to carry across”). Since there can be no simple transfer of meaning, Derrida argues that “for the notion of translation we would have to substitute a notion of *transformation*: a regulated transformation of one language by another, of one text by another” (19). What Derrida calls attention to here is the transformative nature of translation. There is no translation that does not exercise some violence on the original, that does not make thorough or dramatic changes to the original. However, it is important to keep in mind that what we are talking about here is, as Derrida points out, a *regulated* transformation. Derrida is not suggesting that translators could or should make just about any kinds of changes to the original. Translation is, to borrow Gideon Toury’s formulation from *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond* (1995), “a norm-governed activity” (56). As Toury

emphasizes, “it is norms that determine the (type and extent of) equivalence manifested by actual translations” (61). Translational norms are, as the very notion of norm implies, socio-culturally specific and intrinsically unstable. Lawrence Venuti basically makes the same point in *The Translator’s Invisibility* (1995) when he stresses that “canons of accuracy in translation, notions of ‘fidelity’ and ‘freedom,’ are historically determined categories” (13-14). What counted as a good, acceptable, faithful, or accurate translation in seventeenth-century France, for example, would be perceived differently today, due to changes in the norms that govern translation.

In “What Is a ‘Relevant’ Translation?” (2001), originally given as a lecture in 1998, Derrida seeks to describe and formulate what he perceives to be the most important norm or, as he prefers to call it, “law” that has governed translation in recent times, that is, translation “in the rigorous sense conferred on it over several centuries by a long and complex history in a given cultural situation (more precisely, more narrowly, in Abrahamic and post-Lutheran Europe)” (179). According to Derrida, translation today is ruled above all by an economic principle or “quantitative law”:

In recent times, for scarcely a few centuries, a so-called literal translation that aims to attain the greatest possible relevance hasn’t been a translation that renders letters or even only what is placidly termed the sense, but rather a translation that, while rendering the so-called proper meaning of a word, its literal meaning (which is to say a meaning that is determinable and not figural) establishes as the law or ideal – even if it remains inaccessible – a kind of translating that is not *word-to-word*, certainly, or *word-for-word*, but nonetheless stays as close as possible to the equivalence of “one word *by* one word” and thereby respects verbal quantity as a quantity of words. . . . (180-181)

A relevant translation is, as Derrida points out, simply a “good” translation (177). So what Derrida is describing here is what is required of a translation for it to be perceived as appropriate, correct, adequate, idiomatic, and so on. According to Derrida, the law or ideal of translation has for the last few centuries dictated a kind of

translating that stays as close as possible to the equivalence of “one word *by* one word,” but without being excessively literal, which would result in awkwardness, ungrammaticality, and unintelligibility. While remaining grammatically correct, “natural” (as opposed to “awkward”), and intelligible, the translation must as far as possible respect the verbal economy of the original. In practical terms, this means that while it is acceptable for (and indeed often expected of) the translator to alter the syntax of the original, he or she must not change the content of the original. That is the *sine qua non* of translating. The translator should, in principle, neither add nor subtract a single word. If the original uses one word, the translator should replace that word with the most “relevant” equivalent in the target language. Conversely, if the original uses more words than are necessary to convey a certain meaning, the translator should reproduce that pleonasm. Or, as Derrida also puts it, “the translation must be *quantitatively* equivalent to the original, apart from any paraphrase, explication, explicitation, analysis, and the like” (179). A translation that fulfills this duty is, in short, a “good” translation, a translation that does what one expects of it. It does what people nowadays generally expect of a translation.

Although translators are expected to respect the verbal economy of the original, fluency is an equally important translational norm. Translators today work under what Venuti in *The Translator's Invisibility* calls the “regime of fluency” (1). Venuti’s observation that over the past sixty years reviews of translations “have grown amazingly consistent in praising fluency while damning deviations from it” (2) points to how translation has been and still is governed by the ideal of fluency. Fluent translating, as Venuti states, depends (among other things) “on syntax that is not so ‘faithful’ to the foreign text as to be ‘not quite idiomatic,’ that unfolds continuously and easily” (4). Even though it is not a central issue for him, Derrida, too, notes the importance of fluency as a translational norm when he states that in recent times the ideal of translation has dictated a kind of translating that is not *word-for-word* but that nonetheless stays as close as possible to the equivalence of “one word *by* one word.”

When Derrida prefers to call the translational ideal of “one word *by* one word” a *law* and not a norm, this is at least partly due to the fact that in this age of copyright both

literary and non-literary translation are regulated by law and not only by a certain ethics. “In translation proper,” Umberto Eco writes in his book *Mouse or Rat? Translation as Negotiation* (2003), “there is an implicit law, that is, the ethical obligation to respect what the author has written” (3). One of Derrida’s central points in “Des Tours de Babel” is that this is not only an *implicit* law or *ethical* obligation. In his analysis of excerpts from two French treatises on copyright, Derrida shows how French jurists try to limit the artistic leeway of translators by saying that “the translation, which is not supposed to touch the content, must be original only in its language as *expression*” (196-197). Expression is, of course, opposed to content, and Derrida’s point is that copyright law seeks to restrain translators from adding and omitting content. In practice, a certain amount and a certain kind of intervention are generally permitted, or at least tacitly accepted, especially if the goal is to recreate some stylistic effect, for instance a certain rhyme or rhythm. In principle, however, a translator who introduces new content is not just overstepping the bounds of ethical conduct; he or she is also guilty of an infraction punishable by law. What is interesting about self-translation is that authors who translate their own work are not bound by the same ethical and legal codes as ordinary translators. As Hans Magnus Enzensberger, who spoke from experience, once remarked: “If you translate yourself, there are as it were almost two originals. If you change or add something, who is to say you’re not to do that?” (54).

There is a sense in which any translation is, as Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere have put it, “a rewriting of an original text” (ix). Although translation is a form of rewriting subject to a number of constraints, and despite the efforts of copyright law to keep them from doing so, translators often take great liberties with the original texts and make substantial changes to them, for a variety of cultural, ideological, and poetic reasons. This has led some scholars to question the assumption that self-translation is freer than regular translation. In her study *On Self-Translation*, from which I quoted above, Anselmi writes:

If one accepts that the translator’s subjectivity is constrained by the broader context in which the translation is produced as well as by the

source language text, one must recognise that the subjectivity translating his or her own text will be subject to more or less the same constraints as a subjectivity translating a text written by another author. (26)

While self-translators, just like translators in general, are to some extent “constrained by the broader context in which the translation is produced as well as by the source language text,” these are hardly “more or less the same constraints” as those to which ordinary translators are subject. Part of what makes Anselmi’s argument problematic is that it presupposes, much like Hokenson and Munson’s theory, that self-translation is “a mode of writing based on a pre-existing text, which is to be recontextualised for a new receptor-audience speaking a different language” (26). Needless to say, a significant part of any self-translation must be based on a pre-existing text in order for it to be recognized as a translation in the first place. However, there are often substantial parts of the self-translation that are quite clearly not based on any such pre-existing text, at least not on the original text as it is available to us. Consider, for example, how Ferré “translates” the opening line of her poem “Corriente alterna” in *Language Duel*. The Spanish original begins thus: “El inglés es un lenguaje aerodinámico” (1), which Ferré transforms into: “English is like a nuclear reactor” (1). I will explore this poem in greater detail in Chapter Four. Let it suffice for now to note that it is difficult if not impossible to see how the English line quoted could be based on or constrained by the Spanish original. The radical semantic change cannot plausibly be attributed to a desire to recontextualize the poem for a new audience.

If the self-translating process, as Anselmi herself notes, “frequently triggers the revision, editing or rewriting of the original” (88), this is not necessarily and primarily because of a need or desire to re-address the source text to a new audience. It may rather be because texts are never really finished, and because the self-translating process represents a second opportunity for authors to work on their texts. This is certainly an explanation that Borges’s writing on translation would invite us to consider. In his essay “Las versiones homéricas” (1932), Borges asserts that “no puede haber sino borradores,” and that the concept of the *definitive text* “no

corresponde sino a la religión o al cansancio” (*OC* 239). He thus proposes, essentially, a more tentative view of the original as one of many possible versions, as one among a potentially infinite number of drafts. In other words, Borges stresses the provisional nature of all literary writing. Any text, whether translated or original, is but a preliminary version, different in certain respects from what it was in an earlier draft but also from what it would have been in a subsequent one. As Efraín Kristal puts it in his study *Invisible Work: Borges and Translation* (2002): “Borges thought of the original as a text produced not by a superior being but by a fallible human, a text laden with possibilities and potentialities, attainments and failures” (2). According to Borges, therefore, a good translator should be willing to cut, add, and transform the original for the sake of the work.³

In a sense, Derrida’s re-evaluation of the value and dignity of translations was prefigured by Borges. Although their interests and emphases are different, Derrida and Borges share a desire to rethink translation, and they both distance themselves from the tendency to perceive translations as a frail substitute for the original. Borges would certainly agree with the following comment from Derrida’s *The Ear of the Other* (1982): “Translation is writing; that is, it is not translation only in the sense of transcription. It is a productive writing called forth by the original text” (153). However, whereas Derrida first and foremost asserts the importance of translation as continuity, as a way of making sure that the original lives on in a transformed state in another language, what we find in Borges is a much more explicit re-evaluation of translations as aesthetic objects, as texts worthy to be considered as something in themselves and not just as pale reflections of their originals. Borges was not obsessed with the Romantic notion of originality. He was much more concerned with the aesthetic quality of texts, regardless of their status as translations or originals. He questioned what he in “Las versiones homéricas” calls “[l]a superstición de la inferioridad de las traducciones” (*OC* 239). That is, he questioned the widely held but

³ For a discussion of Borges’s views on translation and his practice as a translator, see also Waisman, *Borges and Translation* (2005).

unjustified belief that a translation is always inferior to its original. In one of the lectures he gave at Harvard in the late 1960s, which were published posthumously as *This Craft of Verse* (2000), Borges stresses that

the difference between a translation and the original is not a difference in the texts themselves. I suppose if we did not know which was the original and which was the translation, we could judge them fairly. But, unhappily, we cannot do this. And so the translator's work is always supposed to be inferior – or, what is worse, is *felt* to be inferior – even though, verbally, the rendering may be as good as the text. (65)

What Borges points to here is the problem of evaluating the literary quality of translations. The difficulties involved in any attempt to evaluate the literary quality of a translation should not be underestimated. These, however, lie first and foremost in a feature inherent in the very process of reading, and are therefore not unique to how one reads translations. As Martin Heidegger states in *Being and Time* (1927): “Interpretation is never a presuppositionless grasping of something previously given” (146). Interpretation is not the same as evaluation, but the idea that one always reads a text with certain expectations or preconceived opinions, an idea that would later be developed by Hans-Georg Gadamer in *Truth and Method* (1960), explains why one cannot judge a translation and its original fairly, unless one does not know which is the original and which is the translation. If one knows that a text is a translation, one's perception of that text inevitably changes. It is, as Borges emphasizes, *felt* to be inferior to the original, and that feeling is not necessarily based on “a difference in the texts themselves.”

If there is, as Borges asserts, a widely held superstition according to which “all translations betray their matchless originals” (*This Craft of Verse* 57), a crucial question arises: Do we read self-translations with a similar prejudice? Given the prevailing concept of authorship, one would perhaps expect that self-translations are not read in the same way as ordinary translations. In her study *A Tongue Not Mine*:

Beckett and Translation (2011), Sinéad Mooney makes an observation that seems highly relevant in this regard:

The disconcerting awareness of mediatedness which is usually unavoidable for those aware that they are reading a translation – the experience of reading a text mutely indicating the existence of an absent original – is apparently suppressed when the reader knows that it is the author of the first version who is also responsible for the second. (11)

The status of authorship is indeed commonly attributed to Beckett's self-translations. Consider, for example, Fitch's statement that "[w]hat is appropriate is to attribute equal status to both versions" (133) of Beckett's works, or Raymond Federman's assertion that "when reading Beckett it is absolutely irrelevant to ask which text was written first" (78). However, scholarly responses to other authors who have translated their own work indicate that not all self-translations achieve the same status as Beckett's works. Hintz, for example, argues that Ferré's *The Youngest Doll* (1991) is "a frail substitute for the original" (190),⁴ and that Ferré "does not do justice to the original Spanish-language *Maldito amor* with her own translation *Sweet Diamond Dust*" (190). In other words, Hintz reads Ferré's self-translations more like ordinary translations than as original works. It is therefore fair to ask to what extent Hintz is describing "a difference in the texts themselves" when she asserts that Ferré's Spanish texts "far overpower their English translations in quality and beauty" (191). This is an important question, even if it may not appear so at first glance, since what Hintz's argument basically implies is that scholars need not concern themselves with the texts Ferré has produced in English.

What Hintz finds problematic about Ferré's self-translations are the radical changes Ferré makes to her originals. How is one to perceive such changes? Borges, I believe,

⁴ *The Youngest Doll* contains translations of fourteen of the short stories published in *Papeles de Pandora* (1976), Ferré's first book. According to the paratexts, six of these translations were produced by Ferré herself, while the remaining eight were produced by Ferré in collaboration with another translator. For a comparison of *Papeles de Pandora* and *The Youngest Doll*, see Méndez-Clark, "Reescritura" (2000).

offers a fruitful methodological starting point for the evaluation of literary self-translations. We normally judge a translator's work on the basis of his or her fidelity to a given original. It is in contrast or in opposition to this traditional view that Borges, in his essay "Los traductores de las *1001 Noches*" (1936), argues that the translator's "infidelidad, su infidelidad creadora y feliz, es lo que nos debe importar" (OC 410). Given the notorious infidelity of self-translators, Borges's endorsement of the liberties a translator might take as a means to enrich or surpass the original allows us to see the changes self-translators often make to their texts in a positive light. Since self-translations tend to abound in additions, omissions, and seemingly unconstrained paraphrases, to judge them according to a standard of faithfulness would fail to do them justice as literary works of art. Borges's view of translation, on the other hand, suggests that, in principle, a translation ought not to be judged negatively if it deviates from the original, and that we should take seriously the potential for improvement that lies in an unfaithful translation.

Wilhelm von Humboldt once claimed that "no writer would have written the same thing in the same way in another language" (43).⁵ Recent research on self-translation has proved him right inasmuch as a certain reluctance to write "the same thing in the same way" seems very much to be a distinctive characteristic of authors who translate their own work. Some authors even describe an *inability* to remain "faithful" to the original text. Theodor Kallifatides, who translates himself between Swedish and Greek, states in an essay:

I soon realised that I was unable to translate my own works. The only thing I could do was to rewrite my books, which in fact I did, since I knew the writer and did not need his permission. They became different books. Another rhythm, another style, another sense of humour, another sadness and another love. Sometimes I even had to change the plot. (4)

⁵ These words are used somewhat out of context here. Taken from the preface of Humboldt's rendering of Aeschylus's *Agamemnon*, published in 1816, they were meant as an argument against the view that a translator should write, or rather try to write, the way the author of the original would have written in the language of the translator.

While changes in style and sense of humor may be attributed to the need to re-address a text to a new audience, it seems less plausible that Kallifatides changes the plot of his books for similar reasons. Kallifatides, one might say, treats the original as a writer treats a draft of a work in progress, which, according to Borges, is what a good translator should do. Two further examples, one a comment by South African novelist André Brink, the other an essay by Raymond Federman, illustrate the way self-translating writers tend to treat the source text. Brink, who self-translates between Afrikaans and English, once told an interviewer:

If you write something in Afrikaans, then rework it in English, you discover things you hadn't realized while writing the Afrikaans. So then you go back to the Afrikaans, and you discover things you missed in English. It can go on endlessly, but at a certain moment, you just say "stop." . . . Sometimes the differences are a matter of nuance or punctuation, but other times there are whole episodes in one book that are not in the other, because they don't quite work in one, but they are absolutely necessary in the other. (5D)

Brink develops his Afrikaans and English versions more or less simultaneously, so that the self-translating activity becomes intrinsically linked to the creative process itself. Ferré, as we shall see, practices self-translation in much the same way. Bombal, on the other hand, produced *The Shrouded Woman* several years after *La amortajada* first appeared. However, as we shall see in the next chapter, Bombal also revised the original in light of its subsequent translation. In this sense, the potentially endless process of revision that Brink describes in the quote above is more than a statement about one writer's idiosyncrasies.

In "A Voice Within a Voice" (1993), Federman speaks as a writer who has translated his own fiction and poetry, but also as a critic who has written extensively on Beckett. In Federman's experience, "the self-translation often augments, enriches, and even embellishes the original text – enriches it, not only in terms of meaning, but also in its music, its rhythm, its metaphoric thickness, and even in its syntactical

complexity” (80). Federman too, then, thinks of the self-translating process as a means to revise the original for the sake of the work rather than for the sake of the reader. The textual differences he finds that the process often gives rise to are hardly “audience-oriented.” To augment a text, to try to embellish it, to try to enrich it semantically, rhythmically, and syntactically, is not an exercise in cross-cultural communication. That is, it is not primarily an attempt to recontextualize the source text for the target culture. First and foremost, it testifies to a writer’s continued concern for his work and to his desire to complete and enhance that work to the best of his ability.

Following Borges and Derrida, the present study posits that one of the principal reasons why self-translators so frequently and drastically diverge from the original text, why authors who translate themselves often feel compelled to make changes as radical as those described by Kallifatides, Brink, and Federman, is that they do not see translation as the pure or faithful transport of a pre-existing text into another language. Rather, they see the self-translating process as an opportunity to refashion an earlier “draft,” as “a productive writing called forth by the original text,” an opportunity to make sure that the original “lives more and better” in another language. As Venuti notes in *The Translator’s Invisibility*, the difficult economic situation faced by most freelance translators today drives them “to turn out translations as quickly as humanly possible” (10), which inevitably limits the literary invention and critical reflection applied to a project. Self-translators are perhaps more inclined than the average professional translator to invest time and effort in a project. A genuine concern for the literary afterlife of their texts is presumably something that prompts authors to apply a considerable amount of literary invention to their self-translations. Indeed, dissatisfaction with previous translations done by others or a general distrust of other translators is often the reason why authors undertake the translation of their own works in the first place. Nancy Huston, for example, once remarked that she rewrote her novel *Plainsong* into French herself because “I would not trust anyone to translate it” (qtd. in Klein-Lataud 220, my trans.). Since authors are not subject to the same ethical and legal constraints as ordinary translators, they may find it both difficult and unnecessary to resist the temptation of trying to improve

the original. No one has perhaps made this point as clearly as Ferré does in her essay “On Language, Destiny, and Translation” (1991):⁶

Translating one’s own literary work is, in short, a complex, disturbing occupation. It can be diabolic and obsessive: it is one of the few instances when one can be dishonest and feel good about it, rather like having a second chance at redressing one’s fatal mistakes in life and living a different way. The writer becomes her own critical conscience; her superego leads her (perhaps treacherously) to believe that she can not only better but surpass herself, or at least surpass the writer she has been in the past. Popular lore has long equated translation with betrayal. . . . But in translating one’s own work it is only by betraying that one can better the original. (162)

Although Ferré admits that she translates her own work in order to reach a wider and different audience,⁷ she also insists that she uses the opportunity that self-translation offers her to try to raise her work to a higher standard, to improve it by adding, omitting, rewriting, or replacing certain passages. Whether a writer is *successful* in his or her attempt to “better the original” is an altogether different question (hence Ferré’s cautionary phrase “perhaps treacherously”), one that will have to be evaluated in each case. However, Ferré’s insistence on the desire to better by betraying is, I think, important to bear in mind. If an author’s self-translations are thought to be significantly inferior to his or her originals, this will evidently have an effect on the question of textual priority. It may serve as an argument for not taking the self-translations into account in any way, effectively branding them as insignificant or superfluous texts. Fitch’s claim that the objective of a study of a bilingual work

⁶ Interestingly, this autobiographical essay on self-translation, which was first published in *The Youngest Doll* (1991), is itself apparently a self-translation. A somewhat different Spanish version of the essay had already appeared in Ferré’s *El coloquio de las perras* (1990). Unlike the short stories in *The Youngest Doll*, however, the English version of this essay is not presented as a translation.

⁷ “All writers want their books to sell and be read as much as possible” (108), Ferré states in her essay “Writing in Between” (1997).

“would *not* be, it should be stressed, to pass judgment on the author’s skill as a translator” (14) is therefore not equally applicable to all such investigations. It should be remembered that Fitch’s study deals with Beckett, and in Beckett’s case it might actually be possible “to attribute equal status to both versions” without having to insist on Beckett’s competence as a translator. Beckett is one of very few authors who have achieved a high standing in two literatures, Nabokov being another well-known example, and it would be difficult to legitimize an investigation of the self-translations of a less canonical writer without asserting the significance of those texts. Since the study of literature is for all intents and purposes the study of original works, the burden of proof lies on those who maintain that the self-translated versions also have to be taken into consideration, and not vice versa. To remain silent on the issue of quality would do little to convince other scholars in the field that they have neglected an important part of the work of the author in question.

To be convinced, prior to a thorough examination of the texts themselves, that no translation can possibly match the original is hardly a fruitful starting point for comparing a self-translation with its source text. The reader who believes that it is *possible* to surpass the original, and that the writer-as-translator at least tried to do so, will be better suited to tease out interesting differences and similarities between the two versions.

Interpretative Implications

The question of literary quality is of paramount importance for the credibility of any claim that an author’s self-translations need to be taken seriously, but it is not the only factor that may warrant a study of a writer’s self-translated texts. As Michaël Oustinoff notes in *Bilinguisme d’écriture et auto-traduction* (2001), when an author decides to translate his or her own work, he or she has the possibility of making the original and the translation “play” with each other. After comparing Beckett with Nabokov, Oustinoff suggests that, for Nabokov, translation was an instrument that he used to “complete” the original, whereas Beckett’s decision to produce two versions

of most of his works may be “an inseparable part of the writing itself, a consciously orchestrated play” (262, my trans.). However, Oustinoff does not say what this implies for the *interpretation* of Beckett’s work. The critic who has most strongly insisted on the interpretative implications of Beckett’s bilingualism is Fitch, who claims that Beckett “puts in question the whole matter of literary interpretation by obliging us to rethink completely the hermeneutic strategies involved” (223). According to Fitch, one cannot read Beckett the way one reads “normal” monolingual writers, and his argument for “the need for *both* versions, *both* texts, of his works to be studied for their own sake” (227) is worth considering:

To take only one version of the work is to make a wholly arbitrary decision, for on what possible grounds would one take one rather than the other? To take the first is to fail to recognize that it was followed by another version; and to take the second is to fail to recognize that another version preceded it. In other words, *both versions are, in themselves, incomplete.* (227)

To Fitch’s question one could answer that it is very much possible, likely even, that scholars might choose one version over another on account of quality, which would not be “a wholly arbitrary decision.” It might be a questionable decision, since literary taste changes and is, to a degree, a subjective matter. However, it would not be a decision based on random choice or personal whim. In the context of Beckett studies, this may not be a relevant objection, but, as I said earlier, with respect to a less established author than Beckett quality would surely be an important criterion. Fitch’s argument is interesting, but it is also problematic. Especially problematic is his claim that if two original texts are too similar to be considered separate works and yet too different for each to be “substitutable” for the other, “they *have* to be brought together in some way so that they can form a unified and coherent aesthetic experience” (228-229). This suggests that monolingual interpretations of Beckett are somehow invalid or inadequate. From this perspective, any reading of *En attendant Godot* that does not also take the English version of the play into account, or vice versa, would be based on an incomplete “work.” A massive corpus of criticism by

francophone and anglophone scholars testifies to the fact that Fitch's position does not prevail within Beckett studies. Ann Beer, to name but one example, adopts a more commonsensical approach to Beckett's practice of translating himself. "The paradox of this most language-conscious of artists," she says, "is the way his art triumphs over language-barriers altogether" (219). However, even Beer, who is critical of Fitch's somewhat radical position, admits that "the status of the double texts is indeed a conundrum, and a most unusual one" (218).

Today there are bilingual editions of some of Beckett's works, which would facilitate the kind of reading that, according to Fitch, is not only possible but also necessary. With one exception, Beckett himself produced no such volume.⁸ None of Beckett's plays or prose works were published in bilingual editions during his lifetime. In other words, the English and the French versions of most of Beckett's works do not exist in any individual text for which the author himself was responsible. As Beer points out, Beckett's bilingual corpus "can therefore only be discussed in some larger, and extra-textual, framework that examines the author or the *oeuvre* as a whole" (217). Beer recognizes that it is only in studies with a particular kind of focus that the decision to concentrate exclusively on Beckett's texts in one language may be considered problematic. It is only within "some larger, and extra-textual, framework" that a discussion of Beckett's bilingualism makes sense. This is a crucial observation, which calls for an important qualification to one of my previous statements. If self-translation provokes questions for "any scholarly reader," as I have stated at the beginning of this chapter, this is primarily true if one's ambition is to examine an author's entire body of literature. If one's scope is more limited or simply set within a different framework, if one's aim is, for example, to study one particular novel by an author, then the question of textual priority becomes less relevant and far less pressing than if one's objective is to examine that author's corpus as a whole.

⁸ A small volume entitled *Poems in English by Samuel Beckett* (1961) contains four short poems in French on the left-hand page and in English on the right. A note under the last poem in English states "translated from the French by the author" (53).

The key theoretical problem with the notion of the *oeuvre* lies in the lack of consensus on what the term specifically refers to. As it is used in scholarly as well as in more colloquial discourse, this French loanword refers to an artist's works regarded collectively. However, what specifically is it that constitutes an author's "works"? Do they include his or her letters, rough drafts, notes, deleted passages at the bottom of manuscripts, and so on? This is the question Michel Foucault, using the publication of Nietzsche's works as an example, asks in "What Is an Author?" (1969). Foucault writes: "A theory of the work does not exist, and the empirical task of those who naively undertake the editing of works often suffers in the absence of such a theory" (282). Foucault's point is that it may be problematic to define and determine the limits of what constitutes an author's works. That is not, however, to say that this is an entirely arbitrary task, or that "anything goes." Certain principles may be discerned, and what Foucault's text does is precisely to draw our attention to the often unstated principles that govern our thinking about what ought to be considered part of an author's works and what may legitimately be excluded. Among the various texts left by someone after his or her death, only a limited number achieve the status of "works." Those that do are endowed with what Foucault calls the "author function" (284), while the rest are deprived of it. A private letter, to use one of Foucault's examples, may well have a signer, but it does not have an author in the sense that a novel or poem does.

An appropriate question to ask, in light of Foucault's essay, is whether self-translations tend to be endowed with the "author function." Beckett's translations of his own work certainly do. However, as I have already suggested, Beckett is a somewhat unique case due to the fact that he is widely regarded as one of the greatest writers of the twentieth century. Self-translated texts by other writers do not necessarily achieve a similar status, and they are not bestowed as much critical attention as Beckett has received. Bombal is a good case in point. Her posthumously published *Obras completas* (1996) does not include any of the texts she produced in English. Both *The Shrouded Woman* and *House of Mist* (1947), a novel Bombal claimed to have originally written in English, were left out of this edition. Moreover,

Bombal's English-language texts, which will be discussed in extenso in the next chapter of this study, have rarely been made the object of literary research. Critics who purport to look at her entire creative output do not take the anglophone texts into consideration. In this sense, *The Shrouded Woman* and *House of Mist* have not been favored with the "author function."

An important but tacit principle that seems to have determined the limits of what constitutes Bombal's "works" lies very close to the tenet formulated by Friedrich Schleiermacher in his lecture "On the Different Methods of Translating" (1813), where he asserted that "everyone produces original work in his mother tongue only" (82). It appears that a certain Romantic stress on the *lengua materna* as the indispensable vehicle for literary writing has led editors and critics to exclude Bombal's foreign-language texts from her *oeuvre*. The assumption that only what is written in one's native tongue is truly creative and original, coupled with the widely held "superstition" that "all translations betray their matchless originals" (Borges, *This Craft of Verse* 57), seems to have created an unfavorable climate for the reception of the texts Bombal produced in English. These texts, as we shall see, are often treated as being inferior, irrelevant, and superfluous.

Ferré's case is somewhat different from and more complex than Bombal's. There has yet to be an attempt to collect and publish Ferré's "complete works," so her self-translations and her English-language texts have not been excluded from her *oeuvre* in the literal sense that Bombal's anglophone production has. However, there has been a tendency to either dismiss as inferior or simply ignore Ferré's foreign-language texts. This is especially true of her two early attempts at self-translation, *Sweet Diamond Dust* and *The Youngest Doll*. As Paul Allatson notes in his book *Latino Dreams* (2002), "most commentators have disregarded *Sweet Diamond Dust*" (60), and one could say the same about the short stories collected in *The Youngest Doll*. However, there are scholars who clearly endow these texts with the "author function." Allatson, for example, refers to the Spanish original but concentrates on *Sweet Diamond Dust*, and Ronald Méndez-Clark has argued that "los textos en traducción de Ferré son menos 'metatextos' que remiten a un original que textos

independientes que remiten al *corpus*, al conjunto mismo de su obra, a la evolución y al desarrollo de su escritura” (396). In other words, Méndez-Clark sees Ferré’s self-translations not as texts that somehow serve as “commentary” on a previous text (which is how Gérard Genette defines “metatextuality”),⁹ but rather as independent texts that have a rightful place in Ferré’s *oeuvre*.

An important question, which Beer asks in relation to Beckett but which also pertains to other self-translators, is therefore the following: “Do the works themselves insist on a certain kind of implied reader, to use Wolfgang Iser’s term, and is that reader bilingual?” (210). Beer’s “common-sense” solution suggests that Beckett’s work may allow for a bilingual reading, but that monolingual interpretations are equally valid. Certain works, however, do insist on a bilingual reader. The most obvious examples are bilingual editions in which the author is responsible for both versions of the work, such as Ferré’s *Language Duel*, which will be the subject of Chapter Four of this dissertation. *Language Duel* is a collection of poems with English and Spanish lyrics printed on facing pages, and the asymmetrical and apparently “playful” relationship between the translations and the originals suggests that the two versions are meant to be read in tandem. The type of self-translation that *Language Duel* represents is not altogether uncommon. A work such as French-Canadian Patrice Desbiens’s *L’homme invisible / The Invisible Man* (1981) can, as Robert Dickson states in the introduction, “be especially appreciated by those who are able to read all the pages of this book” (n. pag.). Similarly, the bilingual format of Julien Green’s *Le langage et son double / The Language and its Shadow* (1985) invites, as Hokenson and Munson rightly point out, “a dual reading” (188).

For poets before Romanticism it was even customary to write the “same thing” in more than one language. In *The Poet’s Tongues*, to which I referred above, Forster gives numerous examples of multilingual publications by polyglot poets from earlier

⁹ Metatextuality is one of the five types of “transtextual relationships” that Gérard Genette discusses in his *Palimpsests* (1982). Genette defines metatextuality, which he says is the relationship most often labeled “commentary,” as a relationship that “unites a given text to another, of which it speaks without necessarily citing it” (4). A metatext is thus a text “about” another text.

periods, and he notes that “mere re-statement in a different language provided an additional attraction, which the educated reader appreciated” (27). The multilingual works Forster discusses were written for an international readership that was itself largely polyglot. These works constitute something different from what one normally means when one talks about a literary “work” today, which is, I would argue, an easily identifiable *original*, a singular, unique text produced and created in a single language. *Language Duel* seems to have more in common with these polyglot texts of a bygone age than with contemporary Latino literature that makes use of Spanglish. What one finds in *Language Duel* is not a hybrid language combining words and idioms from both Spanish and English, but a page layout that invites the reader to go back and forth between two more or less “pure” languages.

For Whom Is a Self-Translation Meant?

In “The Task of the Translator,” which I mentioned earlier in relation to Derrida’s rereading of that text, Walter Benjamin poses the following rhetorical question: “If the original does not exist for the reader’s sake, how could the translation be understood on the basis of this premise?” (16). The question is rhetorical because Benjamin has already postulated that “[n]o poem is intended for the reader, no picture for the beholder, no symphony for the listener” (15). This assertion, Paul de Man notes in a lecture he once gave on Benjamin’s essay, “has provoked the ire of the defenders of *Rezeptionsästhetik*, who analyze the problem of poetic interpretation from the perspective of the reader” (77). According to de Man, Benjamin’s claim is “absolutely scandalous” (77) for theorists such as Hans Robert Jauss and Wolfgang Iser. The latter coined the term “implied reader,” a term which has gained a wide currency in literary studies. In short, it refers to the reader a given literary work requires.¹⁰ Iser posits that any text has an intended addressee or audience, a hypothetical “ideal” reader who has the knowledge and attitudes that are necessary in

¹⁰ See Iser, *The Implied Reader* (1972) and *The Act of Reading* (1976).

order to be able to grasp “the potential meaning” (*The Implied Reader* xii) of the text, which is irreconcilable with Benjamin’s sweeping assertion that no work of art is intended for the audience.

Benjamin’s radical dismissal of the notion that texts are oriented toward an audience or a reader would also be somewhat “scandalous” for many of the scholars who have written about self-translation. Hokenson and Munson are an obvious case in point, but they are not alone in stressing the importance of the audience in relation to the changes that occur in self-translation. Castillo, whose essay on Ferré I quoted from earlier, has put forward a theory that has much in common with that of Hokenson and Munson. In *La (auto)traducción como mediación entre culturas* (2006), Castillo argues that “los autotraductores son mediadores culturales en la medida en que acomodan su mensaje para la nueva audiencia al introducir información no presente en el texto de origen” (101). As the title of her book indicates, Castillo sees self-translation as a form of “mediation between cultures,” and she believes that if self-translators introduce new content, it is largely because they are writing for a culturally different audience. Anselmi too, as we have seen, understands self-translation as a process through which a given work is “recontextualised for a new receptor-audience speaking a different language” (26).

What Hokenson and Munson, Castillo, and Anselmi presuppose, then, is that a self-translation is meant for readers who do not understand the original, which is a premise Benjamin would reject. Or would he? It should be remembered that Benjamin’s essay is a profoundly ambiguous text. Paul de Man describes it as “untranslatable” (86), not only for the translators but also for the commentators who talk about it. Derrida, too, in “Des Tours de Babel,” begins his reading of Benjamin’s text by commenting on its enigmatic character and obvious “difficulty” (175). André Lefevere argues that Benjamin’s translation theory is influenced by cabalistic mysticism and “lapses into mystical vagaries” (94). However, as Lefevere also notes, Benjamin’s essay is at the same time “an elaboration on certain thoughts to be found in Herder, Goethe, Schleiermacher, and Schopenhauer” (2). The position taken by Benjamin may thus become fully intelligible only when read in conjunction with

statements made by his German predecessors. His insistence that translations, just like originals, are not oriented toward an audience or a reader seems to allude to Schleiermacher's assertion that there are only two "methods" available to the translator: "Either the translator leaves the author in peace, as much as possible, and moves the reader towards him; or he leaves the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author towards him" (74). Schleiermacher made clear that he privileged the first method, exposing the reader of the translation to syntax and vocabulary that are "foreign" and unfamiliar to him. This method is contrasted with a kind of translating that "leaves the reader in peace" by only exposing him to language that is already familiar to him, which has the effect of making the translated text appear untranslated, "natural," idiomatic, fluent, and so on. Venuti calls the method favored by Schleiermacher "foreignizing translation" (*The Translator's Invisibility* 15), a term that aptly describes the effect of this method. It makes the translation "look" or read like a foreign text by employing syntactical and lexical peculiarities that deviate from the prevailing norms in the translating language.

Like Schleiermacher, Benjamin favors a foreignizing translation. According to Benjamin, "the hallmark of bad translations" is that they intend to perform "a transmitting function" (15). Such translations are only able to impart "information," that is, the content or message of the original. Whenever a translation undertakes to serve the reader, Benjamin claims, it is unable to give voice to what a literary work "contains in addition to information" (15), what Benjamin calls "the unfathomable, the mysterious, the 'poetic'" (15). In other words, he criticizes the view that translation is first and foremost communication of content, and the concomitant view that the task of the translator is to render, as accurately as possible, the content of the original so as to provide access to that content for those who are unable to read the original. It seems, then, that Benjamin is actually prescriptive when he appears to be descriptive. A good translator, he suggests, should stretch and pull the translating language in the direction of the foreign tongue. Benjamin's quote from the German writer Rudolf Pannwitz is particularly revealing of what he thinks a good translation should do: "Our translations, even the best ones, proceed from the wrong premise. They want to turn Hindi, Greek, English into German instead of turning German into

Hindi, Greek, English” (22). Pannwitz’s observations, Benjamin maintains, “rank with Goethe’s Notes to the *Westöstlicher Divan* as the best comment on the theory of translation that has been published in Germany” (22). Among the translators Benjamin praises for having “extended the boundaries of the German language” (22) is Hölderlin, whose translations of Sophocles he highlights. These translations are, as Paul de Man notes, “absolutely literal” and therefore “totally unintelligible” (88). In other words, by foreignizing Sophocles, by turning German into Greek, Hölderlin increased the expressive possibilities of his native tongue. He made the language “grow,” so to speak. Hölderlin’s renderings of Sophocles are an extreme example of translations that are not easily accessible. That is to say, their aim is *not* to make Sophocles intelligible or appealing to a reader who is unable to understand the original. In Schleiermacher’s terms, Hölderlin leaves Sophocles in peace, as much as possible, and moves the reader towards him.

How do Bombal and Ferré translate themselves? Do they move the reader towards themselves or do they move themselves towards the reader? In other words, do they adopt a foreignizing translation strategy or a freer and more domesticating approach, or, perhaps, a combination of both? Do they try to make the reader feel that he or she is reading a text that has been written in another language, or do they seek to camouflage it and give the translated text the appearance of not having been translated? If the original language overtly intrudes into the translating language, is this the outcome of a conscious translation strategy or the unwitting result of translating into a non-native language? These are questions that I will address in subsequent chapters alongside other questions that arise from a close analysis of Bombal’s and Ferré’s self-translations. Hokenson and Munson’s theory, which postulates that self-translated texts tend to differ from their originals because they are tailored to conform to the needs and tastes of the target audience, seems to imply that the translation strategy of self-translators is predominantly domesticating. When Hokenson and Munson stress (182), for example, how Beckett changes allusions, quotations, surnames, and place names so as to make his texts more interesting and accessible to the target reader, they are pointing to clear instances of a domesticating

strategy. I am not denying the significance of such changes. Such changes do frequently occur when authors translate themselves. However, are the most interesting, important, and radical changes made for those reasons? Benjamin's critique of a translation strategy whose ultimate aim is to perform "a transmitting function" is not immediately relevant to this discussion, but it reminds us that not all translations – and, by implication, not all changes made during the translation process – are designed to make a given content accessible to readers who are unable to understand the original. Needless to say, to analyze the works of two self-translators is not enough to refute a general theory such as Hokenson and Munson's, but I believe that it is possible to see something of the general in the particular. Through close analysis of three specific "text pairs," this study seeks to interrogate the hypothesis put forward by Hokenson and Munson in ways that I hope will suggest fruitful approaches to the so-called theory of self-translation. My primary aim, however, is to contribute to a rethinking and reassessment of the self-translations of Bombal and Ferré.

It is rather self-evident that a text such as Bombal's *The Shrouded Woman* is intended for an English-language audience, but that does not mean that the text has been fashioned to comply with the requirements of that audience. Nor does it mean that it was primarily for the sake of her new audience that Bombal, as we shall see, introduced startling and radical changes. On the contrary, it may very well be that Bombal wanted to break with the expectations of her new readership, for example by suggesting the structure, rhythm, and style of *La amortajada* in order to make the reader become aware of the source language through the target language. This could explain why *The Shrouded Woman* was not warmly received by American critics when it first appeared in 1948. *The Shrouded Woman* is not comparable to Hölderlin's "absolutely literal" translations of Sophocles. It is a perfectly intelligible text, but Bombal does not seem to have wanted to "leave the reader in peace" by making the text appear untranslated.

One of the questions that arises from my comparative reading of *La amortajada* and *The Shrouded Woman* in the next chapter, and which becomes a much more pressing

issue in my comparison of *La casa de la laguna* and *The House on the Lagoon* in the subsequent chapter, is whether self-translations can have more than one implied reader. Roberto Ignacio Díaz's concept of the "unhomely reader" can be useful in addressing this question: it acknowledges that some texts invoke more than one kind of reader. Some works, according to Díaz's convincing hypothesis, are addressed to the native readers of the language in which they are written, but at the same time they contain signs or elements that the average reader of that language will most likely not be able to interpret. The "unhomely reader" is Díaz's term for the "secretly implied figure" (126) of such works. He defines this hypothetical ideal reader as a figure that "knows the language of the work that it reads, but it suspects and eventually confirms the subtle sway of another tongue and other literary systems beneath the surface: elements that ought to be interpreted for the best performance of the text" (126). Díaz studies the works of authors from Spanish America who write in languages other than Spanish, and he directs attention to passages in those texts that make sense only if read by someone with a knowledge of Spanish American literature. In a similar manner, the present study asks if there are elements in the self-translations of Bombal and Ferré that make more sense or produce a richer meaning if read by someone with a knowledge of the unstated relationship between the English and the Spanish versions of those works. I call it an "unstated" relationship because, as we shall see, nowhere in the original paratexts of *The Shrouded Woman* and *La casa de la laguna* – that is, nowhere *within* the first printed edition of the two novels – is there any direct mention of the fact that these are translations or revised "versions" of a preexisting text written in another language.

If Díaz's concept of the unhomely reader can be useful in the analysis of works such as *The Shrouded Woman* and *La casa de la laguna*, it is far less applicable to a bilingual text such as *Language Duel*. To ask if *Language Duel* calls for an unhomely reader is not really a relevant question. It is not "the subtle sway of another tongue" but rather the conspicuous juxtaposition of Spanish and English that calls for a particular kind of reader, a reader who is competent in both languages. The questions and problems posed by *Language Duel* are, as a result of the bilingual format,

different from those posed by *The Shrouded Woman* and *La casa de la laguna*. *Language Duel* allows me to explore questions that are unique to bilingual editions at the same time as it enables me to continue my investigation into how Ferré reworks her own originals. As we shall see in Chapter Four, *Language Duel* contains very peculiar examples of textual differences between the English translations and the Spanish originals. These differences do not seem to stem from an attempt to overcome some form of cultural obstacle, and they are not caused by syntactical rules or any absence of vocabulary. Textual differences in *Language Duel*, I will suggest, have an aesthetic function, which once again leads me to ask if Hokenson and Munson's theory places too great an emphasis on the cultural and audience-oriented changes that occur in self-translation.

Chapter Two

María Luisa Bombal: Self-Translator

Tous les arguments contre la traduction se résument en un seul : elle n'est pas l'original.

Georges Mounin

Hokenson and Munson state in *The Bilingual Text* that “self-translators have long been neglected in literary history and translation theory, and it is still often assumed that they are just rather idiosyncratic anomalies, mostly preening polyglots or maladaptive immigrants” (1). While such statements have become almost commonplace in the rapidly increasing literature on self-translation, they do point to something true. María Luisa Bombal, widely regarded as one of Spanish America’s greatest female novelists, certainly fits the pattern of neglect described by Hokenson and Munson. Seen more as a “maladaptive immigrant” than as a “preening polyglot,” her work as a self-translator and practitioner of “translingual” writing has attracted very little attention from scholars.

Born in Chile in 1910, Bombal moved to the United States in the early 1940s due to some rather extraordinary circumstances in her life,¹¹ and during the almost thirty years she lived there she published two novels in English: *House of Mist* (1947) and *The Shrouded Woman* (1948). There is also evidence that Bombal wrote several other texts in English, but these have never been published and scholars have not been allowed to examine the manuscripts. In 1976, four years before she died, Bombal had

¹¹ Upset over a failed love affair, Bombal shot Eulogio Sánchez on 27 January 1941, leaving him gravely wounded. Sánchez survived the incident and did not press charges against her. Bombal spent a few months in a mental institution, and was eventually acquitted on the grounds of temporary insanity. She left Chile for the United States in 1942, and continued to live there until her husband died in December 1969. For an account of Bombal’s life, see Agata Gligo’s biography *María Luisa* (1984).

six “obras inéditas” (85), according to Sara Vial’s chronology of her life and works.¹² These were works in progress to which Bombal alluded in interviews and in her private correspondence. Of the six titles listed by Vial, three are in English: a play entitled *The Foreign Minister*, a text called *Believe me, love*, and a piece called *Dolly and Jeckyll and Miss Hyde*.¹³ Since Bombal left all her unpublished material to her daughter, who has not been willing to show it to scholars,¹⁴ we know almost nothing about the state of these manuscripts. We have only brief remarks from Bombal’s letters and interviews to rely on.

The primary purpose of this chapter is to account for how Bombal translated *La amortajada* (1938) into English and for the changes that occurred in the process. I will argue that Hokenson and Munson’s theory – whose central claim, as we saw in the previous chapter, is that textual differences between self-translations and their originals are “primarily cultural because they are audience-oriented” (198) – lacks explanatory force when one examines the changes that Bombal made when she turned *La amortajada* into *The Shrouded Woman*. This analysis of *The Shrouded Woman* notes how it differs from *La amortajada* in terms of content and form, that is, what one could call its “infidelities,” including the introduction of several new characters. One of the most significant additions, I will suggest, invokes what Roberto Ignacio Díaz calls an “unhomely reader.” My analysis also shows that Bombal revised *La amortajada* in light of its translation. In the revised Spanish edition, published in 1962, Bombal incorporated many, but far from all, of the numerous text segments that she had introduced in *The Shrouded Woman*, and she

¹² Sara Vial’s “Cronología de María Luisa Bombal” was published at the end of the 1976 edition of *La historia de María Griselda*, which contains Bombal’s short story of the same name and another of her short stories called “Trenzas.”

¹³ According to Gligo (133), *Dolly Jeckyll and Mrs. Hyde* is one of three plays Bombal started to write in English but never finished. The title Gligo uses (*Dolly Jeckyll and Mrs. Hyde*) differs from the one listed by Vial (*Dolly and Jeckyll and Miss Hyde*).

¹⁴ Cf. Gustavo Pérez Firmat’s comment about Bombal’s *Nachlass* in *Tongue Ties* (2003): “She left all her unpublished manuscripts, including *The Foreign Minister* and the rest of her English-language writings, to Brigitte, who has shown no interest in retrieving them. To this day they languish in a bank vault somewhere in Santiago de Chile” (137-138).

even added a few new ones. In a sense, therefore, “[e]l original es infiel a la traducción” (OC 732), to borrow Borges’s paradoxical formulation from “Sobre el ‘Vathek’ de William Beckford” (1943). Before we embark on a closer examination of these multiple and intricate “infidelities,” I shall present a critical overview of the reception of Bombal’s work in English.

Two Invisible Works

Bombal produced her first works in the avant-garde milieu of Buenos Aires in the 1930s, where she belonged to the group of prominent writers and intellectuals centered around Victoria Ocampo’s *Sur*, one of Spanish America’s most influential literary journals of the twentieth century. Her first book was a modernist novella called *La última niebla* (1934). *La amortajada*, which appeared when she was twenty-eight years old, was her second and, as it turned out, last book in Spanish. Between the publication of *La amortajada* in 1938 and her death in 1980, the only works Bombal produced in her native language were five short stories and a few other very short texts. But, as noted above, Bombal also published two works in English. *House of Mist* is often misleadingly referred to as a “version” of *La última niebla*, and *The Shrouded Woman*, more correctly, as a translation of *La amortajada*. Neither of them, however, was originally published as a derivative work. *House of Mist* is dedicated “To my husband, who has helped me to write this book in English,” but there is nothing in the *editio princeps* to suggest that *House of Mist* is derived from *La última niebla*. In fact, *La última niebla* and *La amortajada* are mentioned as examples of Bombal’s previous works on the dust jackets of both *House of Mist* and *The Shrouded Woman*, but not a single word is said about the relationship between the English and the Spanish texts.

In 1995, however, the University of Texas Press republished Bombal’s English-language novels in a double edition that contains both *House of Mist* and *The Shrouded Woman*, and where the cover page reads: “Translated from Spanish by the author.” The publisher thus strengthened and, one might say, officially sanctioned the

widely held belief that *The Shrouded Woman* is a more or less conventional English rendering of the Spanish original. In the foreword to the 1995 edition, Naomi Lindstrom informs the reader that in the course of producing “her own version” of *La última niebla*, “Bombal felt free to make significant revisions and add entirely new segments” (vii). This is, if not inaccurate, at least an understatement. *House of Mist* has little or nothing in common with *La última niebla*, except for certain vague similarities in terms of theme and basic plot. In fact, as Kimberly Nance notes in her article “Contained in Criticism, Lost in Translation” (2000), *House of Mist* contains “only brief passages of actual translation” (41). *The Shrouded Woman* is therefore Bombal’s only “proper” self-translation. Bombal did, however, mention in various letters and interviews that she was in the process of translating both *House of Mist* and *The Foreign Minister* into Spanish.¹⁵

In his study *Tongue Ties* (2003), which contains a chapter on *House of Mist*, Gustavo Pérez Firmat states: “The disinterest in Bombal’s career as an anglophone writer is surprising, given that her output in English is actually larger than that in Spanish” (123). Pérez Firmat also points out that “our notions about Bombal’s career are based on half a life” (137). Although these are accurate observations, a certain amount of critical attention has been paid to *House of Mist*, and the differences between the English and the Spanish version have been examined on various occasions. Much of the criticism devoted to *House of Mist* is of relatively recent origin. Besides the already mentioned contributions by Nance and Pérez Firmat, *House of Mist* and *La última niebla* have been studied comparatively by Díaz in *Unhomely Rooms* (2002), the book from which the present study partly takes its cue, by Vittoria Martinetto in “María Luisa Bombal e *House of Mist* (2002), by Elisa Carolina Vian in “Cuando el amor triunfa” (2006), and by Tiziana Gibilisco in “Adaptación y cambio de género en la versión norteamericana de la obra de María Luisa Bombal” (2007).

¹⁵ In a letter dated 13 January 1977, for example, Bombal wrote to her friend Manuel Peña Muñoz: “*House of Mist*. Me encuentro justamente traduciéndolo yo misma de mi inglés. Asimismo mi *The Foreign Minister*. Extraña situación ¿verdad?, pero figúrate que ya tengo contrato con Ediciones Universitarias de la Universidad Católica de Valparaíso para su publicación apenas éstas (mis obras) estén a punto. No me atrevo a fijarte fecha aún” (OC 362-363).

Earlier critics, too, knew that *House of Mist* was basically a new novel, but they chose not to focus on it. In *La novela chilena* (1968), for example, Cedomil Goić describes *House of Mist* as “una nueva versión, más extensa y completamente diferente a la versión española” (209), and Michael Ian Adams refers to it as “a novel in English based on *La última niebla*” (15) in *Three Authors of Alienation* (1975). In her article “House of Mist: House of Mirrors” (1987), published in a volume of criticism devoted to the work of Bombal, Suzanne Jill Levine also points out that Bombal did not translate *La última niebla*, but rather “re-wrote” (140) it in English. However, the first scholar who examined *House of Mist* critically and detailed its differences from *La última niebla* was Patricia Rubio, who in her article “*House of Mist*, de María Luisa Bombal: una novela olvidada” (1998) asserts that the English version “no alcanza la calidad artística de la obra en español de Bombal – la prosa por momentos es almibarada y ríspida y algunos incidentes se acercan al melodrama – y, en este sentido, es una obra menor en comparación con el hipertexto” (n. pag.).

Rubio’s appraisal of the artistic quality of *House of Mist* expresses a view shared by most of the critics who have commented on the novel. In an essay included in *The Cambridge Companion to the Latin American Novel* (2005), for example, Levine echoes the words from her 1987 article and bewails the fact that Bombal rewrote *La última niebla* into *House of Mist*. Referring to Latin American writers who have undertaken “the challenge of self-translation, with varying degrees of success” (314), Levine states:

A particularly lamentable case was that María Luisa Bombal in the 1940s, who “translated” but really rewrote her fine novella *La última niebla* into *House of Mist*, a conventional sentimental novel, adding characters and providing a happy ending. This work was fortunately given a second chance in English in the 1980s.¹⁶ (314)

¹⁶ *La última niebla* was translated by Richard Cunningham and Lucía Guerra as “The Final Mist” and published in *New Islands and Other Stories* (1982).

What exactly is it that, in Levine's view, makes *House of Mist* so deplorable? Why do critics find *House of Mist* so inadequate? The story of why Bombal "adapted" *La última niebla* has no doubt contributed to the negative reception of *House of Mist*. After reading *La última niebla*, Bombal's American agent said that, although he liked the novella, he would not publish an English version of it in its current state, for reasons that Bombal summarized in an interview thus: "Muy bonito, pero es demasiado corto, y no vamos a publicar un poema en prosa. Aclare el asunto: ¿Soñó o no la protagonista? Póngale final" (OC 391). Pérez Firmat has pointed out that "because she changed the plot of *La última niebla* at the urging of her American agent, who wanted her to make the novel less ambiguous, *House of Mist* in particular is dismissed as Bombal's unfortunate attempt to pander to middle-brow American tastes" (123). Rubio's article is a good case in point. Rubio suggests that "Bombal escribió esta novela teniendo presente el gusto de un público anglo, en términos actuales, respondiendo al mercado y buscando un éxito editorial" (n. pag.). This is also how Levine sees the novel. Levine more than implies that when Bombal rewrote *La última niebla* into "a conventional sentimental novel" with a happy ending, she was trying to appeal to the tastes of the American book market. If this is true, and assuming for a moment that the book can be considered a self-translation, then *House of Mist* would be consistent with Hokenson and Munson's understanding of what prompts authors to make emendations to the source text when they translate their own work.

In a letter to her English translators, Bombal herself emphasized that *House of Mist* is “una nueva novela, versión en inglés (basada sobre mi novela en castellano *La última niebla*) y escrita directamente al inglés por mí” (OC 368).¹⁷ It is difficult to make a clear-cut distinction between an “unfaithful” self-translation and a version “based on” a previous novel written in a different language. However, *House of Mist* is today recognized as a “new” novel, and the reasons for considering it as such are self-evident. *La última niebla* is an experimental forty-page novella, “un poema en prosa,” as Bombal’s American agent described it. It is, moreover, a profoundly ambiguous text that withholds the answers to its enigmas and keeps the reader suspended in a state of ignorance with regard to what is real and what is not. *House of Mist*, by contrast, is a 250-page novel that combines a somewhat dated realism with an aura of fairytale-like mystery. As “a mystery without murder,” which is how the book’s prologue describes the “crime story” that follows, *House of Mist* displays an intelligent awareness of earlier English fiction, most notably of two genres largely familiar to American readers: the detective story and the Gothic romance.¹⁸

Critics who have read both *House of Mist* and *La última niebla* often comment on the poor artistic quality of the former. As we recall, Rubio and Levine describe *House of Mist* in rather derogatory terms, and they are not alone in doing so. Nance views it as “a blot on her record as a writer” (42). Gibilisco refers to it as Bombal’s “suicidio literario” (82), and Susana Münnich describes it as “una novela plana, carente de magia” (20*n*). Even Pérez Firmat, who regards *House of Mist* as “an important item in Bombal’s curriculum” (126), argues that “its occasionally lyrical, sometimes awkward and often exclamatory English lacks the subtlety and elegance of Bombal’s Spanish” (137). The novel’s significance, he maintains, arises from “the role it played

¹⁷ The letter is addressed to Lucía Guerra and Richard Cunningham, who translated *La última niebla* and some of Bombal’s short stories into English (see previous note). Guerra, as we shall see, is also a noted Bombal scholar, as well as the editor of Bombal’s *Obras completas* and the recent translator of *House of Mist* into Spanish.

¹⁸ For a discussion of how the novel’s prologue situates *House of Mist* in relation to the detective story and the Gothic romance, see Pérez Firmat, *Tongue Ties*, 130. See also Vian, “Cuando el amor triunfa,” 213, for a discussion of the Gothic features of *House of Mist*.

in the author's efforts to remake herself as woman and artist" (126). Although he understands the objections to *House of Mist*, Pérez Firmat admires what he calls Bombal's "ability to transform herself and her writing, to take apart *La última niebla* and rebuild it into a different kind of narrative altogether" (137).

House of Mist, as Nance has rightly observed, "reads more like parody than translation" (41). Bombal imitates the language of old-fashioned love stories to the point of parody, with Daphne du Maurier's novel *Rebecca* (1938) and the story of Cinderella as two of its most important intertexts.¹⁹ One could perhaps go further and say that *House of Mist* can be read as a conscious negation of the modernist aesthetics that *La última niebla* represents. This is Díaz's point when he argues that it is "quite possible to read Bombal's English-language novel almost as an unwriting – through proliferation – of the novella she had composed in Spanish" (144). *The Shrouded Woman*, as my analysis of the text aims to show, cannot be read in the same way. Reversing Nance's statement, one could say that *The Shrouded Woman* reads more like translation than parody.

Although Díaz and Pérez Firmat read *House of Mist* differently, they both give it its rightful place in Bombal's *oeuvre*. They too, however, ignore *The Shrouded Woman*. Why? If it is because of the work's inferior quality, they do not say so. Their silence on the matter may be ascribed to the fact that neither of them, as may be observed in the internal logic of their respective books, is interested in a full coverage of Bombal, but rather in many other authors as well. To my knowledge, the only scholars who explicitly dismiss *The Shrouded Woman* on account of a perceived inferior quality are Gloria Gálvez Lira, in her study *María Luisa Bombal: Realidad y fantasía* (1986), and, more recently, Margo Echenberg, in her article "Personaje y vanguardia en María Luisa Bombal" (2010). Since Gálvez Lira and Echenberg, unlike most Bombal scholars, make their aesthetic assessment of *The Shrouded Woman* explicit, it would

¹⁹ Du Maurier's *Rebecca* (or Hitchcock's version of it) and the story of Cinderella are identified as so-called intertexts by Díaz; see Díaz, *Unhomely Rooms*, 147, 149. For a more detailed account of the similarities between *House of Mist* and *Rebecca*, see Vian, "Cuando el amor triunfa," 213.

be useful to look more closely at why they regard the English version as a lesser text. After quoting three negative reviews *House of Mist* received in the U.S. press when it first appeared, Gálvez Lira writes:

Debemos confesar que después de leer la novela en ambos idiomas [i.e., *La última niebla* and *House of Mist*] coincidimos ampliamente con la crítica norteamericana. Desafortunadamente sus obras (incluyendo *The Shrouded Woman*, traducción de *La amortajada*), no han alcanzado, por diversos motivos, una comunicación adecuada mediante las traducciones al inglés. La falta de conocimiento cabal del idioma, por parte de la autora, para traducir los matices de la lengua de origen, en el primer caso, no le permitieron transmitir toda la belleza estilística y de contenido que se saborea al leer la novela en castellano. Pero, sobre todo, creemos que el error garrafal consistió en hacerle caso a su editor estadounidense dándole principio y fin a *La última niebla*. María Luisa Bombal pertenece al mundo “vaporoso,” vago y poético; es maravillosa y sublime en él y debió quedarse en él. (9)

Although Gálvez Lira goes on to make clear that “de las dos novelas en inglés, *The Shrouded Woman* nos parece más aceptable” (10), she nevertheless describes both of them as “monótonas, aburridas y pueriles, cansando al lector y dejándolo totalmente ajeno a todo el goce estético que se siente en el idioma de origen” (10). Because Bombal augmented *La amortajada* when she translated it into English, she “debilitó el interés creado en la versión original” (10), Gálvez Lira argues. However, the scholar does not provide a single textual example of Bombal’s supposed failure as a translator and as a writer in English. She criticizes *House of Mist* and *The Shrouded Woman* on general grounds, referring to biographical information about the author

and to the negative reviews of *House of Mist* in the U.S. press, but never to the texts themselves.²⁰

Like Gálvez Lira, Echenberg insists that Bombal's English novels "no alcanzan la talla de las novelas en castellano" (145), but Echenberg's assessment of *The Shrouded Woman* is more focused on the text itself. This is to be expected, since Echenberg's article deals specifically with the differences between *La amortajada* and *The Shrouded Woman*, whereas Gálvez Lira aims to study Bombal's entire corpus. Echenberg does not, however, offer a detailed analysis of the differences between the Spanish and the English version. She concentrates on the two longest additions Bombal made to *The Shrouded Woman*, and argues that the added segments are superfluous and impoverish the novel. Echenberg regards them as "añadidas innecesarias" (151) because they do not contribute to a "desarrollo más completo de la figura protagónica" (151). This is a questionable form of reasoning. If the additions are not instrumental in developing the main character, it does not follow that they are redundant. They may have an entirely different purpose, value, or function. On the other hand, Echenberg makes a valid point when she notes that the new text segments complicate "los enredos amorosos de la novela" (155). I will return to Echenberg's statement in my analysis of the two additions she discusses. At this stage I would

²⁰ It should be pointed out that the reception of *House of Mist* in the U.S. press was not as uniformly negative as Gálvez Lira might lead one to believe. The novel received mixed reviews in the daily and weekly press when it first came out, ranging from enthusiasm to acerbic critique. *The New Yorker* described it as an "overliterary, overfeminine novel, which at the same time combines rich invention and delicate writing" (105). *Time* criticized the novel's "quaint, syrupy prose" (42), and Anthony Boucher in the *San Francisco Chronicle* wrote that "Latin critics praise Miss Bombal's style, which unfortunately does not survive her unwise decision to write directly in English" (22). Bertram Wolfe, in his review in the *New York Herald Tribune*, had a quite different view of the author's command of the English language: "The writer has shown herself master of a singularly subtle and evocative English, bright with color, sound, movement and appeal to all senses, soaked in sentiment and sensibility yet strangely efficient for the functional development of its well constructed plot" (4). Richard Sullivan's review in the *New York Times* criticized several aspects of *House of Mist*, but complimented the novel's "verbal appeal" despite the narrator's "somewhat exclamatory tone": "Dexterous, amoral, delicate and at times the least bit silly, this book – like most thoroughly romantic novels – holds little conviction in story or characterization. Its power to attract, its compulsion, its charm, are mainly verbal. Generally this verbal appeal is well sustained. Yet there are a few discomfiting touches, both in the eerie and in the romantic intentions" (18). Sullivan also noted that there is "some very pretty writing" in *House of Mist* and "a kind of breathlessness of manner, as if the story couldn't wait to be told" (18).

simply like to point out that for Echenberg, like for Gálvez Lira, *The Shrouded Woman* is inferior to *La amortajada* first and foremost because of the added segments – i.e., because of those instances in which the translation is clearly “unfaithful” to the original. These segments cannot, in my view, simply be dismissed as “unnecessary.” They transform the “original” by making it say something new and different, and this, I will suggest, has implications for the interpretation of Bombal’s *oeuvre*.

Like most scholars whose aim is to study Bombal’s literary output more or less in its totality, Gálvez Lira pays almost no attention to her English novels. Unlike most scholars, however, she justifies her exclusion of the two novels. It is not a well-argued justification, and it is a justification that I intend to question, but it is a justification nonetheless. The fact is that no major study that purports to look at Bombal’s total *oeuvre* takes *House of Mist* and *The Shrouded Woman* into account. Most studies prefer not to comment on the differences and similarities between the English and the Spanish texts. In the preface to Hernán Vidal’s *La feminidad enajenada* (1976), the first book-length study of Bombal’s work, Angeles Cardona de Gilbert mentions that *La última niebla* and *La amortajada* were “traducidas al inglés por la misma autora” (12), but says nothing to suggest that the English versions are anything other than what might be termed conventional translations. In *The Lyrical Vision of María Luisa Bombal* (1988), Celeste Kostopulos-Cooperman also refers to *House of Mist* and *The Shrouded Woman* as conventional, straightforward translations. In *El discurso narrativo en la obra de María Luisa Bombal* (1988), Magali Fernández points out that *House of Mist* is a “recreación” (125) of *La última niebla*, but she does not elaborate on what she means by this term, and she, too, seems to think that *The Shrouded Woman* is a fairly ordinary translation.

In *La narrativa de María Luisa Bombal* (1980), Lucía Guerra, arguably the most influential of all Bombal scholars, states her ambition to study “el corpus total” (7) of the author’s work, but she nevertheless ignores her English novels. Guerra also compiled and edited Bombal’s *Obras completas*, which were published posthumously in 1996. For reasons that have not been disclosed, both *The Shrouded Woman* and *House of Mist* were left out of the *Obras completas* edition. No mention is made of

them, no justification given for their exclusion, but the reason is presumably that they are not seen as original works of art. They are regarded as derivative works, translations or adaptations, which do not enjoy the same prestige and status as the originals produced in the mother tongue. In a conference paper published as “Escritura y trama biográfica en la narrativa de María Luisa Bombal” (1992), which appeared four years before the publication of Bombal’s incomplete *Obras completas*, Guerra stated that Bombal “dejó de publicar en 1946” (133), as if *House of Mist* and *The Shrouded Woman* never existed. Marjorie Agosin, another important Bombal scholar, made virtually the same statement in *Las desterradas del paraíso* (1983): “La Bombal deja de publicar oficialmente en 1946” (123). It is no wonder, then, that *House of Mist* was “a forgotten novel” when Rubio reminded us of its existence in 1998, but more recent studies also tend to omit *House of Mist* and *The Shrouded Woman* when they list Bombal’s works. In *Passionate Subjects* (2009), for example, Bernardita Llanos asserts that Bombal’s brief production consists of “two novels, several short stories, *crónicas*, and film scripts” (110). In *Casa de hacienda* (2006), Susana Münnich notes that after the publication of a few short stories in the 1940s, “la actividad literaria de María Luisa Bombal se estancó, y se redujo a la traducción al inglés de su narrativa” (20), which amounts to saying that Bombal’s literary career ended with the appearance of “La historia de María Griselda” in 1946. In a sense, there has been no change in attitude to her work in English since the publication of Rubio’s article.

Guerra, however, does seem to have changed her opinion about *House of Mist*, since she recently translated it into Spanish. In the preface to her translation, which appeared in 2012 under the title *Casa de niebla*, Guerra argues that in this novel Bombal “está recurriendo a una mímica donde se imita la historia de amor en el cine y la literatura masiva, desde una posición irónica que socava lo imitado” (13). Guerra also describes Bombal’s English as “impecable” (14) and states: “A pesar de las diferencias entre ambos idiomas, ella logra cincelar el inglés con su precisión tan característica y el ritmo que infundía a cada frase” (14). This testifies to a very positive view of *House of Mist*. Bombal is described as a clever ironist who parodies conventional love stories and who, moreover, is quite capable of writing well in an

adopted language. Guerra therefore seems to contradict not only her earlier claim that *House of Mist* is an “espectro degradado del texto original” (“Escritura y trama biográfica” 134), but also the comments made by Gálvez Lira and Pérez Firmat about Bombal’s poor handling of literary English.

Bombal’s English

Whether or not Bombal’s command of the English language was good enough for her to write well in her adopted tongue is a question to which I will return in my analysis of specific passages from *The Shrouded Woman*. Before we proceed to the analysis, however, I will touch briefly on the biographical aspects of this question, since some information about the author’s acquisition of English is probably in order in an investigation of this type. As Pérez Firmat discovered when he was writing *Tongue Ties*, this is something we know very little about: “Because Bombal’s career as an anglophone writer has not stirred much interest, I have not been able to find any information about her acquisition of English” (133). Pérez Firmat notes that it is “a language she must have learned as a child in Viña del Mar, a city that had a large English-speaking population” (133), and that she spoke English well enough to interview and make friends with Sherwood Anderson when she visited New York as the Chilean delegate to a PEN congress in 1939.

As noted earlier, *House of Mist* is dedicated “To my husband, who helped me to write this book in English.” Bombal also told Guerra in an interview that she wrote *House of Mist* “bajo la supervisión de mi marido, que dominaba el inglés a la perfección” (OC 345). However, we do not know what kind of linguistic help her husband, Raphael de Saint-Phalle, gave her. According to Agata Gligo (129), Bombal’s biographer, her husband also helped her when she translated *La amortajada* into English, but we do not know to what extent or in what way he assisted her. In his biographical portrait of Bombal, originally published in the Chilean newspaper *El Mercurio* in February 1962, Germán Ewart states that *La amortajada* “se publicó en traducción de su esposo” (392). This has led some critics to believe that Bombal’s

husband was singlehandedly responsible for the translation.²¹ However, those are Ewart's words, not Bombal's. Ewart does not quote the author saying this, and Bombal has on several occasions directly contradicted Ewart's statement. In a letter addressed to Lucía Guerra and Richard Cunningham, the same letter I quoted from earlier, she referred to *The Shrouded Woman* as "traducción mía del castellano al inglés de mi novela *La amortajada*" (OC 368), and in the last interview she gave before she died Bombal said: "Mis libros se han publicado en diversos países. Yo misma los traduje al inglés, ayudada por un diccionario" (OC 447). Whether or not Bombal deliberately downplayed her husband's contribution to the creation of her English novels will remain a matter of speculation unless further evidence comes to light.

As I noted in the Preface, a self-translation can be defined as "[t]he translation of an original work into another language by the author himself" (Popovič 19). However, it is not only the author who is involved in the making of a text that is labeled a self-translation, just as it is not only translators who are involved in translation, and just as it is usually not only the author who is involved in the making of a novel or a poem. In this sense, there is nothing unusual about the fact that Bombal's husband may have played an important role in the creation of *House of Mist* and *The Shrouded Woman*. Rosario Ferré once told an interviewer that when she was working on *The House on the Lagoon*, the novel that will be explored in the next chapter of this study, the publishing house had to correct her error-ridden English on several occasions: "El desarrollo de la novela en inglés me tomó casi tres años, y con la ayuda de los Estados Unidos también, porque allá me tienen que corregir y vuelven y corrigen porque yo cometo muchos errores" ("Familia e historia nacional" 95). Still, no one would say that Ferré was not responsible for the novel. The role of other agents – publishers, editors, consultants, copyeditors, proofreaders, friends and family who offer advice and comments – is often not acknowledged and discussed in literary criticism, but no critic would claim that the author is the only individual who shapes

²¹ See, for example, Vian, "Cuando el amor triunfa," 199n.

the outcome of a complex process that begins with a rough draft and ends with a printed book.

There is arguably an important distinction between a text that has been translated by the author himself or herself and a text that has been translated in collaboration with the author. These are, however, two categories that must be ordered along a continuum. As Susan Bassnett recently pointed out, the practice of writers such as Mario Vargas Llosa, who works closely with his translators, is “a practice that may be said to border on self-translation” (“The self-translator as rewriter” 17). However, even if the borderline between the two practices is not very clear, the distinction still gives some orientation and should not simply be abolished. At one end of the continuum is the completely bilingual author who translates his or her own work without any form of assistance or interference from other people. In practice, however, there is always a degree of editorial intervention. At the other end of the continuum, we have the author who simply “approves” a translation done by someone else, or who simply “revises” such a translation. In between these two extremes, we find all sorts of collaborative relationships between authors and translators.²² Bombal, it seems, cannot be placed at either end of this continuum.

The Genesis of *The Shrouded Woman*

Today there are, as we have seen, several studies of *House of Mist*, whereas there is still a virtual silence surrounding *The Shrouded Woman*. The reason for this

²² It is not unusual for authors to take an active role in the translation of their work. Joyce’s role in the Italian translation of two passages from *Finnegans Wake* (1939) is a good case in point, which illustrates that the borderline between self-translation and translation done in collaboration with the author is not very sharp. Joyce had two collaborators on this project, but the role they played was – according to their own as well as the author’s testimony – so insignificant that Jacqueline Risset concludes that Joyce “did not just check the translation, but actually wrote it himself” (3). On Joyce’s role in this translation project, see Risset’s “Joyce translates Joyce” (1973). For a critical discussion of the different degrees of author intervention when authors and translators collaborate, see Isabelle Vanderschelden’s “Authority in Literary Translation: Collaborating with the Author” (1998). As Vanderschelden notes, the author’s role in such projects ranges “from non-intervention to total involvement” (22).

imbalance of attention is presumably that the former is now recognized as “una obra completamente nueva” (81), as Gibilisco puts it, while the latter is thought to be, in the words of Pérez Firmat, “a more conventional translation that augmented the original without taking substantial liberties with it” (137). However, Pérez Firmat’s assumption that the liberties Bombal took in the translation process were not “substantial” is mistaken. The same applies to Lindstrom’s claim that *The Shrouded Woman* “does not represent a drastic departure from the Spanish original” (ix). Lindstrom’s statement, which comes from her foreword to the 1995 edition of Bombal’s two novels in English, provides an inaccurate description of the relationship between *La amortajada* and *The Shrouded Woman*. A comparative reading of the Spanish and the English version reveals several extensive additions as well as a few minor omissions and revisions. As we shall see, Bombal introduced several new characters and added entirely new segments, some of which are several pages long, causing the original text to grow in size by more than a third.

La amortajada is a dead woman’s tale. The protagonist, Ana María, wakes up dead in the novel’s very first paragraph, almost in the manner of Gregor Samsa in Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis*, who wakes to find himself transformed into a monstrous vermin. From the point of view of common sense, one certainly cannot testify to one’s own death, and yet that is precisely what Ana María does. She is an impossible witness, a witness to her own death, to “la muerte de los vivos” (OC 177), as the enigmatic, nameless narrator calls it. Though dead, Ana María is still able to see, hear, feel, and think, but she cannot move or speak. She wakes up in her deathbed, shrouded and prepared for her funeral, surrounded by friends and family. As the mourners come to her bedside, she reconstitutes her life. Each visitor sparks a memory, and through this mnemonic process she is gradually able to let go of life. In the last paragraphs of the novel, when she regains the ability to move and is faced with the curious option of returning to life, Ana María chooses death, “la segunda muerte: la muerte de los muertos” (OC 177). This, in broad strokes, is also the story of *The Shrouded Woman*. But, as I have already indicated, the English translation contains a substantial amount of new content.

In her biography of Bombal, Gligo describes the process that led Bombal to translate and augment *La amortajada*:

En esta época [the mid-to-late 1940s], *La amortajada*, hija ya crecida, requiere la atención de su autora. Si bien a María Luisa no le inquieta la publicidad y promoción de sus obras, su marido, “que es bala como agente y conoce este país y su gente como el suyo propio,” se preocupa de ofrecerlas a las casas editoriales. Por este camino la Editorial Knopf se interesa por los derechos de traducción de *La amortajada*. Pide a la autora agregar ciento cincuenta páginas al texto original para adaptar su extensión a la serie en que se incluiría. María Luisa, al principio, rechaza la idea; pero finalmente accede, considerando que la venta del libro traducido puede significar una buena ayuda en un momento en que los ingresos de la familia empiezan a disminuir. “Inventé aventuras a uno de los personajes principales y vendí los derechos de traducción.” Para alargar la novela ha usado su oficio en forma fría, profesional, sin desangrarse en la creación. (128)

In other words, Bombal reluctantly increased the volume of the novel and sold the translation rights to Knopf, a New York publishing house, at a time of economic insecurity for her family. But that was not the end of the story. When Bombal received the English version for proofreading, she was deeply unsatisfied with the result and wanted to cancel her contract with Knopf. Knopf, however, wanted to publish as planned. Then Edmond van Zweeland, a wealthy associate of Bombal's husband, intervened. Van Zweeland read the translation and agreed with Bombal that the poetic quality of the novel had been lost. He therefore bought the whole edition and prevented it from ever reaching the market. Helped by her husband, as Gligo notes (129), Bombal herself then began to translate *La amortajada*. The result, *The Shrouded Woman*, was published in 1948 by Farrar, Straus and Company in New York and by Cassel and Co. Ltd. in London.

In order to understand the extent to which Bombal modified *La amortajada* when she translated it, one must keep in mind something most critics are unaware of: the first edition of *La amortajada* differs significantly from the third edition, which has become the standard text on which all subsequent editions rely. It is no real surprise that scholars have not been aware of this. Unless an editor (in a preface, editor's note, or footnote) explicitly states otherwise, it is natural to assume that the work you are reading in, say, the fourth or fifth edition, corresponds more or less accurately, at least in terms of content, to the first edition. Guerra, the editor of Bombal's *Obras completas*, offers no comment on the genesis of *La amortajada*, stating only in a footnote that it was first published in 1938. However, the third edition of *La amortajada* – published in 1962, twenty-four years after the novel first appeared – introduced a series of important changes, most of which can be traced back to *The Shrouded Woman*. The second edition of *La amortajada* was published in 1941. The third edition was therefore the first Spanish edition to be published after the appearance of the augmented English version in 1948. In other words, Bombal translated *La amortajada*, but she also modified the original work in light of its subsequent translation, making it difficult to distinguish consistently between original and translation.

In an interview published in 1967, Bombal announced that she had added “sólo unas pocas líneas” to a forthcoming edition of *La amortajada*:

Escribí el libro hace veinticinco años. Siempre vi que faltaba resolver el problema religioso. Lo dejé sin abordar porque en esa época no lo tenía resuelto. Ahora en la cuarta edición lo afronté: la amortajada tenía su religión tan adentro que no necesitaba hablar de ella. Su confesor lo sabía. Son sólo unas pocas líneas las que agregué. Creí que era honrado colocarlas, ahora que había resuelto ese problema. (OC 399-400)

Bombal was not completely honest in this interview, and, to complicate matters further, Gligo misinterprets the interview when she states (146) that the “few lines” to which Bombal referred in this interview actually amount to twelve pages. The

biographer believes that Bombal was alluding to the speech that Father Carlos delivers at Ana María's funeral towards the end of the novel. "Su confesor lo sabía," Bombal said, hinting at the way Father Carlos, Ana María's confessor, "sums up" the religious views of the protagonist. However, Gligo's statement rests on two erroneous assumptions. First, she assumes that the Father Carlos section was the only material Bombal added to *La amortajada*, and hence that this was where Bombal confronted "el problema religioso." Second, Gligo takes for granted that this section was first added to the fourth edition of the novel, which was published in 1968. The truth is that the Father Carlos section first appeared in *The Shrouded Woman*, and that it was the longest but far from only text segment Bombal added to the 1962 edition of *La amortajada*. The priest's speech amounts only to a thousand words or so, and yet the third and subsequent editions of *La amortajada* contain approximately 3,400 words more than the original 1938 edition. The remaining two-thirds of the new content consist mostly of paragraphs and larger segments that have been inserted into the text in various places.

Most of the additions Bombal made when she revised *La amortajada* in light of *The Shrouded Woman* can be attributed to her desire to resolve "the religious problem" in the original version. Consider, for example, the scene in which the defunct protagonist addresses her sister Alicia, a devoted Christian who is keeping vigil over Ana María's body. This section was part of the original Spanish version, and Bombal made few changes to it when she translated it into English. In the 1938 edition, at a pivotal moment in the scene, Ana María exclaims: "Jamás me conturbó un retiro, ni una prédica. ¡Dios me parecía tan lejano, y tan severo! ¡Oh, Alicia, tal vez yo no tenga alma!" (48). Bombal added almost two pages to the Alicia section in the 1962 edition. The new text segment, which follows immediately after "¡Dios me parecía tan lejano, y tan severo!" (46), begins thus: "Hablo del Dios que me imponía la religión, porque bien pueda que exista otro: un Dios más secreto y más comprensivo, el Dios que a menudo me hiciera presentir Zoila" (46). This is the only place in the novel where the protagonist expresses her religious beliefs. The "few lines" to which Bombal referred in the 1967 interview are therefore not Father Carlos's funeral

speech, as Gligo assumes, but the two pages she added to the soliloquy in which Ana María reveals her rejection of a God “tan lejano, y tan severo,” that is, the God in whom she was taught to believe and in whom her pious sister still believes. Ana María’s belief, as it is first described in the 1962 edition, is in a God who is different from the God of the Old Testament, a God who sounds more pantheistic, more abstract, and more compassionate than the God who, in the Book of Genesis, asks Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac.

Interestingly, the segment Bombal added to the Alicia section in the 1962 edition ends with one of the very few sentences Bombal changed when she revised the Spanish version. Bombal changed “¡Oh, Alicia, tal vez yo no tenga alma!” (48) to “Y es posible, más que posible, Alicia, que yo no tenga alma” (48). In the first edition, Ana María doubts that she has a soul, whereas in the third edition she practically denies that she has one. Moreover, when Bombal rewrote the sentence, she dropped the exclamation points, thus turning a spontaneous outcry into a calm statement of fact. This change cannot be traced back to *The Shrouded Woman*. The English version of this sentence echoes the wording of the original 1938 edition: “Or perhaps it might be, Alicia, that I have no soul!” (45). However, Bombal seems to have used the Father Carlos section to question the existence of Ana María’s soul. Father Carlos quotes Ana María saying “I have no soul, Padre, I have no soul!” (186), and he refers to her soul as “that poor soul you always denied” (190).

If one compares *The Shrouded Woman* and the two editions of *La amortajada*, taking into account the order in which they were written and published, one realizes that Bombal gradually developed the idea of the protagonist’s possible soullessness. It was present in the first Spanish edition only in the form of Ana María’s exclamation “¡Oh, Alicia, tal vez yo no tenga alma!” (48). Then, in *The Shrouded Woman*, Bombal drew further attention to it by letting Father Carlos recall Ana María’s insistence that she has no soul as a sort of personal mantra of hers. Finally, in the third edition of *La amortajada*, Bombal rewrote Ana María’s exclamation into a virtual assertion at the same as she incorporated the Father Carlos section and its references to Ana María’s denial that she has a soul. The Spanish version of the

Father Carlos section is relatively “faithful” to the English “original.” For example, the priest refers to Ana María’s soul as “esa alma tuya, que renegabas” (128), and he quotes her saying, “Pero, si yo no tengo alma, padre. ¿No lo sabía?” (124). The wording is somewhat different from the English text, but the central point remains the same, namely that Father Carlos remembers Ana María repeatedly calling the existence of her soul into question. This has the effect of conjuring up the very curious image of a dead but soulless protagonist who, nevertheless, still thinks and speaks. It creates the apparent paradox of a soulless rationality, of a *ratio* without *anima*, a *logos* without *psyche*.

Bombal as Translator

Because Bombal revised the Spanish original in light of its translation, only the first or the second edition of *La amortajada* can serve as the basis for comparison in a study that aims to examine the changes she made when she rendered the book into English.²³ The most striking feature of the revised edition of *La amortajada* is that Bombal made almost no partial or minor changes to the original version. She added a significant amount of new content, most of which had already appeared in *The Shrouded Woman*, but she rewrote only a few sentences. Interestingly, a comparison of the English and the Spanish version reveals a similar tendency. Since Bombal made several major changes when she translated *La amortajada*, introducing new characters and adding entirely new segments, her translation is, on one level, a radically “unfaithful” one. On another level, however, it is very “faithful” to the original, by which I mean that it preserves the grammatical, syntactical, and semantic forms of the original text. Most of the text is rendered quite straightforwardly, taking into account the rules of English grammar. I offer the first three paragraphs of the

²³ Margo Echenberg’s article, which is the only study I know that compares *La amortajada* and *The Shrouded Woman*, uses the Casa de las Américas edition of *La amortajada* (Havana, 1969) as the basis for comparison. See Echenberg, “Personaje y vanguardia en María Luisa Bombal,” 156n. As noted earlier, most scholars are not aware that Bombal revised *La amortajada* in the early 1960s, and that the revised version became the authoritative version.

original and its translation for comparison. *La amortajada* opens in the following manner:

Y luego que hubo anochecido, se le entreabrieron los ojos. Oh, un poco, muy poco. Era como si quisiera mirar escondida detrás de sus largas pestañas.

A la llama de los altos cirios, cuantos la velaban se inclinaron, entonces, para observar la limpieza y transparencia de aquella franja de pupila que la muerte no había logrado empañar. Respetuosamente maravillados se inclinaban, sin saber que Ella los veía.

Porque Ella veía, sentía. (7)

Its English rendition reads as follows:

As night was beginning to fall, slowly her eyes opened. Oh, a little, just a little. It was as if, hidden behind her long lashes, she was trying to see.

And in the glow of the tall candles, those who were keeping watch leaned forward to observe the clarity and transparency in that narrow fringe of pupil death had failed to dim. With wonder and reverence, they leaned forward, unaware that she could see them.

For she was seeing, she was feeling. (3)

In both versions, a third-person omniscient narrator describes the moment in which Ana María regains consciousness and wakes up in her bed, dead but still able to see and feel. The structure of the translation follows that of the original text. The number of paragraphs is the same, and there is no change in the sequence of narration or in the arrangement of the segments. The parallelism of structure makes it possible to relate each segment of the translation to the respective part of the original. There are no intrusions in the text, and the length of the English sentences matches that of the Spanish ones. That said, there are what one might call stylistic differences. In the opening line, for example, the original employs the *pretérito anterior* tense (“luego

que hubo anochecido”), which is mostly limited to a formal or literary style. The English rendering (“As night was beginning to fall”) is somewhat more “colloquial.”

The only change that is difficult to understand, however, is the enigmatic omission of the two capitalized personal pronouns (“Ella”). Assuming that this was not an editorial intervention, Bombal’s decision not to capitalize “she” is no less enigmatic than why she capitalized “Ella” in the first place, or why she chose to preserve the capitalization in the third edition of *La amortajada*. Arguably, in the Spanish version the capitalization adds to the mystery of this woman with “aquella franja de pupila que la muerte no había logrado empañar,” this dead woman whose senses are nevertheless intact. Who is she? How can she still see and feel if she is dead? And why is she referred to as if she were a deity? The modest mystery of the two capital letters has been censored from *The Shrouded Woman*. For anyone who reads *The Shrouded Woman* after *La amortajada*, however, the mystery is simply of a different kind. What puzzles him or her is no longer the presence of the capitalized pronouns, but their absence, which becomes for him or her the first indication that *The Shrouded Woman* is not “faithful” to the original. Paradoxically, Bombal’s presence in the translation becomes visible because of this absence.

Unlike *La amortajada*, where the sections are visually separated from each other with a section break, in *The Shrouded Woman* Roman numerals divide the text into chapters, and the three paragraphs quoted above constitute the first of the twenty-six chapters that make up the novel. In the first edition of *La amortajada*, the first three paragraphs constitute a sort of prologue. They are printed in the middle of the first page, and a blank page separates them from the main body of the text. This page, which appears to have been intentionally left blank, was omitted from subsequent editions. *La amortajada* and *The Shrouded Woman* thus have somewhat different layouts.

When Bombal translates, she rarely resorts to paraphrase. She tends to opt for an almost literal or, to use Derrida’s term, “one word *by* one word” translation. This translation strategy may betray her dependence on the dictionary, but is, more likely,

a conscious stylistic choice. Consider, for example, how she renders some of the more rhythmical passages that we find in the first pages of *La amortajada*:

La lluvia cae, fina, obstinada, tranquila. Y ella la escucha caer. Caer sobre los techos, caer hasta doblar los quitasoles de los pinos, y los anchos brazos de los cedros azules, caer. Caer hasta anegar los tréboles, y borrar los senderos, caer. (11-12)

The rain falls, finely, obstinately, quietly. And she listens to it falling. Falling on the rooftops, falling until it bends the high heads of the pine trees and the broad arms of the blue cedars, falling. Falling until it drowns the clover and obliterates the paths, falling. (6)

Luego llueve nuevamente. Y la lluvia cae, obstinada, tranquila. Y ella la escucha caer.

Caer y resbalar como lágrimas por los vidrios de las ventanas, caer y agrandar hasta el horizonte las lagunas, caer. Caer sobre su corazón y empapararlo, deshacerlo de languidez y de tristeza. (12)

Then the rains starts again. And it falls, obstinately, quietly. And she listens to it falling. Falling and sliding like tears down the windowpanes; falling and expanding the lagoons to the far end of the horizon, falling. Falling on her heart and drenching it, dissolving it into sadness and languor. (6-7)

The most striking feature of these passages is their rhythm, achieved largely through the repetition of the word “caer” or “falling” and through the use of parataxis. In both the English and the Spanish version, Bombal lets short, simple sentences alternate with slightly longer ones. The rhythm of the English version thus matches Bombal’s Spanish, but we do not need to know that to appreciate how effectively she constructs her English sentences, allowing them to unfold at a measured pace that corresponds to the steady fall of rain that they depict. She also chooses language that creates a slightly elevated tone, words like “obliterates” and “languor,” as well as phrases that

testify to a conscious stylistic choice rather than to an unthinking reliance on the so-called equivalent words provided by a dictionary. For example, instead of attempting a literal translation of “los quitasoles de los pinos,” which would have produced an awkward English phrase such as “the parasols of the pine trees,” Bombal employs alliteration and writes “the high heads of the pine trees.” With all these features, Bombal shrewdly avoids an unidiomatic or more colloquial English, and produces a “poetic” quality that corresponds to that of her Spanish. She does not “normalize” or standardize the language and style of the original text. Nor does she break up sentences and make the syntax smoother, in accordance with the conventions of “good English.”

Did Bombal adopt what Lawrence Venuti calls a “foreignizing” method when she translated *La amortajada* into English? Did she deliberately “bend” the English language so as to recreate the original rhythm and structures? Or was this “method” merely the unintentional result of her dependence on the dictionary? Bombal’s English, in the passages quoted above but also in most of the other passages in the novel that are manifestly not additions, is semantically and syntactically very close to her Spanish. *The Shrouded Woman* does not bear the hallmarks of a fluent translation strategy. *House of Mist*, on the other hand, is marked by Bombal’s effort to ensure easy readability and to give the text the appearance of an original English novel, in the style or manner of Daphne du Maurier’s *Rebecca*. Even if the English of *House of Mist* is “sometimes awkward and often exclamatory” (Pérez Firmat 137), it makes a smoother, more fluent, and more “natural-sounding” prose than that of *The Shrouded Woman*. The opening paragraph of *House of Mist* illustrates the fluency that the novel as a whole aims to achieve: “The story I am about to tell is the story of my life. It begins where other stories usually end; I mean, it begins with a wedding, a really strange wedding, my own” (3). *The Shrouded Woman*, too, masquerades as an original English novel, but it does so only at a paratextual level. If one compares it with the original, one realizes that its aim is not to appear “natural,” that is, not translated. It does not reduce the stylistic features of the original for the sake of fluency or so-called naturalness of expression.

The vocabulary and syntax in *The Shrouded Woman* are clearly constrained by the source language, as a result of Bombal's tendency to avoid "loose" paraphrases. One would expect, therefore, that the novel should have a foreignizing effect on the reader. Judging from the reviews it received in the U.S. press when it first came out, *The Shrouded Woman* had just such an effect on its American readers. The early reviews of *The Shrouded Woman* were not particularly favorable. Patricia Page, for example, published a scathing review of the book in the *New York Times*. She begins by saying:

If "The Shrouded Woman" were a few inches thicker, a fine film of tropic passion in Chile might be made of it. But Maria-Luisa Bombal is experimenting with style. Her characters, a multitude of women of seduction and men of violence, are defined only by a few vaporous words. Like an overstuffed sofa, her novel implies and conceals a wealth of unsavory matter. (n. pag.)

Page goes on to state that the characters in the novel "seem to suffer from Chilean sunstroke," and that "Miss Bombal should give her open-stock-pattern characters a chance or else leave them to the scenario writers" (n. pag.). Do these comments testify to a foreignizing effect, or are they simply disparaging remarks? Most of them attest to little more than the reviewer's general dislike of the novel, but the reference to Bombal's experimental style does seem to suggest that *The Shrouded Woman* had an unfamiliar feel to it. Page sees it as an unfortunate attempt to break with the conventions of English fiction in the 1940s. Its main weakness, she implies, lies in its poor characterization. She finds the characters flat, stereotypic, and underdeveloped. But are the characters in *La amortajada* any different? Are not Bombal's stylistic innovations tied to her fragmented and minimalistic way of conveying information about her characters? Like *The Shrouded Woman*, *La amortajada* contains a multitude of characters, which are developed through minimalistic dialogue and through brief descriptions with minimal use of adjectives. *La amortajada* is an avant-garde text that repudiates the characterization techniques of realist fiction. The English translation reflects a similar repudiation of those techniques, which has the

consequence of making the characters appear less real or lifelike than in a conventional realist novel. Part of what Page criticized, then, is related to stylistic features of the Spanish original that Bombal chose to reproduce in the English version. If she had adopted a freer and more domesticating approach in her translation, *The Shrouded Woman* would have read more like *House of Mist*, and Page would presumably not have found Bombal's stylistic experimentation to be so unsatisfactory.

Nor did *The Shrouded Woman* seem to appeal much to the anonymous reviewer in *Kirkus Reviews*, who noted that the romantic "entanglements" in the novel "are brushed in, episodically, evocatively, and with a lack of restraint which many – who do not care for a display of passion – may find disturbing" (n. pag.). When this reviewer uses the terms "lack of restraint" and "display of passion," he or she is presumably referring to the pathos of Bombal's writing and its exclamatory tone. Like *La amortajada*, *The Shrouded Woman* aims to evoke pity and sadness. Most of its characters lead tragic lives, and sudden cries or remarks are an essential characteristic of the protagonist's idiolect, such as when she cries out: "Oh, the torture of first love, of the first disillusion! When one struggles with the past instead of forgetting it!" (23). It must have been spontaneous exclamations such as this one that the reviewer in *Kirkus Reviews* had in mind when he or she spoke of a "lack of restraint" that many may find "disturbing." Such unrestrained expressions of emotion lend an air of sentimentality or, possibly, of melodrama to the novel. But is the "display of passion" in *La amortajada* more restrained? The passage I just quoted is a very straightforward rendering of the Spanish original: "¡Oh, la tortura del primer amor, de la primera desilusión! ¡Cuando se lucha con el pasado, en lugar de olvidarlo!" (27). The emotional outburst is no less intense in the Spanish version than in the English, but could it be that its effect on the reader is different? Does Spanish tolerate exclamatory language better than English? *La amortajada* has been read and studied widely since it came out in 1938, and few seem to have been disturbed by its "display of passion." In this sense, César Aira is an interesting exception. In his *Diccionario de autores latinoamericanos* (2001), Aira describes Bombal's "obra" as

“algo lánguida y con pronunciadas caídas a la cursilería” (92). Aira, then, implies that there is a pronounced “kitschiness,” sentimentality, or tackiness in Bombal’s work, which does not fit the prevailing image of Bombal as a writer of “beautiful” and formally innovative lyrical prose. But does Aira not have a point? Is a phrase such as “¡Oh, la tortura del primer amor, de la primera desilusión!” not an example of what Aira calls “caídas a la cursilería”? It seems to be a largely unrecognized fact that there are passages in Bombal’s Spanish-language production that verge on sentimentality. However, it is important to keep in mind that direct expressions of feeling such as “¡Oh, la tortura del primer amor, de la primera desilusión!” function as an anti-mimetic device in *La amortajada*. They are an integral part of the lyrical or “poetic” quality of Bombal’s prose. The author’s decision to reproduce that lyricism in the English translation may not offer incontrovertible evidence of a foreignizing translation strategy, but it speaks to a desire not to reduce the stylistic “peculiarities” of the original for the sake of a greater naturalness of expression.

That *The Shrouded Woman* had an unfamiliar feel to it becomes more apparent in Marjorie Brace’s assessment of the novel in the *Saturday Review*. In what is perhaps the most interesting of all the reviews, Brace described *The Shrouded Woman* as “a kind of writing seldom produced in this country” (26). This was not, however, meant as a compliment. Like Page, Brace found *The Shrouded Woman* to be a work of mediocre or inferior quality, and she, too, criticized the novel’s poor characterization: “In real life, of course, despite the stagy rhetoric of such books, people do not feel and even act like Miss Bombal’s characters” (27). The phrase “stagy rhetoric” suggests that Brace, not unlike the reviewer in *Kirkus Reviews*, regarded the frequent expressions of feeling as somewhat theatrical and exaggerated. At one point Brace even compares *The Shrouded Woman* to “a passionately felt love-letter that expresses infantile emotions” (26).

The three reviews discussed above indicate that the appraisal of *The Shrouded Woman* in the daily and weekly press was negative.²⁴ The points the critics made could, however, just as easily have been made about *La amortajada*. In the Spanish version, Bombal is also “experimenting with style,” her characters are also “defined only by a few vaporous words,” and there is manifestly a similar “display of passion.” I would argue that these are stylistic features that Bombal was able to successfully transfer from the Spanish to the English version. Those who reviewed *The Shrouded Woman* in 1948 could not have seen this, since they were not aware of the fact that they were reading a translation. Nor could they have seen that the original had been significantly expanded and partly “revised” during the translation process.

Another interesting point about the early reviews of *The Shrouded Woman*, especially in light of Gálvez Lira’s condescending remark about Bombal’s “falta de conocimiento cabal del idioma” (9), is that no comments were made about any unidiomatic use of English. The reviewers found *The Shrouded Woman* to be experimental, lacking in characterization, “overstuffed,” “disturbing,” and too exclamatory for their taste, but they did not complain about odd expressions or locutions that are not natural to a native speaker of English. Does *The Shrouded Woman* manage to disguise the fact that it was written by someone whose native language was not English? Judging from what we know about her biography, it seems unlikely that Bombal had a perfect command of English in the 1940s, but the author’s lack of fluency is not necessarily reflected *on the page*. What is clear is that Bombal is as much of a linguistic purist in English as she is in Spanish. Social and regional dialects, slang and obscenities, neologisms, jargon, and foreign borrowings are virtually absent from her work, regardless of the language in which it was written. Her Spanish-language work always displays a punctilious care with grammar,

²⁴ *The Shrouded Woman* appears not to have been reviewed as widely as *House of Mist*. I have only been able to find four contemporary reviews: the three discussed above plus another, very short review that appeared in the *New Yorker*, which was also quite negative. The anonymous reviewer in the *New Yorker* concluded by saying that the novel was commendable for “spurts of good descriptive writing dealing with the atmosphere of the hacienda life and the splendors of Latin-American vegetation, but only moderately successful as an account of grand passion and suffering” (121-122).

spelling, and punctuation, and her English-language writing does so as well. There are few or no grammatical errors in *The Shrouded Woman*. Whether this is the result of Bombal's own efforts, or whether it is the result of any help she might have received from her husband or an editor, is not certain. If the English in *The Shrouded Woman* is at times stilted, as a result of being closely modeled on Spanish syntax, the sentences are nevertheless neatly structured and easily readable. Bombal's translation contains few obvious calques of word order. Following Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet's definition, a calque can be understood as "a special kind of borrowing whereby a language borrows an expression form of another, but then translates literally each of its elements" (85). What seems to be a syntactic calque can be found in the third chapter of *The Shrouded Woman*:

Hubieras podido llevarme hasta lo más profundo del bosque, y hasta esa caverna que inventaste para atemorizarnos, esa caverna oscura en que dormía replegado el monstruoso mugido que oíamos venir y alejarse en las largas noches de tempestad. (24)

And you might have carried me off to the depth of the woods, even to that cave you once had imagined to terrorize us, that dark cavern where slept coiled the hideous, bellowing thing whose cries we used to hear rising and receding on long stormy nights. (17)

Ana María is here reminiscing about Ricardo, a childhood friend from a neighboring hacienda who later became her first lover. His presence in the room where the shrouded protagonist rests causes Ana María to look back on her childhood and adolescence. She addresses him in the first person while he is standing there, mutely, looking at her shrouded body. Ricardo, we are told, liked to "terrorize" Ana María and her sister Alicia when they were young, and one of the ways in which he did this was to tell them a story about a dark cavern where a ghastly monster slept. The phrase "where slept coiled" is a literal translation of "en que dormía replegado." The locution is not so much incorrect as unfamiliar and maybe somewhat archaic-sounding. The result is a slightly stilted, odd English syntax that imparts an old-

fashioned flavor. In literary works, especially in works labeled as “poetic,” deviations from ordinary prose syntax are not uncommon. Indeed, such deviations are a feature commonly associated with literariness. However, Bombal’s literal translation of “en que dormía replegado” can be seen as an indication that the text is written by someone who is not a native speaker of English. Another such indication can perhaps be found in the passage in which Ana María describes how “curious” it was for her as a young girl to notice one of the early signs of pregnancy: “It was curious, my two small breasts also were budding, seemingly wanting to blossom with the Spring” (25). Bombal seems to have misplaced the word “also” here, making the sentence somewhat awkward. Be that as it may, *The Shrouded Woman* displays very few solecisms and obvious examples of interference from Spanish in the vocabulary and syntax. Most of the writing is well formulated, and a few unidiomatic phrases and misplaced adverbs do not undermine the overall fascination and value of the work.

If someone read only the first two or three pages of *The Shrouded Woman* and compared them with the original text, he or she could easily conclude that it is a conventional, “faithful” translation, or what Derrida calls a “relevant” translation: a translation that stays as close as possible to the equivalence of “one word *by* one word” without being excessively literal. The first notable “infidelity” appears on page 5, where a lengthy paragraph has been inserted into the text. This eleven-line long paragraph was among the text segments Bombal incorporated into the 1962 edition of *La amortajada*, and it reads as follows:

Here is Zoila, who saw her born and in whose care her mother entrusted her from that moment on, old Zoila, whose arms rocked her sorrow away each time her mother, leaving in her carriage for the city, would forcefully disengage her from her skirts to which she clung screaming. Zoila! the confidant of bad moments, the sweet and timid one, usually forgotten on happy days. Here she is, gray-haired but still hardy and of indiscernible age, as if the drop of Araucanian blood running through her veins had had the power of petrifying her arrogant profile. (5)

Can this be described as an “audience-oriented” textual difference? Did Bombal add this paragraph for the sake of a culturally different reader’s understanding and appreciation of the work? There is arguably nothing in this paragraph that would allow one to draw such a conclusion. Zoila is a character who appears in the first edition of *La amortajada*. In the 1938 edition, she is a family servant, first introduced to us on page 30, who threatens to tell Ana María’s father about her out-of-wedlock pregnancy. She also gives Ana María “herbs” that cause her to have a miscarriage, and mops up the blood on the floor to hide the evidence of her abortion. In *The Shrouded Woman*, not only has she been given a more prominent role, she has in many ways become a more sympathetic character, “the sweet and timid one,” a character who displays a genuine concern for Ana María’s well-being. When Bombal transformed *La amortajada* into *The Shrouded Woman*, she added roughly two pages to the story about the role Zoila played upon discovering that Ana María was pregnant with Ricardo’s child. This is the second major “infidelity” in *The Shrouded Woman*. Zoila, we are told here, tried to force Ricardo to marry Ana María: “I think Zoila wrote you. Only now, can I picture her poor letter. Now that I am dead and can no longer weep, I am moved to pity by her queer handwriting, made up of ignorance and love” (29). Passages such as this one paint Zoila as a more compassionate and caring individual than she “originally” was. These passages did not make it into the 1962 edition of *La amortajada*. In the revised Spanish edition, however, Bombal let Zoila play an equally if not more important role by making her part of the solution to Ana María’s “religious problem.” As noted earlier, Bombal added the following words to the revised edition: “Hablo del Dios que me imponía la religión, porque bien pueda que exista otro: un Dios más secreto y más comprensivo, el Dios que a menudo me hiciera presentir Zoila” (46).

What this tells us is that Bombal gradually developed Zoila into a more complex character, adding details about her physical appearance (“gray-haired but still hardy and of indiscernible age”) and her ethnic origin (“the drop of Araucanian blood running through her veins”), but also about her changing roles in Ana María’s life from infancy to adulthood (Zoila started out as a comforting nursemaid and eventually became “the confidant of bad moments”). Bombal thus gives us Zoila’s

biography in a compressed format. This sets the stage, so to speak, for her future role as the one who makes Ana María receptive to the idea that there may well exist a God after all, a God other than the one imposed on her by religion, “a more secret and more understanding God.”

The third major “infidelity” in *The Shrouded Woman* is the invention of a new character: Luis, Ana María’s brother, who appears in chapter IX of the novel. This six-pages-long chapter was never incorporated into the subsequent Spanish editions. Luis is completely absent from the first edition of *La amortajada*, and only his name survived in the 1962 edition, where Father Carlos recalls Ana María using the burden of having “Alicia, Luis y sus invitados” (131) at her house as an excuse for neglecting her religious duties. Like Zoila, Luis is given what amounts to a biography in *The Shrouded Woman*, and we are told that he was the one who assisted Ana María during her final hours:

Luis, my dear brother, now that I see you coming close to me and watching me intently, I remember that it was you who assisted me at my death.

Yes, I remember that I died clutching at your hand.

Your hand! How many years is it since I felt it between mine? Not since the nights in that far-off Winter, do you remember? Then it happened that your hand often searched for mine at the dinner table beneath the folds of the tablecloth, as if to ask me to hold back the sharp phrases bursting forth from the lips of Elena, my intimate friend and your great love. (46-47)

This is how the chapter about Luis begins. Elena, who is alluded briefly to at the end of the quote, is another character Bombal invented when she translated *La amortajada*. She is Luis’s “great love.” Luis, we are told, is married to another woman, Luz-Margarita, the third new character who appears in this chapter. Can the invention of new characters be understood as an “audience-oriented” change? Again I

would argue that this is hardly the kind of change that facilitates the communication of a foreign text to a culturally different reader. The story of Luis appears to have a different function in *The Shrouded Woman*. Like *La amortajada*, *The Shrouded Woman* deals with, among other things, the complexities of the relationships between ourselves and those closest to us. From the perspective of someone who is given the uncanny opportunity to review her life after she is dead, *The Shrouded Woman* presents us with reflections on a variety of relationships: the relationship between a child and her nursemaid, between two adolescent lovers, between father and daughter, between two sisters, between husband and wife, between mother and daughter, and so on. The story of Luis allowed Bombal to include a similar reflection on the relationship between brother and sister, as the following quote indicates:

For a long time, I was looking at you without seeing you, because long since, you had lost all importance and meaning in my eyes. What do our brothers mean to us anyway? They are like extensions of ourselves, prickly extensions falling back on us in the great moments of our lives, wounding us even though they are trying to protect us.

And yet, oh Luis, now that I see you close to my deathbed, watching me intently, I remember there was a time when we loved each other very much; a time you may have dared to deny, a time you had forgotten but which my death reawakened in you, I am sure.

What joy! For this one night at least you have lost that vacant look, that very correct manner that separated you from me; you have become again the anxious boy who used to take refuge in his sister.

Elena, divorced, scandalous, pure and haughty! If my death finally succeeds in making you remember her, I am glad to have died, Luis. (47-48)

Ana María takes comfort in the thought that her death has had some positive effect, that it has rekindled the love she and her brother once had for each other. In her eyes,

Luis becomes once again “the anxious boy who used to take refuge in his sister.” She is “glad to have died” if her death finally succeeds in making Luis remember Elena, his great love, whom he rejected in favor of Luz-Margarita. This is a sort of leitmotif in the novel. Ana María’s death elicits, in herself and, seemingly, in those she leaves behind, a remembrance of things past, an emotional surge of involuntary memories not unlike that provoked by Proust’s madeleine cake. There are several scenes in the novel that roughly follow this pattern. A good case in point is the scene where Ana María’s daughter approaches the bed of her recently deceased mother. “¡No te vayas!” or “Don’t go,” the young one cries, with her lips searching and feeling for her mother’s hands, her throat, and forehead, all veiled by the shroud, thus evoking a powerful monologue in which Ana María vainly seeks to console her grieving child, so helplessly unable to hear her dead mother’s caressing but futile words. This is one of the most poignant scenes in *La amortajada*, and Bombal translated it very elegantly into English:

“¡No te vayas, tú, tú! . . .”

¿Qué grito es éste? ¿Qué labios buscan y palpan sus manos, su cuello, su frente?

Debiera estar prohibido a los vivos tocar la carne misteriosa de los muertos.

Los labios de su hija, acariciando su cuerpo, han detenido en él ese leve hormiguelo de sus más profundas células, la han vuelto, de golpe, tan lúcida y apegada a lo que la rodea, como si no hubiera muerto nunca.

– “Mi pobre hija, te conocí arrebatos de cólera, nunca una expresión desordenada de dolor como la que te impulsa ahora a sollozar, prendida a mí con fuerza de histérica. “Es fría, es dura hasta con su madre,” decían todos. Y no, no eras fría; eras joven, joven

simplemente. Tu ternura hacia mí era un germen que llevabas dentro y que mi muerte ha forzado y obligado a madurar en una sola noche.

Ningún gesto mío consiguió jamás provocar lo que mi muerte logra al fin. Ya ves, la muerte es también un acto de vida.

No llores, no llores, ¡si supieras! Continuaré alentando en ti y evolucionando y cambiando como si estuviera viva; me amarás, me desecharás y volverás a quererme. Y tal vez mueras tú, antes que yo me agote en ti. No llores . . . (109-110)

And now the English translation:

“Don’t go, don’t, don’t . . .”

What cry is this? What lips are searching and feeling for her hands, her throat, her forehead?

The living ought to be forbidden to touch the mysterious flesh of the dead.

For the lips of her daughter caressing her body have interrupted within it that light tingling in its deepest cells, making her again as lucid, and attached to all around her, as if she had never been dead.

My poor child, I have known you having fits of anger, capricious tears, but never would I have imagined such a wild outpouring of grief as now compels you to sob, clinging to me with hysterical strength. “She is cold, hard, even with her mother,” everyone used to say. Yet, you were not cold, you were young, only young. Your tenderness toward me was like a seed born within you which my death has forced, has compelled to mature in a single night.

No gesture of mine ever brought out what my death achieves at last. You see, you see how death can also be an act of life.

But don't cry, don't cry! If you only knew! I shall continue to breathe within you and to evolve in you and to change as if I were alive; you will love me, you will reject me and you will love me again. And perhaps you will yourself die before I become exhausted and die in you. Don't cry . . . (177-178)

The whole scene is closely rendered, taking into account the rules governing the positioning of the adjective in English (“la carne misteriosa de los muertos” becomes “the mysterious flesh of the dead”), and so on. The only place where the English overtly differs from the Spanish is the sentence where the phrase “capricious tears” is added and where “nunca una expresión desordenada de dolor” becomes “but never would I have imagined such a wild outpouring of grief.” Borges was among the first to review *La amortajada*, and when he praised the novel’s “triste magia” and “oculta organización eficaz” (“La amortajada” 154), it must have been passages such as this that he had in mind. The phrase “hidden effective organization” seems to refer to the way Bombal conveys revealing information about her characters using a minimal number of words. In less than a page, Bombal manages to paint a moving picture of the lifelong relationship between Ana María and her daughter. The “sad magic” to which Borges alludes can be understood as an eloquent way of describing the uncanny situation of a dead mother vainly trying to comfort her grief-stricken daughter. The elegance with which Bombal translated this scene, making it evoke the same keen sense of sadness and using virtually the same number of lines, undermines the notion that Bombal lacked the competence in English that is necessary for literary virtuosity.

However, I have quoted these rather lengthy excerpts from *La amortajada* and *The Shrouded Woman* not so much because they are arguably among Bombal’s finest passages, but because they testify to what one might call Bombal’s integrity of style. Whereas *House of Mist* is written in a style that completely differs from that of *La última niebla*, with the result that the works belong to two distinct literary traditions, *The Shrouded Woman* exhibits largely the same stylistic features as *La amortajada*. A distinctive pathos, achieved through the frequent use of exclamatory language,

characterizes both the English and the Spanish version. The language is poetic if at times somewhat high-flown, and the general tone is melancholic and solemn. Different languages have different criteria for assessing style. For this particular reason, the English of *The Shrouded Woman* might be considered a bit overwritten by native speakers of English. The Spanish version may strike some as more “natural,” while the English is perhaps a little mawkish, or at least a bit “strange” – which, then again, may be a very good thing in its own right. If this is the case, if there is a peculiar, slightly “un-English” feel to the language in *The Shrouded Woman* as a result of its close translation from Spanish, then the novel should not be considered as an “unfortunate attempt to pander to middle-brow American tastes” (Pérez Firmat 123), which is what *House of Mist* has been accused of. *The Shrouded Woman* reproduces the stylistic “peculiarities” of *La amortajada*, but without ever bordering on so-called translationese.

When Bombal translated *La amortajada*, she did not try to make the novel more appealing or better suited to a new audience by rewriting it in a way that would demand less intellectual application from her readers. She added substantial passages that allowed her to say new things, and she wrote these passages in largely the same style as the rest of the novel. The chapter about Luis, as I noted above, allowed Bombal to include a reflection on the relationship between brother and sister. At the same time, this chapter provided Bombal with the opportunity to engage with the issue of gender roles, a central theme in virtually all her works. The two female characters who are introduced in this chapter, Elena and Luz-Margarita, are used to shed light on certain patriarchal values that tend to discriminate against women who refuse to act and live in accordance with traditional gender roles. Elena, “divorced, scandalous, pure and haughty” (48), is contrasted with Luz-Margarita, “that charming fool” and “model of honesty and conventional kindheartedness (48), “the blond and delicate Luz-Margarita,” “with her concealed energy and her post-card goodness,” “wisely instructed by her parents in the way to get you to marry her” (49). Elena is Luis’s great love, but, in his eyes, her “scandalous” past makes it unthinkable for him to marry her:

Elena would become wild whenever you treated her like a child or when you reproached her for her imprudent and much talked-of passions.

“What does it matter losing one’s reputation, the support of a husband or the respect of a stupid family. The one really important thing is to save one’s heart,” she used to say to me.

And proudly she would shake her splendid head, curly and dark. Her hair was chestnut-brown, but when she came near a window it lighted up all over making her appear redheaded.

And at dinner time, she would relate and enlarge upon her love affairs, insulting you with veiled words. And you, Luis, groping beneath the tablecloth, would search with your trembling hand for mine and press it as if to beg me to make her stop talking.

“Why don’t you marry Elena?” I asked you one day. “Then she would stop insulting you and you would no longer suffer needlessly.”

“Marry Elena! You haven’t thought about her past! I adore her, but . . .” (48-49)

Elena rebels against the values imposed on her by a society with very rigid gender roles. She refuses to be treated like a child, talks openly about her love affairs, and is seemingly indifferent to the prospect of losing “one’s reputation, the support of a husband or the respect of a stupid family.” She is thus very different from the women who usually inhabit Bombal’s fictional universe. In fact, Elena is the most rebellious female character ever invented by Bombal. None of the other heroines in Bombal’s *oeuvre* display a similar disregard for the values society imposes on them. Elena, Ana María says to Luis, lives a “restless life, ever in search of love” (50), and for that reason “slander will always pursue her. That is the tribute women like Elena must ever pay for their liberty” (50). Elena, then, is portrayed as a sort of protofeminist, as someone who lives in open defiance of norms that restrict the liberty of women, and because of this she is despised by people like Luz-Margarita, the epitome of

reactionary views on the role of women, who thinks that “God should punish girls who are not born like me – pretty, sweet, rich, and destined to marry the man they love” (51).

The obvious ideological stance taken in the chapter about Luis, with its overt attempt to say that gender roles are not naturally given but based on social conventions that can be challenged and altered, may explain why Bombal decided not to incorporate this chapter into the 1962 edition of *La amortajada*. Even though she is seen as one of Spanish America’s first feminist voices, it is a well-known fact that Bombal, as Kostopulos-Cooperman has put it, “openly maintained a rather provincial attitude toward the role of women in the modern world” (5). This was the attitude Bombal expressed in letters and interviews. For example, she once told an interviewer: “El hombre es intelecto, sabe más . . . mientras la mujer es puro sentimiento. Yo creo que el amor es lo más importante en la vida de una mujer . . . La mujer es puro corazón, a diferencia del hombre que es la materia gris” (*OC* 342). Scholars have been puzzled by the fact that Bombal’s literary works seem to imply a much more critical stance with respect to the “naturalness” of gender roles. As a result, they tend to use a somewhat curious vocabulary that suggests that Bombal was a socially aware writer *against her will*. In *La narrativa de María Luisa Bombal*, for example, Guerra speaks of Bombal’s “feminismo implícito” (83). Kostopulos-Cooperman calls it “an intuitive albeit suppressed social criticism” (6), and Fernández speaks of “una denuncia, inconsciente quizás” (33), of the political and sociological conditions that produced the type of women normally portrayed in Bombal’s fiction. The author is traditionally seen as a conservative, slightly naïve bourgeoisie who had some esoteric ideas about death and the afterlife and who happened to write some very beautiful books. This image of Bombal persists today in spite of the fact that she occupies a secure position as one of Spanish America’s most important female novelists and as a precursor to the magical realists of the 1960s and 1970s. Speaking on behalf of the Boom writers, Carlos Fuentes once remarked: “María Luisa Bombal is the mother of us all” (qtd. in Guerra, “María Luisa Bombal” 42). In other words, Bombal is seen as a gifted writer who holds a prominent place in Spanish American literary history, but not as a strong intellectual.

In *Máscaras suele vestir* (2003), Sonia Mattalia suggests that, in her letters and interviews, Bombal assumed “una posición educadamente irónica” (202). Contesting the standard view that she was a naïve bourgeoisie with very conservative ideas about the role of women, Mattalia argues that Bombal used irony to avoid being pigeonholed as a feminist writer. This is a highly valid point. The claim, for example, that women are “pure heart” and men “the gray matter” cannot but sound ironic when it is made by a woman who wrote such intellectually stimulating books as Bombal did. Thus, she may have been more progressive and enlightened than she led people to believe. The chapter about Luis certainly gives the impression of having been written by someone who wanted to question the social inequalities imposed upon women by a patriarchal culture. It is a chapter that adds a more explicit political dimension to the work, and the fact that it would most likely have contributed to Bombal being assigned to a category she sought to avoid may explain why she preferred not to incorporate it into *La amortajada*.

The next major “infidelity” in *The Shrouded Woman*, which is close to forty pages long, appears in the form of a modified version of “La historia de María Griselda,” Bombal’s longest short story, originally published in *Sur* in 1946.²⁵ Two years later Bombal translated it into English, adapting and converting it into chapters XII and XIII of *The Shrouded Woman*. Although it develops the story about a character first introduced in the 1938 edition of *La amortajada*, the original version of “La historia de María Griselda” contained no information about its link to the novel. A revised version of the short story was published in 1976, where the following subtitle had been added to the title page: “en donde continúa un relato apenas esbozado en la novela ‘La Amortajada’.” This is an accurate description of the short story’s relationship to the novel. In *La amortajada*, María Griselda is the wife of Alberto, one of Ana María’s two sons. Her beauty is so great that Alberto jealously keeps her “secuestrada allá en un lejano fundo del sur” (52). The section devoted to María

²⁵ “La historia de María Griselda” appeared in *Sur* in August 1946, as well as in a journal called *Norte* the same month.

Griselda and Alberto in *La amortajada* is less than three pages long. There is also a brief scene towards the end of the novel in which Ana María revisits her sequestered daughter-in-law, ostensibly as a ghost of some sort (a soulless one at that), telling her: “María Griselda, sólo yo he podido quererte. Porque yo y nadie más, logró perdonarte tanta y tan inverosímil belleza” (108). “La historia de María Griselda” arose out of the few fleeting glimpses of María Griselda and Alberto in *La amortajada*. In a manner reminiscent of what she would later do in *The Shrouded Woman*, Bombal took existing characters and developed them. She also invented two new ones: Silvia, who is married to Fred, Ana María’s second son, and Rodolfo, who is married to Anita, Ana María’s daughter. Since Bombal did not incorporate “La historia de María Griselda” into *La amortajada*, Silvia and Rodolfo belong to the group of characters who exist in *The Shrouded Woman* but not in the Spanish editions. Curiously, the modified version of the short story that appears in *The Shrouded Woman* begins by introducing a character who is absent from “La historia de María Griselda” but who has a minor role in *La amortajada*: Beatriz, Anita’s intimate friend, “so much in love with Alberto who never even deigned to look at her” (56).

The above discussion shows that Bombal was never really finished with the novel that is often considered to be her *magnum opus*. It was not only the need or desire to re-address *La amortajada* to a new audience that prompted her to revise and develop the original version. She revisited *La amortajada* several times during her life, elaborating on the lives of her characters, inventing new characters, and developing the plot. She also revised the text in order to emphasize the possible nonexistence of Ana María’s soul, and tried to find a way of dealing with the protagonist’s “religious problem.”

Asked by her American agent to make the novel longer, Bombal took a short story that continues the story of one of the characters from *La amortajada* and converted it into an integral part of *The Shrouded Woman*. The two chapters that were adapted and translated from “La historia de María Griselda” constitute the longest text segment to be added by Bombal when she turned *La amortajada* into *The Shrouded Woman*. However, the next major “infidelity” in *The Shrouded Woman*, which

appears in chapter XX, is almost equally long, beginning on page 144 and ending on page 176. Once again Bombal has invented a new character, Sofia, who is introduced thus:

Sofia, Ricardo's wife! that elegant, foreign-born girl whom Ricardo preferred to her and eventually married; that girl who in turn treated him with contempt and left him, graciously conceding to him at the time the guardianship of their son, as if everything that came from him meant absolutely nothing to her. (144)

Like most of the other scenes in the novel, the story about Sofia is told through the retrospective lens of a mysterious, unidentified third-person narrator. It is not Sofia's physical presence during Ana María's wake, but the sight of a certain "silent and royal park" (144) that elicits a retrospective look at "that Summer already so long past" (144), when Sofia came to stay at the house of Ricardo's family. Ana María and Sofia became intimate friends over the course of those months, and we are told the story of how their friendship evolved, of the confidences they exchanged, and of the great affection they had for each other. Friendship, described as "a sentiment in which one never knows solitude as one does in love" (157), is an important theme in this chapter. In fact, this chapter is the only place where Bombal, in whose work love is one of the major thematic undercurrents, writes extensively and explicitly about friendship, which she also describes as "the sweetness of being able to love without passion" (157).

Betrayal is another central theme in this chapter. Ana María's friendship with Sofia lasted only one summer. Their friendship came to an abrupt end when Zoila told Ana María about Sofia's "despicable betrayal" (169), of her affair with Antonio, Ana María's husband: "Yes, more than one hour they would stay at the bottom of the ravine, cooing and kissing in the shadow of the weeping willows" (160). This unexpected disclosure makes Ana María feel "sick, physically sick, from disgust, humiliation, deception" (160). However, it turns out that Sofia's crime was not as

“despicable” as Zoila had led Ana María to believe, since Sofía’s own voice suddenly appears in the text and gives us her version of the events:

“And yet, yet, Ana María, however strange, however absurd and impossible it may seem to you, I swear I never betrayed you!

“Everything Zoila had related to you was actually true: my stepping out of the carriage every evening with Antonio, our long conversations under the willows and our kisses . . . yet, I swear to you, I never betrayed you. (160)

The relationship between Sofía and Antonio, as Sofía describes it, was not a love affair but a “comradeship” (162). They did kiss, but it was against Sofía’s will: “And before I had a chance to realize what was happening, he had made me fall to his breast and was pressing his lips hard against mine” (162). Sofía rejected Antonio’s amorous advances and became his confidante instead of his mistress: “I think the comradeship between him and me started from that moment. At any rate, it was that evening he began to tell me about that part of his life he kept hidden from you” (162-163). Sofía, then, did not betray Ana María after all. The chapter about Sofía has all the ingredients of a conventional sentimental novel: two best friends engaged in a sensational plot featuring themes of love and betrayal. Moreover, it has a happy ending, since it turns out that Zoila’s account of what happened was wrong. Did Bombal add this chapter in an attempt “to pander to middle-brow American tastes,” as she is believed to have done when she transformed *La última niebla* into *House of Mist*? The chapter about Sofía is one of the two additions Margo Echenberg discusses in her comparative reading of *La amortajada* and *The Shrouded Woman*, and Echenberg asks what function Sofía has in the novel: “Al desarrollar el personaje de Sofía no añade Bombal a la construcción del personaje central de su novela, hecho que nos lleva a preguntarnos: ¿qué otra función tiene Sofía entonces?; ¿por qué incluirla en SW [i.e., *The Shrouded Woman*] más que para alargar la novela?” (155). Echenberg goes on to suggest that Bombal included the story of Sofía in order to “complicar más los enredos amorosos de la novela, precisamente ese terreno que,

desde nuestra óptica, vuelve la novela convencional” (155). While the chapter about Sofía complicates the romantic entanglements in the novel, and while this makes the novel more “conventional” in a sense, I will argue that the chapter has at least two other functions. First, it provided Bombal with the opportunity to write about friendship. Second, it allowed the author to foreground the issue of betrayal and infidelity, an issue that takes on a special significance for readers familiar with *La amortajada* and the story of why and how Bombal translated it into English. That one of the most obvious instances of *textual* infidelity in Bombal’s self-translation, an entirely new chapter that is over thirty pages long, is a story about *marital* infidelity suggests that *The Shrouded Woman* may have more than one implied reader. The novel is addressed to an English-speaking audience, but an “unhomely reader” also seems to be inscribed within the story of Sofía. As we saw in the previous chapter, Díaz defines the unhomely reader as a figure that “knows the language of the work that it reads, but it suspects and eventually confirms the subtle sway of another tongue and other literary systems beneath the surface: elements that ought to be interpreted for the best performance of the text” (126). According to Díaz, there are elements in *House of Mist* that only such a reader can grasp:

[I]f Bombal is textually aware of the text’s U.S. American reader, one may also detect in *House of Mist* a long series of elements that become significant only in the context of the Spanish American literary tradition that Bombal seems to have put aside, even concealed. English, the other tongue, emerges then not only as the tool in which the story of Helga, the main character and narrator, is told, but as the strange space in which Bombal’s own history of exile and self-translation is apparently hidden but ultimately revealed. (127)

Díaz, then, believes that there is more than one implied reader in *House of Mist*. There is the average American or English-speaking reader, and then there is the reader with a plausible knowledge of Bombal’s Spanish American past. The latter, Díaz maintains, is able to interpret elements that escape the former’s attention, which produces a better performance of the text. Invoking Díaz, one could ask: Is there in

The Shrouded Woman – “beneath the surface,” as Díaz would say – a similar hidden story of Bombal’s self-translation and apparent “betrayal” of *La amortajada*? *The Shrouded Woman* does not, at first glance, contain autobiographical clues like the thinly veiled reference to Bombal’s attempted murder of Eulogio Sánchez that Díaz detects in the prologue to *House of Mist*. But, on closer examination, other signs emerge that become significant only to an unhomely reader. Consider, for example, the dialogue between Ana María and Fernando towards the end of the chapter about Sofia. Fernando has a relatively central role in the first edition of *La amortajada* as Ana María’s “confidente” (55). When he appears in the story of Sofia, Ana María is telling him about her doubts concerning Sofia’s betrayal:

“Oh, Fernando, I don’t know, I’m not sure, but it seems to me that perhaps I should not have sent back all those letters or broken with her without giving her an opportunity to explain! Perhaps Antonio is right . . . perhaps, for the sake of the great affection she had for me I should have forgiven her silly, insignificant betrayal . . . Don’t you think so, Fernando?”

“No, really, Ana María, I cannot follow the way you women talk; you use the big word ‘betrayal’ and then choose to qualify it with the words ‘silly,’ ‘insignificant.’ ”

“But Fernando, why not? You can betray, and yet . . . well, anyhow, it is so difficult to love as one should, so difficult . . .”

“Not to betray those we love! you were going to say?”

“That’s it, that’s it, Fernando . . . If you only knew, the other day I was thinking that perhaps, after all one does not love as one wants to but only as one is able to! . . .” (173-174)

It is as if, with passages such as this, Bombal wants to draw attention to her own “betrayal” of *La amortajada*. Is her apparent “sellout” a serious act of betrayal, or is it a “silly, insignificant betrayal”? Should we give her “an opportunity to explain”?

Bombal once stated that she added certain new episodes to *The Shrouded Woman* “a fin de dar mayor volumen a la novela, según pedido de mis agentes” (OC 368). Does knowing this change the way we perceive Bombal’s “betrayal” of *La amortajada*? Does the author’s explanation make her betrayal seem less grave? Can one use the “big word,” betrayal, and then qualify it with words like “silly” and “insignificant”? For the unhomely reader, the line “one does not love as one wants to but only as one is able to,” which appears twice in this chapter, becomes an allusion to the genesis of *The Shrouded Woman*: Bombal did not translate *La amortajada* as she wanted to but only as she was able to, that is to say, as the circumstances and her command of the English language permitted her.

There is no extratextual evidence that Bombal ever imagined the possibility of an unhomely reader, or that she intended the story of Sofía as a sort of allegory of her self-translation and “betrayal” of *La amortajada*. For someone who knows *La amortajada* and the story of its genesis, however, the chapter about Sofía can take on a new meaning. It is indeed a curious experience to read a chapter so centrally concerned with the issue of infidelity when you realize that the chapter itself is, in a sense, a major “infidelity.” The lesson here is that context always affects meaning. I am not saying that readers must have a prior knowledge of Bombal’s life and works in order to be able to appreciate *The Shrouded Woman*. I am simply saying that those who do have that knowledge read *The Shrouded Woman* differently from those who do not. To the unhomely reader, unlike to the people who first read *The Shrouded Woman*, the chapter about Sofía emerges as a story of betrayal that Bombal incorporated into the narrative fabric of *The Shrouded Woman* so as to ostentatiously signal her own “betrayal” of *La amortajada*.

Bombal’s Literary Legacy

The preceding analysis has brought to light numerous “infidelities” that appear in *The Shrouded Woman*. This shows that Lindstrom’s claim that *The Shrouded Woman* “does not represent a drastic departure from the Spanish original” (ix) requires

correction. It also shows that Bombal herself was far from accurate when she commented on the changes she had made when she translated *La amortajada* into English. Bombal, always reluctant to discuss her own work, refrained from elaborating on the textual differences between *La amortajada* and *The Shrouded Woman*. In fact, her only extensive statement on the subject appears in her earlier quoted letter addressed to Lucía Guerra and Richard Cunningham, which she describes as a “carta netamente profesional” (OC 369). Written less than three years before she died, this letter reads almost like a legal document containing instructions as to what should be done with her works after her death:

Nota a)

sobre *The Shrouded Woman*, traducción mía del castellano al inglés de mi novela *La amortajada*.

En la edición en inglés *The Shrouded Woman* intercalé *La historia de María Griselda* más *dos nuevos episodios cortos* [emphasis in the original], todo escrito naturalmente por mí en castellano y traducido por mí al inglés. Dichos episodios, salvo el del “Padre Carlos,” no van ni fueron en mis pasadas ediciones y no irán en mis futuras ediciones en castellano de *La amortajada*.

Si intercalé todo ello en *The Shrouded Woman* fue a fin de dar mayor volumen a la novela, según pedido de mis agentes. Ahora bien a mí me parece que hay que dejar la edición de *The Shrouded Woman* tal cual apareció en inglés ya que fue conocida y obtuvo éxito en dicho idioma y en dicha forma. (OC 368)

The information Bombal gives in this letter is inaccurate. As we have seen in this chapter, Bombal did not *only* insert “*La historia de María Griselda* más *dos nuevos episodios cortos*” into *The Shrouded Woman*. One of the two “short” episodes to which she refers here is the Father Carlos section, which begins on page 185 and ends on page 195. The other episode in question is presumably the chapter about Sofía,

which is over thirty pages long. In other words, Bombal does not mention the chapter about Luis or the pages she added about Zoila, nor does she refer to any of the other substantial changes she made when she translated *La amortajada* into English. She fails to mention, for example, that she also added chapter XVII. In this brief chapter, which is scarcely more than a page long, “a sorrowful longing rebellion against eternity” impels Ana María “to return to the surface of life, to reintegrate herself once more in her shrouded body, stretched out between the two wavering tapers” (115). What we have here, then, is yet another example of how *The Shrouded Woman* continues the story of *La amortajada*, expanding the plot and postponing the moment of Ana María’s “second death.”

The “infidelities” I have pointed out so far do not constitute an exhaustive list of the textual differences between *La amortajada* and *The Shrouded Woman*. I have concentrated on the most substantial additions, but there are also some relatively minor ones. Towards the end of the novel, for example, Bombal inserted a short paragraph in which the protagonist has accepted “the death of the dead” and bids farewell to those she leaves behind:

And now, one by one, silent and light, they lean down to her forehead and rest their lips on it, briefly, in a last farewell. Farewell Antonio! Alberto, Alicia, Luis, farewell! Farewell Zoila, and you my father, suffering to see me go before you do! . . . And farewell to you, Fred, who I know would like to kiss me longer. I love you! All is well, farewell! (178-179)

Why did Bombal add this brief farewell scene? Was it to give *The Shrouded Woman* a somewhat “happier” ending? “All is well,” Ana María says. In other words, the idea of death no longer scares her. She has come to terms with her impending demise. The protagonist’s peaceful acceptance of “la segunda muerte” is also central in *La amortajada*. The penultimate paragraph of the novel reads thus: “Lo juro. No tentó a la amortajada el menor deseo de incorporarse. Sola, podría, al fin, descansar, morir” (122), or, as Bombal translated it into English: “I swear it. The woman in the shroud

did not feel the slightest desire to rise again. Alone, she would at last be able to rest, to die” (198). *La amortajada*, like *The Shrouded Woman*, can be read as a hypothetical rehearsal for our own death, and it is significant that it leaves us with the feeling that death is not a frightening experience. Ana María dies willingly, with pleasure, even with gratitude. Because to die, according to the ancient euphemism Bombal employs, is simply “to rest.” By adding a short farewell speech, which ends with the comforting words “I love you! All is well, farewell!” (179), Bombal just made Ana María’s acceptance of death more explicit.

The Shrouded Woman, as we have seen, contains a great number of additions. The omissions are significantly fewer and appear to be quite negligible. In fact, only certain words and phrases have been omitted: “sin razón y tan furiosamente” (31), for example, is trimmed into “so furiously” (26). There are also sentences that have not so much been added or omitted as rewritten, as when “la voz de cierta inquietud me despertaba importuna” (33) becomes “The voice of reality came one day to disturb my childish thoughtlessness” (27). There is some kind of relationship between these two sentences, but the rendering is not particularly close. Bombal has here adopted a much freer translation strategy than the more literal approach she adopts in most of the passages she translated from *La amortajada*. Another passage that Bombal translated somewhat “loosely” is the following: “Reconsidera y nota que de su vida quedan, como signos de identificación, la inflexión de una voz o el gesto de una mano que hila en el espacio la oscura voluntad del destino” (96). The corresponding sentence in the English version reads: “Now that she is in the shroud, she realizes how very often in one’s memory only the inflection of a voice or the gesture of a hand remains as a sign of identification of those events which have weighed most heavily on one’s destiny” (129-130). This is not a straightforward rendering of the Spanish source text. It is not a translation that stays as close as possible to the equivalence of “one word by one word,” but because of the phrases “the inflection of a voice or the gesture of a hand,” “a sign of identification,” and “destiny,” it remains an identifiable reflection of the original. As I have pointed out, however, Bombal generally avoids paraphrase as a translation strategy. What is interesting about *The Shrouded Woman* – its great paradox – is that it contains so many substantial

additions and at the same time (that is, in the passages that are manifestly not additions) respects the verbal quantity of the original as a quantity of words.

To sum up, then, what, if any, are the interpretative implications of this strange combination of obvious additions (or “infidelities,” as I have called them) and the strictest fidelity to the verbal economy of the original? Does – or, more precisely, should – Bombal’s decision to self-translate and the resulting textual differences between *La amortajada* and *The Shrouded Woman* have interpretative consequences? If the two texts are so different, which version should be given textual priority? Since Bombal, as we have seen, revised *La amortajada* in light of *The Shrouded Woman*, the English version cannot be said to be more “complete” than the Spanish. The two versions are, quite simply, *different*, and in this regard it seems significant that Bombal wanted them to be and remain that way. Bombal made this very clear in the “purely professional letter” from which I quoted above. The existence of a radically different English version of her *magnum opus* is part of Bombal’s literary legacy. In other words, *The Shrouded Woman* is part of the *oeuvre* she left behind, part of what she “handed down” to us, so to speak. As Santoyo states in a recent article, “when an author translates his or her own work, he or she is at the same time killing the likelihood of different translations into that language by other hands” (“On mirrors, dynamics and self-translations” 36). *The Shrouded Woman* is, for better or for worse, the only available English translation of *La amortajada*, and this situation is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future. If someone were to publish a more “faithful” English translation of *La amortajada*, he or she would be acting counter to Bombal’s express wishes.

It may be of secondary importance that Bombal claimed to have written all the new material for *The Shrouded Woman* in Spanish before translating it into English, but, if that is true, what we are dealing with here are rather extensive fragments of translated writing without an extant original. The chapter about Ana María’s friendship with Sofia, for example, is only available to us in English, and the same is true of the chapter about Luis, Elena, and Luz-Margarita. The length of each of these chapters is comparable to that of a short story, and each of them presents us with reflections and

themes that one does not find elsewhere in Bombal's work. As I stressed in the previous chapter, the question of textual priority is first and foremost relevant to those who aim to study an author's entire literary output. It is perfectly legitimate to study one or several aspects of a given writer's work without addressing this question. One can therefore examine specific themes, features, or parts of Bombal's work without taking *The Shrouded Woman* into account. However, if one's aim is to say something about Bombal's literary project, about her evolution as a writer, the major themes of her work, or about the overall effect of her writing, then it seems academically unjustifiable to neglect the existence of *The Shrouded Woman*.

Is it fair to say that scholars who want to look at Bombal's entire *oeuvre* should read both *La amortajada* and *The Shrouded Woman*, just as they should read both *La última niebla* and *House of Mist*? By doing so, they would get a more complete and more complex picture of Bombal's literary career, and they would be able to form their own opinion about the relationship between the two versions. Scholars such as Gálvez Lira would counter this argument by saying that *House of Mist* and *The Shrouded Woman* are not worth engaging with. Gálvez Lira, as we have seen, claims that Bombal's English novels are "monótonas, aburridas y pueriles, cansando al lector y dejándolo totalmente ajeno a todo el goce estético que se siente en el idioma de origen" (10). This is a view I do not share, and I do not think that this is simply a matter of personal taste and therefore not debatable. There are good reasons to question Gálvez Lira's claim. First, she does not provide any form of textual evidence to support it. Second, there is the whole issue of what Borges calls the "superstition" about the inferiority of translations. The translator's work, as Borges stresses, "is always supposed to be inferior – or, what is worse, is *felt* to be inferior – even though, verbally, the rendering may be as good as the text" (*This Craft of Verse* 65). Self-translators generally enjoy a higher degree of authority and respect than ordinary translators, but the bias against translations is not always suppressed when the reader knows that it is the author himself or herself who is responsible for the translation, especially not if there is extratextual evidence that the author undertook the translation for financial reasons and with an imperfect command of the target language. It is therefore important to ask to what extent Gálvez Lira's claim that *The*

Shrouded Woman is “monotonous, boring, and puerile” is an aesthetic judgment reached after a careful examination of the novel and to what extent it is the expression of a preconceived opinion. I hope that the preceding pages have shown that *The Shrouded Woman* has unjustly been dismissed as a lesser text. Bombal augmented *La amortajada* when she translated it into English, but it is difficult to see how this makes the novel more “monotonous” or more “puerile.”

One does not need to see *The Shrouded Woman* as an admirable aesthetic achievement in order to recognize it as a legitimate part of Bombal’s *oeuvre*. As noted earlier, Pérez Firmat thinks that *House of Mist* “lacks the subtlety and elegance of Bombal’s Spanish” (137), but nevertheless he regards it as “an important item in Bombal’s curriculum” (126). On the other hand, if *The Shrouded Woman* is seen as an inferior work, then there is a likelihood of neglect. Footnotes and more or less incidental remarks have been the space habitually reserved for *House of Mist* and *The Shrouded Woman* in the annals of Spanish American literary history and in studies devoted to Bombal’s work. Often they are not even mentioned. This paints an incomplete picture of Bombal’s literary career. Contrary to what scholars such as Guerra and Agosin have stated, Bombal’s career did not end with the publication of “La historia de María Griselda” in 1946. It is my contention, therefore, that *House of Mist* and *The Shrouded Woman* need to be seen as an inalienable part of Bombal’s creative output, as texts written not in Spanish, but as durable and authentic as her writings in Spanish nevertheless. To say that Bombal only produced “two novels” (Llanos 10) is simply inaccurate, and to dismiss *House of Mist* and *The Shrouded Woman* because they are “derived” from a Spanish source text is often equivalent to excluding them from the Bombal canon.

The standard view of *House of Mist* is that it is Bombal’s unfortunate attempt to pander to the low tastes of a previously untargeted market. However, there are signs that attitudes toward *House of Mist* are shifting. Díaz, Pérez Firmat, and Guerra (in the preface to her recent Spanish translation of the novel, where she distances herself from her earlier views) have contributed to an aesthetic re-assessment of *House of Mist*. It is hoped that the various passages discussed in this chapter have contributed

to a similar re-assessment of *The Shrouded Woman*. What has emerged, however, is that *The Shrouded Woman* is in many ways not comparable to *House of Mist*. The relationship between *La amortajada* and *The Shrouded Woman* is radically different from that between *La última niebla* and *House of Mist*. It is a much more traditional translational relationship, but at the same time it is clear that *The Shrouded Woman* is not an “ordinary” translation.

“To read *La última niebla* ‘after’ *House of Mist*,” Pérez Firmat observes, “is an unsettling experience, for it makes one wonder how the author could have so badly misconstrued her own achievement” (125). Gligo makes a very similar remark about the experience of reading *House of Mist* after *La última niebla*: “Para los antiguos lectores de María Luisa Bombal la nueva obra [*House of Mist*] es desconcertante. Donde se espera un mundo de sombras y emociones, surgen diálogos concretos y explicaciones lógicas para todo lo que ocurre” (124-125). What Pérez Firmat and Gligo describe is, perhaps unwittingly, the aesthetic effect produced by reading and comparing *La última niebla* and *House of Mist*. To read both versions is “an unsettling experience” because it shatters all expectations of sameness. One expects them to be more or less the same in terms of content and style, but one quickly realizes that they are radically and incontrovertibly different books. It is, in a sense, impossible to avoid comparing them, if not physically, at least in one’s mind. Whatever order one reads them in, one inevitably reads the second version with some form of memory of the first version.

To read *The Shrouded Woman* after *La amortajada*, or vice versa, is also – for similar reasons, albeit not in the same way – a somewhat bewildering experience. The bewilderment stems not from realizing that the two versions are completely different novels, which they are manifestly not, but from trying to make sense of the fact that they are similar and different at the same time. As I began this chapter by stating, the primary purpose of my examination of *The Shrouded Woman* is to account for how Bombal translated *La amortajada* into English and for the changes that occurred in the process. Through close analysis of selected passages I have examined the degrees of modification and augmentation that have taken place between *La amortajada* and

The Shrouded Woman. Understanding the changes Bombal made is highly complex. On the one hand, there is the question of the role played by her literary agent and, perhaps, by her husband. Then there is the readership factor: to what extent did the knowledge of writing for a different readership prompt Bombal to modify the source text? On the other hand, there is the complex issue of Bombal's own creative process. I have suggested that most of the changes introduced by Bombal do not derive from her wish to conform to the expectations and conventions of her English-language audience. According to her own testimony, her American agent compelled her to increase the volume of the novel, so it is not simply a question of being possessed by the Muse once again. Initially, Bombal was reluctant to augment her novel, but something good and unexpected came out of the process, since she made changes and additions that she later incorporated into the Spanish version.

Bombal once said of her English-language novels: "Al editar las obras en inglés les hice agregados con el fin de decir muchas cosas que antes no había tenido la madurez de expresar. Ahora, al verter al castellano, acorté de nuevo" (OC 395). This brief statement appeared in an interview published in 1962, the same year Bombal published the revised edition of *La amortajada*. It makes sense that when Bombal wrote *The Shrouded Woman* in the late 1940s, she made additions with the purpose of saying things she had lacked the maturity to express ten years earlier. She was a more mature writer in 1948 than she was in 1938. It is also quite understandable that when she revised *La amortajada*, sometime around 1962, Bombal had changed her mind about some of the additions she had made to the English version almost fifteen years before. The chapter about Luis, as I have already suggested, may have been left out of the 1962 edition because it would have contributed to Bombal being labeled as a feminist writer. However, if her aim was to avoid being associated with feminist literature, why did she insist on leaving *The Shrouded Woman* "tal cual apareció en inglés" (OC 368)? When Bombal translated *La amortajada* into English, she treated the original in a manner not unlike the way in which a writer treats a draft of a work in progress, which, according to Borges, is what translators should do. She was willing to make significant changes. Similarly, Bombal had no problem with revising

La amortajada in light of *The Shrouded Woman*. Strangely enough, however, she was unwilling to emend the English version, ostensibly because it “fue conocida y obtuvo éxito en dicho idioma y en dicha forma” (OC 368).

The fact that Bombal wanted *The Shrouded Woman* to live on as a strikingly “unfaithful” translation of *La amortajada* has two immediate consequences for critics who study her work. The first and most obvious consequence is that we write partial criticism if we choose to focus exclusively on *La amortajada*. To do so, I have suggested, is untenable if one’s objective is to study Bombal’s *oeuvre* as a whole. Derrida, as we saw in the previous chapter, regards translation as a “complement” to the original, and *The Shrouded Woman* is a complement in the very literal sense of the word: it “completes” the original by adding something to it, by saying something different, by producing something new, and it does so in a much more easily recognizable way than most “ordinary” translations. The second consequence of Bombal’s decision to leave *The Shrouded Woman* as it first appeared has to do with the aesthetic effect produced by comparing it, physically or in one’s mind, with the Spanish original. What happens when one reads both versions? The experience can be compared to that of reading a book for the second time. A second reading of a literary work, as Wolfgang Iser puts it in *The Implied Reader*, “often produces a different impression from the first” (280). On a second reading one tends to notice things that one failed to notice the first time, with the result that episodes, passages, sentences, and words frequently appear in a new light or take on a new significance. Needless to say, to reread a text means to read it with some expectations of what comes next. To read *The Shrouded Woman* after *La amortajada*, or vice versa, also means to read it with expectations of what comes next. The difference is, of course, that *The Shrouded Woman* fails to fulfill those expectations. *The Shrouded Woman* does not only produce a different *impression* from *La amortajada*. It is different. “Translated from Spanish by the author,” the cover page of the University of Texas Press edition declares. These words, coupled with a very misleading foreword by Lindstrom, create an expectation of sameness. The reader will therefore be puzzled when he or she realizes that the “translation” contains substantial additions and introduces a number of new characters.

Chapter Three

Rosario Ferré in English and Spanish

La traducción parece destinada a ilustrar la discusión estética.

Jorge Luis Borges

In the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790), Kant tells a story about the changed response to the beautiful song of a nightingale when the listeners learn that the sound is in fact being produced by a boy concealed behind a bush.²⁶ The realization that a songbird is nowhere to be found changes everything: “But as soon as one becomes aware that it is a trick, no one would endure listening to this song, previously taken to be so charming” (182). The wisdom of this brief anecdote is that once we realize that we are not faced with the “real thing” but with an imitation or copy, however beautiful, our attitude toward the object in question may change radically. It reveals a tendency to favor what is authentic and original over that which is derivative, without necessarily basing this judgment on any aesthetic criteria.

Rosario Ferré, born in Puerto Rico in 1938, is a noted self-translator who has written many and significant works in both Spanish and English. While her activity as a self-translator is well known among critics, few seem to have realized that it may be problematic to distinguish Ferré the self-translator from Ferré the writer. Ferré’s work, I will argue in this chapter, blurs the boundaries between what is original and what is translated, and it does so in a highly self-conscious way. The two texts I will compare in this chapter, *The House on the Lagoon* (1995) and *La casa de la laguna* (1996), are both presented as original texts. However, the fact that several characters

²⁶ I first came across this anecdote from Kant’s third critique in Mark Sagoff’s essay “The Aesthetic Status of Forgeries” (1983).

in the novel falsely present derived work as original counsels caution. The house that gives the novel its title, for example, is built by an architect who literally copies the work of someone else and passes it off as his own. Furthermore, *The House on the Lagoon* and *La casa de la laguna* are both intentionally “unoriginal” in that they both intentionally employ clichéd language, and in that they are both openly “imitations” of Gabriel García Márquez’s *Cien años de soledad* (1967) and Isabel Allende’s *La casa de los espíritus* (1982). Ferré, it seems, is playing with traditional notions of writing that are primarily focused on “originality” and “creativity.”

This chapter builds on previous research: Simona Cocco’s book *The House on the Lagoon/La casa de la laguna di Rosario Ferré: tra riscrittura e autotraduzione* (2005) and Gema Soledad Castillo’s doctoral dissertation *Rosario Ferré, mediadora entre culturas: sus autotraducciones de “Maldito amor” y “The House on the Lagoon”* (2005) have laid the groundwork for what follows. However, my approach to *The House on the Lagoon* and *La casa de la laguna* differs from Cocco’s and Castillo’s. While Cocco and Castillo provide valuable accounts of the textual differences between the English and the Spanish version of the novel, their studies rest on a widespread but problematic assumption, namely that Ferré composed the text entirely in English and then translated it into Spanish. I will argue that there is no warrant for this assumption in the texts themselves or in the paratexts. Ferré, as we shall see, gives a different account of the genesis of the novel. In addition to examining differences and similarities between *The House on the Lagoon* and *La casa de la laguna*, this chapter aims to trace a relationship between the novel’s intricate genesis and “translation process,” its intertextual origins, its thematic interest in originality (originals versus copies), and what is arguably its most important feature, what I shall call its self-criticism. By “self-criticism” I mean the way in which this work, which features a novel within a novel, literally criticizes itself from within and accuses itself of, among other things, lacking originality. These aspects have not been adequately dealt with by scholars, and I will argue that the novel emerges as a more complex and self-conscious work if one takes them into account. I will also address the vexed question of the literary quality of Ferré’s writing in

English, which some critics have found to be more riddled with clichés – that is to say, less “original” – than the works she has written in her native Spanish.

The Novel within the Novel

The House on the Lagoon is presented as the work in progress of Isabel Monfort, a rebellious wife and fledgling novelist who originally sets out to write a memoir of her family and of her husband Quintín Mendizabal’s family. This memoir, however, eventually becomes a novel. We are told that what we are reading are the unpublished results of Isabel’s attempt to write a novel, and that we are in fact reading the chapters as they are composed, along with Quintín, who stumbles upon his wife’s manuscript hidden behind a dictionary. As he secretly reads Isabel’s work in progress, Quintín criticizes the text and scribbles his acerbic comments in the margins. Quintín’s comments and reflections, together with the story of how and where he finds the manuscript, are in italics and narrated from an omniscient third-person point of view. These sections (there are ten such sections in total, all of them relatively short and simply entitled “Quintín”) are thus clearly separated from the main body of the text, which is narrated by Isabel in the first person. There are also two short italicized sections entitled “Isabel.” The sections in italics add an explicit metafictional dimension to *The House on the Lagoon*. Following Patricia Waugh’s definition, “metafiction” can be understood as “fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artifact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality” (2). This, as we shall see, is precisely what *The House on the Lagoon* does through its italicized sections. However, if we ignore these sections – i.e., the sections in which the text self-consciously reflects upon itself –, the novel is in essence a five-generation family saga. It begins with the arrival of Buenaventura Mendizabal, Quintín’s father and the family patriarch, in Puerto Rico on July 4, 1917. The narrator says that this was “the same day President Woodrow Wilson signed the Jones Act, which granted us American citizenship” (15). This reference to an actual historical event is only

partially correct. Wilson did sign the Jones Act in 1917, and the act did grant U.S. citizenship to the people of Puerto Rico. However, he signed it on March 2, not on the American Independence Day. The Spanish version of this sentence is therefore more historically accurate: “El presidente Wilson acababa de firmar la Ley Jones por aquellos días” (26).

Why did Ferré make this apparent “correction”? Had she quite simply made a factual mistake when she first wrote *The House on the Lagoon*, an error she was given the opportunity to correct in the subsequent Spanish version? This seems like an improbable explanation for more than one reason, the most important of which is that we are dealing with a metafictional novel that constantly calls attention to its own errors and shortcomings. In the “Quintín” sections, Quintín repeatedly points out Isabel’s mistakes, such as when he notes that there were no hot dog stands in Puerto Rico in 1917 and no German submarines roaming the Caribbean Sea during the First World War. Facts versus errors, truth versus lies, history versus fiction, this is partly what this novel is “about.” The placement of an obvious factual mistake within such a work is hardly coincidental, and it seems unlikely that Ferré’s correction of this “mistake” was prompted by a desire to eliminate error.

We find another “mistake” in the opening paragraph of the first “Quintín” section of the English version. Quintín, the narrator tells us, “was in the study reading Plutarch’s *Lives of the Noble Romans* when he needed to look up a word in Latin” (70), so he went to the bookcase to take out “the Latin dictionary” (70) and found Isabel’s manuscript hidden behind it. There are at least two things worth noting about this quote. First, the work Ferré refers to is probably the so-called Dryden translation, the full title of which is *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*. Ferré, then, has omitted part of the title. Second, Plutarch wrote not in Latin but in Greek, so why would Quintín need to look up a word in Latin? Both of these “mistakes” have been corrected in *La casa de la laguna*. The title of the work Quintín is reading has been changed into *Vidas paralelas*, which is what Plutarch’s biographies are commonly called in Spanish, and Quintín’s Latin dictionary has been changed into a “diccionario griego-español” (86).

Most of the “mistakes” in *The House on the Lagoon* and *La casa de la laguna* appear to be deliberate and are closely linked to the novel’s interest in the relationship between fact and fiction. While the novel chronicles the history of Puerto Rico in the twentieth century, Ferré has intentionally made it difficult for readers to distinguish between fact and fiction. Some of the mistakes are identified in the “Quintín” sections, while others are not. By correcting apparently deliberate errors, Ferré makes it harder to distinguish between fact and fiction. That is to say, she increases the difficulty for a particular kind of reader, the reader who undertakes a careful comparison of the two versions of the novel. A bewildering mix of facts and errors surfaces “between” the conflicting versions, just as it does within the texts themselves. However, the somewhat curious philological details (Quintín reading a classical author and the reference to a book which is first a Latin dictionary and then, strangely enough, a Greek one) may also contain an allusion to Borges. In Borges’s work, one finds an abundance of similar details relating to classical authors and dictionaries. More specifically, Ferré seems to allude to Borges’s short story “Funes el memorioso” (1942), which explicitly refers to a Latin dictionary as well as to several Latin authors. An allusion to Borges in this particular context could be seen as appropriate since, as Efraín Kristal has observed, “in his translations Borges often corrected the originals” (xv).

Quintín points out many of Isabel’s “mistakes,” and we are led to believe that he makes these mistakes known to his wife by writing in the margins of her manuscript and on the back of some of the pages. In the first of the two “Isabel” sections, which are both placed quite late in the novel, Isabel informs us that she has found out about her husband’s discovery of her manuscript and about his marginal annotations:

Quintín has found and read my manuscript. He’s not only read it, he’s put in commentaries in longhand, scribbling angrily in the margins, and even adding his version to mine on the back of some of the pages. What nerve, to accuse me of distorting the truth, of changing the events of our family histories around! He knows I know he knows. (197)

Acaba de suceder algo inusitado. Quintín encontró mi manuscrito y lo está leyendo. Y no sólo lo está leyendo, le está añadiendo sus comentarios a mano, garabateándolos con furia en los márgenes. En algunos casos, hasta ha sumado su versión a la mía, por la parte atrás de las páginas. ¡Qué atrevimiento! ¡Acusarme a mí de falsear la verdad, de virar al revés la historia de nuestras familias! Él sabe que yo sé lo que él sabe. (209)

The first sentence of the Spanish version (“Acaba de suceder algo inusitado”) is absent from the corresponding section in the English version, but the two passages are otherwise closely matched. As Isabel says, her memoir-turned-novel deals with her family history and Quintín’s, and Quintín accuses her repeatedly of “distorting the truth,” sometimes adding his own version of the same stories. In fact, Quintín openly contradicts Isabel by claiming that he knows “[w]hat really happened” (111) / “[l]a verdadera historia” (125). We are thus given conflicting versions of the same events. “This complication of narrative voice,” Julie Barak observes in a study of the English version of the novel, “is typical of Ferré’s work” (32). Barak also notes that Isabel seems to be the one responsible for Quintín’s sections, as there are several textual clues indicating that Quintín himself could not have written them or provided the material necessary to write them. The irony here, as Barak puts it, “is that Isabel is casting doubt on her own story” (33).

The Reception of the Novel

A reader's first impression of *The House on the Lagoon* may very well be that this is not a novel of staggering complexity. One might even say that the text has no surface difficulties whatsoever, which may explain the book's relative commercial success.²⁷ According to an influential view, Ferré intended the novel as a history lesson for anglophone readers unfamiliar with the complexities of Puerto Rican society. As Ilan Stavans noted in an early review in *The Nation*: "*The House on the Lagoon* seems intentionally designed for a conventional public in the mainland United States, illiterate in matters of the island" (642). *La casa de la laguna*, which was first published in Spain, also seems intended for a public "illiterate in matters of the island." It has the same structure as the English version, and it tells the same story. There are textual differences between the two versions, and we have already seen some examples of this. However, there are no major "infidelities" like those one finds in Bombal's *The Shrouded Woman* or, for that matter, in Ferré's first self-translation, *Sweet Diamond Dust*. That is to say, there are no characters who appear in one version but not in the other, and there are no additions or omissions that are several pages long. I will analyze some of their differences and similarities in detail later, but for the moment I would simply like to point out that *The House on the Lagoon* and *La casa de laguna* are, more or less, the "same" novel. Both versions juggle multiple plots, locations, shifting points of view, and more than thirty characters, and they both reflect Puerto Rican society's vast inequalities. The privileged lifestyle of the elite, represented by the Mendizabals and their well-to-do peers, is in stark contrast to the humble existence of the impoverished masses, represented by the Mendizabals' servants, who live in the dirt floor cellar of the extravagant mansion that gives the novel its title. Specific historical events and tensions within the household reveal broader Puerto Rican societal clashes. Racial and gender inequalities are highlighted,

²⁷ According to Ferré (*Memoria* 158), *The House on the Lagoon* sold almost 100,000 copies in the U.S. alone, and because of this the book was subsequently translated into French, Italian, Greek, Dutch, and German. Despite receiving mixed reviews when it first appeared in 1995 (for a discussion of the reviews, see Mercado 28-32), *The House on the Lagoon* was a finalist for the prestigious National Book Award.

and the novel also brings to light the conflict regarding the island's political status. All this adds to the impression that this is a work with a very obvious didactic purpose, namely to inform readers about Puerto Rican society and history, and to expose social injustice. This impression is strengthened by the fact that both versions of the novel are written in a relatively simple and unadorned prose. Ferré has said that her work in Spanish tends to be more "baroque" than her English texts because it has a more convoluted syntax, and because Spanish affords her more opportunities to play on words (Ferré, "Writing in Between" 103-104). However, as the passages quoted above indicate, the language in both *The House on the Lagoon* and *La casa de la laguna* is straightforward and easy to understand. The syntax and vocabulary in both versions, I will argue, ensure easy readability, as well as a kind of "naturalness of expression."

Admittedly, the metafictional aspects do add a certain complexity to the novel, a complexity perhaps best reflected in the steady stream of scholarly works that have been devoted to both *The House on the Lagoon* and *La casa de la laguna* since they first appeared. It is not surprising that scholarly responses to the novel have tended to focus on Quintín and Isabel's dispute in the margins about the "truth" of their stories and about the differences and similarities between history and literature. Isabel is an aspiring writer educated at Vassar College, a well-known liberal arts college in the United States, while Quintín is a self-made businessman with a master's degree in history from Columbia University. Quintín, who reads classical authors such as Plutarch and Suetonius in the original language, is portrayed as a somewhat naïve amateur historian. His belief that there are clear lines of demarcation between history and literature – that history, unlike literature, tells us "[w]hat really happened" – recalls Leopold von Ranke's dictum that historians should represent the past *wie es eigentlich gewesen* (as it really was). Isabel, on the other hand, is depicted, at least in the "Quintín" sections, as a relativist, as someone who questions the very possibility of objective truth:

“Nothing is true, nothing is false, everything is the color of the glass you’re looking through” was one of her favorite sayings – which she had picked up from a famous Spanish baroque poet. (106)

“Nada es verdad, nada es mentira, todo es según el color del cristal con que se mira,” era uno de sus refranes favoritos, que había leído en un libro de un famoso escritor español. (120-121)

Here Ferré has, once again, made an apparent “correction.” The quotation is from “Las dos linternas,” an oft-cited poem by Ramón de Campoamor, who was not “a famous Spanish baroque poet,” as it says in the English version, but a nineteenth-century Asturian poet. He is thus more accurately referred to in the Spanish version as “un famoso escritor español.” The reference to Campoamor is interesting, particularly in the light of Ferré’s “copying” from García Márquez and Allende, which I will discuss in greater detail below. Campoamor wrote an article entitled “La originalidad y el plagio” (1875), in which he defended himself against accusations of plagiarism and sought to define “la verdadera originalidad” (19). Anticipating twentieth-century theories of intertextuality, Campoamor argued that a poet can borrow from other writers and still be original. He admitted that “al escribir versos, suelo trasladar de la prosa á la poesía muchas ideas de los libros que leo” (19), and he asserted that even if a poem is no more than “un mosaíco de pensamientos ajenos” (19), it is nevertheless original. By alluding to the “baroque” poet who wrote these words, Ferré implicitly aligns herself with a writer who was critical of the Romantic cult of originality.

In addition to signaling Ferré’s repudiation of the Romantic notion of originality, the quotation from Campoamor serves to define Isabel’s position on truth. Quintín and Isabel’s central intellectual quarrel has to do with their diverging understanding of what historical truth is. Isabel, it seems, is critical of her husband’s positivist “cult of facts.” She contends that there are no absolute truths and implies that the historian’s use of historical facts is never purely neutral or objective because “everything is the color of the glass you’re looking through.” Several critics have pointed out the

questioning of the boundaries between fact and fiction that occurs in *The House on the Lagoon*. Barak, for example, summarizes the work's thematic concerns thus: "What the novel is really 'about' are the connections and disconnections between history and literature" (34). One finds similar statements in other studies,²⁸ and Ferré herself once told an interviewer: "The theme of the novel is the relativity of all truth" ("A Side View" 67).

It is not my intention to contest these interpretations, although I hasten to add that we should exercise caution and not take Ferré's testimony for granted. We should be careful not only for general theoretical reasons (the meaning of a text cannot be discovered by recourse to "revelations" by the author), but also because there is something very suspect about an author who claims to tell the truth about her novel and says that it is really about "the relativity of all truth," which is an almost self-undermining statement. Still, the quasi-philosophical quarrel about the nature of truth constitutes a central theme in the novel. It is, at the very least, its most obvious theme. However, I would like to emphasize that this is a 400-page novel with multiple plots, multiple characters, and also multiple themes. My aim is to draw attention to some aspects of the novel that have been eclipsed by its more manifest thematic focus on "the connections and disconnections between history and literature." I will also discuss Quintín's annotations in the margins, but I will do so not so much because of the way he questions the truth of Isabel's stories as because of the way he criticizes the literary quality of his wife's manuscript. This critique, which self-consciously condemns the text's lack of originality, is closely related to the novel's overt "imitation" of García Márquez and Allende, to its many characters who represent stolen or borrowed work as original, but also, strangely enough, to Ferré's account of how she wrote the two versions of the text.

²⁸ In her study *Subversive Silences* (2009), for example, Helene Carol Weldt-Basson states that "history versus fiction is undoubtedly one of the novel's principal themes" (162). As Beatriz Urraca notes in an article from 2005, Quintín's obsession with facts has prompted several critics to align him with traditional History, and Isabel with the "counter-discourse" (226) of literature and art.

The Genesis of the Novel

As noted earlier, *The House on the Lagoon* and *La casa de la laguna* tell more or less the same story. As a general rule, however, the sentences and paragraphs in the Spanish version are somewhat longer and more elaborate than the corresponding sections in the English version. They contain, as this chapter aims to show, details, words, phrases, and, occasionally, entire sentences that are absent from *The House on the Lagoon*. Although *La casa de la laguna* is longer than its English-language predecessor, *The House on the Lagoon* also contains a number of phrases and passages that are absent from the Spanish version.

If one attempts to account for how Ferré translated *The House on the Lagoon* into *La casa de la laguna* and for the changes that occurred in the process, one encounters an intriguing problem, a problem that did not present itself when I compared *La amortajada* and *The Shrouded Woman* in the previous chapter: contrary to what much Ferré criticism assumes, we do not know which text is the original and which is the translation. There is, as we shall see, an easily perceived translational relationship between the two versions, but we cannot say for sure which version was written first. Why?

When *The House on the Lagoon* first appeared, it was published and marketed as Ferré's first original work in English. Many of the early reviews pointed out, as Suzanne Ruta did in the *New York Times Book Review*, that it was "her first novel written in English" (28). Ferré was at this time an established author who had written several books in Spanish. She was a noted feminist and widely recognized as one of Puerto Rico's leading writers. It was also a well-known fact that she had translated her two most important narrative works into English: *Sweet Diamond Dust* appeared in 1988 and *The Youngest Doll* in 1991. In other words, *The House on the Lagoon* was not Ferré's first attempt to reach an English-speaking audience, but it was ostensibly the first major text she had "originally written in English" (30), as Edna Acosta-Belén put it in the *Latino Review of Books*. However, when *La casa de la laguna* appeared the year after, it was also published as an original work. On the

cover of the first edition, there is only a brief reference to the existence of an English-language predecessor (“la versión inglesa de *La casa de la laguna* fue finalista del National Book Award”), which was no doubt placed there for advertising purposes. Critical readers with any form of literary memory might therefore suspect foul play. Perhaps *The House on the Lagoon* was not an original work after all but a disguised translation? Original works traditionally enjoy greater prestige than translations, and perhaps Ferré, well aware of this, had played a clever trick on her readers, analogous to that of the boy with the beautiful imitation of the nightingale’s song in the anecdote from Kant’s third critique? Ferré’s two subsequent novels, *Eccentric Neighborhoods* (1997) and *Flight of the Swan* (2001), were also first published in English, with a Spanish version appearing shortly after. *Eccentric Neighborhoods* was followed by *Vecindarios excéntricos* (1999), and *Flight of the Swan* by *Vuelo del cisne* (2002). As can be appreciated from their paratexts, neither the English nor the Spanish version of these novels was published as a translation.

Anyone familiar with Ferré’s work would know that she translated *Maldito amor* and *Papeles de Pandora* into English in the late 1980s and early 1990s and that these translations did not have the impact Ferré had hoped for in the anglophone world. Neither *Sweet Diamond Dust* nor *The Youngest Doll* has achieved the status of original English-language works, even though they are vested with the authority of the author (“Translated from the Spanish by the Author,” the title page of *Sweet Diamond Dust* declares). *Sweet Diamond Dust* in particular is often dismissed, much like Bombal’s *House of Mist*, as an unfortunate attempt to cater to the tastes of mainstream America. In her book *Boricua Pop* (2004), for example, Frances Negrón-Muntaner argues that in Ferré’s translation of *Maldito amor* “the writer makes a number of choices that make this work one of transition from Ferré-as-feminist-nationalist-writer to Ferré-as-Latina-commodity-producer” (191). The limited critical and commercial success of *Sweet Diamond Dust* and *The Youngest Doll* may explain why Ferré decided to publish *The House on the Lagoon*, *Eccentric Neighborhoods*, and *Flight of the Swan* shortly before the Spanish versions. However, the chronology of an author’s works does not necessarily reflect the order in which they were written, which is a far trickier question to settle with any certainty. Only the record of Ferré’s

publications is public knowledge, and in order to establish the sequence in which she actually wrote her works we are obliged to resort to the paratexts. That is to say, we must resort to whatever information is given by Ferré herself or by her editors and publishers. According to Ferré's own explanation of the genesis of *The House on the Lagoon* and *La casa de la laguna*, the English version of the novel is not the original text, if by "original" we mean the form or language in which a text was first produced or created. In 1998, Ferré told an interviewer that

yo hago siempre una versión original en español, que es una versión corta, una especie de mapa de camino. *La casa de la laguna* la desarrollé en inglés expandiéndola, porque yo sabía cuál era la estructura, para dónde iba, cuál era el principio y cuál era el final, o sea que ya no estaba preocupada de cómo se iba a estructurar la novela, que es lo que a mí más trabajo me da. O sea que desarrollar, expandir y hacer el juego lingüístico es mucho más fácil: lo más difícil es estructurar la acción de la novela y eso lo hago siempre en español. ("Familia e historia nacional" 95)

The existence of an unpublished "original version in Spanish," a shorter version that served as a draft or "road map," deprives *The House on the Lagoon* of its status as an original text. In another interview, which took place in 1997, Ferré stated that the "short" original version in Spanish consisted of "200 páginas, que al traducir al inglés se amplió en 400" ("Rosario Ferré entre el inglés y el español" 63). In other words, *The House on the Lagoon* was not conceived and structured in English, only developed and expanded. Even if it was significantly reworked and increased greatly in size, the book's status as Ferré's first original work in English no longer rings true. In the two interviews I just quoted from, but also in her memoir *Memoria* (2011), as well as in at least one more interview,²⁹ Ferré undermines *The House on the Lagoon*'s authority as the original text, effectively rendering it only "partially" original. It is

²⁹ See Ferré, *Memoria*, 153-158, and "Entrevista a Rosario Ferré," 242.

not, then, an original text in the established sense of the word, but not quite a translation either. It is something in between the two, as Ferré appears to have written half the novel “originally” in Spanish and the other half “originally” in English. Another way of saying this is that Ferré confuses and thereby renders inoperative the narratological distinction Gérard Genette makes in *Paratexts* (1987), when he argues that each of Beckett’s self-translations “must, in one way or another, serve as commentary on the original text” (405). Although Genette cautions that it is “a commentary to be used with care, for the right to be unfaithful is an authorial privilege” (405*n*), his argument presupposes that it is possible to distinguish clearly between original and translation, between the text itself and its paratext (that is to say, the text that serves as “commentary” on the original text), and thus to determine which version should be given priority. In Ferré’s case, and perhaps also in Beckett’s,³⁰ this is not necessarily a distinction that can be made, at least not without serious hesitation or doubt.

“Yes, I never write in English. I translate my own work” (“Rosario Ferré” 100), Ferré said in an interview that took place in 1991. After the publication of *The House on the Lagoon* and *La casa de la laguna*, however, Ferré stopped referring to any of her texts as translations. “I don’t translate my work; I write versions of it” (“A Side View” 64), she asserted in an interview published in 2000, directly contradicting the statement she made in 1991. The change in how Ferré refers to her own writing is striking, and it raises some interesting questions. Does this change reflect a new writing process, a process of developing the Spanish and English versions more or less simultaneously, which differs from how she wrote *Sweet Diamond Dust* and *The Youngest Doll*? Ferré’s comment about how she used a shorter Spanish version as a “road map” when she wrote *The House on the Lagoon* does seem to suggest that she had adopted a new method of writing. However, Ferré also displays an increased awareness of the fact that translations, even if it is the author herself who is

³⁰ As George Steiner observes in *Extraterritorial*: “For a good deal of Beckett’s work we do not know whether the English or the French version came first” (5).

responsible for them, do not receive the same kind of critical attention and treatment by the media as original works. In an interview by Negrón-Muntaner, Ferré said of her English and Spanish books:

. . . los dos son originales, porque no me identifico con uno más que con otro. Con los dos últimos libros, por ejemplo, el escrito en inglés salió primero por razones prácticas, porque así podía entrar al mercado internacional. Si se publicaba como una traducción del (o al) inglés, entonces no le daban la misma crítica, no aparecía en los medios. (qtd. in Negrón-Muntaner 315*n*)

Ferré, then, is keenly aware of the differentiation in status between what is seen as “original” and what is seen as “translation.” She deliberately avoids the term “translation” and insists that both versions of her works are original. The statement that the books written in English were released first for “practical reasons” implies that chronology cannot be used as a criterion for establishing a hierarchy between the English and the Spanish texts. Ferré is, in fact, very consistent in her refusal to establish such a hierarchy. She does not want to “identify” more with one version than with the other. “Considero que tanto mis libros en español como mis libros en inglés son originales” (177), she stated in *A la sombra de tu nombre* (2001), and she reproduced this sentence verbatim in the preface to her *Antología personal* (2009). Ferré thus invites, even obliges readers to think non-hierarchically about the relationship between her Spanish and English texts. If both versions are original, then neither of them can be considered more definitive or authoritative than the other.

The paratexts do not allow us to say that *La casa de la laguna* is a translation of *The House on the Lagoon*, nor do they allow us to say that the English version is a rendering of the Spanish. However, are there elements in the texts themselves that indicate that the novel was composed in one language and then translated into another? María Caballero has said of *La casa de la laguna*:

Más allá de indudables descuidos que pueden achacarse a la edición – por ejemplo, faltas de ortografía en frases como “Rebeca estaba *echa*

una calamidad” (p. 277)–, no cabe duda de que la redacción acusa calcos sintácticos del inglés como fruto de su primigenia redacción en esa lengua. Se detectan abundantes problemas de régimen o concordancia del tipo: “en cuanto llegó a la Fortaleza mandó *a* prohibir el ron y las peleas de gallos.” (127)

According to Caballero, there is no doubt that *La casa de la laguna* was originally written in English. The Spanish version, she observes, contains calques of word order that betray traces of an English original. In other words, Caballero claims that the Spanish version “borrows” the syntax of *The House on the Lagoon*. However, there are not many obvious syntactic calques in *La casa de la laguna*, and the existence of a few such calques does not necessarily mean that the novel *as a whole* was composed in English and subsequently translated into Spanish. The relationship between the two versions is, according to Ferré, more complex than that, and it is difficult to draw any clear conclusions with regard to the question of which version was written first by examining and comparing the texts. Although *La casa de la laguna* and *The House on the Lagoon* often have a similar structure, it is generally difficult to determine whether the Spanish version “borrows” the structure of the English or vice versa. This is closely related to the fact that neither version reads like a translation. *La casa de la laguna* tends to follow a recognizably Spanish word order, and it uses words and expressions that are familiar to Spanish readers. Similarly, *The House on the Lagoon* rarely deviates from the most commonly used forms of the English language. It is not a text that appears “strange” or “awkward” against the backdrop of current English-language fiction. Both versions, it seems, aim to appear “natural,” that is, not translated. The standard view that *La casa de la laguna* is a translation of *The House on the Lagoon* therefore needs correction. In theory, any given passage in the two texts can be either translated or original, and any element that appears in one version but not in the other can be either an addition or an omission. This is something most Ferré critics, even those who have studied Ferré’s activity as a self-translator, have failed to acknowledge. In her book from 2005, for example, Simona Cocco provides a detailed account of the textual differences between *The House on the Lagoon* and *La casa de la laguna*. However, Cocco’s

study presupposes that Ferré wrote the novel in English and then translated or rewrote it into Spanish. Since there are numerous differences between the two versions, Cocco defines the Spanish text as an “auto-traduzione (ri)creatrice” (120), that is, as a text translated by an author who has taken extensive liberties with the original.³¹ In her 2005 doctoral dissertation, Gema Soledad Castillo also examines how Ferré translated *The House on the Lagoon* into *La casa de la laguna*. Like Cocco, Castillo assumes that Ferré wrote the English version first. By ignoring the issue of the genesis of the novel, Cocco and Castillo fail to grasp the complexity of the relationship between the English and the Spanish version, and they fail to see that the development and creation of the two versions is related to how the texts themselves problematize the concept of originality.

Both Cocco and Castillo maintain that most of the changes Ferré made when she translated *The House on the Lagoon* into Spanish are audience-oriented. In her article “Lost in (Self-)Translation? Riflessioni sull’autotraduzione” (2009), in which she sums up the results of her study of the textual differences between *The House on the Lagoon* and *La casa de la laguna*, Cocco states that Ferré “seems to adjust the original according to its new audience” (110, my trans.). This is a view Castillo shares. As noted earlier, Castillo has developed a general theory of self-translation as a form of “mediation between cultures,” as a way of adapting texts to suit the needs and requirements of a culturally different audience. Castillo expounds this theory in her book *La (auto)traducción como mediación entre culturas* (2006), where Ferré is one of the self-translators she discusses.³² Ferré, Castillo claims, “domesticates” the original by adding “referencias y datos del contexto que el lector desconoce” (96). While this may be an adequate description of the changes Ferré made when she translated *Maldito amor*, the relationship between *The House on the Lagoon* and *La*

³¹ Cocco follows Michaël Oustinoff’s typology of self-translations. A self-translation, according to Oustinoff’s taxonomy, can be either “naturalisante,” “décentrée,” or “(re)créatrice.” See Oustinoff, *Bilinguisme d’écriture et auto-traduction* (2002), 29-34.

³² Castillo also outlines this theory in her essay “La autotraducción literaria como puente de comunicación entre pueblos” (2006).

casa de la laguna is, as I have already suggested, more complex. When Ferré changes a “Latin dictionary” into a “diccionario griego-español,” or when she changes “a famous Spanish baroque poet” into “un famoso escritor español,” she is hardly acting as a cultural mediator. Nor is she modifying the original so as to make it more interesting or more intelligible to a new audience. Rather, she is invoking a reader who is familiar with both versions of the novel and who is able to see these “corrections” in relation to the novel’s questioning of the boundaries between fact and fiction. Ferré invokes an “unhomely reader,” to use Díaz’s term, and she often does so in a very subtle way, such as when she changes “El Morro Castle” (334) into “el castillo San Jerónimo” (356). El Morro is a sixteenth-century citadel located in San Juan and one of the most popular tourist attractions in Puerto Rico. The irony here, which is only perceptible to the unhomely reader, is that when Ferré “translates” this proper noun, she changes it into a reference to Saint Jerome, who is called the patron saint of translators and who advocated a free, sense-for-sense translation, “except of course in the case of Holy Scripture, where even the syntax contains a mystery” (25).³³

Ferré’s “Translation Strategy”

The allusion to Jerome hints at Ferré’s translation strategy. Like Jerome, Ferré prefers to translate sense for sense and not word for word. Previous studies have shown that Ferré tends to avoid word-for-word rendering, and that she frequently adds and omits text segments. My aim here is not to provide an exhaustive account of the textual differences between *The House on the Lagoon* and *La casa de la laguna*. Thanks to the work of Cocco and Castillo, we already have thorough and detailed knowledge of how the two versions differ. However, in order to get a clearer sense of how Ferré translates her own work, and of how her way of translating makes it difficult to

³³ In his letter to Pammachius, Jerome wrote: “Now I not only admit but freely announce that in translating from the Greek – except of course in the case of Holy Scripture, where even the syntax contains a mystery – I render, not word for word, but sense for sense” (25).

identify a source text, it would be useful to look more closely at the formal features of *The House on the Lagoon* and *La casa de la laguna*. Consider, for example, the words that open the novels:

My grandmother always insisted that when people fall in love they should look closely at what the family of the betrothed is like, because one never marries the bridegroom alone but also his parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, and the whole damned tangle of the ancestral line. I refused to believe her even after what happened when Quintín and I were still engaged. (3)

Mi abuela siempre decía que, cuando una se enamora, hay que mirar muy bien cómo es toda la familia, porque de los palos suelen nacer las astillas y una desgraciadamente no se casa con el novio nada más, sino con los padres, los abuelos, los bisabuelos y toda la maldita madeja genética que lo antecede. Yo me resistía a creerlo a pesar de lo que sucedió en una ocasión, cuando Quintín Mendizábal y yo todavía éramos novios. (15)

Who would be able, solely by means of comparing these two passages, to tell which of them is original and which is translated? There is, I would argue, no way to determine unambiguously if either of these passages is a translation. Both passages could have passed as original. In fact, they *have* passed as original inasmuch as both *The House on the Lagoon* and *La casa de la laguna* have been read and studied as original works of art. Critics frequently consider only the version that is written in their own language, without taking the bilingual creation process into account. Anglophone critics such as Susan Strehle, Kelli Lyon Johnson, Marita Wenzel, and Ylce Irizarry thus read only the English version,³⁴ whereas hispanophone critics such as Lydia Vélez Román, Leonora Simonovis, Patricia Varas, and Giada Biasetti read

³⁴ See Strehle, *Transnational Women's Fiction* (2008), 77-101; Lyon Johnson, "Writing Home" (2008); Wenzel, "House, Cellars and Caves" (2008); Irizarry, "Doubly troubling narratives" (2006).

only the Spanish version.³⁵ Neither of these two groups of critics addresses the question of the potential translated status of the text they are studying. If either of the two passages quoted above can be labeled as a translation, it is what Venuti calls a “domesticating” translation. Both passages display discursive features that produce fluency. As Venuti puts it in *The Translator’s Invisibility*, a fluent translation displays no “linguistic or stylistic peculiarities” (1). Rather, it is written in a language “that is current (‘modern’) instead of archaic, that is widely used instead of specialized (‘jargonisation’), and that is standard instead of colloquial (‘slangy’)” (4). The language in the two passages cited above fits this description of the formal characteristics of fluent translating. With the possible exception of “betrothed” in the English version, the language in both texts is “modern,” jargon-free, and “standard.” Loanwords are avoided. There are no Anglicisms in the Spanish version and no Hispanicisms in the English. It is also worth noting that both passages bear evidence of a punctilious care with grammar and punctuation, and that they both use fluent, natural-sounding syntax. In both versions, there is an absence of syntactic, grammatical, and lexical “peculiarities,” that is, of features which have come to be associated with translation. Ferré, it seems, has made a successful effort to minimize the “foreignness” of both *The House on the Lagoon* and *La casa de la laguna*, with the result that neither of them appears to be translated.

Although there is an obvious translational relationship between the two passages quoted above, there are, nevertheless, important differences. The Spanish version is slightly longer than the English, mainly because it contains the phrase “de los palos suelen nacer las astillas,” as well as a few other words that lack an equivalent in the English version, words like “desgraciadamente,” “en una ocasión,” and Mendizábal, Quintín’s surname. The most interesting difference is the phrase “de los palos suelen nacer las astillas,” which is absent from the English version. This phrase, which is a variation of the Spanish proverb “de tal palo, tal astilla” (the closest English-language

³⁵ See Vélez Román, “Violencia y fronteras móviles en *La casa de la laguna*, de Rosario Ferré” (2001); Simonovis, “*La casa de la laguna* de Rosario Ferré” (2004); Varas, “*La casa de la laguna* y la nueva novela histórica hispanoamericana” (2006); Biasetti, “El poder subversivo” (2011).

equivalent would probably be “like father, like son” or “the apple doesn’t fall far from the tree”), foreshadows the fact that later in the story Quintín turns out to be just as violent as his father. Just as Buenaventura brutally beats his wife Rebecca after she appears naked in a performance of Oscar Wilde’s drama *Salomé* in one of the early chapters of the book, Quintín violently strikes Isabel on the head in the novel’s last chapter. Did Ferré add this phrase to the Spanish version or did she omit it from the English? There is no real way of knowing this. As I stressed earlier, any element that appears in one version but not in the other can be either an addition or an omission.

The idiomatic phrase “de los palos suelen nacer las astillas” hints at certain plot developments that will arrive later in the story. However, it also makes the text sound like something only a native Spanish speaker could have written. It adds a Spanish feel to the text. Many of the textual differences between *The House on the Lagoon* and *La casa de la laguna* seem to be motivated by a similar desire to “Hispanicize” the assumed original. Compare, for example, the second paragraph of the English version with the corresponding section in the Spanish:

One evening Quintín came to visit me at the house in Ponce. We had been lounging on the veranda’s sofa, when a sixteen-year-old boy who was sitting on the sidewalk in front of the house began to sing me a love ballad. (3)

Quintín se encontraba de visita una tarde en nuestra casa de Ponce. Estábamos sentados en el sofá de mimbre de la terraza, pelando la pava, como todos los novios de entonces, cuando un joven empezó a cantar coplas de amor en la acera de enfrente. (15)

Most of the changes here are quite innocent. Ferré has changed the order of some of the phrases, and she has added and omitted a few details: “sofa” becomes “sofá de mimbre,” and “a sixteen-year-old boy” becomes “un joven.” The words “pelando la pava, como todos los novios de entonces” in the second sentence of the Spanish version are much more conspicuous. Like the phrase “de los palos suelen nacer las astillas” in the previous paragraph, “pelando la pava” is an idiomatic expression that

Ferré added to the Spanish text or excised from the English, depending on the order in which she wrote them. Such idiomatic expressions contribute to the “Spanishness” of *La casa de la laguna*. Something similar occurs when “ancestors” (4) becomes “antepasados extremeños” (16), when “belt” (4) becomes “cinturón de cordobán” (16), and, perhaps, when “a common bully” (4) becomes “un Juan Haldudo cualquiera” (16). The word “extremeños” is an explicit reference to Spain and Spain’s conquest of the Americas, as Extremadura was the source of many of the initial Spanish conquerors and settlers in the New World. The word “cordobán” also contains a reference to Spain, albeit a slightly more oblique one. It literally means “of Cordoba,” and it refers to a kind of leather that was originally made in that city.

The phrase “un Juan Haldudo cualquiera” is an allusion to Cervantes. Juan Haldudo is a character from *Don Quixote* who whips his servant Andrés, and Isabel’s grandmother refers to Quintín as “un Juan Haldudo cualquiera” after he whips the young boy who sings Isabel a love ballad. The allusion to *Don Quixote* could be read as an attempt to inscribe *La casa de la laguna* within the context of Spanish literature. However, we should remember Cervantes’s playful account of *Don Quixote*’s origins. Cervantes tells us that the book was originally written in Arabic by Cide Hamete Benengeli, a fictional Moorish historian created by Cervantes, and then translated into Spanish. Ferré thus playfully alludes to a pseudotranslation in what is, potentially, a “pseudo-original.” The insertion of an allusion to a fictitious translation into a potentially fictitious original gives rise to a peculiar form of self-conscious humor: it is an intertextual joke that depends to a large extent on the reader’s familiarity with the story of the work’s genesis.

The First House on the Lagoon

If, as Ferré has claimed in various interviews, *The House on the Lagoon* was only “partially” original when it first appeared in 1995, then the text’s genesis resembles that of the house which gives the novel its title, since there are actually three houses on the lagoon. The Mendizabals’ residence is razed to the ground and rebuilt two

times during the course of the twentieth century before it is ultimately set on fire and burned to the ground by Quintín and Isabel's rebellious son Manuel in the novel's very last scene. Ironically, the second time the house is rebuilt, it is carefully restored "to its original state" (299) / "a su estado original" (320), the irony being that in its original form the house was not original. This is a fact of which Quintín, who finds the original plans for the house and orders to have the building restored "to its original glory" (298) / "a su antigua gloria" (319), is well aware, even though he seems unable to appreciate the irony of his nostalgic desire to return to its original condition something which was not original to begin with.

The "original" house on the lagoon, we are told in one of the book's early chapters, was built by a Czech architect named Milan Pavel. Although he is not a protagonist in the novel, Pavel is nevertheless a central character and we are given his biography in some detail. The most striking feature of Pavel's buildings is that they are copies. Pavel himself, however, does not see the buildings he designs as copies but rather as "faithful re-creations." Accused of plagiarizing the work of his former employer Frank Lloyd Wright,³⁶ whose so-called Wasmuth Portfolio he once stole, Pavel is apparently "stunned":

Pavel designed a beautiful building, an exact copy of one Wright had built in Chicago. But someone on the committee of parishioners was familiar with Wright's work and accused Pavel of plagiarism. Pavel was stunned; he couldn't understand how anyone could say such a thing. His church would have been a faithful re-creation, stone by stone, of Wright's masterpiece, not a mere copy. (41)

Pavel diseñó un edificio hermoso: una versión exacta de una de las iglesias que Wright le había comisionado construir en Chicago. Pero alguien del comité de la parroquia conocía la obra de Wright, y acusó de

³⁶ Unlike Milan Pavel, Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959) is an actual name from architectural history. He is the most famous proponent of the style of the Prairie School movement of architecture. The Wasmuth Portfolio that Pavel steals is a two-volume folio of 100 lithographs of his work.

plagio a Pavel. Pavel lo miró sorprendido; no podía comprender cómo podía hacer una denuncia semejante. Su iglesia era una recreación fiel, piedra por piedra, de la obra del maestro, y no una vil copia. Era su manera de rendirle el homenaje máximo. (55)

The last sentence of the Spanish version (“Era su manera de rendirle el homenaje máximo”) is absent from the corresponding section in the English version, but Ferré’s “re-creation” of the assumed original passage is otherwise quite “faithful.” Both versions tell us the story of Pavel’s questionable past. It was because of the accusations made against him in Chicago that Pavel moved to Puerto Rico, where he made his fortune by building “beautiful copies” of Wright’s work for the well-to-do people of the island’s capital:

. . . in Puerto Rico he managed to become his hero. He re-created much of Wright’s work with absolute fidelity; he filled San Juan with beautiful copies of the master’s houses, which the islanders hailed as gems of architecture. (42)

En San Juan, reencarnó como su admirado ídolo; llenó la ciudad de recreaciones de las casas, las iglesias y los templos de Wright, que los puertorriqueños celebraron como joyas arquitectónicas originales y auténticas. (56)

The meaning of these two passages, their central message, is more or less the same, and yet there are a number of obvious differences between them. “En San Juan, reencarnó como su admirado ídolo,” for example, is quite different from “in Puerto Rico he managed to become his hero,” and the sentence “He re-created much of Wright’s work with absolute fidelity” is absent from the Spanish version. Moreover, “beautiful copies” becomes “recreaciones,” “the master’s houses” becomes “las casas, las iglesias y los templos de Wright,” and “gems of architecture” becomes “joyas arquitectónicas originales y auténticas.” This last transformation stresses further what I understand to be the central point in the story of Milan Pavel: that his designs were perceived as original and authentic, and that his success owed

everything to this illusion. Clearly, the islanders would not have hailed his buildings as “gems of architecture” if they had been aware of his plagiarism. Pavel’s success was built on deceit. His houses were admired because, as the narrator tells us, “Puerto Rico was isolated enough so very few people there had heard of Frank Lloyd Wright” (42) / “Puerto Rico quedaba lo suficientemente alejado del mundo para que alguien hubiese oído hablar jamás sobre Frank Lloyd Wright” (56). Like the boy in Kant’s little tale, and perhaps like Ferré herself, Pavel was able to play a clever trick on his audience by deliberately concealing the truth from them, that is, by refraining from disclosing to his unsuspecting admirers the origins of his work. Pavel, then, is a forger. His work is not authentic but is presented as authentic with the intention to deceive. Ferré’s insistence on the beauty of his copies seems to suggest that if a work of art has its origin in another, its attractiveness does not diminish for that reason. The story of Milan Pavel reminds us that a masterpiece may become “a mere copy” if the truth of its genesis is revealed. However, the object itself does not change, only our attitude towards it. This is precisely what makes the existence of forgeries so interesting.³⁷ Why must forgeries be considered inferior to originals if nobody can tell the difference? Pavel, we are told, was able to flawlessly reproduce the work of his master Frank Lloyd Wright:

He had a natural ability for design; his architectural drawings were delicate and executed with a precise drafting hand. He had a photographic memory as well, and in time was able to reproduce, line by line, Wright’s unique plans for his buildings. (40)

Pavel tenía una habilidad natural para el diseño; sus dibujos arquitectónicos eran exquisitamente delicados y ejecutados con mano precisa. Tenía también una memoria fotográfica y era capaz de reproducir los planos del maestro línea por línea. (54)

³⁷ For a theoretical discussion of the aesthetic status of forgeries, see the collection of essays *The Forger’s Art: Forgery and the Philosophy of Art* (1983), edited by Denis Dutton.

The differences between these two passages are relatively minor. Both passages emphasize Pavel's ability to make perfect copies of his master's work, copies which he subsequently presents as his own, original works. The suspicion this arouses is that, in a similar way, *The House on the Lagoon* is a work that is not original but is presented as original. However, according to Ferré's testimony at least, *The House on the Lagoon* was much more than a precise rendering of the original draft in Spanish. As we have seen, Ferré has in various interviews described a rather intricate creative process that renders a rigid dichotomy between translation and original virtually impossible. She has also stressed how this process inspired her to expand her novels, which resembles what happens to Pavel when he designs the "original" house on the lagoon with one of Wright's masterpieces as his model: "As he worked on the plans he grew inspired and added many new elements which would make the house more in keeping with life in the tropics" (48). The house thus gradually becomes an independent work: "It was the first time in his life he designed something truly original. He created the house on the lagoon as one would create a poem or a statue, breathing life into its every stone" (49). Interestingly, the passages about how Pavel becomes inspired to add "many new elements" and to create "something truly original" are absent from the Spanish version. However, the last sentence ("He created the house on the lagoon as one would create a poem or a statue, breathing life into its every stone") has been partially taken over by Rebecca, Isabel's mother-in-law, who convinces Pavel to build the first house on the lagoon. In a passage absent from the English version, Rebecca tells Pavel: "Pero no quiero que meramente me construya una casa. Quiero que se la invente de zócalo a techo, como quien escribe un poema o talla una escultura, sacando a la luz el alma de la piedra" (62). Faced with what is often perceived as a largely "mechanical" operation, translating and copying respectively, both Ferré and Pavel are stirred to deviate from the original, thus discreetly blurring the distinction between what is translated or copied and what is original.

Forgers, Imitators, Copyists

The story of Milan Pavel is part of what I have somewhat vaguely termed the novel's thematic interest in originality. A striking feature of *The House on the Lagoon* and *La casa de laguna*, one that nevertheless appears to have gone largely unnoticed by critics, is the abundance of characters who copy or imitate the works or styles of other artists. These characters and their life stories constitute a sort of leitmotif in the novel. In a certain sense, all the characters with artistic aspirations are, like Pavel, "unoriginal." Take Rebecca and the second-rate artists who come to her literary salon. Rebecca, the narrator tells us, writes uninspired poetry in secret. Like her artist friends, she imitates an "out-of-date" Modernismo:

While in Argentina and Peru the rising stars were avant-garde writers such as Vicente Huidobro and César Vallejo, in the backwater of Alamares Lagoon the modernist poets Darío and Herrera y Reissig, who sang the beauties of the bejeweled Art Nouveau world, were still the darlings of the moment. In Europe as well as in Latin America, rhyme and meter were passé and poetry now strove to express the conflicts of modern civilization – the loneliness of the city, the protests of the exploited masses, the loss of religious belief. The world was bursting at the seams, but in Rebecca's literary salon poets still sang of gardens full of roses, ponds skimmed by snow-white swans, and foam-crested waves spilling over the beach like lace-hemmed gowns. (45)

Mientras que en Argentina y Perú los escritores del momento eran los ultraístas, como Vicente Huidobro y César Vallejo, en las aguas rezagadas de la laguna de Alamares los poetas mimados seguían siendo los modernistas Rubén Darío y Herrera y Reissig, amantes de la enojadas bellezas del *art nouveau*. Tanto en Europa como en América Latina la poesía luchaba por expresar los conflictos de la civilización: la aterradora soledad de la ciudad, la protesta por la explotación de las masas, la pérdida de la fe y de la religión. Al terminar la primera guerra

mundial, el mundo se deshacía por las costuras, pero, en nuestra isla, los poetas seguían cantándole al cisne que surca el zafiro límpido del estanque y a la ola que se deshace en encajes sobre la playa. (60)

As in the other passages discussed thus far, there are a number of relatively minor “alterations” here: “the rising stars” becomes “los escritores del momento,” “avant-garde writers” becomes “los ultraístas,” and Rubén Darío is referred to only by his adopted last name in the English version but by his full *nom de plume* in the Spanish. It is perhaps also worth noting that the sentence “rhyme and meter were passé” is absent from the Spanish version, that “in Rebecca’s literary salon” becomes “en nuestra isla,” and that the last sentence of the Spanish version (“los poetas seguían cantándole al cisne que surca el zafiro límpido del estanque y a la ola que se deshace en encajes sobre la playa”) is somewhat different from the corresponding sentence in the assumed original (“poets still sang of gardens full of roses, ponds skimmed by snow-white swans, and foam-crested waves spilling over the beach like lace-hemmed gowns”). The phrase “gardens full of roses,” for example, lacks an equivalent in the Spanish version, but the swan, the emblem of Darío’s poetry, figures prominently in both passages. Although there are a number of differences between them, the meaning of the English and the Spanish version is nevertheless roughly the same. In both versions, Rebecca’s literary salon is described as a gathering of artistically backward poets, of imitators who have failed to keep up-to-date with the latest artistic movements from Europe and Latin America. Rebecca and her friends, the *jeunesse dorée* of San Juan, uncritically incorporate the worn-out topoi of the Modernismo movement into their poetry. In short, these poets lack originality. When they sing of “gardens full of roses” and “ponds skimmed by snow-white swans,” they are imitating Darío, who sings of “los rosales del jardín” (64) in “Canción de otoño en primavera,” of “El olímpico cisne de nieve” (1) in “Blasón,” and of “. . . mi jardín de sueño, / Lleno de rosas y de cisnes vagos” (5-6) in the opening poem of his *Cantos de vida y esperanza* (1905).

Another albeit less obvious example of a “copyist” in *The House on the Lagoon* and *La casa de la laguna* is André Kerenski, the Russian ballet instructor who takes

segments of classic ballets such as *Swan Lake* and *Firebird* and turns them into “an original Kerenski version” (171) / “una versión original suya” (184). In other words, Kerenski is perhaps less of a copyist than a sampler, since he takes bits and pieces of other works and compiles them into a new piece. In a sense, he too confuses the boundary between what is original and what is “borrowed.” Like Pavel, he allows himself a certain amount of artistic license in his handling of the original sources, most notably when he causes a scandal by turning *Firebird* into something quite different from what it was originally:

More than classical ballet, it looked like a mating dance, a splendid rendition of the attraction the female yields over the male. (177)

Más que un ballet clásico, aquello era una danza de apareamiento, una representación espléndida de la atracción que la hembra ejerce sobre el macho. (190)

Kerenski, Pavel, and Rebecca (a sampler, a copyist, and an imitator respectively) also have a parallel in Mauricio Boleslaus, a Czech art dealer who served a ten-year sentence for art forgery in Paris before arriving in Puerto Rico and starting his own gallery. In the English version, it simply says that “[h]e made his living copying Picasso and Modigliani sketches and selling them as authentic works of art to the local galleries” (297). We find a similar-sounding sentence in the Spanish version: “Mauricio se estaba ganando miles de francos copiando los dibujos de Picasso, de Matisse y de Modigliani” (317). However, in *La casa de la laguna* we are given further details about Mauricio’s past life as a forger. We are told that he had studied at l’École des Beaux Arts in Paris, and that although he was “un dibujante prodigioso” (317), he was nevertheless a failed artist. His drawings “estaban llenos de gracia, tenían una delicadeza exquisita,” but “no se le ocurrían temas originales” (317) and that was the root of his artistic failure. He spent long hours in the Louvre trying to find inspiration: “Sólo cuando Mauricio estudiaba los dibujos de los grandes maestros sentía que se inspiraba” (317). The details about Mauricio’s past that are absent from *The House on the Lagoon* tend to emphasize his ability to make his

copies pass as original works of art: “Cuando llevaba su dibujo a las galerías de arte, nadie se daba cuenta de que era una falsificación. Así, los *marchands d’art* le pagaban lo que él pidiera” (317).

With the story of Mauricio Boleslaus, Ferré raises, indirectly (and in a manner reminiscent of the story of Milan Pavel, Mauricio’s compatriot), the problem of the aesthetic status of forgeries. If nobody can tell the difference, why must Mauricio’s forged paintings be considered inferior to the originals? The story of Doña Ermelinda Quiñones, another character in the novel, raises the same question in a slightly different context. Doña Ermelinda is a dressmaker from Ponce, famous for her “lavish bridal gowns and evening dresses” (222). In the Spanish version, her creations are even described as “verdaderas obras de arte” (237). Her dresses gain popularity among the town’s young ladies and debutantes, who praise her for her ability with thread and needle, for her “good taste” and “gifted sense of style” (222). Tongues in Ponce, we are told, also wag about the way her gowns make women “mysteriously seductive” (222). However, Doña Ermelinda’s success, like that of both Pavel and Mauricio, was built on deceit:

. . . from her vantage point, Doña Ermelinda recognized several of her young Ponce customers wearing her latest creations, which she had copied that season from *Vogue*. (224)

Desde su puesto de vigía, doña Ermelinda reconoció a varias de sus clientas de Ponce, vestidas con sus trajes de última moda, los cuales había copiado para ellas esa temporada de los ejemplares más recientes de *Vogue*. (240)

Here Ferré stresses, once again, how something being perceived as beautiful, good, and original is contingent upon the truth about its origins not being revealed. If Doña Ermelinda’s young clients were to realize that the costly dresses they so admired had been copied from *Vogue*, “verdaderas obras de arte” would suddenly become simple knockoffs. Like Pavel and Mauricio, and to a certain extent the ballet teacher Kerenski as well, Doña Ermelinda literally copies the work of others and presents it

as her own. Rebecca, on the other hand, imitates rather than copies. However, she too has a number of parallel characters. Her son Ignacio, Quintín's younger brother, is apparently also an imitator. Like his mother, Ignacio is an artist whose work seems to lack originality:

He was very good at doing watercolors on paper, but he never thought his sketches were beautiful enough. He liked to go walking in Old San Juan at dusk, to paint the ramparts of the city when they are bathed in purple light and seem to melt into the blue of the sea. But if you praised his work he would laugh and dismiss it as of no importance. (270)

Era un buen acuarelista, pero nunca le parecía que sus acuarelas eran lo suficientemente buenos. Le gustaba ir a caminar por el Viejo San Juan y pintar las murallas de la ciudad al atardecer, cuando las baña esa luz malva que se filtra por el horizonte. Pero si alguien alababa su trabajo, se reía y hacía como si no tuviese importancia. (288-289)

The main difference between Rebecca and her son Ignacio, who has a degree in “art appreciation” (269) / “historia del arte” (288), is that the latter *knows* that his work is not particularly innovative or original. His amateur aquarelles of the ramparts in Old San Juan “when they are bathed in purple light and seem to melt into the blue of the sea” are kitsch, postcard-like, and border on parody. It is thus not fake modesty when Ignacio dismisses the importance of his work. It is rather that he is aware of the limits of his talent. A seemingly more talented and original artist in the novel is Willie, the somewhat fragile mulatto boy who is the offspring of Quintín's rape of a servant girl and whom Isabel forces Quintín to recognize as his own and to raise as such. Like Ignacio, Willie studies art. However, his paintings are very different from Ignacio's postcard aesthetics in that they are abstract. Towards the end of the novel, in the book's last italicized section, which serves as a sort of epilogue, Isabel informs us of Willie's artistic success:

A few years later he would become an accomplished artist, and today his work hangs in important galleries all over the country. (380)

Unos años más tarde Willie llegó a ser un pintor reconocido, y sus cuadros se exhiben hoy en las galerías más prestigiosas de Estados Unidos. (402).

All the other artists in the novel are, in some sense of the word, unoriginal. Is Willie the only one who escapes this strange logic, the exception to the rule, so to speak? In the English version, his paintings are simply described as “avant-garde” (332). However, in the Spanish version Ferré elaborates on Willie’s style. His paintings, we are told, “parecían rombos y cubos de colores brillantes flotando en el espacio” (354). In other words, Willie’s paintings are nonrepresentational in a way that seems imitative of, or at least heavily influenced by, cubist art. Ultimately, Willie may not be as original as his success would perhaps indicate.

Regardless of whether Willie is an original artist or not, there is at least one more notorious imitator in the novel: Isabel herself. To understand to what extent Isabel can be considered an imitator, the reception of *The House on the Lagoon* is instructive. Since the novel is presented as Isabel’s work in progress, any critique of the novel is also, in a sense, a critique of the novel within the novel. It is therefore interesting to note that several of the early reviews faulted the book for being excessively derivative of *Cien años de soledad* and *La casa de los espíritus*. In a scathing review published in the *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, Ellen Friedman called it “an attempt at a Puerto Rican *House of the Spirits*” (168). Ilan Stavans wrote in his review in *The Nation*:

Her [Ferré’s] narrative suffers from what I shall call “the Macondo syndrome,” a condition through which writers seem bent on replicating *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Her novel’s resourceful design, its structure, its pathos are derivative of Gabriel García Márquez, to the point of annoyance. Or better, they seem to be modeled after imitations, and imitations of imitations, such as Isabel Allende’s *The House of the Spirits*. (641)

Friedman's and Stavans's observations about *The House on the Lagoon's* debt to García Márquez and Allende are not unwarranted. In fact, the intertextual origins of the novel are rather obvious, which explains the consistency with which the book has been compared to these two authors. "It follows the model of 'national narration' defined by Gabriel García Márquez on the one hand and Isabel Allende on the other" (5), Judith Grossman pointed out in *The Women's Review of Books*. Grossman, whose review was positive overall, also observed that the portrayal of Petra Avilés, an important character in the novel, "seems markedly derivative of Márquez – notably of the figure of the mulatto concubine Petra Cotes in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*" (5). Similarly, Edward Rivera wrote in a highly positive review in the *Washington Post*: "Like Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and Isabel Allende's *The House of the Spirits*, which it sometimes resembles, *The House on the Lagoon* should have a wide appeal" (5). However, in what way does Ferré's text resemble the best-selling novels of the two foremost representatives of the literary style often labeled as "magic realism"? As the most perceptive reviewers pointed out, several characters in *The House on the Lagoon* appear to be more or less directly modeled on literary figures from *Cien años de soledad*, and there are also similarities in terms of the two works' design and structure. Stavans, for example, noted that Buenaventura Mendizabal is "reminiscent of the founder of García Márquez's Buendía dynasty" (641), that Milan Pavel resembles Pietro Crespi, the suicidal Italian music master in *Cien años de soledad*, that Isabel is "a bit of recluse not unlike Rebeca, the Buendías' adopted daughter" (641), and that Petra Avilés, a black maid with "mysterious" powers, is similar to Pilar Ternera, the clairvoyant woman who reads the future with cards for the inhabitants of Macondo. Stavans's list of characters in *The House on the Lagoon* who are modeled on characters from *Cien años de soledad* is long but not exhaustive. There is also Abby, Isabel's paternal grandmother, who sleeps with Orencio Monfort, mistaking him for his twin brother Lorenzo, which resembles what happens to Petra Cotes in *Cien años de soledad*. It would seem, then, that a substantial proportion of the characters in the novel are "copies" of other characters. As Friedman pointed out in her review (168), there is even a girl with a

birthmark who dies when the mark is removed, just like the character in Nathaniel Hawthorne's short story "The Birth-Mark."

Just as *The House on the Lagoon* and *La casa de la laguna* openly "imitate" and "copy" from *Cien años de soledad*, they veritably flaunt their intertextual debt to *La casa de los espíritus*, a novel that has itself been accused of imitating *Cien años de soledad*.³⁸ There are at least three references to *La casa de los espíritus* in Ferré's novel. First, the title echoes that of Allende's debut novel. Second, Ferré's protagonist and narrator, Isabel, has the same first name as Allende. Third, the novel's present is said to be 1982, which happens to be the same year as *La casa de los espíritus* first appeared:

It was only three months ago – on June 15, 1982, to be exact – that I began to write *The House on the Lagoon*. I was tired of playing Penelope, forever postponing my own accomplishment. (330)

Hace sólo tres meses – el 15 de junio de 1982 para ser exacta –, empecé a escribir *La casa de la laguna*. Estaba hastiada del papel de Penélope, siempre relegando mi propios logros. (351)

Like her namesake's *La casa de los espíritus*, the book Isabel Monfort is writing is a multigenerational family saga that uses a house as its geographic and symbolic center, and she is writing this book, her first, in the same year as Allende published her first novel. It is in this sense, then, that Isabel is a "copyist." The numerous references to Allende and García Márquez can be read as Isabel's and, by extension, Ferré's way of acknowledging a literary debt to two important Spanish American authors. However, I believe that the transparent imitativeness of this work can best be understood in the light of other aspects of the novel. By displaying their intertextual origins so openly, *The House on the Lagoon* and *La casa de la laguna* deliberately draw attention to their own lack of originality. The insistent citations of other texts

³⁸ For a discussion of *La casa de los espíritus*'s relationship to *Cien años de soledad*, see Robert Antoni's article "Parody or Piracy" (1988).

serve to destabilize the boundaries between what is original and what is derived. We have already seen how, in various interviews, Ferré calls into question the originality of *The House on the Lagoon* by describing it as only “partially” original. In an oddly self-destructive manner, Quintín’s criticism of Isabel’s manuscript also contributes to doubt being cast over the originality of the novel.

Quintín’s Criticism

An often ignored but curious and fundamental feature of *The House on the Lagoon* and *La casa de la laguna* is that its fiercest critic is found within the novel itself, in the form of Quintín’s comments on Isabel’s work in progress. At first, historical facts are Quintín’s sole concern. His main accusation in the initial stages of the novel is that Isabel is falsifying Puerto Rican history as well as the Mendizabal family history. However, in a later section he decides to shift his focus in order to concentrate on the literary quality of his wife’s manuscript:

He decided the best thing was to create a distance between what he was reading and his own personal feelings, and he would do that by adopting a critical attitude. He would read the manuscript as if he were a conscientious literary critic; after all, literature, like history, had to be well written. Style was enormously important. (107)

Decidió que la mejor manera de leer aquello era establecer una distancia con el texto, adoptar una actitud valorativa. Leería el manuscrito como si fuese un crítico literario; después de todo la literatura, como la historia, tenía que estar bien escrita. El estilo era enormemente importante, así como el hábil uso de los recursos literarios. (122)

These two passages are closely matched. The only significant difference is that the last clause of the last sentence in the Spanish version (“así como el hábil uso de los recursos literarios”) is absent from the assumed original. Both versions announce

Quintín's intention to adopt "a critical attitude." Quintín's criticism of Isabel's novel is not groundless or even particularly unfair. He balances the novel's virtues against its vices, gauging its originality and how well written it is, much as "a conscientious literary critic" would do. Echoing the jargon of book reviewers, he notes that the text has "its good points" (108) / "sus buenos puntos" (122), and then he goes on to express his dislike of the novel:

. . . melodramatic phrases like "When I met Quintín, my heart was thrown into turmoil; I lived at the very center of desire" made him laugh aloud, they were in such bad taste. (108)

Frases melodramáticas como "Al conocer a Quintín, mi corazón cayó en un torbellino irresistible, que me arrastró al fondo de mí misma," arruinaban la armonía del todo. Eran jibarerías de mal gusto. (122)

There is an interesting difference between these two passages, in that "made him laugh aloud" becomes "arruinaban la armonía del todo." While the English version stresses the comic effect Isabel's "melodramatic phrases" have on Quintín, the Spanish version emphasizes how these phrases destroy the "harmony" of the text as a whole. The central point, however, remains the same, namely that there are phrases in Isabel's manuscript that are "in such bad taste." In the Spanish version, Ferré employs the unmistakably Puerto Rican word "jibarerías" to convey the same point.³⁹ Although Quintín is in many ways an unsympathetic character,⁴⁰ there is, nevertheless, validity in his criticism. There are actually numerous "melodramatic

³⁹ Like all words with a broad cultural meaning, "jibarerías" is difficult to translate. Derived from "jíbaro," a term commonly used in Puerto Rico to refer to mountain-dwelling peasants, it connotes "provincialism" and "lack of sophistication."

⁴⁰ Ferré once told an interviewer that Quintín is "less unpleasant, nicer and more human" in English, whereas in Spanish he is "a scoundrel who is not worthy of forgiveness" ("Bilingual Author Finds Something Gained in Translation" 2). However, Ferré could not explain why, noting only that the two languages "resonate" differently and that Spanish-speaking Quintín "may reflect machismo in Puerto Rican society" (2).

phrases” in the novel, phrases that are “in such bad taste,” to use Quintín’s words. Consider, for instance, the following excerpts:

Gently they drifted toward each other, Manuel floating on his back, with his arms and legs spread apart, and suddenly his penis rose up like a sail. Coral, for her part, was the bay where Manuel’s ship would come to berth. (344)

Suavemente, se fueron acercando el uno al otro. Manuel, que flotaba de espaldas, con los brazos y las piernas abiertas, de pronto se volvió todo proa, todo verga erguida y compacta en dirección al sexo de Coral. Coral sintió que se transformaba en un arrecife de fuego; su cuerpo era la ensenada en donde atracaría la proa de Manuel. (365)

The Spanish version of this passage is somewhat different from the English, but at the same time it sounds no less clichéd: “se volvió todo proa, todo verga erguida y compacta en dirección al sexo de Coral” is just as tawdry as “his penis rose up like a sail,” and the sentence “Coral sintió que se transformaba en un arrecife de fuego,” which is absent from the English version, hardly makes the passage any better. The central sexual metaphor, which is what makes this passage so terribly clichéd, is the same in both versions: Coral is “the bay” (*la ensenada*) where Manuel’s “ship” (*proa*) comes “to berth” (*atracar*). Any “conscientious literary critic” would presumably characterize this erotic metaphor as being of poor taste. The tawdriness of the passage in question derives from the fact that this metaphor utterly lacks originality. It sounds like something from a second-rate romantic novel and not from a serious work of fiction by a respected intellectual and feminist who has been described as “Puerto Rico’s leading woman of letters” (Erro-Peralta 176). This impression is strengthened by the profoundly melodramatic exchange of words that follows the depiction of Coral and Manuel’s sexual intercourse:

“Death must be like this, my darling,” Coral whispered. “You’re wrong, my love,” Manuel replied. “This is what our life will be like from now on.” (344)

–Así debe ser la muerte, mi amor –le susurró Coral cuando se encontraron.

–Te equivocas –le contestó Manuel–. Así será nuestra vida juntos. (365)

Quintín's criticism of his wife's manuscript is valid and "fact-based" because of the relative abundance of passages such as this one. In other words, Quintín points to something important when he notes that there are "melodramatic phrases" in the novel. At one point, he even states that one of Isabel's chapters is "as maudlin and juvenile as a Corín Tellado romance" (109), which in the Spanish version becomes: "Parecía un capítulo escrito por Corín Tellado, de tan empalagoso y pueril" (124). Corín Tellado, who published more than 4,000 romantic novels and sold more than 400 million books, is the epitome of poor, oversentimental writing in the hispanophone world. To be compared to her is an affront to any serious author. It implies that the author lacks originality and sophistication. By implication, several of Quintín's critical comments point to the lack of originality in Isabel's novel. His use of adjectives such as "melodramatic," "maudlin," and "juvenile" to describe her work, together with the reference to Corín Tellado, makes this clear.

Overall, Quintín's assessment of his wife's manuscript is extremely negative. Although he often sounds thoughtless and bigoted, such as when he calls feminism "the curse of the twentieth century" (108) / "la maldición del siglo XX" (122), his critical assessment of the novel's literary quality is by no means unwarranted. What does this curious form of "self-criticism" mean? First and foremost, it tells us that we are dealing with an eminently self-conscious work that somehow foreshadows the very serious criticism that would later be leveled against it in various newspapers, academic journals, and books. In an article from 1997, for example, Lola Aponte Ramos states that, in *The House on the Lagoon*, "se siente el tanteo tembloroso y escolar de quien redacta en una lengua que no le es dúctil" (35). To dismiss *The House on the Lagoon* by claiming that it is of poor quality, as Aponte Ramos in effect does, always comes close to reiterating a view already expressed by Quintín, the ostensible "villain" or antihero in this novel. The novel is, as a narrative whole, self-

destructive. It criticizes itself from within, pointing out not only its “mistakes,” but also its aesthetic shortcomings and its lack of “originality.” In a passage absent from the Spanish version, Quintín also anticipates the debate about Ferré’s reasons for writing the novel “originally” in English:

Would she have written her manuscript in English if she didn’t think English was important? If she had written her novel in Spanish and published it in Puerto Rico, why, only a handful of people would read it! But if she published in the United States, thousands would read it.
(151)

Quintín speculates that Isabel is writing in English in order to reach a wider audience in the United States, which echoes the accusations that were made against Ferré in the aftermath of her switch to English. As noted earlier, *The House on the Lagoon* was published before *La casa de la laguna*. Ostensibly, Ferré had adopted English as her language of original composition. This caused a protracted controversy, particularly among the pro-independence Puerto Rican intelligentsia. Doris Sommer pointed to the ideological nature of this debate when she noted, in 2003, that Ferré’s writing “pulls elsewhere now, in an English that can offend patriotic ears” (Introduction 15). The following comment by critic and writer Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert illustrates the ire and disbelief many Puerto Rican intellectuals felt when Ferré decided to compose her first novel in English:

From my pro-independence nationalist (i.e., Puerto Rican) vantage point (which for my generation has meant a valoration of Spanish, or its Puerto Rican variant, as the unyielding rampart of cultural defense), the choice [i.e, Ferré’s choice to write and publish *The House on the Lagoon* in English] loomed like an unthinkable heresy. I have calmed down considerably since then and am ready to discuss her decision as a most regrettable error of judgment, a seduction, a responding to the siren song of a multicultural, postcolonial book market. . . . (162)

As the quote from Paravisini-Gebert indicates, the question of language choice in Puerto Rico is far from ideologically neutral. A large part of the island's intellectual sector considers it a matter of treason to write in English because of Puerto Rico's colonial relationship with the United States. This is important to keep in mind if we wish to understand the provocative force of *The House on the Lagoon*. However, it was not only patriotically inclined Puerto Ricans who condemned Ferré's switch to English. Donald Shaw, for example, ended the chapter on Ferré in his book *The Post-Boom in Spanish American Fiction* (1998) with a laconic but highly suggestive remark: "If, as seems to be the case, she has in middle life taken to writing in English, one may be forgiven for contemplating this development with regret" (137). There is an ill-disguised allegation in this remark that Ferré has "betrayed" her native tongue because of the temptations of reaching a wider English-speaking market.

A Déjà Vu Experience

The question Barak poses in her study of *The House on the Lagoon* is an important and highly appropriate one: "How does one *read* the work of a writer who writes in Spanish, translates her own work into English, and then writes in English, and translates her own work into Spanish?" (31). Like most critics, Barak reads Ferré in only one language, but Barak was, I believe, the first to indicate the interpretative implications of Ferré's bilingual activity. Ferré's practice of producing two versions of her works is something no one interested in Ferré can disregard. Not that I wish to suggest that one cannot read *The House on the Lagoon* and *La casa de la laguna* independently. Both versions remain autonomous. Each makes perfect sense on its own. However, a kind of play or dialogue surfaces "between" the two versions of the novel. As I have tried to show in this chapter, Ferré has made "corrections" and alterations that invoke an "unhomely reader."

The unhomely reader's experience of this novel can perhaps be compared to a déjà vu experience. Most of the critics who reviewed *The House on the Lagoon* pointed out, as we have seen, that the book resembled something they had read before. Its style

and language, its characters, its structure, its pathos, its principal themes – it all echoes the work of García Márquez and Allende, according to the reviewers. This slight sense of déjà vu is curiously intensified for the unhomely reader. If one is already familiar with *The House on the Lagoon* when one reads *La casa de la laguna* for the first time, or vice versa, then one begins already knowing it. The first time is actually the second. To read one version after one has read the other has a very peculiar aesthetic effect: not the feeling of repetition but of reading something for the second time, suspecting that it is not quite the same text yet not knowing exactly what has been modified. This feeling of not knowing what has been altered may result in an impulse to compare the two versions.

Ferré's work in English is widely considered to be inferior to her Spanish-language production. However, a comparison of *The House on the Lagoon* and *La casa de la laguna* does not, in my opinion, allow one to conclude that one version is better or worse than the other. In fact, it would be more accurate to say that both versions are equally "bad." There are, as I have tried to show, a number of clichés in both the Spanish and the English version. Lyn Di Iorio Sandín has pointed out that "the bad writing, when it happens in this novel, in some sense can be attributed to Isabel, the fledgling novelist" (53). I think it can more appropriately be attributed to what I have called the novel's thematic interest in originality. Clichés are phrases that are overused and betray a lack of original thought, and it seems proper that a novel that is persistently calling into question its own originality should open itself up to accusations of being unoriginal by intentionally employing clichéd language. If Ferré believes, as she states in her essay "On Destiny, Language, and Translation," that "in translating one's own work it is only by betraying that one can better the original" (162), she achieves this goal in *The House on the Lagoon* and *La casa de la laguna* only insofar as different is always better.

It may very well be that Ferré's originality resides in the way she calls the originality of her originals into question. She does this by producing two imperfectly matched versions of her works, "among which the reader can find no clear sense of the definitive or authoritative" (17), to borrow a phrase Sinéad Mooney uses to describe

the situation that faces Beckett's readers. Like Beckett, Ferré consistently refuses to give priority to one version over another. This refusal, to borrow another phrase from Mooney, "renders the idea of the outlines of any individual work oddly porous" (17). It disturbs the notion that there is always a single, unique, and identifiable original text. Can there be *two* original texts (in two different languages) that are too similar to be considered separate works and yet too different for each to be substitutable for the other, both of which are signed and written by the author herself? One can always argue that *The House on the Lagoon* and *La casa de la laguna* are re-writings or variants of an original manuscript no longer extant. However, my point is that Ferré deliberately confuses the traditional hierarchical relationship that gives priority, in both the temporal and the qualitative sense of the word, to originals over translations. If she wrote the novel the way she claims she did (that is, by translating it twice: once from an original Spanish draft into English and then from its augmented English version back into Spanish), then the book's genesis renders a rigid dichotomy between translation and original virtually impossible, and to say that one version is either more or less original than the other would make for a tenuous argument at best. In this chapter, I have maintained that any given passage in the two versions can be either translated or original, and that any element that appears in one version but not in the other can be either an addition or an omission. The result is that the ordinary concept of translation becomes problematic. It is as if Ferré does not want us to be able to dismiss either version complacently as "a mere translation" while elevating the other as art. In *The House on the Lagoon* and *La casa de la laguna*, Ferré has cleverly anticipated any debate over which version is the "best" or the "most original" by openly imitating and "copying" from García Márquez and Allende, by making unoriginal artists a leitmotif in the novel, by intentionally employing clichéd language, and by letting Quintín criticize the novel's use of such language.

Chapter Four

Rosario Ferré's Bilingual Poetry

. . . the task of the translator, *confined to the duel of languages* . . .

Jacques Derrida

Ferré, whose work as a bilingual novelist was the subject of the previous chapter, is also a bilingual poet. This chapter examines her bilingual collection of poems *Language Duel / Duelo del lenguaje* (2002),⁴¹ a work which has been eclipsed by Ferré's novels, short stories, essays, and, to a certain extent, also by her two previous collections of poems, *Fábulas de la garza desangrada* (1982) and *Las dos Venecias* (1992). A search in the MLA International Bibliography fails to reveal a single article, essay, or book chapter devoted to *Language Duel*, which is symptomatic of the almost complete lack of scholarly interest in this book. This is somewhat surprising since the literature on Ferré has grown quite extensive over the years. Ferré is, as Julio Ortega has noted, "el autor puertorriqueño más estudiado y comentado en Estados Unidos" (11), and yet there does not exist a single in-depth study of *Language Duel*. My aim here is not to concentrate on the original Spanish poems. Nor is it my intention to gauge the quality of the English translations. What interests me is the counterpoint created by the presentation of the texts in a bilingual format, which I think is crucial to understanding what this work *does*, its potential to affect readers, and thus also its literary appeal. Indeed, the basic thesis of this chapter is that *Language Duel* must be understood not as a collection of poems where the translations serve a marginal function, as a kind of gloss on the original texts, but as a

⁴¹ For the sake of brevity, I will use the English-language title (*Language Duel*) to refer to the work as a whole, and I will routinely use only the English titles of the poems I have chosen to examine.

genuinely dual work where the arrangement of the parallel texts is a means to attain determinate effects and to elicit certain kinds of attention.

Translations on the Left, Originals on the Right

Language Duel consists of thirty-one poems, all of them with an English and a Spanish version facing each other on alternate pages, almost as two opponents face each other in a duel. The two versions compete, so to speak, for the reader's attention; they are "dueling" poems. The book also contains a selection of poems from *Fábulas de la garza desagrada* and *Las dos Venecias*, but these appear in appendices with separate title pages and will not be discussed in this chapter (or, for that matter, in this dissertation). Many of the English translations of these poems, which are presented in a bilingual format for the first time in *Language Duel*, have been produced in collaboration with Alan West, a critic and translator who has also published his own bilingual collection of poems, a book entitled *Dar nombres a la lluvia / Finding Voices in the Rain* (1995). The title pages of the two appendices to *Language Duel* identify West as the co-translator of the poems from Ferré's two previous poetic works, and Ferré expresses her gratitude to West in the acknowledgements at the beginning of the book. By contrast, no co-translator is named on the title page of *Language Duel* itself, where the following words are printed: "Translated from the Spanish by Rosario Ferré." This is an apparently innocent little piece of factual information. It unambiguously informs the reader of which version came first and hence of which version should be given priority, in accordance with the academic norm that dictates that poetry, often viewed as the most untranslatable literary genre, should always be studied in the original language. However, it is interesting to note that the original Spanish poems are printed on the right-hand page of the book while the translations appear on the left-hand page, contrary to the norm for bilingual editions. When an original text is printed in parallel with a translation, the original is usually printed on the verso. The way the page design of *Language Duel* violates this standard is hardly haphazard. Page design is often a critical component to a poem, but

here it takes on a special function. It serves as a counterbalance to the authority bestowed upon the Spanish versions by the title page. Since most Western languages read from left to right, in *Language Duel* the originals come after the translations, thus reversing, one might say, the very hierarchy postulated by the distinction between the original Spanish poems and the English translations.

Language Duel has the merit of posing within a single volume the questions posed by the existence of Ferré's bilingual *oeuvre* as a whole. The juxtaposition of the Spanish and the English versions foregrounds the whole issue of textual priority. It disturbs lazy reading habits and invites the reader to reflect on his or her reasons for giving priority to one particular version of a text. The privileged place of English, on the first page, facing a Spanish original relegated to a secondary position, is a continuation of Ferré's controversial habit of publishing the English version of her novels before the Spanish version. However, *Language Duel* also marks the end of Ferré's career as a self-translator and bilingual writer. In March 2005, at a conference devoted to her work, Ferré announced that she had abandoned the English language altogether (qtd. in Ortega 12), and the fact that all of her subsequent books have only appeared in Spanish proves that she has remained faithful to this decision. In retrospect, *Language Duel* thus appears to be Ferré's farewell to the language in which she had worked regularly since the publication of *Sweet Diamond Dust* in 1988. Interestingly, in *Language Duel* we also find Ferré's only attempt to translate her own poetry. Perhaps the experience taught her that T.S. Eliot was right when he contended that "I don't think that one can be a bilingual poet" (99). At any rate, Ferré's decision to stop writing in two languages must have come as a surprise to anyone who had read the defiant assertion she had made just a few years earlier in one of the essays collected in *A la sombra de tu nombre* (2001): "Soy una ciudadana del Nuevo Mundo – de América del Norte y de América del Sur – y seguiré escribiendo en español y en inglés aunque sobre mi cabeza se crucen las espadas" (179).

Language Duel is, to date, the only book by Ferré to have been published in a bilingual edition. It is also the only book she appears to have written with a bilingual

reader in mind. Both the English and the Spanish poems can be read independently and still make sense, but the work as a whole can only be appreciated by someone who is able to read all the pages of the book. The English translations (named as such by the title page) are not always “faithful” renderings of the original. The two versions are often imperfectly matched. As we saw in the previous chapter, this is also the case with Ferré’s novels. In *Language Duel*, the Spanish poems tend to be slightly longer than their English-language counterparts, but sometimes it is the other way around, and fluency in both languages is not always required to perceive the lack of symmetry. Occasionally it is in fact impossible to avoid seeing the lack of correspondence, and nowhere is this more conspicuous than in the longest poem in the collection, “Coming Up the Archipelago.” An entire page has been left blank in the English version of this poem, and the sheer emptiness of all that white space contrasts sharply with the ten lines in Spanish on the opposite page.

The Function of the Bilingual Format

Many of the poems in *Language Duel* deal with language-related topics such as the feud between English and Spanish in the U.S. and Puerto Rico (“Language Duel”), differences between English and Spanish (“Language Current”), the history of the Spanish language (“Coming Up the Archipelago”), Spanish as a source of both ethnic solidarity and social stigma in the U.S. (“Spanish at the Ritz”), the connotative power of words (“A *Beso* Is Not a Kiss”), and the dangers of the ideology of monolingualism (“Tongue Less”). However, *Language Duel* is also “about” language in another, much more fundamental way. It invites, by means of its *mise-en-page*, a reflection on the differences and similarities between the English and the Spanish versions. Much of the pleasure of reading *Language Duel* lies in finding out what the other version says, if it says something completely different or if it says more or less the same thing but in a different language, and in wondering why it sometimes differs quite significantly and at other times less so. Whichever version the reader decides to concentrate on, his or her gaze will almost inevitably slide across the page, eager to

discover the wording of the other version or to see how Ferré has chosen to recreate her poem in another language. Curiosity, in short, fuels the reading. The act of comparing the two texts is, in my view, more important and more interesting than what either version says independently. If *Language Duel* is in some way worth thinking about, it is largely due to its bilingual format.

The vital role that the bilingual format plays in *Language Duel* illustrates one of the central points Ralph Sarkonak and Richard Hodgson make in their preface to a special issue of the journal *Visible Language*, which appeared in 1993. Subtitled “Writing . . . in Stereo: Bilingualism in the Text,” this issue explores the practice of bilingual writing in a wide variety of texts. Sarkonak and Hodgson introduce the volume by stating:

Producing and reading a bilingual text, much like creating and viewing a stereoscopic image, involve a much more complex process of perception and decoding than do the writing and deciphering of a monolingual one. Working with bilingual texts creates both special problems and unique opportunities for the writer, the graphic designer, the reader and for those of us who are fascinated by visible language in all its forms. (7)

In what follows, I will concentrate on the “special problems and unique opportunities” that *Language Duel* creates for the *reader*. As Sarkonak and Hodgson point out, “bilingual writing makes the reader work harder than monolingual writing” (26). Sarkonak and Hodgson understand bilingual texts as “those texts, whether literary or not, whether as long as a novel or as short and succinct as a company logo, which in various ways and forms make use of two or more different languages” (9). *Language Duel* certainly fits into this broad category. Indeed, Sarkonak and Hodgson’s description of what they call the “stereographic effect” draws a very accurate picture of how the bilingual format of *Language Duel* affects the reader:

The bilingual textual space allows, even obliges, the reader/spectator/viewer decoding a message encoded at one and the same time in more than one language to pass from one language to another, to compare their similarities or their differences and their fundamentally complementary nature. (9)

It is my contention that the English and the Spanish versions in *Language Duel* are complementary, that they combine, interact, and contrast with each other linguistically and aesthetically. In short, I will argue that the presence of the two languages has a significant aesthetic function. It is important to keep in mind that, in *Language Duel*, to read always means to read with or against or besides another text. We are dealing with two linguistic codes that have been placed next to each other within the confines of a single textual space.

The importance of the bilingual format may explain why *Language Duel* has received scant critical attention.⁴² Monolingual readings can easily dismiss it as an inferior work. Miguel Ángel Fornerín, who devotes less than a page to *Language Duel* in an essay on Ferré, argues that the book is not “una obra de valores estéticos” (30). Fornerín’s assessment of the aesthetic value of *Language Duel* purports to be an assessment of the work as a whole, but he only discusses and quotes from the Spanish versions of the poems. Similarly, Luz María Umpierre published a scathing review of *Language Duel* in which she states that she concentrates on the original Spanish poems “since an old professor of mine taught me many moons ago that ‘traduttore, traditore’” (126). By contrast, Joaquín Badajoz wrote a very enthusiastic review in which he takes both versions of the poems into account and praises them as “textos de gran valor ético y literario” (n. pag.). Badajoz points out that “los textos de *Duelo del lenguaje* no son traducciones estrictas,” and argues that almost all the poems in

⁴² *Language Duel* was not widely reviewed when it first appeared. In fact, I only know the two reviews I discuss in this chapter. As noted above, no in-depth study of the collection appears to exist. I am familiar with the fact that at a conference devoted to Ferré’s work (Rosario Ferré: Lenguajes, Sujetos, Mundos), which took place in March 2005 (the same conference where Ferré announced that she had abandoned the English language), three of the papers delivered dealt with *Language Duel*. However, these conference papers have not been published.

the collection are “un extraordinario divertimento” (n. pag.). The divergence of opinion among the few critics who have commented on *Language Duel* points to something important, namely that the act of comparing the two versions of the poems is essential to appreciation of the work.

“Language Duel”

In the essay quoted above, Fornerín notes that *Language Duel* is an odd book within Ferré’s literary production, because it marks “un retorno a una poesía anecdótica y es una renuncia a la poesía culturalista que hace la autora en *Fábulas de la garza desangrada* y en *Las dos Venecias*” (30). This is an accurate observation. *Language Duel* does not, for example, contain as many references to mythical, biblical, and literary figures as one finds in *Fábulas de la garza desangrada*. The poems of *Fábulas de la garza desangrada* rewrite the stories of figures such as Ariadne and Antigone, whereas many of the poems in *Language Duel* depict smaller narrative incidents, such as when the expletive “¡Coño!” elicits “a conspiratory smile” (12) / “una sonrisa cómplice” (10) from the elevator boy in “Spanish at the Ritz,” or when the poetic speaker describes a visit to the Museo Arqueológico Nacional de Madrid in “La Dama de Elche.” According to Fornerín, the shift away from a literature that abounds in cultural and literary references and towards a more anecdotal poetry constitutes a regrettable development in Ferré’s work. Fornerín is particularly critical of the title poem in *Language Duel*, which he simply describes as “malo” (30). This poem, the first in the collection, deals with the long-term feud between English and Spanish, and it begins by asking:

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Why is it that | ¿Por qué será |
| in the year of our Lord 2001 | que en el año 2001 |
| Americans have such a difficult time | a los americanos se les hace tan difícil |
| learning Spanish? | aprender a hablar el español? |
| (1-4) | (1-4) |

One might say that this is a poem which takes a certain ideological position. It is a poem that expresses approval or preference for bilingualism. The title, “Language Duel,” alludes to the language debate in the United States and in Puerto Rico. English and Spanish, we are told, have been “at war” (15) / “en guerra” (17) for centuries, and they are “. . . still feuding in Florida, / Puerto Rico, / and California” (20-22) / “Todavía están guerreando en la Florida, / en Puerto Rico, / y en California” (22-24). The accusatory tone of the opening question seems to imply that contemporary Americans should be more motivated to learn Spanish. To remain monolingual is ostensibly to fail to take advantage of “the double perspective” to which the lyric speaker refers towards the end of the poem:

| | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Not to take advantage | No aprovechar la doble perspectiva, |
| of the double perspective | correr a toda marcha por los rieles |
| and run full speed ahead | paralelos de ambos mundos |
| down parallel rails | me parece una verdadera lástima. |
| seems a pity. | Pero no hay nada que hacer. |
| But there’s nothing to be done. | Dos jueyes machos no caben |
| Two male crabs | dentro de una misma cueva. |
| can’t root in the same lair. | (31-37) |
| (31-38) | |

Unlike many of the other translations in *Language Duel*, the English version of this particular poem is a very “faithful” rendering of the Spanish. The line breaks are sometimes different, but the two versions match each other in terms of length and content. There are no lines in either version that lack a corresponding line in the other. The translation is not, however, a literal one. As we saw in the previous chapter, Ferré tends to avoid word-for-word rendering. In “Language Duel,” there is, as we shall see, an interesting exception to this, but generally Ferré translates the Spanish text into standard, idiomatic English. She employs straightforward, ordinary prose syntax and enjambed free verse in both versions. Fornerín argues that the title poem is not poetry but ideology disguised as poetry:

El primer poema que le da título al libro es malo. La autora no hace más que ideología a partir de una pregunta fútil: ¿por qué los estadounidenses no aprenden español? Dentro de la ideología que no llega a anclar en el lenguaje poético Rosario termina con un refrán popular: “dos jueyes machos no caben / dentro de una misma cueva.” El sentido machista nada tiene que ver con el supuesto pleito de las dos lenguas. . . . La autora trata de hacer poesía a partir de ideologías. Pero no hace poesía. . . . Este libro muestra la pérdida de la poeta que nos presentó en *Fábulas* y en *Las dos Venecias*. (30)

According to Fornerín, the language Ferré uses is not “poetic.” If, by “poetic” language, he means the opposite of ordinary, everyday language, this is not an unreasonable claim. Even as an expression of taste implying that the language in this poem is not “beautiful,” this is presumably something with which most readers would not disagree. What a monolingual reading such as Fornerín’s ignores, however, is that the bilingual format of the poem can be understood as a stylistic device or literary technique that makes the language draw attention to itself. Using Victor Shklovsky’s terms, one might say that the bilingual format is a way of increasing “the difficulty and length of perception” (12). The more different the two versions are from each other, the further the process of perception is prolonged. However, even in a poem such as “Language Duel,” where the translation sticks very closely to the original,

there are instances in which textual differences work as a stimulus to reflect on how language is used, the choice of words, or how something is rendered into another language. Consider, for example, the following translation: “In fact, I swear / that as I talk to you / in English / about my right to speak / in Spanish, / I can hear the guns boom / and see the cannon balls roar / over my head” (23-30). This is not a “proper” translation of “De hecho, yo les juro / que mientras discuto en español / sobre mi derecho a hablar inglés, / escucho rugir los cañones / y veo las bombas / salir volando sobre mi cabeza” (25-30). In a sense, the translation says the opposite of what the original says. The speech act “I swear” commits the poetic speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition, and to swear *in English* that “as I talk to you / in Spanish / about my right to speak / in English,” which would have been a more accurate translation of the original, would render the proposition false. By implication, only an unfaithful translation can be faithful to what the poetic speaker wants to say. The translation must change and rearrange the semantic content of the original in order for the proposition to remain true.

The most thought-provoking part of “Language Duel” is arguably its last two lines: “Dos jueyes machos no caben / dentro de una misma cueva.” As Fornerín notes in the quote above, this is a proverbial phrase with obvious connotations of machismo. In her scornful review of *Language Duel*, Umpierre points out that the image of no cohabitation of “two male crabs” in the same “cave” has “heterosexual connotations” (127). However, Umpierre’s suggestion that Ferré’s metaphor of the dueling crabs “may imply a heteronormative assumption about the nature of males” (127) sounds a bit far-fetched. The crab metaphor seems simply to refer to the long-term feud between English and Spanish (and, perhaps, to the linguistic “duel” staged by Ferré in *Language Duel*). In Puerto Rico, if someone says, for example, that two persons are “como dos jueyes machos en la misma cueva,” it implies that they are always fighting or arguing. By implication, then, English and Spanish cannot coexist peacefully. However, as the poem clearly demonstrates, rendering idioms literally often makes no sense whatsoever. When “Dos jueyes machos no caben / dentro de una misma cueva” is translated into “Two male crabs / can’t root in the same lair,” either the meaning is changed or simply lost. Although Ferré changes “cabén” into “root” and

“cueva” into “lair,” the translation is nevertheless a fairly literal one. Why did Ferré translate the phrase so literally? The metaphor of the dueling crabs sounds strange and unfamiliar in English, whereas in Puerto Rican Spanish “Dos jueyes machos no caben / dentro de una misma cueva” is a perfectly comprehensible phrase and a part of everyday language.⁴³ Ferré’s literal translation of a familiar idiom may therefore be more fruitfully understood as an experiment in estrangement rather than as an inadequate translation. That the meaning and importance of these lines hinges on the defamiliarizing effect of the non-idiomatic translation can perhaps also be deduced from the fact that Ferré’s most recent collection of poems, *Fisuras* (2006), contains a revised Spanish-only version of this poem, in which the word “jueyes” has been changed into “reyes”: “Dos reyes machos no caben / dentro de una misma cueva” (35-36). The metaphor of the dueling male crabs has thus been replaced by a metaphor of dueling “male kings,” a curious pleonasm whose main function is ostensibly to compensate for the loss of the contrasting effect with which the bilingual format provides the poem in *Language Duel*.

Judging from Umpierre’s and Fornerín’s responses to “Language Duel,” the crab metaphor is an image that attracts the attention of the reader, perhaps because as a popular saying with connotations of machismo it seems somewhat out of place in a poem, especially in a poem by a leading feminist writer whose work often focuses on the role of women in a patriarchal society. The metaphor is something most readers will pause to reflect on. If the reader is not acquainted with Puerto Rican Spanish, he or she will most likely not be familiar with the word “juey,” much less its use in proverbial phrases. The last two lines of the poem will therefore sound even more peculiar to such a reader, and he or she will presumably consult the English version (assuming, of course, that he or she reads English) in order to make sense of those lines, but only to find a rather literal translation that sheds little or no light on the source text. The realization, whether as a result of consulting the proper sources or of

⁴³ “Dos jueyes” is also the title of a song from the early 1980s by Nuyorican salsa musician Willie Colón and Cuban American salsa performer Celia Cruz.

some prior acquaintance with the phrase, that “Dos jueyes machos no caben / dentro de una misma cueva” is a Puerto Rican saying whose figurative meaning is lost in the English rendering, prompts the reader to slow down and think about why Ferré chose to translate the phrase so literally and why she chose the metaphor to begin with. In other words, a comparative reading of the English and the Spanish version extends the duration of the reflection provoked by the poem.

Another puzzling phrase in the final lines of “Language Duel” is “los rieles / paralelos de ambos mundos,” which in the English version is pruned into “parallel rails.” The “double perspective” mentioned in the preceding line seems to suggest that bilingualism is intellectually advantageous, that it provides one with an added perspective. Not to take advantage of the added perspective “seems a pity,” the speaker says. The phrase “parallel rails” is more enigmatic, and not to “run full speed ahead / down parallel rails” is also part of what “seems a pity.” As a result of the book’s bilingual format, the poems in *Language Duel* echo the shape of parallel rails. Could, then, the rail metaphor be understood as a metaphor for reading the two versions in parallel? Is that what to take advantage of “the double perspective” means? Perhaps this is where *Language Duel* most clearly displays awareness of itself as bilingual poetry. “But there’s nothing to be done. / Two male crabs / can’t root in the same lair,” the speaker pessimistically and enigmatically concludes. There are few direct expressions of feeling in this poem, but it ends with this expression of despair, which, significantly, contains an allusion to Beckett, the most famous of all bilingual writers.⁴⁴ “Nothing to be done” (9) is the opening line of *Waiting for Godot*, Beckett’s own translation of *En attendant Godot*, and the line is repeated at intervals during the play. By quoting from Beckett, *Language Duel* implicitly aligns itself with a complex poetics of self-translation where, as Sinéad Mooney argues, “it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish consistently between original and translation” (9). *Language Duel*, so conscious of its page design, of its shape as “parallel rails,” also

⁴⁴ When asked about Beckett in an interview, Ferré’s laconic reply was: “Sí, como todos sabemos, Beckett se traducía muy bien” (“Entrevista a Rosario Ferré” 244).

blurs the boundaries between original and translation. However, the despair the speaker expresses at the end of the title poem seems to imply that she knows that there can only be one original. There is “nothing to be done” about it. By definition, there can only be one original text. If you place an original poem next to a translation signed by the author herself, which bestows upon the translation some of the same authority enjoyed by the original, there will almost inevitably be a “duel,” a fight for textual priority, as when two male crabs clash together in a fight for supremacy over the same lair. The image of the rivaling crabs can thus be understood as alluding to the predictable fate of a bilingual collection of poems. There will be a winner and a loser, and the translation will most likely lose that duel because it has the weight of tradition working ceaselessly and powerfully against it.

“Language Current”

Rather than a collection of poems of immense beauty, or poems that excite intense feelings, *Language Duel* is first and foremost a work that makes us think. That is arguably its most admirable quality, and a bilingual reading yields more reflection than a monolingual one. If we compare the English and the Spanish versions of the poems, we notice that they tend to exhibit the same characteristics, such as enjambed free verse and prose syntax, but that they do not always say the same thing or express the same ideas. In many instances, the differences between the parallel texts are much greater than what we saw in the case of “Language Duel.” Consider, for example, “Language Current,” the second poem in the collection. This is ostensibly a poem about differences between English and Spanish. It is divided into two irregular stanzas, the first of which seeks to describe the English language:

English is like a nuclear reactor.

I'm in it right now.

As I shoot down its fast track

small bits of skin, fragments, cells

stick to my side.

Whole sentences gush forth

and slam themselves against the page

condensing rapid sprays of pellets

into separate words.

No excess baggage is allowed.

No playful, baroque tendrils

curling this way and that;

no dream time walkabout

all the way down to Australia.

In English you have to know where you're going: (1-14)

towards the splitting of the self

or the blasting of the molecules around you.

(1-17)

El inglés es un lenguaje aerodinámico.

En él los pensamientos se disparan

por el aire como relámpagos.

Cuando me desvelo, viajo en él

a 380,000 millas por hora.

No admite sobrepeso.

Tampoco el decorado barroco

que en español se enrosca juguetón

alrededor de las palabras.

No al paseo soñador de los aborígenes

que atraviesan descalzos los páramos de Australia.

El inglés tiene que saber adónde va:

hacia la fisión nuclear del yo,

o hacia el estallido de las moléculas que lo rodean.

The first nine lines of the English version of this poem are notably different from the first five lines of the Spanish. Indeed, they differ to such an extent that it is difficult to recognize a translational relationship between them. The first line of the Spanish version describes English as “un lenguaje aerodinámico,” suggesting that English has a “shape” that allows it to move at a greater speed than Spanish, a language whose “decorado barroco” somehow slows it down. The opening line of the English version replaces this metaphor of aerodynamics with a curious simile, one where it is difficult to see how it can be derived from the Spanish: “English is like a nuclear reactor.” Why is English here compared to a nuclear reactor when “El inglés es un lenguaje aerodinámico” is so clearly a perfectly translatable sentence? Such questions

continuously haunt the reader of *Language Duel*. “I’m in it right now,” the speaker of the English version then announces, which seems to radically call into question the assumption that the Spanish version of this poem was written before the English. It is only in the English version that the speaker explicitly states that she is “in” a language “right now.” That is to say, she states that she is “in” the “nuclear reactor” (i.e, the English language) at the very moment of her utterance, whereas in the Spanish version the speaker never implies in a similar way that she is “in” the Spanish language. It is therefore not unlikely that in this case the assumed translation is in fact the original version. Even if there is nothing in the texts themselves that would allow us to “affirm” such a claim, it is significant enough that this is something that the reader is left to wonder about.

When the nucleus of an atom is split, nuclear fission occurs. That is what happens in the core of a nuclear reactor. In the metaphorical nuclear reactor of the English language, it appears to be the speaker’s self, the nucleus of her being, that is split, and this is not described as a pleasant experience: “As I shoot down its fast track / small bits of skin, fragments, cells / stick to my side.” It is as if the speaker disintegrates physically because of the fact that she is writing in English. The bits of skin that stick to her side are presumably from her own body, and it is noteworthy that this feeling of being splintered is not alluded to in the Spanish version: “En él los pensamientos se disparan / por el aire como relámpagos.” Here the emphasis is solely on the tempo of the “aerodynamic” English language. Thoughts shoot through the air “like lightning” in English, and, when the speaker is unable to sleep, she “travels” in English at an astronomical speed: “Cuando me desvelo, viajo en él / a 380,000 millas por hora.” Once again, the English version says something completely different: “Whole sentences gush forth / and slam themselves against the page / condensing rapid sprays of pellets / into separate words.” There is no mention here of staying awake or being unable to sleep, no verb equivalent to *desvelarse*, and no mention of travelling at “380,000 miles per hour.”

When the speaker is “in” that “nuclear reactor” which is the English language, she produces a veritable stream of sentences (“Whole sentences gush forth”). The

sentences “slam themselves against the page” when she writes in English, the word “slam” suggesting great force and speed, as when something being carried along by a rapid current slams against the rocks. The sentences thus metaphorically crash into the page, and the result of the impact is described using a peculiar formulation: “condensing rapid sprays of pellets / into separate words.” What does this mean? The choice of words here (“pellets” particularly, but also “condensing”) is arguably very unusual, almost cryptic. Faced with a passage such as this, a passage one wonders about and does not quite understand, one would presumably want to consult the Spanish original to see if it might shed some light on the passage in question. However, in this case one would do so to no avail, since there is no corresponding passage in the “original.” That absence in itself raises questions, and one would return to the English version even more confused than one was to begin with. So, to repeat the question then, what does “condensing rapid sprays of pellets / into separate words” mean? What does it suggest? Could it be that the primary function of those lines is precisely to make the reader consult the other version? That is not to say that the words are meaningless, only that their function as a stimulus to comparison is more important than their meaning. It is when one of the versions resists interpretation that one is most likely to feel compelled to compare it with the text on the opposite page.

So far I have compared lines one to nine of the English version with lines one to five of the Spanish version. There is, as we have seen, a striking difference between the two texts up to this point. From line ten in the English version and line six in the Spanish, however, they begin to resemble each other, and for the first time in the poem it becomes clear that there does exist a translational relationship between (parts of) the two texts: “No excess baggage is allowed” could rightly be considered a translation of “No admite sobrepeso.” The metaphor is the same in both languages. Curiously, this metaphor is thematically linked to another metaphor in the poem, namely the metaphor of aerodynamics, which only appears in the Spanish version. “No excess baggage is allowed” recalls Ezra Pound’s insistence that “[g]ood writers are those who keep the language efficient. That is, keep it accurate, keep it clear” (32). However, whereas Pound describes efficiency as the most important and

characteristic feature of “good writers” in general, Ferré’s poem seems to refer to what counts as good writing *in English*, that is, as opposed to what counts as good writing in Spanish. “No excess baggage is allowed” implies that English is a more “economic” language than Spanish. It suggests that brevity is a more important stylistic ideal in English than in the tongue that gave birth to Gongorism. It is in this sense that English is an “aerodynamic language”: it is a language stripped of all “excess baggage.” This point is emphasized further in the next line of the poem when the speaker asserts that “No playful, baroque tendrils / curling this way and that” are allowed in English, the central word being “baroque,” which suggests that English does not tolerate a highly ornate and extravagant style. This word is also used in the Spanish version. English, the speaker insists, does not permit “el decorado barroco / que en español se enrosca jugueteón / alrededor de las palabras.” Here the reference to ornamentation (“decorado”) is explicit. The speaker thus claims that Spanish shows a greater tolerance to ornamental excess than English.

The idea that Spanish tolerates ornamentation better than English is reminiscent of the view Ferré expresses in “On Language, Destiny, and Translation.” In this essay, Ferré insists that “the Spanish (and Latin American) literary tradition permits a much greater leeway for what may be called ‘play on words,’ which generally sound frivolous and innocuous in English” (157). The claim that Spanish tolerates “playful, baroque tendrils” better than English, and the corresponding claim that “No excess baggage is allowed” in English, may thus reflect Ferré’s view that the Spanish literary tradition permits wordplay to a much greater extent than the anglophone tradition. Interestingly, this is a view Ariel Dorfman seems to share. Like Ferré, Dorfman translates his own literary work between Spanish and English, and in “Resisting Hybridity” he states: “There is a precision that English demands of me, where I learn to be lyrical in a spare way” (56). To be lyrical “in a spare way” is, one might say, to avoid “excess baggage,” and according to Dorfman this kind of precision is something that the English language demands of him.

According to the speaker of “Language Current,” it is not only “decorado barroco” that is not allowed in English. “No al paseo soñador de los aborígenes / que

atraviesan descalzos los páramos de Australia,” the poem continues. The corresponding lines in the English version read: “no dream time walkabout / all the way down to Australia.” This is not a “faithful” translation of the Spanish. In the English version, Ferré omits the reference to the Aboriginals “who cross the deserts of Australia barefoot,” perhaps because such a reference would sound superfluous to an English ear: “dream time” and “walkabout” are culture-specific terms that an English reader will automatically associate with Australian Aboriginal culture and mythology. The former term is normally spelled as one word and the first letter is usually capitalized, but Ferré writes “dream time” and uses it as an adjective and not as a noun referring to a sacred era. This is an unusual epithet to apply to “walkabout.” So is “soñador” to “paseo” perhaps, but there is an important difference in that the Spanish version uses fairly ordinary words without a culture-bound meaning. In both versions, however, the unexpected juxtaposition evokes the idea of an aimless wandering, a journey without a destination. To “go walkabout” refers to an Aboriginal rite of passage, but in everyday speech it can also mean to wander around from place to place in a protracted or leisurely way. The Spanish word “paseo” has a similar connotative value. It suggests a leisurely walk or stroll, usually in the evening and in some public place such as a street or plaza. “Language Current” implies that such aimlessness is not permitted in English. “El inglés tiene que saber adónde va,” the next line of the poem reads. Even though Ferré changes the grammatical subject of the sentence from “El inglés” to “you,” she translates this line more or less “faithfully.” “In English you have to know where you’re going,” the English version reads. This recalls one of Ferré’s comments in “Ofelia a la deriva en las aguas de la memoria,” the Spanish version of “On Language, Destiny, and Translation.” In a passage that is absent from the English version of this essay, Ferré asserts that English requires “una dirección práctica, una línea de acción definida y específica” (76). Is this not equivalent to saying that “El inglés tiene que saber adónde va”? In the poem, the idea that English requires a clear sense of direction seems to relate to the claim that “no dream time walkabout” is allowed in English. However, the enigmatic last two lines of the stanza render the meaning of the preceding line more uncertain:

| | |
|---|--|
| In English you have to know where you're going: | El inglés tiene que saber adónde va: |
| towards the splitting of the self | hacia la fisión nuclear del yo, |
| or the blasting of the molecules around you. | o hacia el estallido de las moléculas que lo rodean. |
| (15-17) | (12-14) |

Here the English and the Spanish version say more or less the same thing using roughly equivalent words. What is surprising, however, is that these lines refer back to a metaphor that is only used in the English version, namely the nuclear reactor metaphor. Similarly, as I have already pointed out, the line “No excess baggage is allowed” is related to the aerodynamics metaphor, which is only used in the Spanish version. Thus, there appears to be a peculiar form of link between the two versions, a kind of link that might be called “intratextuality.” This has implications for the interpretation of the poem. To someone who only reads the Spanish version, for example, the last two lines of the first stanza would appear strangely unconnected to the rest of the text, whereas someone who also reads the English version would immediately connect them with the nuclear reactor metaphor. It is as if, in this way, the poem insists on a comparative reading, a reading that moves back and forth between the two versions. The intratextual relationship would only be perceptible to a reader who takes the trouble to compare the two versions, and the attendant back-and-forth movement of such a reading may be what the Spanish title of the poem (“Corriente alterna”) alludes to: *corriente alterna* is the Spanish term for alternating current, that is, an electric current that continuously reverses its direction. It is also the title of a book by Octavio Paz. Although *Corriente alterna* (1967), which is a collection of nonfictional texts that range over a variety of subjects, appears to have little in common with Ferré’s poem except for the title, it is at least possible that Ferré alludes to it because of how it problematizes the concept of originality. In one of the texts, Paz writes: “Si los artistas contemporáneos aspiran a ser originales, únicos y nuevos, deberían empezar por poner entre paréntesis las ideas de originalidad, personalidad y novedad: son los lugares comunes de nuestro tiempo” (21). Ferré, whose work plays havoc with the question of original authorship, would presumably

agree with Paz's view that the demand for original expression is one of "the clichés of our time."

The two central metaphors in the first stanza of "Language Current," the nuclear reactor metaphor and the aerodynamics metaphor, are both used to describe the English language. The aerodynamics metaphor is arguably the more "accessible" of the two. To say that English is an "aerodynamic language," a language that does not allow any "excess baggage," immediately makes more sense than to say that "English is like a nuclear reactor," or that in English you have to know whether you are going "towards the splitting of the self / or the blasting of the molecules around you."

Different languages have different criteria for the perception or evaluation of style, and the speaker's claim that Spanish tolerates ornamentation better than English is an understandable "statement" about stylistic differences. The nuclear reactor metaphor, on the other hand, does not "add up" to any sort of coherent, much less transparent, "statement." In the final stanza of the poem, another peculiar metaphor is used, but this time to describe the Spanish language:

Spanish is a very different tongue.

It's deeper and darker, with so many twists
and turns it makes you feel you're navigating
the uterus. Shards of gleaming stone,
emerald, amethyst, opal,
gleam in the dark as you swim
down its moist shaft.

It goes deeper than the English Channel,
all the way down the birth canal and beyond.

(18-26)

Nuestra lengua es muy distinta.

Es húmeda y profunda,
con tantas curvas y meandros que nos hace sentir
astronautas del útero. Fragmentos
de cuarzo, ópalo, amatista,
resplandecen incrustados en sus muros
mientras descendemos por su oscuro pasaje.

Va mucho más allá que el Canal de la Mancha,
casi tan hondo como el canal
por el que llegamos al mundo.

(15-24)

Here the translation sticks fairly close to the assumed original, but there are some noteworthy textual differences. In the first line of the stanza, for example, the speaker clearly identifies Spanish as her native tongue when she refers to it as “nuestra lengua,” whereas in the English version she refers to it simply as “Spanish.” The collective *we* is used throughout the Spanish version of this stanza (“nos hace sentir,” “descendemos,” “llegamos”), which contrasts with the generic *you* used in the English version (“makes you feel you’re navigating,” “you swim”). There are other discrepancies as well: “húmeda y profunda” becomes “deeper and darker,” “astronautas del útero” is rendered as “navigating the uterus,” and “cuarzo” is replaced by “emerald.” These are relatively minor changes, but they raise questions for the reader. Why, for instance, does Ferré not write “astronauts of the uterus,” which would have been a more literal and, I think, more poetically effective translation than “navigating the uterus”? Why is “cuarzo” not rendered as “quartz”? What is gained by substituting one gemstone with another? Perhaps what is gained is freshness and variety for the reader, to renew his or her interest and to keep him or her reflecting on the translation. It seems proper that the reader of a bilingual poem about differences between English and Spanish should reflect on the differences between the English and the Spanish version of that poem. Both versions assert that Spanish is “very different” (“muy distinta”) from English, but in what way is it different? The pivotal phrase of this stanza is “su oscuro pasaje,” which becomes “its moist shaft” in the English version. The shaft is used as an extended metaphor around which the whole stanza revolves. Spanish is described as “deeper and darker, with so many twists / and turns it makes you feel you’re navigating / the uterus,” and in this shaft shards of precious stone “gleam in the dark” as you “swim” down it. The speaker, then, compares the Spanish language metaphorically to a shaft, and this shaft metaphor reaches its climax in the enigmatic last lines of the poem: “It goes deeper than the English Channel, / all the way down the birth canal and beyond.” This makes for a curious image. How can a language be “deep”? How can it go “deeper than the English Channel,” which, incidentally, is not known for its depth? The English Channel is in fact relatively shallow, which gives the “deeper than” comparison an

odd, almost comic effect. And, perhaps even more puzzling, how can a language go “all the way down the birth canal and beyond”?

As the above discussion indicates, “Language Current” uses somewhat cryptic, figurative language to describe differences between English and Spanish. These are metaphorical descriptions that cannot be reduced to a statement of “facts” about differences between the two languages. However, it is possible to extract certain communicable meanings from the poem. The poetic speaker, as we have seen, implies that Spanish tolerates ornamentation better than English, and the second stanza begins by asserting that “Spanish is a very different tongue” from English. It is therefore interesting to note that a comparative reading of the two versions seems to contradict the speaker’s claims with respect to linguistic and/or stylistic differences. If we compare the two texts, we find that the language in the Spanish version is not “very different” from the language in the English. It is certainly not more “baroque” or ornate in style, and it is difficult to see how the English version could be said to be more “aerodynamic” than the Spanish. The sentences, when they express the same ideas in both versions, tend to match each other in terms of length, style, and tone. What separates the two versions, apart from the obvious fact that they are written in two different languages, are first and foremost those instances in which the *content* is incontrovertibly different. One suspects, therefore, that there is a deliberate contradiction here between *what* the poem says and *how* it says it, a contradiction that only becomes discernible if the reader yields to the desire to compare the two versions of the poem.

“A Crack in the I”

“Many bilinguals cannot help but struggle with the distinction between their two language-bound selves” (83), Nicola Danby observes in an article on Nancy Huston’s *Limbes / Limbo* (1998), a bilingual collection of poems. This struggle with the distinction between “two language-bound selves” is the ostensible theme of “A Crack

in the I,” the third poem in *Language Duel*. The first of the two stanzas that make up this poem reads thus:

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>On the island the mountains are darker and sharper. They burn like blue coals against the sky and the almond trees rustle like dry coral reefs over your head. The blatant beauty of the landscape presses down on you: a load of stones belched out by the sun. There are no barriers between your skin and its rays. They penetrate deep into the marrow. (1-10)</p> | <p>En la isla las montañas son más oscuras y afiladas. Arden en carbones azules contra el cielo, y los almendros bullen arrecifes secos sobre mi cabeza. La belleza demasiado obvia del paisaje me oprime como una carga de piedras vomitada por el sol. No existen fronteras entre mi piel y sus rayos. Penetran hasta el tuétano más profundo. (1-10)</p> |
|---|---|

The English and the Spanish version of this stanza have exactly the same number of lines. The opening lines of both versions describe the topography of an unnamed island: the shape and color of the mountains, the almond trees, the beauty of the landscape, and the intensity of the sunlight. The two versions are semantically as well as syntactically very closely matched. In lines three and five of the English version, we find two similes (“like blue coals” and “like dry coral reefs”). The Spanish text evokes the same images, but without employing a word equivalent to “like” or “as.” Similarly, the Spanish version employs a simile in line seven (“como una carga de piedras”), whereas the English avoids the word “like” and uses a colon instead. The decision to omit in one version a word that introduces a simile in the other may have been dictated by rhythmic concerns, just as the phrase “belched out” seems to have been chosen in order to achieve alliteration: “vomited up” would be closer, semantically as well as etymologically, to “vomitada por,” but it does not alliterate

with “by,” “burn,” “blue,” “blatant beauty,” and “barriers.” Deviations of this kind are to be expected in a translation of a poem. They have no direct or recognizable bearing on the meaning of the poem. The images evoked, such as the strange image of a sun that ejects stones through the mouth, are essentially the same in both versions.

It is the fact that this poem is otherwise “faithfully” rendered that makes the three minor “infidelities” in the translation stand out. First, “mi cabeza” becomes “your head” in line five. Second, “me” becomes “you” in line seven. Finally, “mi piel” becomes “your skin” in line nine. Needless to say, the possessive adjective “your” is not a translation of “mi,” and the personal pronoun “you” is not a translation of “me.” Rather, they are opposite in meaning to each other. The title of the poem, “A Crack in the I” (“La fisura del yo” is the title in Spanish), makes more sense if we take this difference into account. The change from the first to the second person may hint at the fact that many bilinguals report feeling that they are not the same “person” in both languages, but more likely it hints at Ferré’s own experiences as a bilingual writer. In “Bilingual in Puerto Rico” (2003), an abbreviated version of her essay “Writing in Between,” Ferré states: “A bilingual writer is really two *different* writers, has two different voices, writes in two different styles, and, most important, looks at the world through two different sets of glasses” (138). “A Crack in the I” ends with what appears to be an image capturing this feeling of being two different writers:

As I step outside, I block out the sun
and walk over my own shadow
lying severed on the floor.
(17-19)

Al salir fuera, eclipse el resplandor del sol
y observo mi propia sombra
desfallecida a mis pies.
(18-20)

The poem uses the image of a shadow “lying severed on the floor” to describe the splitting of the self that some bilingual writers experience. The word “severed” implies that one self has been brutally and irreparably cut off from the other, but the

Spanish version ends on a more optimistic note, as the word “desfallecida” suggests that one self has merely lost consciousness and is waiting to regain it. As I noted above, the theme of “A Crack in the I” is ostensibly the distinction between “two language-bound selves” with which many bilinguals struggle. The image of the shadow “lying severed on the floor” is perhaps the most vivid description of this feeling of being two different “persons” and/or writers. However, Ferré also alludes to this feeling by juxtaposing “mi cabeza” with “your head,” “me” with “you,” and “mi piel” with “your skin.” These “infidelities” illustrate the kind of “play,” dialogue, or productive exchange that is taking place between the English and the Spanish versions in *Language Duel*.

“A Beso Is Not a Kiss”

In a sense, all the poems in *Language Duel* call attention to the connotative value of words. Even if the literal meaning of the words is often more or less the same in both versions, the connotations of those words may vary widely. Consider, for example, the translation of “jueyes” as “crabs” in the final lines of the title poem. When Umpierre discusses this poem in her review of *Language Duel*, she states that she remembers how, in the ghetto in Puerto Rico where she grew up, “we raised jueyes in the backyard so that we could have some seafood instead of going to a fancy restaurant” (127). Although this is a personal anecdote, it shows that the English word “crab” does not have the same socio-cultural associations as the Puerto Rican word “juey.” It would therefore not be an exaggeration to say that, in the lines “Dos jueyes machos no caben / dentro de una misma cueva,” connotation is foregrounded at the expense of denotation, whereas in the English rendering the literal meaning seems to take precedence over any ideas or feelings invoked, which is not to say that “crab” is a purely denotative sign. The only poem in *Language Duel* that directly thematizes the connotative power of words, however, is called “A Beso Is Not a Kiss,” a brief poem which I quote here in its entirety:

A *beso* is like
eating leeches on a mountain top

In a kiss Cleopatra
draws the asp to her breast
so as not to enter Rome
in chains.

There are mysteries of the tongue
that cannot be explained.

(1-8)

La palabra beso es como una joven
comiéndose una pomarrosa

en la cima de una montaña.

Kiss trae consigo
el silbido del áspid
que Cleopatra acercó a su pecho

cuando rehusó entrar a Roma
encadenada.

La lengua admite misterios
inexplicables.

(1-10)

The proper translation of the Spanish word *beso* is kiss, and yet, as the title of this poem clearly states, a *beso* is not a kiss, just as a *juey* is not a crab. The Spanish version of the poem begins by comparing the word *beso* to a young girl eating a rose apple (“una pomarrosa) on a mountaintop. The English text echoes this line, but without evoking the image of a young girl. More importantly, Ferré’s rendering contains a thought-provoking “mistranslation”: a leech is not a *pomarrosa*, although not in the sense that a *beso* is not a kiss. In both instances, the meaning is different. In the latter case, only the connotations differ, but “leeches” has a completely different denotative meaning than *pomarrosa*, and the distinction is rather important. What we have here is a very bizarre and unexpected juxtaposition. The Spanish original evokes the idyllic image of a young maiden consuming a tasty fruit on a mountaintop, which contrasts sharply with the repulsive image of eating bloodsucking worms suggested by the English version. Is it possible that “leeches” is a misspelling of “lychees” or “lichees,” which are variant spellings of the plural of “litchi,” the fruit? Due to the importance of contrasting effects in *Language Duel*, I doubt that this is spelling mistake. I would argue that this is a deliberate mistranslation designed to produce an aesthetic effect.

The next lines of the poem introduce the image of Cleopatra as she “draws the asp to her breast / so as not to enter Rome / in chains.” According to legend, the Egyptian queen killed herself with an asp bite, and her suicide was immortalized by Shakespeare in *Antony and Cleopatra*:

CLEOPATRA. This proves me base:
 If she first meet the curléd Antony,
 He'll make demand of her, and spend that kiss
 Which is my heaven to have. Come, thou mortal wretch,
 [to an asp, which she applies to her breast
 With thy sharp teeth this knot intricate
 Of life at once untie: poor venomous fool,
 Be angry, and dispatch.
 (5.2.299-306)

The passage quoted is taken from the last act of *Antony and Cleopatra*. Iras, one of Cleopatra's servants, has just died (ostensibly from an asp bite), and Cleopatra, in a fit of insane jealousy, wants to expedite her own death so that her beloved will not waste his affection on Iras in the afterlife “and spend that kiss / Which is my heaven to have.” Yearning for a chance to kiss Antony again on the other side, Cleopatra holds an asp to her breast and another to her arm, and dies. The allusion to Shakespeare is important in Ferré's poem. More than any other writer, Shakespeare has shaped the English language, and what this poem seems to suggest is that the word “kiss” carries with it an echo of Shakespeare and of his depiction of Cleopatra's suicide by snakebite: “In a kiss Cleopatra / draws the asp to her breast / so as not to enter Rome / in chains.” For the speaker of the poem, “kiss” is suggestive of Cleopatra's decision to commit suicide rather than be paraded as a conquered enemy through Rome. This semantic echo may be the whistling (“el silbido”) to which only the Spanish version refers. The socio-cultural and personal associations of words vary widely and for reasons that often elude us. The fact that “kiss” can remind the poetic speaker of Cleopatra's suicide, or that *beso* is capable of evoking the image of a young girl eating a *pomarrosa* (or leeches) on a mountaintop, is part of what the

speaker calls “misterios inexplicables.” For some inexplicable reason, Ferré paraphrases this pleonasm as “mysteries of the tongue / that cannot be explained” instead of translating it more literally as “inexplicable mysteries.” The translation remains somewhat of an enigma, as befits a poem about the mysteries of language.

“A *Beso* Is Not a Kiss,” then, is concerned with the connotative value of words. However, equally important in the poem is the way it draws attention to the aural quality of words. Notice, for example, the repetition of sibilants in these four lines: “In a kiss Cleopatra / draws the asp to her breast / so as not to enter Rome / in **chains**.” Sibilance is here used onomatopoeically to suggest the sustained *s* sound of a serpent’s hiss. Ferré also alludes to the “snakelike” sound of the word *kiss* in the Spanish version: “*Kiss* trae consigo / el silbido del áspid / que Cleopatra acercó a su **pecho** / cuando rehusó entrar a Roma / encadenada.” In other words, the sound that the reader can imagine the asp made when Cleopatra applied it to her breast reechoes in the very lines that describe the Egyptian queen’s suicide. The sharp sibilant sound of “kiss” distinguishes it from the soft vowel sound of *beso*, and the sibilance in the lines that describe “kiss” corresponds to the repetition of vowel sounds in the description of *beso*: “La palabra beso es como una joven / **comiéndose** una **pomarrosa** / en la cima de una **montaña**.” The English version does not reproduce the *o* assonance in these lines, but both versions of the poem point to the different aural qualities of “kiss” and *beso*. The material quality of a word, together with its connotative meaning, is in a sense what remains of a word when one has extracted from it the denotative meaning. It is, in short, what makes a word unique, and the reason why a *beso* is not a “kiss,” even though both words refer to “a touch with the lips.”

The Title Revisited

In the preceding pages, I have attempted to offer a comparative reading of some of the poems of in *Language Duel*, a reading I hope has managed to both respect and convey the bilingual character of the work. In this final section of the chapter, rather

than providing a conclusion that simply serves to repeat the earlier discussion, I would like to offer some reflections on the title of the collection. Like the poems themselves, the title is given to us in both English and Spanish: *Language Duel* is juxtaposed with *Duelo del lenguaje*, the former ostensibly being a translation of the latter. Ferré herself has commented on the ambiguous nature of the book's title. In an essay entitled "Al entrar a la Academia,"⁴⁵ she states:

Reconozco que en mi obra, y en mi persona, sentí siempre el "duelo" – el enfrentamiento – de dos tradiciones literarias y de dos lenguas diferentes. Sin darle peso, jamás, al Spanglish en mi obra, mi propia experiencia fue que al escribir en inglés logré incorporar aspectos diferentes de ese idioma a la corriente central de la literatura puertorriqueña. Era como ver el mundo por lentes distintos, que ampliaban la manera de entender la vida. Lo expresé en el poema "Corriente alterna," publicado en el libro *Duelo del lenguaje*: "El inglés es un lenguaje aerodinámico. . . ." Pero hay otra aceptación de la palabra "duelo" que es importante en ese libro. Su título es ambiguo, y el duelo se refiere también al canto fúnebre por el español de nuestros amados Lope de Vega y Cervantes, un mundo clásico en vías de perderse, que no se podrá recuperar. Eso también me duele profundamente. Por otra parte, la literatura en lengua española se ha renovado en sus grandes momentos, gracias al diálogo plurilingüístico: con el italiano, gracias al poeta Garcilaso de Vega; con el francés, gracias a Rubén Darío; con el inglés, gracias a Borges. (*Memoria* 175)

As the references to Borges, Darío, and Garcilaso de Vega indicate, Ferré sees herself as one of the great renewers of Spanish-language literature, and she is careful to distinguish her own bilingual work, where Spanish and English are almost always neatly separated, from the hybrid language used by practitioners of Spanglish. The

⁴⁵ This essay was written for Ferré's induction as honorary member of La Academia Puertorriqueña de la Lengua Española on December 19, 2007.

word “duel” in the title of her book, Ferré tells us, refers to the confrontation between two literary traditions and between two different languages in her life and work, but at the same time it refers to a certain pain or sorrow she feels, playing on the double meaning of *duelo* in Spanish, which is lost in the English translation. However, there is something Ferré fails to mention in this “revelation” about what the title of *Language Duel* refers to. The title contains an allusion to “Des Tours de Babel,” Derrida’s essay on translation. I discussed this essay in Chapter One, and I will return to it here because the allusion to Derrida, which has yet to be pointed out in the scant critical literature on *Language Duel*, may cast some interesting light on the collection as a whole.

At a certain point in “Des Tours de Babel,” Derrida uses the phrase “the duel of languages” (198), or as it says in the French original, “le duel des langues” (242). Ferré seems to have taken this phrase, modified it slightly, translated it, and incorporated it into the title of her bilingual collection of poems. That Ferré’s title should contain an oblique reference to Derrida may seem surprising, but in her more academic texts Ferré demonstrates her familiarity with Derrida’s work.⁴⁶ More important is the fact that there are some interesting parallels between “Des Tours de Babel” and *Language Duel*. For example, both “Des Tours de Babel” and *Language Duel* were originally published in bilingual editions. Like Derrida’s essay “Living On,” another text haunted by the question of translation, “Des Tours de Babel” was written to be immediately translated and to be originally published in English. It first appeared in an English-language anthology of essays on translation. The original French version of the essay was included in an appendix to the volume, a placement that playfully reverses the traditional hierarchy of original and translation. The original text is here relegated to a secondary position. One of Derrida’s central points in “Des Tours de Babel” is that a translation, rather than serving as a weak substitute for the original, completes and potentially enhances the source text. The privileged place given to the translation of this essay reflects this view. The page design of

⁴⁶ See Ferré, *El árbol y sus sombras*, 9.

Language Duel, as we have seen, reverses the long-established hierarchy of original and translation in a similar way.

In order to get a clearer sense of why *Language Duel* alludes to “Des Tours de Babel,” it would be useful to look more closely at how and in what context Derrida actually uses the phrase “the duel of languages.” What does he mean by “the duel of languages”? Derrida writes:

One will note in passing that the *task of the translator*, confined to the duel of languages (never more than two languages), gives rise only to a “creative effort” (effort and tendency rather than achievement, artisan labor rather than artistic performance), and when the translator “creates,” it is like a painter who copies his model (a ludicrous comparison for many reasons; is there any use in explaining?). (198-199)

Derrida has just quoted some excerpts from two French treatises on copyright, and here he is questioning the attempt by French jurists to draw a clear line of demarcation between the “relative” originality of translations and the “proper” originality of original compositions. Derrida’s use of the word “duel” plays on the idea of dueling as a practice governed by a “code.” Dueling was, before the twentieth century, a practice governed by a complex set of rules, customs, and laws. In this sense, dueling is not unlike translation. The task of the translator, as Derrida puts it, is “confined to the duel of languages,” that is, to a duel whose rules restrain or forbid the translator from straying too far away from the original. The French law, Derrida notes, states that a translation “is not supposed to touch the content” and “must be original only in its language as *expression*” (196-197). Derrida, then, uses “the duel of languages” as a metaphor for the laws and norms that constrain the artistic license of translators. The title of *Language Duel* can therefore be understood as referring to the very rules that the book flouts. When Ferré deviates from the original text and changes the content during the translation process, as we have seen numerous examples of in this chapter, she is flouting the rules of “the duel of languages.”

According to Derrida, the fundamental premise of copyright, what he calls “the foundation of the law” (196), is a rigorous distinction between original works and derived works. “This law,” he argues, “collapses at the slightest challenge to a strict boundary between the original and the version” (196). Jurists therefore need to maintain this distinction at all costs. The title page of *Language Duel* distinguishes the original Spanish poems from the English translations in a very careful manner, which suggests that this is a distinction that Ferré would never want to renounce or even bother to question. In the final analysis, however, this is precisely what she does. The conventional hierarchy that gives originals priority over translations is, like copyright law, contingent on the ability to maintain a strict boundary between the original text and the translation, and Ferré blurs this boundary by not letting herself be “confined to the duel of languages.”

As we saw above, when Derrida uses “the duel of languages” as a metaphor for the laws and norms that govern translation, he notes in parenthesis that the task of the translator is seen as a duel between “never more than two languages.” This parenthetical remark is interesting in light of the bilingual format of *Language Duel*. Translation is normally understood as the process of rendering words or text from one language into another, that is to say, as a process in which there are only two languages involved. This, according to Derrida, is “one of the limits of theories of translation” (171). Derrida alludes to this theoretical problem earlier in “Des Tours de Babel”:

. . . let us note one of the limits of theories of translation: all too often they treat the passing from one language to another and do not sufficiently consider the possibility for languages to be implicated *more than two* in a text. How is a text written in several languages at a time to be translated? How is the effect of plurality to be “rendered”? And what of translating with several languages at a time, will that be called translating? (171)

Language Duel may not be the kind of text Derrida has in mind here, since he has just quoted the sentence “And he war” from Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake*. However, with two languages facing each other on alternate pages, it poses a similar challenge to the translator and, by extension, to anyone who attempts an exegesis of the work. When we interpret a text we are, Derrida insists, attempting a translation of it. Echoing Derrida, one could ask: How is the effect of plurality in *Language Duel* to be “rendered”? How is that effect to be explained, interpreted, or described in a critical metalanguage? The paradox of translation, according to Derrida, is that it is “both necessary and impossible” (174). In a sense, that is also the paradox experienced by those who attempt to translate *Language Duel* into the metalanguage of literary criticism. It is as if the traditional vocabulary of literary criticism is not capable of naming the strange bilingual aesthetic effects at work in *Language Duel*, and yet, paradoxically, the task of the critic requires the ability to name and describe those effects. Observing the need “to generate names and descriptions for a broad range of rhetorical figures and language games” (38), Doris Sommer confronts a similar problem in *Bilingual Aesthetics* (2004). What, she asks, do you call a “purposeful mistranslation,” a calque “that keeps a code from crippling” (38-39), or specific forms of playful code switches? In other words, the aesthetic effects produced by “language games” lack an established rhetorical name.

It is a rather curious experience to be faced with the self-translated poetry of the author who, some ten years before the publication of *Language Duel*, wrote in “On Language, Destiny, and Translation”: “Poetry, where meaning can never be wholly separated from expressive form, is a mystery which can never be translated. It can only be transcribed, reproduced in a shape that will always be a sorry shadow of itself” (161-162). However, *Language Duel* is more a play with shadows, with two languages casting their shadows over one another, than “a sorry shadow of itself.” *Language Duel*, then, testifies not to the possibility or impossibility of translating poetry, but to the possibility of using translation and a bilingual format for poetic purposes. Part of its mystery is precisely that its meaning can never be wholly separated from the bilingual format in which it is expressed. As Sarkonak and

Hodgson have rightly pointed out, reading a bilingual text involves a much more complex process of perception and decoding than do the deciphering of a monolingual one. It makes the reader work harder, increases what Shklovsky calls “the difficulty and length of perception,” and upsets prescribed ways of reading. *Language Duel*, I have suggested in this chapter, requires that extra effort of the reader.

The implied reader of *Language Duel* is bilingual, to some extent. *Language Duel* is a so-called dual-language book, a point emphasized by the title’s homophonic play on the words “duel” and “dual,” and the act of comparing the English and the Spanish versions makes possible a richer reading of the poems by prompting a reflection on the differences and similarities between the parallel texts. When one reads *Language Duel*, one must negotiate between the two versions in ways that are largely unfamiliar. Each reading yields new connections. The ways in which the two texts sometimes mirror each other and sometimes contrast with each other keep multiplying. To read and compare them does not facilitate the understanding of the work; it complicates it. Or better, it allows us to grasp the complexity of a work that, with a nod to Beckett and Derrida, interrogates the distinction between original and translation. The very fact that the references to classical figures that characterized *Fábulas de la garza desangrada* give way in *Language Duel* to allusions to such eminently language-conscious writers as Beckett and Derrida is in itself an important indication that the preoccupation with language and the questioning of conventional modes of reading and thinking are central to *Language Duel*. In *The House on the Lagoon* and *La casa de la laguna*, as we saw in the previous chapter, Ferré has made it virtually impossible to distinguish consistently between translation and original. In *Language Duel*, on the other hand, she distinguishes very clearly between the translations and the original poems, but only to subvert this distinction from within the work itself. *Language Duel* shows that to read a poem need not be a monolingual undertaking, and that the creation of meaning and aesthetic effects can also result from reading a poem in more than one language. The arrangement of two imperfectly matched versions facing each other on alternate pages, two versions that somehow interconnect and “play” with each other, does much to determine the overall effects

of this work. The presence of the two languages performs an essential aesthetic function and is an integral part of the work's overall significance.

Conclusion

Traducción y creación son operaciones gemelas.

Octavio Paz

This dissertation has sought to account for how Bombal and Ferré rework their own originals into another language and to analyze the interpretative implications of their self-translating activity. In this concluding chapter, as a means of summarizing my findings, I will first highlight some important similarities and differences between Bombal and Ferré. Then I will consider the implications of my study for future research. Finally, I will discuss some of the limitations of my investigation in order to suggest possible directions for future studies.

Summary

Bombal and Ferré are very different as writers, even though they are both canonical Spanish American female authors born in the first half of the twentieth century, and even though they are both considered to be feminist writers. This is to be expected, since Bombal made her debut as a writer in the 1930s and was mostly active in the first part of the twentieth century, whereas Ferré published her first works in the 1970s and is still an active writer. However, this study has shown that Bombal's *magnum opus*, *La amortajada*, did not, as most scholars assume, acquire its final form in 1938. As we saw in Chapter Two, Bombal revised *La amortajada* in light of the changes she made when she translated the novel into English in the 1940s. As a result, all editions published after 1962 contain roughly 3,400 words more than the original 1938 version. This means that the version of *La amortajada* that scholars have been reading and studying for the last fifty years is partly the result of the creative process in which Bombal engaged when she transformed *La amortajada* into

The Shrouded Woman. *The Shrouded Woman* is not a “faithful” translation of *La amortajada*, but neither is it an entirely “new” work. As this study has demonstrated, Bombal’s translation strategy is predominantly foreignizing. Bombal did not seek to reduce the stylistic “peculiarities” of *La amortajada* in order to make the language in *The Shrouded Woman* fluent and “natural-sounding.” What I have described as the great paradox of *The Shrouded Woman* is that it sticks very closely to the syntax and vocabulary of *La amortajada* and at the same time contains numerous substantial additions. As a translation it is, one might say, faithful and unfaithful at the same time. Most notably, *The Shrouded Woman* introduces several new characters. The story of one of these new characters, I have suggested, invokes an “unhomely reader” and can be read as an allegory of Bombal’s self-translation and “betrayal” of *La amortajada*.

The textual differences between *La amortajada* and *The Shrouded Woman* are more radical or more conspicuous than the differences between *The House on the Lagoon* and *La casa de la laguna*. This is presumably a result of the fact that Bombal wrote *The Shrouded Woman* ten years after she wrote *La amortajada*, whereas Ferré wrote *The House on the Lagoon* and *La casa de la laguna* more or less simultaneously. As scholars such as Cocco and Castillo have pointed out, Ferré tends to adopt a domesticating strategy when she translates her own works, and she often makes changes that seem intended to make her texts more interesting or more intelligible to the target audience. In *The House on the Lagoon* and *La casa de la laguna*, however, one finds less obvious examples of such “audience-oriented” changes than one finds in, for example, *Sweet Diamond Dust*. Furthermore, as we saw in Chapter Three, a kind of play or dialogue surfaces “between” the different versions of this novel, as Ferré has made playful “corrections” and alterations whose effect depends to a large extent on the reader’s familiarity with both versions. These changes are not “audience-oriented” in the sense that they are motivated by a desire to suit the text to a new audience. Rather, they invoke an unhomely reader, a reader who is familiar with both versions of the novel and who is able to see the so-called corrections in relation to the novel’s questioning of the boundaries between fact and fiction.

What happens when this kind of exchange is taking place between two versions of the “same” work? In a sense, the very contours of the “work” are blurred, threatened, or disturbed, the opposition between original and translation, which is normally taken for granted, effacing itself or contesting its own legitimacy. In Chapter Three and Chapter Four, I considered how Ferré, in various ways and at various levels, frustrates a clear-cut dichotomy between what is “original” and what is “derivative” in her work. This, I believe, is crucial to understanding her critique of our propensity to give priority to so-called authentic works of art over copies, imitations, translations, and texts written in a language other than one’s mother tongue. It should be clear from the preceding discussion that Ferré does not simply reverse this value system and say that what is derivative is better than what is authentic or original. Nor does she simply collapse the distinction by saying that ultimately nothing is original. It would be more accurate to say that Ferré deliberately *confuses* and *calls attention to* the hierarchical order that gives priority to original works over derivative works. In *The House on the Lagoon* and *La casa de la laguna*, I have argued in this study, Ferré intentionally employs clichéd language and “copies” from García Márquez and Allende. I have also demonstrated that “unoriginal” artists are a leitmotif in the novel. Finally, but most importantly, this study has shown that Ferré has made it impossible to maintain a clear-cut distinction between what is “original” and what is “translated” in *The House on the Lagoon* and *La casa de la laguna*. This means that Ferré’s readers have to learn to live with the fact that neither version can be considered more definitive or authoritative than the other. To the best of my knowledge, the only scholars to date who have studied and compared the two versions of the novel are Cocco and Castillo, both of whom take for granted that *The House on the Lagoon* is the original and that *La casa de la laguna* is the translation. It is my contention that there is no evidence to support this assumption.

The relation between original writing and translation is more complicated in Ferré’s work than in Bombal’s, even though Bombal revised *La amortajada* in light of *The Shrouded Woman*, and nowhere is it more complicated than in *Language Duel*. In *Language Duel*, Ferré distinguishes very clearly between the translations and the originals, but only to subvert the autonomy of the original poems by making the

translations and the originals dependent on each other. *Language Duel*, as this study has shown, requires a dual reading in order to achieve its full effect. It is a work where, to borrow a phrase Paschalis Nikolaou uses to describe one of his bilingual poems, “self-translation is not just taking place but further participates in the play of meaning” (28). To date there has been no systematic study of *Language Duel*, and this absence can be explained by the fact that monolingual readings can easily dismiss it as an inferior work. Monolingual readings fail to recognize that the translations in *Language Duel* have a crucial aesthetic function. In short, to read only the originals is to read only half the work.

For Bombal, self-translation was a way of reinventing *La amortajada* a decade after it was first published. Dissatisfied with a translation done by another translator, Bombal decided to translate it herself in a way that would preserve the poetic quality of her work. Although she was at first reluctant to make changes to the original, she eventually turned her novella into a full-blown novel, and a few years before she died she emphasized that she wanted *The Shrouded Woman* to remain “tal cual apareció en inglés” (OC 368). For Ferré, on the other hand, the self-translating process is intrinsically linked to the creative process, or at least it was so in the years prior to her decision to abandon the English language. Neither *La casa de la laguna* nor *The House on the Lagoon* is a reinvention of an identifiable original text. Rather, both versions appear to be the result of a series of textual “reinventions,” inspired by a process in which writing and translating reciprocally influenced each other. To what extent *Language Duel* is the result of a similar creative process is uncertain. However, it seems unlikely that Ferré simply *wrote* the poems in Spanish and then *translated* them into English, since there is an “intratextual” relationship between the Spanish and the English versions.

Implications

The results of this study suggest that Bombal and Ferré scholars should read both the English and the Spanish versions of their works. What I am arguing, therefore, is that

the English versions are texts worthy of the same careful scrutiny as the Spanish versions. If a scholar aims to study the entire literary output of Bombal or Ferré, it is not only a question of which version(s) he or she *should* read. A scholarly work that purports to look at their *oeuvre* and does not take their English-language texts into account fails to do what it purports to do. It also impoverishes criticism by leaving an important literary quarry untapped, and it blinds itself to the questions raised by the existence of a bilingual corpus of literary texts.

I do not think that the Spanish versions of any of the works examined in this study harbor an advantage over their English-language counterparts, or vice versa. I therefore disagree with scholars such as Echenberg, who insists that Bombal's English novels "no alcanzan la talla de las novelas en castellano" (145), just as I disagree with scholars such as Sandín, who asserts that "Ferré is simply a better writer in Spanish than she is in English" (44). I want to suggest that there are two principal sources of the hostility to the anglophone production of Bombal and Ferré. First, there is what Borges calls the "superstition" about the inferiority of translations, which he claims "procede de una distraída experiencia" (*OC* 239). Second, there is the "natural" assumption that it is impossible to create a work of enduring quality in a language not learned in childhood. The idea that "everyone produces original work in his mother tongue only" (82), as Schleiermacher famously put it, is a profoundly Romantic notion that I think scholars should dispense with. These two factors, the bias against translations and the bias against what is written in a non-native tongue, constitute a value system that tends to dismiss self-translations and foreign-language texts as inferior. It is precisely this value system that Ferré challenges and draws attention to. In the case of Ferré, it is also important to keep in mind that, in Puerto Rico, to write in English is an ideologically charged act. *The House on the Lagoon*, as we saw in Chapter Three, has provoked the ire of Puerto Rican intellectuals with *independentista* leanings.

In her essay "Writing and translating" (2006), Susan Bassnett states: "One of the difficulties we have today in assessing the work of countless writers is that uncomfortable distinction between writing and translating, which starts to break

down once it is scrutinized closely” (175). Bassnett is here talking about authors who translate the work of other authors. However, one of the difficulties we have today in assessing the work of Bombal and Ferré is also “that uncomfortable distinction between writing and translating, which starts to break down once it is scrutinized closely.” Central to the conception of self-translation that I have adopted in this study is the idea that translation is writing, or, as Derrida puts it, “a productive writing called forth by the original text” (*The Ear of the Other* 153). The two theorists whose work I have drawn on, Derrida and Borges, both dismantle the traditional hierarchy of original writing and translating. The self-translations of Bombal and Ferré, I would like to suggest, are too often either looked at with unsubstantiated suspicion or, what is more troubling, completely ignored. The material analyzed in this dissertation is too limited to provide any far-reaching, general conclusions about the status of self-translations in literary history. However, work carried out in this field by various other scholars indicates that the “normal” status of self-translations tends to be a marginal one. Eva Gentes, for example, notes in a recent study that “self-translation is often marked by a high degree of invisibility” (267). If self-translations tend to be “invisible” in literary history, they share the position assumed by ordinary translations. As Itamar Even-Zohar observes in his article “The Position of Translated Literature within the Literary Polysystem” (1978):

As a rule, histories of literatures mention translations when there is no way to avoid them, when dealing with the Middle Ages or the Renaissance, for instance. One might of course find sporadic references to individual literary translations in various other periods, but they are seldom incorporated into the historical account in any coherent way.
(45)

Like ordinary translations, self-translations “are seldom incorporated into the historical account in any coherent way.” This is very clear in the case of Bombal, but it is also true in relation to Ferré. Bombal criticism, as we have seen, operates according to a model that gives priority to the author’s original works. With the exception of Echenberg’s article “Personaje y vanguardia en María Luisa Bombal”

(2010), to date there have been no studies of *The Shrouded Woman*, and *House of Mist* became the object of literary research only after it was recognized as a completely “new” novel. The fact that neither *The Shrouded Woman* nor *House of Mist* is included in Bombal’s *Obras completas* is symptomatic of the status of Bombal’s English novels in the scholarship on Bombal as well as in literary history. In the scholarship on Ferré, the situation is more complex. Ferré’s self-translations have received far more attention from scholars than *The Shrouded Woman*. In encyclopedic articles on Ferré, however, her self-translating activity is either not mentioned at all or mentioned only in passing.⁴⁷ This study is critical of the general tendency in the scholarship on Bombal and Ferré. It defends the view that any historical or scholarly discussion of the *oeuvre* of Bombal and Ferré that neglects or minimizes the importance of their self-translations and foreign-language texts is inevitably flawed in some way.

If, as this study maintains, scholars should read both versions of the works of Bombal and Ferré, what is to be gained from doing so, apart from a more accurate or complete picture of their literary careers? What is the *interpretative* gain of reading both versions? Does it help us to understand a work properly, or at least prevent us from getting it wrong? No, because to read both versions leaves the reader with more questions than answers. A comparative reading does not restrict the possibilities of meaning released by a work; it offers *new* possibilities of meaning. It represents a different way of responding to a work. Sarkonak and Hodgson have pointed out that “bilingual writing makes the reader work harder than monolingual writing” (26). In a sense, this is true whether the reader is dealing with two texts that have been placed next to each other within the confines of a single textual space, or with two texts that require the reader’s deliberate effort to put them side by side. A comparative reading is a fertile literary experience precisely because it “makes the reader work harder.” It prompts “a slowness of attention” (17), to borrow a term from James Longenbach,

⁴⁷ See, for example, Erro-Peralta, “Ferré, Rosario” (2008), García Pinto, “Ferré, Rosario” (2004), and Rivera, “Rosario Ferré” (1994).

and it entails a willingness to defy prescribed ways of reading. There is, of course, the not insignificant risk that a reading that embraces both versions of a given work might overemphasize, or read too much into, their perceived relationship. It is, nevertheless, interesting to see what happens when one actually does read both versions. If one does, one's perception of the "work" changes, and, in my experience at least, it changes for the better. One's perception of the "work" is enriched, as one tends to see passages in a new and different light when one reads them for the "second" time. When one reads the second version, one is likely to notice things one missed when one read the first version. Certain aspects of the "work" are likely to assume a new significance. In Chapter Two, I compared the experience of reading *The Shrouded Woman* after *La amortajada* to that of reading a book for the second time, and in Chapter Three I compared the experience of reading *La casa de la laguna* after *The House on the Lagoon* to a déjà vu experience. The point is that to compare two versions of the "same" work, whether physically or in one's mind, produces an aesthetic effect. It provides a new aesthetic experience, since one is faced with something that is at once familiar and radically different. To read both versions is also important because it is the only way to grasp the nature of the relationship between them. The ultimate measure of a self-translation's worth is not its degree of fidelity to the words and structure of the original, but understanding the relationship between the two is an important element in the reader's perception of what a given self-translation is doing.

Future Research

A limitation of this study is that it has only examined the relationship between the English and the Spanish versions of two of Ferré's works. My decision to concentrate on *The House on the Lagoon* / *La casa de la laguna* and *Language Duel* / *Duelo del lenguaje* was prompted by two factors. First, I consider these to be Ferré's most interesting works. Second, it was in relation to these texts that I felt I could make a notable contribution to the field. Of all her self-translations, *Sweet Diamond Dust* is

by far the most widely studied. A certain amount of critical attention has also been paid to *The Youngest Doll*, where six of the fourteen short stories are presented as self-translations and the remaining eight as translations done in collaboration with the author. However, more scholarship is needed to explore the relationship between *Eccentric Neighborhoods* and *Vecindarios excéntricos* and between *Flight of the Swan* and *Vuelo del cisne*. A comprehensive comparative study of Ferré's entire bilingual corpus is also needed. Such a study could provide insight into how Ferré's practice of self-translation and "translingual" writing evolved over time, from its beginning in the 1980s to its ostensible end in 2002 (i.e., the year *Language Duel* was published). It would also be interesting to look at Ferré's translation of Lillian Hellman's memoir *Scoundrel Time* (1976). This translation appeared in 1980 under the title *Tiempo de canallas*. It is, to date, Ferré's only translation of the work of another writer, and could provide a fruitful point of comparison.

In terms of quantity, Bombal's bilingual corpus is much smaller than Ferré's. As a result, the possible avenues of research on Bombal's work as a self-translator and practitioner of translingual writing are more limited than those offered by Ferré's bilingual *oeuvre*. However, *The Shrouded Woman* and *House of Mist* merit far more attention than they have received so far. It is important to keep in mind that Bombal's literary career did not, as notable Bombal scholars such as Guerra and Agosín have stated, end with the publication of "La historia de María Griselda" in 1946. Moreover, it is to be hoped that scholars will one day be allowed to examine the *Nachlass* Bombal left behind on her death in 1980. The manuscripts of the unfinished self-translations of *House of Mist* and *The Foreign Minister* to which Bombal referred in various letters and interviews may open up new avenues of research if they are released from the bank vault in Santiago de Chile where they languish today (cf. Pérez Firmat 138).

A second limitation of this study is that it does not develop a systematic theory that could serve as an alternative to the theory with which it takes issue. In this study, I have argued that the theory put forward by Hokenson and Munson in *The Bilingual Text* is hard to defend in the light of textual evidence. The view that textual

differences between self-translations and source texts are “primarily cultural because they are audience-oriented” (198), I have suggested, needs correction. However, more scholarship is needed to explore the complex transformations that take place when authors translate their own texts. The full extent of the task of developing a general theory about why self-translators often make substantial changes to the source text is plainly beyond the scope of this dissertation, and perhaps beyond the field of expertise of any individual scholar. Such a theory will have to allow for a variety of reasons or motivating forces, and I suspect that the most radical and most interesting changes that occur in self-translation do not stem from the author’s wish to conform to the expectations and conventions of a culturally different audience. I believe that, as a rule, changes are made for the sake of the work rather than for the sake of the reader. Authors who translate themselves often do inventive and fascinating things vis-à-vis their source material that cannot be explained by saying that the textual differences are “primarily cultural.” As noted in Chapter One, this study posits that one of the principal reasons why self-translating authors so frequently make drastic changes to their originals is that they are never really finished with their texts. The self-translating process therefore represents an opportunity to “redraft” the text, to make it new and different, to make sure that it “lives more and better” in another language (Derrida, “Des Tours de Babel” 179). A theory about what motivates self-translators to make textual changes will have to take into account what might be called the “creative impulse” in authors. It will also have to take into account that textual differences may have an aesthetic function, as they do, for example, in *Language Duel*. Certain kinds of non-obligatory shifts in the novels examined in this study, such as the shift from “El Morro Castle” (334) in *The House on the Lagoon* to “el castillo San Jerónimo” (356) in *La casa de la laguna*, can also be said to have some kind of “aesthetic” function. Such changes, I argued in Chapter Three, invoke a reader familiar with both versions of the novel.

While this dissertation has sought to interrogate the hypothesis put forward by Hokenson and Munson in ways that I hope will contribute to theoretical development within the nascent subfield of “self-translation studies” (Anselmi 17), its principal

aim has been to fill a gap in the scholarship on Bombal and Ferré. It is hoped, however, that this study is the start, not the end, of a discussion about the status of the self-translations and foreign-language texts of Bombal and Ferré, and that it provides a context for re-assessing the works of these two translingual writers.

Works Cited

- Acosta-Belén, Edna. "Rosario Ferré's Crossover Writing." *The Latino Review of Books* 2.2 (1996): 30-31. Print.
- Adams, Michael Ian. *Three Authors of Alienation: Bombal, Onetti, Carpentier*. Austin: U of Texas P, 1975. Print.
- Agosín, Marjorie. *Las desterradas del paraíso, protagonistas en la narrativa de María Luisa Bombal*. New York: Senda Nueva de Ediciones, 1983. Print.
- Aira, César. *Diccionario de autores latinoamericanos*. Buenos Aires: Emecé, 2001. Print.
- Allatson, Paul. *Latino Dreams: Transcultural Traffic and the U.S. National Imaginary*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002. Print.
- Allende, Isabel. *La casa de los espíritus*. Barcelona, Plaza & Janés, 1982. Print.
- Anderson Imbert, Enrique. *Historia de la literatura hispanoamericana*. 3 vols. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1966-74. Print.
- Anselmi, Simona. *On Self-Translation: An Exploration in Self-Translators' Teloi and Strategies*. Milano: LED, 2012. Print.
- Antoni, Roberto. "Piracy or Parody: The Relationship of *The House of the Spirits* to *One Hundred Years of Solitude*." *Latin American Literary Review* 16.32 (1988): 16-28. Print.
- Aponte Ramos, Lola. "Recetario para el novelar híbrido: Esmeralda Santiago y Rosario Ferré." *Nómada* 3 (1997): 33-37. Print.
- Badajoz, Joaquín. "Rosario Ferré. De la sartén al fuego de la literatura." Rev. of *Language Duel / Duelo del lenguaje*, by Rosario Ferré. *Revista Literaria Baquiana* 39/40 (2005): n. pag. Web. 27 July 2012.
- Barak, Julie. "Navigating the Swamp: Fact and Fiction in Rosario Ferré's *The House on the Lagoon*." *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Languages Association* 31.2 (1998): 31-38. Print.

-
- Bassnett, Susan. "The self-translator as rewriter." *Self-Translation: Brokering Originality in Hybrid Culture*. Ed. Anthony Cordingley. London: Bloomsbury, 2013. 13-25. Print.
- . "Writing and translating." *The Translator as Writer*. Eds. Susan Bassnett and Peter Bush. London: Continuum, 2006. 173-183. Print.
- Bassnett, Susan, and André Lefevere. Preface. *Translation, History and Culture*. Ed. Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere. London: Pinter, 1990. ix. Print.
- Bauman, Zygmunt. *Culture as Praxis*. 1973. London: Sage, 1999. Print.
- Beatson, Jennifer. "Self-Translation and Re-Writing: *Maldito amor* and *Sweet Diamond Dust*." Diss. Vanderbilt University, 1998. *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*. Web. 21 Mar. 2013.
- Beaujour, Elizabeth Klosty. *Alien Tongues: Bilingual Russian Writer's of the "First" Emigration*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1989. Print.
- Beckett, Samuel. *En attendant Godot / Waiting for Godot*. New York: Grove, 2010. Print.
- . *Poems in English*. New York: Grove, 1961. Print.
- Beer, Ann. "Beckett's bilingualism." *The Cambridge Companion to Beckett*. Ed. John Pilling. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994. 209-221. Print.
- Behiels, Lieve. "Las estrategias de Rosario Ferré, ¿traductora?" *Convergencias e interferencias. Escribir desde los borde(r)s*. Ed. Rita De Maeseneer. Valencia: Ediciones eXcultura, 2001. 103-115. Print.
- Belsey, Catherine. *A Future for Criticism*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011. Print.
- Benjamin, Walter. "The Task of the Translator." 1923. Trans. Harry Zohn. *The Translation Studies Reader*. Ed. Lawrence Venuti. New York: Routledge, 2005. 15-23. Print.
- Berman, Antoine. *The Experience of the Foreign: Culture and Translation in Romantic Germany*. 1984. Trans. S. Heyvaert. Albany: State U of New York P, 1992. Print.
- Biasetti, Giada. "El poder subsersivo de *La casa de la laguna* y *La niña blanca* y los pájaros sin pies: La centralización de la periferia." *Hispania* 94.1 (2011): 35-49. *Project Muse*. Web. 24 May 2012.

-
- Bombal, María Luisa. *Casa de niebla*. Trans. Lucía Guerra. Santiago de Chile: Ediciones Universidad Católica de Chile, 2012. Print.
- . *House of Mist*. New York: Farrar, 1947. Print.
- . *House of Mist and The Shrouded Woman*. Austin: U of Texas P, 1995. Print.
- . *La amortajada*. 1st ed. Buenos Aires: Sur, 1938. Print.
- . *La amortajada*. 2nd ed. Santiago de Chile: Nascimento, 1941. Print.
- . *La amortajada*. 3rd ed. Santiago de Chile: Nascimento, 1962. Print.
- . "La historia de María Griselda." *Sur* 142 (1946): 41-63. Print.
- . *La historia de María Griselda*. Quillota: El Observador, 1976. Print.
- . *New Islands and Other Stories*. Trans. Richard and Lucía Cunningham. New York: Farrar, 1982. Print.
- . *Obras completas*. 1996. Ed. Lucía Guerra. Santiago de Chile: Andrés Bello, 2000. Print.
- . *The Shrouded Woman*. 1st ed. New York: Farrar, 1948. Print.
- Borges, Jorge Luis. "La amortajada." *Jorge Luis Borges en Sur (1931-1980)*. Eds. Sara Luisa del Carril and Mercedes Rubio de Socchi. Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1999. 153-154. Print.
- . *Obras completas*. Ed. Carlos V. Frías. Buenos Aires: Emecé, 1974. Print.
- . *This Craft of Verse*. Ed. Calin-Andrei Mihailescu. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2000. Print.
- Brace, Marjorie. "Death, Nos. 1 and 2." Rev. of *The Shrouded Woman*, by María Luisa Bombal. *The Saturday Review* 1 May 1948: 26-27. *UNZ.org*. Web. 20 Mar. 2013.
- Brink, André. "Devoid of a political agenda." Interview by Nicholas A. Basbanes. *The Gainesville Sun* 16 Mar. 1997: 5D. *Google News*. Web. 21 Mar. 2013.
- Byrkjeland, Bo. "María Luisa Bombal: Self-Translator." *Corrientes: Revista nórdica de estudios iberoamericanos* 1 (2011): 41-71. Print.
- Caballero, María. *Ficciones isleñas: Estudios sobre la literatura de Puerto Rico*. San Juan: La Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1999. Print.
- Campoamor, Ramón de. "La originalidad y el plagio." *Revista Europea* 95.6 (1875): 241-249. Facsim. ed. *Proyecto Filosofía en español*. Web. 16 May 2013.

-
- . "Las dos linternas." *Doloras y Humoradas*. By Ramón de Campoamor. *Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes*. Web. 24 Apr. 2013.
- Cardona de Gibert, Angeles. Preface. *María Luisa Bombal: La feminidad enajenada*. By Hernán Vidal. Barcelona: Hijos de José Bosch, 1976. 7-25. Print.
- Castillo García, Gema Soledad. *La (auto)traducción como mediación entre culturas*. Alcalá: Universidad de Alcalá, 2006. Print.
- . "La autotraducción literaria como puente de comunicación entre pueblos." *Inmigración, cultura y traducción: reflexiones interdisciplinarias*. Eds. Nobel Augusto Perdu Honeyman et al. Almería: Universidad de Almería, 2006. 225-233. Print.
- . "La mujer creadora y traductora: La escritora puertorriqueña Rosario Ferré." *Género, lenguaje y traducción: Actas del Primer Seminario Internacional sobre Género y Lenguaje (El género en la traducción ~ La traducción del género), Valencia 16-18 octubre 2002*. Ed. José Santaemilia. Valencia: Universitat de València, 2003. 379-392. Print.
- . *Rosario Ferré, mediadora entre culturas: sus autotraducciones de "Maldito amor" y "The House on the Lagoon."* Diss. Universidad de Alcalá, 2005. Print.
- "Chile: Escapist." Rev. of *House of Mist*, by María Luisa Bombal. *Time* 14 Apr. 1947: 42. Print.
- Cocco, Simona. "Lost in (Self-)Translation? Riflessioni sull'autotraduzione." *Annali della Facoltà di Lingue e Letterature Straniere di Sassari* 6 (2009): 103-118. Web. 14 Apr. 2013.
- . *The House on the Lagoon/La casa de la laguna di Rosario Ferré: tra riscrittura e autotraduzione*. Sassari: Magnum-Edizioni, 2005. Print.
- Danby, Nicola. "The Space Between: Self-Translator Nancy Huston's *Limbes/Limbo*." *La linguistique* 1.40 (2004): 83-96. Print.
- Darío, Rubén. *Obras completas I: Poesía*. Ed. Julio Ortega. Barcelona: Galaxia Gutenberg, 2007. Print.

-
- De Man, Paul. "Conclusions: Walter Benjamin's 'The Task of the Translator'." *The Resistance to Theory*. 1986. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2009. 73-105. Print.
- Derrida, Jacques. "Des Tours de Babel." *Difference in Translation*. Ed. Joseph F. Graham. London: Cornell UP, 1985. 209-248. Print.
- . "Des Tours de Babel." Trans. Joseph F. Graham. *Difference in Translation*. Ed. Joseph F. Graham. London: Cornell UP, 1985. 165-207. Print.
- . "Living On." 1979. Trans. James Hulbert. *Deconstruction and Criticism*. London: Continuum, 2004. 62-142. Print.
- . *Monolingualism of the Other; or, The Prosthesis of Origin*. 1996. Trans. Patrick Mensah. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998. Print.
- . *Positions*. Trans. Alan Bass. 1972. London: Continuum, 2004. Print.
- . *The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation*. 1982. Trans. Peggy Kamuf. Ed. Christie McDonald. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1988. Print.
- . "What Is a 'Relevant' Translation?" Trans. Lawrence Venuti. *Critical Inquiry* 27.2 (2001): 174-200. Print.
- Desbiens, Patrice. *L'homme invisible / The Invisible Man*. Ottawa: Prise de Parole / Penumbra Press, 1981. Print.
- Díaz, Roberto Ignacio. *Unhomely Rooms: Foreign Tongues and Spanish American Literature*. Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 2002. 55-57. Print.
- Dorfman, Ariel. "Resisting Hybridity." *Voice-Overs: Translation and Latin American Literature*. Eds. Daniel Balderston and Marcy Schwartz. New York: SUNY, 2002. Print.
- Dickson, Robert. Introduction. *L'homme invisible / The Invisible Man*. By Patrice Desbiens. Ottawa: Prise de Parole / Penumbra Press, 1981. Print.
- Du Maurier, Daphne. *Rebecca*. London: Victor Gallancz, 1938. Print.
- Dutton, Denis, ed. *The Forger's Art: Forgery and the Philosophy of Art*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1983. Print.

- Echenberg, Margo. ““¿Se mueve la niebla con nosotros?”: Personaje y vanguardia en María Luisa Bombal.” *EN-CLAVES del pensamiento* 4.7 (2010): 143-160. *Red de Revistas Científicas de América Latina, el Caribe, España y Portugal*. Web. 29 Mar. 2013.
- Eco, Umberto. *Mouse or Rat? Translation as Negotiation*. 2003. London: Phoenix, 2004. Print.
- Eliot, T.S. Interview by Donald Hall. *Writers at Work*. Ed. George Plimpton. New York: Viking, 1963. 89-110. Print. *The Paris Review Interviews*, 2nd Ser.
- Enzensberger, Hans Magnus. “An Interview with Hans Magnus Enzensberger.” Interview by Nick Caistor. *InOtherWords* 25 (2005): 53-57. Print.
- Erro-Peralta, Nora. “Ferré, Rosario.” *Latin American Women Writers: An Encyclopedia*. Eds. María Claudia André and Eva Paulino Bueno. New York: Routledge, 2008. 176-179. Print.
- Even-Zohar, Itamar. “The Position of Translated Literature within the Literary Polysystem.” 1978. *Poetics Today* 11.1 (1990): 45-51. *JSTOR*. Web. 17 June 2013.
- Ewart, Germán. “Retratos: María Luisa Bombal.” 1962. *Obras completas*. By María Luisa Bombal. Ed. Lucía Guerra. Santiago de Chile: Andrés Bello, 2000. 385-396. Print.
- Federman, Raymond. “A Voice Within a Voice.” *Critifiction: Postmodern Essays*. Albany: SUNY, 1993. 73-84. Print.
- Fernández, Magali. *El discurso narrativo en la obra de María Luisa Bombal*. Madrid: Pliegos, 1988. Print.
- Ferré, Rosario. *A la sombra de tu nombre*. Mexico City: Alfaguara, 2001. Print.
- . *Antología personal*. San Juan: La Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 2009. Print.
- . “A Side View.” Interview by Bridget Kevane. *Latina Self-Portraits: Interviews with Contemporary Women Writers*. Eds. Bridget Kevane and Juanita Heredia. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 2000. 59-68. Print.
- . “Bilingual Author Finds Something Gained in Translation.” Interview by Mireya Navarro. *New York Times* 8 Sept. 1998: 2-3. Print.

-
- . "Bilingual in Puerto Rico." *Switching Languages: Translingual Writers Reflect on Their Craft*. Ed. Steven Kellman. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2003. 137-138. Print.
- . "Entrevista a Rosario Ferré: *In between dos worlds*." Interview by Gema Soledad Castillo García. *Centro Journal* 17.2 (2005): 233-247. Print.
- . *Eccentric Neighborhoods*. New York: Farrar, 1997. Print.
- . "Familia e historia nacional." *Sobre castas y puentes: Conversaciones con Elena Poniatowska, Rosario Ferré y Diamela Eltit*. By Walescka Pino-Ojeda. Santiago de Chile: Editorial Cuarto Propio, 2000. 77-135. Print.
- . *Fisuras*. San Juan: Callejón, 2006. Print.
- . *Flight of the Swan*. New York: Farrar, 2001. Print.
- . *Language Duel / Duelo del lenguaje*. New York: Vintage, 2002. Print.
- . *La casa de la laguna*. Barcelona: Emecé, 1996. Print.
- . *Las dos Venecias*. Mexico City: Joaquín Mortiz, 1992. Print.
- . *Maldito amor*. Mexico City: Joaquín Mortiz, 1986. Print.
- . *Memoria*. Veracruz, Mexico: Universidad Veracruzana, 2011. Print.
- . "Ofelia a la deriva en las aguas de la memoria." El coloquio de las perras. By Rosario Ferré. Harrisonburg: Editorial Cultural, 1990. 67-82. Print.
- . "On Destiny, Language, and Translation; or, Ophelia Adrift in the C. & O. Canal." *The Youngest Doll*. By Rosario Ferré. Lincoln: U of Nebraska Press, 1991. 153-165. Print.
- . *Papeles de Pandora*. Mexico City; Joaquín Mortiz, 1976. Print.
- . "Rosario Ferré." Interview by Donna Perry. *Backtalk: Women Writers Speak Out*. Ed. Donna Perry. New Jersey: Rutgers UP, 1993. 83-103. Print.
- . "Rosario Ferré entre el inglés y el español: 'Let oneself become the meeting place of both.'" Interview by Gloria Díaz Rinks and Elisabeth Sisson-Guerrero. *Dactylus* 16 (1997): 61-69. Print.
- . *Sweet Diamond Dust*. New York: Ballantine, 1988. Print.
- . *The House on the Lagoon*. New York: Farrar, 1995. Print.
- . *The Youngest Doll*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska Press, 1991. Print.
- . *Vecindarios excéntricos*. New York: Farrar, 1999. Print.

-
- . *Vuelo del cisne*. New York: Vintage, 2002. Print.
- . "Writing in Between." *Hopscotch* 1.1 (1997): 102-109. Print.
- Fitch, Brian T. *Beckett and Babel: An Investigation into the Status of the Bilingual Work*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1988. Print.
- Fornerín, Miguel Ángel. *Ensayos sobre literatura puertorriqueña y dominicana*. Santo Domingo: Ediciones Ferilibro, 2004. Print.
- Forster, Leonard. *The Poet's Tongues: Multilingualism in Literature*. London: Cambridge UP, 1970. Print.
- Foucault, Michel. "What Is an Author?". 1969. Trans. Josué V. Harari. *The Book History Reader*. Eds. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery. London: Routledge, 2010. 281-291. Print.
- Friedman, Ellen. Rev. of *The House on the Lagoon*, by Rosario Ferré. *Review of Contemporary Fiction* 16.1 (1996): 168. Print.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method*. 1960. Trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall. Rev. ed. London: Continuum, 2006. Print.
- Gálvez Lira, Glora. *María Luisa Bombal: Realidad y fantasía*. Potomac: Scripta Humanistica, 1986. Print.
- García Márquez, Gabriel. *Cien años de soledad*. 1967. Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1968. Print.
- . "Los pobres traductores buenos." 1982. *Notas de prensa 1980-1984*. Madrid: Mondadori, 1991. 290-292. Print.
- García Pinto, Magdalena. "Ferré, Rosario." *Encyclopedia of Latin American and Caribbean Literature, 1900-2003*. Eds. Daniel Balderston and Mike Gonzalez. London: Routledge, 2004. 206-207. Print.
- Genette, Gérard. *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*. 1982. Trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1997. Print.
- . *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*. 1987. Trans. Jane E. Lewin. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997. Print.
- Gentes, Eva. "Potentials and Pitfalls of Publishing Self-Translations as Bilingual Editions." *Orbis Litteraturum* 68.3 (2013): 266-281. Print.

- Gibilisco, Tiziana. "Adaptación y cambio de género en la versión norteamericana de la obra de María Luisa Bombal." *Studi di letteratura ispano-americana* 37-38 (2007): 75-85. Print.
- Gligo, Agata. *María Luisa (sobre la vida de María Luisa Bombal)*. 2nd ed. Santiago de Chile: Andrés Bello, 1985. Print.
- Goic, Cedomil. *La novela chilena: Los mitos degradados*. Santiago de Chile: Universitaria, 1968. Print.
- González Echevarría, Roberto. "BdeORridaGES (Borges y Derrida)." *Isla a su vuelo fugitiva: ensayos críticos sobre literatura hispanoamericana*. Madrid: Porrúa, 1983. 205-215. Print.
- Gosser Esquilín, Mary Ann. "Rosario Ferré: Voice of the Writer, Voice of the Translator." *Journal of West Indian Literature* 8.2 (1999): 91-99. JSTOR. Web. 6 June 2013.
- Grayson, Jane. *Nabokov Translated: A Comparison of Nabokov's Russian and English Prose*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1977. Print.
- Green, Julien. *Le langage et son double / The Language and its Shadow*. Paris: Editions de la Différence, 1985. Print.
- Grossman, Judith. "Constructing and reconstructing." Rev. of *The House on the Lagoon*, by Rosario Ferré. *The Women's Review of Books* 13.5 (1996): 5. Print.
- Grutman, Rainier. "Auto-translation." *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*. Eds. Mona Baker and Kirsten Malmkjær. London: Routledge, 1998. 17-20. Print.
- . "L'Autotraduction : Dilemme social et entre-deux textuel." *Atelier de Traduction* 7 (2007): 219-229. Print.
- . "Self-translation." *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*. Eds. Mona Baker and Gabriela Saldanha. Rev. ed. London: Routledge, 2009. 257-260. Print.

-
- Guerra, Lucía. "Escritura y trama biográfica en la narrativa de María Luisa Bombal." *Literatura como intertextualidad: IX Simposio Internacional de Literatura. Universidad del Norte, Asunción, Paraguay, 22 al 27 de julio de 1991*. Ed. Juana Alcira Arancibia. Buenos Aires: Vinciguerra, 1993. 118-136. Print.
- . *La narrativa de María Luisa Bombal: una visión de la existencia femenina*. Madrid: Playor, 1980. Print.
- . "María Luisa Bombal." *Spanish American Women Writers: A Bio-Bibliographical Source Book*. Ed. Diane E. Marting. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1990. 41-52. Print.
- . Preface. *Casa de niebla*. By María Luisa Bombal. Trans. Lucía Guerra. Santiago de Chile: Ediciones Universidad Católica de Chile, 2012. 9-14. Print.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. 1927. Trans. Joan Stambaugh. Rev. ed. Albany: SUNY, 2010. Print.
- Hellman, Lillian. *Scoundrel Time*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1976. Print.
- . *Tiempo de canallas*. 1980. Trans. Rosario Ferré. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1988. Print.
- Hintz, Suzanne S. *Rosario Ferré, A Search for Identity*. New York: Peter Lang, 1995. Print.
- Hokenson, Jan Walsh, and Marcella Munson. *The Bilingual Text: History and Theory of Literary Self-Translation*. Manchester: St. Jerome, 2007. Print.
- Rev. of *House of Mist*, by María Luisa Bombal. *The New Yorker* 10 May 1947: 105. Print.
- Rev. of *House of Mist*, by María Luisa Bombal. *San Francisco Chronicle*. 20 Apr. 1947: 22. Print.
- Humboldt, Wilhelm von. "A Theory of Translation." Trans. André Lefevere. *Translating Literature: The German Tradition from Luther to Rosenzweig*. Ed. André Lefevere. Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 1977. 40-45. Print.
- Huston, Nancy. *Limbes / Limbo: Un hommage à Samuel Beckett*. Arles: Actes Sud, 1998. Print.

- Irizarry, Ylce. "Doubly troubling narratives: Writing 'the oppression of possibility' in Puerto Rico and Cuba." *Comparative American Literature: An International Journal* 4.2 (2006): 197-217. Print.
- Iser, Wolfgang. *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*. 1976. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1980. Print.
- . *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett*. 1972. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1978. Print.
- Jaffe, Janice. "Translation and Prostitution: Rosario Ferré's *Maldito amor* and *Sweet Diamond Dust*." *Latin American Literary Review* 23.46 (1995): 66-82. Print.
- Jerome. "Letter to Pammachius." Trans. Paul Carroll. *Western Translation Theory from Herodotus to Nietzsche*. Ed. Douglas Robinson. Manchester: St. Jerome, 2002. 23-30. Print.
- Jones, W. Glyn. "Karen Blixen's Translations of Her Own Work." *Scandinavica* 37.1 (1998): 45-65. Print.
- Kallifatides, Theodor. "About Translation." Trans. Eivor Martinus. *Swedish Book Review* 2 (2003): 3-4. Print.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. 1790. Trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews. Ed. Paul Guyer. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000. Print.
- Kellman, Steven G. *The Translingual Imagination*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2000. Print.
- Kostopulos-Cooperman, Celeste. *The Lyrical Vision of María Luisa Bombal*. London: Tamesis, 1988. Print.
- Klein-Lataud, Christine. "Les voix parallèles de Nancy Huston." *TTR : traduction, terminologie, rédaction* 9.1 (1996): 211-231. Print.
- Kristal, Efraín. *Invisible Work: Borges and Translation*. Nashville: Vanderbilt UP, 2002. Print.
- Lefevere, André. *Translating Literature: The German Tradition from Luther to Rosenzweig*. Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 1977. Print.
- Levine, Suzanne Jill. "House of Mist: House of Mirrors." *María Luisa Bombal: Apreciaciones críticas*. Eds. Marjorie Agosín, Elena Gascón-Vera, and Joy Renjilian-Burgy. Arizona: Bilingual Press, 1987. 136-146. Print.

-
- . "The Latin American novel in English translation." *The Cambridge Companion to the Latin American Novel*. Ed. Efraín Kristal. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005. 297-317. Print.
- Lindstrom, Naomi. Foreword. *House of Mist and The Shrouded Woman*. By María Luisa Bombal. Austin: U of Texas P, 1995. vii-xii. Print.
- Llanos, Bernardita M. *Passionate Subjects / Split Subjects in Twentieth-Century Literature in Chile: Brunet, Bombal, and Eltit*. Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 2009. Print.
- Longenbach, James. "Paying Attention – Slowly." Interview by Kathleen McGarvey. *The Rochester Review* 75.5 (2013): 16-17. Web. 26 June 2013.
- Lyon Johnson, Kelli. "Writing Home: Mapping Puerto Rican Collective Memory in *The House on the Lagoon*." *Writing Off the Hyphen: New Critical Perspectives on the Literature of the Puerto Rican Diaspora*. Eds. José L. Torres-Padilla and Carmen Haydée Rivera. Seattle: U of Washington P, 2008. 239-255. Print.
- Martinetto, Vittoria. "María Luisa Bombal e *House of Mist*: storia di un *embrujo*." *Las páginas se unieron como plumas: Homenaje a Hernán Loyola*. Eds. Domenico Antonio Cusato and Antonio Melis. Messina: Andrea Lippolis Editore, 2002. 227-243. Print.
- Mattalia, Sonia. *Máscaras suele vestir. Pasión y revuelta: escrituras de mujeres en América Latina*. Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2003. Print.
- Méndez-Clark, Ronald S. "Reescritura, traducción, cambio de voz en Rosario Ferré." *La Torre* 5.17 (2000): 387-417. Print.
- Mercado, Melissa. *Puerto Rican Culture and Identity As Seen in Rosario Ferré's The House on the Lagoon*. Lexington: LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2012. Print.
- Mooney, Sinéad. *A Tongue Not Mine: Beckett and Translation*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011. Print.
- Mounin, Georges. *Les belles infidèles*. Paris: Cahiers du Sud, 1955. Print.
- Münnich, Susana. *Casa de hacienda / Carpa de circo (María Luisa Bombal, Violeta Parra)*. Santiago de Chile: LOM, 2006. Print.

- Nance, Kimberly A. "Contained in Criticism, Lost in Translation: Representation of Sexuality and the Fantastic in Bombal's *La última niebla* and *House of Mist*." *Hispanófila* 130 (2000): 41-51. Print.
- Negrón-Muntaner, Frances. *Boricua Pop: Puerto Ricans and the Latinization of American Culture*. New York: New York UP, 2004. Print.
- Nikolaou, Paschalis. "Notes on translating the self." *Translation and Creativity: Perspectives on Creative Writing and Translation Studies*. Eds. Manuela Perteghella and Eugenia Loffredo. London: Continuum, 2006. 19-32. Print.
- Novalis. "Translation as Original Work." Trans. André Lefevere. *Translating Literature: The German Tradition from Luther to Rosenzweig*. Ed. André Lefevere. Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 1977. 65. Print.
- Oustinoff, Michaël. *Bilinguisme d'écriture et auto-traduction : Julien Green, Samuel Beckett, Vladimir Nabokov*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001. Print.
- Ortega, Julio. Preface. *Fisuras*. By Rosario Ferré. San Juan: Callejón, 2006. 7-14. Print.
- Page, Patricia. "Sunstroke." Rev. of *The Shrouded Woman*, by María Luisa Bombal. *New York Times* 6 June 1948: n. pag. *New York Times Article Archive*. Web. 25 Nov. 2010.
- Paravisini-Gebert, Lizabeth. "Women Against the Grain: The Pitfalls of Theorizing Caribbean Women's Fiction." *Winds of Change: The Transforming Voices of Caribbean Women Writers and Scholars*. Eds. Adele S. Newson and Linda Strong-Leek. New York: Peter Lang, 1998. 161-168. Print.
- Paz, Octavio. *Corriente alterna*. 1967. Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1998. Print.
- . *Traducción: literatura y literalidad*. 1971. Barcelona: Tusquets Editores, 1990. Print.
- Pérez Firmat, Gustavo. *Tongue Ties: Logo-Eroticism in Anglo-Hispanic Literature*. New York: Palgrave, 2003. Print.
- Plutarch. *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*. Ed. and revised by Arthur Hugh Clough. New York: Modern Library, 1992. Print. The Dryden translation.

-
- Popovič, Anton. *Dictionary for the Analysis of Literary Translation*. Edmonton: University of Alberta, 1976. Print.
- Pound, Ezra. *ABC of Reading*. 1934. New York: New Directions, 2010. Print.
- Risset, Jacqueline. "Joyce translates Joyce." 1973. Trans. Daniel Pick. *Comparative Criticism: An Annual Journal* (1989): 3-21. Print.
- Rivera, Carmen S. "Rosario Ferré." *Modern Latin-American Fiction Writers*. Eds. William Luis and Ann González. Detroit: Gale Research Inc., 1994. 130-137. Print. *Dictionary of Literary Biography* 145, 2nd Ser.
- Rivera, Edward. "Annotations in the Margins." Rev. of *The House on the Lagoon*, by Rosario Ferré. *Washington Post Book World* 1 Oct. 1995: 5. Print.
- Rodríguez Monegal, Emir. "Borges y Derrida: boticarios." *Maldoror* 21 (1985): 123-132. Print.
- Rubio, Patricia. "House of Mist, de María Luisa Bombal: una novela olvidada." *Literatura y lingüística* 11 (1998): n. pag. *Red de Revistas Científicas de América Latina, el Caribe, España y Portugal*. Web. 20 Mar. 2013.
- Ruta, Suzanne. "Blood of the Conquistadors." Rev. of *The House on the Lagoon*, by Rosario Ferré. *New York Times Book Review* 17 Sept. 1995: 28. Print.
- Sagoff, Mark. "The Aesthetic Status of Forgeries." *The Forger's Art: Forgery and the Philosophy of Art*. Ed. Denis Dutton. Berkeley: U of California P, 1983. 131-152. Print.
- Sandín, Lyn Di Iorio. *Killing Spanish: Literary Essays on Ambivalent U.S. Latino/a Identity*. New York: Palgrave, 2004. Print.
- Santoyo, Julio-César. "Autotraducciones: Una perspectiva histórica." *Meta: journal des traducteurs / Meta: Translators' Journal* 50.3 (2005): 858-867. Print.
- . "Blank Spaces in the History of Translation." *Charting the Future of Translation History*. Eds. George L. Bastin and Paul F. Bandia. Ottawa: U of Ottawa P, 2006. 11-43. Print.
- . "On mirrors, dynamics and self-translations." *Self-Translation: Brokering Originality in Hybrid Culture*. Ed. Anthony Cordingley. London: Bloomsbury, 2013. 27-38. Print.

- . "Rosario Ferré: Entre dos lenguas, entre dos culturas." *Estudios de filología inglesa: Homenaje al profesor José M^a Ruiz Ruiz*. Eds. Pilar Abad García and José Ramón Fernández Suárez. Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid, 2003. 337-352. Print.
- Sarkonak, Ralph, and Richard Hodgson. "Seeing in Depth: the Practice of Bilingual Writing." *Visible Language* 27.1 (1993): 7-39. Print.
- Schleiermacher, Friedrich. "On the Different Methods of Translating." 1813. Trans. André Lefevere. *Translating Literature: The German Tradition from Luther to Rosenzweig*. Ed. André Lefevere. Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 1977. 67-89. Print.
- Shakespeare, William. *Antony and Cleopatra*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1964. Print.
- Shaw, Donald L. *The Post-Boom in Spanish American Fiction*. Albany: SUNY, 1998. Print.
- Shklovsky, Victor. "Art as Technique." *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*. Trans. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1965. 3-24. Print.
- Rev. of *The Shrouded Woman*, by María Luisa Bombal. *The New Yorker* 15 May 1948: 121-122. Print.
- Rev. of *The Shrouded Woman*, by María Luisa Bombal. *Kirkus Reviews* 19 Apr. 1948: n. pag. *Kirkus Reviews Archives*. Web. 20 Mar. 2013.
- Shuttleworth, Mark, and Moira Cowie. 1997. *Dictionary of Translation Studies*. Manchester: St. Jerome, 2007. Print.
- Simonovis, Leonora. "La casa de la laguna de Rosario Ferré: verdad histórica frente a verdad literaria." *Actual* 3.55-56 (2004): 11-21. Print.
- Sommer, Doris. *Bilingual Aesthetics: A New Sentimental Education*. Durham: Duke UP, 2004. Print.
- . Introduction. *Bilingual Games: Some Literary Investigations*. Ed. Doris Sommer. New York: Palgrave, 2003. 1-18. Print.
- Stavans, Ilan. "Serving Two Masters." Rev. of *The House on the Lagoon*, by Rosario Ferré. *The Nation* 20 Nov. 1995: 640-642. Print.

-
- Steiner, George. *Extraterritorial: Papers on Literature and the Language Revolution*. 1971. New York: Atheneum, 1976. Print.
- Strehle, Susan. *Transnational Women's Fiction: Unsettling Home and Homeland*. New York: Palgrave, 2008. Print.
- Sullivan, Richard. "Mystery and Terror." Rev. of *House of Mist*, by María Luisa Bombal. *New York Times* 13 Apr. 1947: 18. Print.
- Toury, Gideon. *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1995. Print.
- Umpierre, Luz María. Rev. of *Language Duel / Duelo del lenguaje*, by Rosario Ferré. *Chasqui: revista de literatura latinoamericana* 31.2 (2002): 126-128. JSTOR. Web. 27 July 2012.
- Urraca, Beatriz. "He said/She said: Gendered historical discourses in Rosario Ferré's *The House on the Lagoon*." *Centro Journal* 17.2 (2005): 223-231. Print.
- Vanderschelden, Isabelle. "Authority in Literary Translation: Collaborating with the Author." *Translation Review* 56.1 (1998): 22-31. Print.
- Varas, Patricia. "*La casa de la laguna* y la nueva novela hispanoamericana." *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos* 33.2 (2006): 3-14. Print.
- Vélez Román, Lydia. "Violencia y fronteras móviles en *La casa de la laguna*, de Rosario Ferré." *Alba de América: Revista Literaria* 20.37-38 (2001): 167-176. Print.
- Venuti, Lawrence. *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*. 1995. Rev. ed. London: Routledge, 2009. Print.
- Vial, Sara. "Cronología de María Luisa Bombal." *La historia de María Griselda*. By María Luisa Bombal. Quillota: El Observador, 1976. 81-85. Print.
- Vian, Elisa Carolina. "Cuando el amor triunfa: *House of Mist* o la reescritura de *La última niebla*, de María Luisa Bombal." *Mujeres en el umbral: La iniciación femenina en las escritoras hispánicas*. Eds. Emilia Perassi and Susanna Regazzoni. Sevilla: Editorial Renacimiento, 2006. 199-217. Print.
- Vinay, Jean-Paul, and Jean Darbelnet. "Methodology for Translation." 1958. Trans. Juan C. Sager and M.-J. Hamel. *The Translation Studies Reader*. Ed. Lawrence Venuti. New York: Routledge, 2005. 84-93. Print.

- Waisman, Sergio. *Borges and Translation: The Irreverence of the Periphery*.
Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 2005. Print.
- Waugh, Patricia. *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*.
London: Methuen, 1984. Print.
- Weldt-Basson, Helene Carol. *Subversive Silences: Nonverbal Expression and Implicit
Narrative Strategies in the Works of Latin American Women Writers*.
Cranbury, USA: Associated University Presses, 2009. Print.
- Wenzel, Marita. "Houses, Cellars and Caves in Selected Novels from Latin America
and South Africa." *Literary Landscapes: From Modernism to Postcolonialism*.
Eds. Attie de Lange et al. London: Palgrave, 2008. 143-160. Print.
- West, Alan. *Dar nombres a la lluvia / Finding Voices in the Rain*. Trans. Alan West
and Mark Schafer. Madrid: Verbum, 1995. Print.
- Wolfe, Bertram. "A Gem From a Chilean Novelist." Rev. of *House of Mist*, by María
Luisa Bombal. *New York Herald Tribune* 13 Apr. 1947: 4. Print.