

Graduate Program in Translation
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She Who Calls You Life: Inés M. Mendoza Rivera. Her Private Life in Her
Diary and Letters

(a translation of a chapter from the book *La que te llama vida: Inés M. Mendoza Rivera. Su vida interior en sus diarios y cartas* by Daisy Sánchez)

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For my parents, Griselle and Iván

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

1.1 Introduction

When I began my studies at the University of Puerto Rico, I had a very different idea of what my academic future would be. I never was the type of person who had everything planned out. On the contrary, I didn't even know what field of study to apply to. I wanted to study many subjects, all at once. I could never decide on just one. I initially had thought of Psychology or Marine Sciences, which I found fascinating. At one point I became very curious about Urban Planning while finishing my bachelor's degree in Sociology, but it wasn't until I heard a professor and a student speaking in Portuguese that I knew I wanted to study in a field related to languages. Translation has given me the opportunity to study language while also gaining knowledge about many different fields, a perfect combination.

The process of locating a text for my thesis was a little challenging. For the first six years of college, I was accustomed to a particular way of reading and writing as I completed my bachelor's degree in Sociology. When I was searching for a text, I wanted a topic that I would find interesting and at the same time be useful for others. It was not until my dad recommended to work with Daisy Sánchez Collazo's book that I knew this could be a good fit for me, although I must admit that I find biographical or literary texts somewhat intimidating. All the same, I looked at this as a challenge and as an opportunity to expand my translation skills because I'm a firm believer that through practice one's work will get better and better.

As I began to learn more about the world of translation and work with a wide range of texts, all the work and the processes a translator must undergo to create a piece of work that would be, in the end, helpful and resourceful to others, got me thinking about what kinds of text I

would be interested in working with as a future translator. Ever since I took a course in translation and gender, I learned the importance of working with texts written by women. I learned that translating their work has great value in how society perceives history from a woman's vantage point. Translating their work is of great significance, but at the same time the translator must be aware of the responsibilities that go with it in terms of attempting to transmit the author's voice and the message the author wants to provide to their readers.

The book by Daisy Sánchez Collazo, *La que te llama vida* (She Who Calls You Life), is a work focusing on one of the most illustrious women in the history of Puerto Rico, yet it seems that many people, especially from my generation and the ones that follow, know very little about her story. In my experience growing up, I remember studying a few important women in the history of Puerto Rico, but it was not until I began studying Social Sciences at the University of Puerto Rico that more important women came into the picture. As I was deciding on working with this text, I felt embarrassed and at fault for barely knowing about the First Lady of Puerto Rico, Inés María Mendoza Rivera. I find that, like many societies around the world, Puerto Rico is not exempt from viewing its history from a male-dominated perspective. It is important that as a society we acknowledge this and begin to take steps forward to regain more of our history with a different point of view. As I began reading the book and looking for more information that would help me with my translation process, I unintentionally ran a test of my own, which ended up proving my point. Whenever I spoke about the topic of my thesis with my friends or people near my age, the majority had no idea who Inés Mendoza Rivera was, but as soon as I said the name "Luis Muñoz Marín" they quickly recognized him, the first governor of Puerto Rico elected by the people.

Throughout this process I have come to realize the importance of the small contribution I might be making by translating a chapter of this book about the life of a woman who had a great

influence on the island's political evolution. In this sense, it would be ideal to translate the entire book, since this work could be important and resourceful for women's studies in Puerto Rico and for people outside the island who would like to know more about the life of important women like Inés María Mendoza Rivera. This process allowed me to understand the importance of translating works by Puerto Rican women and perhaps developing a support network that would allow women's work to be recognized by the rest of the people on the island and those who live outside Puerto Rico. The main purpose of my research and translation for this text is to bring to light the life of a woman who was strong and who stood firmly for what she believed, and to present the contributions she made for the education and cultural identity of Puerto Rico.

1.2 The Author

Daisy Sánchez Collazo was born in San Juan, Puerto Rico, on May 2, 1957. She studied at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras campus, where she obtained a bachelor's degree in Public Communications with a concentration in Film History. She went on to pursue graduate studies at the Centro de Estudios Avanzados de Puerto Rico y el Caribe, obtaining a master's degree in Puerto Rican Studies. She worked for over 30 years in the star edition of Tele Once's news department (also known as Univisión Puerto Rico).

Sánchez Collazo is a co-founder of the Colectivo de Periodistas and Nuevo Ángulo, a corporation that provides content to the media and to private enterprises. Previously she worked as public relations officer in government agencies and private institutions and as a reporter for several publications in the island, including the newspaper *El Mundo*, in its section *Puerto Rico Ilustrado*.

Daisy has won many awards and acknowledgments for her professional work. She was

awarded a scholarship by the Overseas Press Club and many of her journalistic works have been awarded by the Asociación de Periodistas de Puerto Rico, where she served as president for two terms. During her presidency, the Bicentenario del Periodismo Puertorriqueño was celebrated and the Editorial Casa Periodistas was founded. It was named after its predecessor, the journalist Nelson del Castillo.

In 1995 her first book, *Cita con la Injusticia* (An Appointment with Injustice), obtained an honorary mention by the Instituto de Literatura Puertorriqueña. In 1998 she was recognized by the House of Representatives of Puerto Rico as Outstanding Woman in the Field of Journalism. In 2002 she was invited to be part of the jury at the Premio Rey in Madrid, Spain. Her second book, *La que te llama vida* (She Who Calls You Life), came in third place at the Premio Nacional de Literatura of the Pen Club of Puerto Rico in 2008. She currently is an active member of the Junta de Directores del Centro de Periodismo Investigativo.

1.3 Inés María Mendoza Rivera

Daisy Sánchez Collazo's book is focused on the life of a woman who deserves recognition, yet history books fall short in terms of detailed information about her life and the contributions she made in Puerto Rico over the course of her lifetime. Her name was Inés María Mendoza Rivera, and she was born on January 10, 1908, in the town of Naguabo, Puerto Rico. She was the second in a family of five children. In her town, Inés was known as the "writer" and neighbors would come up to her house so she could read them letter they received from family, friends, and lovers. During that time in Puerto Rico, large number of the people were illiterate, so they would go to the house of the "writer" for her to read the letter out loud. During her first years as a university student, she became an active member of social movements that were starting to expand across the island, for example the socialist movement and the Nationalist Party led by Pedro Albizu Campos. Her intellectual,

academic, and professional development took place in a reformist world where women fought to counterbalance their political rights with their social responsibilities. At the age of 23, and against her mother's will, Inés María spoke freely and defined herself as a member of the Nationalist Party.

In 1931, Inés Mendoza Rivera obtained her bachelor's degree in Science at the Teacher's College at Columbia University in New York. There she met the artist Rafael Palacios, who became her first husband and with whom she had two children, Carmen and Rafael Palacios Mendoza. During her career as a teacher, Inés passionately defended the use of the Spanish language in the educational system in Puerto Rico. She defied the U.S. imposition of the English language and ban of the Spanish language in the island. As an act of defiance, she would give her classes in Spanish. In the night of May 20, 1937, Inés Mendoza Rivera came before the Hay's Committee to defend the Spanish language in the educational system. Her acts of defiance led her to lose her job and forced to move back to New York for a while.

It was in 1938 that Inés Mendoza Rivera fell in love with Luis Muñoz Marín. On November 16, 1946, they got married in a small ceremony a day after Muna Lee, Muñoz's first wife, granted him a divorce. Inés Mendoza Rivera loved, cared for, and treasured Muñoz Marín and never left his side until his death in 1980. Throughout Muñoz's term as governor, Inés Mendoza Rivera was always present in his work team whenever he went to new campaign for reelection. Her letters and documents maintain that she lived an intense public life in which she participated fully in the development of her husband's governmental work and defended the statesmanship within which she said she felt "perfectly free."

1.4 The Text

La que te llama vida: Inés M. Mendoza Rivera. Su vida interior en sus diarios y cartas (She Who Call You Life: Inés M. Mendoza Rivera. Her private life in Her Diary and Letters) was

published in 2007. The text is 279 pages in length (59,483 words), and it is divided into four main chapters. Each chapter is in turn divided into parts or sections. The work includes entries from Inés Mendoza Rivera's personal diary and letters she wrote to friends and family. It also includes a variety of photographs that transport the readers to the Puerto Rico of the 1950s.

The book is a biographical investigation of the First Lady of Puerto Rico, Inés M. Mendoza Rivera, yet the author states that her work is not intended to function as a biography per se. Her intention is more to provide an approach to the life and work of a woman who made a significant mark in the history of Puerto Rico. Although it might seem that the author follows a chronological order of the life of Inés María throughout the book, the information the author provides is somewhat limited given that this book is her thesis work to obtain her master's degree in Puerto Rican Studies.

The author clarifies that her work “does not pretend to be a biography about Doña Inés.”

The clarification is pertinent, and an imperative that could save claims to come.

Furthermore, in this way the reader will become aware that the text has been limited by the author to specific areas or topics, a strategy that is sometimes necessary in this type of academic work in order to achieve the main objective—in this case, the attainment of the master's degree that motivated the work (Pérez Miranda, 2008).¹

The chapter I chose to work with was the third chapter of the book. I decided to translate this chapter because my interest was to work with a part of the book that would present the relationship between Inés Mendoza Rivera and Luis Muñoz Marín and, most importantly, how she narrates one of the most pivotal times in political history of the island from her point of view. Although I have defined Inés María Mendoza Rivera as a strong woman with fierce character

¹ Translator's note: Pg. 13. Text originally in Spanish. Translation my own.

who defended education, the Spanish language and confronted with bravery a trial for going against the imposition of the English language on the island, Sánchez Collazo decided to portray Inés Mendoza as a woman madly in love who would do or be anything for her husband. It is important to make this distinction because it will help the reader have a better understanding of how Inés Mendoza is perceived within different contexts. The first, being a fighter and passionate with her ideals. The second, a partner, mother and friend who would do anything to keep safe and sound the ones she loves.

This chapter is the longest of the four chapters, with 55 pages of source text. It begins on page 81 of the book and it includes the following sections: *El amor en campaña* (Campaign Love), *Tiempos difíciles* (Hard Times), *Huerto cerrado* (The Secluded Garden), “*Guárdame el secreto,*” (Keep My Secret) *Se acabó la fiesta* (The Party’s Over), *La que te llama “Vida,”* (She Who Calls You “Life”) *Angustias compartidas* (Shared Concerns), *¡Por fin, corazón, por fin!* (At Last! My Love, at Last!), *Inés María ocupa La Fortaleza* (Inés María Moves into La Fortaleza), *Un asunto doloroso* (A Painful Matter), *Se encendió la hoguera* (The Fire is Lit), “*Un prisionero que me pesa,*” (A Prisoner Who Weighs on My Conscience) *La “dictadura” de Muñoz* (Muñoz’s “Dictatorship,” “*No tengo que ponerme,*” (“I Have Nothing to Wear”) and *Un refugio para la pena* (A Refuge from Grief) ending on page 151. I decided not to include the section *Cartas de amor para un viaje a Cuba* (Love Letters for the Trip to Cuba) and the first three paragraphs of the next section, *Inés María Moves Into La Fortaleza* (Inés María Moves into La Fortaleza), in order to stay within the maximum word count I could translate for my thesis. Also, I found that by eliminating this section and the three paragraphs of the subsequent section, important information was not left out and the flow of reading would not be interrupted.

1.5 The Translation

Beginning with the title of the book, *La que te llama vida*, I wanted to stay as close to the author's wording, because I think she wanted to keep alive Inés María's persona and her undying love for Luis Muñoz Marín by using one of the phrases that Inés and Luis used as a tender way of addressing each other. In the second part of the title, I chose to translate the phrase "private life" instead "inner life," which the former would be a more literal translation, because it is referring to her private life; inner could be related more to mind or spirit with a when referring to a person. Also, I would change the Spanish version of "interior" to "privada."

Working with Sánchez Collazo's book was a challenge because throughout the text there are two voices that are speaking, that of the author and Inés María's. When having two voices narrating at the same time, it can become confusing because the reader can get easily distracted with what one voice is saying and then redirect their focus on what the other voice is saying. Although Sánchez Collazo maintains a good rhythm with Inés Mendoza Rivera's voice there is another problem that significantly affects the flow of the reading, the way in which the author decided to format her text. For example, whereas footnotes would usually be found at the bottom of the page, the author placed her footnotes on a different page, not exactly as endnotes, accompanied by photographs or other images, which made the reading confusing due to the flow of the text being interrupted by images and notes. This format makes the reader lose the narrative thread by redirecting our attention to another thing, which ultimately gives a sense of disorganization.

My translation approach was to keep the target text as simple as possible, but because of the voice and register difficulties with both narrators present in the text, I had to rely on the use of transcreation to some degree in order make the final work a clearer and more organized text.

Another problem was that the author's register was not as difficult as opposed to working with the register of Inés María. As I translated the diary entries and the letters that Inés María wrote, I tried to maintain her way of expressing things in a very poetic tone about her life and experiences. I had to find a way to maintain that type of rhythm and register throughout my translation, which ended up sometimes adapting the text so that the reader could understand what was being said to maintain this specific voice. We should bear in mind that Inés María lived in a different era, so that her style of writing also represents the Spanish of the 1950s in Puerto Rico, and often she would use words, phrases, or idiomatic expressions that we would not normally use today. While translating some of these phrases or idioms I used transcreation to convey the message. For example, the sentence "Se les morían los hijos de empachos en racimo," I translated it as "Their children were dying of malnutrition by the cartloads." On the other hand, Daisy's register is fairly easy to read, but I found that at times she also seemed to echo Inés's style, writing sentences with a poetic tone to them. An example of this can be seen in the sentence: "We all smelled of earth from the mountains, of smoke, of grass, of ripe fallen fruit, of freshly cut sugar cane; we smelled of saltpeter, swell and sargassum along the coasts, and we were always sweaty people, somewhat forlorn but always loving, smiling, waiting patiently, stubbornly energetic." (p.83). The use of the adjectives and metaphors creates a poetic tone to the text, thus mirroring Inés's style.

Another issue I found was with certain words used in the text that make part of the cultural context of Puerto Rican jargon and history such as the word "doña." Although, it is used a few times in the text, the word "doña" is used to formally address Inés Mendoza Rivera. I decided to leave "doña" because it is a word used as a sign of respect, and it did not impede in terms of comprehension. It was my consideration that equivalents in English, such as "Mrs.,"

“Lady” or “Madam” Inés Mendoza Rivera, would detract from the power and meaning that “doña” imparts when addressing the first lady of Puerto Rico. Another word that I did not change was “jíbaro,” since it is so embedded in Puerto Rican culture, and no single-word equivalent would provide the complete context without providing a footnote to refer to the rural agricultural workers who lived in the center of the island. On the other hand, I translated the word “arrabales” to “slums” because the definition of slum fits well into the description of the “arrabales” that were built in the outskirts of major cities of the island and is a word globally used to refer to such urban areas.

The use of “isla” and “país” in the text is a translation problem that conveys an ideological context. Throughout the text both words appear capitalized at some point. It is important to state the fact that Puerto Rico has been a colony for many years, and never, in its history, has been an independent country. Puerto Rico was a viceregal possession of Spain for more than 400 years and in 1898 through the Treaty of Paris, Puerto Rico was ceded alongside Cuba and the Philippines to the United States. Taking it back to the present day, the island continues to be a colony, a territory and all the years of colonization has influenced immensely the way Puerto Ricans portray their identity. When it comes to trying to define the situation of Puerto Rico, the issue of status has been dimly brushed as an important aspect of our relationship with the United States. What is Puerto Rico’s status? It is a word that lingers in the air when talking about politics in Puerto Rico, but it has not been raised as one of the problems we have as a society by not recognizing where we stand with the United States. According to Alejandro Álvarez Nieves in his work *La nación manipulada; desfases traductológicos de los documentos jurídicos fundacionales de Puerto Rico* (The Manipulated Nation: Translation Gaps in Puerto Rico’s founding legal documents) he states that: “Puerto Rico is a translated country, an island immersed in the division that a process of cultural translation entails. To consider, at first glance,

Puerto Rico as a country, no matter the intended meaning of the term in this case, is problematic because the nature of the island's relations with the United States."² What Álvarez Nieves wants to say is that Puerto Rico is a nation in translation. Throughout the relationship with the United States, Puerto Rico has resorted constantly to translation strategies that have let them negotiate and concentrate a greater share of self-government to avoid disappearing as collective. "Perhaps the main advantage that Puerto Ricans have gained from cultural translation is the possibility of creating a double space that allows for the emission of a discourse for the local population³ without having to change the vernacular language or customs of Hispanic origin³ and another for the metropolitan environment. Thus, Puerto Rican political leaders (especially Luis Muñoz Marín and the Popular Democratic Party) had the opportunity to speak to the population alluding to cultural elements very identifiable to the Puerto Rican population and, at the same time, sit at the negotiating table with the U.S. authorities and propose local autonomy appealing to the discourses of liberal democracy represented and defended by the United States."³ With this said, I decided to translate the word "country" to "island." I will maintain the author's decision to write the word "island" with a capital letter wherever she decides to capitalize the word throughout the text.

Another issue I encountered with the source text is the change of tenses in both narrators' texts. The setting and time were the narration and most of the events presented in the book take place in Puerto Rico in the 1950s. Being that said the events described had already happened, in that sense the translation should be written in the past tense, for both speakers or at least the conditional. The translation process was at times a long and arduous one.

My research included books, articles, videos, and journalistic articles. It included reviews

² Translator's note: Text originally written in Spanish. Pg. 3. Translation, my own.

³ Translator's note: Text originally written in Spanish. Pgs. 445-446. Translation, my own.

about Sánchez Collazo's book, articles written about the life of Inés Mendoza Rivera. I also looked and researched the work cited by Sánchez Collazo in her work. Dictionaries were used to search the meaning of word, phrases, and sentences. The *Tesoro Lexicográfico de Puerto Rico* was of great help while trying to understand the meaning of some words of the Puerto Rican jargon. With this work my intention is to clarify and bring light the story of a woman who lived during a pivotal time in Puerto Rican history, who faced changing times in the island and worked towards changing the outcome of the island's future for the better.

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