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**Translating Transgender: English Pushed to the Limits in
José Donoso's *El lugar sin límites***

**Traduciendo el transgénero: el inglés llevado al límite en *El
lugar sin límites* de José Donoso**

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Abstract: A devastating Sunday in the tumultuous life of a 60-year-old transvestite, co-owner of a brothel with her/his virgin daughter La Japonesita, sets up a bloody storyline that takes readers to the Chilean town of El Olivo through the pen of José Donoso and his seminal work *El lugar sin límites* (1966). The novella unravels the internal struggles of the fictional town dominated by the patriarchal prominent landowner, Alejandro Cruz. The story provides an account of situations that transpire as a result of the actions of La Manuela, as s/he moves across traditional constructed sex/gender boundaries while becoming involved with a hypermasculine character, Pancho, who wrestles with homoerotic desires. A gendered reading of this novel takes into consideration the way in which sexual difference is inscribed discursively in the text, and how the translation into English by Suzanne Jill Levine's (*Hell Has No Limits*, 1995) exposes the interplay of gender and social control. The analysis conducted in this article is of a descriptive nature, and it intends to point out decisions taken by the translator in order to represent the multilayered and flexible gender identities shown in the Spanish text and how they are rendered into English in order to portray the fictional characters. A careful analysis of the renditions of key passages will bring to light the translator's perceptions of the gendered ideology within the novel. English is pushed to the limits in order to represent the sexual identities of this gender-laden Spanish text.

Keywords: Donoso, Femininity, Gender, Masculinity, Translation, Transgender

Resumen: Un devastador domingo en la tumultuosa vida de un travesti de 60 años, copropietario de un burdel con su hija virgen la Japonesita, introduce una sangrienta trama que lleva a los lectores a la localidad chilena de El Olivo a través de la pluma de José Donoso y su trascendental obra

El lugar sin límites (1966). La novela desentraña las luchas internas del ficticio pueblo dominado por el prominente terrateniente patriarcal, Alejandro Cruz. La historia relata las situaciones que suceden como resultado de las acciones de la Manuela, mientras él/ella se mueve a través de las fronteras tradicionales construidas por el sexo/género a la vez que se relaciona con un personaje hipermasculino, Pancho, que trata de controlar sus deseos homoeróticos. Una lectura con conciencia de género de esta novela toma en consideración la forma en que la diferencia sexual se inscribe discursivamente en el texto, y cómo la traducción al inglés de Suzanne Jill Levine (*Hell Has No Limits*, 1995) expone la interacción entre el género y el control social. El análisis que se realiza en este artículo es de carácter descriptivo, y pretende señalar las decisiones tomadas por la traductora para representar las multidimensionales y flexibles identidades relacionadas con el género que se muestran en el texto español y cómo se traducen estas al inglés para representar los personajes ficticios. Un cuidadoso análisis de las traducciones de pasajes clave sacará a la luz las percepciones de la traductora en cuanto a la ideología relacionada con cuestiones de género en la novela. El inglés es llevado al límite para representar las identidades sexuales expresadas en este texto en español tan repleto de cuestiones relacionadas con el género.

Palabras clave: Donoso, feminidad, género, masculinidad, traducción, transgénero

INTRODUCTION

Novelistic characters constantly serve as stand-ins for humans and carry with them their gendered fictional selves. The characters in the novella *El lugar sin límites* (1966) cannot stop themselves from «doing gender» Like their human counterparts they constitute their gendered identities through societal expectations associated with their sex. Gender (for our fictional characters, and for us humans), then is a performance; «the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being» (Butler, 1999, pp. 43-44). This performativity becomes evident as we learn about a voyeur (Alejandro Cruz), an asexual being (La Japonesita), a tranvestite (La Manuela), and a hypermasculine truck driver with secret homoerotic tendencies (Pancho).

This article explores the translation into English of *El lugar sin límites* by Suzanne Jill Levine, who chose the title *Hell Has No Limits*¹. In this novel,

¹ There are two translations into English of the novella. One from 1972 which has Hallie D. Taylor and Suzanne Jill Levine as translators, and one from 1995 where Levine appears as the

gender limits are activated, maintained, imposed, violated, challenged, and transformed through the use of language by the narrator and different characters that create, construct, reproduce and undermine different notions of gender.

The analysis conducted in this article is of a descriptive nature, and it intends to point out decisions taken by the translator in order to represent the multilayered and flexible identities shown in the Spanish text and how they are rendered into English in order to portray the fictional characters. A careful analysis of the renditions of key passages will bring to light the translator's perceptions of the gendered ideology embedded in the novel.

1. AUTHOR AND TRANSLATOR BACKGROUNDS

José Donoso is one of Latin America's leading fiction writers. He was born on September 25, 1924, in Santiago, Chile into an upper-class family of professionals (several family members were lawyers and doctors). In 1949 he obtained a fellowship that brought him to Princeton. While living in the United States he published two short stories: «The Poisoned Pastries» and «The Blue Woman²». His most famous work is *El obsceno pájaro de la noche* (*The Obscene Bird of Night*). In 1972 he published his personal history of the Latin American «Boom»³. He later participated in theater and film projects inspired by his novels and short stories. In 1990, he received Chile's National Literature Award. From 1990 onwards, he wrote five voluminous novels. He died on December 7, 1996, in Santiago, Chile. José Donoso's literary style is characterized by his expressive depiction of the realities of life, including his own. Donoso's works showcase themes related to humankind while highlighting the characteristics of the society of his time. «Donoso's characters emerge from three distinct social classes: the senile aristocracy, the manipulative maids and the amoral pariahs of society» (Martínez, 1975, p. 250). The topics of violence, inequality, and intolerance abound in his works. Although Donoso uses simple and precise language, his works display a remarkable depth, creativity, and originality.

Suzanne Jill Levine is a Distinguished Research Professor at University of California Santa Barbara. She is a renowned translator of

sole translator. Apart from a few lexical choices, the translations are very similar. I will be using the 1995 version. A film based on the novella was made in 1977 (Ripstein, Director, CONACITE-2, 1977), but I will not be discussing it.

² Donoso's first publications were two short stories in English. «The Poisoned Pastries» narrates a childhood memory regarding some alleged poisoned pastries, while «The Blue Woman» describes the experiences of a young woman after a nose job.

³ The «Boom» refers to the period in Latin American literature throughout the 1960s and the early seventies in which several Latin American writers achieved international acclaim for their work.

prominent Latin American writers such as Guillermo Cabrera Infante, Julio Cortázar, Carlos Fuentes, Manuel Puig, José Donoso, Adolfo Bioy Casares, and, most recently, Silvina Ocampo. She has written several books about translation such as *The Subversive Scribe: Translating Latin American Fiction* (1991; 2009), *Manuel Puig and the Spiderwoman: His Life and Fictions* (2000, 2002). Through her extensive career as a translator, Levine has chosen to translate mostly men and those at the outer limits of society; for her «the most important Latin American writers traditionally were men, the ones who principally have been promoted. But as I explain in my book [*The Subversive Scribe*], those I translated [José Donoso, Guillermo Cabrera Infante, Manuel Puig] were actually rather marginal» (Guzmán, 2009). Her translation style reflects not only the choice of authors she translates, but the way she transforms their texts into English. She explains: «Far from the traditional view of translators as servile nameless scribes, the literary translator can be considered a subversive scribe. Something is destroyed — the form of the original— but meaning is reproduced through another form. A translation in this light becomes a continuation of the original, which already always alters the reality is intended to recreate» (Levine, 1991, pp. 7-8). Levine practices a target-oriented translation approach by rendering a target text that follows conventional uses of the target language and culture. Although her translations maintain the same register and sociolect created by the authors she translates, she often actively intervenes and appropriates the foreign text with a specific objective in mind, usually to highlight issues regarding gender and male chauvinism.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This translation analysis utilizes the theoretical framework of Descriptive Translation Studies (Toury, 1995). It involves a comparison of a source text and a target text in order to identify the relationships that exist between corresponding segments⁴. Selected target-text segments will be analyzed rather than the whole text. These segments are compared to analyze the translational choices made by the translator regarding the representations of femininities and masculinities that appear in this Spanish text. The analysis will also examine the translation strategies used when considering the structural or metalinguistic (irony, sarcasm) differences between languages. It will highlight specific cases when changes (often

⁴ Toury refers to these segments as coupled pairs.

known as *shifts*⁵), in the syntactic order or the number and type of words produced in the target text differ from the source text.

The translational choices are then examined to analyze the renditions into English of the Spanish text, concentrating primarily on the representations of femininities and masculinities. The shifts in the translation will be pointed out and discussed both at the semantic and/or syntactic levels to determine differences that may reflect the translator's appreciations of the representations of gender in the target texts when compared with the source text. There will also be instances where grammatical gender will be examined, since «English nouns are not regularly inflected to distinguish between feminine and masculine» (Baker, 2011, p. 99). A careful examination of the English source text will shed light on the choices taken by the translator and how her decisions may affect the reading of the text in English.

3. HELL HAS NO LIMITS

Levine's overall translation of the novella can be said to be considered an idiomatic translation, which generally means producing a target text that conforms to the conventions of the target language usage and utilizes expressions commonly used by native speakers of the target text. In other words, a translation that reads well in English. Unfortunately, (as it is usually the case for most translated works) the reviews of the novella in English do not describe the translation in detail. Using Jean-Paul Vinay and Jean Darbelnet's translation procedures (1995), this analysis will examine Levine's translations of several translated passages.

3.1. Title

A literal translation of the Spanish title would be *The Place without Limits/The Limitless Place*. Levine chooses *Hell Has No Limits*, taken from a line from a fragment of Christopher Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* that Donoso uses as an epigraph for the novella⁶. Levine uses a strategy she has used before when translating titles of other novels; for example, the Spanish title for one of Manuel Puig's novels is *Boquitas pintadas*, which in English appears as *Heartbreak Tango: A Serial*. The title in Spanish is taken from an epigraph (a quotation of tango lyrics in one part of the book [Third Installment]). Levine's translation of the title comes from another epigraph from another part of the

⁵ The shifts discussed will be non-obligatory shifts, which are determined by literary or cultural considerations as opposed to obligatory shifts, which are necessary changes due to linguistic aspects of languages (Toury, 1995, pp. 57, 118, 173)

⁶ The Tragic Story of Doctor Faustus, or simply Doctor Faustus, is a play written by Christopher Marlowe, possibly in 1592, based on the legend of Faustus, in which a man sells his soul to the devil in order to gain power and knowledge.

book [the Fourth Episode]). Levine explains her translatorial decision: «The translation responds not only to the author's context but, most urgently, to its potential reader» (Levine, 1989, p. 31). Levine uses the words from the epigraph to further underline the hellish life characters experience in a forsaken Chilean town.

3.2. *Transgendering*

I will consider La Manuela a transgender character as opposed to a gay one. Some critics prefer to use the term homosexual in reference to this type of character (Foster, 1991)⁷. My decision stems from the definition of transgender provided by Wendy McKenna and Suzanne Kessler as someone who decides to change their «social gender through the public presentation of self, without recourse to genital transformation» (2008, p. 480). La Manuela, then, will be considered transgender character as well as queer which is often defined as «a way of denying the normalcy of heterosexuality by blurring the gay/straight binary opposition and celebrating the plurality of responses that are made available». (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004, p. 75).

The novella starts featuring the main character, La Manuela, right away. She appears as a migrant being, s/he comes from somewhere else, and is sheltered in the brothel (of which she will become co-owner), in her role as a transvestite, dancer/ prostitute. S/he is, however, a nomadic subject, the circumstances of her life have led her to be constantly on the move in many towns, from Talca to El Olivo, from a primitive and assigned masculinity, to performing Manuela in her red flamenco dress.

La Manuela despegó con dificultad sus ojos lagañosos, se estiró apenas y volcándose

hacia el lado opuesto de donde dormía la Japonesa, alargó la mano para tomar el reloj. Cinco para las diez. Misa de once. (11)⁸

La Manuela forced open her bleary eyes, stretched briefly and, twisting away from the

sleeping Japonesa, reached for the clock. Five to ten. Eleven o'clock mass. (7)⁹

⁷ Both José Donoso 's 1966 novel *El lugar sin límites* and Manuel Puig's 1976 novel *El beso de la mujer araña* have biologically male protagonists that identify themselves as «women,» but are referred to as homosexual by Foster.

⁸ The numbers in parenthesis indicate the page number(s) from the Spanish text that appears in References.

Notice that the Spanish text has 36 words while the English text has 26. Levine uses reduction as a semantic adjustment strategy and for the sake of readability. She eliminates «lado opuesto» (opposite side), probably because it is understood and not considered necessary to relay the textual image. She also uses a translation technique known as «borrowing»¹⁰, when she uses the name in Spanish. Although proper names are often not translated in literary texts, I will consider this a borrowing since it incorporates a foreign word with the article «/a». The objectification of the name with the definite article is not as clear in the English and it is all together eliminated for the daughter Japonésita, probably for the sake of legibility. In fact, the names of all the women of the brothel use the definite article before their names in the Spanish text. Discrimination against women in our society is a phenomenon that has many manifestations. One of them is in language. In spontaneous speeches, on numerous occasions, in Spanish, women are often usually named by adding the definite article before the noun that designates them; on the contrary, with men this procedure is not used as much (Aliaga-Rovira, et al., 2020, p. 225).

This apparent difference in the treatment of the noun can be understood to be related to an underlying view of women that is closer to the category of 'object' than to that of 'person', inasmuch as the use of the article or other determinant before noun is regulated only for common nouns, which largely refer to objects. (Aliaga-Rovira, et al., 2020, p. 230). A footnote may have helped the English reader become aware of this nuance, but Levine does not use footnotes in her translation probably not to distract readers.

The first night at El Olivo La Manuela is chased out of the whorehouse and carried through the edge of town. She ends up being thrown into the water of a canal. Her dress has been ripped off and s/he stands naked in front of all the people present. Everyone is amazed at the size of the genitals they observed.

Donoso opens with a reference to an animal (*burro/donkey*) which is usually used to describe the size of the male organ (in English we also use the expression *he is hung like a horse*).

—*¡Qué burro...!*

—*Mira que está bien armado...*

—*Psstt, si éste no parece maricón.*

⁹ Note the numbers in parenthesis indicate the page number(s) from the English text that appears in References.

¹⁰ A translation procedure where a word or expression from the source text is used in the target text (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1995, pp. 31-32)

—*Que no te vean las mujeres, que se van a enamorar.*

La Manuela, tiritando, contestó con una carcajada.

—*Si este aparato no me sirve nada más que para hacer pipí. (78-79)*

«*What a stud*»

«*Hey, this guy's well hung...*»

«*Wow, that doesn't look like a fag to me.*»

«*Don't let them see that or they'll fall in love with you.*»

La Manuela, teeth chattering, answered with a laugh.

«*I only use this thing to pee.*» (82)

Being well-endowed is often associated with being a virile and masculine heterosexual male. A large penis it is often times seen as synonymous with manhood, which makes it «an object of intense adoration, the symbol of absolute power and satisfaction. It is the source of the macho's self-assurance and control, sexual and psychological, and the envy of Hispanic women» (Stavans, 1995, p. 52). The translator is well aware that queer characters reflect a particular sexuality that is very often textually marked, so as Alberto Mira describes in «Pushing the Limits of Faithfulness: A Case for Gay Translation», it becomes relevant to «be able to read the signifiers in an informed way, and more importantly, to be able to transfer them to a different culture» (1999, p. 111).

Levine is no stranger to this textual marking as she uses a slang term «stud» (short for «studhorse», which is a stallion kept for breeding). The euphemism in Spanish (he is well equipped) is much more visible in the English «well hung», meaning with large genitals. The translator is using a procedure known as equivalence¹¹; her translation creates a stronger image that describes a more explicit sexual connotation.

Levine finds a different way to objectify the penis (using *thing* instead of the Spanish *apparatus*) The last line, which in Spanish has 12 words in English has 7. Levine again uses reduction without losing any of the meaning, again for the sake of readability.

¹¹ A translation procedure which replicates the same situation with different wording. It is frequently applied to idioms (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1995, pp. 38).

3.3. *Virginity*

The passage below describes La Japonésita as young girl filled with contradictions. She is the daughter of La Japonésa Grande (big Japanese woman) from whom she inherits the brothel. Despite being eighteen years old, she still does not menstruate. She is thin, ugly and remains a virgin. She could be seen as an image of virginal femininity, although she seems to be an asexual being, whose desire does not manage to flourish. She accumulates money but does not put her libido into the business either. She is the product of a «bizarre union» (La Manuela, a transvestite father, and Japonésa, the owner of a brothel), which has a profound influence on her personality. She is full of ambiguities; owner of a whore house, but cannot be a whore, repelled by the brutish Pancho, but secretly desiring him. She is always moving in the dark, with very little light, and always appears to be cold.

La Japonésita, en cambio, era pura ambigüedad.... Pero si con sus dieciocho años bien cumplidos ni la regla le llegaba todavía. Era un fenómeno. Y después decía que no. Que no quería que la anduvieran mandoneando. Que ya que era dueña de casa de putas mejor sería que ella también fuera puta. Pero la tocaba un hombre y salía corriendo. Claro que con esa cara no iba a llegar a mucho. (24-25)

Japonésita, on the other hand, was all ambiguity... And yet here she is, over eighteen years old and she hasn't gotten her period yet. Amazing. And then Japonésita would say no. She didn't want to be pushed around. And since she owned a whorehouse she might as well be a whore too. But let a man touch her and she'd run like mad. Of course, with that face she didn't have much choice. (22-23)

Levine here uses amplification¹² when she adds, «And yet here she is.» She uses that same procedure again when she translates «salía corriendo» (run out/run away) as «run like mad.» She uses modulation¹³ as she expresses the Spanish «she wouldn't get far» with «she didn't have much choice» which could serve to reinforce the irony of being the ugly girl in a whorehouse. Levine's translation of this passage serves to portray the psychological configuration and repression of the character.

¹² A translation procedure where the translator uses more words in the target text than in the source text to reinforce an idea (Delisle, Lee-Jahnke, & Cormier, 1999, p. 116).

¹³ A translation procedure where a translator changes the point of view of a source text segment (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1995, pp. 36-37).

3.4. Seduction

La Japonesa Grande (Big Japanese) is the first owner of the brothel. She is pure fire, has a big build, is full of hope, and she is ambitious. She has an overpowering personality (it is explicit in the sexual act in which she conceives her daughter with La Manuela). Since she often squints her eyes due to nearsightedness, she earned the nickname «Japonesa» (Japanese).

She is, like everyone else in the village, under the aegis of Don Alejo Cruz and her brothel is established as the headquarters of his electoral campaign. Since she is in charge of a brothel, she is not allowed to fall in love with any man. She had affairs with Don Alejo in her youth, although now they have just a friendly relationship. The act of «deflowering» Manuela truly ignites the character.

After La Manuela has been seen naked, Don Alejo bets La Japonesa that she cannot excite La Manuela and have sex with him/her. They bet ownership of the brothel. La Japonesa tries to convince La Manuela to put on the ultimate performance.

—*¿Estás mala de la cabeza, Japonesa, por Dios? ¿No ves que soy loca perdida? Yo no sé. ¡Cómo se te ocurre una cochinado así!* (82)

«*Are you crazy, Japonesa, for God's sake? Can't you see I'm hopeless? I don't get it. How could you think of such a dirty thing?*» (86)

Levine here decides not to emphasize the idea of being gay «loca» (a slang word used to refer to homosexuals) and uses the word «hopeless.» Her choice appears to reference La Manuela's continuous attraction to males, since women are never considered as sexually desirable for the character. Also, «cochinada» refers to an improper action, which often has a sexual connotation. Levine uses «dirty thing» which also has a similar connotation and objectifies the sexual act.

La Japonesa is still trying to convince La Manuela to have sex with her, saying that is just going to for show (performance) for the benefit of Don Alejo Cruz who will be watching so they can obtain ownership of the brothel.

Manuela, no tengas miedo al movimiento de las nalgas, de las caderas, la boca en la boca, como dos mujeres cuando los caballeros en la casa de la Pecho de Palo les pagan a las putas para que hagan cuadros plásticos. (104)

Manuela, don't be afraid of my thighs moving, my hips, my mouth in yours like two women when the gentlemen in Wooden Heart's house pay the whores to let them watch. (110)

Levine's translation adopts the possessive (*my thighs moving, my hips, my mouth*) when translating into English, since this is the idiomatic way to refer to body parts in English. She uses explicitation¹⁴, as well as modulation, translating «cuadros plásticos» as «let them watch» although perhaps «tableaux vivants» (a representation of a picture, statue, scene, etc., by one or more persons suitably costumed and posed) could have been used; maybe «pornographic tableaux vivants». Nevertheless, Levine emphasizes the voyeuristic aspect of the scene with her translatorial choice.

It is curious to note that the name of the owner of a rival brothel (*Pecho de Palo*) has been translated as «Wooden Heart» substituting chest (*pecho*) for heart. The external quality of a person (chest) has been turned into an internal one (heart). I tend to agree with Sifuentes Jáuregui that «*Pecho de Palo*» could mean flat (as a stick/board), probably referring to being flat chested. Jáuregui, goes even further to state «I am tempted to speculate that she too was a transvestite» (Sifuentes Jáuregui, 1997, p. 61). Levine uses the image of a wooden heart to provide the idea of the owner of the competing brothel as heartless person with no empathy. Suzanne Jill Levine intentionally shifted the focus from the physical realm to the emotional one, maybe to give some depth to the character, or to subvert a depiction that she saw as sexist¹⁵.

La Japonesa and La Manuela do engage in the sexual act. The scene presents an upset of binary terms. Between la Japonesa Grande and La Manuela, limits explode and desire results in an act that nobody imagined possible. Paradoxically, from this encounter, from this fusion and confusion of identities, plagued by eroticism, Japonesita will be born; the heiress of the brothel, an asexual being.

...no, no, tú eres la mujer, Manuela, yo soy la macha, ves cómo te estoy bajando los calzones y cómo te quito el sostén para que tus pechos queden desnudos y yo gozártelos, sí tienes Manuela, no llores, sí tienes pechos, chiquitos como los de una niña, pero tienes y por eso te quiero.
(104)

...no, no, you're the woman, Manuela, I'm the man, look how I'm taking off your panties and loosening your brassiere so your breasts will be

¹⁴ A translation procedure to make explicit in the target language what is implicit in the source language. (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1995, pp. 342)

¹⁵ Levine has discussed these types of changes often. In her book *The Subversive Scrive* (1984) she examines her translation of Guillermo Cabrera Infante's *La Habana para un infante difunto* (Infante's *Inferno*) and argues that her role as translator is not to repeat the sexist model shown by the narrator of Cabrera Infante's novel. Levine decides to intervene on some occasions and subvert, eliminate, soften, or change the sexist views of the male narrator.

bare and I can play with them, yes you have them Manuela, don't cry, you do have breasts. Tiny like a little girl's, but you have them and that's why I love you. (110)

The traditional dichotomous roles of the feminine and the masculine (in terms of women's passivity and men's sexual aggression) are here reversed. Levine decides to translate «*macha*» as «man». «*Macha*» is the feminine of the word for *macho*¹⁶. Since English does not show grammaticalized gender the same way as Spanish does, it is difficult to convey this play on words. The translation avoids the playfulness altogether and makes it more explicit with the use of the word «man».

La Manuela fantasizes about the moment and identifies as a woman.

Yo soñaba mis senos acariciados, y algo sucedía mientras ella me decía sí, mijita, yo te estoy haciendo gozar porque yo soy la macha y tú la hembra, te quiero porque eres todo, y siento el calor de ella que me engulle, a mí, a un yo que no existe, ... (104)

I dreamed about my breasts being caressed and something happened while she was saying, yes little girl, I'm making you like it because I'm the man and you're the woman, I love you because you're everything, and I feel her heat devouring me, me, a me that does not exist, ... (110)

Here again the target text uses «man» instead of the «macha» term. The Spanish plays with the contrast («macho/hembra» [«male/female» usually used when referring to the sex of animals]) which Levine translates as man and woman. Male and female could have been used but it would have required a bigger change or unusual terms to be introduced (perhaps male/female, (fe)male, she-male) that could have interfered with the natural flow of the text. The translation of «mijita» (short form of my little daughter, which in turn is the affectionate and diminutive way of saying «my daughter» or «dear») has been translated as «little girl» which also gives an affectionate tone while maintaining the gender of the person.

During the sex act, Donoso portrays La Manuela's ejaculation as bleeding, as a woman may bleed when she has penetrative sex for the first time because of her hymen breaking. La Manuela never had sex with a woman before, something that Levine is quick to notice.

...hasta estremecerme y quedar mutilado, desangrándome dentro de ella mientras ella grita y me aprieta y luego cae, mijito lindo, qué cosa más rica, hacía tanto tiempo, tanto, y las palabras se disuelven y se evaporan los

¹⁶ Sometimes the words *marimacho/marimacha*, a woman who in her corpulence or actions looks or acts like a man, it is often utilized to refer to butch lesbians.

olores y las redondeces se repliegan, quedo yo, durmiendo sobre ella, y ella me dice al oído, como entre sueños: mijita, mijito, confundidas sus palabras con la almohada. (104-105)

...until I shudder and am mutilated, bleeding inside of her as she screams and clutches me and then falls, my precious little boy, what a sweet thing, it's been so long, so long, and the words dissolve and the odors evaporate and the hardness shrivel, I stay sleeping over her, and she says into my ear, as if in a dream, my sweet girl, my sweet boy, her words muffled in the pillow. (110)

The Spanish text has the phrase «*las redondeces se repliegan*», meaning the roundness retracts, which appears to refer to the end of coitus. The image is that of bodies separating (in my view the roundness refers more to La Japonesa's body since she has been previously described as chubby). Levine has used modulation, once more, to give the reader a different point of view, that of the man losing his erection after the sexual act has been consummated. The translator has managed to reflect the changes from masculine to feminine in the Spanish text. Levine has translated «mijito» (the masculine form of «mijita», the term of endearment discussed before) in two different ways; the first time as «little boy», and the second time as «sweet boy/sweet girl.» Her alternative provides a clear transition from the masculine to the feminine.

3.5. *Bi-curiosity*

At the beginning of the novella, Pancho is thinking about going to the brothel to have sex with both a father and a daughter (La Manuela and La Japonesita).

—A las dos me las voy a montar bien montadas, a la Japonesita y al maricón del papá... (12)

«I'll screw the two of them, Japonesita and her fag of a father...» (8)

The Spanish text plays with the gender of the definite articles as the sentence starts using the feminine article «*las*» although we only have one feminine noun (Japonesita). In Spanish the definite article would have taken the masculine form when referring to male and female names together. This cannot be accomplished in the English without adding several additional words and the translator has decided not to take that route. The Spanish also uses «*montar*» which is used to refer to an animal having sex with another animal. Also, «*montar*» gives the image of riding as well as being on top and having a dominant position during a sex act. Levine decided to use the slang term «screw» which refers to having sexual intercourse, but in a

hasty or casual way. It also gives the idea of using use a long penetrative object to force into a hole. Levine has used a modulation to provide an intense image.

A crucial moment in the novella happens when Pancho is afraid his homoerotic desires would be discovered by his brother-in-law, Octavio, and everyone else. Pancho tries to justify his bi-curiosity to himself.

Entonces Pancho se rio. Si era hombre tenía que ser capaz de sentirlo todo, aun esto, y nadie, ni Octavio ni ninguno de sus amigos se extrañaría. Esto era fiesta. Farra. Maricones de casas de putas había conocido demasiados en su vida como para asustarse de esta vieja ridícula, y siempre se enamoraban de él —se tocó los bíceps, se tocó el vello áspero que le crecía en la abertura de la camisa en el cuello. Se había tranquilizado bajo la mano de la Lucy. (121-122)

Then Pancho roared. After all he was a man, he was supposed to feel everything, even this, and no one, not Octavio or any of his friends would think him a freak. This was a party! A fling. He had met too many whorehouse fags in his life to be frightened by this ridiculous old woman, and they always fell in love with him—they felt his biceps, they felt the rough hair that grew to where his shirt opened at the neck. He relaxed under Lucy's hand. (129)

The transvestite body of Manuela awakens a violent desire in Pancho who is justifying his desires to himself. Levine has translated «rio» (laughed) as «roared» which usually conveys the meaning of laughing loudly or boisterously to intensify an already tense situation. In addition, it provides an animalistic connotation. In another clear example of modulation, «ninguno de sus amigos se extrañaría» is translated as «any of his friends would think him a freak». Her decision provides for a stronger look at the character's introspection and not be seen as an example of a strange deviation from nature.

The word «farra» was translated as a «fling» «Farra» in Spanish is usually associated with a short period of unrestricted partying, a boisterous festivity. Levine uses the word «fling» (another modulation) to indicate both a short period of unrestrained pursuit of one's wishes or desires and a casual or brief love affair. Her choice, then, diminishes (for the character) the seriousness of a possible encounter with La Manuela.

Also, the translator slightly changes the perspective of a phrase when in the Spanish text Pancho is touching his own biceps and body hair while Levine has others touching his body parts and hair. The decision seems to reinforce the character's desirability.

3.6. Annihilation

La Manuela starts to realize the danger her/his performance has brought her/him.

Parada en el barro de la calzada mientras Octavio la paralizaba retorciéndole el brazo, la Manuela despertó. No era la Manuela. Era él, Manuel González Astica. Él. Y porque era él iban a hacerle daño y Manuel González Astica sintió terror. (124-125)

Standing in the mud, paralyzed by Octavio, who was twisting her arm, la Manuela woke up. He wasn't la Manuela. He was Señor Manuel González Astica. He. And because he was he they were going to hurt him and Manuel González Astica tasted terror. (132)

The character realizes that the transgression now has been fully exposed. The text gradually changes sexes for the protagonist as he/she fears what is coming to her/him. Notice how Levine uses explicitation to make clearer the transformation from woman to man, when she adds the word «Señor,» perhaps compensating for the Spanish past participle used as a feminine adjective in the beginning of the text («*parada*») that cannot be rendered in English. Levine also uses modulation when she translates «*sintió terror*» (felt terror) as «tasted terror» to give a different point of view that adds to the alarming situation.

Pancho conceals his repressed homosexuality and his secret desires though the macho image he presents to the world. The violence exercised over Manuela, by Pancho and his brother-in-law, Octavio, is a mechanism of expiation, an act of purification of the hegemonic masculinity of the victimizer; for Pancho it serves to invalidate the homoerotic desire that produces in him the transvestite body of his victim. (Romero, 1997).

...buscando quién es el culpable, castigándolo, castigándola, castigándose deleitados hasta en el fondo de la confusión dolorosa, el cuerpo endeble de la Manuela que ya no resiste, quiebra bajo el peso, ya no puede ni aullar de dolor, bocas calientes, manos calientes, cuerpos babientos y duros hiriendo el suyo y que ríen y que insultan y que buscan romper y quebrar y destrozar y reconocer ese monstruo de tres cuerpos retorciéndose, hasta que ya no queda nada y la Manuela apenas ve, apenas oye, apenas siente, ve, no, no ve, y ellos se escabullen a través de la mora y queda ella sola junto al río que la separa de las viñas donde don Alejo espera benevolente. (127)

...looking for the one to blame, punishing him, her, them, shuddering gratifications, excruciating confusion, la Manuela's frail body resists no more,

breaks under the strain, can't even moan from pain, hot mouths, hot hands, slavering, hard bodies wounding his, bodies that howl, and insult and grope, that monster of three torturous bodies, breaking and tearing, and raking and probing, until nothing is left and now la Manuela scarcely sees, scarcely hears, scarcely feels, sees, no, doesn't see, and they scape through the blackberry bushes and she is left alone by the river that separates her from the vineyards where Don Alejo waits, benevolent. (134-135)

The punishing death scene recalls the image of Cerberus, a three headed dog that guards the gates of hell as the scene points to a hellish conclusion. La Manuela's sacrifice fulfills a double role. It allows Pancho to absolutely mask his homosexuality before the world and in particular before Octavio who is the one who questions him. It is also an act of atonement, of purification of his «contaminated» sexuality.

The translator maintains the length and syntax of the paragraph, which is one long sentence with many subordinate clauses. Levine decided to maintain the Spanish syntax although contemporary English usually relies more on shorter sentences. Her choice makes the selection follow the Spanish text and visualize the complex experiences the narrator is expressing during this horrifying struggle.

Levine's translation does not repeat the verb «punishing» as the Spanish does, but chooses to use the pronouns in the masculine and feminine forms to show the ambiguity portrayed in the Spanish applying a reduction strategy again. She forgoes the reflexive form of the verb «*castigándose*» (punishing themselves) and opts to use the pronoun «them» for a more succinct solution.

The phrase «*deleitados hasta en el fondo de la confusión dolorosa*» was translated as «*shuddering gratifications, excruciating confusion*» using reduction, modulation and a transposition¹⁷, since it changes the point of view but maintains the idea of being both gratified and confused. She uses «excruciating», which includes the idea of «cross» to bring about the religious undertones of the novel. She uses «howling» for «*ríen*» (laugh) to add a more animalistic image to the scene.

FINAL THOUGHTS

All translation is intervention. It transforms a text from one language to another through the mediating actions of a translator or translators who re-write passages first written in one language in order to make them available

¹⁷ A transposition uses a different part of speech in the target text that was used in the source text (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1995, pp. 36).

in another. Transforming fictional texts from one language to another requires careful analysis of the human characters that appear in fiction. The textual representations of femininities and masculinities, as well as the attitudes of both female and male characters towards each other, also require examination when making translatorial decisions and may often require an intervention that goes further than the usual translation shifts previously described.

This article has discussed some of the translatorial decision of an accomplished translator as she faced Donoso's magnificent Spanish novella. Beginning with the title, Levine intervenes to produce an experience for the English reader that is as rich as Donoso's text. The translator has managed to produce an idiomatic translation that (re)creates the gendered views and performances expressed in the Spanish text. Her interventions through reductions, explicitations, and many modulations have been carefully chosen to navigate the many gendered views that coexist in a small Chilean town, filled with ambitions, desires, secrets and deceptions.

The translation of *El lugar sin límites* is certainly no easy task. Levine has masterfully managed to bring into English characters that perform their gender in ways that often contradicts conventions. Levine has deftly managed to make us feel the voyeurism of Don Alejo, the ambition and perversity of La Japonesa Grande, the ambiguity of La Japonesita, and the desires and actions of an over the hill transvestite as their lives intersect in a limitless hell.

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