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**WE PLANT THREEFOLD: THE FURROWS OF AGROECOLOGY
AND FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IN PUERTO RICO**

(A translation of select chapters from *Sembramos a tres partes: Los surcos de la agroecología y la soberanía alimentaria* by Nelson Alvarez Febles)

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Translator's Preface

To fulfill the thesis requirement for the completion of a Master of Arts degree from the University of Puerto Rico's Graduate Program in Translation, I submit for review a translation from Spanish into English of select chapters from the book *Sembramos a tres partes: Los surcos de la agroecología y la soberanía alimentaria* by Nelson Álvarez Febles. The work comprises two parts: "Políticas para la sustentabilidad alimentaria y la agroecología" and "Puerto Rico, de la colonia a la soberanía alimentaria." I have chosen to translate the last three chapters of the second part of the book—chapters 5, 6, and 7—as my thesis project, which amounts to 11,896 words.

Since I am only translating an excerpt from the book, I deemed it appropriate to provide a brief introduction to the subject matter to help readers become better acquainted with some of the concepts discussed in the translation. I also take it as an opportunity to emphasize the importance of the text in light of current world events.

Introduction

In the first half of the book *Sembramos a tres partes: Los surcos de la agroecología y la soberanía alimentaria*, the author, Nelson Álvarez Febles, recounts a conversation he had with a traditional farmer from Barrio Matuyas in Maunabo. The farmer explains how he and his family plant crops in three parts: reserving a portion for their livelihood, another for their neighbors and the community, and yet another for the pests that will inevitably destroy some of those crops.

This passage resonated with me more than any other because my great-grandfather, Cristóbal Pabón, was also a traditional farmer in Barrio Fránquez in Morovis. My father, who used to help around Cristóbal's farm when he was a young boy, tells me that he does not know how grandpa

made a living as a farmer because whenever they harvested crops and went out to “sell” them, grandpa ended up giving them away to his neighbors and friends. Cristóbal, however, received the same generosity from his community, especially after experiencing losses due to pests or drought. That solidarity and acceptance of the cycles of nature are at the heart of agroecology.

Beyond having a personal connection to this text, I had other reasons for translating it. In 2017, when I started working on my thesis project, I had chosen to translate a fiction novel titled *La belleza bruta* by local author Francisco Font Acevedo. This novel—composed of interconnected short stories—is described as dirty realism and depicts the underbelly of Río Piedras and Santurce. Moreover, almost every character portrayed in the novel is either a criminal or simply morally corrupt and unredeemable. About 30% into that translation project, Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico. That traumatic blow brought a lot of issues to the forefront, hard truths that Puerto Ricans had been choosing to ignore. Supplies did not reach us fast enough, and many people in the interior of the island went without access to food and clean water for longer than they should have. After María, everything changed. And I found I had changed too. I could not bring myself to continue translating *La belleza bruta* because I could not relate to the text anymore or justify the value of translating it.

After struggling for months with translator’s block, I decided not to finish my translation project, which meant I would not graduate. I was still making peace with my choice when a fellow translator and close friend, Claudia Rodríguez Hamilton, pointed out that I was simply translating the wrong text and it was not too late to translate something else. She soon lent me her copy of *Sembramos a tres partes*, introduced me to Nelson Álvarez, and encouraged me to sign up for a community-supported agriculture initiative by the agroecological farm El Josco Bravo in Toa Alta. As I started consuming fresh, local food and learning more about the potential

of agroecology for creating food security and fostering resilience against climate change, I knew *Sembramos a tres partes* was a text I could feel proud to translate.

In the course of translating the three chapters I selected for this new project, I gained knowledge about my home, my culture, and food production practices in Puerto Rico and abroad. I discovered that local crops such as root vegetables are not only part of our cultural heritage because they were grown by our ancestors in harmony with nature, but are also incredibly resilient to hurricane-force winds and floods. I also learned that conventional agribusiness farming practices are harmful to the environment and simply inefficient. Monocropping, for example, depletes the soil of nutrients, causes erosion, and compromises the nutritional value of food. The use of synthetic fertilizers is also problematic and unnecessary. Synthetic nitrogen was used to create bombs and explosives during World War II. After the war, corporations didn't know what to do with the leftover nitrogen, so it was instead marketed as fertilizer. But while plants need nitrogen to grow healthy and bear fruit, they cannot take up nitrogen as is. Instead, it is the bacteria in living soils that break down nitrogen particles into smaller ones—such as nitrates and ammonia—that plants can absorb. And even then, plants rely on mycorrhizal fungi to transport those smaller particles to their roots in exchange for sugars. By pumping synthetic fertilizers into the soil, we destroy the biodiversity that makes life possible and endanger our lives in the process when those excess chemicals end up polluting our water sources.

The complex processes of nature evidence the interconnectedness of life at every level and the importance of an agricultural model that seeks to maintain the balance and harmony inherent in the natural world. Agroecology is at the opposite end of the conventional, large-scale

agribusiness spectrum. It considers every part of the productive nucleus and how these elements complement each other instead of competing against one another.

Global Warming and the Agri-Food Industry

From manufacturing to agriculture, every sector of our economy contributes to rising global temperatures through greenhouse gas emissions. These greenhouse gasses—carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide, and methane—have dramatically increased in the past 170 years due to human activity (Gates, 2021). Rising global temperatures, commonly referred to as global warming, also contribute to other large-scale problems such as extreme weather events, widespread forest fires, devastating flash floods, glacial melting, rising sea levels, shoreline erosion, and wildlife extinction and migration. While most human activities contribute to the climate crisis we now face, one industry is especially problematic: food production. This sector, which spans everything from growing and transporting crops to raising cattle, is responsible for 40% of global greenhouse gas emissions (Shiva, 2016). The agri-food industry also contributes to soil erosion and depletion, loss of biodiversity, water pollution, the displacement of smallholder farmers, and the loss of ancestral farming knowledge passed down through generations.

As it stands, our food industry is so resource intensive that it requires large quantities of synthetic fertilizers to infuse the soil with nitrogen and other nutrients necessary for high crop yields. But as environmental activist Vandana Shiva points out, the intensification of chemical inputs to increase food production doesn't lead to greater productivity. On the contrary, these processes lead to ecological and resource-use inefficiency and waste, as well as a host of related problems (Shiva, 2016). Saturating the soil with nitrogen, for example, does not guarantee plants will utilize it. Most plants don't have the ability to break down the nitrogen molecules they require to survive; it is microorganisms in the soil that do. And those microorganisms only carry

out such an energy-consuming task when it is necessary, meaning when there is no nitrogen in the soil. If there is no soil cover to protect the ground from erosion or humus in the earth to hold in moisture, percolation and runoffs will eventually carry that excess nitrogen from synthetic fertilizers into bodies of water, creating toxic algae blooms that endanger animal and human life. If it is not carried away by water, nitrogen will evaporate and become nitrous oxide, which has a greater warming potential than carbon dioxide.

While industrial food production is problematic on many levels, some deem it the only viable solution to feed the world's ever-growing population, which, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2017), is expected to increase to 10 billion by 2050. But the agri-food industry doesn't produce food; it produces commodities—raw material that can be bought and sold. And 90% of the world's corn and soybean commodities are used for biofuels, not to feed the population. Only 30% of the food we eat comes from industrial farms; the other 70% comes from small, farmer-owned plots of land (Shiva, 2016). And many of the small-scale farms that feed the world employ sustainable farming practices that foster productivity and resilience against climate change through biodiversity and soil regeneration.

The Benefits of Agroecology

Agroecology is a branch of science that combines “local, traditional, indigenous, and practical” farming knowledge in a multidisciplinary approach to food production (FAO, 2018). Since agroecological practices consider multiple disciplines and perspectives, they combine the best of each one to solve problems in a localized way. And since these practices rely heavily on internal inputs (organic fertilizers) as opposed to external ones (inorganic fertilizers and pesticides), they are accessible to most food producers, regardless of their approach to food production. While there is still some debate about what exactly constitutes agroecology and how it differs from

organic farming, its key principles are generally recognized and include fostering biodiversity to create resilience and increase production, sharing and co-creating farming knowledge, optimizing synergies between systems, minimizing external inputs to increase resource-use efficiency and decrease pollution, and recycling to minimize costs and environmental impact (FAO, 2018).

Beyond these technical applications, agroecology also addresses the social aspects of food production, such as building environmental and social resilience, protecting, and improving the lives of farmers, preserving cultural and food traditions, and fostering responsible governance to create circular economies. By applying ecological principles to agricultural practices, the FAO has stated we can achieve social, economic, and environmental sustainability. Through agroecology, we could respond to climate change with holistic and contextualized solutions that leave a low carbon footprint, all while creating a fair food production system that values its growers and integrates communities.

Food Sovereignty and the Agri-Food Industry

A handful of large corporations—such as Dupont and Monsanto—control the agrochemical industry and most of the world’s seed banks. These companies, in conjunction with governments and markets, also determine which commodities are bought and sold globally. This dynamic results in cheap, low-quality food items taking over markets in lower-income countries, especially in the Global South. Unable to compete with the dirt-cheap prices of behemoth corporations, small farmers in these countries are displaced and disempowered. The result of this dynamic is rampant inequality in the food production industry, as the rights of Indigenous and local growers around the world are trampled by corporations.

This also means that traditional farming knowledge is being replaced by large-scale and resource-intensive food-production models that ignore the cycles of nature and the interconnectedness of life, creating irreparable environmental damage in the process. While this sounds dire, the solution to the problem is quite simple in theory: allowing people to choose the food they consume and how they want to consume it. And that is the key discourse at the heart of food sovereignty—a concept introduced by the international peasant movement *La Via Campesina* during the 1996 World Food Summit (La Via Campesina, 2021). By granting locals the right to choose healthy food that is produced ecologically and aligns with their cultural values, we could take power away from corporations and put it back in the hands of the people.

Food Sovereignty in the Context of Puerto Rico

In 1939, about 65% of Puerto Rico's food needs were met through the local production of crops such as plantains, bananas, okra, yams, citruses, mangoes, breadfruit, coconuts, and root vegetables (Alvarez, 2016). According to Alvarez Febles, however, the rapid industrialization process that took place between the 40s and 60s shifted focus away from agricultural practices and toward expansive urbanization and industrialization. Over time, this led to Puerto Rico becoming largely dependent on imports from the United States to feed a population that today exceeds three million. This dynamic, of course, continues to be exacerbated by the Merchant Marine Act of 1920, also known as the Jones Act, which limits our ability to trade goods with other countries and considerably increases the price of food (Georges & Holt-Gimenez, 2017). As a side-effect of our food dependence, we have also lost interest in agriculture and conserving our ancestral farming heritage. We have lost not only valuable knowledge, but also lost lands that were prime for agroecological farming, and with them a lot of the biodiversity that made those soils healthy and prevented erosion and water pollution.

A different kind of farming now predominates on our island. Puerto Rico has more permits for experimental GMO seed stock than any other U.S. territory or state. In fact, multinational agribusiness corporations like Monsanto and Dow Agro-Sciences have received over \$526 million in subsidies and tax exemptions from our local government. These agribusinesses have control over prime agricultural lands on the island and may be, in part, responsible for Puerto Rico's debt crisis (Georges & Holt-Gimenez, 2017). Despite this, we still produce food locally and there are several agroecological initiatives around the island that produce organic food based on traditional farming methods. This is proof that it is not too late to turn things around; we can make better choices and reclaim some of the most valuable elements of our rural *jibaro* heritage. Much of our ancestors' farming knowledge has survived through farmer-to-farmer extension initiatives, and we can support their endeavors with our time and money. It may not be as convenient or cheap as buying from supermarket chains and big-box retail stores, but we can—if and whenever possible—foster agroecological efforts such as those of El Josco Bravo in Toa Alta, Siembra Tres Vidas in Aibonito, La Tierra Prometida in Aguadilla, and many more. We can also purchase agroecological produce from local markets such as the Mercado Agrícola Natural in Old San Juan and Mercado Orgánico Placita Roosevelt in Hato Rey.

If we need any further encouragement to start making small changes involving how and what we consume, let us just consider the social and environmental turmoil we have experienced since Hurricane Maria, an event which made clear that many of the systems we have relied on over the years are outdated and in urgent need of reform. We need to build environmental resilience and rely less on imports to fulfill our food needs. This can be a turning point for Puerto Rico, an opportunity to create climate resilient food systems that provide for the needs of the

population without external intervention. And food sovereignty could be the potential first step toward decolonization, which is necessary for Puerto Rico to thrive. This time of crisis presents new opportunities to redefine our priorities and propose legislation that can bring about much needed social and environmental change.

About the Text

As individuals and consumers, we can be agents of change in our families and communities by choosing what and how we consume, sponsoring agroecological projects with our time and money, and pushing for legislation that protects our lands from further urban development and puts them in the hands of small farmers who can produce food locally and sustainably. And, as translators and linguists, we too have a choice. The type of content we translate can be instrumental in bringing about the change we are eager to see in our society. With this in mind, I propose translating selected chapters from *Sembramos a tres partes: Los surcos de la agroecología y la soberanía alimentaria* by Nelson Alvarez Febles.

Sembramos a tres partes is an informative text described as equal parts history book and agroecological reference book. It touches on things like organic farming and food sovereignty, first in general and then specifically in the context of Puerto Rico. And while it doesn't propose a step-by-step approach to achieving either of these goals, it does provide a clear overview of the possibilities inherent in the practice of agroecology. More importantly, it shatters the myths and misconceptions surrounding our country's food production potential and our ability as a people to become self-sufficient. Many of us have been raised on the notion that, without external support, our economy would crumble, and our livelihoods would be at stake. However, the work of Alvarez Febles shows us that this discourse is unfounded and has been perpetuated by a system that puts profits before people and depends on fear to drive mindless consumerism.

The title of the book, *Sembramos a tres partes*, references farming in three parts: farming for one's livelihood and that of one's family, sharing with one's neighbors and community, and understanding that a portion of the crops will inevitably be lost to pests. And that is the simplest definition of agroecological farming, which encompasses the principles of self-sufficiency and food sovereignty; the idea of creating networks that foster cooperation, solidarity, and equality; and the application of farming methods that conserve beneficial soil organisms and maintain soil health by forgoing the use of chemical herbicides and insecticides. Instead of competing, the organisms within an agroecological system complement each other, and it is that biodiversity that creates greater resource-use efficiency, resilience, and productivity.

Chapter Selection

Sembramos a tres partes: Los surcos de la agroecología y la soberanía alimentaria is divided into two parts. The first, titled "Políticas para la sustentabilidad alimentaria y la agroecología," touches on topics such as the importance of agrobiodiversity and the extensive damage caused by the agri-food industry, the green revolution, free trade agreements, and GMOs. While having a general focus, this first half of the book provides an excellent foundation to help readers understand the breadth and depth of the global crises we currently face. It also provides an in-depth look at the principles of agroecology and the viability of this food-production model as a potential solution to food insecurity and other social and ecological challenges.

The second half of the book, titled "Puerto Rico, de la colonia a la soberanía alimentaria," provides a wealth of knowledge about the history of food production in Puerto Rico. It touches on such diverse topics as food traditions in the interior of the island, agroecological practices passed down through generations, and the importance of *jibaro* culture in the preservation of ancestral farming knowledge. It is in this second half of the book that we get a clearer picture of

what food production has looked like in Puerto Rico over time, from the Spanish colonization to the present. We also get a better understanding of the policies that have led to the current state of abandonment of usable farmland on the island as well as other social and ecological problems we're still facing today. In broad strokes and with a hopeful outlook, Alvarez Febles also outlines possible solutions to these problems, taking from both agroecology and food sovereignty.

This second half of the book is about 28,000 words and focuses specifically on Puerto Rico's food production in the past and present. Chapters 1 and 2 deal with the history of food production in Puerto Rico, Chapter 3 deals with the promotion of the biotechnology industry over farming, and Chapter 4 provides a historical background of organic farming on the island. The most valuable sections, however, are chapters 5, 6, and 7: "Lo jíbaro como metáfora del futuro," "La agroecología, agenda pendiente," and "La agricultura ecológica, alimentos y soberanía alimentaria." These chapters total 11,896 words and offer more detailed solutions to help Puerto Rico achieve food sovereignty using organic farming methods used by our ancestors, the jíbaros and the *taínos*. It should be noted that these solutions are only outlined and not explored in rigorous detail, as the book aims to be simply an educational instrument to make readers aware of these possibilities.

As is suggested in the Thesis Manual, I opted to translate consecutive chapters 5, 6, and 7 for the sake of clarity and the benefit of the committee members. This decision was also influenced by Nelson Alvarez Febles himself, who, upon meeting with me to discuss the possibility of this translation, suggested that the most important chapter—in his opinion—is the last one. It was his goal, now some years back, to publish the second half of *Sembramos a tres partes* as a booklet for English-speaking audiences. At that time, I was ambitious enough to

imagine I could be the one to translate those 28,000 words. But while I recognize there is a wealth of valuable information in the first four chapters of Part II, I opted not to include these in my selection because they would exceed the maximum word count requirement. This would not only add to my workload, but also add to that of the committee members, and the goal of this project is to provide only a sample of my work. However, I am open to the possibility of translating these four chapters in the future, if only for the benefit of those interested in reading more about agroecology in the context of Puerto Rico in their native language.

As the world slowly realizes we are at a crossroads where our choices could impact the future of humanity, the translation and dissemination of works such as *We Plant Threefold: The Furrows of Agroecology and Food Sovereignty in Puerto Rico*—the title I propose for this translation—could influence how our society reacts to some of the systemic problems we are now facing and will likely continue to grapple with in the near future. Beyond this, the translation of this material, whether in part or in its entirety, could reach Puerto Ricans born abroad whose first language is English, perhaps inspiring them to reconnect with their roots and return home to get involved in agroecological initiatives. Since becoming interested in this topic, I've met several people who have moved to Puerto Rico to do just that and works such as *We Plant Threefold* could help them understand the history of food production on the island and its ties to our cultural identity.

About the Author

Nelson Alvarez Febles is a social ecologist who specializes in agroecological policy and practice. He first became involved in organic agriculture in the Catalan Pyrenees in the 1970s. In later years, he had the opportunity to learn directly from traditional Puerto Rican farmers Barrio Matuyas in Maunabo. Alvarez Febles, also a teacher and independent researcher, holds a

bachelor's degree in sociology from Fordham University, a Juris Doctor from the University of Puerto Rico, and a master's degree in social ecology from Goddard College in Vermont. He worked at Universidad Ana G. Méndez's *Instituto de Educación Ambiental* [Environmental Education Institute], was the director of *Proyecto Agro Orgánico* [Agro Organic Project] in Cubuy and served as program officer with GRAIN in Montevideo and Barcelona. He helped found the publication *Biodiversidad: cultivos y culturas* [Biodiversity: Crops and Cultures] as well as the website *Biodiversidad en América Latina y el Caribe* [Biodiversity in Latin America and the Caribbean]. Other works by Alvarez Febles include *El huerto casero: manual de agricultura orgánica* [The Home Garden: Manual of Organic Agriculture] (2008) and *La Tierra Viva: Manual de agricultura ecológica* [Living Soil: Manual of Ecological Agriculture] (2010). Today, he continues to offer workshops on organic farming and participates in local seminars. Every first, third, and fourth Sunday of the month he can be found at Placita Roosevelt, freely sharing his knowledge of agroecology with people of all ages and from all backgrounds.

Translation Challenges

Since becoming involved in the field of translation, every translator I've met has employed their own unique and often dynamic approach to translation. I've met translators who transcreate texts, completely transforming the source at a syntactic level while conveying its overall meaning. I've also met others who are more conservative in their choices to maintain the “integrity” of the source text or the voice of the author. While I see value in both approaches, my inclination is to take the path of least resistance, so in my professional practice I've often left it up to the client to decide the extent of my intervention in a text. In this case, as there is no client to satisfy, I opted to let the purpose of the text guide my translation choices. This decision is in line with the Skopos theory proposed by scholars Katharina Reiss and Hans Vermeer, according to which the

purpose of the target text is the main determinant of how the source text should be translated. As *Sembramos a tres partes* is an informative or educational work, the final translation should serve to educate readers about Puerto Rican culture and agriculture. This also touches upon Venuti's ideas of foreignization as a form of cultural intervention. Foreignizing a translation by choosing to maintain elements that "highlight the linguistic and cultural differences between source and target text can be a form of resistance against ethnocentrism and racism, cultural narcissism and imperialism, in the interests of geopolitical relations" (Venuti, 1994). For these reasons, I've chosen to keep terms like *jíbaro*, *conuco*, *yuntas*, and *promesas de reyes* in the native Spanish. As these terms provide important cultural context and there is no appropriate equivalent in English that conveys their local meaning, it would be most valuable to readers if these terms were briefly explained. In this way, a native English speaker would be able to learn more about Puerto Rican culture as opposed to having the Puerto Rican reality be reduced for the benefit of the colonizing culture. I also feel this choice is in line with the undertone of the source text, which doesn't hide the fact that the colonial relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States has served to perpetuate systems and beliefs that are incompatible with Puerto Rican reality.

Some of the terms I just mentioned presented a bigger challenge in my first draft of the translation, but simply because I wasn't acquainted with them. That entailed a bit of reading and even asking around to make sure I truly understood the concept. This was the case with *promesas de reyes*, which I had never heard of before. However, as my maternal grandmother is Catholic, I was already familiar with the concept of vows to saints and representations of the virgin Mary. According to the Encyclopedia of Latin American Religions, vows to saints are "propitiations" or agreements between a devotee and a particular saint chosen to fulfill their

request. These requests can be anything from protection and healing to advantageous outcomes and other favors. Once the petition is fulfilled, the devotee keeps their promise to the saint. *Promesas de reyes* are then vows made to the biblical Magi. A quick online search yielded information from local sources and newspapers talking about this old tradition that has been kept alive in different regions of the island, such as Maricao. In this context, the devotee whose petition is fulfilled prepares an altar for the Magi with flowers, candles, and other offerings. When the promise is fulfilled, the devotee holds a festivity where *aguinaldos* or local carols are sung to traditional instrumental accompaniment. Another related festivity is *rosarios cantados*, which are rosaries sung to instrumental accompaniment. These typically take place around the Christmas season and could be part of the vows to the Magi or other religious figures. These two traditions are less typical in the metropolitan area but, just like *parrandas*, they are still practiced in many neighborhoods of Puerto Rico, especially in mountain towns where cultural-religious festivities are still very prevalent and practiced by extended families and communities. It must be noted that vows to saints and sung rosaries are also practiced in other former Spanish colonies, such as the Philippines.

As I've opted for a somewhat foreignizing translation that maintains local expressions in the native Spanish, I provided short explanations in the footnotes, differentiating my observations from those of the source text with a "TN" for Translators Note. Words like *morcilla*, *pitorro*, and *arroz con gandules* could be translated as blood pudding, moonshine rum, and rice with pigeon peas, but these are truly emblematic of Puerto Rican culture, and anyone wanting to learn more about it should research them. A third category of terms proved problematic during the editing stage of the translation. *Yuca*, *malanga*, *yautía*, and *ñame*, basically all the root vegetables, go by different names in different places, and choosing any one

English term to refer to them proved a challenge. For example, yuca is also known as yucca, cassava, and manioc. Ñame is known as yam, but some call it taro, which is another name for malanga. Perhaps the most confusing one is yautía, which can be hard to tell apart from malanga at first glance and goes by many names, including arrowroot, malanga, American taro, etc. To avoid confusion, I chose to provide their scientific names based on an online source that included images of the root vegetables in question along with their scientific names and their common names in different Spanish-speaking countries like the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Venezuela, and Mexico. Surprisingly, this valuable source was an article published by DominicanCooking.com, the “oldest and largest” Dominican cooking website. The article, titled *Getting to the Root of It—A Guide to Dominican Tubers*, included verifiable references and a brief explanation of their methodology. There was one variety of yautía not included in the article, yautía Kelly. Finding its scientific name proved a little harder, but I was able to locate a research paper published in the Journal of Agriculture of the University of Puerto Rico called *Yield Trials with Xanthosoma Verities* by A. Acosta Matienzo and J. Vélez Santiago, which states that the Kelly variety stands out as a separate class of Xanthosoma, possibly belonging to the *violaceum* species. While some readers might find the added footnotes and names in parenthesis cumbersome or inelegant, those interested in learning about Puerto Rican agriculture might find these explanations valuable. And, after all, “the richer the context of a message, the smaller the loss of information” (Jacobson, 2000).

As for the title of the work, *Sembramos a tres partes: Los surcos de la agroecología y la soberanía alimentaria*, my first inclination was to simplify and shorten it to make it more accessible and appealing to readers. Alvarez Febles suggested using something along the lines of “Threefold Planting in Puerto Rico: The Furrows of Agroecology and Food Sovereignty,” but I

ultimately opted for a more literal translation to convey that the title is an expression by a traditional Puerto Rican farmer who is recounting his experiences to Alvarez Febles. As such, it is a declaration said with pride and the conviction that jíbaro culture survives to this day as part of the greater whole of Puerto Rican culture. We, the descendants of jíbaro farmers, still practice traditional agroecology in Puerto Rico. I also considered using “farming” as opposed to “planting,” but this would have made the translation less precise, as farming encompasses raising livestock and there is no “threefold” approach to it. We could argue that planting in three parts is synonymous with agroecology, which is also concerned with the synergies between plants and animals in an ecosystem. However, the exact quote is “*sembramos a tres partes*” as opposed to “*fincamos a tres partes*,” another phrase used in the book to refer to the broader concept of farming. For this reason, I’ve chosen to maintain the more specific “planting.”

According to Eugene Nida, loss and gain are intrinsic to the process of translation because there is no such thing as "sameness" between two languages (Nida, 2000). Starting from this premise, we can surmise that translation is an imperfect craft, as the target text will never fully convey the meaning of its source with all its context and nuance. This is further emphasized by Venuti, who states “a foreign text is the site of many different semantic possibilities that are fixed only provisionally in any one translation, on the basis of varying cultural assumptions and interpretive choices, in specific social situations in different historical periods” (Venuti, 1994, p. 18). Since “meaning is plural” and contingent upon the interpretation of the author or translator, the fidelity of a translation will depend on the audience that reads it and its cultural values at a specific period. So, as the notion of fidelity is subjective and equivalence is dynamic, I'm certain that the choices I make in translating these selected chapters won't be without defect.

Nevertheless, my goal is to render a translation that is as accurate as possible while providing additional context—when needed—to help readers better understand cultural references.

Miscellaneous Issues

As with any project, some unexpected issues arose during this translation. The first one had to do with acquiring an affordable Optical Character Recognition (OCR) tool that could help me scan and convert the print book into a Microsoft Word document. This proved a lot more difficult than I imagined, as many of the programs I found online were beyond my budget. Finally, I came upon a scanner with OCR capabilities for a reasonable price, but its accuracy in recognizing characters left much to be desired. This led to many days spent cleaning up and reformatting the source text. Much to my dismay, many of those errors survived well into the final editing phase. Once I managed to clean up the source text, I began the translation process with the aid of a Computer Assisted Translation (CAT) tool called Memsource. The free version of this program is quite user-friendly, but it deletes projects after a year. That means my translation project was archived and deleted several months ago and I have since lost the ability to go back and revisit segment comments and other useful information. When my thesis advisor, H. Jane Barnes de Ramírez, pointed out that I had failed to translate several sentences in Chapter 6, I could not pinpoint exactly where the error had occurred. While these were technical difficulties, they did have a direct impact on my work.

Another rather technical issue I found was that, since the book was published in 2016, some of the online sources cited in the footnotes no longer exist. This resulted in four broken links, one in chapter 6 and three in Chapter 7. The first one, on p. 240, points readers to other publications by the international peasant movement La Vía Campesina. The second, on p. 252, leads readers to the Inter Press Service News Agency and is presumably a news article related to

Olivier De Schutter's annual report to the United Nations Human Rights Council in 2010. The third broken link is on p. 265 and is the second of two sources with additional information on externalities. The final broken link is on p. 267 and leads to a website called New Rules for Global Finance. Upon encountering these, my first inclination was to switch out the links for sources that readers could find useful. However, my thesis advisor suggested I leave the broken links and make a note of it instead. I trust that those interested in learning more about La Via Campesina, Olivier De Schutter's report, or externalities will be able to find ample resources online.

Besides these small technical hurdles, I also had several issues with the source text. Alvarez Febles had warned me that the first edition of *Sembramos a tres partes* had numerous errors that the editor had failed to catch, including missing or incorrect diacritics. I had not noticed, however, that the author's last name was missing an accent throughout the text, including the bibliography, front matter, and cover. When my thesis advisor pointed out that I had been inconsistent in writing the Alvarez, I looked into the other two books written by the author and found that his name was not accented in the cover of either one. I decided to contact Alvarez Febles and ask him why this was the case. His reply was that, when he was a child, the rule was to not accent capitalized vowels. He later found out that the reason for the rule came from typewriters not having the option to accent capital letters. This has changed since the advent of computers, yet—out of rebelliousness and habit—he chooses not to use the accent in Alvarez. He left the choice of whether to use the diacritic up to me, yet I'm inclined to respect his act of rebellion and the source text.

The Jibaro Debate

During the final stages of this project, I was made aware of an ongoing debate in Puerto Rican academic circles regarding the use of the term jíbaro and its racial connotations. The basis of this debate centers around the fact that jíbaros were mostly of white European descent and often portrayed as white—or whiter—in historical Puerto Rican literature, works of art, and popular depictions. This whitening of Puerto Rican heritage, which was part of a political agenda, negates other aspects of our identity as a people, effacing our African and indigenous ancestry. Yet while the racialization of the term jíbaro—especially in a historical context—is undeniable, there are other perspectives that reclaim the term and imbue it with new meaning.

Alvarez Febles tells us that the use of the word jíbaro was first recorded during the earliest stages of the Spanish colonization and means “people of the mountains.” While the origin of the word is uncertain, some hold to the theory that, as it is used in other islands once inhabited by the Taíno, the word likely originated in Venezuela and was passed down from the first inhabitants of Borikén. The term jíbaro was later adopted by the people of the mountainous region of Puerto Rico—which included surviving Taíno, marginalized Spaniards, and runaway slaves—who viewed themselves as inherently different from the Spanish (Alvarez 2014).

It was not until the 19th century that jíbaro acquired two additional and very different meanings (Alvarez 2014). First, it came to represent the idealized white European settler (hard working, honest, humble, etc.). Then, it came to describe people from rural areas who were deemed uncultured, unsophisticated, and crude. Nowadays, the vast majority of Puerto Ricans view the jíbaro as a thing of the past, part of our folkloric heritage. Yet there are still those who identify as proud jíbaros and aim to salvage the best of what the word entails. The *neo-jíbaro* movement or (new jíbaros) is breathing new life into this concept, making it synonymous with

hard work, solidarity, community involvement, shared knowledge, respect for the cycles of nature and a host of agroecological practices that aim to conserve soils and other valuable natural resources. It is this definition of jíbaro that informs the source text and my own translation.

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