"Una semana de siete días" as "A Week is Seven Days":

Translating Magali García Ramis for my Senior Thesis Project

Rebecca Garonzik

May 10, 2005

Introduction

This paper is the result of a year-long process of translation that began with my loosely formed desire to develop a text in English that would convey the beauty and power characteristic of a Spanish-language original. This process is now culminating in a fully translated story, a submission for publication, and a presentation of what I have learned as a result. When I say the words, "what I have learned," the first things that come to my mind are *patience* and *perseverance*, these two most indispensable characteristics of a translator that I have struggled to develop over the course of the past year. Learning to focus my attention on one project for so long without abandoning it whenever the work seemed insurmountable or when I temporarily lost interest at first came as an enormous challenge to me. The year seemed to stretch out endlessly before me, and sometimes I wondered, "what could I have possibly been thinking when I chose to subject myself to such frustration?" Now as I have become more familiar with the process of translation, I have found that it is a living thing, a space that I have chosen to inhabit and have grown accustomed to, and I believe that it will come as something as a surprise to me when the project is finished.

The topics that I intend to address in this paper are the knowledge and skills that I have developed in response to being exposed to the challenges of the translating space and why I perceive what I have learned as valuable. I will use material from my preliminary thesis paper to present some of the intentions and expectations that I had in embarking upon this project and will compare these with what actually occurred in my experience. Much of the literary analysis that I presented in my first paper has remained

consistent and will appear largely unaltered in this paper with perhaps a few minor additions. Regarding the extent to which I have actually utilized translation theory or seen this theory manifest itself in my own translation process, my experience has often coincided with theories that I have studied. At other times, due to the complexity of translation itself, the experience has surpassed anything that I could have imagined or that any theory could have possibly accounted for. One of the chief concepts that I addressed in my first paper was the notion that translation and interpretation are not dissimilar acts. I will open this paper by articulating the significance of this concept for the person who sets out to translate a work of literature.

A great many theorists, artists, and philosophers have toiled with the question: What *is* translation, exactly? While this question lies beyond the scope of this paper, I will say that my experience translating has confirmed the view of many theorists which claim that 99.9% of translation is interpretation and that, in the case of literary translation, interpretation takes the form of literary analysis. It has been said that the role of the literary critic is to 'translate' the language of literature into a different discourse, namely the discourse of literary criticism. The role of the literary translator is similar to that of the critic in that both are dependent upon literary analysis. However, instead of leaving his or her analysis in the discourse of criticism, the literary translator translates that analysis back into the discourse of literature and into another language.

A lot of the conflict surrounding the act of translation comes from the assumption that there is a possibility of direct transference between two languages. Such an assumption fails to acknowledge the presence of the person performing the translation and the preferences and preconceptions that he or she brings to this process. Any attempt

to reduce a translation to some sort of an exact exchange misses what I have come to know and respect as the translator's art and makes light of the genius of the original author by underestimating the effort required to mirror her or his creation. That having been said, this paper constitutes an attempt to acknowledge and take responsibility for my role as interpreter of Magali García Ramis's work. Since I view both the act of reading and my personal involvement with the story as not separate from the act of translation itself, within this paper I explain my reading of "Una semana de siete días" and why I chose it as the story I would translate for my senior thesis project, as well as the ways in which these considerations manifested themselves in the mechanics of my translation. However, I hope that both this paper and my translation of "Una semana de siete días" will not only demonstrate the value of the translation process but will also stand as a testament to García Ramis's work, which, to quote the wisdom of Alberto Vital, is really all that the work of a good literary critic, (or literary translator), can be (Vital 4).

Why I Chose to Translate "Una semana de siete días" by Magali García Ramis

In my preliminary thesis paper I identified five criteria that I was hoping to satisfy in the work that I would translate: 1) that the work be written by a Latin American author; 2) that the author be a woman; 3) that I be moved to develop an emotional connection to the work; 4) that the work's content, (language, structure, literary techniques, context, and themes), be relatively familiar to me; and 5) that there be an adequate amount of literary criticism and biographical data on the author. Of those five criteria, I have found that the following requirements; a female author, the potential for emotional connection,, and my familiarity with the work's content, have had the greatest

impact on the work that I have done this semester. These last three criteria are also related in that all of them have their roots in my own personal history and identity.

My familiarity with the work's content and my inclination toward works written by female authors were largely determined by my undergraduate courses at Goucher College. My familiarity with the content of "Una semana de siete días" comes from having studied Caribbean Women's Literature in Professor Irline François' Women Studies class: "Is There Life Beyond the Looking-Glass?" and having traveled to the Caribbean. Although I have never been to Puerto Rico, I spent three weeks in Cuba studying Cuban Business and Culture on one of Goucher's three-week intensive-course-abroad programs with Professors Cristina Sáenz de Tejada and Janine Bowen. In addition, I spent two months in the Dominican Republic conducting interviews with Dominican union leaders, some of which I later translated into English under the guidance of Professors Michelle Tokarczyk and Cristina Sáenz de Tejada. For this reason I felt more comfortable interpreting a work written by a Caribbean author and set in a Caribbean context than I would have felt about translating a work written in an unfamiliar region of Latin America. My preference for the work to have been written by a woman was influenced, not only by my own gendered identity, but by the fact that, in my desire to understand my identity, I have taken a number of classes at Goucher focusing on women, and on women's literature in particular. As a result, I am actually more well-read in women's literature than in literature written by men.

I was moved to develop an emotional connection to "Una semana de siete días" both as a result of García Ramis's narrative technique as well as by her sensitive exploration of the theme of the mother-daughter relationship. In searching for a story to

translate, “Una semana de siete días” was one of the few stories I read that I found to be genuinely touching as well as intellectually intriguing. “Una semana de siete días” is a story about a little girl whose mother is an activist who disappears at the end of the story without the little girl ever learning why. The story covers the period from the death of the girl’s estranged father to the mother’s disappearance, and the little girl’s subsequent loss of innocence. The father’s death causes mother and daughter to travel to an unspecified island to stay with the girl’s paternal grandmother. While the island itself is not identified, in “Show and Tell the Difference” Maria Sola posits that the story takes place on the island of Puerto Rico and that the girl’s mother is a Puerto Rican Nationalist and a participant in the 1950 uprising. The girl herself is also left unnamed.

The title of the story comes from the fact that, after having paid their respects to the deceased, the girl’s mother, Luisa, is called out of town on what the reader is led to believe is a political mission, leaving the daughter in the care of her grandmother for a week’s time. When the grandmother asks her granddaughter whether she knows how many days there are in a week, the little girl responds that she does not know; she does not understand the concept of time. However, as the days scroll by without her mother’s return, the girl witnesses unusual and disconcerting events, including rioting and the appearance of the police in her grandmother’s home asking for her mother’s whereabouts and instructing the grandmother not to remove her granddaughter from town. In the last scene, as she stands with her knapsack on the balcony waiting for her mother to come looking for her, the girl testifies that she has learned how to measure time and that it has been more than seven days since her mother’s departure. The little girl’s awareness here confirms the saying that, to quote my thesis director Cristina Sáenz de Tejada: “Los niños

son niños pero no son tontos: Just because children are young doesn't mean they're stupid." In admitting that her mother has been gone for more than a week, the girl alludes to her own awareness that her mother may never return and to the loss of innocence that this realization represents.

Upon asking myself why it had been so easy for me to empathize with "Una semana de siete días," I realized that much of my own personal writing has also focused on my relationship with my mother. Even though "Una semana de siete días" is worlds away from my own life experience, I was able to resonate with the potential for support and creativity that García Ramis suggests can exist in the bond between a mother and her daughter. I believe that I was drawn to the story in my desire to further explore the creative potential in women's relationships in my own life, as well as to celebrate that potential in a larger social context.

Reading "Una semana de siete días": A Translator's Interpretation

As an interior monologue told from the little girl's perspective, "Una semana de siete días" portrays the girl's attempt to preserve the memory of her mother and the events surrounding her mother's disappearance. The girl begins narrating the story in the past imperfect tense, "My mother was a woman…," in order to convey the fact that the mother is, for some reason, no longer present in the temporal perspective from which the story is being told. The syntax and diction of the girl's language—simple, concrete terminology—also quickly inform the reader that she is speaking from an immature perspective, and is granting the reader direct, uncensored access to her thought process without being conscious that she is "speaking, or 'reflecting' a literary work" (Booth 155). The little girl's innocence keeps her from analyzing the events of the story so that

her narrative functions as a "direct relating of events" and is perceived by the reader as verisimilar, unmodified truth (Booth 155). This narrative technique allows García Ramis to convey key elements of the story without stating them explicitly. For example, rather than saying that her mother had many lovers, García Ramis has the little girl confide that "In every place we lived Mamá had a lot of friends – comrades she called them – and they would come to our house at night to talk about things and sometimes they'd play the guitar" (63). Another example of this technique appears in the following passage:

> Grandmother took the newspaper that came in the mornings to the balcony and read the front page very carefully. Then she had Rafaela read her lists of names that sometimes came on the inside pages in letters too tiny for her poor vision. I wasn't allowed to see. I could only skim the big black letters on the front page that said things like: AR RES TED UP RIS ING SUS PI CIOUS and LEFT ISTS that I didn't understand. (70)

The fact that the girl narrates these events to the reader without being able to comment on their significance forces the reader rely on her or his own powers of discernment. As a result, the reader has a much more direct and powerful experience of the gravity of these events than she or he would have given a more explicit narration.

Another narrative technique that García Ramis utilizes is that of "disguised narrators," other characters whose voices and silences help to clarify elements of the story that are beyond the little girl's understanding; in the absence of author commentary "every speech, every gesture, narrates" (Booth 152). For example, the reader infers the mother's role as an activist based on a letter from the little girl's aunts to her mother, which states, "Leave her here for a few months a year, in the summer…this much

traveling can't be good for her" (63). Another clue to the mother's vocation appears in the girl's description of the items in their apartment, one of which is "the painting of the man in a hat with a rifle in his hand," which is clearly a painting of a revolutionary soldier (63). García Ramis's innocent and open treatment of such sensitive issues infuses the story with a bittersweet irony, compounding the tension between the little girl's naivety and the horror of what eventually happens to her mother.

García Ramis further amplifies this tension by contrasting the little girl's unknowing references to the instability of her mother's lifestyle with the solidarity of their mother-daughter relationship. The little girl begins her depiction of her mother by stating that her mother was a woman who made men cry. She later enumerates two occasions when this phenomenon took place, clearly demonstrating that the mother was not a woman to let her life be governed by her attachment to a man. Conversely, the mother's devotion to her daughter is striking; she is pictured patiently explaining her week-long absence to her daughter, reminding her of another time when she had left and returned--telling her that she would never leave her: "You know Mamá would never leave you" and that she had never lied to her: "You know I've never lied to you – if I say that I'll come back, I will" (64, 8). In her introduction to the anthology Aquí cuentan las mujeres: muestra y estudio de cinco narradoras puertorriqueñas, María M. Sola posits that the character of the mother, Luisa, is "quizás la menos típica y la más amorosa de las madres que pinta la literatura puertorriqueña" – perhaps the least typical and most loving of the mothers depicted in Puerto Rican literature (Sola 32). As both an unmarried female political activist and an attentive caregiver, the mother simultaneously confounds the

stereotypes of the oppressed, objectified housewife and that of the emotionally detached and overtly masculine political leader.

Moreover, the solidarity of the mother-daughter relationship between the activist and her little girl, as well as their relationship with the grandmother, defies stereotypical representations of contention in female relationships. Sola observes that the little girl and her mother "son personajes que subrayan la relación única que puede establecerse entre mujeres" – are characters that highlight the unique relationship that can establish itself between women (Sola 32). For her part, the little girl feels she has a responsibility to support her mother by trusting her; "Mamá and I were comrades…and we always gave each other support" (69). The daughter puts complete faith in her mother's promise to return not only out of her sense of loyalty, however, but also because, up until her disappearance, the girl's mother constituted her only family and, hence, her only foundation. In the story's opening paragraph, the little girl informs the reader that her mother had "never pushed her away" (63). It is the girl's mother who shapes her understanding of the world, from the meaning of abstract concepts, such as the existence of God, to the definition of obscure vocabulary, like the word "adornment" (64, 9). Such singular dependence upon her mother for love, familiarity, insight, and grounding, makes the little girl's separation from her mother all the more severe and her solitude all the more profound.

Throughout the story, García Ramis constructs the little girl's isolation by amassing details that contribute to the foreignness of her environment. First of all, the girl is forced to leave her home to travel to an island that she does not remember ever having been to before. On the island she is met with unfamiliar and disorienting sights; the street

signs written in English are illegible to her and the Christmas lights in the plaza are the first she has ever seen. She has never been inside a house with a central patio, and she has no prior memory of the grandmother with whom she is to spend the week. Her mother attempts to reconcile this obvious incongruity with the notion that her daughter is growing up, telling her that "you're a big girl now and it's good for you to know your relatives" (64). However, both the girl's age and the fact that neither her mother nor her grandmother choose to explain the situation to her more fully prevent her from understanding the events surrounding her mother's disappearance. For example, the little girl has no reference for the man who was her father other than the picture her mother hangs on the wall above her bed; therefore, she cannot understand why her mother stands staring off into the distance when they visit his gravesite. Similarly, in the disagreement between mother and grandmother as to whether or not the girl should be allowed to accompany her mother to the local Christmas celebration, the mother points out that she will be leaving the next day and they settle the matter by speaking with their eyes. Neither the mother nor the grandmother wants to voice the possibility that the mother may never return.

The little girl's isolation, due to her inability to relate to and analyze her surroundings, serves as a metaphor for the political repression that exists as a social reality on the island. Although she is not aware of its significance, in this restrictive environment the little girl's attempt to express and understand her situation constitutes an act of political protest. By narrating her mother's disappearance, the little girl penetrates the silence that surrounds her. The nearness of the narrative voice, particularly in the last paragraph, makes the girl's experience seem all the more tangible. Until the end of the

story, the little girl narrates in the past tense from the naïve and immature perspective of a child. In the last paragraph, however, García Ramis's use of the present tense causes the reader to feel that he or she is present to hear the little girl speak. The psychological gap between the reader and the narrator also narrows since the reader becomes aware of the tragedy of the little girl's situation just as the little girl becomes aware that her mother may never return. By situating the narrative in the openness of a young girl's speech, García Ramis has created a voice to bear witness and speak out against crimes inflicted against innocence and against the sanctity of the relationship between a mother and her daughter.

As I read and reread the story, I found myself increasingly captivated by the voice of the little girl and by the way in which her perception shapes the story's development. Only later, with the help and guidance of my thesis advisors, did I learn that understanding this voice would occupy a central place in translating "Una semana de siete días" into English. In her essay "A Conversation on Translation," Margaret Sayers Peden asserts that "the overall most important key to the translation is to find its voice. Who is telling? Who is narrating? Who is singing?" (Peden 76). Precisely because the task of the translator involves being able to recreate the tone of the original within a new linguistic medium, the translator must be able to empathize, not only with what the story is saying, but with the way in which it is being said; the voice of the original must resonate within the translator in order for it to resound in her translation of the text. Sayers Peden explains that "once I can find the voice, other things begin to fall into place," things including but not limited to rhetorical levels and style.

In "Narrative Voice," Crawford Kilian and Jonathan David Jackson define narrative voice as the persona of a text that an author constructs using techniques such as diction, rhetoric, and point of view, forming "the first and most important lens through which readers perceive and receive texts" (Kilian 1). In Cristina Sáenz de Tejada's class on the Latin American short story I have learned that the most effective means of understanding what an author is trying to communicate in a short story is to analyze that author's use of narrative voice, which constitutes his or her chosen method of transmission. This follows from a quote by Edith Wharton that Norman Friedman included in his article "Point of View in Fiction: the Development of a Critical Concept":

> It should be the story-teller's first care to choose his reflecting mind deliberately…, to live inside the mind chosen, trying to feel, see and react exactly as the latter would…Only thus can the writer avoid attributing incongruities of thought and metaphor to his chosen interpreter" (Wharton in Friedman 115).

Herein we see that narrative voice not only relates to the *way* in which an author communicates a story, but that, as the author's "reflecting mind," narrative voice also informs the *substance* of that communication.

Wharton's choice of the word "interpreter" as a synonym for "reflecting mind" – referring to the role that narrative voice plays within a text – is telling. It indicates that the author's process of expressing a story from the perspective of one of its characters is itself a type of translation. Therefore, the translator's goal should also be to inhabit the reflecting mind of the original and so assume the same integrity of tone expressed therein. Due to the instrumental nature of the little girl's voice within "Una semana de

siete días," I chose to use the voice as a structuring tool, my goal being not only to preserve the rhetorical style of an adolescent girl, but also to ensure that the girl's narration would fulfill the same literary function in English that it does in Spanish. At which point the question became, having recognized the centrality of the little girl's voice within the story, how was I to go about embodying and articulating it?

From Spanish into English: Translation as Rearticulated Literary Analysis

The actual task of articulating "Una semana de siete días" using the English language effectively eradicated my idealized preconception of translation. Before I began this process of linguistic engineering I honestly expected my first draft of the story to be a translation guided by my creative instinct and by my own interpretation of and emotional response to the story. I envisioned myself utilizing my interpretation of the narrator's voice as a structuring force that I would apply to the target language in order to achieve tonal and thematic consistency. While this was all very well intentioned, what I actually ended up doing was hacking through the story as best I could, giving very little thought to my own interpretations or emotions but really just trying to make some sense of the text in English. I had seen Gregory Rabassa describe translation as "the closest reading one can possibly give a text" in his article "No Two Snowflakes are Alike: Translation as Metaphor," and the experience of drafting my first translation brought this point home (Rabassa 6). Through the initial act of rendering the story in English I came to the unpleasant realization that I did not understand all of the story's words, phrases, and even sequences of events, as well as I had believed myself to. While at first disheartening, this realization was actually quite constructive in helping me to determine what further research I needed to conduct and which aspects of the story I needed to devote particular

attention to in order to proceed. Performing a more literal translation allowed me to first fully familiarize myself with the story's linguistic content before starting to focus on its literary demands.

When, in the process of revising, I did finally turn my attention to the literary demands of the story, I was in for a quite a few surprises as well. I had initially intended to model my own translation process around the methods of William Weaver as he presents them in his article aptly entitled "The Translation Process," and I did actually utilize several of his techniques. I began translating just as he had, by writing a rapid first draft, putting it aside, and then slowly revising it. I also listed various ways of phrasing stubborn sentences and hard-to-translate vocabulary and saved multiple versions of each revision, strategies which I found to be immensely useful in the revising process. As I had predicted, these techniques allowed me to "preserve clues" to my own thought processes that allowed me to retrace my steps whenever I forgot why I had chosen one particular phrasing over another. However, I also realized that, while Weaver had duly emphasized the significance of revision within the translation process, he had inevitably oversimplified the enormity of that endeavor, as I am sure that I will do as well. The complex, and at times, exasperating task of revision was where I most needed of the patience and perseverance mentioned in my introduction to this paper.

Weaver was also right about the need for a translator to be constantly shifting her or his focus from the micro level to the macro level, (from word to phrase, paragraph to page), and back again. In order to translate a particular word or phrase I had to consider how that word or phrase would fit into the rest of the sentence, as well as what I believed to be the function of that particular sentence within the story as a whole. Once I felt that I

had translated a sentence adequately, I then had to test how that sentence sounded in relation to the other sentences within the paragraph, listening for whether or not the sentences flowed. I wanted to avoid making my translation too literal, for fear of its sounding stilted. A literal translation is not the same thing as a loyal translation, as Umberto Eco cautions in his Experiences in Translation – and particularly not as far as "Una semana de siete días" was concerned (8). Spoken and idiomatic language decide whether or not the characterization of the little girl and her mother is convincing, which then determines whether or not the reader can connect with their experiences. I could not allow myself to take the easy way out, transmitting only the surface meaning of words and phrases while ignoring their function, as meaning is never separate from form. However, I also needed to prevent myself from veering to the opposite extreme and interpreting the text too freely so that it could no longer be considered a loyal translation of García Ramis's work. By far the most important and useful guideline I had when making these decisions about phrasing and terminology was the voice of the little girl; therefore, I will again turn my attention to the role of narrative voice in my translation.

As I explained in *Reading "Una semana de siete días": A Translator's Interpretation,* the power of this story lies in García Ramis's verisimilar characterization of the little girl through her use of voicing and perspective. "Una semana de siete días" is effective precisely because the reader is encouraged to trust the little girl's character and to form an emotional connection to her feelings when the girl's mother disappears. In order for my translation of the story to have a similar effect, I needed to not only convey the meaning of the little girl's words, but also to recreate the identity embedded in her Spanish voice. On the suggestion of one of my thesis advisors, Professor Michelle

Tokarczyk, I read and reread each sentence of my translation aloud, listening for whether or not my syntax was reminiscent of a young girl's speech. I experimented with first one phrasing and then another until I finally found one that I felt was believable. This process of trial and error also helped keep me from translating the text either too loosely or too literally.

Another conflict that I had to grapple with was whether to translate culturally-specific terminology within the text so that it would be easier for the reader to recognize and identify with the story's content – what is known as 'domesticating' a text – or whether to preserve culturally-specific terminology in order to convey the original context of the story – known as 'foreignizing' a text (Eco 22). Not surprisingly, narrative voice had an influence here as well. I wanted the reader to be able to recognize symbolic imagery in the text, especially considering the fact that the story's power is dependent upon the reader's ability to empathize with the little girl's experience. Therefore, I imagine that, had I needed to, I would have erred on the side of domesticity. However, in choosing a work to translate I had been careful to avoid stories that made frequent use of regional dialects; hence, there were very few terms in the text that lacked cultural equivalents in English.

The one regionally specific term in "Una semana de siete días" for which I was unable to find an English equivalent was *picas de caballitos*, which appears in the little girl's description of the Christmas festival in the plaza. I interpreted the function of *picas de caballitos* to be atmospheric as opposed to symbolic or narrative because García Ramis seems to include it as a descriptive marker to recall the setting of a small Puerto Rican town. Therefore, wanting the term to continue to perform this same function in the

story's translation, I chose to leave *picas de caballitos* in Spanish and to use a footnote to satisfy the descriptive effect that the term itself achieves in Spanish. In addition, I chose to leave untouched several other Spanish words with which the English-speaking world has some familiarity: Mamá, señora, and cariño, so as to situate the story in its original historical and political context. While the story itself contains a significant amount of ambiguity with regard to its exact location and the specifics of the political disturbance that occurs, García Ramis provides enough contextual clues for the reader to deduce when and where the story is taking place. Rather than extracting the work from its context and relying entirely upon footnotes to explain the story's background, I chose to preserve García Ramis's allusive narrative technique and to leave these terms, particularly the word "Mamá," in Spanish as a reminder of the story's cultural context. My choice to emphasize the work's origin also stems from what I view as the importance of the translated text for the audience by whom it will be received, namely that of American readers.

In the introduction to her book Subversive Scribe, Suzanne Levine writes that one of the fundamental steps in finding the way to convey a work within a foreign context is to ascertain why that particular work should be conveyed – asking what the work might mean on a basic, thematic level to those by whom it will be received. I believe that "Una semana de siete días" has something to teach American readers, many of whom have little or no knowledge of Puerto Rico in spite of the problematic political relationship between our two countries. For example, very few people know that although Puerto Ricans do not have the right to vote in our country's elections, many Puerto Ricans have fought in the front lines of allegedly 'American' wars. In an interview with Carmen C.

Esteves, Magali García Ramis asserted that "to make people aware of their oppression, a writer needs to highlight that oppression," and, in "Una semana de siete días," García Ramis has succeeded in doing just that (Esteves 2). Through her portrayal of the little girl's activist mother, García Ramis unveils the existence of resentment surrounding the island's status as a U.S. commonwealth, as well as the efforts that Puerto Ricans have made to obtain independence. "Una semana de siete días" also reveals the severe treatment that these activists have faced as a result. However, the fact that the island of Puerto Rico is never directly identified within the story speaks to both García Ramis's need to shield her own work of literary dissent from government censure, as well as to the universal nature of the treatment of activists in other parts of the Caribbean and Latin America, and in other regions of the world.

Paralleling the political significance of "Una semana de siete días," García Ramis's incredibly intimate rendering of a female political activist's relationship with her daughter has the potential to affect her readers in a profoundly personal way. Her portrayal of the little girl's mother undermines traditional stereotypes of women in that she is both a committed political activist and, at the same time, an extremely devoted and loving mother. The view of women that García Ramis offers in "Una semana de siete días" reinforces the concept that the personal is political, and offers a vision of compassionate rather than competitive interaction between women that bespeaks the supportive potential waiting to be actualized in women's relationships. In my experience of "Una semana de siete días," the little girl's narrative cries out to be translated since it has the force to penetrate the lack of knowledge surrounding Puerto Rican history and women's activism in the same way that it penetrates the political silence portrayed within

the story itself. Most importantly, however, I hope that, having translated “Una semana de siete días” as “A Week is Seven Days,” I will have exposed English-speaking readers to a lesser-known Latin American/Caribbean author and the mastery of her work.

Working Bibliography

17 narradoras latinoamericanas. Columbia: Coedición Latinoamericana, 1996.

Ahern, Maureen, ed, trans. A Rosario Castellanos Reader. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1988.

Arrojo, Rosemary. "Translation as Possessive Love: Hélène Cixous, Clarice Lispector and the Ambivalence of Fidelity." Post-Colonial Translation: Theory and Practice. Ed. Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi. New York: Routledge, 1999. 141-161.

Balderston, Daniel; Schwartz, Mary E. Voice-overs: Translation and Latin American Literature. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002.

Benavides, Rosamel, ed. Antologia de Cuentistas Chicanas: Estados Unidos, de los '60 a los '90. Santiago Chile: Editorial Cuarto Propio, 1993.

Biguenet, John; Schulte, Rainer, eds. The Craft of Translation. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989.

Booth, Wayne C. The Rhetoric of Fiction. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961.

Castellanos, Rosario. Al pie de la letra. Xalapa, Mexico: Ficcion Universidad Veracruzana, 1959.

---. Ciudad Real. Xalapa, Mexico: Ficcion Universidad Veracruzana, 1960.

Correas de Zapata, Celia; Lygia Johnson, eds. Detrás de la reja. Carácas, Venezuela: Monte Avila Editores, CA, 1980.

Crow, Mary, ed. Woman who has Sprouted Wings: Poems by Contemporary Latin American Women Poets. Pittsburg: Latin American Literary Review Press, 1987.

Délano, Poli, ed. Adan visto por Eva: Relatos de narradoras latinoamericanas. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Instituto Movilizador de Fondos Cooperativos C.L., 1995.

D'Introno, Francesco. Sintaxis transformacional del español. Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra, 1979.

Eco, Umberto. Experiences in Translation. Trans. Alastair McEwen. Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2001.

Esteves, Carmen C. “Literature/Journalism: the Frontier; an Interview with Magali García Ramis.” Callaloo 17 (3) Summer 1994: 862-69. Expanded Academic ASAP. Online. Thomson Gale. 04 Oct. 2004.

Fish, Stanley. “Literature in the Reader: Affective Stylistics.” Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism. Ed. Jane P. Tompkins. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980. 70-100.

Friedman, Norman. “Point of View in Fiction: The Development of a Critical Concept.” The Theory of the Novel. Comp. Philip Stevick. New York: The Free Press, 1967. 108-37.

García Ramis, Magali. La familia de todos nosotros. Río Piedras, P.R.: Editorial Cultural, 1990.

Kafka, Phillipa. “Saddling La Gringa”: Gatekeeping in Literature by Contemporary Latina Writers. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2000. 121-135.

Kilian, Crawford and Jonathan David Jackson. “Narrative Voice.” (Working Paper), 1-4.

Mas’ud, Mari. Translate to Communicate: a Guide for Translators. Elgin, Ill.: D.C. Cook Foundation, 1988.

Mason, Wyatt. “Swann’s Ways.” New Republic 17 Jan. 2005: 26.

Miranda, Rossana. “La Venus y la ciudad.” El Cautivo. 01 Oct. 2004. 05 Oct. 2004 http://mipagina.cantv.net/epifita/300604/V3/Pag_V3.htm.

Levine, Suzanne Jill. The Subversive Scribe: Translating Latin American Fiction. Saint Paul, Minn.: Graywolf Press, 1991.

Rabassa Gregory. “No Two Snowflakes Are Alike: Translation as Metaphor.” The Craft of Translation. Eds. Biguenet, John; Schulte, Rainer. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989. 1-12.

Sayers Peden, Margaret. "Building a Translation, the Reconstruction Business: Poem 145 of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz." The Craft of Translation. Eds. Biguenet, John; Schulte, Rainer. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989. 13-27.

---. "A Conversation on Translation." Voice-overs: Translation and Latin American Literature. Eds. Balderston, Daniel; Schwartz, Mary E.Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002.

Sefchovich, Sara, ed. Mujeres en espejo. 2nd ed. México: Folios Ediciones, 1985.

Shaw, Bradley A. "So You Thought Translation Was All About Words." The ATA Chronicle 33.10 (2004): 22-6.

Socorro, Milagros. Author Commentary. 17 narradoras latinoamericanas. Ed. Cecilia Absatz. Columbia: Coedición Latinoamericana, 1996.

Sola, Maria, ed. Aquí cuentan las mujeres: muestra y estudio de cinco narradoras puertorriqueñas. Río Piedras, Puerto Rico: Ediciones Huracán, 1990.

---. "Show and Tell the Difference." JSRI Research & Publications Occasional Paper Series. 06 Oct. 2004 http://www.jsri.msu.edu/RandS/research/ops/oc05.html.

Valle, Amir, ed. Caminos de Eva: Voces desde la Isla. Puerto Rico: Editorial Plaza Mayor, 2002.

Vital, Alberto. "Notas en torno al rescate crítico de *Pedro Páramo*." El Centro de Estudios Literarios. Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas. Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. 18 Oct. 2001.

Weaver, William. "The Process of Translation." The Craft of Translation. Eds. Biguenet, John; Schulte, Rainer. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989. 117-24.

Appendix

A Week is Seven Days

My mother was a woman with big eyes who made men cry. Sometimes she would stay quiet for long hours, and she always walked with her face to the wind. But even though she was tired of life, she had given birth to me and she never pushed me away. Whenever people saw me with her they always wanted me to stay with them. “I’m gonna steal you away, pretty eyes,” the storekeepers would say. “Leave her here for a few months a year, in the summer. This much traveling can’t be good for her,” some of my aunts had told my mother in a letter. But my mother never left me. Together we walked a world of a thousand streets and hundreds of cities and she worked and watched me grow and ran her fingers through my hair whenever she was being affectionate. In every place we lived Mamá had lots of friends – ‘comrades’ she called them – and they would come to the house at night to talk about things and sometimes they’d play the guitar. One day Mamá called me to her. She was serious and gentle, like she was when she was going to tell me something important. “We’re going home,” she said to me, “Papá is dead.” Dead. The dead were in the cemeteries, that much I knew, and our home was this blue apartment. In every apartment we had lived in Mamá had the painting of the man in the hat holding a rifle, the wooden statue of a woman with her child, a pair of photos of a man that she put in the bedroom, and one of another man that she hung on the wall alongside my bed. She’d tell me, “There is no ‘God the father,’ this man is your father, your only papá.” And I would look at him every night, at the man with such light hair and green eyes who was dead now and was the reason we had to leave home.

I can't remember how we got to the island. I only remember that when we got there I could barely read anything, even though I already knew how to read, because the names of the stores were written in English. Then somebody drove us to San Antonio. Antonio was my father's name and this was his town. Before we left for San Antonio my mother bought me two dresses: one white and the other dark blue, and she dressed me in the blue one for the trip. "You're going to see your grandmother again," she told me. "You'll be spending a few days with her. I have some business to take care of and afterwards I will come and get you. You know Mamá would never leave you. You'll stay with Grandmother for a week; you're a big girl now and it's good for you to know your relatives."

So like a big girl, more or less, I arrived in San Antonio asleep on Mamá's shoulder. The car left us beside a plaza covered in strings of red, green, blue, orange, and yellow lights. A band of musicians was playing a march and lots of children were walking around with their parents. "Why are there lights, Mamá?" "It's Christmas," was her only reply. I picked up my knapsack and Mamá took the suitcase and led me by the hand up the street, far from the plaza that filled my eyes with colors and music. We walked up a steep road and when we had almost come to a hill we stopped in front of a wooden house with a wide balcony and three big doors. I sat down on one of the steps while my mother knocked at the door on the left. From where I was sitting my eyes came right to the level of those knees that she had once been told were so beautiful.

"Your knees are beautiful and you sure are a pretty woman," the blond man said to Mamá. I pretended to be asleep in the little bed beside them and heard them say things to each other that I didn't understand. From everything they said and told each other that

night the only thing I remember is that her knees were beautiful. That blond man told her that he loved her very much, that he loved me, too, and that he wanted to marry her – but she didn't want to. One day we were sitting in a café and she told him not to come back, and right then he paid the bill and left crying. I looked at my mother and she pulled me close.

It was cold outside and I thought I was going to fall asleep again but I didn't have time to because, from behind the door with the black ribbon, a woman's voice asked: Who's there? "It's me Luisa, Doña Matilde. I've come with my little girl." The woman opened the door and stuck out her head to look onto the balcony. There, on the stair to her right, I sat, looking at this woman with my father's green eyes. "Come in, come in, you'll catch a cold in this night air," grandmother said. We went down a wide hallway with lots of doors on both sides, and then a courtyard without a ceiling, in the middle. "Why does this house have a hole in it, Mamá?" "It's a courtyard, houses from the olden days are like this," Mamá said. We kept on walking through the house from the olden days until we came to a dining room where we found Rafaela, grandmother's servant girl, who was almost as old as she was. We sat down to have bread and coffee and Mamá spoke with grandmother.

The next day I woke up in my pajamas in a bed covered with sheets and pillow cases embroidered with flowers. The bed was so high I had to jump to get down. I looked for Mamá and got scared thinking that she had left for a week without saying goodbye, before I was even dressed. Then I heard her voice: "Our baby girl has grown up well, Doña Matilde. She's smart – and good like her father." "She has the Ocasio eyes," said grandmother. "I know what you think, that so much change isn't good for her, and I

know you don't agree with the life I lead, or with my political ideals. But once you get to know her you'll see she hasn't been deprived of anything: not love, or manners, or schooling." "He asked about you before he closed his eyes. He always believed you would come back," grandmother answered, as if each one were having a separate conversation. "Mamá, Mamá, I'm awake now," I said. "Come here, we're in the courtyard," she answered. "But I don't know where my bathrobe is," I shouted, because she was telling grandmother that I had manners and, even though I never wore my bathrobe, if I did it would help prove what my mamá was saying. "Don't worry about your bathrobe, just come," repeated Mamá, who never faked anything. When I went to them I saw grandmother from the front; she was almost as tall as my mother and her hair was pulled up in a hairnet. She smiled at me from where she was perched on a little ladder, pruning a winding vine in the courtyard planted with ferns and palms. "Greet your grandmother." "Good morning, grandmother," I said. And she stepped down from the ladder and kissed me on the head.

During breakfast my mother kept on talking about me and my grandmother kept talking about my father. Later they helped me put on my white dress and we went to the cemetery. It had been a week since he was buried, grandmother told us. We saw the tombstone, which said something, and after these words my father's name was written: Antonio Ramos Ocasio R.I.P. "I know you aren't a believer, but let the child kneel down with me and say the 'Our Father' for her father's soul…" My mother said yes and stood looking out into the distance. And so I fell to my knees on the earth in my grandmother's world from the olden days, repeating something about an 'our father' who was in heaven

and looking at my mother out of the corner of my eye because both of us knew that this father didn't exist.

"Mamá, tonight will you take me to that place with the lights?" I asked her later that day. "To what place?" grandmother asked, "remember that in this house we are in mourning. "She's asking about the plaza, Doña Matilde. Don't scowl, remember that nobody knows us in this town. Besides, she's never spent Christmas in a town on the island before, and I'm leaving tomorrow…" She finished what she was saying with the look on her face. Grandmother took a deep breath and looked into my eyes.

That night Mamá and I went to the plaza. Once again there were a lot of people walking around. They were selling pink-colored cotton candy, balloons painted with the faces of the three kings, and refreshments and sweets. There were food stands and lots of *picas de caballitos*• where men and boys were betting their money. And the band played marches that made you want to jump. I kept quiet the whole time because I was seeing all these things and I liked all of it so much that it made me want to cry. "Now don't you get sad," said Mamá. "I'm not sad, Mamá, I'm just thinking," I explained, and she led me over to a little stone bench. We sat right on top of where it said: "These benches were built with municipal funds under the leadership of the mayor of San Antonio, the honorable Asencio Martínez, for the adornment of the city and the comfort of its inhabitants." "Tomorrow Mamá has to go to the city where we first arrived. It'll only be for a week and I'll be going to a lot of offices so it's better that you spend the next few days here with grandmother – understand, baby? You know I've never lied to you; if I say that I'll come back, I will. Do you remember the time you spent a few days with Mamá's friend, Francisco?

Francisco owned two talking parrots. We lived with him for a while and once when Mamá had to go someplace important she left me with him for a few days. When she came back she brought me a Japanese doll with three little dresses that you could change and Francisco made up stories for me about the men from Japan. A little while later Mamá came and told us that she had found work in another city and that we had to move that same day. Francisco wanted to move with us; Mamá told him no. And he said goodbye to us in the train station with his eyes full of tears – from being so in love with my mother.

"Yes, Mamá, I remember," I told her. "Well, it's exactly the same. Mamá has some very important things to do. Grandmother Matilde is your father's mamá. She loves you very much – didn't you see that over her dressing table there's a portrait of you when you were little? Tomorrow she's going to make you the kind of cake that you like. And she'll tell you lot's of stories. And before you know it the week will be over. Do we have a deal?" I wouldn't have agreed with her for anything in the world, but Mamá and I were comrades, like she said, and we always supported each other. So I shut my mouth as tight as possible and opened my eyes as wide as I could, like I did whenever something was hard for me to accept, and told her yes, Mamá, it's a deal, because I knew that being away from me was scary for her, too. And we gave each other a long hug sitting there on the bench, on top of the mayor's name and the adornment – which means ornament – my mamá explained to me.

The next day in front of the plaza – quiet then after lunch – we said goodbye to Mamá, who boarded a bus full of people. "Things in the city don't look so good, Luisa. You be sure that nothing happens to you." "Don't worry, Doña Matilde. I'm just going to

see a lawyer to settle this thing about my and Antonio's papers and then I'll come right back for my daughter and we'll go. Take good care of her and don't worry."

"Do you know how long a week is?" "Yes, grandmother, it's as long as Papá has been buried." "Yes, dear, but do you know how much time it is, in days?" grandmother asked me after Mamá had gone. "No, grandmother." "A week is seven days. Seven," she repeated, but I never was too good with numbers and I didn't really understand what she meant by the word time. What I do remember is that it was a time of crisis. One night we heard shots and screams, and no one went out in the streets or into the plaza. For a few days everyone was afraid. Grandmother took the newspaper that came in the mornings to the balcony and read the front page very carefully. Then she had Rafaela read her lists of names that sometimes came on the inside pages in letters too tiny for her poor vision. I wasn't allowed to see. I could only skim the big black letters on the front page that said things like: AR RES TED UP RIS ING SUS PI CIOUS and LEFT ISTS that I didn't understand.

One night later some men arrived when Rafaela, grandmother, and I were about to go to bed. "Hurry and get into bed," grandmother said very seriously. At first I obeyed and then I got up. I ran from room to room until I came to the one that overlooks the living room where I stopped to listen. The men were already at the door and I could only hear when they said: "So don't try to remove her from town, not to mention from the island. We know she will come for the girl and we have a warrant for her arrest." "Look Officer," grandmother said, "I'm sure that she had nothing to do with this. I'm telling you: she only came to the island because my son died, she isn't involved in politics anymore, believe me. Why is there a warrant?" "As we have informed you, señora, all of

these leftists have to be taken in for questioning. And if she had nothing to do with it why is she hiding? There are witnesses who attest to having seen her in the capital, armed…does that seem innocent to you? The girl stays here in town, and you know exactly why."

The girl was me, that I knew right away, and in the time it took grandmother to shut the door I ran from room to room back to my bed. Grandmother came all the way back to where I was. I pretended to be asleep but I don't know if I tricked her because she stayed there beside me for so long that I fell asleep for real.

Now I am on the balcony waiting for my mamá to come and get me, because I know that she will come for me. I think about her every day and what I remember most is that she had big brown eyes and that she was a woman who made men cry. Oh, and that she never lied to me; that is why I am here, on the balcony, with my knapsack, waiting for her. But it's been more than a week, I know because I've learned how to measure time by now, and because my blue and white dresses don't fit me anymore.

• A version of roulette played with horse-shaped game-pieces.