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TRANSLATING MATUTE'S *ALGUNOS MUCHACHOS*: APPLIED CRITICAL READING AND FORMS OF FIDELITY IN *THE HELIOTROPE WALL AND OTHER STORIES*

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The translation of renowned Spanish writer[1] Ana María Matute's collection of short stories *Algunos muchachos* (considered by the author to be her most mature and successful work in this genre) into English was guided by a moral imperative: namely, that the paramount responsibility of a translator should be an abiding fidelity toward *what* an original text says or suggests and *how* it achieves this communication.[2] Fulfillment of this duty would depend on and reflect the nature of the applied critical reading—that extremely close, inter-idiomatic reading called translation—of *Algunos muchachos*. This inter-idiomatic reading, best characterized as a dual reading or textual analysis—balancing what actually appears in print in Spanish against what might most appropriately and effectively reappear in print in English—would be the foundation upon which implementation of translation strategies would be justified. The closer this reading of calculated subservience to cross-linguistic possibilities of the source text, the better the translation in its recasting of the many and diverse elements that had gone into Matute's book, that linguistic alloy of history, autobiography, and fantasy. The process of faithful cross-idiomatic recreation necessarily took into consideration—as all translations must—the dynamic relationships between reading, critical understanding, and creative writing, relationships upon which I would like to reflect briefly before discussing some of the results of their interplay in the name of fidelity in translation.

Translation and criticism are both forms of applied critical reading, with translation being the reader's deepest, most complete, and most flattering encounter with a text. The adjective "applied" is meant to distinguish this type of reading from what is generally construed as reading, in that applied critical reading of a text produces a concrete verbal result. It is reading that is subsequently applied to some form of writing based upon the textual encounter—a note, review, essay, article, or translation. The results of a translator's applied critical reading differ from other forms of applied critical reading. Since no aspect of the original text can be either ignored (under-determined) or overplayed (overdetermined) in translation, as does occur in the type of reading called literary criticism; and since translation cannot use the original text as pretext for theorizing about itself, which does occur often enough in literary criticism; and since translation is critical reading's most concrete, whole, and intimate form, the task of the translator *qua* reader is to account as fully as possible for the complete depth and breadth of the text being translated, to reproduce in the target language the fullest possible richness of expression and nuance in the original.

A translator is never simply reading for appreciation of the effects achieved in one language. Rather, the translator always reads in two languages simultaneously, projecting that appreciation of the original into its potential for recreation in another language, measuring what appears in the visible text against what might best reappear in the as-yet-invisible text of the translation taking shape. It is reading a text with an eye toward the text-to-be of that very same text, a strabismus in which one eye is trained on the original, the other on its prospects for cross-linguistic re-expression. It is an inter-idiomatic reading in search of cross-idiomatic results. Only in this manner of applied critical reading can the moral tenet of translation fidelity begin to be satisfied.

Ever since the Ciceronian dichotomy of word vs. sense, the notion of fidelity in translation has had its historical ups and downs along the gamut running from so-called literal to liberal rendition. In 1987 at the first NEH Literary Translation Institute at the University of California-Santa Cruz, it seemed that fidelity was on the downgrade, as statements were made repeatedly that a focus on the working processes of translation was desired, as opposed to a rehashing of traditional and endlessly debatable issues such as faithfulness.[3] This was in keeping with Susan Bassnett-McGuire's call in 1980 that discussion of translation should "move away from the old vague conflict between free and literal translation, with the attendant value judgements," toward a "more general theoretical discussion as to the *nature* of translation" (134). Mary Snell-Hornby has more recently echoed this call by recommending "radical changes in thinking": that translation should be viewed as "a cross-cultural event" in which traditional considerations "have been [already] replaced by a holistic, gestalt-like principle based on prototypes dynami-

cally focussed at points on a cline" as the nature of "texts in situations" is explored (1-3, 131).

Yet a practicing translator soon discovers and is constantly reminded while at work that the processes and discourses of translation cannot ignore the fundamental question of fidelity. Fidelity lies at the core of the enterprise; it is the moral and operative heart of the matter, regardless of the eventual shape the translation takes, whether leaning toward the mot à mot or free side of cross-linguistic and cross-cultural renewal. The resulting forms called literal or free renditions are merely tropes, semantic masks, signposts of an aspect, for one and the same thing: the full range of the spectrum encompassed by the working concept of fidelity. In this sense, fidelity must be considered in light of its dynamic, inevitably deconstructive nature. One can be faithful to the source-language text, in a reductive literal vein, only to the extent allowed by the possibilities of the target language. If the forms and tradition of the target language will not accommodate a strict *ad litteram* form of fidelity in translation, then fidelity must be adhered to in other ways which, on the surface of it, *appear to be* departures from the notion of fidelity, as the target language, rather than the source language, begins to dictate fidelity on its own terms. Yet, these apparent (surface, formal) departures should be carried out in the name of the original text: they should represent strategies and good-faith efforts to salvage and reproduce the original, the most workable solutions to retaining its effects.

Fidelity is apparent, simple, and felicitous on those occasions when the source language is similar enough to the target language to allow the source language to be carried across literally or near-literally into the new language. But when the differences between the two languages make this impossible—which is often more of a rule than an exception—then the translator must pay greater heed to the idiomatic demands of the target language because, after all, that is the language in which the new text must be read. In the first instance, fidelity reveals itself through the original text, i.e., it can easily be traced back to the original. In the second, it is less apparent because it is now serving the interests (the readership) of the new language, and its loyalties have been divided. Thus the translator, trying to satisfy the pull of both languages, is constantly working along a tense spectrum in which fidelity encompasses workable equilibrium points along the entire cline of literal and liberal rendition (See Fig. 1).

FIDELITY

Translator Burton Raffel has observed that every translator is required "to meet his text head-on: there is simply no way to avoid such confrontations."[4] This inevitable confrontation, faced any time a translator is at work, is born of doubt: What to do with the text in another language, how to proceed, what necessary new shape to give it without betraying too much the form of the original and certainly without sabotaging the spirit. Because new shape—visually, aurally, culturally—is unavoidable, as Raffel has eloquently reminded us in his recent book, *The Art of Translating Poetry*. The crux of this entire question is constituted by the traditional issue of fidelity, vis-à-vis which of its tropes—literal (straightforward,[5] direct, modest, timid, servile), near-literal, near-liberal (free, creative, courageous,[6] arrogant, rebellious), etc.—the translator will select as the most appropriate new cross-idiomatic form in the target language. A translator's personal confrontation with fidelity cannot be sidestepped; it occurs each and every time a word or line is rendered anew. If not, if the translator's overriding concern with fidelity toward the original is dismissed, then it is not translation at all which is taking place, rather something else: a cross-linguistic adaptation, a parody of translation or the creation of something altogether different from the original—an exercise in creative writing, if you will—which is not what translation should be about. When the sense of

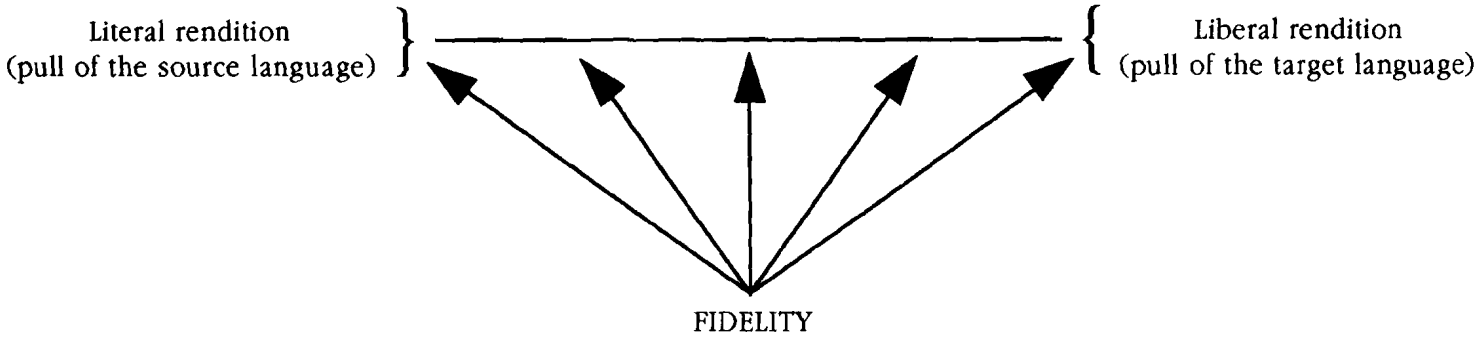

Fig. 1

obligation called fidelity is banished from holding the high seat in the translation process, both translator and original author are in trouble, as is the reader, who bears the brunt of what has transpired.

Translation and creative writing, however, do indeed have much in common. But the two part paths when meaning is considered. Creative writing initiates meaning: it is the original, creative impetus for meaning. Translation must, by definition, be deferential in this regard: it must follow (slavishly, Nabokovishly) an already existent meaning provided by the more creative writer—more creative, that is, only in the sense of initiating or configuring the signs of meaning.[7] It is not the translator's place to make additions, deletions, stylistic changes (syntax and punctuation strategies), etc., except when the target language absolutely requires such deviations from the original, which, again, is often, given the idiomatic differences between languages. But such changes must never be made gratuitously; they must be carefully measured and respond only to the idiomatic demands of the new language. If the target language requires that little or no change be effected in the translation, then, as Gregory Rabassa has often said, it is incumbent upon the translator to bring across "warts and all." In this respect—the initiation of meaning—translation should never be out to compete with the creative writing of the original. In all other features—particularly in writing as art and craft—translation does more than compete with creative writing: it is creative writing; it can be no less than creative writing.

Thus, the primary concern in bringing Matute's *Algunos muchachos* into English was to render it faithfully and well crafted with a constant eye toward both the letter and the spirit, the forms and the meanings (or the meanings and their forms) of the original. But the faithfulness could not be only to what had been written in Spanish and how. As translator Anthony Kerrigan has said, it had to be also a faithfulness to the tradition, restraints, and possibilities dictated by the new language, English, into which the Spanish original was being recast,[8] an exercise in what Barbara Johnson has qualified as the faithful bigamy of the translator.[9] The translation goal was to bear all this in mind—updated considerations of Cicero's double-pronged caveat: "If I render word for word, the result will sound uncouth, and if *compelled by necessity* I alter anything in the order of the working, I shall *seem* to have departed from the function of a translator" (Bassnett-McGuire 43, emphasis added)—and to wed theological and Romantic hermeneutics in the process.

The theological aspect of the enterprise meant that the spirit of what Matute had written in *Algunos muchachos* was to be considered "sacred" and that there should be no violation of the meaning in the original, which would indeed be to traduce the author. The Romantic side of the equation meant that the letter, the form and manner in which Matute conveyed her meaning, was also sacred, but only relatively so, as the structures and strictures of the English language are different from those of the Spanish. Because of this, changes in the stylization of the letter of the original would be unavoidable if Matute's text were to be readably authentic in English. The ideal was to reproduce in English in a calculated manner what Matute herself might well have written had this been her original language: it was to assume the persona of Matute in a language other than Spanish. To achieve this would require a conscious restraint while working on the translation manuscript in order to attain to a transparency and fluidity necessary to relive, to re-experience, the original author's thought processes and implementations of writing strategies in creating *Algunos muchachos*. To do so, or at least to operate under the illusion of having done so, would require many careful inter-idiomatic and intertextual readings [10] of the original text and many discussions with the author about her own reading and writing of the text, a hermeneutic dialogue between texts (the one in Spanish and the one-to-be in English), author, and "alter author." Yet, the daily encounter with the text in Spanish was always and everywhere a mockery of the translator's desires. No matter how many hours were spent with the text or consulting with Matute, she, *Algunos muchachos*, and the functional chasms between Spanish and English were always there to serve as reminders that theological and Romantic hermeneutics are merely heuristic devices for the translator, that what they point to can only serve as a guiding principle. Yet these two forms of hermeneutics functioned as a working axis, the compelling postulates according to which translation strategies and implementations were formulated in a commitment to fidelity. But fidelity in action, it became clear, was always tropic in nature. There were different levels and shapes for it, different workable solutions in confronting diverse aspects of the text of *Algunos muchachos*, such as titles, the narrative stylization of the language used, and nuances of meaning brought to light in English through consultation with the author.

TITLES

On Sacrificing Letter for Spirit: A Higher Principle

The title *Algunos muchachos* (title of the collection of stories as well as the opening story of the volume) was translated into English as *The Heliotrope Wall and Other Stories*. At first glance, the English rendition would appear to substantiate cries of foul betrayal and demands of wherein lies the commitment to fidelity. There are no heliotropes, no wall, and no stories mentioned in the Spanish title. It would translate simply and directly as something along the lines of "some/a couple of/certain kids/children/youngsters/boys," to be read in different ways, such as: "It's just some kids," "Hey, what do you think? Some kids, huh?," or "Some kids

never have been kids." All of these nuances are echoed intentionally in the Spanish title, which also bears a nice, full, symmetrical sound in the Spanish vowels **A - U - O, U -A - O** (*algunos muchachos*), coupled with the rhyming and alliterative **OS** at the end of each word (algun*os* muchach*os*). The English language possibilities, in comparison, fall completely flat—some kinds (phonetically **ugh igh**), a couple of kids, some boys, certain children, certain youngsters, etc.—literal equivalents far too prosaic for a writer known for the poetic quality of her prose. An additional negative factor in any literal semantic rendition of the title would be that it would almost certainly imply that *Algunos muchachos* is a book for children. This collection of stories, as are Matute's *Los niños tontos* and *Libro de juegos para los niños de los otros*, is not a book *for* children, rather a book *about* children for adults. The additional risk of a literal translation, then, would be that it might well earmark the stories for the wrong audience in English, a culture generally unfamiliar with Matute's work.[11] Word for word was a doubly poor option to begin with.

Given these literal shortcomings, the decision was made instead to adopt several long-standing translation devices in order to translate the title more felicitously: to borrow a motif from the Spanish original and to specify the genre of the book. "Heliotrope wall" is the predominant motif in the title story, "Algunos muchachos." The protagonist, Juan, recalls "how strange that name [heliotrope] seemed to him the first time he heard it" (1). Further, the heliotropes that exist linguistically do not, in fact, exist: "But there aren't any heliotropes around here, Don Angelito would insist, how absurd, there's not a single heliotrope to be found in this entire area, what idiots, what fools, there are no heliotropes" (5), a fact reinforced by Juan's grandmother, who says, "I don't know what all this nonsense is about a heliotrope wall, there never have been heliotropes on this property" (6). But the story itself is really about the process of fiction, which operates just as nonexistent heliotropes do, since it is about things that never truly were. In a doubling on this play of what is and what isn't, and with a tip of the hat to a reader's or character's willing suspension of disbelief, Matute ends the story by writing that: "Someday, perhaps, harsh and strange people would raise the curtain, hang curious props, and explain a story that never happened" (35).

Since heliotropes epitomize the true spirit of the story—that it is a poetic prose allegory about itself, the process of fiction—and since the book itself, like the famous heliotropes, is a work of fiction, to name the collection *The Heliotrope Wall and Other Stories* seemed a most fitting translation. In this decision there is indeed a betrayal of the letter of the original Spanish title, but it is compensated for and salvaged by an overriding fidelity to the resonating spirit of the original. In a sense, a more faithful translation has been achieved by following a higher principle of fidelity. The result is a title in English that strives more for the right tone for the right audience for the right reasons. To have literally translated the title as "Some Kids" would have been, ironically, a gross mistranslation of *Algunos muchachos*, an injustice to the felicitousness of the original title in Spanish. A solution was required which would *work* as a literary title in English.[12]

On Adherence to the Letter of the Original: Authorial Intent Redoubled for the Sake of Retention of Strangeness

Another instance where the translation of a title was problematic was in the closing story of the collection, "Una estrella en la piel." It translates literally as "A Star on the Skin," drawn from the opening description a young girl makes of a herd of horses: "The oldest, the king, was the red one with some lighter spots on its rump, and the others were of various colors. Some, maybe most of them, black; others, bays and chestnut-colored. But there was one that was white, with a black star" (93).

The "black star" refers to a distinguishing mark—a discoloration, blemish, spot—on the horse's forehead, which is how a white horse with a black spot on its forehead is referred to in idiomatic Spanish among people who know horses. Possible idiomatic renditions into English progress along the lines from "A Horse with a Spot," to "A Mark/Spot on Its Head," to perhaps "The Spotted Horse." But the author remarked that this would amount to a mistranslation, as the flavor and originality of the title in Spanish resided in its intentional strangeness, that it was also somewhat odd in the original—only a white horse with a black spot on the forehead is referred to in this manner, not vice versa or any other color combination—and that perhaps a literal translation would be the best way to retain this quality in English. Thus, "A Spot on Its Head" was changed back to the straightforward yet far more suggestive rendition, "A Star on the Skin." In this instance, unlike the previous example, strict adherence to the letter of the original served appropriately to redouble, to echo back into English, the very same effect Matute had sought in Spanish. It was also a translation lesson learned from the author that any nuance of intentional strangeness in the original must be fully understood and carefully measured so that it is not watered down by a translator's over-learned tendency toward idiomaticness.[13]

LANGUAGE AND NARRATIVE STYLIZATION: ON NOT TRANSLATING AWAY AUTHORIAL DESIGN

On Reproducing Vivid, Poetic Language

A distinguishing feature of Matute's prose has always been its vivid, poetic quality. Prose for her does not plod; it is a lyrical, image-filled medium. One of the joys of

translating *Algunos muchachos* was to try to allow this poetic Spanish prose to be poured, filtered through the translator, into a matching poetic English prose, as when Juan, in the title story, reflects nostalgically on his fading adolescence: "Nighttime was better than daytime. Nobody was around at night; he was all alone with his ship, the dying ship of Juan. Or perhaps he himself was a sunken ship and somebody, the survivor of a child, was gathering booty on the beach, the remains of ropes, sails, and a rusty compass" (2). Or Juan thinking about how his tutor, poor old Don Angelito, "withstood the lashes of scorn like an old galley slave, shackled, inane. Obliged, cruelly obliged to continue rowing when in reality all Don Angelito wanted was to flirt, to skip coquettishly across the letters, already half erased from so many readings, across desiccated memories, across, in the final instance, a windowsill he would never cross" (8). Or the description of the eerie protagonist's third death in "The King of the Zennos":

> Ferbe burned at eleven o'clock in the morning. His body caught fire with great splendor, a white brightness consumed him before his companions, and he betrayed no signs of pain or fear. At two in the afternoon the smell of burnt flesh filled the entire city, and a mist, black and oily, stuck to the walls of the houses, the trees, and the clothes people wore. The wind blew above the plazas and strands and ferried the ashes to the sea. (72)

Or simply the servant, Adela, mumbling in a disgruntled voice in "A Star on the Skin": "What does Miss Encarna see in this carrot-top, this brush-face?," in reference to the lady of the house's attraction toward her driver, Alberto, who had "a large mole, almost like a cherry, beneath the nape of this neck, almost on his back, and it was like velvet" (98).

There was one particular instance in which the editors and translator were at odds on how to bring a wonderfully vivid phrase of idiomatic Spanish across into English. Matute had made the following description in "Do Not Touch": "Venía hacia nosotros un hombrecito con guardapolvo y boina, que arrastraba sobre una tarima de ruedas una máquina fotográfica *del año de la polka*" (68, emphasis mine throughout, unless otherwise indicated, to highlight the translation problem). At issue was how to retain the temporal charm of an image alluding to something so old that it was "from the year of the polka." The editors forwarded a reviewer's comments to the effect that this phrase refers simply to something "very old." True, but to water down "a camera from the year of the polka" by changing it to "a very old camera" or "an ancient camera" would demolish the visual and musical redolence of the original; it would pave over the bouncy, folksy, quaint temporal feeling associated by Matute with the camera. Although the age of things in English is not measured in terms of the polka (whereas, in Barcelona, for example, it is, in the above manner of speech), the translator felt that the gist of the phrase would be clear enough to an American reader. The resistance here was to translate away a wonderful image, sacrificing it for idiomaticness. In any event, since it was an editorial sticking point, it begged to be resolved by something other than "a very old camera." In an effort to compromise between the richness of the Spanish and the comparative poverty of the suggested idiomatic English rendition, the passage was translated as: "a little man with a dustcoat and beret was coming toward us, pulling a camera from the Stone Age on a wheeled wooden cart" (59). Although "the year of the polka" is completely lost in this version, "from the Stone Age" manages to partially salvage in an imaginative and idiomatic manner the total loss that would have accrued to having said simply "a very old camera." This, as Andrew Bush, editor of the *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos*, aptly points out, is illustrative of the translator's tight-wire act, which "is always mediated by the editor...a picture of the translator with divided loyalties: fidelity to the author's view of the original text balanced against fidelity to the editor's view of the reading public."[14] In retrospect, a wonderful opportunity was lost by not having seen that the liveliest transcultural rendition would have been "a camera from the year of the Charleston," thereby further Americanizing the more European image of the original.[15]

On Recasting Informal Registers of Discourse: The Figurative Nature of Slang and the Talk of Servants, Teenagers, and Bullies

Matute has a wonderful ear for different registers of discourse. Since the stories in *Algunos muchachos* are set in contexts of either social distinction or age differences (most of her protagonists are adolescents poised on the threshold into sordid adulthood), capturing and reproducing this Matutean adroitness in dialogue was especially important. The informal registers of discourse in *Algunos muchachos* are characterized by their tone and short, charged communicative power in a highly idiomatic and figurative mode in Spanish, as when Galgo says in indirect discourse in the opening story that "*a buenas horas* estaba esperando el mundo a que él lo agarrara" (42). The key phrase here translates literally as "in good hour/time" or "about time," which was rendered cross-idiomatically as: "that was just what the world was waiting for, for him to grab hold of it" (22). Or when Celestina, the protagonist of the story "Math Notebook," is in the plaza with the maid, Ernestina, who thinks that Celestina is busy reading a comic book called Captain Thunder, when in fact Celestina is thinking to herself that "no lo leía, que *miraba los santos*" (84). This would translate literally as "I was looking at the saints," which would be a non sequitur in English, as the appropriate rendition of the meaning is simply that "I was looking at the

pictures" (49). Or when Ernestina calls Celestina a "*cacho* bruta," which refers literally to a small piece of something, as in the colloquial "un cacho de pan," a piece or bit of bread. In translating this phrase simply as "you little brute" (58), the cultural redolence of the word "cacho" was unavoidably lost by reducing it to "little," a type of loss or watering down which characterizes the general requisite of cross-cultural idiomaticness in translation. Yet, it was deemed the most suitable solution, as a literal carrying over of "you piece/bit of brute" would not have worked at all in English. Another example occurs in the story "News of Young K.," when the unnamed protagonist warns his well-intentioned adversary, Don Jeo's grandson (also unnamed): "aparta, aparta, vamos a *tener la fiesta en paz*" (40), which translates directly as "stand/step aside, let's have the party in peace," again functionally a non sequitur whose cross-idiomatic sense must be expressed as "step aside, out of my way, let's not ruin things" (85).

Aside from the many such general instances above, numerous problems of accurate cross-idiomatic transfer in translating *Algunos muchachos* were related to the talk typical of servants, teenagers, and bullies. An example is when Celestina's mother laments the servile status (yet superior to her own) of Señorita Leopoldina in the master's household, saying: "lo que tiene el ser pobre, ya se cobran el haberla recogido, ya, que no para, *hala todo el día* como una mula" (84). The straightforward translation of "halar" is "to pull/haul/heave/tow" something. But in idiomatic English "to work like a mule" cannot be phrased by "to pull/haul like a mule." It must be rendered idiomatically, as in: "oh, what it's like to be poor, don't they get enough in return for having taken her in, oh, yes, never stopping, working all day long like a mule" (49). In the discourse of teenagers, the protagonist in "News of Young K." calls his adversary "so *alelao*" (140). "Alelado" translates literally as "bewildered/stupefied/stupid," which was transformed into an idiomatic match of "you moron" (85). Another such example occurs later in the same story, when the protagonist ridicules his adversary in terms of "*el chalao ese gili*" (143), literally "that crazy/mad cretin/idiot/imbecile," which was rendered as "that addle-brained little twirp" (88).

Teenage discourse comes frequently from the mouths of bullies, as when Galgo says to his little brother, Andrés, "Tú eres un *rajao*, eso te pasa" (56), in the title story. "Rajado" means literally "split/cracked" in standard Spanish discourse, "yellow/cowardly" in a figurative sense. The English translation became: "You're chicken, that's what you are" (31). Another case occurs when Galgo warns the protagonist, Juan, "*Hala patrás, o te pincho*" (61), literally, "Pull back, or I'll prick/puncture/inject/tease/taunt you." But the context is that of a threat being made with a knife, so the translation is "Get back, or I'll stab you" (34). A final such example occurs when the protagonist in "News of Young K." gloats at having administered a beating to his unwitting adversary: "multa, cárcel, o lo que sea, bueno, ¿y el gustazo de *haberle puesto como un Cristo?*" (147). "Cristo" in a literal sense refers to Christ or the crucifix, which would lead to a mistranslation along the lines of: "A fine, jail or whatever, okay, and what about my great satisfaction at having placed/put/made him like a Christ/crucifix," when the figurative intent is "and what about my great satisfaction at having beat his face to a pulp" (91).

On Retaining Ambiguity, Capitalization, Punctuation, Ungrammaticality, and Literary Neologism

Matute is a writer who often works quickly in the beginning, creating first drafts in spontaneous yet sustained bursts of writing, as in the case of one of her most famous novels, *Primera memoria*, which she committed to paper in about three weeks. But after producing the original manuscript, the real work of writing begins—the corrections and transformations (the author's own intra-lingual translations of herself?) in subsequent drafts. This aspect of her writing is much more laborious, as she struggles against what she has called "la pobreza de la palabra," the poverty of language.[16] The result is a highly stylized, deliberate fiction, suffused with authorial intent. Nothing is gratuitous; even the seemingly smallest details are carefully crafted. For example, ambiguity was often intentional in *Algunos muchachos*, and the translator's struggle was to resist the occasional temptation of translating it away, of undoing what Matute had done with a purpose, such as having the reader renew the threads of Juan's thought in the title story after Matute has intentionally cut away from him to other characters with a portion of the narrative to develop. At one moment Juan thinks to himself that "aún sin decírselo, *ellos*, cuando pensaban el uno en el otro, sabían que retrocedían hasta alguna playa común" (16), "they knew, even without saying so out loud, that when they thought about one another they retreated to some beach they had in common" (5). The "they" in question refers to Juan and his buddy, Andrés, not to Juan and Galgo, Andrés's older brother, who has been the focus of the preceding three paragraphs. Matute wants the reader to work through the narrative construction with her, to experience the difficulty of the drama unfolding inside Juan's head, and to repeat his very same vague feelings of having once shared something with an increasingly distant Andrés, fading slowly into a near yet vaguely remote past. The entire tone of the story is purposefully vague, daydream-like, and it would have been a betrayal to clarify it for the benefit of the reader in English by stating that "Juan and Andrés knew," when Matute could have but did not facilitate things for the reader in Spanish.

Another instance of authorial intent is Matute's insistence on capital letters when her adolescent protagonists refer to formal institutions in the adult world, institutions being relentlessly imposed on them by the grown-ups in their

lives. The capital letters she employs are signs of the formality of that other world. They suggest distance, fear, exaggerated importance or adolescent mockery, as when Juan echoes in indirect discourse in "The Heliotrope Wall" that: "In This School What Concerns Us Most Is The Building Of Character, blah, blah, blah" (9). Editorial suggestions were often made in these instances that the capitals should be converted into more conventional small case letters. But they serve as visual cues that highlight the adolescent anxiety, opposition, and derision of the conventionality of the adult world. Again, to have translated them away would have been to traduce the author's intent.

Stylistically, Matute is both meticulous and traditional in her use of punctuation in *Algunos muchachos.* One might say she is fond of commas. Although contemporary English permits an ever-increasing streamlining of punctuation, the attempt was made, whenever possible, within the constraints imposed by modern idiomatic English rendition, to reproduce Matute's style of prose pacing. An example is the following sentence from "Math Notebook":

> My mother used to live here long before I was born, and I had never seen my mother until just recently, and on the first day I thought she was ugly and dirty, and when she gave me a kiss I pushed her away with the palms of my hands, and she said, what a naughty little daughter, but she didn't cry like the rest of them, she just said it for the sake of it, she already knew that I wasn't a naughty little daughter or anything else, I wasn't anything at all. (43)

This sentence in Spanish (76) also has nine commas, reproduced in English with very few syntactic changes. In English, among other possibilities, the number of commas could have been reduced easily to five by omitting the first four. Or the sentence could have been divided into as many as nine different sentences. But if Matute had wanted to reduce the number of commas or if she had wanted to divide the single sentence into several, she certainly would have done so in Spanish. Part of the obligation to fidelity lay in closely measuring Matute's original punctuation to determine whether or not it might work equally well in English, such that the American reader would experience the narrative pacing of the Spanish, as long as it could be cloned idiomatically in the new language. This again illustrates the belief that it is not the translator's place to make gratuitous alterations, especially when the author could have proceeded differently but chose not to.

Since Matute is so very traditional when it comes to punctuation in *The Heliotrope Wall and Other Stories,* it was surprising to discover the phrase "entre un vaho de whisky + vino tinto + cazalla con pasas" (134) in "The King of the Zennos." The intentional use of a mathematical sign in her prose was striking because there is no other such deviation from literary convention in the stories. The desire was to retain this unexpected playfulness, this stylistic surprise, in the English translation. But the editorial recommendation was to render it in a more conventional manner as simply, "a breath that reeked of whiskey and red wine and cazalla gin," which would undermine the suddenly playful, suddenly more contemporary Matute's intent. The compromise solution was to render it as "a breath that reeked of whiskey plus red wine plus cazalla gin" (80), which at least takes advantage of more mathematical-sounding words to replace the signs.

Another stylistic decision in the translation involved coping with purposefully ungrammatical language. In "The Heliotrope Wall," Juan corrects his companion, Andrés, for having mis-spoken his Spanish: "¿Lo qué?—dijo el Andrés...—Se dice el qué, no lo qué" (33). The context is that Juan has boasted of being able to do something better (engage in petty theft) than Andrés's brother, the already corrupted (grown-up) Galgo. The more grammatical expression in Spanish would be Juan's correction, which is an ellipsis of "¿Hacer qué mejor?," adding conversely an informal idiomatic nuance, "el," to a simpler "¿qué?" ("el qué"). The quandary was how to recast this in English. Unable to find a matching grammatical error in English, sleight of hand was resorted to in transforming it into one of pronunciation: "'Whut?' said Andrés...'It's what, not whut'" (16-17). Although in English "what" and "whut" are pronounced the same (the **A** sound in "What" being a schwa), there is an increasing tendency among native speakers to pronounce English phonetically if they can see the written work. The ploy was to submit a false substitute mistake, calling upon the reader's eye and ear to buy into the linguistic con.

In yet another instance, Matute uses a word in Spanish that doesn't exist: she brings into play a neologism. In the title story she writes that: "el Galgo saltó el candado (o el *garruzote,* como decía el Andrés, aunque esa palabra no estaba en el diccionario)" (40). The straightforward translation is: "Galgo broke open the padlock (or the *garruzote,* as Andrés called it, although that word wasn't in the dictionary)" (21). The problem is that the word "garruzote"is another one of Andrés's linguistic miscreations; it doesn't exist anywhere in Spanish except in his mouth. "Garruzote" refers to the padlock; it is Andrés's way of saying contraption, thingamajig, yet it seems somehow to connote more specificity than these vague words. Since the word doesn't exist in English either, the decision was made to retain it just as it appeared in Spanish because, pronounced in English, "garruzote" sounds as good if not better than any other doohickey that might be used to lock something up. The best form of translation fidelity, in this case, was not to translate at all but to delegate that function to the eye, ear, and imagination of the reader in English.

On Acquiescing to the Author's Correction of a Misprint

In one instance, as the translation was being checked aloud against the source text, Matute remarked on the following sentence from "Cuaderno para cuentas" ("Math Notebook"): "el amo mandaba tanto, que hizo matar a todos los que le acomodó, con sólo señalar con el bastón, decía el Gallo eso, que lo recuerda muy bien, que ya era mozo, y fue a filas, dice, que es pegar tiros al enemigo de Dios y de la Patria, aunque no mató a nadie, él dice que *no* cree que mató a nadie" (82). She asked to see the edition and began to complain about errata, or even worse, creative editing, those who indulge themselves in "improving" an author's manuscript. She circled in black ink the word "no" toward the end of the sentence, and drew an arrow to mark a syntactic change:

> **y fue a filas, dice, que es pegar tiros al enemigo de Dios y de la Patria, aunque no mató a nadie, él dice que no cree que mató a nadie.**

"Que *no* cree que mató a nadie" should have read as "que cree que *no* mató a nadie," a change in English from "he doesn't believe he killed anybody" to "he believes he didn't kill anybody" (literal renditions). It is a slight change, barely noticeable, yet indicative of Matute's narrative precision. She was adamant about the printing error and wanted it rectified, such that the sentence would appear in English as it was intended to have appeared originally in Spanish: "the master was such a boss that he had anybody he wanted to killed, just by pointing with his cane, at least that's what Gallo said, who remembers it well, he was already a young man and had joined up, he says, which means squeezing the trigger against the enemy of God and country, although he didn't kill anybody, at least he says he thinks he didn't" (47). In this instance, Matute was unwittingly borrowing a line of advice from Borges "when he told his translator not to write what he said but what he wanted to say."[17]

THE AUTHOR AS INFORMANT: HISTORY, CULTURE, AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY AS SOURCES OF CONTEXTUAL CLARIFICATION

To be able to work on a translation project with the author as informant is a boon for the translator.[18] What a translator discovers in a collaborative, consultative venture is that, in the final instance and despite statements from different quarters to the contrary, nobody knows a literary work quite like the author. In the typology of readers *qua* informants of a text, the most informed, ideal reader is the writer of the text. The author knows what he or she meant to say, and if the meaning does not always come across as it was originally intended, if it is unclear or ambiguous to the reader, the author is the best source of guidance for the translator *qua* reader who is wrestling with indeterminacy, whether it be intentional or unintentional. This is especially true in those instances where a work is historically, culturally, and autobiographically coded. The author knows better than anybody else what he or she has lived and is therefore in the best position to help the translator decode and recode appropriately. On numerous occasions, when stumped by the meaning or nuance of a passage in *Algunos muchachos*, Matute provided the contextual clarifications required for felicitous translation. In doing so, she provided living proof that the notion that the author is dead (a structuralist and post-structuralist legacy) is an absurdity for the translator who is able to consult with the author for more propitious results.

In the opening story, for example, Juan reflects on his discovery that Andrés and Galgo have another little brother whom he didn't know existed: "Otro más, a rondar por las alambradas del Campo, a la espía de los restos de rancho, *de los plus*, de los días de visita, de los recados del cocinero del Barracón" (25). "De los plus" translates literally as "from the bonuses/pluses/extras," a non sequitur if left simply at that. Matute clarified the penal context of the passage, explaining that in Spain shortly after the civil war convicts earned a small income while doing time, so that the money could help their families (who often lived in hovels set up at the edge of the prison confines) to survive. A characteristic of these circumstances was the occasional bonus days—extra paydays—for the convicts. With this insight provided by the author, the passage was accurately rendered as: "Just one more to be scrounging around the barbed-wire fences of the Prison, on the lookout for leftovers from the mess, extra paydays, visitation privileges, or messages from the Camp cook" (11).

In another example from the same story, Juan recalls that "cuando mamá era pequeña, dice, qué horror, cuando éramos niñas *comprábamos chinitos con sellos usados*, Juanito no se deformará con esas cosas" (37-38). Matute clarified that the narrative context of the phrase in question relates to the Catholic Church, that religion in post-war Spain functioned as a kind of clearing house through which "we bought little Chinamen with used stamps" (literal rendition). But standing on its own like this, the exact nature of the transaction is unclear: Is it physical? metaphoric? the work of Jesuit missionaries abroad, perhaps? Matute explained that in her youth children were encouraged to save the used stamps on envelopes and turn them in to the church to be redeemed, the proceeds of which would then be used in a religious adoption of heathen abroad, for instance, in China. It was a way for the churchgoing children of Spain to perform a good deed—the redeemed stamps were used to buy Catholic baptism for the infidel. This elucidation led to a more accurate recasting of the sentence in English: "When

mom was little, she says: how dreadful, when we were little we used to save the souls of little chinamen by redeeming used stamps, Juanito won't be scarred by things like that" (19). The English version is necessarily longer than the Spanish, which operates on a kind of historico-cultural shorthand, because the translation must incorporate some element of explication if it is to properly communicate the gist of the original for the contemporary American reader.

Further along in "The Heliotrope Wall," Juan is curious about "el Brusco," a friend of Galgo's: "Le contó el Andrés que el Brusco tenía más de cuarenta años, y vendía candelabros, armarios con doble fondo, faroles rojos y azules, ángeles, *piedras*, medallas y monedas de emperadores" (45). Here Andrés is itemizing the merchandise Brusco sells in his backwater emporium. Initially, "piedras" was interpreted as a descriptive shorthand for "precious or semiprecious stone." However, Matute clarified that the "piedras" referred to "trozos arrancados a palacios, escudos," coats of arms which had been stolen or removed from building façades. With this contextual enlightenment, the passage was accurately rendered as: "Andrés told him how Brusco was more than forty years old and how he sold candelabra, wardrobes with a double bottom, red and blue lanterns, angels, coats of arms taken from over doorways, medallions, and the coins of emperors" (24).

In a final example of how Matute's input aided in the fidelity of the translation of *Algunos muchachos*, the narrator in "Do Not Touch" describes the protagonist's wedding preparations: "El día de la boda, Claudia se levantó a la hora acostumbrada, devoró su desayuno, leyó superficialmente el periódico, se dejó vestir por su madre y dos primas solteras, soportó en silencio y sin muestras de impaciencia, que le *prendieran alfileres*, y prodigasen extraños e inadecuados consejos" (110). "Alfileres," "pins," was taken to refer to the pins used to hem Claudia's wedding dress, her mother and cousins making sure that she looked just so for the ceremony. This again would have resulted in a mistranslation, as Matute remarked that the pins were good luck charms which popular belief held as omens that marriage would soon be forthcoming for unwed female family members and friends who fastened them on the bride's wedding gown. As a result of her elucidation, the sentence was translated as: "The day of the wedding Claudia rose at her usual hour; she devoured her breakfast, glanced at the newspaper, allowed herself to be dressed by her mother and two spinster cousins, and withstood patiently and in silence the good luck pins which they fastened on her (in hopes that they too might marry soon), all the while lavishing her with strange and inadequate advice" (66). Again, the English translation requires an explanatory insert to compensate for the cultural shorthand being used by Matute if the recoding is to succeed in capturing the proper cultural coding of the original.

In discussing the examples above with Matute, other aspects of the translator *qua* reader became apparent. Matute explained that in her opinion many, perhaps most, Spanish readers would have been able to understand what she meant to say in each instance. Yet the translator is generally not a perfect, completely native reader of the source-language text being translated; this quality (as it must be) is more generally reserved for the translator's target language, the one in which he or she writes and is most at home. The translator is again always struggling between two linguistic and cultural poles: on the one hand, the desire to be a perfect native reader of the original text; on the other, the requirement of being a native reader and writer in the language of the translation. It is extremely difficult and unusual (perhaps impossible, recall Steiner) to be absolutely bilingual and bi-cultural.[19] Given this, the author becomes the translator's best ally in the attempt to comprehend all that the most-informed-of-native-readers would—to double in another language and cultural coding the original author as ideal reader of what has been written.

The theoretical and practical observations made at the beginning of this essay, and the subsequent examples based upon them, represent an attempt to summarize some of the many considerations that went into the translation of *Algunos muchachos*. Theological and Romantic hermeneutics functioned as heuristic devices, the working axis according to which the translation strategies were formulated and implemented in an overriding commitment to fidelity. Fidelity lay at the heart of what was recast, re-poured, reconfigured from Spanish into English, the cross-idiomatic result of an inter-idiomatic reading. But it was a fidelity considered expansively as a trope for what translators do when they are at work, for fidelity can and must range from literal to liberal renditions, depending on the moment or possibilities and demands of the text and two languages at hand. In the end, and despite the impossibility of achieving it, even with the invaluable assistance of the author as native informant, the goal was to write as well in English what Matute had written in Spanish—indeed, to attempt to write what Matute might well have written had English been her language. Drawing from the experience and wisdom of other translators, and learning from Matute in the process, the desired result of this particular applied critical reading was to be able to hold up a mirror to the original text in situation and see in its reflection the very words of its cross-linguistic renewal.

NOTES

1. Ana María Matute was born in Barcelona in 1926. She has been critically acclaimed for over three decades as one of Spain's leading writers. To date she has published 16 books: nine novels, nine collections of short stories, and eight titles for children. Matute has also published six translations of classics in the genre of children's literature. She has won nine awards for her fiction in Spain, among them the prestigious Nadal, the Planeta, the Premio Nacional de Literatura, and the Fastenrath de la Real Academia. There are more than 94 translations of her works into 24 languages, although English lags far behind other major languages (French, German, Russian) in this regard. Artur Lundqvist, a distinguished member of the Swedish Academy, is on record since the early 1970s as having touted Matute as one of the few Spanish writers, in his esteem, deserving of the Nobel Prize for Literature. Also in this vein, Camilo José Cela, winner of the 1989 Nobel Prize for Literature, reaffirmed in an interview in 1989 that Matute remains today one of "the great names of Spanish letters" *(New York Times* 11/7/89: B2).
2. Not all translations are guided by this moral imperative of a balanced fidelity toward the original. Some privilege form over content or vice versa. Others, as in the case of Zukofsky, privilege sound and musicality over both form and content. The issue of what a given translator privileges in translation—and how and why—represents an interesting area of inquiry in translation studies.
3. I was fortunate to have been selected as one of twenty-five participants in this six-week gathering of literary translators, directed by Dr. Gabriel Berns and Joanna Bankier. I am indebted to them as well as to my fellow participants for having created and nurtured a healthy atmosphere of inquiry regarding translation.
4. Burton Raffel, letter to the author, 20 June 1989.
5. A descriptive term proposed to me by Burton Raffel at the Simposio Internacional sobre Conversos y Otras Minorías: Homenaje a Joseph H. Silverman (San Diego State University, 4/13-14/89). Raffel believes that the term "literal" is wholly inappropriate when referring to translation as, strictly speaking, there can be no such thing as a literal translation. The phrase "literal translation" is a euphemism for no translation at all, since nothing would be changed in the letter of the original text.
6. In a metaphorical recasting of the literal vs. liberal spectrum in translation, shifting from process and result to attitude, Minas Savvas writes that "the translator's modesty should be surrounded by a certain amount of courage, the willingness to take risks" ("Translating Verse," *The Colorado Quarterly*, Vol. XXIII, No. 2 [Autumn 1974]: 244).
7. Yet, as Susan Bassnett-McGuire has observed, even so distinguished a thinker and writer as Octavio Paz makes a disclaimer in this regard. He writes that "every text is unique and, at the same time, it is the translation of another text. No text is entirely original because language itself, in its essence, is already a translation: firstly, of the non-verbal world and secondly, since every sign and every phrase is the translation of another sign and another phrase" (38). With this, Paz questions the privileged status of creative writing over translated writing by saying that creative writing is already a metaphor for translation. They are two names for the same activity since "all texts are originals because every translation is distinctive. Every translation, up to a certain point, is an invention and as such it constitutes a unique text" (38). That "certain point" is the first configuration of signs, the initiation of verbal meaning, by the original (first) author of a text.
8. Michael Scott Doyle, "Anthony Kerrigan: The Attainment of Excellence in Translation," *Translation Excellence: Assessment, Achievement, Maintenance*, ed. Marilyn Gaddis Rose (Binghamton: University Center at Binghamton [SUNY], 1987), 140.
9. Barbara Johnson, "Taking Fidelity Philosophically," *Difference in Translation*, ed. Joseph F. Graham (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 142-48. Johnson writes that: "It might...seem that the translator ought, despite or perhaps because of his or her oath of fidelity, to be considered not as a duteous spouse but as a faithful bigamist, with loyalties split between a native language and a foreign tongue. Each must accommodate the requirements of the other without their ever having the opportunity to meet. The bigamist is thus necessarily doubly unfaithful, but in such a way that he or she must push to its utmost limit the very capacity for faithfulness" (143).
10. By intertextual reading I mean that part of my translator's homework was to read those very same works that the author considered important to her as a writer. In this instance, the readings ranged from Andersen to Hamsun to Dostoevsky to Faulkner. The point of this reading repetition was not to trace influences but rather to absorb nuances in voice, tone, and style which the translator might subsequently be able to call on subconsciously in the process of writing, perhaps doubling to some extent the manner in which such readings had gone into the original writing.
11. In a recent visit to the United States for a symposium in her honor (The Child in Hispanic Literature, San Diego State University, March 15-16, 1990), it became apparent that this is also a problem faced by Matute in Spanish. Many of the questions posed to her began with a leading statement such as: "As an author of children's books...." Repeatedly Matute countered that only eight of her twenty-six books are for children and that many of her titles which bear an allusion to children are not for children at all. Her gentle admonition was that the reader should not misconstrue the creation of literary characters for an intended audience. It is one thing to write a book for children, quite another to resort to children and adolescents as protagonists in a book for adults. One might add that Matute relies so heavily on child and adolescent characters in her works because of her conviction that "a child is not the project of an adult, rather an adult is what is left of a child." Childhood and adolescence are for her the terrain of possibility, the only glimpse an adult manages of grace, mystery, and innocence.
12. It was extremely gratifying to receive a phone call from Matute saying that she agreed with the new English title—"Ha sido un hallazgo"—and that, in a curious exercise in backtranslation, she also would have liked that title for her book in Spanish, "La pared/tapia de los heliotropos."

13. Beginning translators usually commit the infraction of being over-literal in translation, cranking out cribs and trotting them before the reader. Then they learn to look for cross-idiomatic equivalence, which too often moves the translation from over-literal to over-liberal, such that the original text becomes a pretext for their own creative writing. Both extremes, which the translator learns to temper with practice, tend to traduce rather than translate a source text.
14. Andrew Bush, letter to the author, 18 November 1989.
15. This solution came to me all too clearly during a lecture on "Working the Craft of Translation with Ana María Matute" (Brigham Young University, 3/12/90), a year after the translation was published. It is, I believe, indicative of the fact that translators continue to grapple with the possibilities of a text even after the translation has been published. The search for the *mot juste* carries over as part of the residue of a translation project.
16. Michael Scott Doyle, "Entrevista con Ana María Matute: 'Recuperar otra vez cierta inocencia,'" *Anales de la Literatura Española Contemporánea* 10.1-3 (1985): 246.
17. From an anecdote in Gregory Rabassa's essay "No Two Snowflakes Are Alike: Translation As Metaphor," *The Craft of Translation*, ed. John Biguenet and Rainer Schulte (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 2. In instances of errata or creative editing it seems warranted to make amends in the translation for mistakes that the author would wish to have corrected in subsequent editions of the original text. The translator, in collaboration with the author, is merely the first person to rectify the error.
18. Anthony Kerrigan has stated that this should generally be the case but that it is never a given. The consultative venture may become especially complicated by authors in another language who think they know the target language better than they actually do. As a result, the translator is occasionally persuaded by the author to make a poor translation decision, listening to the author's recommendations rather than to his or her own native idiomatic ear. Since Matute knows no English, this problem never arose.
19. Bilingual is not to be mistaken for bi-cultural. I have asked numerous colleagues who are fluent in English and Spanish (many of them native speakers of Spanish from Latin America) if they understood what Matute meant in the four examples provided. None of them had grasped the special *Spanish* nuance within which she was operating. Despite being bilingual or native speakers of the language, none had fully understood the cultural context and coding which in turn determined an understanding of the words used. Ironically, the language of the translation communicates the content more clearly to those native speakers of a language who are not familiar with the different cultural context being drawn upon.

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