

Graduate Program in Translation  
College of Humanities  
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Río Piedras Campus

**DEPARTURES AND ARRIVALS: MIGRATORY EXPERIENCES IN  
CONTEMPORARY PUERTO RICAN ART**

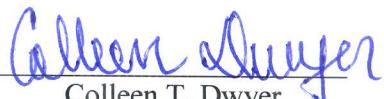
(a translation of selected essays from *Ida y vuelta: experiencias de la migración en el arte puertorriqueño contemporáneo* by Dr. Laura Bravo)

by  
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Colleen T. Dwyer, 2019

*For my godmother, Cyndy Scott*

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## **TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE**

## 1.1 Introduction

If someone had asked me as a first-year translation student to name some of my specialization interests, I probably would have said something about the global market's demand for multilingual business materials and the United States Federal Drug Administration's requirements for medical back-translations. As a Spanish-to-English translator from the continental United States with experience in localization project management, I believed that these were some of the few fields that would bring me financial success. While they are all still worthy paths to consider, my studies at the Graduate Program in Translation (PGT, by its Spanish abbreviation) at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus (UPRRP) have inspired me to pursue art history translation as one of my specializations, and it all began with pro bono work for the online arts journal *Visión Doble*, which was assigned to me while I was a professional fellow at the Translation Center of the PGT. Thus, I began searching for a text that would meet the requirements for the thesis translation, struggling to find something within this field that was challenging but not overwhelming. My advisor, Dr. David Auerbach of the PGT, suggested a selection from the catalogue *Ida y vuelta: experiencias de la migración en el arte puertorriqueño contemporáneo* by Dr. Laura Bravo, who also happens to be the founder and editor-in-chief of *Visión Doble*.

The exhibition *Ida y vuelta: experiencias de la migración en el arte puertorriqueño* debuted at the Museum of History, Anthropology and Art (MHAA) of the University of Puerto Rico in February 2017 under the direction of Dr. Laura Bravo. It compiles the works of eighteen artists—including photographers, painters, graphic artists, videographers, and installation artists—who demonstrate their migratory experience,

either past or present, through their artwork. Dr. Bravo has described this exhibition as “addressing migration through the presentation of different perspectives, starting with cautionary advice involved in embarking on this complicated adventure, and also broaching conflicts, especially those regarding identity, which are usually the result of coexistence in a geographical space that is not native” (*Exhibición Ida y vuelta*). The exhibition also demonstrates how Puerto Rico’s economic, political, and meteorological crises have been a catalyst in the mass migration of Puerto Ricans from the island. It forms part of a larger research project being conducted by Dr. Laura Bravo, Jorge Duany, Quintín Rivera Toro, and Brenda Cruz, which began in 2014 and studies this great exodus through more than 50 video interviews with artists, curators, art critics, and gallery owners. As this exhibition is scheduled to travel to Brooklyn College of the City University of New York (CUNY) and Taller Puertorriqueño, a museum of Puerto Rican art and culture in Philadelphia, the essays—translated from Spanish (PR) to English (US)—will be presented alongside the descriptive text for each artwork.

## 1.2 *The Author/Editor*

Dr. Laura Bravo is the author of the selected essays and the editor and coauthor of the catalogue *Ida y vuelta: experiencias de la migración en el arte puertorriqueño contemporáneo*, which accompanies the exhibition that she curated at the MHAA. This is only one of fifteen exhibitions that she has directed or curated in museums and art galleries in Puerto Rico, Spain, and the continental United States. Dr. Bravo holds a Ph.D. in Art History from the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid and has traveled the world with her research; however, she is most well-known at UPRRP, where she is a tenured professor and has served as Chair of the Art History Program (2012-2016) and

coordinator for faculty initiatives at iINAS, an undergraduate research program at the Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research.

Dr. Bravo has coauthored more than twenty books and exhibition catalogues on art history and visual culture and is founder and editor-in-chief of the online art journal *Visión Doble*, which was launched in 2013. She has presented her research in more than forty conferences and symposia in international institutions in countries such as Spain, the Netherlands, Germany, and Cuba, as well as in Puerto Rico and the continental United States.

In the summer of 2018, as part of the Visiting Scholars and Artists from Puerto Rico (VISAPUR) program at the Latin American Studies Program of UPRRP, Dr. Bravo began conducting research on migration and contemporary art in Puerto Rico after Hurricane María with support from Migration: People and Culture Across Borders, a Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies (PIIRS) interdisciplinary research community.

### 1.3    *The Text*

The catalogue *Ida y vuelta: experiencias de la migración en el arte puertorriqueño contemporáneo* was published by the MHAA in 2017. The full text is 80 pages in length and contains approximately 25,000 words. It includes essays by several authors, many of which may also be translated for publication, but for this thesis, I have chosen to translate Dr. Bravo's essays that analyze each individual artwork, as well as the associated captions and references. This is the densest section of the text, which begins with *Un trayecto por etapas* on page 37 of the source text PDF and includes subsections 1. *Una Aventura arriesgada*, 2. *Un lúgubre triángulo: Crisis política, económica y social*, 3.

*Espacios intermedios entre la geografía y la memoria, 4. En constante desplazamiento,* and 5. *Identidades Desplazadas*, ending on page 67. The final published version of the source text also includes images interspersed alongside the text so that the reader can refer visually to the artworks while reading Dr. Bravo's descriptions and interpretations. This also includes the images and captions on pages 28, 32, and 36.

The selected text demonstrates the phenomenon of the current mass migration of Puerto Ricans to the continental United States through the lens of artists who have relocated, often in pursuit of new learning and development opportunities or creative environments. Although some artists may have left the island due to the same economic and political pressures that have been the impetus of this current movement, which has now surpassed the number of emigrants who departed during the Great Migration of 1950 to 1954, many show unique tendencies. These individuals are what I would call "boomerangs," subject to a phenomenon that the author refers to as "circular migration" or "yo-yo migration" in the sense that they are departing and returning, sometimes cyclically.

Puerto Rican art is often characterized by nationalistic images of flags, landscapes, and the iconic forts of Old San Juan, but *Ida y vuelta* goes beyond those clichés and truly delves into the autobiographical perspective and the cultural immersion of the artists themselves. The essays seek to provide context for the pieces in the exhibition and link them to the artists' experiences and the ongoing research that Dr. Bravo has been conducting with her team. Whatever their reasons for participating in this new wave of migration, the artists selected for this exhibition have something to say about it, and Dr. Bravo articulates their messages gracefully and poetically.

## 1.4 The Translation

Once we understand the meaning of circular migration, we can see why the author chose to title the work *Ida y vuelta*. It captures this sense of coming and going, back and forth, or leaving and returning. I considered translating this as “A Roundtrip Flight,” but I felt that it lacked an important sense of continuity. Other suggestions were “Circular Migration” or “Yo-yo Migration,” but these produced an incongruence with the imagery of the text, which makes many references to airplanes and mass transit, so I settled on the author’s suggestion of “Departures and Arrivals,” which maintains the allusion to mass transit and also the circular flow of migration.

The next issue I encountered was a matter of style guide. When I proposed this project, I had intended to use the Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS) with specific adaptations from the Art Editors Style Guide, but as I began to work on it, I realized that I did not recognize the style guide that the author had used, and I began to worry that my translation would seem inconsistent if it were to appear side-by-side with the source. When I contacted Dr. Bravo, she explained that she had used the Modern Language Association (MLA) style guide with her own personal adaptations. Most notably, the in-text citations are not in Author-Date style. Instead of including the date, Dr. Bravo chose to include the truncated title of the work when there was more than one work by the same author. Thus, I decided to maintain this citation style in my translation and refer to the Art Editors Style Guide only for matters related to the composition of art history texts (Association of Art Editors).

In many ways, this translation could be classified a transcreation, which comes from the union of the words “translation” and “creation.” Transcreation requires the

recreation or rewriting of the text in the target language in a way that may not be an identical word-for-word translation of the source. The source text can be seen as a series of concepts that must be adapted to fit the local culture. Many art history texts in Spanish, including this one, are written in a garrulous style that can sound very convoluted when translated to English without some reworking. Spanish more easily lends itself to longer sentence structures because the verb morphology allows the writer to reconnect a verb with a previous subject without repeating it. Gender and number in Spanish nouns and adjectives also provide this necessary link. If we apply this same sentence structure to English, the resulting text is verbose or disjointed. Thus, one of my objectives for this translation was to concentrate on conciseness—dissecting the phrases and breaking them down to their core meaning, removing superfluous or repetitive language, and dividing long sentences into more manageable, shorter ones. Often, this required word additions or deletions. Moreover, in this text, words such as “exponer,” “generar,” “plantear,” and “provocar” appear frequently in sentences where the noun drives the meaning. These verbs can have many different translations depending on the noun that accompanies them, so I found myself digging into a thesaurus more than a few times in order to diversify the language.

From a cultural perspective, there were also knowledge gaps that needed to be filled. For example, Luis Muñoz Marín is a household name for most Puerto Ricans on the island, but someone from the continental United States without a degree in Puerto Rican history is unlikely to recognize him. My solution was to include additional information indicating that he was Puerto Rico’s first elected governor. Another example of this is the mention of the “yola,” which I decided to keep in Spanish to add

authenticity, since it is a specific term used on the island. However, I added a short description, explaining that it was a small dinghy traditionally used to make the voyage from the Dominican Republic.

Like most multimedia texts, this translation also created many situations in which the text was subordinate to another element, namely the photos of the artistic creations. The following passage essentially sums up the primary challenge of translating for visual and conceptual arts texts:

[T]he division between these two orders is highlighted by a simple experiment derived from the adage, “A picture’s worth a thousand words.” Given one hundred, one thousand, or one hundred thousand words to describe an image—with what degree of accuracy would readers be able to picture this work if they had never seen it before? How far would they be able to reproduce it accurately in their imagination? No matter the detail of the description, it is likely that few (if any?) respondents would reproduce an ‘accurate’ reproduction of the image in their imaginations. (Hill, “Writing the Visual” 4)

Before translating the text, I studied each image carefully in order to truly understand its composition. One example of this is the description of Edra Soto’s *Graft*, which describes “las rejas” that safeguard the front porches of middle-class Puerto Rican homes she encounters in the Chicago suburbs, similar to those that are very common on the island. In other circumstances, I probably would have translated this simply as “bars,” but this term alone does not do this image justice. In many large cities in the continental United States, I have seen basement windows with bars akin to those you might see in prison, solely serving as a protective barrier. On the other hand, the bars I see on Puerto Rican

porches are often lovely designs, transforming an element that could be associated with confinement into an eye-catching detail. They are often a work of art themselves. I wanted to make sure this came through in the translation, so I chose to add some detail, referring to them as “ornate wrought iron bars.”

I also encountered some geopolitical matters that warranted delicate handling. One such instance was the translation of the words “inmigrante” and “emigrante.” Although I recognize that from the perspective of the target audience, who in this case are in the host or receiving country, the correct term should be “immigrant,” I chose to maintain the author’s point of view, using the word “emigrant” throughout. In 2014, radio host Laura Ingraham questioned Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor’s citizenship when she said, “Why do we have a Supreme Court Justice whose allegiance obviously goes to her immigrant family background, not the U.S. Constitution?” Although Puerto Ricans share some sociological characteristics of immigrants, they are not immigrants from a legal perspective (Greenberg, “Sonia Sotomayor’s Family”). An immigrant generally comes from another country and needs some sort of visa, residency, or other permission to travel or reside. Since Puerto Ricans are United States citizens, I find this translation to be inadequate or untrue. Another option that I considered was “migrant,” but again, this is a politically charged word often referring to field workers on farms in the continental United States. “Emigrant” seemed to be the only of these options that did not carry any sort of political undertones. I think it will be clear that this is Dr. Bravo’s voice coming through, and it is more important to me to honor the artists and their identity than to cater to the perspective of the target culture. In fact, I would like to make readers think about the way that they use this type of language when referring to Puerto

Ricans. I used the word “immigrant” in only one instance, to refer to Dominicans—who fit both the legal and sociological definition of the word—migrating to Puerto Rico. On the same note, I found terms like “migration” and “migratory” to be acceptable due to their neutrality, often applied to the relocation habits of birds or other animals, which usually move circularly throughout the seasons.

Another such instance that I encountered was the translation of “la Isla” and “el país.” I had to ask myself whether “country” would be confusing for the target audience since Puerto Rico is not a sovereign nation, and I certainly wanted to avoid terms like “territory” or “commonwealth,” which can be disparaging because they have been applied by the United States to Puerto Rico. Additionally, when I came across “la Isla” in capital letters, I was unsure of how to handle this. I ultimately decided to use “island” rather than “country”—again, to make a point about the political status—and to eschew capitalization, as I found that it was distracting and that it would not hold much significance with the target audience.

Next, there is the age-old debate of what we “gringos” call ourselves. In English, we would normally identify as “American,” but in Spanish, “americano” refers to the people from the entirety of the continents of North and South America. “North American” would include Canada, the Caribbean, Mexico, and Central America, so that is not an adequate translation into English either, and then, of course, there is the issue that Puerto Ricans are also United States citizens and should have every right to call themselves American if they choose to. I chose to avoid the word “American” entirely and refer to any people or items as from the “continental United States” to make this clarification.

When it came to the references, most were fairly straightforward, but I found that some links were either broken or non-existent. If I could find a working link, I updated it with the correct one. As a last resort, I checked the WayBack Machine, which is a non-profit that creates free digital Internet archives (“About the Internet Archive”). If the link was truly non-existent, I removed it, leaving the rest of the original publication information. A few needed some minor adjustments in the ordering of elements or had typos. When I came across the Marc Augé reference, I searched for the text in English, and although WorldCat did not provide any results, I did find a text titled *Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity* (2009) that appeared to be the English version. However, since Augé originally wrote the text in French and then it was later translated into English and Spanish—and also for the purposes of maintaining Dr. Bravo’s page references—I thought it would be best to leave the reference to the book in Spanish that she consulted.

For the Isabel Allende quote, on the other hand, I did find the published English-language translation of the book in the library in order to insert it, and thus, I used the English book’s reference information and updated the page numbers accordingly in the in-text citation. I learned a valuable lesson in this process. When I took the English-language version out of the library, I failed to also take the Spanish source text out. When I returned to my office to search for the quote, I obviously could not locate it because the pagination was nowhere near similar. I had a good laugh to myself and considered flipping my desk over like Billy Joel in his music video for “We Didn’t Start the Fire,” but I was relieved to find a paginated version of the source text on the internet, saving me another trip to the library (Joel, “We Didn’t Start the Fire”). In order to

identify the quote in the target text, once I found it in the source text, I located the chapter and counted the paragraphs.

On a personal note, this text really resonated with me and my own personal experiences with migration and being an outsider. Although I cannot relate to the socio-economic pressures that are impelling many Puerto Ricans to leave the island, I could certainly relate to the artists who have traveled to seek new opportunities for study and learning. I came to Puerto Rico from Philadelphia for this very reason, and now and then, I do feel objectified due to my appearance, or I sense that I am existing in an “internalized non-place,” a sort of cultural identity crisis characterized by constant uncertainty and a feeling of placelessness (Márquez, “Arte en torno a la migración”). Sometimes I am very angry at the United States and want to dissociate and further assimilate into Puerto Rican culture, but I cannot deny my birthplace. I am also living “between two flags,” and the flag of my native country makes a very bold statement in Puerto Rico (Duany, *The Puerto Rican Nation* 197-201). I recently solved this personal identity issue by acquiring the flag of the City of Philadelphia, where I was born. This is now my other flag, in addition to the beautiful flag of Puerto Rico, so that I can have that patriotic connection to my homeland without sending a political message.

The author states in her introduction that these artworks have “the ability to transcend local references and the specific temporal context to which each alludes, becoming a universal mirror, reflecting the experiences of other viewers” (Bravo, *Ida y vuelta* 37). Unfortunately, I did not have the pleasure of seeing the exhibition in person, but I think the text does accomplish its mission of taking this uniquely Puerto Rican experience and transforming it into a concept that is relatable for many of us who have

relocated at some time in our lives. My goal was to deliver this message concisely and with additional context so that perhaps the target culture might identify and empathize with the Puerto Rican predicament.

### *1.5 Localization and Desktop Publishing*

When I first received this project, it came in the form of an Adobe Acrobat PDF and separate MS Word document with comments. I had doubts about the finality of this MS Word document and concerns about being able to present the images and captions alongside the text, so I contacted the MHAA and requested the InDesign IDML source file. I was able to load this file directly into memoQ 8.7, my Translation Environment Tool (TEnT). Jost Zetzsche—ATA certified translator, author of the blog *The Translator's Toolbox*, and coauthor of *Found In Translation: How Language Shapes Our Lives and Transforms the World*—coined the term TEnT in order to properly describe this form of translation technology, which is most commonly called a Computer-Assisted Translation (CAT) tool but is too often confused with Machine Translation (MT) engines, such as Google Translate. Using the TEnT, I identified the translatable text, including captions, and translated it in an environment that aligns the source and target side-by-side, directly from the final published IDML file. The TEnT allows me to build glossaries with a simple keystroke and later verify my text for uniformity. I can also quickly insert notes into each segment with a click, and no phrase is ever left untranslated. When I came across the Allende quote, I had to skip over it because I had not yet consulted the translated book, but memoQ alerts me to any omissions, as well as unmatched punctuation or capitalization and other inconsistencies. Furthermore, I was able to identify several minor formatting errors in the source text. Due to the way that

memoQ manages formatting, through the placement of highly visible tags, it draws the translator's attention to details that would not be so apparent in MS Word.

I have been working with this tool since I began translating, and I would like to highlight a new feature that came with memoQ 8.7, the newest build. "Hey memoQ" relies on Apple's voice recognition technology to provide a voice-to-text feature within the TEnT ("Hey memoQ"). I downloaded an app on my phone that pairs it with the software, enabling voice dictation. While I think the technology still has a few kinks, and I found that this feature was not very useful for this project due to the many long and complex sentences that required a bit of research and time, I am very excited about the prospect of translating by voice. For a different type of project, I could see this type of technology increasing translation speed and decreasing some of the health issues that translators often experience from long hours on the keyboard.

After translating, editing, and running the quality control feature, I exported the text into a MS Word document, and with the help of my advisor, I reviewed it a second time outside of the TEnT. I will then be able to import the edits and export the finalized text to Adobe InDesign 2019 for desktop publishing, which requires some typesetting to handle any text expansion or contraction that occurs during the translation. For that reason, I will be able to deliver a PDF version of the translated text in layout to the MHAA.

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