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PUERTO RICAN LEGENDS AND TRADITIONS

(a translation of excerpts from *Tradiciones y leyendas puertorriqueñas* by Cayetano Coll
y Toste)

by

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

The Text and Author

Tradiciones y leyendas puertorriqueñas, written by Cayetano Coll y Toste, is a collection of Puerto Rican legends set during the Spanish colonization of the Americas. The stories are a mix of historical facts from the author's research on Puerto Rico's past, and of the traditions passed down through the generations since the sixteenth century. Some of the main themes are love, death, faith, corruption, the enslavement of African and Indigenous people, as well as the political conflicts within the colonies. Originally, the author had written 90 legends and divided them into four volumes in 1924. These were later organized into two tomes in 1928. My thesis focuses on the first volume of the 1928 version, which includes 48 myths dating between 1511 and 1832.

While many of Coll y Toste's legends have been translated, this thesis focuses on the ones that were not. The texts that I have selected are the foreword—which gives a historical overview of the concept of mythology, while describing Coll y Toste's writing—and the following six legends: “A Good Game of Cards,” narrating a soldier's romantic pursuit and unlawful incarceration by a corrupt governor; “The Magic Fountain,” Juan Ponce de León's infamous search for the fountain of youth; “Becerrillo,” the tale of a dog's service during a war between colonists and Indigenous peoples; “The Possessed,” a description of cases of demonomania during the 1600s; “The Amethyst Reliquary,” a look into the influence of superstition; and “The Treasure of Almeida the Pirate,” a myth surrounding the origin of Caja de Muertos—a small, uninhabited island off the southern coast of Puerto Rico.

Most of us have grown up learning about the mythology, fairytales, and legends from countries such as Greece, England, France, and Germany. These works of literature

provide insight into various cultures and worldviews. They can serve as a window to the past and its customs, inviting us to compare them with our current reality. They teach values, promote ideologies, or attempt to explain some circumstance or natural event. I decided that I wanted to share the history and traditions of my birthplace, Puerto Rico. I want to pay tribute to the culture with which I grew up and the stories shared during my childhood. In addition, I want to make this text available to any English speaker interested in learning about Puerto Rican culture.

Cayetano Coll y Toste was born on November 30, 1850, in Arecibo, Puerto Rico. He studied medicine at the University of Barcelona and later returned to the island to practice his profession, establishing and directing the Monserrate Hospital in his hometown. The doctor was also a well-known historian, poet, and journalist. His thorough research led to the collection of invaluable information and to the ultimate documentation of historical sources related to the development of Puerto Rico's culture and society. Along with the book chosen as my thesis subject, some of his works include *Historia de la esclavitud en Puerto Rico* (History of Slavery in Puerto Rico) and *Colón en Puerto Rico* (Columbus in Puerto Rico), a historical analysis of Christopher Columbus' second voyage. He was appointed president of the Puerto Rico Athenaeum, a Gentleman of the Order of Bolívar in Venezuela, and the official historian of Puerto Rico from 1913 to 1930.

One of his most famous works is the *Boletín histórico de Puerto Rico*, a bulletin composed of 14 volumes that were published between 1914 and 1927. This compendium was dedicated to teaching the island's history to the public and demonstrating the findings of ongoing research regarding the accuracy of our knowledge of the past. There

are countless essays and articles about early politics, the Spanish colonization, important figures who influenced Puerto Rico, and discussions about historical events. For example, the first volume includes copies of research on Puerto Rico's geography and population conducted by order of the Spanish Crown with added commentary from Coll y Toste. Other volumes contain a discussion about the site of the disembarkation of Christopher Columbus, and a selection of legends that were later made part of Coll y Toste's book *Tradiciones y leyendas puertorriqueñas*.

Leyendas is perhaps most important from the perspective of translation because of its cultural significance. Coll y Toste's writings are a product of his political, geographical, and anthropological research on Puerto Rico. His studies gave insight to the lives of the Taíno natives and the enslaved Africans and corrected many misconceptions of the island's history. In his book *Prehistoria de Puerto Rico*, which was dedicated to the Royal Academy of History in Madrid, he corrected the assumption that all Indio-Antillean natives were Caribs, described the intellectual feats of native peoples, and documented their customs and history, among other areas of investigation.

The fruits of his historical studies are reflected within the pages of this book through the detailed descriptions of the protagonists and events taking place in each tale. He provided names of real figures who were involved in Puerto Rican politics and history, such as Juan Ponce de León, Governor Gabriel de Roxas, Sancho de Arango, Governor Íñigo, among others. He also wrote most dates in full detail and mentioned real locations, such as the Castillo San Felipe del Morro (also known as El Morro) and the settlement of Caparra, which helps make the stories more believable for the reader.

Through his narratives, he portrays the results of his findings: the mindset of the colonists during that time, the mistreatment of the natives and enslaved peoples, the political corruption, the abuse of religion to gain power, the discovery of lands for profit, etc. For example, Governor Íñigo attempted to put a man to death without trial, the natives are referred to as savages, and the Black woman thought to be possessed by a demon was beaten by an exorcist. Coll y Toste himself wrote in an earlier version titled *Leyendas Puertorriqueñas* (1924) that he aimed to employ this literary genre to awaken in his compatriots a love for the study of their history by portraying it in a more appealing way. He took historical facts and presented them in a way that sparked the interest of his readers in learning more about them. As a result, it is my belief that this thesis subject is essential for the understanding of our cultural heritage.

The foreword to the text was written by Carlos Noriega Carreras, a Puerto Rican journalist, poet, and writer who was born on May 3, 1895. He was appointed secretary of the Puerto Rico Athenaeum in 1929 and the president of the Puerto Rico Athenaeum's section of Fine Arts. He was also an honorary consul of the Dominican Republic from 1930 to 1933. One of his most notable literary contributions is the *Antología completa de poetas puertorriqueños* (Complete Anthology of Puerto Rican Poets), a collection of works by 144 different poets divided into three volumes. He also wrote *El caballero del silencio* (1940) and *El ruiseñor extraviado* (1959).

Translation Challenges and Research

The first challenge was the writing style of the author. This includes the grammar, vocabulary, and register used throughout the source text. Coll y Toste presents many cases of unnecessary name repetition and random italicized words. He also splits sentences in

half between long explanations, which can make reading comprehension difficult. It was essential to restructure sentences to clarify the message of the stories. This technique was also applied to the overuse of commas, which divided sentences into small segments and can affect the pace of reading. The terminology he chose sometimes required research in specific fields of study, such as sailing, psychology, and philosophy. Finally, there are instances of ambiguity where the speaker is not clear in a dialogue, for which I had to add information to make the scene easier to follow for the reader.

It is important to note the historical context in which *Leyendas* was written. The first decades after the arrival of the U.S. government in Puerto Rico were filled with tension between this political entity and the Puerto Rican elite, who looked nostalgically toward the era of Spain's rule. They were in search of evidence of the presence of a national identity that existed before the American invasion, of what being "Puerto Rican" meant. These legends were intended to display that Puerto Rico's roots are centuries old.

In the foreword of the book, the first problem was the name "Mermes." Carreras introduces the topic of legends by discussing mythology from different countries, organizing each subject into a separate paragraph. When he describes some well-known Egyptian legends, such as the gods Isis and Osiris, he mentions the initiation of someone named Mermes in a temple in Thebes.

Thebes was as an ancient city situated along the Nile River during the eras of the Middle Kingdom and the New Kingdom. It is the home of palaces, necropolises, and several temples, such as the Luxor and Karnak temples, which were dedicated to Egyptian gods and generations of pharaohs that ruled the land. The text does not specify in which temple the supposed initiation took place and does not explain the nature of the

ritual. It is not clear if it refers to a coronation of royalty or a ceremony to welcome someone into a religious sect. Another possibility is that the word “initiation” refers to the beginning or origin of this figure in Thebes, rather than a rite.

However, there is no evidence of someone named Mermes in contemporary encyclopedias of Egyptian mythology. The closest name that was found was Menes, the first pharaoh to rule over the first dynasty and the supposed founder of the city of Memphis. This option was discarded because he existed during the Early Dynastic period in Memphis, which took place up until the era of the Old Kingdom. An Egyptian guidebook from 1902, currently held in the Harvard University Library, mentions an inscription of a Prince Mermes dating from the reign of Amenophis III and located in the Temple of Seti I—which is on the west side of the Nile at Thebes. However, this prince is not acknowledged as an important figure within Egyptian mythology.

A possible answer is that the author meant to write Hermes instead. In ancient times, there was a correlation between the Greek god Hermes and the Egyptian god Thoth, who were both associated with wisdom and the realm of the dead. From this connection originated Hermes Trismegistus. He was rumored to be many things: a sage, a deity, a patron of alchemy, and the alleged author of the *Corpus Hermetica*, a collection of Hermetic theological and philosophical texts that study astrology and alchemy, along with other topics. Alchemy is a chemical science focused on the transmutation of the base metals into gold, the search of a cure for disease, and the pursuit of a means to prolong life. Many sources trace the origin of this practice in the West back to ancient Egypt, stating that certain writings were found within temples located in Memphis and Thebes.

Another option would be that it refers to the Greek god Hermes and the city of Thebes, located in Boeotia, Greece. According to the website of the Archaeological Museum of Thebes, there is a temple dedicated to Apollo Ismenios that used to display a statue of Hermes at its entrance. However, the city is known for being the origin of the mythical figures Heracles, Oedipus, and Dionysus—not Hermes. Unfortunately, there was not enough information to decipher Carreras' connection between this mythological figure and Thebes. Despite not finding clear evidence, I concluded that the author either meant to write Hermes for his relevance in Egyptian mythology, or there is an error in the text.

One of the greatest issues encountered revolved around the discussion of the Vedas. This is a collection of scriptures that served as a foundation for Hinduism and that were likely composed between 1500 and 500 BC. Carreras informs us that there was a division of four races: red, yellow, black, and white, the last referring to the Aryans. To verify this information, I researched the meaning of the colors and whether they were mentioned in the text by consulting sections from different editions of the Vedas. In Hymn XLI:1 on the Rig Veda, there is a verse that says, “active and right have they come forth...driving the dark skin far away.” Here the hymn is said to be referring to the dark-skinned Dasyus, who were identified as the enemies of the Aryans. However, there was no explicit mention of the “red” or “yellow” people.

On one hand, the four color categories could correspond to the varna, which literally means color. This relates to the caste system in ancient India, which served as a division of work among the members of the society of the time. The Brahmans or priests were the white, the Kshatriyas or warriors were the red, the Vaishyas or farmers were the

yellow, and the Sudras or servants were the black. This classification, however, does not refer to varying races, but their roles within Indian society. The Brahmins, for example, were scholars who learned and taught the scriptures, while the Sudras were artisans and laborers. However, there are conflicting accounts as to what the colors might mean in relation to the Vedas. While the general connection is with the varna classifications, there is a disagreement with to whom each color is assigned and whether the Vedas allude to this color division in the first place.

On the other hand, while there certainly was a social class distinction during the Vedic period, perhaps the phrasing of the words in the foreword is leaning more toward the concept of race used between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries, given that this text was written in 1928. Scientists such as Carl Linnaeus proposed that humanity should be divided into four racial categories: red referring to American natives, yellow to Asians, black to Africans, and white to Europeans. This second possibility could explain why Carreras wrote that the reds are the primitive race and that the white race left the forests of Europe. In any case, these colors were italicized in my translation to emphasize that their meaning differs from contemporary notions of race.

The following obstacle was the statement about Africans having a dragon illustrated in their flags and sculpted in front of their temples. While there is no mention of dragons with the iconic wings, legs, and flaming breath, African mythology contains serpent-like creatures that were said to have influenced the creation of the world and hold the power to manipulate the elements of nature. For example, it is believed that rain was brought by the cosmic serpent Bunzi, rainbows are said to be the breath of a python, and the universe was ushered into existence by the goddess Mawu, riding upon the cosmic

serpent Aido-Hwedo, who in turn supports the weight of the world upon its body. Snakes were worshipped and invoked in times of war. Unfortunately, none of these legends allude to their use as a symbol in war.

While I was unable to find an African nation that presented the mythological serpent in its flags during combat, I did find a temple that had sculptures of dragons at its entrance called Nah Hua. It is a Buddhist temple located in South Africa that serves as a religious and administrative facility for several related temples throughout the continent. However, aside from the fact that Buddhism is not generally associated with autochthonous African traditions, this temple was built in the year 1992, decades after Coll y Toste's book was published. The only emblem that I found that displayed a snake was that of the South African Military Health Service, but this is irrelevant to the topic of war symbols.

The next issue was defining *las dormidas célticas*. This phrase, which translates literally to "the sleeping Celtic women," is mentioned while Carreras discusses the origin of clairvoyant women in mythology. To confirm the connection between clairvoyance and these "sleeping women," I consulted books on Celtic legends. Celtic languages refer to a family of ancient Indo-European languages that were spoken in Europe and parts of Asia. As a result, its collection of lore encompasses a variety of stories from more than one country, among which are Great Britain, Ireland, and Scotland.

One myth from Wales titled "Pwyll, the Prince of Dyfed" mentions some sleeping women. As the story goes, Queen Rhiannon's newborn son was stolen during the night while the six women called upon to watch him were fast asleep. To conceal their failure from the eyes of the king, they decided to frame the sleeping mother. The women killed

some animals, smeared the blood all over the queen's face, and scattered the bones around her body. This dark tale, however, does not connect with the concept of clairvoyance because none of the women are seers or employ any supernatural powers to commit their horrible act.

While priestesses in Celtic tradition were said to possess the power of predicting the future and manipulating the elements, I could not find any other specific legend that included sleeping women with or without supernatural abilities, nor could I find a source in Spanish that could possibly clarify what the writer was describing. Even attempts at searching for texts about mythology published between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—around the time Coll y Toste's text was written—resulted in no leads. I considered the possibility that I misinterpreted the meaning of the words and consulted the dictionary from the Royal Spanish Academy (also known as RAE for its abbreviated name in Spanish) to see if *dormidas* and *célticas* had other definitions. The verb *dormir* means to sleep, to spend the night somewhere, to be careless, and to be the object of neglect; *céltica* means Celtic or relating to the Celts. Ultimately there were no references that could provide an explanation regarding what myth the author was describing, for which I chose to keep the literal translation.

The *Zend Avesta* is also mentioned in *Leyendas*. It is a collection of sacred Zoroastrian texts dating back to the Sassanian dynasty in Persia. The content is divided in five texts, which present the original teachings—or Avesta—and the side commentary, also known as Zend. According to Carreras, the text includes myths titled “The Legend of the Ram” and “The Legend of the Children of the Sun and Moon.” The former could be referring to Bahram, an ancient Persian god of war whose name appears as Verethragna.

He takes the shape of ten different creatures, among which is the ram. The sacred text also mentions Mithra, a god connected to the sun and nicknamed as the Persian Apollo, but—even though the *Zend Avesta* contains hymns dedicated to the veneration of the sun and moon—I could not find any information regarding any legend about the offspring of these celestial bodies.

In the paragraph describing Greek mythology, there is an erroneous description of Dionysus, the god of fertility and wine. Carreras writes that Dionysus was known for resurrecting souls, yet he was the one who was resurrected. According to the legend, he was the son of the god Zeus and Semele, a mortal woman. After falling victim to the jealous rage of Hera, Semele's unborn child was rescued by Zeus, who placed him inside his thigh until the baby was ready to be born. There is another version of the story where Dionysus resurrects his mother Semele from the Underworld. However, his godly nature is not tied to possessing this kind of power.

A similar situation is seen in the paragraph describing Christianity. Carreras mentions the presence of the mule and ox in the scene of the birth of Jesus when these animals are not in the Gospel of St. Matthew, which is the section of the Bible that narrates this event. However, depictions of the Nativity scene over the years have traditionally included animals because the birth of Jesus was said to have taken place in a manger, which is a long trough from which horses or cattle feed. Taking into consideration this possible reasoning behind the author's words, I did not change or omit them in both cases.

“A Good Game of Cards” recounts the love story of Lieutenant Alonso and Juana, the daughter of the corrupt Governor Íñigo. Within the National Archive of Puerto Rico, I

found that there was a governor and captain general by the name of Íñigo de la Mota Sarmiento who truly finished the construction of a wall initiated by his predecessor Enrique de Sotomayor, just as it is written in the story. However, there is no evidence that supports the existence of a daughter named Juana Manuela or a lieutenant named Alonso de Aguilar. The rest of the characters were not mentioned by name, so they could not be verified.

The next challenge was the meaning of *cuartelillo de retén*, which was initially confusing. The scene where it is mentioned indicates that Don Íñigo walked from the Governor house's gardens to the *cuartelillo* to look for the captain of his troops, after which he headed upstairs to his office. The RAE defines a *cuartelillo* as a place or building that houses a section of an army, and *retén* as a troop that reinforces one or more military posts. However, it seemed odd that the governor would have his office in a separate building that was created specifically to house soldiers. This issue was clarified by the book *The Forts of Old San Juan*, which describes La Fortaleza as the residence of the governor and of other royal officials. Íñigo did not go to another building, he simply went back inside the governor's mansion where the captain most likely resided as well.

When Alonso was held prisoner inside El Morro, we can find the phrase *todo reo en capilla*, which literally means "every prisoner in chapel." According to the RAE, this term refers to when prisoners are held in a chapel from the moment they are sentenced to death until their execution. My initial decision was to translate the term as "every prisoner on death row," but it was too modern for the setting of the story. The use of the words "death row" was first recorded during the late 1800s according to the online dictionary Merriam Webster, yet this story is set in 1631. The words "death sentence"

were recorded around 1655, which was after the events of the story, for which I decided to phrase it as “sentenced to death” because the verb “sentence” has carried this meaning since the sixteenth century.

Next, I kept the word *padrino* in the original language during the scene when the bishop offered to sponsor the wedding of the young couple. Its English translation is “godfather,” which is commonly recognized as a title for a man who sponsors a person at his or her baptism and as the name of the leader of a criminal society, which does not make sense in the context of the story. A wedding *padrino* undertakes the responsibility for the couple’s spiritual guidance, the organization and even the finances for the wedding. This should not be confused with the modern “best man,” who is simply a male friend who attends the bridegroom on his wedding day.

Along the same lines, in the story “The Amethyst Reliquary,” I also decided to keep the word *chica* in Spanish. *Chica* is defined by the RAE as a form of address toward someone around the same age or younger with whom there is familiarity. While “girl” can be a term of endearment toward a female, translating it literally would take away the meaning that is relevant to the context of the story, where the eldest daughter Concha is referring to her younger sister Florencia in this manner. In “The Treasure of Almeida the Pirate” I kept the word *Mulata*—which derives from the word “mule” and was used to describe people of mixed White and Black ancestry—because I wanted to emphasize the use of this derogatory term in that point in history while keeping a respectful stance.

“The Magic Fountain” is based on the mythical fountain of youth sought out by Juan Ponce de León, a Spanish soldier born during the fifteenth century known for exploring and conquering lands for the Spanish Crown. It is believed that he

accompanied Christopher Columbus during his second expedition in 1493, that he was given permission to search for the island of Bimini, and that he discovered a region in North America that he called “Florida.” He was named the first governor of Puerto Rico and was granted the title of Adelantado of Florida and Bimini. He was mortally wounded on an expedition to Florida, eventually sailed back to Cuba, and died in Havana in 1521.

This tale of Ponce de León’s exploration presented a couple of challenges. When the conqueror began his journey, he mentioned an area called San Francisco Point that was part of his route while leaving Puerto Rico. The *punta de San Francisco* was difficult to verify because there were no modern texts that identified where this place is or was located within the geography of Puerto Rico. The National Archive of Puerto Rico was the only source that provided a map of the island from 1765 titled “Mapa de la ensenada de la Aguada de San Francisco,” where the area can be seen on the west side of the island next to the departure site of Ponce de León’s fleet. It was located along the coast of what is known today as the municipality of Rincón. I was also able to verify the existence of the estuary of the Añasco River leading to the sea on the west coast.

One of the titles given to the explorer was *Adelantado de la Florida y Bimini* after his attempt to find the renowned spring. An *adelantado* was formerly the title of a military and political leader of a fortified province. It is also someone who was given charge of an expedition with the privilege of becoming governor of any discovered lands during the trip. When searching for an English translation, I found that the Spanish word has been adopted into the English language according to many sources such as the online Oxford University Press dictionaries, Merriam Webster, and *Juan Ponce de León: First Explorer of Florida and First Governor of Puerto Rico* (2017).

“Becerrillo” was based on a legendary canine that was presumed to have lived during the Spanish conquest. There is a debate regarding the identity of the owner of the animal. Some accounts state that Becerrillo belonged to Juan Ponce de León but was entrusted to Captain Diego de Salazar. Others say that the dog was brought to Puerto Rico by Diego Columbus. In the case of Coll y Toste’s story, the dog belonged to Captain Sancho de Arango, a Spanish colonizer said to have brought this dog from Hispaniola to Puerto Rico. This interpretation was also found in certain history books from the late nineteenth century. Regardless of the uncertainty surrounding its origin, all texts agreed on Becerrillo’s fierce reputation, intelligence, and accomplishments in battle. These outstanding qualities were what earned it the respect of the Spanish soldiers and the salary of a crossbowman.

One of the translation obstacles involved determining the breed of dogs used in military campaigns. In Spanish, the terms used were *lebré de presa*, referring to a dog that hunts rabbits, and *perro de presa*, a dog with the instinct to cling to their prey that is employed for hunting, guarding, and defending. They are translated as “sighthounds” and “catch dogs,” respectively. When searching for references that might have a more specific description of the kinds of dogs present during the Spanish conquest, there were many options such as greyhounds, bloodhounds, mastiffs, among others. In addition, several books did not agree on which breed Becerrillo was, for which I took a closer look at the source text. The physical description only specifies the color of his fur and a vague estimate of his size. Because of this, I chose a term that could include all possible breeds that fall into the same category: hounds. These are dogs that hunt by either tracking the scent of their prey or chasing it.

In this same story, I noticed an error in the spelling of a name written as Francisco de Guindós. An example of the correct version was found in a text from the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture titled *Historia militar de Puerto Rico* (Military History of Puerto Rico) from 1992, which lists the conflicts that the Spanish colonists faced with the natives, including those with the Caribs. It states that in 1514 the natives attacked for the fifth time, on the command of their cacique Cacimar, the estates of Pedro López de Angulo and of Francisco de Quindos. This spelling was also found in *Puerto Rico y su historia: investigaciones críticas* (1894), a history book from another Puerto Rican historian named Salvador Brau.

While many texts I reviewed wrote “Quindos,” some books accented the letter O in his last name. There is no consistency in that aspect of the spelling given that it was found in references before and after *Leyendas* was published. Considering this situation, I chose to revise the spelling and keep the accent on the O just as it is presented in the more recent writings. Variations were also seen in other names like Pedro López and Sancho de Arango, but I kept the more common version.

“The Possessed” revolves around demonomania, a psychological disorder in which a person believes that some sort of spirit or demon is directly influencing his or her behavior and thoughts. According to *The Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology* (1901), some patients feel a sense of dread and melancholy while others manifest other symptoms such as sudden convulsions, loud shouting, and episodes of violence. It has been linked to other conditions, such as possession disorder, which can trigger memory loss and disassociation with one’s identity. Dating back to the Middle Ages, this illness was handled by the Church through severe exorcisms and other forms of inhumane

treatments. Thanks to modern science, one can understand that those who claimed to be under the influence of some malignant force centuries ago could have simply had a mental or physical disability that had yet to be discovered or studied properly at that time. Zealots, fanatics, and nonconformists were also often accused of being possessed. The observation of myths from a scientific perspective is precisely what Coll y Toste proposes at the end of his analysis of supposed demonic possession.

In this text, a priest proclaims “*Laus tibi, Christe*” when he released a Black woman from the grasp of a demon named Pedro. During a rite of exorcism, it is custom that the priest must chant in Latin to subdue the demon, break its connection with the host, and cleanse their surroundings. The translation of this phrase in English would be “Praise be to Christ,” but this option would not be appropriate. Aside from the fact that the source text keeps the expression in Latin, the context of the story requires that those words must remain in the original language.

The following obstacle was a quote by Pérez Galdós from *La de los tristes destinos*. Since there is currently no English translation of the text, I decided to translate the quote myself. When I looked for the book to verify that the sentence in Spanish was identical to the quote, I noticed that Coll y Toste had written a small paragraph with Galdós’ exact words. However, he added quotation marks to one sentence as if that were the only portion that was cited directly. This would be considered plagiarism, so I looked at other editions of *Leyendas* to see if it is a mistake in this PDF version. Although a physical copy from 1928 contained the same error, a version published in 2015 by Puerto Rico eBooks offers a revision of Coll y Toste’s stories, including corrections such as the placement of the punctuation marks in “The Possessed.” A similar decision was made

with a quote in the foreword taken from Aníbal Latino's *La Nueva Literatura* because it is only available in its source language.

Another case of misspelling was found when Coll y Toste describes the illness of King Charles II, also known as the Bewitched. He was the last Spanish Hapsburg royalty and was known for his mental and physical afflictions, as well as his infertility. His declining health was left in the hands of a German exorcist, known for his ability to conjure and banish demons. He was hired by Inquisitor General Rocaberti to supposedly cure the king. Instead, he conspired against Charles II and succeeded in slowly worsening his condition. In *Leyendas* the exorcist's name is written as Maura Teuda, but—once I verified with sources such as *A History of the Inquisition in Spain* (1906) and the play *Carlos II El Hechizado* (1860)—I found that the friar's name was Mauro Tenda. Like “Mermes,” this could be a typographical error.

In “The Amethyst Reliquary,” the character known as Concha has a painter create miniature portraits of her and her husband. The requested art pieces were meticulously prepared by using watercolor paint on ivory, which was the standard material that supported miniatures during the 1700s. It was also popular because of the glowing effect it cast on the painted figure's skin. The text describes the form of the ivory as *placas*, which can be translated as plates or sheets. To verify the shape of these paintings, I consulted books like *American Portrait Miniatures*, published by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the official website of the Gibbes Museum of Arts. The sheets of ivory were cut to small discs that could fit inside a metal locket or a glass case, for which I decided to use “discs.”

After the death of Concha's husband and the discovery of the amulet in Florencia's possession, the sisters turn to their friend who was a doctor for his opinion on the power of amulets. The doctor dismisses the notion of amulets holding any real influence over the lives of people, and he states that the decisions one makes are what define our fate, after which he expresses that that was the *quid divinum* of amulets. While I decided to keep the expression in the original language because it was not translated in the source text, I wanted to verify its relevance to the context of the story.

According to the RAE, it is an expression in Latin that literally means "that which is divine." I found many examples of this expression being applied, but not explained. Most of the reference texts credited Hippocrates as its creator within his teachings. Hippocrates wrote about the nature of human disease and how it should not be considered as something originating from a divine or supernatural source. Keeping this in mind, one can understand that the doctor meant that the supposed divine quality of the amulets comes from the power ascribed by those who believe in them.

Next, I would like to discuss the phrase *cuarta de acero* in "The Treasure of Almeida the Pirate." The word *cuarta* can refer to a whip or a unit of measurement while *acero* means steel. What made me hesitate to use "steel whip" was the phrase "*lo dejatiso de la primera puñalada*," which translates literally as "leaving someone stiff from the first stab." The word *puñalada* has no other meaning, according to the RAE, other than "a strike dealt by thrusting a dagger or a similar weapon." It made me think that the weapon used was something that could stab rather than lash. In addition, the character Alida states that her husband's weapon would "pierce skin and meat," which supports this idea. I found a dictionary from 1849, close to the timeline of the story, where *cuarta*

is first defined as "each of the four parts in which a rod is divided" and a rod is "a long, thin stick and every analogous object." Given the previous explanations, I chose to write "steel rod" and "stab" in my translation.

The next obstacle was encountered in the scene when Almeida's crew attacks a Swedish ship described as a "brick." Since the word was written in English in the source text, I tried consulting texts about sailing. It was only referred to as a building material. Books on pirates and navigation in Spanish presented evidence that "brick" is a type of vessel but did not offer a physical description. It was in an online archive of the Ministry of Culture and Sport from Spain that I found the term "brick-barca." The word "brick" turned out to be the shortened version of *bricbarca*, which is a ship with three or more masts. The English word that matches the description of this kind of vessel is "barque."

The Portuguese man's acts of piracy ended with his death sentence in 1832, which was confirmed by the *Tribunal Supremo de Marina*, which literally translates to Supreme Court of the Navy. I was able to confirm the existence and name of this organization through the online archives of the Puerto Rican National Library, the official website of the Ministry of Defense of the Spanish government, and old documents from the 1830s. An edition of the *Boletín* published on July 1, 1981 had a section dedicated to Almeida and his supposed child, where there is a mention of the Supreme Court of the Navy. One of the few references that contained an English translation of this organization was *School of Forest Engineers in Spain* (1886), in which a section is dedicated to the organization of the Spanish government. The phrasing used in this book was "Supreme Tribunal of War and Marine." However, *Marina* refers to the Spanish Navy, so this would be the appropriate translation.

When Almeida returns to find his beloved Alida in Curaçao, he is told that the Igartúa couple had gone to live in St. Thomas. The text then states that the *Relámpago* headed toward the Windward Islands. This is a mistake because the island of St. Thomas is part of the Virgin Islands, which in turn belong to the Leeward Islands. Various sources from the 1820s and 1830s classify this island as such, and they include that it previously belonged to the British Leeward Islands during the early 1800s. The only explanation could be that the author made a mistake in his writing.

At many points of the translation, I found some expressions in Spanish that were written incorrectly. For example, *echar por delante* is the incorrect version of *llevarse por delante*, which means “destroy someone or something” in a figurative sense. The spelling of this expression was verified with the RAE. Whether this was typed using an archaic spelling or were accidentally written this way, I consider that these details are important to note as observations made during the translation of the book. I would also like to mention that in the first sentence of “The Amethyst Reliquary” the author calls the eldest sister “Concepción,” yet he refers to her as “Concha” for the rest of the story. Given that Concha is a nickname for Concepción, I chose the shorter of the two versions and used it throughout the story.

While most of my research was conducted online, I had the opportunity to visit some institutions containing primary sources before leaving Puerto Rico. For example, I managed to conduct some research at the Lázaro library of the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras campus. The archives inside only had one physical copy of the 1928 edition of *Leyendas* and two different English versions of some legend compilations that included between eight to twelve of the author’s legends. I also visited the General

Archive and the National Library of Puerto Rico to search for other editions of Coll y Toste's book and any English translations available. Although some relevant books were kept in sealed boxes and the online database of the library was not available during the process of writing my thesis, a few revised copies of the source text were found here along with three English translations of a selection of legends.

The website for the National Archives of Puerto Rico was especially helpful for my thesis translation. I had access to various volumes of the historical bulletin published by Coll y Toste and some letters written by him. The information contained there, including his residential address, his professional titles, and achievements, as well as lists of political figures throughout history, were helpful when confirming names, places, and events mentioned in each story. For example, it was here that I found the only document that evidenced the existence of San Francisco point in an old map of the island.

Another challenging aspect involved finding answers to certain issues despite the very limited literature on the subject. Some myths mentioned—like the Children of the Sun and Moon from the Zend Avesta, the dragon emblem on an African flag, and the sleeping Celtic women—were difficult to verify in terms of whether they were real or simply invented. In a couple of cases, there was no evidence, the information was unclear, or I was unable to offer a well-documented solution and had to rely on the context of the writing. This lack of evidence could mean that this text should be considered more as a work of fiction than a well-documented record of historical facts.

The most difficult portion to translate was the foreword because of the different mythologies presented. I read portions of different English translations of the Vedas and the Zend Avesta, as well as different versions of the Christian Bible—among which I

read the King James, the New International, and the New Revised Standard versions—to compare their contents with Carreras’ writing. Encyclopedias on Greek, Egyptian, Celtic, and Roman mythology were also useful when reviewing the description of certain gods, stories, and historical figures. In addition, I examined Spanish and English dictionaries from between the nineteenth and twenty-first centuries, as well as online dictionaries from Oxford, Merriam-Webster, and the RAE. I also attempted to use language that would be appropriate to the period of the source text, replicating the antiquated register seen in the Spanish version. While some issues were not resolved, I am sure I exhausted the resources that were available to me at the time and showed my best effort to justify every decision.

In conclusion, Coll y Toste’s book was a challenging text to choose as a thesis subject. To search for solutions, I relied on a variety of references from numerous fields of study, including history, law, science, art, medicine, and literature. The translation of *Leyendas* certainly helped me gain a far greater appreciation of my own culture and better understand various aspects of Puerto Rico’s history. This experience has also helped me appreciate my chosen profession because of the time, skill, and effort put into translating, proving to me that translation is both a science and an art.

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GLOSSARY

Becerrillo. Little calf.

Borikén, Borinquen. Taíno name for Puerto Rico.

chico, chica. A young person (often as a form of address).

ecco il problema. That is the problem (Italian).

elijan. A move played in monte, a Spanish card game. When three cards of equal value are played and, by invitation of the dealer, a player bets that the fourth card drawn will not complete the set of the cards.

entrés. A move played in monte, a Spanish card game. When one of the cards placed on the table is repeated, players can place bets on which card will appear after the dealer draws the next three cards. If one of new cards has the same value of the repeated card, they lose.

guasábara. Rebellion, uprising.

in pectore. In secret (Latin).

laus tibi Christe. Praise to you, Christ (Latin).

Leoncillo. Little lion.

mondongo. A soup made with tripe.

Mulata. A woman with one White and one Black parent (the term is considered offensive in English, and often so in Spanish as well).

padrino. Godfather or sponsor at a baptism or a wedding.

pastelillos. Pastries filled with guava paste.

quid divinum. That which is divine (Latin).

relámpago. Lightning.

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