



## The Enriching Possibilities of Mobile Translation: A Departure from Prevailing Theories

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### Abstract

*It is widely believed that, no matter how well intentioned or genuine an attempt at translation is, the final product is inevitably lacking. In fact, translation is often regarded as a utopian venture; the original work is placed on an unreachable pedestal. Nevertheless, many translation theorists try to categorize translations in order to isolate what constitutes the most faithful method of translation. I analyze three translations of the Spanish *comedia*, *La vida es sueño*, by Pedro Calderón de la Barca, and draft of my own translation of the first act of Tirso de Molina's *Amazonas en las Indias*, according to two prevailing theories on the methods of translation by Friedrich Schleiermacher and Willis Barnstone. In so doing, I show that such categorizations are both narrow and impractical because they do not take into account the inherent variation present in different translations. I conclude by proposing a departure from these theories and their tendency to focus on the shortfalls of translations and encourage instead an approach that embraces the enriching possibilities of mobile translation.*

There is a widespread belief—encapsulated in the Italian proverb, *traduttore, traditore* (“translator, traitor” in English)—that no matter how well intentioned or genuine an attempt at translation is, the final product is inevitably lacking. Many theorists nevertheless strive to isolate what constitutes the most faithful method of translation. This goal is flawed, however, in that it presumes that there is a single, albeit unreachable, solution. Throughout my own work with translation, it has become clear that reality dictates quite the opposite; translation, like all other art forms, is not static but rather mobile. In other words, not only is there not one authoritative product, the translator is capable of transforming her art throughout its creation.

This paper closely examines two prevailing theories in translation literature. The first, proposed by Friedrich Schleiermacher, identifies two opposing methods employed by translators in order to remain faithful to the original work.

The second, by Willis Barnstone, provides a more precise classification than the one proposed by Schleiermacher in that it categorizes methods based on three different aspects considered by translators: register, structure, and authorship. By analyzing three translations of Calderón de la Barca's *La vida es sueño* according to these two principal theories, I demonstrate that such attempts to categorize translations based on their methods is narrow-minded and impractical. Furthermore, I consider the various translation methods employed regarding diction, syntax, and the relationship between author, translator, and reader throughout my own translation of Tirso de Molina's *Amazonas en las Indias*. This shows that, although much of the literature in the field strives to identify a singular method that will produce a translation that is most wholly faithful to the original, there are countless ways of translating a text, each of which engages different perspectives that ultimately enrich the life of the original itself.

The assumption of a utopian method of translation begins to deteriorate upon examining and applying current theories to different translations. As previously mentioned, Friedrich Schleiermacher, in his essay, "On the Different Methods of Translating," proposed a theory that identifies two opposing methods of translation: paraphrase and imitation. The former is described as leaving the writer undisturbed and moving the reader towards the writer, and the latter as the exact opposite—leaving the reader undisturbed and moving the writer towards the reader (42). Explained in a different manner, while applying the method of paraphrase, the translator maintains the "foreign" style throughout the translation, despite the possibility of it seeming strange to the reader. She attempts to replicate the original vocabulary, poetic structure, syntax, etc., as much as possible, even at the expense of the reader's understanding. This method has many strong supporters, including Schleiermacher himself (52). Another theorist, Rudolf Pannwitz, agrees that "The basic error of the translator is that he preserves the state in which his own language happens to be instead of allowing his language to be powerfully affected by the foreign tongue" (qtd. in Benjamin 81). For these theorists, to stray from the characteristic beauty of the work is to dishonor the original and its author. Metaphorically, the original is a mountain peak that is incredibly high and impossible to reach; the translator admires its breathtaking magnificence and vows to get as close to the summit as possible. Seeing no other way to the peak than up the very mountain itself, the translator utilizes paraphrase, guiding her readers along the path that she believes will bring them closest to the top—the original itself.

Imitation, on the other hand, can be described as producing a text that reads as if it had originally been written in the target language. In this method, the translator above all aims to maintain the spirit of the original; she takes liberties in changing what she must in order to transport it to the culture and era of her reader. By freely altering the original text, the translation truly becomes a work of its own. Although far from reaching the "peak" of the original, the translator who imitates is as much in awe of the breathtaking summit as she who paraphrases.

Instead of attempting to climb the mountain itself, however, she hopes to give her readers an identical experience by guiding them along a different path up a summit that she hopes will approximate the first. Only from that neighboring summit does she believe her readers will truly appreciate the beauty of the original. Whether a translator uses paraphrase in an attempt to stay on the mountain path or imitation with the hope of creating a comparable experience, her goal is always to give her readers the best view of the original summit as she can. Theorists often judge the success of translation based on their opinions of these two paths. However, the advantages and disadvantages of classifying translations based on these two opposing techniques highlight a major flaw in the theory and metaphor: it is entirely unrealistic. The theory paints an incomplete picture, suggesting that there are only two paths to take. There are numerous drawbacks in adhering exclusively to one method or the other, and no translator would sacrifice so much just to stay faithful to her ideals. It will soon become evident that no translator's methods align perfectly with either of these camps and that there is much more to the picture than reaching the summit of the mountain.

Calderón de la Barca's *La vida es sueño* is notoriously difficult to translate. Despite this, various translators have attempted to do so over the past five centuries. The variety present in these translations proves that, rather than encompassing one technique or the other, translations fall somewhere on a spectrum, with Schleiermacher's two methods at either end. In order to demonstrate this, I will analyze various translations of the first monologue of *La vida es sueño*, in which Segismundo, imprisoned by his own father, questions the Heavens about his sad fate. The first version that I consider comes from Edward Fitzgerald's 1853 translation, titled *Such Stuff as Dreams Are Made of*. Without entering into the monologue, we can see from the title that Fitzgerald translated liberally. Stylistically evocative of Shakespeare, it foreshadows what lies within. Fitzgerald did not maintain the Spanish *décima*, which is a poetic form that consists of a ten-line stanza with eight syllables per line and the rhyme scheme abba: accddc. Instead, he opted to use the Shakespearean iambic pentameter, a choice consistent with his title (449). In his introduction to the translation, Fitzgerald admits that, rather than mimic the sonorous Spanish verse of the original, he chose to translate with a sound and style that was similarly pleasing in English (2). Fitzgerald's introduction allows us access to the thought process behind certain translation decisions. He states outright that he does not believe that an exact translation of Calderón would have any success and says that he, "while faithfully trying to retain what was fine and efficient, sunk, reduced, altered, and replaced, much that seemed not" (2). While Fitzgerald clearly recognized the beauty of the original Spanish, he determined that it was untranslatable and unsuitable for English. Therefore, though he felt he could not maintain the distinctive style of the original, he attempted to create something analogous for his English readers.

In order to transform the text from *décima* to iambic pentameter, Fitzgerald made such extensive changes that they render passages almost

unrecognizable. From the very start of the translation, a line-by-line comparison reveals two entirely different lines of verse in both structure and meaning.

Original

Fitzgerald's Translation

<i>Ay mísero de mí, y ay, infelice!</i>	<i>Once more the storm has roar'd itself away,</i>
<i>Apurar; cielos, pretendo,</i>	<i>Splitting the crags of God as it retires;</i>
<i>ya que me tratáis así,</i>	<i>But sparing still what it should only blast,</i>
<i>qué delito cometí</i>	<i>This guilty piece of human handiwork,</i>
<i>contra vosotros, naciendo;</i>	<i>And all that are within it. Oh, how oft,</i>
<i>aunque, si nací, ya entiendo</i>	<i>How oft, within or here abroad, have I</i>
<i>qué delito he cometido:</i>	<i>Waited, and in the whisper of my heart</i>
<i>bastante causa ha tenido</i>	<i>Pray'd for the slanting hand of heaven to strike</i>
<i>vuestra justicia y rigor</i>	<i>The blow myself I dared not, out of fear</i>

The translation alters the words to such a degree that the story itself is altered. While Calderón de la Barca's Segismundo concedes that his punishment is just, Fitzgerald's goes so far as to pray that the heavens strike him down (449). While Fitzgerald seems to make fidelity of style his first priority, the manner in which he does so quiets the author's voice. All things considered, the finished translation most closely aligns with the category of imitation. However, what we know of Fitzgerald's inner struggle to maintain what he could of the stylistic beauty of the original complicates the issue. There is a discrepancy between Fitzgerald's intentions and the finished product, since, although he claims to have wanted to maintain the original's "sonorous Spanish," his abundant modifications have converted his translation into a work of its own (2). If we return to the mountain metaphor, Fitzgerald's translation leads his readers astray from either path.

About twenty years later, Denis Florence MacCarthy published a translation of *La vida es sueño* quite different from Fitzgerald's. While Fitzgerald chose iambic pentameter to maintain the spirit of the Spanish verse, MacCarthy opted to mimic the Spanish *décima*. In the introduction to MacCarthy's translation, Henry W. Wells specifically refers to Fitzgerald's translation as a point of comparison. Wells criticizes the older translation, saying that it is "adaptation rather than translation" and that it "adds much and subtracts much" (9). Though certainly not a revelation, as Fitzgerald admits the same in his introduction, Wells highlights these flaws in order to show how MacCarthy's version remains faithful to the Spanish style without making such abundant modifications. If we were to use Schleiermacher's theory to classify MacCarthy's translation based solely on the introduction, we would mostly likely categorize it as paraphrase. In comparing the translation to the original, however, the changes in diction and addition of material become apparent:

Original*Ay misero de mí, y ay, infelice!**Apurar, cielos, pretendo,**ya que me tratáis así,**qué delito cometí**contra vosotros, naciendo;**aunque, si nació, ya entiendo**qué delito he cometido:**bastante causa ha tenido**vuestra justicia y rigor,**pues el delito mayor**del hombre es haber nacido.*MacCarthy's Translation*This is the bottom of calamity!**Why am I a man forlorn,**Heaven, I desire to know,**Since you willed it to be so,**Why have I provoked your scorn**By the crime of being born?**Though for being born I feel**Heaven with me must harshly deal,**Since man's greatest crime on earth**Is the fatal fact of birth—**Supreme sin without appeal.*

Though MacCarthy's changes do not match Fitzgerald's in quantity or degree, his fidelity to the Spanish *décima* has cost the translation a certain natural quality. While MacCarthy manages to compose a comparable form with seven syllables per line and an identical rhyme scheme, the rhyme in English seems forced and requires significant alterations. In this way, although the style itself is more faithful to the original, MacCarthy's choice does not necessarily better conserve the spirit of the original that both he and Fitzgerald before him sought to uphold. To further complicate matters, Wells states in the introduction that, like every translation of a classic, MacCarthy's alterations give the original a "modern' or contemporary coloration and tone" (10). In other words, Wells believes that the translation stays faithful to the original while modernizing it. Once again, this translation cannot be classified as either paraphrase or imitation and instead strays from the two mountain paths.

William E. Colford's translation from 1958 provides yet another example of Schleiermacher's problematic theory. Having translated his version well after Fitzgerald and MacCarthy, Colford had the advantage of having access to both previous versions as points of reference. He identified successes and failures in each and then formulated his own strategy. We see a glimpse of this process in Colford's introduction, in which he states that Fitzgerald's translation was "freely adapted" and "Shakespearean" while MacCarthy's was neither too painfully literal nor too carelessly free; in Colford's words, he hoped to "strike a balance between the two" (xviii). Just as Fitzgerald's and MacCarthy's translations did not follow either mountain path, Colford's, too, wanders off in its own direction.

Original

*Ay misero de mí, y ay, infelice!*

*Apurar, cielos, pretendo,  
ya que me tratáis así,  
qué delito cometí  
contra vosotros, naciendo;  
aunque, si nací, ya entiendo  
qué delito he cometido:  
bastante causa ha tenido  
vuestra justicia y rigor,  
pues el delito mayor  
del hombre es haber nacido.*

Colford's Translation

*Oh, wretched me! Alas, unhappy man!*

*I strive, oh Heav'n, since I am treated so,  
To find out what my crime against thee was  
In being born; although in being born  
I understand just what my crime has been.  
Thy judgement harsh has had just origin:*

Like Fitzgerald, in order to convey “to the English-speaking mind what the original conveyed to the Spanish-speaking mind,” Colford used a standard English verse form comparable to the Spanish verse of the original, instead of attempting something similar to MacCarthy’s English *décima* (xviii). Although Colford preferred to cater to the needs of his English readers, he also saw the value in maintaining as much of the original language as possible. While his choice in verse form reflects a penchant for imitation, his dedication to the original diction suggests that he also values the foreignness of paraphrase. Though we have only examined three different translations, these examples make it clear that it would be nearly impossible to produce a translation utilizing solely imitation or paraphrase. As I have shown by focusing on various elements of each translation, such as style and diction, the method that a translator chooses varies depending on the aspect. Attempting to classify a translator’s methods based on two opposing viewpoints is narrow-minded and obscures the complete picture. The breakdown of this classification is present in the metaphor as well. Although guiding readers up the mountain path seems to be an ideal way to reach the peak, what is truly gained once it is neared? What is beautiful from afar becomes difficult to admire when one is so close. A similar disappointment occurs through the path of imitation as well. For, once readers have reached the summit of the other mountain, the view of the original peak is not so impressive. The failure of the metaphor shows the theory’s limitations; translation must involve more than just these two paths.

The impossibility of adhering to these two techniques of translating forces us to be more precise in our classification. If the translator’s methods vary depending on her priorities, be they the verse form, syntax, vocabulary, etc., then the classification must evolve to match that mobility. Willis Barnstone, another notable translation theorist, proposed a more rigorous approach to categorizing translation. He suggests that translators’ decisions fall under three categories: register, meaning the degree to which the diction is literal; structure, or how much

of the original structure is maintained; and authorship, meaning the extent to which the original author's voice can be heard in the translation (qtd. in Larson 85). By viewing these elements as separate entities, the choices made by translators are more easily analyzed.

Returning to the translations of *La vida es sueño*, there is much to be gained by narrowing the classification with Barnstone's theory. Instead of generalizing the categorization of the translations, each aspect is considered separately. For example, there was already a marked difference in Fitzgerald's methods regarding the structure and voice of his translation. According to Barnstone, Fitzgerald's choice of iambic pentameter would be described as "naturalizing structure of source text in target text" because its purpose was to act as an English equivalent to the Spanish *décima*. This classification is the middle of the three levels that Barnstone proposes, the others being retaining the structure and abandoning it altogether (qtd. in Larson 85). Fitzgerald states in his introduction, however, that, although he admits to the loss of a good deal of Spain and Calderón in the translation, a good deal was also retained (2). This suggests that Fitzgerald aimed to retain the author's voice, thereby acting in opposition to his naturalization of the structure. To a certain degree, this more detailed classification frees translations from the restriction of following one path or the other.

We can apply this theory once again to MacCarthy's and Colford's translations. For example, in our previous discussion, we observed a conflict of interests between the structure and register of the translation. MacCarthy took it upon himself to stay as faithful as possible to the original structure by maintaining the Spanish *décima*. Barnstone would classify this as retaining the structure of the original (qtd. in Larson 85). Regarding the register, or diction, of the translation, however, Well's introduction reveals that MacCarthy made alterations to modernize the language of the original. Though not involving complete license, the modifications certainly fall under what Barnstone would consider a "middle ground" (qtd. in Larson 85). Therefore, MacCarthy's method of translating register was freer than that which he used to translate the structure. In the case of Colford, while his structure would be classified as a naturalization of the structure, like Fitzgerald's, his register can best be classified on Barnstone's scale as "literalism," for, despite the modification in structure, the diction is remarkably close to the original (qtd. in Larson 85). Although Barnstone's theory has a more representative application than Schleiermacher's, as it provides more space for the mobility involved in translation, further analysis is needed to substantiate such a claim.

My own work in translation makes for another interesting study, as I have had to consider the very factors highlighted by Barnstone while translating a work of early modern theatre. Along with my mentor, Madera Allan, and my colleague, Daniel Vaca, I have been translating the first act of *Amazonas en las Indias*, a Spanish *comedia* written by Tirso de Molina. It is one of a trilogy of plays about the conquest of Peru in the 16th century. The play has never before been

translated into English, so there is no precedent. The play is of interest for two reasons. The first is that, since it was likely commissioned by the Pizarro family, it depicts the universally reviled Pizarro brothers in a relatively positive light. Given that history has shown them to be anything but heroes, the play's point of view has posed an exciting challenge for us as translators, which we will soon explore at greater depth. The second peculiarity is that the play almost entirely avoids the Pizarro brothers' role in the conquest, focusing instead on their fictitious relationships with Amazon women. Not only does this raise serious questions about the performability of the play, and therefore affects how it is translated, it plays a significant role in which aspects we choose to bring to the foreground in the translation. In terms of Barnstone's theory, the play's special interests have specifically influenced our choices in register, structure, and authorship.

As previously discussed, the unique point of view of *Amazonas en las Indias* has been an exciting challenge for us as modern translators, as it has strengthened our understanding of the relationship between the author, the translator, and the reader. The translator is in the unique position of being a reader, an interpreter, and, to a certain extent, an author, simultaneously. She, a reader herself, translates a work so that fellow readers who do not understand the language of the original can experience it. As a reader, the meaning she attempts to transpose from the original to the target language is her own, influenced by her experiences, her relationship with and understanding of the two languages, and even the era in which she reads the original. Furthermore, the readers of the new translation also generate meaning. In this way, the relationship between the reader and translator mediates the different layers of meaning, and how this relationship unfolds has a significant impact on the translation.

These complexities have influenced how we have chosen to translate *Amazonas en las Indias*. Because meaning can be influenced by the author, the translator, and the reader, we have had to be conscious of whose perspective we want to dominate the translation. As we continue to work with the translation, we are constantly attempting to strike a balance between Tirso de Molina's unique take on the Pizarro brothers, our own experience of the play as translators, and how we expect our audience to understand and experience it as readers. In order to demonstrate this delicate balance and its effect on Barnstone's considerations, I will provide specific examples from our current draft of *Amazonas en las Indias*. By considering our choices, we gain a better understanding of the mobility of translation.

Structure, or Barnstone's second consideration, was one of the first points of focus for our translation. The entirety of act one is written in Spanish verse with lengthy monologues dominating the interactions between characters. Anyone who has read Shakespearean verse knows that such poetry requires skillful manipulation of language, which greatly affects the natural syntax of English. The language is stretched to its limits in order to satisfy the meter and rhyme scheme. Compared to Spanish, however, the possibilities available in English syntax are



limited. Because of its lack of clarity in components like verb conjugation and gender inflection, English compensates with a relatively strict syntactical structure in order to help speakers mark who is doing the action and to what or whom the action is being done. While there is some freedom in the placement of adverbs and prepositions, as well as less common structures like passivization, the prototypical word order is SVO, or subject-verb-object. For example, many English sentences resemble, at least on a basic level, the sentence *John read the book*, where “*John*” is clearly identifiable as the subject, “*read*” as the verb, and “*the book*” as the object. Spanish, on the other hand, has much more freedom in this aspect. Where English lacks in case markings, Spanish does not. With a much clearer system of verbal inflection and gender and number marking, the Spanish language allows for more freedom in its word order (Carreiras et al. 125). As in all languages, syntax is exceptionally variable in poetry. Tirso de Molina’s monologues are replete with instances of SVO, OVS, and VSO intertwined throughout:

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*Sin hombres, pues, nuestra patria,  
quedaron en su custodia  
las mujeres bien seguras  
de que ajenas plantas pongan  
en sus límites sus sellos,  
porque a la fama le consta  
que solo distinguió el sexo  
sus hombres de sus matronas.*

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Because of the difference in syntactic liberty between Spanish and English, we determined that mimicking the verse was out of the question. In attempting to force verse, we would have lost its natural quality, as MacCarthy did in his translation of *La vida es sueño*. This inclined us towards translating into prose, a decision which Barnstone would describe as an “abandonment of original structure and creation of new one” (qtd. in Larson 85). The impossibility of maintaining the syntax itself, though, was only one factor in our decision. We were also influenced by the complicated relationship, mentioned earlier, between the author, the translator, and the reader. As translators, my colleagues and I prioritized conveying the play’s peculiar perspective. Whether Tirso de Molina personally believed in the heroism of the Pizarro brothers or was influenced by his patrons, the author’s decision to paint the characters in a certain light is an essential aspect of the play. Therefore, in order to ensure the most accurate and clear rendering of that depiction, we chose to translate into prose. Our hope is that by eliminating the unnatural quality of a forced English verse, readers will be free to focus on the play’s striking perspective.

That said, our general choice to change the structure of the text has not permanently limited us to that option. At various points throughout the first act, we have found opportunities to pay homage to the original structure. For example, during Menalippe’s monologue beginning in line 370, Tirso de Molina

uses a stunning parallel structure that we wanted to maintain. While we could not salvage the rhyme scheme or the complete adjective-object-verb structure, we instead used a comparable adjective-predicate structure that preserves the feel of the original while remaining consistent with our prose translation, which serves our goal in keeping the play's perspective in the foreground:

<i>rebeldes las armas toman,</i>	370
<i>soberbias al campo salen,</i>	
<i>valientes el parche tocan,</i>	
<i>horribles los arcs flechan,</i>	
<i>resueltas dardos arrojan,</i>	
<i>ingratas su sangre asaltan,</i>	375
<i>bárbaras sus dueños postran,</i>	
<i>cruelles escuadras turban,</i>	
<i>diestras desbaratan tropas,</i>	
<i>hambrientas cuerpos derriban,</i>	
<i>severas miembros destrozan.</i>	380

*Haughty, they took the field; brave, they beat the drums; horrible, they nocked their arrows; intrepid, they shot darts; thankless, they shed blood; barbarous, they lay waste to their masters; cruel, they upset squadrons; deft, they threw the troops into disarray; hungry, they felled bodies; unrelenting, they tore their enemies limb from limb.*

Thus, not only do our methods vary from aspect to aspect, but from section to section within the same translation. Although Barnstone's three-part classification seemed more promising than Schleiermacher's when analyzing the translations of *La vida es sueño*, the insights gleaned by analyzing a translation in progress allows us to delve deeper and recognize the theory's shortfalls. While it is true that structural transformation was necessary for the realization of our goals, we did not limit ourselves to that singular method. Instead, we found it practical and advantageous to consider not only each aspect but each portion of the work as a separate entity that deserves individual attention. In this way, neither Barnstone's classification nor Schleiermacher's for that matter accounts for the mobility that our translation requires.

This mobility is visible once again regarding another of Barnstone's categories—register. Influenced by our goal to convey the work's content clearly, we often opted to be liberal with our choices in diction. Where something was outdated or unclear, we revised it. If we found a word or phrase to be unnecessary or irrelevant to the perceived meaning, we removed it. Many of the modifications occurred naturally as we transformed verse to prose, as Tirso de Molina had added certain words only to adhere to the verse's formal requirements. In this excerpt, in which Gonzalo tells Menalippe about his need to return to Quito, we removed redundancies and modernized the language:

*llámame la mucha edad  
del marqués que solo y viejo,  
entre envidiosos y extraños,  
necesita mi presencia  
porque mal sin mi asistencia  
podrá reprimir engaños*

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*The marquis, old and lonely, has need of me. Surrounded by envious strangers, he can scant contend with their plots and schemes alone.*

By freeing the text from poetic constraints, the meaning and intention become more transparent, thereby bringing the author and reader closer together.

However, just as our translation's structure was not entirely determined by the choice to write in prose, our liberal selection of diction was not absolute. While Barnstone may have defined our translation's register as "license" (the freest of the classifications) based on many of our choices, we chose to adhere to the original in specific sections because they possessed qualities that we wished to underscore (qtd. in Larson 85). For example, in his first monologue, Gonzalo expresses his awe of the Amazons' valor through a metaphor comparing a brilliant sunset with a blazing funeral pyre. My colleagues and I decided that the bold comparison was essential to establishing the strength and power of the Amazon women and therefore fought to maintain as much of the imagery as we could:

*¡Oh sol, que en el ocaso donde mueres  
Por guarda de tu pira luminosa  
Influyes tal valor en las mujeres!*

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*Oh sun! Here, where you die each night, you ignite tremendous valor in women to protect your blazing pyre.*

This section, among others in our translation, demonstrates the imprecision of both theorists' classifications yet again. While Barnstone's theory improves upon Schleiermacher's by creating the possibility of straying from the two established mountain paths, it is still incapable of capturing the vast array of variation in a translator's decisions. Such considerations as register, structure, and authorship do not occur only once; they are part of a constant decision-making procedure that takes place throughout the translation. The process, however, does not stop there. Each revision requires further consideration, as the translator's intentions and tastes often change due to her complex role as an intermediary between the author and reader. This perpetual evolution demonstrates the true mobility of translation and hence the difficulty in classifying the translator's final product. At this point, two important questions are raised: are critics genuinely attempting to classify translations? And if so, what is their end goal? While critics and theorists do not spend their time grouping translations into categories, they do tend to speak about translations as if those categories and boundaries existed. If we have shown the impracticality and narrow scope of these classifications,

why are they so commonly utilized? The response brings us full circle: theorists critically analyze translations as a means of discovering the most faithful method of translation—the path to the breathtaking summit.

The attempt to uncover the path to translation utopia is widely viewed as worthwhile. In order to find the best method of translation, theorists focus almost exclusively on what each translation lacks. For example, Arthur Schopenhauer stresses in his essay, “On Language and Words,” that the incongruities of languages—the fact that some words exist in one language but not in others—makes all translations imperfect (32). This point is not unique to Schopenhauer; it is made by many theorists, including Yves Bonnefoy, José Ortega y Gasset, and Gregory Rabassa (Bonnefoy 186–187; Ortega y Gasset 96; Rabassa 1). In fact, the field is replete with criticism not only of others’ works but with self-criticism as well. Gregory Rabassa insists that a translator “must always be dissatisfied with what he does because ideally, platonically, there is a perfect solution, but he will never find it” (12). While recognizing weakness is essential to growth, appreciating strength is equally vital. It is worth considering what would happen if, instead of evaluating translations’ faults, efforts were redirected to assessing their particular contributions.

Focusing on a translation’s strengths is understandably difficult, especially when the original is placed on a pedestal. Anything that differs is automatically deemed inferior. I struggled with this myself while working on our translation. While revising our first draft, my colleague, Daniel Vaca, and I were hesitant to make significant changes for fear that we would stray too far from the original. In order to free us from that debilitating reluctance, my mentor, Madera Allan, suggested that the three of us translate a section of the play in a manner unlike the original as well as each other’s. To begin, Allan chose to translate as simplistically as possible, removing anything unnecessary to her perceived meaning and modifying the language to be excessively clear. Vaca, on the other hand, focused on adding his own voice to the translation, making alterations that aligned with his specific tastes. Finally, I carried out the task in a more drastic way by translating the section as if the characters were young millennials expressing their love for each other via text messaging. When we shared our translations, the results of the experiment were illuminating and, frankly, pleasurable. The portion of the dialogue that follows shows Gonzalo promising to return and ask for Menalippe’s hand in marriage:

Original

<i>Yo voy tan enamorado</i>	655
<i>de ti y tan reconocido</i>	
<i>que jamás podrá el olvido</i>	
<i>borrarte de mi cuidado</i>	
<i>Volveré mi Menalipe,</i>	
<i>a tus ojos brevemente</i>	660
<i>con armada y con más gente.</i>	

*Tendrán Carlos y Felipe  
 noticia de tu valor.  
 Licencia les pediré  
 para que el alma te dé  
 con la mano, y el amor  
 uniéndonos en sus lazos  
 hará mi dicha inmortal  
 Admite agora en señal  
 de mi palabra estos brazos  
 adiós, que es fuerza el volverme*

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Madera Allan's version

*I have fallen so hard that I could never forget you. I will soon return with ships and men. I will tell Charles and Philip of your valor and ask for their blessing to give you my hand— and soul—uniting us eternally. For now, accept this embrace as a token of my sentiment. I must return. Farewell.*

Daniel Vaca's version

*I am so in love with you that you will never be lost in my memory. Worry not, my Menalippe. I will return, and when I do, an armada and more people shall accompany me. Carlos and Felipe will know of your bravery. I will ask them for permission to love you with heart and soul in eternal joy. Accept my words as proof of my affection. Farewell, I must leave now.*

Megan DeCleene's version

*Gurl, im just so in luv wit u. I no my <3 will nvr 4get u. Im cumin back 4 u M. Ill bring my crew n a bunch of other ppl n ill make sure Carlos n Felipe no ur a tuf girl. Im gonna ask 4 thur blessin 2 marry u. My soul is urs. Luv will bring us 2gether n make me happy 4ever. \*sends emoji of guy and girl kissing\* Let this show im bein real wit u. Bye bb. I g2g.*

Allan's version is certainly blunt compared to the original. Lacking poetic quality, it becomes something resembling a telegram with pithy language that does not evoke much emotion, despite the topic of the dialogue. These characteristics, however, are far from faults. For one thing, there is a certain beauty to the brevity of the language. It maintains the essential content despite harsh reductions. Its bareness allows readers immediate access to the plot. In addition, for those of us able to comprehend both the original and the translation, its concision allows us to appreciate the poetry of the original to an even greater extent. If the play were made of layers, with Allan's version at the core, we could visualize how additional layers would bring out all of the intricacies of language present in the original.

Vaca's version has a personality that the others lack. By making modifications and additions based on his own tastes, the language acquires a

voice and degree of emotion that is absent in the others. Though critics could argue that, because Vaca's version contains his own voice, it stifles the author's, my experience with both versions tells me otherwise. Vaca's perception of the sentiments of the original is evident in his language. Had he not interpreted such emotions in the original, he would not have been able to reproduce it in his own translation. Therefore, instead of stifling those sentiments, Vaca's version intensifies them.

My version of the text is quite comical in comparison to Allan's and Vaca's. The juvenile language and SMS abbreviations demonstrate a modern use of technology to which much of my generation can relate. While this version does not add any poetic value, it proves something that the other two versions could not, which is the versatility and relevance of the original. When you strip the original of its poetry, you are left with only a story. The fact that the same story can be retold in an utterly modern genre shows that it is relatable and relevant. What this exercise demonstrates is that, despite straying far from the original in various ways, each version possesses a strength: clarity, voice, and contemporary relevance, respectively. Furthermore, each of those strengths enriches the original in one way or another. Whether it creates more appreciation, intensifies the voice, or proves the versatility of the original, our distinctive versions underline diverse elements of the play.

While this exercise involved extreme hyperbole, the central idea is clear and serves as a springboard for a discussion about the impact of variation in translation. Though the tendency is to view deviations from the original as failures and imperfections, the exercise creates the possibility of seeing difference in a more positive light. As discussed earlier, one of the most frequently encountered issues of translation is the untranslatability of certain words. In his essay, "The Misery and Splendor of Translation," José Ortega y Gasset explores this issue in depth. Not only are there words that do not have a corresponding expression in another language, but words that supposedly have the same meaning are actually dissimilar. Ortega y Gasset uses the example of the word *bosque* in Spanish and *Wald* in German. While both words can mean forest, they differ because of how each word is experienced by speakers of the different languages, and so the words evoke different sentiments and images when encountered (96). For the translator who sees deviation as a fault, this dilemma would be disheartening. In contrast, my colleagues and I adopted the opposite stance when we encountered this issue in our own translation.

In a particular section of the first act, there is a play on words that seriously challenges the possibility of a "faithful" translation. In this section, Sir Diego, an enemy of the Pizarro brothers, refers to them as "*pizarras*" in order to draw a comparison between the men he intends to kill and slates, or gravestones.

*Cuatro pizarras pudo Extremadura  
hacer que en el Pirú se atravesasen  
al paso del valor y la ventura*

*de mi padre y al Cuzco le estorbasen.  
 Consigo se llevó la sepultura  
 la pizarra mayor porque apoyasen  
 pronósticos del nombre sus sucesos:  
 losas pizarras son, sepulten huesos.*

750

Though this portion of our translation is still under revision, a literal translation is clearly out of the question because of the lack of similarity between *Pizarro* and the corresponding English translation, *slate*. Because of this, other translators might view this as an automatic loss, one step further from perfection. Imagine, though, what could be gained by taking a different perspective. Instead of accepting defeat or considering whatever substitute as inferior, we have been taking the opportunity to explore the possibilities. Though there is no true equivalent, why should that mean that another option is lesser? By embracing the opportunity to depart from the text, we have an opportunity to find an equally powerful metaphor that perhaps better suits our translation. What is more, a different metaphor may create an entirely new experience for the reader that she would not have had the chance to experience if we were to attempt to stay “faithful” to the diction of the original.

This embrace of freedom brings us full circle to our previous discussion about the choices we have made thus far in our translation. Whether we decided to venture toward paraphrase or maintain a more liberal imitation, we did so in order to bring life to certain aspects of the work. If we return to Barnstone’s three criteria for translation, we find he refers to authorship as the final consideration for translators (qtd. in Larson 85). Taking all other decisions about structure, diction, style etc., into consideration, whose voice do we as translators wish to retain—the author’s or our own? While the tendency to outline certain options or strategies, as Schleiermacher and Barnstone have done, encourages a partisan thought process, we know now that this is not realistic. The metaphor of the mountain peak deteriorates because the focus is too narrow. In an effort to bring readers as close to the peak as possible, the translator loses sight of the fact that the grandeur of a mountain peak is best appreciated in the context of the bigger picture. Though at certain points my colleagues and I fought to reproduce the particularities of the original, at others we embraced the liberty of translation and made our own personal choices about what we thought sounded pleasing or right. It is the mobility, and not an adherence to fidelity, that makes our translation and others enjoyable for the reader.

The concept of mobility in translation is not unique. Other theorists have expressed their support of this concept to different degrees. Edmund Keeley, for example, says that “translation is a moveable feast that must initially serve the taste of its particular day and then be prepared to change in keeping with the taste of another day” (63). José Ortega y Gasset insists that works should be translated in various and diverse ways in order to illuminate all of the dimensions of the original text (110). Though this viewpoint stems from a belief that all worthwhile

endeavors are utopian, translation included, the support of diverse translations aligns with what my findings have shown. Perhaps the most well-known supporter of mobility in translation is Jorge Luis Borges. A proponent of freedom in translation, Borges not only wholeheartedly believes in the creation of many diverse translations but proposes that each translation, as well as the original, be regarded as drafts on an equal plane (qtd. in Waisman 47). He goes so far as to say that “*La literatura es una serie de versiones que se reflejan múltiplemente, una sala textual de espejos en donde es difícil diferenciar un original*” (Literature is a series of versions that are numerous reflected, a textual room of mirrors in which it is difficult to differentiate an original) (qtd. in Waisman 58). Even a classic piece of literature is just a refraction of other versions and stories (qtd. in Waisman 59). In other words, for Borges, fidelity to the original is not the goal because the original text is not superior. In the context of our original metaphor, Borges’ picture involves not one but many mountains. Each mountain is its own separate entity, and yet no single peak stands out. Like drafts combined to make a finished story, the multitude of mountains creates an entire mountain range, a more complete picture.

This version of the metaphor is superior to the first in many ways. For one thing, the many mountains represent the fact that there are more than just two different approaches to translating a text. It accounts for the wide range of mobility and the many different perspectives taken by translators. When reaching one mountain peak is no longer the goal, each summit can be appreciated on its own or as a completed picture. However, there is still a major flaw in Borges’ landscape that underscores a fundamental difference between his views and my findings. When there are numerous peaks, and only peaks, how can one truly appreciate the mountain’s beauty? For how can we admire beauty when everything looks the same? To suggest that the original is nothing but another draft diminishes the value and splendor of the original author’s work. It is still the birthplace—an original work worthy of awe and respect. What is beautiful about the mobility of translation is not that it levels the playing field, but that each translation provides a unique perspective, enhancing the original in a multitude of ways. Thus, each translation, with all of its differences, continues and enriches the life of the original author’s work.

If we return to the metaphor one last time, the vision is now clearer. Rather than one daunting summit standing alone, it is a mountain surrounded by endless hills and valleys, completing a breathtaking landscape. The beauty of the portrait is enriched by the different elements of nature: trees, rivers, flowers, animals, and perhaps a few passersby, each one representing different translations of the same work. There is no limit to their numbers, but without any one of them, the picture would be incomplete. Most importantly, within this landscape, one can stand at any point and enjoy an entirely new perspective of the breathtaking mountain. Despite my qualms with Borges’ theory, he does make one observation that brilliantly illuminates the potential of mobility in translation: for a speaker of



Greek, there is only one Odyssey; for a speaker of Spanish, however, there can be many (Waisman 60). By letting go of the inevitable failures of utopic translation and instead embracing the multitude of perspectives capable of enriching the original itself, we can uncover a whole new world of possibilities within the art of translation.

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