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A STORY OF YUKÉ
(a translation of *Historia de Yuké*
by Eduardo Lalo)

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

This thesis is presented to fulfill the requirements toward completion of the master's degree in Translation of the Graduate Program in Translation at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus. For my thesis, I have translated Eduardo Lalo's *Historia de Yuké* from chapters 1 to 2 and 7 through 10, a narrative that crosses between reality and fantasy and takes place in, as the author says, Borikén¹ before it became Puerto Rico. Since my bachelor's degree was in anthropology, with a minor in archaeology and sociocultural anthropology, I was immediately drawn to this text. I feel that I can apply the knowledge I acquired in my undergraduate studies and combine it with what I have learned over the course of my studies in the Graduate Translation Program.

This novella is based on a generalized notion of the past. It incorporates a general idea of Puerto Rican history, but more than anything, it is a work of fiction. The first part consists of a retelling of Borikén's history and beginnings through a creational myth constructed by the author, which features various fantastical elements. The second part of the book tries to be more historical in nature. It creates a Taíno and Afro-Caribbean narrative, a sort of religious syncretism between the two since it very loosely takes religious elements from both orisha worship² and Taíno traditions. The writing style is quite simple and direct, in part because this book started out as bedtime stories that the author would tell his children. Due to the nature of this book's inception, it cannot be taken as historically accurate or as genuine Taíno or Lucumí religion mythology.

Primarily called Borinquén by lay people in the present year 2021, its original spelling and pronunciation has been debated. [Tesoro Lexicográfico del español de Puerto Rico]

² Also known as Santería, La regla lucumí, La regla de ocha, Lucumí religión, Yoruba religión, etc. Does not have only a single established name.

In an interview with Daniel Cholakian from the online news site Nodal.am, the author specifies the reason of the creation of this novel:

Entonces, por un lado había que rehacer esa historia. Aquí lo que había era una pérdida de testimonios en primera persona, de testimonios históricos. Me propuse recrear una historia, la historia de esa montaña. Recrear la historia de un pueblo. Y por eso es que es una invención mítica. Hay un tiempo mítico, sobre todo en la primera parte. Lo segundo que me propuse hacer es algo muy difícil, que me costó muchísimo trabajo, que fue tratar de coser ese tiempo con un tiempo histórico.

Thus, on the one hand, this story had to be redone. What we have here was a loss of first-person testimonies, historical testimonies. I proposed to recreate a history, the story of that mountain. Recreate the story of a people. And that is why it is a mythical invention. There is a mythical time, above all in the first part. The second thing I proposed to do was something very difficult, and which took a lot of work, which was to try and sew together that time with a historical time. [my translation]

In the first part of the text, the author writes about the creation of the island and its flora and fauna, all from a created mythological perspective. In the second part of the book, the author recreates a historical, lost, firsthand testimony of those from whom we are descended who could not write their own history. The keyword here is “recreation,” since he is not basing this text on testimony, but recreating something that does not exist, which is also why he emphasizes a mythical invention, keyword also being invention since it is very barely based on Taíno or orisha mythology. Due to the author’s creative license with this novella, I’ve had to research and specify what’s real and not because it doesn’t say anywhere on or in the book that most of it is created and if the reader is not sophisticated, they could believe everything in it is fact or real Taíno or Lucumí mythology. This has a lot to do with the double meaning of the word “historia” in the title, which could mean history or story in

Spanish. Also because of Puerto Rico's political limbo since the 1898 invasion of the United States, there's a need to assert a national identity. A current example of this is expressed in the neo-Taíno movement which is also part of a historical indigenismo movement in Latin America. Lalo is part of an intellectual elite that has historically preferred independence and this book is part of that nation building, by cementing a shared collective identity.

Traditionally, Puerto Rico's national identity has been categorized as threefold: Spanish, Taíno, and African, in exactly that order, as explained below. As one of Puerto Rico's celebrated historians, Salvador Brau, famously put it:

Tres han sido las razas pobladoras de este país, la indígena cuya procedencia es objeto aun de sabias y escrupulosas indagaciones; la Europea, conducida al vasto mundo Americano por su inmoral Descubridor, o atraída luego por la prodigiosa fecundidad del suelo; y la africana, introducida por los conquistadores, según lo acreditan documentos oficiales, desde los primeros días de la colonización;... (Brau, 2)

Three have been the races that populated this country: The indigenous, whose provenance is the subject of scrupulous inquiry; the European, driven to the vast American world by its immoral Discoverer, or later attracted by the land's prodigious fertility, and the African, introduced by the conquistadors, as has been officially documented, since the first days of the colonization... [my translation]

In formulating and disseminating our own national identity, first our Spanish heritage was emphasized, then, with the creation of the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture, the Taíno part was privileged, many times ignoring our African heritage. Through literature, Eduardo Lalo creates a new work that seeks to provide a balanced emphasis of our African and Taíno heritage as fundamental parts of Puerto Rico's national identity. The Spanish side is also included, however in a clearly antagonistic role. The problem with this model is that it

creates a homogeneous identity that negates historical migratory waves such as those of the Corsicans, Haitian-French, and Lebanese through the 19th to the 20th centuries and post-revolutionary Cuban, Dominicans, and even Americans from the continental United States.

From my own personal and professional observation, while studying toward my bachelor's in anthropology, there was sometimes a tendency in the anthropology department to equate Black heritage with what for simplicity's sake will be referred to here as Lucumí religion or orisha worship. Afro-Caribbean descentance sometimes tends to be equated purely with Santería, and with the music genres of bomba and plena, and little else. But this oversimplification of a people, who we in Puerto Rico are all descended from, and which ignores countless contributions in literature, politics, the sciences, the arts in general, education, etc., seems little more than uninformed stereotyping. Being Afro-Caribbean means so much more than just Santería, and today many would be offended if they were to be exclusively defined that way. The other problem is that it does not hold up to historical scrutiny. In the book *The Cooking of History: How Not to Study Afro-Cuban Religion* by Stephan Palmié, the author informs us that in Cuba, most groups of Santeros can trace their lineage to a secret group of rich, white men who were practicing Santería. According to Palmié, while enslaved peoples did import their customs, their belief systems, religions, and languages, and tried to hide these elements by including Catholic saints, this process was not an exclusively Afro-Caribbean phenomenon. It was not even exclusively a lower-class phenomenon, since higher classes were adopting and shaping it from very early on. As santero priest Wande Abimbola has stated,

Some people feel that they don't want to see any white man in this religion. But we keep reminding them that, to start with, white men are there already via Cuba and Brazil, from where the religion came here [i.e., to the United States] in the first

instance! ... the òrìṣà in Brazil have ceased to be a property of the black people alone. Both whites and mulattoes participate in òrìṣà worship, and there are in fact a few people among the elite classes whose sincerity in supporting the òrìṣà cannot be called into question. (Palmié p107)

Importantly, Eduardo Lalo also tells us in the same interview for Nodal.am,

Pues la colonialidad puertorriqueña es cruda. El estado libre asociado, lo he dicho mil veces, no existe. Eso no existe. Nunca existió y hasta la corte suprema de Estados Unidos lo corroboró.

Puerto Rico's coloniality is glaring. I have said it a million times before, the Commonwealth does not exist. It does not exist. It never existed and the Supreme Court of the United States confirmed it.

Given Puerto Rico's political situation since its "discovery" and conquest by the Spanish, and subsequent invasion by the United States government in 1898, Puerto Rico has been in a political limbo and arguably a colony ever since it became "Puerto Rico." The negative effects of colonialism have long been studied, and even comprise their own discipline aptly named Postcolonial Studies. Colonialism affects one's sense of self. It affects a nation's self-esteem, identity, its economy, and its ability to achieve progress or make any decisions to govern itself. It is only in somewhat recent years that archaeologists have begun piecing together the past prior to colonization, but even that process of reconstruction, or "piecing together," is still incomplete and has a long way to go. It has only been in the last two decades that many of the colonial models for understanding the pre-Columbian Indigenous inhabitants of the island have been called into question and are being seen from a new light. Archaeologists now understand that Puerto Rico was initially inhabited more than five thousand years ago.

Puerto Rico's early, pre-colonial history is fragmented, which is why Eduardo Lalo's *Historia de Yuké* is important. It is a text rooted in a historical and political consciousness of the country's past that is, all the same, situated in the present. It thus fills a void, since it is the author's attempts to retell it not from a Eurocentric point of view, but from that of the inhabitants of Borikén, a point of view lost to history. This in of itself is a hard task because the very word Taíno gives the impression that there was a general homogeneity in precontact people, a shared cultural reservoir, which with more archaeological research we are beginning to learn isn't true. However, Lalo does not stop there; he also tries to reconstruct an also-lost Afro-Caribbean narrative from the beginning of the colonization period, which is also difficult due to the enslaved people who were brought here not being a homogeneous group either. Many were Yorùbá, but there were also Dahomey, Fulani, Igbos, Bantus and many other groups that usually remain unnamed. Salvador Brau tells us on page 427 in his book *La Colonización de Puerto Rico* that Taíno populations continued to exist well into the 1700s. Since Ricardo Alegría, the first director of the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture, officially formulated Puerto Rican identity as having originated from Spanish, Taíno, and African descent, in exactly that order, the last two had been pushed aside in favor of the first, which also became recognized iconically with the phenotypically white-skinned *jibaro*. Then the Taíno part began to be recognized, but the third remained mostly ignored except when it was deployed as a folkloric part of our past as in *bomba y plena*. While this concept of mixed identity was positive in the sense that it created a shared identity, which was created during the Puerto Rican migration to the U.S. in the 50's to also help the Puerto Rican diaspora maintain a shared identity, it was also deployed by the local government as a cultural-nationalist discourse that negates the reality of racism. Yet, this *mestizaje*, this mixed national identity did not erase racial hierarchies in Puerto Rico. *Mestizaje* functioned as a tool

for whitening, or as we say in Spanish, *mejorar la raza*, devaluing our black heritage. There is much to be said about “race,” specifically that it does not exist from a biological point of view but does exist as a social construct. Race is a concept so engrained into the United States psyche as a nation that the concept of identity politics exists and gets translated into things that have nothing to do with biological purity. The concept of “one-drop rule” of hypodescent in the United States, which classified people with just a single drop of non-white blood as Black, is an example of the concept of race deployed as a racist concept of biological purity. This contrasts with Puerto Rico, where it works more as a gradient that people can move between, where money and social class can whiten. In contrast, the United States has traditionally operated on a binary concept of race where you were either “white” or “black.” Given Puerto Rico’s identity as mixed from three different roots, these two differing ways of conceptualizing identity clash. From a biological anthropological standpoint, race conceived as biological race is a useless and nonexistent category. Race cannot be pinned down biologically or culturally since it does not and never has provided an accurate representation of human biological variation. The American Association of Biological Anthropologists, known as AABA, wrote a statement in 2009 asserting,

...the Western concept of race must be understood as a classification system that emerged from, and in support of, European colonialism, oppression, and discrimination. It thus does not have its roots in biological reality, but in policies of discrimination. Because of that, over the last five centuries, race has become a social reality that structures societies and how we experience the world. In this regard, race is real, as is racism... Humans share the vast majority (99.9%) of our DNA in common... Notably, variants are not distributed across our species in a manner that maps clearly onto socially-recognized racial groups. This is true even for aspects of

human variation that we frequently emphasize in discussions of race, such as facial features, skin color and hair type. No group of people is, or ever has been, biologically homogeneous or “pure.” Furthermore, human populations are not — and never have been — biologically discrete, truly isolated, or fixed.

Therefore, the use of race should always be questioned. To replace the concept of race, anthropologists have resorted to the use of culture—culture as a tool used to better understand a group of people has been highly criticized for its lack of definition. Culture could be society, practice, tradition, etc., and has been hailed a conceptual trashcan where you can throw in anything without having to examine it. Another criticism was that the word “culture” could be replaced with “race” signifying the discipline’s lack in breaking away from the concept of race. Anthropologists still debate what categories to use to classify and better understand their objects of study.

Lalo’s novella begins with a creation myth, used to create a primordial beginning, an identity that existed from before the Spanish conquest, which establishes a physical and geographical space, and an identity for the island itself. Afterward, pre-Columbian people come onto the scene, and eventually the Spaniards and then the Africans. In practice, Puerto Rico has adopted the Taíno as a national symbol, and anything that is written in Puerto Rico about the Taíno automatically takes on a cultural-nationalistic air due to the Taíno having become such a potent national symbol of *puertorriqueñidad*. Puerto Rico is not exclusive in this, since there existed a movement in Latin America called *Indigenismo* promoted by the Criollo elites to create a distinct national and political identity separate from colonial powers. Just as in other parts of Latin America, part of the reason Taíno imagery is used so much is also due to proponents for independence, yet Puerto Rico created a cultural national identity

that denied a political national identity due to its colonial relationship with the United States, as echoed by anthropologist Nieves-Colón:

Our findings do not support historical narratives of complete population replacement or genetic extinction of Indigenous communities in Puerto Rico.

Indigenous heritage is an important component of Puerto Rican national and ethnic identity. (Nieves-Colón)

There is undoubtedly an element of nationalism in this book, but there is also a critique, which is clearly seen with the development of the Spanish characters in the text. Creation and foundation myths have existed probably as long as sentient humanity has existed, and certainly in written form since the Judeo-Christian Bible, the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the *Ramayana*, Greek epic and tragedy traditions, the *Aeneid*, the *Popol Vuh*, etc. While creation myths being employed for nationalistic causes may be common to many peoples, one of the most extreme cases within the context of nationalism was in Nazi Germany during WWII. As a specific case study, German opera composer Wagner's epic musical cycle *The Ring of the Nibelung* published completely in 1874, loosely based on characters from Germanic heroic legend, share with *Story of Yuké* that they both contain elements of embellished mythology utilized to create a sense of unified national identity. Hitler's favorite composer and even inspiration was Wagner, who created the *Ring* cycles as an exaltation of proto-German heritage and mythology. Although Wagner died before the rise of Nazism, he was anti-Semitic, and he believed in Germany's innate superiority over all other nations.

In Latin America, many nations championed their Indigenous pasts as part of a program of developing a unique national identity and establishing a break with the Spanish colonial past. While there is a sense of nationalism in *Story of Yuké*, there is also a sense of separate and conflicting identities, with the African and Taíno identities becoming one, and

the Spanish identity being excluded. There are also times when aspects of this text might resonate with identity politics, which is not surprising, given that this was written in the present in 2018. More specifically, we are presented with three identities situated in the context of colonialism trying to make sense of each other while trying to survive. One might also find it problematic that an essentially white author is speaking for Indigenous and Black peoples. So even though there is an undercurrent of nationalism, there is also a severe criticism of colonial history, and a meting out of punishment for historical crimes that is also damning of the country's Spanish origins.

Given the cultural turn in Translations Studies beginning in the 1990s and, seeing that I am a Puerto Rican woman physically situated in the Caribbean translating into English a book written in Spanish, which was written by the Puerto Rican author Eduardo Lalo, postcolonial translation theory would seem a natural fit, especially given the content of this work. Considering Puerto Rico's current political and economic situation where a Financial Oversight and Management Board, appointed by the Congress of the United States, controls every budget consideration, and how the very nature of the *ELA* has been questioned for years, and its purported sovereignty weakened by two 2016 Supreme Court decisions, postcolonial theory has provided tools to explain the power imbalance of different languages and address questions such as who did the translation, how, why, and the inevitable impact that the translation might have. Even-Zohar's polysystem theory has proven useful in understanding what might happen with this translation, in trying to understand who the audience might be (the United States polysystem), and the possible impact it might have on readers within that context.

TEXT SYNOPSIS

Eduardo Lalo's novella, which is written in third person, starts before the arrival of humanity, by describing and personifying the forces of nature that created the island of Borikén. It tells the story of the island's volcanic creation and the Wind, a personified element, who witnessed it and survived while the rest of his family died. It speaks of the beginnings of life and eventually how humanity came to be. Here nature is alive and is personified by many characters who are later depicted as working and living in harmony with the Taínos. The arrival of the Spanish conquistadors, and the horrors that they come to inflict, is foretold beforehand. The Spaniards invade and bring along with them enslaved Africans. One such person, Olufunke, is left tied to a tree and after being saved by the Taíno Guaracón, he is adopted into their community and becomes one of them. By becoming one of them, his identity changes. This is shown in a name exchange ceremony called *guaitiao* where Olufunke exchanges names with the *behique*, a spiritual leader, called Mácoael and is from then on named Olufunke Mácoael, and Mácoael is now Mácoael Olufunke. Their identities are thus seen as a fusion of identities. His arrival alters their narrative as a people to include his, and he alters the narrative of his people to include theirs. Even the antagonist of the story, a Spaniard, finds his own narrative. His narrative begins rather abruptly, and unlike the others who have a sense of history and unification, his only refers to the present. He is a man without history, but toward the end he discovers his own narrative, which includes his father who was just like him and did not treat him well, eventually abandoning him as a child. This might be considered a minor justification, or an attempt to explain that he too was victimized as a poor young Spaniard, yet his ending does not forgive him. It also emphasizes the cruelty of the Spaniards, which extends even to their own children, thus creating a generational cycle of abuse and brutality. His is ultimately a cursed narrative, since

it is the story of all the crimes that he had committed, and thus represents the damage caused by the Spanish conquest.

One of the key themes that Lalo employs is how the memory of history and identity plays an integral part in creating a common narrative. All the protagonists in this book are caretakers of separate histories that ultimately blend into one narrative. The novella ends with the Spanish finding them and killing all the humanity of Borikén, except for one, Guaracón. This lone survivor lives forever, thanks to the powers of nature, and he keeps the memory and narrative of his people, the Taíno—which was merged with the Yorùbá people in the *guaitiao*—alive to this day. This open ending is intentional since it provides the reader with hope that even though most of the Taíno were wiped out, their memories still live on and that the ultimate mixture with African traditions should be viewed as positive since it unifies Puerto Rico's African and Taíno heritages as a national identity, while excluding the Spanish and or European component.

Puerto Rico's official history is that the Taíno were wiped out by the Spaniards and that is why in this book all except one Taíno are killed. It is an interesting contradiction because if they were all wiped out due to enslavement and disease, then Puerto Rican ancestry would consist mostly of African and Spanish descent. Yet this perception has recently changed to one where the Taíno hid in the mountains, some even mixing with maroons and creating hidden communities. Recent preliminary research into mitochondrial DNA points to Puerto Ricans descending from the Taíno, but this new perception has not completely spilled into the Puerto Rican narrative. This story is not only useful to the diaspora, but also for creating an alternative narrative where Borikén gains greater visibility in the world, thus adding to the richness of Puerto Rican, Caribbean, and world literature.

A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF EDUARDO LALO

Eduardo Lalo is a writer and artist, and a professor at University of Puerto Rico. Born in Cuba in 1960, he was brought to Puerto Rico at age two and has lived here ever since. He considers and calls himself Puerto Rican, and Puerto Rico has adopted him. He completed his primary and secondary education at the private school San Ignacio de Loyola and graduated in 1977. He went on to study literature at Columbia University and later attended the Université de Paris III: Sorbonne Nouvelle, where he studied art. He first published a novel in 1986 called *En el Burger King de la Calle San Francisco* [At the Burger King on Calle San Francisco].³ Since then, he has published several texts that vary in format and genre, such as *Libro de textos* [Text Book] which contained poems, monologues, and stories. *Los pies de San Juan* [The Feet of San Juan] was a photographic essay, and a novel titled *Inutilidad* (*Uselessness*). But it was *Simone* (*Simone: A Novel*) that threw him into fame when he won the Venezuelan government's prestigious Rómulo Gallegos Prize in 2013. His writing is a mixture of fiction and essays that has evolved in its focus over time. He also publishes essays in *80 Grados* and editorial columns for the newspaper *El Nuevo Día*. Besides being a writer, he is a photographer and a visual artist and he has even directed two medium-length films titled *donde* [where] and *La ciudad perdida* [The Lost City].

Historia de Yuké has recently been published (2018) in Argentina by Editorial Corregidor. Since no previous translations exist, I have decided to translate it into English, from chapters one to two and seven to ten.

³ Bracketed and unitalicized title translations are my own and my own translation are due to a lack of previous translation.

TRANSLATION PROCESS

The book *Historia de Yuké* is divided into two parts. I chose to translate from the first part. In the first part I translated from chapters one to two, and chapters seven through ten of *Historia de Yuké* and decided to use throughout the text a sense-for-sense translation instead of a word-for-word translation. At first, I considered examining Eduardo Lalo's other books that have been translated into English, but since in many interviews he has emphasized his departure on this project from his typical writing style I concluded that doing so could even be counterproductive. I also did not want to be influenced by the translations of his previous books especially since he had emphasized this new "voice." I have tried to maintain what I perceive as the author's voice throughout, consciously attempting to minimize my own.

I started out by first doing a quick translation of the source text into the target language, just as Gayatri Spivak tells us in her work *The Politics of Translation* (1993):

Let me summarize how I work. At first, I translate at speed. If I stop to think about what is happening to the English, if I assume an audience, if I take the intending subject as more than a springboard, I cannot jump in, I cannot surrender. My relationship with Devi is easygoing. I am able to say to her: I surrender to you in your writing, not you as intending subject. There, in friendship, is another kind of surrender. Surrendering to the text in this way means, most of the time, being literal. When I have produced a version this way, I revise. I revise not in terms of a possible audience, but by the protocols of the thing in front of me, in a sort of English.

(Spivak 406)

Using this approach, I would have an idea of the problems the translation of the texts would bring, and I could then go back, research the problems, and begin polishing my

translations. My readings in translation theory proved helpful in providing specific approaches to the translation process, however, they were most useful as tools for a critical reading of the text. I began researching Taíno mythology and creation myths and immediately hit a wall. I researched using Sebastian Rabiou Lamarche's *Mitología y religión de los Taínos* (The Mythology and Religion of the Tainos), and *Taínos y Caribes: Las culturas aborígenes antillanas* (Taínos and Caribs, Antillean Aboriginal Cultures) and could not find mention of many of the characters that played an integral role in the development of the story. The characters of the Wind and the Black Shrimp were not in any of the research material and neither was the creation of the island that Lalo described. After a considerable amount of research, I emailed the author and asked him what sources he used for the Taíno mythology part of his book, and he told me that he did not use any sources. I later read in an interview, as indicated below, that this book actually evolved from bedtime stories that he would tell his children at night before putting them to bed. I then realized that this book was more of a personal and creative project than a historical one. Due to the nature of this text's inception as stories for his own children who were his first target audience, this text was simple in its writing style and its register is low. Taking into consideration that the target audience had changed from exclusively children to also include adults I tried to keep the translation simple enough for a child to read as Eduardo Lalo had in Spanish, but not too childlike that an adult would be turned off by it. Even so, there were still difficulties in its translation.

From the outset, the first translation problem was the first word in the title, *Historia de Yuké*. In Spanish "*historia*" has the double meaning of "history" and "story" united in one word. I considered "story" due to the little use of historical sources in terms of Taíno mythology. I read many books on Taíno mythology and could not find many of the things

that were written and, as indicated above, found he did not rely on any source to create the mythological part of the book. I later found an article published in 2018 in *AGlo Anuario de glotopolítica* where in an interview he emphasizes that,

“Ninguna investigación, ya había leído mucho. No quería reproducir lo que ya se conoce sino quería ficcionalizar lo que debió haber sido... Pretendo contar la Conquista pero desde el punto de vista de la memoria que no registró la historia. Tuve que inventar su perspectiva...” [“No research; I’d already read enough. I didn’t want to reproduce what was already known, I wanted to fictionalize what should have been... I intend to tell the story of Spanish conquest, but from the point of view history failed to record. I had to recreate their perspective...]. (My translation)

After finding this interview and realizing how little was researched, the word “history” became “story.” I had a long list of about 12 words but narrowed it down to “story” and “legend.” While “legend” or “myth” were considered and worked with the concept of mythical time that the author plays with, I ultimately chose “story” as it was closest in meaning and etymology, and this way it would not be confused as a historical Taíno or Lucumí legend or myth. An “A” was added to the title, then becoming “A Story of Yuké”, so the reader would not be confused and think this was the only possible story and would know right off the bat that there could be many interpretations and versions of this story. This was necessary due to the general lack of knowledge about Taíno and Lucumí mythology and because nowhere in the book does it say that the first part is largely creative license. In the description on the cover, it mentions a “mythological time” but this can easily be confused to mean Taíno mythology and not artistic license. There is a thirst, specifically for Taíno mythology, and this is due to the political limbo Puerto Rico has been in that

causes a conflict of identity and a need to self-define, which leads to the indigenismo movement which is very much alive and well in Puerto Rico.

Using a strategy promoted by Translation Studies theorist Lawrence Venuti, I knew that a certain amount of domestication might be necessary in this translation, but I tried and was able to avoid it where possible thanks to the simplicity of style and more informal register. This facilitated the use of Venuti's concept of foreignization, which was used when deciding to not translate and keep all of the Taíno and Lucumí words in the hopes that when the reader has finished reading the text, it stops seeming foreign and feels natural and normal, so that the different ways of being in this book can eventually become somewhat known in the English-speaking world to a level where they eventually would not feel so foreign. Since this is a book about the genesis of a people, readers will probably want to learn new concepts and ways of being. In other words, entirely domesticating this text would be counterproductive. I tried to find a balance between domestication and foreignization so that the text would be natural, easy and enjoyable to read while also allowing the reader to experience new things, but more importantly creating a new "normal" by educating the reader and nudging them ever so slightly but continuously to change, and therefore change reality, which is part of the whole point of this book, for there to be something new added to world literature but that is still Puerto Rican, to change the narrative to include us automatically. I aimed to be subtle but effective.

When Eduardo Lalo wrote this book, one of the references he did use was the *Diccionario de voces indígenas de Puerto Rico* by Luis Hernández Aquino [Dictionary of Puerto Rico's Indigenous Terminology]. Due to this being one of the few references he used, including an unknown Yorùbá source, and given the interviews where he plainly states he

wanted to recreate the lost perspectives of Taíno and Afro-Caribbeans by communicating their perspective in their own languages, I decided to keep all Yorùbá and Taíno words.

Finding Yorùbá sources was a challenge. Firstly, because there exists a traditional, living, Yorùbá language, which is spoken to this day by the Yorùbá people as a first language in Nigeria and in the Republics of Benin and Togo. In contrast, there was the liturgical language used in Lucumí religions, a lexicon of words and phrases called Lucumí that seems to be a mix of mainly Yorùbá and other African languages. I contacted the author to verify his source, but he did not remember at the time. At first, I thought it was Yorùbá because in all the interviews I'd read and exchanges with the author he always called it "Yoruba", but upon further research I found out that, like Mandarin Chinese, Yorùbá is a tonal language, which is the reason the word "Yorùbá" is spelled with both a grave accent and an acute accent. They are diacritical marks used to express the tonal nature of the language, and none of the text in the book had any grave accent marks. It was due to this that I concluded that he was probably using Lucumí. As mentioned earlier, Lucumí is a mysterious liturgical language used in orisha worship during ceremonies, mysterious in the sense that many people do not know the meaning of the words they are saying and simply memorize the pronunciation and pass it on to the next generation. Its writing and some of its pronunciations have taken on Spanish rules of pronunciation and diacritics, but there is no one, official, standardized form. The other problem is that since orisha worship was mostly practiced in secret and is an oral tradition, a standardized source does not exist. I found some books and many online sources that seem to feed off of each other and the sources usually, if mentioned at all, seem to be largely anecdotal. There's not much official work to go by, but I did find the sentences used in this novella on various word lists on Academia.edu, an academic research database, a book compiled by Ernesto Valdes Jane

from Proyecto-Orunmila.org called *Lengua de Santero: Para Iyawo, Santeros y Babalawo con las Letras del Dilogún y los Odun de Ifá* [The Language of Santeros: For Iyawo, Santeros and Babalawo with Dilogún and Odun de Ifá Letters]. Since there is no standardized orthography in Lucumí, I have limited myself to simply verifying the existence of words. Where there are sentences, I check to see if there exist a record of a set phrase. If not, then I just verify each individual word separately. When there are Lucumí words that I cannot find a source for, I have decided to leave them in the text to give the author the benefit of the doubt. This is due to the nature of Lucumí being a non-standardized, and until recently a secret liturgical language, which has verbally been passed down through generations. It is possible that he found a source that I did not.

One of the major difficulties of translating this text was choosing the format to explain terminological meaning. If care were not taken, the text could grow exponentially. For this reason, I tried to explain within the context of the narrative what a word meant, trying not to extend the text excessively. Where it would excessively extend the text, I considered adding a footnote the first time the word appeared, but I realized later it was not necessary since most could be explained within the text. Instead of the distraction and confusion of a footnote, a glossary was created to help the reader. The Taíno language is an extinct language so there can be differences between sources. The sources used included a glossary from *Mitología y religión de los Taínos* (The Mythology and Religion of the Tainos) by Sebastián Rabiou Lamarche, *Diccionario taíno ilustrado* [Illustrated Taíno Dictionary] by Edwin Miner Solá, and, *Diccionario de voces indígenas de Puerto Rico* [Dictionary of Puerto Rico's Indigenous Terminology] by Luis Hernández Aquino. If there were discrepancies in the different sources—due to the fact that it was the author's source and given the uncertainties relating to Taíno as a dormant language—I would privilege the *Diccionario de voces indígenas de*

Puerto Rico over the others. Most of its definitions of the Taíno words were taken from *Tesoro Lexicográfico del español de Puerto Rico* [A Lexicographical Compendium of Puerto Rican Spanish] website, which includes Luis Hernández Aquino's *Diccionario de voces indígenas de Puerto Rico* as a source text. I specifically chose Aquino's definitions that I found on the *Tesoro.pr* website and translated them into English. Where Taíno words were already accepted into English use, Merriam-Webster's online dictionary was used to supply the definitions in the glossary. When words were accepted into English usage, they were not italicized, but when that was not the case they were italicized whether they were Yorùbá or Taíno words, both in the text and in the glossary.

Translating "yuca" was complicated since the plant has many regional names in Spanish with different acceptance rates in English. I first thought "yucca" since there exists a plant called that in English. But upon further research I realized that it was a different plant. The word "manioc" was another option, but when I looked up its etymology it came from another extinct indigenous language called Tupí from Brazil. It turned out that "yuca" was in the Merriam-Webster English dictionary, but that its definition referred back to cassava. I then considered "cassava" as a possible translation, not to be confused with "*cazabe*" or "*casabe*" in Spanish. According to the Royal Spanish Academy "*cazabe*" is a sort of bread made from *yuca* that the Taíno's used to eat, while "*casabe*" is a fish found in the Caribbean. In Puerto Rico, this distinction has not seemed to have caught on as I found both meanings and spelling to be interchangeable in my Taíno dictionaries and in *Tesoro.pr*. This makes sense, given that Taíno is a dormant language, one that also did not have a writing system, as far as we know, and was not very well documented. Given this, there is no official spelling except what is given by the Royal Spanish Academy. I concluded that "cassava" was possibly an old mistranslation of "yuca," a historical confusion, since *cazabe* is also flour that is made

from yuca. Also to be considered, was the connection of the word “yuca” with the deity name *Yucabú Bagua Maórocoti*, which means “Lord of the Yuca and Sea, Devoid of a Masculine Ancestor,” and *Yucabú* comes from yuca. Because of all this and trying not to tame the text, I ultimately chose to maintain the word “yuca.”

The next decision was whether to translate into English or leave in Lucumí what Olufunke says on page 68. There is such confusion and conflicting emotions when it comes to the classification of the language used. Some people understand Lucumí to be a broken and fragmented Yorùbá, while others feel they have to defend it because it's theirs and has a value in and of itself. This confusion is even seen in how people talk about Yorùbá religion and language as if it were Lucumí, Santería, Candomblé, Palo, etc. I believe the author was also confused with Yorùbá and Lucumí since in all of his interviews he speaks of Yorùbá instead of Lucumí. By choosing Yorùbá as Olufunke's language, the author creates a link to where on the continent of Africa he might have hailed from, automatically delimiting his identity from a general African one to Yorùbá, which is considered one of the largest ethnic groups in Africa, specifically in Western Africa, who despite sharing a language, myths of origin, religious beliefs, cultural practices, experiences of bondage, and Anglo-Franco colonial heritage, are not a single homogeneous group. Olufunke is not simply an enslaved man without a history, a colonial tool, he has a past to which he is connected through the Yorùbá language as well as a future in the west of Africa and in the Caribbean diaspora. Seeing the importance of this, I chose to leave all Lucumí text in Lucumí, especially since the translation was already written into the text as it was assumed the reader would not know the language. This was also a reason I chose to use Venuti's concept of foreignization. While Lucumí did not exist at the time this story takes place in, I chose to continue in Lucumí instead of translating everything to Yorùbá due to Yorùbá being a living language with a

grammatical and syntactical system that I did not know, and I did not want to change the story the author had written.

Translating “*los reycristoros*” was interesting. I originally considered translating “kingchristers” but had to change it since what the author was really trying to communicate was “king, Christ, gold,” which meant king first, then Christ, and finally gold, and that is how I ended up with “kingchrigolds.” This word amalgamation first occurs in chapter six and was not part of the translation. To explain what it means and where it came from, I took the sentence where it was first introduced and added it into the seventh chapter a few paragraphs before it was used. It fit naturally into the text since the story generally mentioned Guaracón and Olufunke were gifting each other words to be able to communicate. I then added a small new part to the story that the author did not write to explain the meaning of “kingchrigolds” and “fun fun” which means white. I had to add it in before it was used because there were already too many definitions from other Lucumí words and it would just be too confusing and unnatural.

On page 73, the phrase “*humanidad de Borikén*” I debated whether to translate between “humankind” or “humanity.” The definitions were that “humankind” referred to the human race, and “humanity” to humans as a group inside of “humankind.” “*Humanidad*” is used throughout the book, and it is used to refer specifically to the people living in Borikén and not all the human race which would be “humankind,” so “humanity” was chosen instead.

According to the novella, the root of all life is the Black Shrimp. I researched various sources in search of a Taíno myth or legend concerning a shrimp but could not find a single one. The same thing happened with the personified character of the Wind. Since I came to

understand that much of the mythology in the text was created by the author, I felt that I could translate more freely based solely on what was on the page.

In chapter 9 on page 87, mention is made of “*muchos caminos*,” which is a conceptual image that the author plays with considerably in earlier chapters. When he refers to “*caminos*,” physical walking is evoked, however the term also refers to a spiritual path like in oricha worship. I was between the words “path” and “way,” and marked off the list “route,” or “road” because of a lack of a spiritual component. In English the phrase “the way of the oricha” and the “path of the oricha” are both in use, reflecting the use of both words for spiritual use. I tried to use the same or similar language throughout the text each time a path is mentioned to reflect the author’s spiritual intention, and in the first chapter on the second page, before there are people in Borikén, he writes about there being no paths except for those made by ants walking in a line. The word “way” would have sounded too obvious and unnatural, and since “path” sounded natural like in the original, I chose that.

In chapter 10 on page 104, Olufunke sings a song about being kidnapped into the slave trade from his home that could also easily apply to Borikén thanks to the Spanish.

Another problem was how to translate “*el Camarón Negro*.” At the time I had made the mistake of assuming the text was more historical than it was a work of creative fiction and had searched and searched for a mention of any shrimp in my reference material. I then realized through the email and interview that the book was more literary than historical and simply translated it as “Black Shrimp.” The same thing happened with the character “el Viento,” which I translated as the “Wind.” I found the word “cohoba” in Merriam-Webster, meaning its usage was accepted into English usage, so I did not. The word “achiote” was also found in Merriam-Webster’s dictionary and was also written in normal script.

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GLOSSARIES

Glossary note: If a word is not italicized that means its usage has been accepted into English. If it is italicized, then it has not yet been accepted into English as of the writing of this theses in 2021. Glossaries are presented in alphabetical order.

TAÍNO GLOSSARY

achiote. A spice made from the red seed of the annatto tree. Also, the seed from which the spice is made.

areito. A ceremonial dance among the indigenous peoples of Spanish America.

agua. Sea.

batey, bateyes. It is an open rectangular space where games, gatherings and ceremonies take place. All the houses were generally built around it.

behique. Taíno shaman and healer.

Bieque. Taíno name for the island of Vieques, also a part of Puerto Rico.

bohío, s. A round or square house, made with supporting beams buried into the ground, rods tied with vines, and palm leaves or *Heliconia bibai* for the roof and walls. A hut.

Borikén. Puerto Rico's name in Taíno. Variant spellings: Buriquén, Burenquén, Boriqué, Boricua, Burichena, Borichen, Boriquíen, Borriquén, Boriguén, Boriquer, Boluchén, Buriquena, Borinkén, Borinquen.

cacique. A native Indian chief in areas dominated primarily by a Spanish culture.

cemí, cemies. A Taíno idol that represented the spirit of Good or deities. They were made of rock, clay, wood, cotton or gold.

cohoba. A narcotic snuff made from the seeds of a tropical American tree (*Piptadenia peregrina*), also the name of the ceremony where it is taken.

conuco, s. A plot where the Taíno grew food close to their *bohíos*.

dujo. A short three-legged stone chair the Taíno would sit on either squatting or bent over.

foto, s. A seashell used as a trumpet to communicate from a distance.

guaitiao, s. An Arawak name exchange ceremony.

guamá. A superior, a sort of tribe chief.

guamí. Great Lord, a superior.

guanime, s. Food, cornmeal formed into a cylindrical shape, wrapped in plantain leaves, and boiled with some salt.

guara. Place, fatherland in Guaraní.

guatú. Fire.

guazábara. War, battle.

inarú. Woman.

kingchrigolds. Not a real Taíno word. The author created “reicristoros” for this story.

Comes from king, Christ and gold, pronounced “king cry golds” run together.

macana. A wooden weapon or agricultural tool widely employed by the Indians of South America and the Antilles, usually made like a flattened club or sword, and sometimes edged or headed with stone.

manigua. Forest.

maraca, s. A rattle usually made from a gourd that is used as a percussion instrument.

mayohuacán, mayohuacanes. The first is singular and second is plural form of an Arawak word for drum.

ni. Water.

yuca. Cassava, manioc, tapioca. Edible root of the cassava plant *Manihot esculenta*.

Yucahú Bagua Maórocoti. Lord of the Yuca and Sea, Devoid of a Masculine Ancestor, a deity.

Yuké. White land, reference to the mountain el Yunque in Luquillo, Puerto Rico, that is topped with clouds and fog.

LUCUMÍ GLOSSARY

abure, aburo. Brother, sister, younger sister.

aché, ache. Thank you, good luck, bless you, word, virtue, grace, soul, amen.

adá. Machete, sword, saber, or something with a wooden handle.

Babá, Baba. Father.

dudu, dun dun, dundun, dundún. Black.

ede, edé. Shrimp.

erekuso Borikén. The island of Borikén.

erús. Black person, slave, black slave, seeds used in initiation ceremonies.

eyé, eyebale. Blood, tribal tattoo, any scarred mark meant to show tribal filial connection, big tragedy, seven.

eyó, eyo. War, revolution, tragedy, snake.

fibale. Greetings to the elders. Gesture of reverence made to the Iyawó (spouse of an orisha) or when talking about an orisha.

fun fun, fún fún, funfun, funfún. White.

ikú, icú. Dead, death, dying moment.

ilé ikú. Cemetery.

ilé, ile. House, land.

isún kukuté. slept with death.

isun. Sleep.

kukuté. Death.

lafodé. Boat.

laro. Sick person.

manam manam, mánamana, manamaná. Lightning bolt.

obba, obá. Cacique, king, royal, president.

obé afeleyé. Machete.

obe. Cuchillo, caldo.

ogbo. Forest.

okán chocho. Only one path.

okín. The sea.

okuta, okutá. Piedra.

omí. Water.

suco, aúko. Cry.

to ibán echú. Very good, save it to memory.

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