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Thesis

Rebirth in Spring: A Translation of *Primo Vere* by Esteban Tollinchi

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## **Translator's Preface**

“You, to whom life would taste / so bitter, Father, when you tasted mine, / that turbid first  
infusion of my Must, / you kept on tasting as I kept on growing...” (Rilke 180)

“Echo: spring detaches from the arms of winter, / and still trembles bare in the frigid air; /  
the sun between your tears / limpidly shines, oh, Lálage. // On a Winter’s night, beneath  
the shroud of snow, / those flowers dreamt of sprinkled dawns, of a splendid / sun and  
your face, oh Lálage.” (my translation, Estelrich 183-184)

## **Introduction**

Esteban Tollinchi published *El Hijo / Primo Vere* in 1963 in Munich, Germany. He said in an interview, titled “La casa de los sueños,” that the only reason he published his works there was because “it was much cheaper to print than in America” and he felt “that impatience that every new author has of seeing themselves between two covers” (my translation). This mixture of modesty and acidic humor was characteristic of Tollinchi. On the occasion of Tollinchi’s passing, Mario Vargas Llosa wrote an opinion piece for *El País* titled “Un humanista puertorriqueño” that he possessed a “sharp humor” and “blue eyes that frequently smiled, usually with a hint of mischief and teasing” (my translation). This same description is prevalent in *Primo Vere*, which indicates that he was either self-aware of his mannerisms or that every fiction writer inevitably lets their mask drop sometimes to reveal parts of themselves. As Michel Butor mentions in his essay “El uso de los pronombres personales en la novela,” “Everyone knows that the novelist constructs his characters, whether he wishes to do so or not, out of the elements of his own life” (89). However, *Primo Vere* is not a particularly humorous text, but a dramatic tale about renewal and transformation. Near the end of the story Carlos, the protagonist, longs to return home

with a new perspective: he no longer feels the need to escape his own reality. Just as flowers blossom beneath the weight of melting snow with the promise of spring and life in the novel, Carlos undergoes a similar process of rebirth that makes him bloom again with a new purpose.

### **Description of the Text and Value of the Translation**

*Primo Vere* is a short novel that narrates the experiences of a banker named Carlos, who decides to leave his job and family one day to go to New York on a whim because he feels dissatisfied by the outcome of his life and disillusioned with the relationship he shares with his wife and estranged son. On this “business trip,” (*Primo Vere* 15) he meets a woman named Ana Teresa with whom he shares a series of joyful yet occasionally bittersweet experiences. After his attempt to see an old friend named John Moseley goes wrong, which was the main reason for this trip, he decides to return home. Near the end of the story Carlos longs to return home with a new perspective: he no longer feels the need to escape his reality.

The protagonist and narrator of this short novel is Carlos, a middle-aged banker who has grown disillusioned with his life and wishes to abruptly change his situation by following his inner desires instead of continuing to sacrifice and neglect his personal wishes for the sake of his family. Although Carlos is the protagonist, the first character who speaks is Marina, his wife. She is supportive of his husband but shows more tolerance and open-mindedness to their son Jorge and his decisions, which leads them to argue due to their differing opinions. Jorge, although he is only mentioned by other characters and is not present in any scene, may be described as independent and unpredictable. He shows his independence by deciding to leave his parents’ home and telling them that he wishes to

“completely forego their help” (4). His unpredictability is shown when Carlos calls him “fickle” (2) because he constantly changes his plans, like deciding to change what he is studying and then suddenly choosing to stop studying altogether. Carlos also sees this in his choice to marry a woman that he disapproves of. However, since Jorge is not an active character in this short novel, his descriptions are only the product of how other characters’ view him, mainly Carlos. For this reason, we may have a distorted view of Jorge that is filtered through his father and does not allow us to perceive his true personality.

The secondary characters of *Primo Vere* are the people who Carlos meets when he goes to New York: Ana Teresa and John Moseley. Ana Teresa is described by Carlos as “slender” (19), “no ordinary woman” (19) but also “not as young as she seemed” (19). Her personality is mostly melancholic, yet she demonstrates inquisitiveness and adventurousness by continuing to talk to Carlos after his sudden initial approach. However, Carlos sees something change in her when they visit a museum together, where she seems “fully animated, playful, lively...” (28), although he questions how authentic those emotions are. She was also involved in a romantic relationship with John Moseley in the past. Moving on, John Moseley is a slightly enigmatic character who Carlos is searching for in his visit to New York. He describes him as a “Greek epebe with English clothes” (38), “always with vigilant eyes ahead” (35) and “a ready smile” (35). The only insight into his relationship with Carlos is that he was an old friend with whom he shared a few experiences in New York many years before the events of this short novel. In the conversation that Carlos recalls, John’s philosophy is shown to be slightly egotistical and self-indulgent. This is demonstrated when Carlos criticizes how Moseley may hurt others with his way of thinking because he is only concerned about his own emotions and desires.

Two additional minor characters that are named but do not play a significant part in the plot are Luz, Carlos' secretary at the bank where he works, and Dennis, a bellhop who works at the Hotel Snowdon where Carlos stays when he goes to New York.

A few key conceptual themes of this short novel are regrowth, family and interpersonal conflicts, and the pursuit of fulfillment in life. The action unfolds in three places: New York, Puerto Rico and, through retrospection, some parts of Europe. It is a realist novel that employs retrospection (analepsis) and descriptive moments that enrich the main character's different states of mind or act as extensions of his personality, slightly reminiscent of Balzac. A great part of the narration consists of the protagonist's contemplative thoughts and opinions about his own experiences and relationships. The text also has a sober yet occasionally romantic style (particularly in its descriptions) that often reaches philosophical moments of deep reflection regarding the condition of humankind.

The story resembles postwar existentialist works such as *Nausea* (1938) by Jean-Paul Sartre or *El pozo* (1939) by Juan Carlos Onetti in that the protagonists in these three texts are hyper-sensitive and analytical of their past and present experiences and narrate them through their own thoughts or feelings in a way that simulates a diary more than a traditional novel. Perhaps the most important precursor of this style of writing is Fyodor Dostoevsky in his novel *Notes from Underground* (1864), where the main character puts forth his ideas and experiences in a similarly personal and confessional manner. Another important genre to consider is "psychological realism," which many people have used to describe the works of Dostoevsky. This genre is relevant to *Primo Vere* because it focuses on the inner thoughts and feelings of each character (although Tollinchi focuses more on the protagonist) while also describing their motives for their behavior. Going back to the

above-mentioned works, the main characters and Carlos all share a common attribute: they are all searching for a more fulfilling purpose in life and they all feel something lacking in their current routines. The length of this text is 44 pages with a total of 17,077 words.

Esteban Tollinchi self-published these two short novels and did not have an editor to see to the final revision of these texts. It is because of this that, in my opinion, there are some typos in the text that I have chosen not to discuss in the translation difficulties, given that they are more typological and editorial errors rather than complications in translating the text. However, it is worth mentioning that, occasionally, the process of translation also required an additional effort of revising and correcting these minor errors. A few examples are: “*cambiare*” (5) to “*cambiara*,” “*acostumbrade*” (11) to “*acostumbrada*,” “*Tempoco*” (19) to “*Tampoco*” and “*les cosas*” (19) to “*las cosas*,” among others. As it may be observed, they are commonly just one-word errors that may have been the result of a typo that, since it was likely done on a typewriter, could not be erased by simply pressing the backspace key. However, there is a significant typographical error where the subject is changed from a third-person possessive pronoun “*se*” to a first-person “*me*” on page 15 of the source text. If the paragraph would not have mentioned “*su plan*” (15) later on and contextualized the subject, this error would have resulted in a mistranslation.

The poem that Tollinchi uses as an epigraph, also titled “*Primo Vere*,” was published in a collection of poetry by Giosuè Carducci titled *Barbarian Odes* (1877–1889). Carducci was an Italian poet who in 1906 became the first Italian recipient of a Nobel Prize in Literature. Although I could not find an English translation of this poem, I found a Spanish translation by Juan Luis Estelrich published in an anthology of Italian poetry titled *Poetas líricos italianos, traducidos en verso por J.L. Estelrich* (1891) and a slight variation



of that version rewritten by Estelrich around 1920. This anthology, however, has not been digitized and I could only find this poem cited in an essay written in Catalan by Miquel Edo i Julià titled “Catalan Literature as Opposed to the Carduccian Rethorical Model.” Using both Spanish versions, I then translated the poem into English. Considering that Tollinchi left the poem in its original Italian, I chose to do the same, but added my English translation based on Estelrich’s text to this preface.

With this translation, my goal is to breathe new life into this text by allowing it to reach English-speaking audiences interested in exploring the more obscure members of the Puerto Rican literary canon. Tollinchi’s greatest passions were mainly the study of literature, philosophy, and language, and in this story we see evidence of all three: the epigraph by Carducci shows his fascination for foreign literature (particularly European), the moments of profound existential reflection by the main character demonstrate his interest in philosophy and human thought, and the beautifully descriptive passages he composed represent his affinity for romantic and realist literature. As such, this makes this text representative of the wide scope of Tollinchi’s vision and a good steppingstone to continue exploring and translating the works of this overlooked author. Another added value is to bestow more recognition and attention to Tollinchi’s literary work, given that he is mostly known for his nonfiction. The historical value of the text is also worth noting since it serves as a firsthand account of the experience of a Puerto Rican author in a postwar setting that includes Puerto Rico, the United States, and Europe.

Although Tollinchi focused mainly on European art, I consider his work inherently a product of the island he was born and lived in for most of his life. In the same vein of Jorge Luis Borges’ essay “El escritor argentino y la tradición,” I believe Tollinchi’s affinity

for Europe could not remove the fact that, writing and living in Puerto Rico, made him inevitably a Puerto Rican author and led him to declare, as Borges: "...our tradition is all of Western culture" (my translation 272).

### **About the Author**

Esteban Tollinchi Camacho was born on October 20, 1932 in Guánica, Puerto Rico and passed away on December 4, 2005 in San Juan, Puerto Rico. His higher education began at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus, and continued in Rome, Heidelberg, Munich, and Madrid. He was a celebrated professor of Humanities at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus and an important intellectual that contributed greatly to the cultural development of the University in all his forty-six years there. He was fascinated by the study of language and was a polyglot who knew twelve languages: Spanish, English, Italian, French, German, Greek, Latin, Russian, Portuguese, Catalan, Old Provençal and Dutch. During his time as a professor, he offered seventy-five different courses in comparative literature, philosophy, modern languages, and general studies. Also, he published fourteen books and dozens of articles and translations mostly focused on European and Western culture. Among his best-known works are *Las visiones de Thomas Mann* (1973), *La conciencia proustiana* (1978), *Romanticismo y modernidad: Ideas fundamentales de la teoría del Siglo XIX* (1989) and *Los trabajos de la belleza modernista, 1848-1945...* (2004). His literary work, which is not so well known, includes the two short novels *El Hijo / Primo Vere* (1963) and his novel *Aura, auroras y crepúsculos* (1963).

## Theoretical Analysis of the Text

The story is told from the perspective of Carlos and filtered through his understanding of the world. In “El punto de vista” Norman Friedman calls this “selective omniscience,” which means that “...the reader, instead of seeing the story through different consciousnesses, is limited to the thoughts of only one character” (my translation, Sullà 85) which, in this case, is Carlos himself. Although the story is told from a third-person perspective, it seems to portray what Roland Barthes wrote about “some narratives ... written in the third person, [whose] stance is nevertheless the first person” (262). This may be seen if we attempt Barthes test: to change each “he” in the narrative to an “I.” Barthes continues by saying that, “...as long as this operation does not entail any alteration of the discourse other than the change of grammatical pronouns, we can be certain that we are still in a person system” (262). An example could be: “[I] experienced mild shame when [I] remembered [my] age, [my] dignity and position back home” (19). Therefore, the idea that most of the events are filtered through Carlos is reinforced, since the use of the third-person singular “he” does not eliminate the fact that it is Carlos himself who looks, thinks and experiences the events of this short novel. However, just as Barthes distinguishes between “personal and apersonal (impersonal)” (262) systems, there are episodes in *Primo Vere* that are impersonal because they either lack a subject or character that experiences them, or cannot be articulated in a first-person singular “I” and fail Barthes’ test. An example of an impersonal episode could be the following: “So fresh! The lively and sunlit water. The skin glowed delightfully in the light. The promenade on the opposite side was covered with ivy” (7).

Another important and prevalent concept in this short novel is the “internal focalizer” described by Gérard Genette. First, we must distinguish between “focalizer” and point of view, since the former includes not only the eyes that gaze upon each scene, but the “...cognitive, emotive and ideological orientation” (Rimmon-Kenan 71) of that observer. Carlos is the narrator-focalizer of the story because his “...ideology ... is usually taken as authoritative, and all other ideologies in the text are evaluated from this ‘higher’ position” (81), although, later on, Carlos attempts to adopt Moseley’s ideology or life philosophy and ends up returning to his own. However, this perspective is not limited to Carlos, but also to how he speaks externally of each character’s actions. Tollinchi employs “words of estrangement” (Uspensky cited in Rimmon-Kenan 81), “...indicators such as ‘he thought,’ ‘he felt,’ ‘it seemed to him,’ ‘he knew,’ ‘he recognized,’” to establish some distance from his characters. Nonetheless, he always returns to his “narrative of ‘interior monologue’” (193), which Genette identifies as the only moment when “Internal focalization is fully realized...” (193). By using this method, it appears that Tollinchi is attempting to cast doubt on his own protagonist (an unreliable narrator *à la* Poe), communicating that even his “internal focalizer” is not completely in control of his own thoughts or actions, or that he does not understand the full reasoning behind them. At a certain point in the narration, Carlos even admits this unawareness by saying to himself: “I know what’s going on with you,” (14), but then “stop[s] himself to ask if he truly knew” (14).

This short novel may be described as a realist short novel with an “education plot,” defined by Norman Friedman as “...a change in thought for the better in terms of the author’s conceptions, beliefs and attitudes” (251). Friedman goes on to say “...that a

sympathetic person undergoes a threat of some sort and emerges into a new and better kind of wholeness at the end, with a final sense of relief, satisfaction, and pleasure” (251), which clearly encapsulates the conclusion of this short novel. It also has elements of the “affective plot,” where “The problem ... is to come to see some other person in a different and truer light than before, which involves a change in feeling” (252). This is significant because Carlos at first feels aversion for his wife and son, but after the main action ends, he lets his past judgements behind and reaches a level of acceptance of both without attempting to change them to his liking anymore; therefore, he changes the former perception of his personal world.

Another important aspect of *Primo Vere* is the use of description to compare or comment on a character’s mental or emotional state. When Carlos wakes up after his first night at the hotel, he goes to the window and describes his view in a positive way: “...everything was enveloped in an extremely bright light. He searched the sky and found it intensely blue” (22). But as he remembers his plans in the city, he describes how “The sun dimmed and the city fell under the cloudy and milky light of day again” (22), mirroring his own emotions that shift from a bright joy to a dim sadness. Another moment where this is seen is at the end of the short novel, when Carlos is on his way to the airport to fly back home and a panoptical description of the city is given: “The sky cleared up and it was sultry blue. The snow subsided. Water ran in small streams everywhere. ... In the parks and in the outskirts of the city, saffron flowers peeked out along the snowy fields” (43), which, since it is mentioned when Carlos has already undergone a change of perspective regarding his family, he no longer feels weighed down by that snowy bulk that hid his potential for growth. Similar to Émile Zola’s naturalism, there is correspondence between the character

and his environment: "...identification between nature and character, in which the environment is not only a state of mind, but also illuminates the unconscious [thoughts] of whoever contemplates it or imagines it" (my translation, Bourneuf and Oullet 131), although, in this case, unlike the first scene that I described, he does not contemplate or imagine this natural phenomenon.

The final point of interest in the short novel's formal structure is the use of retrospection, termed "analepsis" by Genette. In *Narrative Discourse*, Genette identifies a type of analepsis that "...is as it were pinpointed, recounting a moment from the past that remains isolated in its remoteness, and [is] not seeking to join that moment to the present by covering an intervening period..." (62). There are a handful of these analepses in *Primo Vere*: when Carlos recalls a scene near the Pont au Double in Paris, when he recounts an experience (purportedly in New York) with John Moseley (although his name is never mentioned), and a moment when he recalls himself crossing the Pont d'Arcole to reach the Place de l'Hôtel de Ville, also in Paris. Genette continues by saying that "...this type of retrospection, which ends on an ellipsis without rejoining the first narrative ... serves solely to bring the reader an isolated piece of information, necessary for an understanding of a specific moment of the action" (62). One might understand how the analepsis that narrates Carlos' meeting with Moseley is important to the plot, but the other two seem to only cut into the present action to relive a past pleasant experience that contrasts with his unsatisfactory present. "These analepses," as Genette says, "pose no problem of joining or narrative juncture: the analeptic tale plainly interrupts itself on an ellipsis, and the first narrative picks up right where it had stopped..." (63), which is exactly what Tollinchi does

in *Primo Vere*, these bygone recollections abruptly end and we are launched back again to the present action.

### **Historical Context**

Tollinchi begins his short novel *in medias res* with the words: “How will this crisis in Berlin end?” placing the historical context of the plot in 1961 during the aptly termed Berlin Crisis. This conflict was one of the major events of the Cold War between the United States (supported by France and the United Kingdom) and the Soviet Union (USSR). During this incident, the construction of the Berlin Wall began and tensions between the Eastern Bloc (socialist states) and the Western Bloc (capitalist states) were heightened. To understand the importance of this event, I will give summarize the events that led to it and its aftermath.

After World War II, Germany was divided between the Allied forces, namely, the United States, France, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union. In this process, Berlin was separated into two territories: East Berlin and West Berlin. While East Berlin became a part of the USSR and practiced a socialist economic model, West Berlin belonged to Western forces (United States, France, and the United Kingdom) and carried on a capitalist economic system. Therefore, these states were ideological, economic, and political rivals. The economic growth that West Berlin experienced led East Berliners to regard it as a land of thriving opportunities and progress that contrasted with their living conditions in the East. For this reason, many decided to relocate to the West and East Berlin quickly began to lose a great deal of its working professionals. In November 1958, due to the massive emigration of Eastern Berliners to West Berlin, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev issued an ultimatum to the Western Powers in which he demanded that they retire their military forces from Berlin to transform it into a demilitarized state that the West could only enter

when East Germany allowed it. Upon its rejection, he reissued the same ultimatum in June 1961 and added a deadline of December of that same year. Since the West would still not agree to this proposal, the USSR signed an order to begin building the Berlin Wall in August 1961. In October, the U.S. and the Soviet military stationed their tanks at Checkpoint Charlie (one of the main points of entry between East and West Berlin) and faced off for an entire day because, according to the Allied forces, their personnel was being stopped and asked for identification in East Berlin, actions that went against the Potsdam Agreement of 1945, which stated that Allied personnel could move freely in any sector of Berlin. After both countries withdrew their armies, the Berlin Wall was reinforced and continued separating both parts of Germany until its demolition in 1989.

### **Translation Difficulties and Methodology**

Considering that one of Tollinchi's passions was the study of languages, one can see how he, perhaps intentionally, utilized certain idiomatic phrases or terms that cannot be translated literally and require an oblique or free translation. Most authors understand this idea and also put it into practice in their works, but I emphasize it here because Tollinchi, although an explorer of universal themes in his writing, favored the uniqueness of each language to articulate specific ideas in that language and culture. This trait is evinced, among other reasons, by his choice of leaving the epigraph in its original Italian, as well as by the title of the short novel. He expressed that the title was chosen for its two possible meanings: the term for "spring" in Latin and because one of the meanings of "*primo*" is "beginning" which, if we follow the definition of the "education plot" mentioned before, describes the main transformative moment in the narrative: a new beginning. Another important aspect of his writing is his formal register. My intention in making the translation



more appealing and accessible to wider audiences led me to translate whole phrases or terms in a free and open manner because I felt that his style often seems excessively purist or elevated. Also, I employed contractions whenever it was possible and appropriate. However, there are also instances where I adhered closely to the formal structure of the source text to be able to communicate the same idea in the target text without distorting the original meaning. Therefore, my approach consists in a combination of oblique translation and foreignization to render a more fluent translation, as well as Philip Lewis' strategy of "abusive fidelity," which "involves risk-taking and experimentation with the expressive and rhetorical patterns of language" (Munday 264) when the target text must faithfully recreate the source text construction to communicate specific concepts foreign to its language, or "explicitate" whenever that is not possible.

One of the main difficulties that I encountered while translating this short novel was the distinction between "*tú*" and "*usted*" when Carlos is speaking to Ana Teresa for the first time. This concept is termed the T-V distinction and is present in many other European languages such as Italian, Greek, German, and Russian. However, I will focus on Spanish and French, both of which share a verb that indicates this practice: "*tutoyer*" in French and "*tutear*" in Spanish, which means "To refer to someone with the second person pronoun to show familiarity or trust" (my translation, "tutear"). The context of this conversation is that Carlos thought he heard a waiter mention Ana Teresa's first name and tells her: "*Claro: un mozo no la va a tutear,*" which adds the idea that "*tutear*" also means when someone calls another person by their first name. While calling someone "*tú*" is used to refer to someone who one knows closely, "*usted,*" is employed to refer to someone in a more respectful or professional way. However, since this mode of address does not exist

in English, its closest equivalent would be to follow the second idea of “*tutear*” that Carlos mentions, which is to distinguish between referring to someone by their first name as informal or calling them by their last name preceded by a title such as “Mr.” or “Mrs.” as formal. Therefore, to preserve this aspect, I decided to use the technique of “explicitation,” defined by Vinay and Darbelnet as the moment when “implicit information in the ST [source text] is rendered explicit in the TT [target text]” (Munday 92) by including the information that addressing a stranger in a professional setting by their first name denotes informality. Thus, the translation reads: “...no one called you by your first name” (25) and then Carlos adds: “a waiter wouldn’t be so informal.” (25). Although this slightly increases the word count and changes the formal structure of the sentence, the meaning of the ST is preserved. While the grammatical structure of Spanish has the distinction “*tú/usted*” inherent in its language, English must seek an equivalent within its own rules and cultural modes of address utilizing resources such as “explicitation” and description. I utilized both, since I described the reason that the waiter would not call Ana Teresa by her first name (i.e. because it would be informal) and “explicitated” the text by adding this concept of informality that is implicit in the source text word “*tutear*.”

Additionally, Tollinchi employs many diminutives, words in Spanish such as “*iglesita*” (10), “*viejito*” (6), “*mesita*” (18), “*placita*” (10), or “*Jorgito*” (3). These single words, however, require an adjective in English, except “*Jorgito*” which, since it is a proper name, remains the same. Therefore, my solution for these cases was to add “little” or “small” before each noun: “little church” (10), “little old man” (6), “small table” (18) and “little plaza” (10). It is important to understand that most of these diminutives with an “-ito” or “-ita” suffix “...tend to be a spoken phenomenon of Spanish more than a written

one” (Ávila 2), which means that including them in the translation serves more to reproduce the style and expressions in Spanish rather than translating essential information to the text. This is reinforced by Anthony Gooch when he concludes that these “suffixes belong to the realm of popular and colloquial language rather than formal or impersonal literary style” (15). On another note, the use of “small” or “little” does not always refer to the object or person’s physical size but may be used as “metaphorization ... whereby physical smallness is transferred to the expression of several meanings related to diminution in a more abstract way” (12). In *Primo Vere*, the use of diminutives is mostly of an affective nature, which is described by John R. Taylor “as an ‘attitude of affection or tenderness on the part of the speaker’” (cited in Ávila 13). Rodolfo Lenz also shares this view of diminutives when he declares that “it refers ... more to a higher or lower subjective appreciation rather than an objective alteration of the exterior size of objects or qualities” (cited in Mendoza 7). However, this “affection or tenderness” “is not restricted to animate creatures, but rather it can be part of the speaker’s attitude or affection towards the referred item” (13), which explains why Carlos refers to a plaza or a church in that way. On the other hand, not all diminutives require adjectives when they are translated, since there are examples like “*sonrisilla*” (2) that I chose to translate as “smirk” (2) because “smirk” gathers both the “mischievous” connotation of the word “*sonrisilla*” and the “smile” implied by that word, which is a diminutive of “*sonrisa*.” It must be noted that there are instances when omitting the adjectives does not add or subtract any valuable information, but I chose to preserve the same construction to foreignize the style and follow the method of “abusive fidelity.”

A problem that is also a particularity of Spanish which is not present in English is the title “*Don*” (15) given to adult males. An example of this can be seen when Carlos’ secretary refers to him as “¡*Don* Carlos!” (14), which I translated literally. Since this occurs in a professional setting and there is no English equivalent to this title, I chose to leave it as “*Don* Carlos!” (14) to preserve the deferential tone that this title implies. If I decided to simply use “Carlos,” this would render the formal tone into a more personal one. Also, the use of “Mr.” in this context would not be acceptable because “Mr.,” unlike “*Don*,” is employed only when it precedes a surname, and since Carlos is his given name, the phrase called for the use of “*Don*.” A similar case that does have an equivalent in English of this is when Carlos calls John Moseley “*señor John Moseley*” (28), which I translated as “Mr. John Moseley” (30) because, although he already met him many years back, he is not currently acquainted with him and the use of “Mr.” followed by his full name indicates that this is a more formal and respectful mode of address. Even though some translators decide to omit these modes of address, I chose to include them because, as Jeremy Munday states in *Introduction to Translation Studies*, these forms are used to “...express familiarity or deference” (105), which demonstrate the relationship that these characters share among themselves. In both cases, the use is clearly deferential, and if these titles were to be omitted, the text would have an entirely different tone and register. In this regard, the translation is slightly more literal to serve the purpose of quickly identifying the relationships the characters share.

One of the major complications encountered was when to explain or make explicit what is vague in the source text to complete certain ideas that would otherwise be grammatically or semantically incorrect or incomplete. Grammar includes, as defined by

Jeremy Munday, "...the kind of information which has to be made regularly explicit in utterances" (92). The most significant of these cases is when Carlos decides to wait a quarter hour to call his secretary back to his office. In the source text, the only information we have is that Carlos: "*Se fijó un límite de un cuarto de hora*" (15), which could be translated as "He set an interval for a quarter hour." However, since later on the ST indicates "*Sonó el cuarto*" (15), this prompted me to "explicitate" in the translation to specify that the clock has a chime that rings every fifteen minutes: "The quarter hour chime rang" (15). Without adding this detail, the original idea of the text would be lost, or the sentence would have to be entirely restructured and solved in a way that would resemble the source text even less. This is also notable when the ST describes Carlos moving toward a mirror to look at himself. In the source text it only says "...*se acercó a la consola a observarse...*" (6), while in the translation I added "console mirror" (6) to indicate that Carlos is not staring at the console specifically, but at the mirror above it.

As Roman Jakobson mentions in his essay "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation," "Languages differ essentially in what they *must* convey and not in what they *may* convey" (116), while the source language has no need for these explicit details to convey the original idea, the target language requires them to make clear sense of the meanings and dispel any ambiguities. Moreover, these solutions follow what Katharina Reiss says about "translation according to the sense and meaning" (167), which states that "...it may be necessary that what is conveyed implicitly in the SL [source language] text should be explicated in the TL [target language]" (167). Another case of "explicitation" can be seen in the spelling of the time of day. The first instance of this problem occurs when Luz, Carlos' secretary, mentions that he has a meeting with the bank director at nine. To communicate the hour

effectively, I chose to add “a.m.” (18) in the translation to avoid any nuance or ambiguity in the target text. In another instance, the source text specifies: “*Salían a las tres de la tarde*” (23), which I chose to translate as “three p.m.” (30) instead of “three in the afternoon” to create a parallel construction with the previous sentence and the rest of the sentences that also refer to the time of day. However, this last case is an uncommon one in the short novel, since Tollinchi usually only mentions the time without anything to indicate whether it is morning or night, which led me to take this decision to be more specific. In this way, although the translation is slightly amplified, each moment is clearly identified without any trace of ambiguity.

Another important detail to mention is the prevalent use of a third person impersonal, passive, or reflexive construction (using “*se*” or “*su*”) when Tollinchi describes certain scenes or characters from a distance or describes Carlos’ own thoughts and impressions. Jeremy Munday identifies Spanish as one of many verb-inflected languages that must “...make explicit what are sometimes deliberately ambiguous grammatical subject referents” (151-152). Citing the first line of Julio Cortázar’s *Rayuela* (1963) that reads: “¿*Encontraría a la Maga?*” (152), Munday goes on to say that the translator must choose between the following options: “Would I/he/she/you find the Magus?” (152), which presents a similar difficulty that Tollinchi’s story shares. Some examples of its different uses in *Primo Vere* are: “*No se quedaba solo en la butaca*” (19) to “*He* couldn’t stay still in the armchair” (19); “...*ya se había acabado todo*” (5) to “...everything was over” (5); and “*La contemplaba y entonces contemplaba su interior*” (22) to “*He* observed her and then looked inside *himself*” (23). Through these three examples and many others, we see how “*se*” or “*su*” do not always refer to the same subject and must be considered within

each specific context to be accurately translated into the correct pronoun in the target text. Since English requires an explicit subject in these instances, this forces the translation to amplify the source text by including an additional definite pronoun (e.g. “he,” “she,” etc.) or an indefinite one, as can be seen in the last example that changes from “...*se había acabado todo*” (5) to “...everything was over” (5).

Furthermore, the elasticity of that reflexive “*se*” leads to a translation that may employ the same pronoun but refer to different characters. Two examples of this are the following: “*Se había tornado taciturno...*” (4) to “*He* had become taciturn...” (4) and “...*se acercó a la consola*” (6) to “...*he* drew near the console...” (6), where the former quote refers to the protagonist’s son Jorge, and the latter refers to Carlos. If we isolate each sentence, it would be understood as the same subject, which seems to be a stylistic choice of the author to create ambiguity, but reading the complete paragraph and understanding the context of the phrase allows the reader to accurately identify the subject in each one. In addition, there is one moment where the subject is hypothetical: “*Se le enseñaría a aceptar su vida gustosamente, su familia...*” (8) to “People would be taught to gladly accept their life, their family...” (8), which, in this case, Tollinchi employs to refer to all of humankind. Since English demands a subject for this type of construction, I added “people” to complete the sentence structure and used the pronoun “their” to refer to that subject. Another similar problem is when a pronoun is omitted, such as when the short novel begins, where the source text only uses the verb “*comentó*” (1). In this case, the suffix “-ó” only hints that the subject must be identified with either a male or female third-person singular pronoun. After reading the whole paragraph and contextualizing this phrase, we can conclude that it is Carlos’ wife Marina who is speaking and thus translate it correctly as “she commented”

(1). Another example of this is the translation of “*Es la vida de un entregado*” (12) to “It’s the life of someone who’s surrendered” (12), where English demands a neutral or gendered pronoun to accompany the verb “surrender,” which is inflected to the past tense with the addition of the suffix “-ed.” Spanish, on the other hand, has the ability to only include an adjective such as “*entregado*,” whose gender markers are the indefinite article “*un*” and the suffix “-o” at the end and, since it derives from a verb, has a past participle ending. In this case, although “*un*” and the “-o” suffix is frequently used for male subjects in Spanish, it may also be used for neutral ones, which prompted me to identify the subject as “*someone* who’s surrendered.”

There are a few cases in which transposition and modulation were inevitable to fashion a more fluent and natural translation. Two moments in the narration that stand out are: “*Así era explicable el hastío que sentía ahora por todo lo circundante*” (9) to “That way, his weariness for all that surrounded him could be explained” (9) and “*Estaba casi de espaldas*” (19) to “Her back was nearly turned to him” (19). In the first example we see how the English syntax must transpose the adjective “*explicable*” to the end of the sentence and change it to a verb to generate a clear translation of the phrase that adheres correctly to the English grammar. Also, the noun “*lo circundante*” is transposed to an adjective phrase as “all that surrounded him” because if it were translated to “his surroundings,” this would imply only his immediate physical surroundings and not what he truly means, which is the people and places that constitute his present life. In the second example, transposition can be seen more clearly due to the change of point of view. While the Spanish sentence elides a specific gender determiner and only uses a third-person singular “*Estaba*” to refer to the subject, the English translation must include a subject identified by a pronoun, such



as “She was...” or, as I chose to solve it, employ transposition and change the focus to “Her back...” and include two possessive pronouns (i.e. “her” and “him”) to specify the third-person subject and the observer. A significant change from the source text may also be observed in the phrase “*tendrás que rendir cuentas*” (12), translated to “you’ll have to answer for your actions” (12). The first difference is that the target text must include two second-person singular pronouns (i.e. “you”), while the source text only requires the suffix “-ás” to indicate the subject. The second and perhaps most important difference is the rewording of the expression “*Rendir cuentas*” to “answer for your actions.” Although this could be literally translated to “be held accountable,” I chose to translate it as “answer for your actions” because the expression in the next sentence is tied to this phrase and must display a parallel structure to it. The source text demonstrates this continuity by omitting the subject and verb and only writing “*A nadie y a nada*” (12), which forces the reader to refer to the previous phrase to make sense of this expression. If it were taken on its own, the reference would be lost and the phrase would not make sense. Therefore, the translation I chose was “I won’t answer to anything or anyone” (12), that adds the first-person singular pronoun “I,” a contraction of “will” and the verb “answer,” which amplifies the text but is a more natural stylistic choice that also communicates the original idea more effectively by tying both phrases together in a similar way that the source text does.

A significant translation difficulty was translating “*tapizado en paño perla*” (29) into English, an expression which I researched thoroughly but could not find exactly what Tollinchi was referring to because I could not find any parallel texts that employed this same collocation. I found, however, that its closest possible meaning would be the third acceptance of “*pañó*” in Spanish defined as “tapestry or another hanging” (my translation

“paño”). Thus, the different options that I had were translating “*paño*” to “cloth,” “fabric,” “textile” or omitting this word and only referring to its use as a tapestry. In addition, I concluded that the word “pearl,” in this case, is referring to the color of that unspecified fabric. Therefore, since the word “*paño*” is unclear as to what type of material it is and this does not communicate essential information, I decided to translate it as “pearl-colored tapestry” (28), omitting what type of fabric it is and explicating by adding that the word “pearl” refers solely to its color. In another instance where the source text only mentions “*bufanda perla*” (35) I also followed the same formula and translated it as “pearl-colored scarf” (34). This was done because the sentence consists of a description of a character’s clothing that begins with his “black overcoat” (34) and then mentions the scarf. The nearness of the word “black” to “pearl” led me to understand the latter as a description of its color, and since “pearl” is not usually used as a standalone adjective to describe color, this led me to add “colored” to specify that it is only indicating the color of a pearl and not the actual object or its form.

When Carlos first meets Ana Teresa, she expresses that he does not seem “*norteamericano*” (25), which I translated as “American” (26). Although this is not a literal translation, I believe that in this context it is more natural to use “American” than “North-American.” Although ideally “American” should be a term that encompasses the entire continent of the Americas from North America to South America, it is clear that in the United States it is used to refer mainly to their country. Merriam-Webster has it as its third acceptance: “a native or inhabitant of the U.S.: a U.S. citizen” (“American”). Also, if it were translated literally to “North-American,” it would also include Canada, and the intention of Ana Teresa seems to be to refer mainly to the U.S. and the particular culture

she inhabits in contrast to Carlos' attitude and expressions. Therefore, I decided to follow the direction of "naturalness of expression" described by Eugene Nida in his concept of "dynamic equivalence." This means that "one is not so concerned with matching the receptor-language message with the source-language [one], ... but that the relationship between receptor and message should be substantially the same ... as that between the original receptors and the message" (Nida 129). Since this translation is directed to English-speakers, predominantly from the United States, I consider "American" to be "the closest natural equivalent to the source-language message" (136).

An important factor that must be mentioned is the degree of "expansion" done in the translation process that leads it to be lengthier. In Antoine Berman's essay "Translation and the Trials of the Foreign," he mentions how George Steiner once stated that translation is "inflationist" (cited in Berman 290). This does not mean that translation adds any new information that is not in the source text, but that "it augments only the gross mass of text, without augmenting its way of speaking or signifying" (290). However, Berman does not agree with this strategy, indicating that this process is "...designed to muffle the work's own voice" (290) and although they "render the text more 'clear,' ... they actually obscure its own mode of clarity" (290). I agree with this perspective, but also understand that there are exceptions to this idea. If the translation does not communicate certain original ideas clearly and effectively, then reducing the word count only for the sake of preserving a fluent style would sacrifice the original author's expressions or make the text less accessible for readers. One of the examples where this can be seen is in the scene where Carlos mentions "Sonó el cuarto" (15), which must be inflated to "The quarter hour chime rang" (15) so its sense is communicated clearly. On the other hand, when Carlos is

addressed as “*Don Carlos!*” (14), there is no other way but to translate it literally to be able to recreate the original deferential form of address. This is also present in the narration when Carlos is speaking about his son and mentions that he spent a year “*haciendo vida social*” (4) or “practicing social life” (4). Since this is a quote from another character that Carlos cites verbatim, I chose to follow the source text closely and translated the expression as literally as possible, only changing “*haciendo*” or “doing” to “practicing” because it is a more natural and common construction in English. In this sense, I favor Schleiermacher’s idea of “moving the reader towards the author” (51) to generate a translation that favors the audience’s understanding rather than subscribe to its formal structure, except for those moments I cited where a literal translation is necessary to preserve specific elements of the source text language.

I chose to translate idiomatic phrases in a domesticizing way, favoring their semantic content over their formal one, since a literal translation was not always possible, lest the phrases be rendered incomprehensible. The first expression is “*a flor de labios,*” (21) which I translated in this case as “the shadow of a smile” (20) because it is closely related to the expression “*a flor de piel,*” defined as an adverbial locution that means “sensible, easy, quick” (my translation, “flor”). In this initial context, it is tied to the action: Carlos is staring elsewhere because he fears that another character’s face may reveal a hint of a smile or the beginning of one. To preserve its poetic sense, I chose to use the word “shadow” instead of “trace” or “hint.” However, when this phrase is employed again, I chose to translate it as a “ready smile” (35) because it is used to describe the recurring attributes of John Moseley. Other idiomatic phrases that I encountered were “...*a mil maravillas*” (39), which I translated following a method of economy and generalization as

“marvelously” (41) and “...de hito en hito” (31) as “fixedly” (33), given that its definition is “to fix the gaze on an object without distractions” (my translation, “hito”). Thus, in both cases I followed the principle of economy to communicate the same meaning at the expense of the idiomatic phrases. This strategy is what Mona Baker calls “translation by paraphrase” (80), which is “when a match cannot be found in the target language” (80) or “differences in stylistic preferences of the source and target languages” (80) do not allow the idiom to be translated literally or by using an idiom with a similar meaning. In this case, this was due to the first reason and to my choice in reducing the word count in the target text when no essential information needed to be included. However, there was one phrase that could be transferred to English in a more literal sense that resembled the idiomatic phrase in Spanish: “...dejando mucho que desear” (4) to “left much to be desired” (4).

There were instances of poetic language or phrases, somewhat related to the idiomatic sayings, that required some effort to make them sound well in English. In general, I attempted to translate them literally to preserve the original expression but focused on domesticizing the syntax and lexicon. For example, I translated, “...que le pudiera saciar su delirio de evolución bella” (5) to “...that could satisfy his frenzied desire for a beautiful evolution” (5). This solution was mostly a literal translation, although “delirio” was separated into two words (i.e. “frenzied” and “desire”) because in this context it is not “frenzied excitement,” as the second acceptance of “delirium” in Merriam-Webster reads, but a mad or irrational desire to satisfy his wish to witness that “evolution.” The second phrase that required some consideration was “La presencia efectiva cambia y desvirtúa totalmente la imagen ideal” (6), which I translated to “An effective presence completely changes and distorts the ideal image” (6). This sentence resembles the last one because

both reproduce nearly the same form as the source text sentence. The use of “An” instead of “The” was prompted by the fact that this is a more natural construction in English, as well as because Carlos is referring to a conceptual “presence” that, since it is not specific, does not require a definite article. The change from “*desvirtuar*” to “distort” was done to emphasize the visual aspect of that “ideal image,” which is corrupted and distorted in a way that it becomes unrecognizable.

Finally, I had to rework the phrase “...*un barco engalanado con luces que la temprana niebla apagaba*” (20) a number of times until I settled on the choice “...a boat that was decked in lights which were extinguished by the early fog” (19). I decided on “decked” for “*engalanado*” because two of its acceptations are “decorate” (“deck”) and “to portray or present in embellishments” (“deck”), which agrees with the Spanish definition of “engalanar” that describes it as “to adorn” (my translation, “engalanar”). Also, I considered writing “...a boat that was decked in lights which the early fog extinguished” to resemble the source text more, but noticed that this could create confusion as to whether I was referring to the boat or the lights with the verb “extinguished.” Therefore, I chose to employ a passive verb construction to be more specific and be able to communicate the same idea as the source text without nuances.

### **Ethical Concerns and Inclusive Language**

A stylistic problem that I decided to change in the translation is the common use of the word “*hombre*” (8) to refer to humankind. Some translators may consider it an unnecessary amplification or even a mistranslation to deviate from the ST in this way, but I believe that its importance lies on the response of the audience that this text is meant for. Since I wish this translation to reach younger audiences, I felt the need to be inclusive and speak of

“humankind” (9) whenever it was possible. However, since this is a story that deals directly with concepts of masculinity and manhood, I had to translate “hombre” for “mankind” in certain cases. In their essay titled “Feminist Meanings and the (De)politicization of the Lexicon, ” Susan Ehrlich and Ruth King share a similar perspective with regards to replacing the male gender marker as generic whenever it refers to human beings in general: “...by replacing masculine generics (e.g. he, man) with neutral generics (e.g. they, with singular reference, he/she), advocates of gender-based language reform are challenging the claim implicit in the use of masculine generics that men are the typical case of humanity and that women are a deviation from this norm” (Ehrlich and King 61). This echoes sentiments from Simone de Beauvoir’s highly influential work *The Second Sex*, where she writes that “man represents both the positive and the neutral, as is indicated by the common use of man to designate human beings in general; whereas woman represents only the negative, defined by limiting criteria, without reciprocity” (cited in Wayne 86). Thus, my intention with this change is to avoid the generic use of “man” to indicate “human beings,” given that it is a term that privileges the male gender and bars female inclusion. In other words, this means to follow the practice of “nonsexist language reform [which] has been to eliminate the so-called generic terms that have been shown to consistently produce images of a specific sex, i.e. males” (Wayne 63). Thanks to this modification, more readers will be able to relate to the text and, at the same time, its language will be updated to a more modern and inclusive style. At the same time, the passages that explore themes of masculinity will be noted more by their stark contrast with this type of inclusive language and may be seen as directly related to the conceptual nature of the novel and not as a stylistic preference of the author or, in this case, translator.

Merriam Webster's second acceptation of "mankind" is "men as especially distinguished from women," while "humankind," has the sole definition of being "the human race: humanity" ("humankind"). Therefore, when Carlos mentions "Everyone wanted to progress" (8), it is evident that he is not only saying "Men want to progress," but men and women equally. As an example of this concern in official documents, the European Parliament published an updated document in 2018 to commemorate ten years since, in 2008, they adopted "multilingual guidelines on gender-neutral language" (2). In this document, there is a section dedicated to the "generic use of 'man'" (10) that gives many alternatives to "[those] who draft, edit English or translate into English" (10) to avoid using "man" as a neutral gender marker. Among these options, they indicate that "humanity" (10) should be used instead of "mankind," which, although I use "humankind" instead, is an alternative that agrees with my translation choice.

In addition to this stylistic change, there is a moment in the source text where Carlos calls his son's wife a "*mujerzuela*" (2), which is a pejorative term used to refer to a woman who is morally corrupted or degraded. I chose to translate it as "harlot" (2) because of a need to preserve the intensity of Carlos' insult. Another possibility for this word was to translate it as "slut," but since the Merriam Webster entry for "harlot" specifies that it is used to define "a person..." rather than "usually ... a woman" like slut, I decided to utilize this term because of this detail that hints more at neutrality. Additionally, the use of "harlot" also helps place the narration at a previous time period, given that this word is not frequently employed anymore. Moreover, it communicates the male-dominated and sexist biases that pervaded those times, which, unfortunately, still exist in some places to this day.



Another similar stylistic change I made was changing “*su mujer*” (5) to “his wife” (5) because the literal translation (i.e. “his woman”) seems inappropriate and denotes a sense of possessiveness of his partner. Also, it is important to note that in Spanish it is a phrase that is commonly used by men to refer to their wives or partners, but one rarely hears it the other way around used by women. This leads me to believe that it is indicative of patriarchal biases and must be updated to a more neutral and specific expression such as “wife,” “partner” or “couple,” that guarantees the same treatment for both men and women. Ígor Rodríguez-Iglesias explores this idea in chapter 7 of a book titled *La desigualdad de género invisibilizada en la comunicación*, which focuses on this type of expression in media-related publications. His essay, titled “Interseccionalidad en una heterojerarquía de dominación en el discurso mediático y cotidiano: ‘su mujer’, ‘mi mujer’,” specifies that “...women do not define their conjugal relationships alluding to ‘my/your/their man.’ That only occurs in stylistic instrumental uses in practical areas in which said expression acquires a relevant value and is accepted as valid” (my translation 80). While the term “*hombre*” or “man” is used to describe the whole of humanity, “*mujer*” alludes specifically to a woman’s relationship to a man, which shows an inherent linguistic inequality that constitutes a form of micro-aggression. Moreover, Rodríguez Iglesias adds that “As subtle as they may seem (all forms of ‘microsexism’ are essentially subtle), the use of ‘*woman*’ instead of ‘*wife*’ ... contributes to supporting the patriarchy” (my translation 85) in that “woman” ties the entire ontological experience of that female subject to a position of dependency to their spouse. Therefore, since “wife” does not add this particular possessive connotation because it only refers to a legal title and not the whole person, I chose to

translate it in this manner out of an ethical concern to follow a style of language that seeks inclusivity and equality.

The use of “men” to refer to humankind is generally more prevalent in older texts, which prompts me to consider that it only demonstrates a dated use of language that is historically tied to institutions of power. In this case, the academic study of language that grew primarily out of male subjects. In my opinion, to keep referring to “humankind” as “men” is an exclusionary act that privileges the male gender over the female one. It may be acceptable in a literal translation that seeks to recreate the particular style of an author, but since this translation seeks to modernize the text rather than reproduce it word-for-word, it would be amiss of me to continue perpetuating such loaded language; these preconceived notions of the world only continue because people directly or indirectly allow them to.

### **Final Remarks**

A literary translation must always resemble a rewriting of sorts that seeks to grant each new reader the same pleasure that those first source text readers experienced. This also frequently entails an adaptation to the present context where the language is updated to reflect the world that we currently live in. To fully realize this, the translator must be able to reach a balance between adhering to the source text and expressing themselves in a fluent and natural way in the target language. In addition, the translator must not be a passive bystander, but an active writer that recognizes the inherent political implications that their choice of words or expressions produce in their readers. Thus, this project warranted a combination of creativity, political awareness, and eloquence to render a translation that is both fluent and accessible to all who read it.

Translation demonstrates even more incisively the many lives that literary works may live, stretching far beyond an author's original intention and reaching audiences that they never expected to reach. I am certain that this was the case with Esteban Tollinchi, since he did not wish to speak or discuss his literary works much, calling "El hijo" a "literary exercise" (my translation) in the interview "La casa de los sueños" and saying that he did not wish to reread these works for fear of feeling embarrassment or regret. Nonetheless, authors are known to be their worst critics and, just like Max Brod saw value in Franz Kafka's writings and did not follow his wishes to burn them, I consider that Tollinchi's literary works also have value for future reference and should be studied, even if he thought differently. They are perhaps not considered great works of world literature like Kafka's *oeuvre*, but they have historical and cultural importance to Puerto Rico in that they allow a glimpse into the makings of a writer that would go on to become one of the most prominent intellectuals of the University of Puerto Rico.

Even in this exercise of "settling scores with his youthful experiences" (my translation), a unique and burgeoning Tollinchi can be appreciated. If we are to admire a blossoming flower, we must also consider the importance of the essential roots and seed that began this process. In the spirit of this short novel, this translation seeks to bring a springtime rebirth to this work that has been buried beneath the dust of many years of inattention, to allow it, as Virginia Woolf once said in *A Room of One's Own* about poets: "...the opportunity to walk among us in the flesh" (131) and thus contribute to the cultural heritage and legacy of our island and university.

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