

**UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL
SISTEMA DE ESTUDIOS DE POSGRADO
FACULTAD DE FILOSOFÍA Y LETRAS
ESCUELA DE LITERATURA Y CIENCIAS DEL LENGUAJE
MAESTRÍA PROFESIONAL EN TRADUCCIÓN (INGLÉS-ESPAÑOL)**

**Reproducing Character Point of View in the English Translation of
Luis Chacón Ortiz's *Ciudad Radiante***

Trabajo de investigación para aspirar al grado de
Magíster en Traducción Inglés-Español

presentado por

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2017

**Nómina de participantes en la actividad final
del Trabajo de Graduación**

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*Ciudad Radiante***

presentado por el sustentante

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Table of Contents

**Reproducing Character Point of View in the English Translation of Luis Chacón Ortiz's
*Ciudad Radiante***

Nómina de participantes en la actividad final	ii
Explanatory Note	iii
Abstract	vii
Resumen	viii
Translation	1
Research Report	93
1. Introduction	94
1.1. <i>General Description</i>	94
1.2. <i>Background</i>	95
1.3. <i>Literature Review</i>	96
1.4. <i>Research Objectives</i>	97
1.5. <i>Justification</i>	98
1.6. <i>Outline</i>	100
2. Critical Apparatus	102
2.1. <i>Introduction</i>	102
2.2. <i>Theoretical Framework</i>	102
2.2.1. <i>Corpus of Research on Style in Literary Translation in Costa Rica</i>	102
2.2.2. <i>Research on Point of View in Translation Theory Based on the Fowler-Uspensky Model</i>	104
2.2.3. <i>Definitions of 'Style' and 'Point of View'</i>	106
2.2.4. <i>The Fowler-Uspensky Model</i>	106
2.2.4.1. <i>The Ideological Plane</i>	107

<i>Justification for the Analysis of Specific Modal Systems on the Ideological Plane in Spanish</i>	108
2.2.4.2. <i>The Psychological Plane</i>	110
<i>Justification for the Analysis of Specific Verba Sentiendi and Perception and Epistemic Modal Adverbs on the Psychological Plane in Spanish</i>	111
2.2.4.3. <i>The Spatio-Temporal Plane</i>	112
<i>Omission of the Spatio-Temporal Plane in the Analysis of Ciudad Radiante</i>	112
3. Textual Analysis of <i>Ciudad Radiante</i> Using the Fowler-Uspensky Model	120
3.1. <i>Introduction</i>	120
3.2. <i>Ideological Plane</i>	120
3.2.1. <i>The Case of Poder</i>	120
3.2.1.1. <i>La Hacedora (The Maker)</i>	121
3.2.1.2. <i>Alejandra</i>	123
3.2.1.3. <i>Paula</i>	124
3.2.2. <i>The Case of Deber</i>	126
3.2.2.1. <i>La Hacedora (The Maker)</i>	127
3.2.2.2. <i>Alejandra</i>	128
3.2.2.3. <i>Paula</i>	130
3.2.3. <i>The Case of Tener que</i>	132
3.2.3.1. <i>La Hacedora (The Maker)</i>	133
3.2.3.2. <i>Paula</i>	134
3.3. <i>Psychological Plane</i>	134
3.3.1. <i>La Hacedora (The Maker)</i>	135
3.3.2. <i>Alejandra</i>	138
3.3.3. <i>Paula</i>	139

3.4.	<i>Conclusion</i>	142
4.	Recreating Character Point of View Conveyed by Linguistic Features Analyzed	145
4.1.	<i>Introduction</i>	145
4.2.	<i>Paula</i>	145
4.3.	<i>La Hacedora (The Maker)</i>	152
4.4.	<i>Alejandra</i>	157
4.5.	<i>Conclusion</i>	163
5.	Conclusion	164
	Bibliography	168

Abstract

This graduation project embarks on an investigation of style in translation. The topic is explored through the analysis of character point of view as an aspect of style in a contemporary Costa Rican science fiction novel, *Ciudad Radiante*¹, written by Luis Chacón Ortiz. We explore the point of view of three of the novel's female characters on two of the three planes of the Fowler-Uspensky model, the ideological and psychological planes, identifying how precise linguistic features—in this case, epistemic modal verbs, perception and epistemic modal adverbs, and *verba sentiendi* (verbs denoting feelings)—contribute to the creation of character point of view. By examining the effect of these linguistic features, the translator is able to shift her focus to not only reproducing the message into the target language, but also to recreate the effect that these linguistic features have on each character's unique point of view in the English translation while applying Eugene Nida's methods of formal and dynamic equivalences as general translation strategies. Through the analysis of twenty excerpts from the source text and the side-by-side comparison of the Spanish and English versions of seven passages, we reveal the value of the analysis of character point of view as a tool in literary translation. We also identify how such analysis offers the translator a vantage point from which to add or omit linguistic elements, as part of her translation techniques, in a way that recreates, and sometimes even enhances, character point of view.

Keywords: Costa Rican literature, point of view, Fowler-Uspensky model, style, literary translation, epistemic modals

¹ Chacón Ortiz, Luis. *Ciudad Radiante*. San José, C.R.: Uruk Editores, 2015. Print.

Resumen

El proyecto de graduación se aboca a investigar la cuestión del estilo en la traducción. El tema se explora a través del análisis del punto de vista de los personajes como un aspecto de estilo en la novela contemporánea costarricense de ciencia ficción, *Ciudad Radiante*², escrita por Luis Chacón Ortiz. Utilizamos dos de los tres planos del modelo Fowler-Uspensky, el plano ideológico y el psicológico, para explorar el punto de vista de tres de los personajes femeninos de la novela, identificando la manera en que algunas características lingüísticas — en este caso, los verbos modales epistémicos, los adverbios modales epistémicos y de percepción y los *verba sentiendi* (verbos que indican sentimientos)— contribuyen al desarrollo del punto de vista de los personajes. Al examinar el efecto de estas características lingüísticas, el traductor puede cambiar su enfoque no sólo para reproducir el mensaje en el idioma meta, sino también para recrear el efecto que tales características lingüísticas aportan al punto de vista único de cada personaje en la traducción al inglés, aplicando los métodos de la equivalencia formal y dinámica de Eugene Nida como estrategias generales de traducción. Al analizar veinte fragmentos extraídos del texto original y comparar el texto original en español con su traducción al inglés en siete casos distintos, revelamos el valor del análisis del punto de vista de los personajes como una herramienta en la traducción literaria. También identificamos cómo tal análisis ofrece al traductor una posición desde la cual él puede añadir y omitir elementos lingüísticos, como parte de sus estrategias de traducción, de una manera que recrea, ya veces incluso mejora, el punto de vista de los personajes.

Palabras clave: literatura costarricense, punto de vista, modelo Fowler-Uspensky, estilo, traducción literaria, modales epistémicos

² Chacón Ortiz, Luis. *Ciudad Radiante*. San José, C.R.: Uruk Editores, 2015. Impreso.

Translation

Rodolfo (p. 11)

I go into the bathroom, lean over the sink, vomit blood. The blood is purple, almost black. I turn on the faucet, let the water wash away the blood. The dark stain on the sink is like a receding wave's damp silhouette on the sand. I place my hands under the stream of water. I splash water on my face, eyes, mouth. I clean the sink with my hands, turn off the tap. I rub the excess water (blood)

on my shirt. I walk out. Carefully closing the door without a sound, I go into the kitchen. The clock on the microwave reads two in the morning. I take a pack of Rex from a drawer in the pantry, sit in a chair, light a cigarette. My wife and son are still asleep. I grab a mug from the dish rack, flick the ash into it. When I finish the cigarette, I light another. I think about my wife. More precisely: about the day we got married.

She had been beautiful. I mean: she looks beautiful in her wedding dress. The dress is light-blue. Yolanda is pregnant. We will lose the child a few months later, in a car accident. There is no need to say more about it. We get married in a lawyer's office, without her family's knowing. The "Doctor of Law" diploma hangs on the wall behind the desk, above a shelf full of books. I myself study law, but I'll never earn more than my Bachelor's. There is no need to say more about that either.

The only window in the office looks out onto a small, almost empty parking lot. The car is parked poorly in one of the spots. Or maybe I should say "our." Our car, then. Another pulls in and parks in the spot next to ours. At the same time, Yolanda leans over the table. I can see the back of her thighs. Her hand is resolute, like iron. She hands me the pen: the ink is the same color as her dress. I think: it's a sign.

The lawyer gathers up the papers, sticks them in a folder. The folder gets put in a cabinet. He says, without looking at either of us: Very good. Everything's in order. He extends his hand, I shake it. He clarifies: Now you are married. May your marriage be a happy one. He says it as if it were one of our birthdays; as if, at any moment, balloons would drop from the ceiling or a piñata would appear. Still smiling, he walks us to the door, says goodbye.

My wife and I take each other's hand, walk down the stairs. The lightbulbs emit a white light: everything their light touches looks new. We get to the first floor, exit through glass doors, walk to the car. The sky is light-blue because that day, the world is light-blue. I open the passenger-side door; Yolanda gets in. I walk around the front of the car. Our eyes meet through the windshield. I get in. I insert the USB, put the car in reverse. As I back up, my side mirror hits the mirror of the next car over. I say: Shit! Yolanda doesn't say a word.

I kill the engine and get out. The shrieks of the alarm shatter the parking lot's silence. It's a Toyota™. I see a scratch on the driver's side. One of the rear tires looks a little low. A short, chubby man comes running over. His belly jiggles up and down. His shirt has big yellow stains under his arms, although it's not a particularly hot day. He says: Oh my God, oh my God. I outstretch my arms in apology. I explain that I knocked off one of his side mirrors. He isn't listening. Oh my God, he says again.

I promise to pay for the part, for the labor, for whatever. The man inspects the mirror as if he were holding one of his own eyes between his fingers. He looks at the side of the Toyota™, says: And the scratch too? He shrugs his shoulders, looks at me with fury. I respond: That scratch was already there, sir. Once more, he says: Oh my God. Yolanda watches us through the glass: for her it's a funny movie in a foreign language. I offer the chubby man to wait for the traffic officer if that's what he wants, but the guy doesn't say a word. He looks at the car, at me. It seems like he doesn't really understand what's going on. I tell him: This is my cell phone

number. My insurance company will be in contact with you. And I end the exchange giving him a pat on the back.

I return to the car. I insert the USB, leave the parking lot. In the rear-view mirror, I see that the guy is still staring at his mirror, the broken glass on the pavement. I turn right, lose sight of him. Yolanda doesn't say anything. She places her hand on my knee, slowly kisses my cheek. We are in love: nothing that can happen to us now or ever could ever ruin this feeling. That's what I believe then.

We rent an apartment in Barrio Escalante. A small place, one-room, recently built, well-lit. Yolanda takes off her dress, steps into the shower. The slight curve of her pregnant belly is just beginning to show. Her panties on the floor show the path to her inner thigh. I, too, take off my clothes, step into the bathroom. Her wet pubis is a forest where it had rained just five minutes before. Her nails draw a map on my back.

One day, over twenty years later, I wake up. I vomit dark blood in the bathroom sink of our mortgaged house.

I sit in the kitchen until dawn. I smoke all the cigarettes. At some point I stand up, make coffee, drink a cup. At six in the morning, Yolanda comes into the kitchen. She says: Good morning, have you been smoking? Are you okay? How long have you been sitting here? I tell her I'm fine; that I haven't been able to sleep; that I'm worried about something at work. I embellish it with my best smile.

She kisses my forehead, starts making breakfast. I get up, go to the room, change my clothes. I put on a dab of cologne on my neck to hide the fact that I haven't showered. I return to the kitchen. Eugenio is sitting at the table: his high school uniform is wrinkled. Yolanda makes a face. She makes him take off his shirt, his pants. She gets out the iron, irons out the uniform's

wrinkles on the counter. Eugenio goes to the bathroom, brushes his teeth. Hearing him spit out the toothpaste and rinse his mouth, I think again about the blood flowing down the drain. Yolanda drapes the uniform over the back of a chair, sits down to eat.

I brush my teeth, pee. Eugenio waits for me in the car. I kiss Yolanda, caress her flaccid breast beneath her nightgown. She says: I love you. I love you. I leave the house, get into the car. Eugenio is blasting his music. A private station. I lower the volume and my window. He lets out a sigh from the passenger's seat, but doesn't say anything. I don't either. I shift into gear and we back out of the garage. The sky is clear like on my wedding day. Like the day we lost our first son.

I take the highway, then the express lane that goes through La Uruca. I sit in traffic. Thanks to the new automobile kindness campaign sponsored by the Ministry of Transport, drivers smile stupidly behind the wheel. The campaign involves switching out cars' air conditioners for nitrous oxide. Saturating the public stations with classical music or smooth jazz. People yield to other drivers, laugh, wave to each other. No one fights. No one honks. I never turn on the AC or the radio.

Half an hour later I park the car at the high school's entrance. Eugenio gets out, slams the door as he walks off. I feel like getting out, grabbing him by his shirt collar, beating the shit out of him. But I contain myself. And it's not because he's my son: the truth is I don't know why. I don't want to make a scene. I start the car again, drive to the office. A Bachelor of Law degree has landed me a job as a legal assistant. A legal assistant is nothing more than a messenger: a moron who delivers packages. The lawyer's office is in a building near San José Norte. The building bears the name of some European architect. Above the entrance, a flat screen reads: Need a lawyer? Call Volio and Associates! It's followed by a telephone number.

I pull into the lot, park the car in the first empty spot I find: pretty far from the lobby's entrance. What can I do? I walk slowly for what seems like ten minutes. If I weren't a

messenger, I wouldn't be able to do anything else. I'm good for nothing. I have no other skills. There is no possibility of a raise, either, unless I get my Doctorate. But I will never get my Doctorate. I guess I should be thankful. For example: for the job, for the spot, for the weather, for the blood. No.

I walk into the lobby. In one of the corners, a hand-carved cedar desk. The walls are decorated with paintings by well-known Costa Rican artists. Everything is expensive, pathetic, despicable. Art. I go to the desk. The secretary is wearing a grey skirt, red heels, a white blouse. Her name is Ericka. Ericka the Mexican hates me. She ignores me. She avoids talking to me, looking me in the eye. At company parties, she sits with my Yolanda: she wants to find out how truly revolting I can be. Anything that would justify her disgust. For her, it's not enough to just be a third-class rat.

Ericka gives me some packages, has me sign a document. She continues typing on her computer. Her eyes are closed: her fingers press invisible letters on the wooden desk. To one side, the Vespa's USB is hanging from one of the hooks on a thin wooden board. I take the key, go to the locker, enter the bathroom. For a second I fear I'll vomit again. I mean: I feel it in my throat. I lean over the sink, but it's just a little cough. I wash my face, return to the parking lot, walk towards the messenger bike.

The Vespa is red. It has a trunk behind the seat for packages. It is not mine: I am only allowed to use it during business hours. And the gas is on me. Before tossing the packages into the trunk, I glance at the address: Puntarenas Court of Justice. I get on the Vespa and insert the USB. The engine makes a sneeze-like noise and starts. I shift into gear. I flee from the parking lot, from the offices. I dominate the express route to Caldera.

On both sides of the highway, the new mechanical trees: the invention of the hour. These trees are just gray posts with a few branches. Two green leaves process the carbon dioxide, convert it into oxygen. On my way, I taste a hint of something salty. When I cough, I

coat my hand with red, like the color of wine, or the Vespa. I wipe the blood off on my pants, continue driving on. Then I smell salt, sand, pollution.

The buildings welcome me, bowing their heads. A few people play on the beach with an inflatable ball. I enter the city, search for the closest empty spot to the Court of Justice. I find one two blocks from the building, under the shade of an industrial palm tree. I turn off the bike, grab the packages, walk to the building's entrance. The façade is covered in graffiti not yet removed. Some are an echo of others I've seen in San José. One says: Court of Ju\$lice. Another: Sexi Lexi. Another: Jxl 1xnx k L30pxrdl'3r3s.

In the lobby, I find an exhibit of tiny sculptures composed of Apple™ products. More art. I enter a small office that says: Deliveries. A tanned, dark-haired, 25-year-old secretary greets me. A R0xxx: a modified woman. Her crossed legs expose her inner thighs. The black garter. I start conversation: Hey. She doesn't respond. She takes out an e-cigarette, takes a hit. She gives me a piece of digital paper. I place the packages on her desk, sign the slip. She writes something, gives it to me. I leave.

A gust of sand slaps me in the face. I feel the vomit rising in my throat. I clench my teeth, swallow it back down. The acid burns my vocal chords. It's almost noon, I look for a restaurant. I barge into a place that's open near where I've parked the Vespa. I sit down at a table. The restaurant is almost empty, the waiter arrives immediately. I order a Coca Cola, a cheeseburger, two packs of Rex. I demand that the waiter first bring me the cigarettes and a lighter. He says: Smoking isn't allowed here, sir. I answer: Then kick me out. He doesn't.

The nicotine tastes different. I inhale the smoke. Let it fill my lungs. I suppress the cough, exhale. The cloud of smoke floats up to the ceiling, vanishing just as quickly as it had appeared. Then the waiter comes with the food. I silently put out the cigarette. The ice immediately melts. The Coke begins tasting salty, a taste that is impossible to get off my tongue. The burger is

pretty raw. The lettuce, old. I leave the last bite. I wipe my mouth with a napkin, get up from my seat. I ask where the bathroom is. The waiter points to a door at the end of a poorly lit hallway.

Again, I vomit blood, this time with such force that, for a moment, I think that I've also thrown up my liver, my lungs, shit. I sit on the toilet gasping for breath. When I feel better, I wash my mouth with water from the faucet, with my shirt. I immediately understand that there's something terribly wrong with me. I look in the mirror: I see a pair of light-colored, scared, yellow eyes. To finish, I splash a little water on my face. I leave the bathroom, pay for my food. I walk towards the beach.

On the sand, a bench. I sit down. I light another Rex, think about my life. Whatever is wrong with me—I mean, inside of me—can be fought but not defeated. I know it. I see myself in an oncologist's office, on a hospital bed. My family at my side. I see myself without hair, but with a smile: the unbearable sneer of a man who counts on living another five years. The ending is always the same, inevitable: death. I see my future unravel before my eyes. And that's not what I want. To hell with hospitals, chemotherapy, doctors. To hell with family. We all fantasize about a dramatic death: my death wouldn't be dramatic at all. It's the death of a mediocre person. Predictable. Just like my life.

I walk to the water's edge. The tide breaks at my feet. I throw my phone into the waves. I take my wallet out of my pant pocket: I throw that into the ocean, too, as far as I can. I light another cigarette, return to the Vespa. I drive from street to street in search of an open repair shop. It isn't difficult to find one, any one. It's a dark, messy place, without a sign. I park the bike inside, get off. A dirty guy comes out of a door to greet me. His face is covered with tattoos, with piercings. His hair is chrome-colored. A NetPunk.

I motion towards the Vespa with my head. I ask him: How much will you give me for it? The NetPunk looks at me as if he doesn't understand my language. He looks at the Vespa. He

walks over, touches the handlebars, the tires, the seat. He sniffs it. I insist: It's the latest model; it's got some miles on it, but it's still good. It's urgent. The dude doesn't say anything. I offer him the USB. He starts the engine, listens carefully to the sound of the machine. This language he understands. He wipes off his hands on his shirt, says: Ten thousand dollars, cash. I tell him: good. It's better than what I was expecting. The NetPunk goes into a small room. He comes out with a roll of bills in hand. I give him the USB. I grab the bills, stuff them into my pocket. We part ways like a pair of strangers who've never met before.

I walk along the streets, looking for For Rent signs. The apartment buildings close to the coast are upscale, expensive. I walk further into the city, a city not so different from San José. And, like an extension or an appendix or a tumor, I find poorer neighborhoods, hidden places, worn-down avenues with few people. In other words: the city forgotten by the future. I find an older house, with a red gate from which a sign hangs: 4 RENT. Under the 4, there's a telephone number. I memorize it. I go into another restaurant, ask to use the phone, using the excuse that I had lost mine. I call the number, make an appointment to see the place in twenty minutes.

I wait outside the gate. A guy in his fifties arrives. He's bald. I walk up, we shake hands like old friends. He asks my name, I make it up. He opens the gate, the front door. We go in. Inside, there's a sofa, a table, a fridge, a twin-sized bed. The man explains that the place is unfurnished, but for a bit more money per month he could leave the few things that are there. I ask: Exactly how much more? And he answers: A thousand a month, plus the deposit, of course. I accept. I pay the deposit and two months in cash. The man hands me the keys. We hug each other goodbye.

With the money I have left, I buy a small gas stove, clothes, some L30 pills. I also buy food, bottled water, a lot of cigarettes. After stocking up, I barely have any money in my pockets.

I think: I'm going to have to get a job, if things get worse. In the apartment, I close the curtains, lay down on the bed. I think about Yolanda. I swallow a pill, connect to the Internet.

I download an application to hide my IP address. I don't want anyone to find me. My interface is pretty basic, slow, but it works. It's like navigating in a river full of mud. I surf some porn sites, search the videos for one that I like. A pop up suddenly appears warning me of the risks a virus poses to my neuronal system. Blah, blah. I close it. I choose some classic pornos. I browse some with Eva Angelina. I click on one where she fucks her best friend's husband. Or whichever.

The nanochip in my brain receives the stimulation: my penis immediately gets hard. I don't even have to jack off. Everything is automatic. I come. I close the sphincter, contain myself. The actor forces Eva to get on her knees. His semen falls. It covers her glasses. It coats her tits. I trip over her too. I feel calmer, more relaxed. I disconnect. For a second, it is difficult to remember where I am, what I'm doing. I turn my head, vomit. Observe: a blood-colored stain on the mattress. I go into the bathroom, bathe myself with hot water.

Yolanda is still a virgin when I meet her. She tells me she's had a couple boyfriends, but nothing serious. The first time we fuck is in a luxury hotel room. She shakes like a leaf as she lets her clothing drop to the floor, but quickly gains confidence. Experience. It's awkward at the beginning, but pleasure or pain or death never take long to come. The next morning, we discover that we've stained the bedsheets with blood. I look at the bed as if it were the site of a ritual, or perhaps a canvas. She looks at me with fear, her hair is a mess. She says: Please don't tell my dad, please. I answer: Of course I won't. But I want to tell the whole world. We keep doing it in secret every chance we get, like a sin, but no time is ever like that first time, so intimate, so prohibited. My past

(my future)

is nothing but a bloodstain on the mattress.

Yolanda is allergic to L30. One time, we enter the Internet together to watch some porn, as a couple, but she becomes paranoid, jumpy. It's hard for her to breath. In the hospital, the doctor explains to us that the cells in her brain have connected to her nanochip in a different way. In other words: she is damned to using WIFI connections. Old, archaic, dirty connections. And that's not safe. That day I discover a chasm between us: the intimacy that we will never be able to share.

A man sitting alone in a theater, in the dark. This is not his life; it's someone else's. This is not his death.

I can still go home. I can say that I've been robbed. That I've lost everything but my life. I can regain some dignity, a sense of belonging. But a part of me tells me not to. And that part is called liberty. The promise of death has left me without attachments. My profile picture is that plane that discovers, upon landing, that its brakes have failed.

Mario (p. 23)

I pack my things into a backpack. I leave. Nobody notices because they are all connected to the Internet. Their bodies lie on the rug, on the kitchen table, on the sofa. Any place is a good place to connect. The living room is a party. I close the door without a sound, walk over to one of the cars. I stick my hands into my jean pocket, take out the USB. I insert the USB into the slot, press the button. The door doesn't open. Shit! I go to another car, try the USB again. The door opens. I get in, start the engine. I look in the rearview mirror, expecting someone to come out of the house. No one.

Let's go, Marito, I tell myself. Okay, let's go. I shift gears, drive along the dirt path to the gate at the entrance. The gate scans the car, opens automatically, silently. I take the main road south. Half an hour later, I know I've succeeded. The night stretches out in front of me. It is grey. The LED lights have changed the color of the darkness. Light is nothing more than a cloak that exists between us, the sky. And I don't know why I think about a telephone screen. I see it light up. I look at the passenger's seat: there it is. I knew it. Ever since I was a child, I've always been a little bit psychic. A sixth sense. Her phone is here.

I grab it with my right hand while holding onto the steering wheel with the other. The car senses that my two hands are not on the wheel and immediately slows down. I look at the phone as if it were something foreign. But really, I know it very well. I have gone through it meticulously. I could check the messages, the calls, the videos one more time. I could call someone. Hear the fear on the other end of the line when they pick up. I could call Arturo, but what would he do? Whose side would he be on? But I don't do any of these things. I'm no longer Mario. At least not her Mario.

Cell phones have GPS, locators. Of course. I roll down the window, throw out the phone while the car continues ahead at 40 miles per hour. I don't hear it shatter against the cement. I don't hear it take a part of my life away with it. I tell myself: Think, Mario, think. We don't have time for stupid shit like that. If that's what they want, well, fine, I'll think.

I think: I'm eleven years old and my family has two cats: Lara and Lero. One day, Lero gets run over by one of the neighbors, in front of our house. I struggle to look around the neighborhood, through my tears, at the doors of every house, as if I could identify the person who did it with my X-ray vision. It's impossible, obviously. No one has X-ray vision yet. Hours later, my dad scoops up what remains of Lero with a shovel. He uses alcohol to clean the stain of animal blood from the cement. I bury Lero in our backyard. I make my parents wear their

most formal outfits. I run out of tears. A few days later, my dad takes Lara, trims her whiskers, abandons her in a vacant lot. He tells me: Lara has decided to leave because she couldn't stand seeing you so sad. The lie is a version of the truth. We don't buy any more pets. It takes me five years to find out what really happened. By then, animals don't mean shit to me.

I find an open gas station/ Internet area/ Coca Cola zone, so I pull in, kill the engine. The station is empty. A guy in his twenties with a ridiculous green uniform covered in LED lights comes over. I ask him to fill the tank. I get out of the car, take out some cigarettes. I walk towards the main street and light one. I can see this scene as if it were happening to someone else. For example: he doesn't know where he is

(No, he doesn't have the map app, he doesn't even have his phone. He forgot it),

but his gut tells him to keep travelling down, always towards the southeast, as far from her as possible, until he discovers himself. So, what's left to discover?

I wish I had a little L30 because, truthfully, nothing calms me like the Internet. Not even cigarettes. I flick the butt, return to the car. The guy had finished. He is waiting for me by the driver's side door. I ask if he has any pills; he says: Just a minute. He walks away, disappears behind the door of what looks like a stand. A few minutes later he returns with a strip of L30. I ask: How much for everything? He looks me up and down and answers: Two-hundred. I pay him, get into the car. He tells me: If you want, the Internet area is on the left; it's private; right now, there's nobody there, or almost no one. Okay.

I drive to where he said. I go through a tunnel. I find a type of open-air park where each car has its own cubicle. While I look for a spot, I see another car parked in one of the spots, its headlights off. I go into another cubicle, turn off the engine. I fix my jeans, my hair. I take the pill. I immediately enter the Internet. The interface is a search bar. I write: Map of Costa Rica.

Results: some five hundred thousand. I search for the place I fled from, some 280 miles from San José. There need to be more miles between us.

I enter *La Nación*³, read the news. In the forum, people are fighting about something that nobody really understands. They insult each other. The messages are filled with hate, fury, shame. I also write a message filled with rancor, sterile rage: it doesn't matter about what. The moderator approves my comment, posts it. I feel a bit better. I look for photos of famous places where I would like to be

(to be anywhere that isn't here, now),

I save them on the hard drive. I check my email. I check Facebook. The pill's effect wears off. I open my eyes, disconnect. Only forty minutes have passed since I connected. A good L30 would keep me connected for twice that. They sold me a generic. My throat feels dry.

I start the car, leave the Internet area. I get back on the main road, step down on the gas pedal. The lights from billboards stream across the windshield like colored fish in a black river. I think: She thinks that I'll take the expressway. That's the most obvious. It's better to use side roads. And I do.

I think: I work as a graphic designer for an advertising agency. We tell people how to dress, where to drink, what to think. It is an entertaining place, without schedules. People are interesting. I mean, sometimes we meet interesting people, like artists or writers. Today, we have a meeting. The conference is with her, with her work group. She is my age, but she somehow looks even younger. I don't find out how she does it. She doesn't care about society's rules. She is a rebel, a hacker of the biggest system of them all. An aura protects her from all of society's shit. I immediately fall in love.

³ One of the oldest, most prominent daily newspaper in Costa Rica.

She asks me out. Yes, she asks me. I pinch myself hard to make sure I'm not dreaming. I feel so grateful. Me. She has a Nissan™. I don't even know how to drive. Before getting out of the car and going into the bar, she unzips my jeans, grabs my penis, slides it into her mouth. She caresses my thighs, my balls. When I come, she doesn't move away. When she kisses me for the first time, her breath tastes of L30, of light cigarettes, of alcohol, of sperm. She wipes her lips with a tissue from her purse. We go into the bar.

It is the first time that a chick dares to go out in public with me. It's the first time in a long time. The few relationships that I've had, have been sporadic, always in secret. I was a loser in high school: a gamer, with glasses, acne, braces, *Lord of the Rings* shirts. I don't have braces anymore, but I have gained some weight

(I prefer not to say fat),

I wear glasses, etc. Women don't want to be seen with a guy who's almost blind and who weighs almost three times what they do. But she does. She is different. When we go into the bar, at least ten guys turn and watch me walk in. They are all wondering the same thing: What is that chick doing with that fat guy? But tonight, it doesn't matter. We drink, we dance. In the early morning, when the place is about to close and the manager kicks us out, she takes me home. I kiss her hand; she smiles. She says: I love that you are so silly, so correct. The only thing I'm thinking about is spreading her legs, meeting her other smile.

I can't sleep tonight. I can't stop thinking about her lips. When the sun rises, I feel like one of the zombies from *Warm Bodies*. I update my Facebook status at least ten times: Happy. I'm feeling happy. The world is wonderful. It's a great day! I even upload a couple drawings, something I never do. If my phone receives a message, it's her. I lose my mind. Going back to work on Monday is torture. I have to wait almost a whole week to see her again. I mark the days on my cell phone calendar. Set a reminder. On Friday, she picks me up from my house again.

Half an hour before, I'm sitting on the living room sofa waiting for her. I try playing something on my tablet, but I can't focus. If I look in the mirror, the glass tells me: The buttons on your shirt don't button, fatty. I go back to my room to change my shirt. None of them fit me well. I mean, none of the nice ones. Who wears a *Green Lantern* shirt on a date? What will I be thinking about? Several times I'm about to cancel, but I never manage to send her the message, call her. At nine o'clock, I hear the honk of her car outside of my house. I look in the mirror one last time, leave, jog towards the car. She opens the door, curtsies, laughs. She greets me with a kiss on the lips. She says: You look handsome. She gazes into my eyes, smiles.

We go to a bar; we eat, dance. In the car, we devour each other with kisses. The people who pass by us in the parking lot stare, but I don't care. She asks if I want to go to a motel. I tell her yes. In the room, we strip off each other's clothes. I place my head between her legs. She orgasms almost immediately. She raises her gaze, looks at me. Breathless, I ask her: What's wrong? What's the matter? And she answers: Did you bring condoms? I tell her yes. And she lays back. She spreads open her legs the width of the world. I penetrate her.

It is impossible to describe how it feels. It's like trying to stick a cork back into the bottle, and succeeding. She complements me. We tremble: we are the wave, the foam. I come inside her. My heart is a pill in my chest. After, we lay side by side. She rests her head on my shoulder. We intertwine our fingers. We sleep like castaways clinging to a piece of wood.

I wake up some hours later. The bed is empty. She is sitting on a chair with her eyes closed, connected. I move closer, brush my hand across her breasts, across her thighs. Can you feel me, even though you're browsing the Internet? Her nipples get hard. I get on my knees. I look up at her face, see her eyes moving as if she were dreaming. Are you dreaming about me or about some other thing you're seeing on the Web? Electric, ethereal images; bodies from thin air. Dreams of Google. Hallucinations of Facebook.

Her scent in my mouth. I stand up, go into the bathroom, clean myself. I drink a little water. When I return to the bed, she's standing, waiting. She wraps me in her arms, kisses my neck. We sleep in each other's arms until the end of the world. In the Apocalypse, we shower together. I glide the bar of soap over every inch of her body. She does the same to mine. We get dressed, have breakfast. She takes me home, just like the last time. Before getting out of the car, she takes my hand between hers. I ask her to be my girlfriend. She answers: Of course; yes of course. We make plans to go to the movies the next day. We kiss one more time. Her breath tastes of coffee, of eggs, of me.

This happens before everything else. Sometimes the Internet is a better place than the present. The sky loses its grayness, begins fading into blue. I've been driving all night long in silence. I turn on the stereo. The hard drive is full of her, music that was once ours. I listen to it. *Sal e/ Sol*. I find a restaurant, stop the car. A sign at the entrance says: San José, 187 miles. I wonder if that would be enough. If her reach would extend that far. The answer is: No. Yes.

I take out my camera and take a picture of the sign as proof of what I have achieved: I am here, no one can stop me. Look at me, Frida. Look at us. I go into the restaurant, sit down at a table. My skin smells like sweat, like memories. In the restaurant, I watch a family on their way to the beach. The younger son looks at me like I'm a weirdo. The waiter comes over. I order some toast with coffee, a yogurt, an L30. I ask if he has the real thing or generic pills. He assures me that he has the real thing. I tell him: Good. He comes back with a full tray. I disinterestedly drink half the coffee, pay the bill. I lock myself in the car to enter the Internet.

I don't have any messages or notifications on Facebook. The clock on my interface reads that it's time for her to have noticed my absence, the disappearance of her car. Has she given up? I mean, has she given up, too? Has she realized that there's nothing left for us to do? Has she stayed with her? I explore the Internet for a bit longer to calm my nerves. This pill

is better. Acceptable. An hour later, I disconnect. My shirt is drenched in sweat. I look for my deodorant and a clean shirt in my backpack. I change quickly without anyone seeing me. Then, I start the engine, shift into gear, drive until the restaurant fades out of my rearview mirror.

My mother comes into my room. She sits on my bed while I draw something on the computer. She asks: How can you be sure that she isn't playing with you? With your feelings? There's no doubt she's had other boyfriends; some of them may have been better looking than you. That's my mother. She insists: I don't want you to get your hopes up. I'm just telling you the truth. I yell at her, demand that she leaves my room. If you ruin this for me, I will hate you forever, Ma. Forever. I slam the door shut, lock myself in to cry.

We go out that night. She immediately notes that something is wrong. She's quick; details are what she does. She's always careful, even with me. That's why I love her. She asks what's wrong. I tell her about the fight with my mom. I can't keep it in. She makes me trust her, makes me want to tell her everything. She smiles, takes my hand. She places it against her heart; I can feel her pulse. The pause between this second and the next one. She says: Mario, you are a drama king. And she doesn't have to say anything else. It's not necessary. Words can change from one second to the next; ideas get distorted. But not now.

We go to her apartment, take a pill together. We enter the Internet. Her hand on mine is a phantom limb: distant but present. The interface opens before us like a curtain. We search for photos of Paris, of Rome, of New York, of any city besides San José. We photoshop ourselves there, like a married couple. We are in the Elysian Fields. We are in front of the Coliseum. We upload the photos to Facebook. We tag ourselves. Laugh. The world must know that we are a couple, that we are having a good time. Happiness isn't real unless it's shared. The world must envy you. Happiness is a tree that falls in the middle of a forest.

We disconnect. She gazes into my eyes. Her hair falls across her face and she says: This is just the beginning. I will find a faster, more stable L30 so we can really enter the Internet; really see it, as if this were the Internet. I will be greater than Gibson. I will build the cyberuniverse. In her eyes, I see the willingness to do whatever is necessary. I don't understand exactly what this means to her, for the project, for the country, but I know what it means to me. I tell her: I love you. I love your honesty. It's the first time, but it won't be the last. We are artists: My comics, your World Wide Web. Our stars are the circuits of a computer, a constellation of hard drives.

Happiness. I'll say something else about happiness. What is happiness? What does it mean? Happiness is love. Happiness is pills. Lots of pills. Maybe that's why the Government recommends taking no more than four or five pills per day. If you have more than the recommended dose, the side effects will hit you too hard. However, abstinence is also shitty. Happiness is Internet. Too much of one or the other in one day will make you crazy. None and you'll want to die, to cry. Somewhere between the two is where you find happiness.

The Maker (p. 44)

I wake up. He's gone. Son. Of. A. Bitch. He has taken my car, my phone, my documents, my money. In short: everything. First thing's first: I go to the kitchen, serve myself a cup of coffee. Everyone else is still lying in the living room, connected. I take a Dunhill from my pocket, light it. The laboratory/house is so close to the sea that the wood creaks every time a wave crashes against the rocks on the shore. I stand up. I go out the kitchen door to the beach. I walk on the sand towards the path that leads to the main road. It has rained: little puddles of water have filled the tire marks in the mud. I think about him. I mean, I think about his absence. I think: I didn't think you could really go through with it.

I walk around the laboratory. I go in the front door. I look at all the bodies strewn across the rug, the couch, the table. Andrés, Tatiana, Daniel. Eighteen nonstop hours connected to the Internet, alone with the cyberuniverse. I'm proud of them, of their dry, yellow skin. Of their clothes drenched in sweat, in urine. They are like my children. Their eyes twitch in never-ending R.E.M. I sit on the floor with them, light another Dunhill, wait for them to wake up. The intravenous dose of Px that they've taken should wear off shortly. The time of small, controlled doses is over. *Fortuna favet fortibus*. The idea is to find out how the body functions when exposed to long periods of connection. As a chemist, I feel anxious; as a programmer, excited.

I have been working on the pill for over fifteen years. No one else in Costa Rica, no one else in the world, knows how the L30 pill works like I do. I must add: no one really knows how it works. Not even Bayer, the company that manufactures it. I've been there. I've seen them follow long chains of chemical components without understanding the language. The scientists follow the specifications: they don't know what they are doing, or why. Their world is a mass of confusion. An enigma without a solution.

We do know this: since the creation of the neuronal nanochip, every human being is, simultaneously, its own computer, its own modem. The L30 pill stimulates the chip's Ethernet™ port without the need for a WIFI network. This makes it possible to connect privately, without interference or loss of connectivity. The connection works for a while, several hours, but it wears off. The gods that have given you the secret to immortality will take it away before you finish reading the formula. That's how it is. Who you are is really defined by your IP address, which all at once tells us where you are, who you're with, what you're doing.

But let's not talk about that yet. Let's talk about Mario, or rather, about me through him. This happens twelve years earlier. My research is financed by the Government. I have whatever

budget I want. Access to all the laboratories in the capital. Open doors. The most brilliant chemist in the country. The cover of *La Nación*. No, the cover of *Perfil*⁴. And I'm not just saying that. At the age of twenty-five, I have achieved more than Franklin Chang⁵ has in his whole fucking life. Me: a woman. What do you think of that? Good. I have the Ministry's support. Geniuses are in short supply in third-world countries. Call it brain drain, whatever. 99% of the population

(this is a scientifically proven figure)

is labeled as average from birth. They should be happy being average: it is better than just being a moron.

At this moment, innovation defines me: the girl of the hour. Mario is a rather shy, chubby guy, kind of a geek, but doesn't have a label. I see him: it is as if I can see right through him. Mario is clay that can be shaped to my desire. I just came back from getting my doctorate in Chemistry

(yes: a doctorate at 25: *du kannst mich am Arsch lecken*, bitches)

in Germany. I need to market my project to the Ministry. I go to a publicity company with the hope of getting some ideas. Here, I meet Mario. I ask him out. He likes my boldness. Who doesn't? He can't turn me down.

A week later I have a meeting with representatives from the Government. I show them the video, the research data. Nothing speaks louder than numbers on a screen. The results are: a new presentation of L30 is possible. With enough resources, and with time, I can have it ready in five years. Maximum. The Government rubs its hands together. A new pill sold worldwide will make us the leaders in the L30 market. It will make us all enormously rich. Etc.

⁴ A Costa Rican magazine for women interested in lifestyle, wellbeing, health, beauty and fashion.

⁵ A Costa Rican mechanical engineer, physicist and former NASA astronaut, esteemed as one of the most successful scientific figures in Costa Rica.

Every company, organization and government in the world wants that. The difference is that none of them have me.

The Government rents me a modern laboratory in Barrio Escalante. It sets aside a juicy slice of the country's budget for my project. They give me the freedom to choose my team, so I do. We start working immediately. In Germany, I had had the opportunity to visit Bayer's plant, the place where the pill is produced. I spoke with a dozen scientists and engineers. The explanation was always the same: L30 is produced by a machine that someone (No one says who!)

programmed a long time ago. The language, obsolete. The binary code, useless. Do they *really* want me to think that God created the pill? God doesn't exist. Apparently, everything is a lie.

Not about the machine

(that does exist, because I've seen it. I swear),

but about their ignorance. About what exactly occurs. The silence is a corporate secret. Bayer wants to hide its own failure. The deficiencies, the defects, the side effects of the pill are numerous. It's incredible that in so many years, they haven't been able to improve the stability or the speed of the connection. The generic copies of the pill, mostly Korean or Chinese, are much worse: their side effects even more dangerous.

It's my job to bring the world into a new era of Internet. The future, like they say in countless sub-par movies, depends on me. The government is willing to take the risk. To hell with ecotourism, the rain forests. To hell with the environment, preserving flora and fauna. To hell with endangered species. The future of humanity is on the Web: inside a tiny pill.

Once the nanochip is introduced worldwide as an update for the nervous system, the darkness—that is, real darkness—comes to an end. By closing your eyes, you, and Juan, the storekeeper from the corner, see a desktop, something like a computer screen. We

programmers call it the interface. The interface is just that: a face within your face. You can personalize it to your liking. Welcome to your personal computer. Nanochips can be Microsoft, Apple, IBM, Intel, etc., depending on how much money your parents have. Choosing well is important: changing a chip for another is impossible. We divide the world into processor classes: Apple people, Microsoft people. The operation must be done before you are three months old. The nanochip is inserted into the frontal part of your brain. It becomes connected to your neurons, creating a new system: one more cell. The mark that the operation leaves on the skull is no bigger than that of the tuberculosis shot. The scar can be hidden by your hair.

Whole days in front of a whiteboard, analyzing the chemical chains of L30. BrCl<SCNHSPH3. Etc. We wonder: What happens if we change this percentage? And we do it. We test the result on some lab animal, a rabbit or a monkey. Have you ever seen a monkey connected to the Internet? It's hilarious. We shut his eyelids with tape, tie up his hands. He can only shake, whine, get scared.

If I'm not in front of a whiteboard or on my computer, I'm with Mario. That's my life in a nutshell. He is Apple™, which simplifies our connectivity. We go out to eat, to drink, to fuck. A girl has her needs too. On the weekends, Mario goes out to take pictures. I go with him. His dream is to be an artist: exhibit in a gallery, draw a comic. We take selfies, upload them to Facebook. He always wears some shirt depicting a vintage rock band or a superhero. Mario is beautiful, happy. The truth: it is good for me to be with him. What I feel isn't love, at least not precisely, but the affection that I feel towards him distracts me from my main target. But I enjoy being next to him, feeling his skin close to mine. The research is moving forward slowly, or that is what I tell the Government. It isn't moving forward at all.

The behavior of L30 is temperamental, unstable. It's like trying to solve a riddle in a foreign language. It doesn't matter how much we analyze the components of the pill, we are always met with a dead end. We change the focus of the research. One morning, I gather the team. I tell them to forget about the pill. We need to research the brain. A properly installed nanochip serves two functions: the biological function and the cybernetic one. The latter is well-known, so we focus on the former. We conclude that one of the nanochip's primary responsibilities in its biological function is inhibition. For example: upon entering the system, L30 releases its chemical components, which are absorbed by the Ethernet™ port. These chemical components can be considered toxins. The chip releases a series of enzymes that regulate the pill's behavior, as well as its potential. In other words: it restrains the pill.

A good step forward, at least for us. The problem is modifying the chip's biological behavior so that it doesn't step on the brakes. We decrease the pill's components, but the chip releases the enzyme regardless of the quantity. We request some cadavers from the morgue to study the chip, but it soon becomes apparent that we need live patients. The Ministry of Health is constantly monitoring us, so getting them is an impossible task. We run out of more and more resources every day. We don't have a single positive result to show. It's stressful. Admitting failure isn't in my DNA.

I take Mario to a bar in Escazú. Test #31347 has come back negative. I'm in a bad mood. We go inside and sit at a table in the corner. Mario orders a Coke with Oxygen. I, a whisky. Sometimes Mario can be so ridiculous. His behavior infuriates me. I don't talk to him. I don't pay attention to him. A chick comes over to the table. She's wearing glasses, too much gel in her extensions, a faded shirt from some unknown rock group from the nineties. She's a

UCR⁶ girl. She greets Mario with a kiss on the cheek, asks him if she knows him from some course. I know this trick. Mario answers: No, I don't think so. From where? And he smiles at her. Mario, so nice, all the time. She assures him that they were classmates in a course at the Uni. She takes a chair, sits at the table.

I jump up and stand face-to-face with her. She steps back. She says: Chill dude, chill. Dude, don't tell me to chill. I push her hard: the chick hits into another table, trips, falls to the floor. I kick her twice in the ribs, once in the face. How does my heel look on your cheek? Blood stains the floor. The security guards arrive, kick me out of the bar, threaten to call the cops. I dare them to. I take out my phone, call Mario, make him come outside. We go back to the car; I drive to my apartment without opening my mouth. We kiss in the darkness. The adrenaline turns us into a pair of aroused animals in the presence of spilled blood.

That's how it comes to me. If I cannot stop the nanochip's inhibition, then I'm going to weaken it so that the L30 surpasses the enzyme. In other words: overload the system. I tell the team what we're going to do. Take action. No questions. We choose one of our lab animals; we start giving it a higher dose of L30 at defined intervals. The side effects become more intense, stronger. This is the first step. The label on every box of L30 warns against this procedure: we are gods.

The monkey's skin becomes dry, pale. Its eyes are always red. Its grunt becomes a weak whimper. We keep it hydrated, stress-free, separated from the rest. The connection time does not vacillate. The experiment seems like another dead end. My order is to keep going. Never stop. The first subject dies two days later. The agony is terrible for us: the dream falls to pieces. We choose another one.

⁶ *Universidad de Costa Rica*, a public university in Costa Rica regarded as one of the most prestigious schools in Latin America.

The animal successfully stays connected an hour longer than the average time. The next day, two hours. We've done it. It seems incredible now, but we have succeeded in increasing connectivity. We celebrate. Thanks to the more extreme conditions, we have made a change. We copy the chemical components. We replicate the experiment. We write long chains of cations, peroxides. We synthesize many pills into a single dose. We put the dose in a centrifuge. The L30 will go directly to the blood, without a decomposition process as an intermediary.

In the next meeting with the representatives from the Government, I present the results. No makeup, no adornments. I tell them what we are doing. What we are thinking of doing. They take the advance with caution, anxious. They contain their excitement. Their eyes light up, they say: you're the fucking woman. That's right. They ask me: What do you need? I respond: Human beings.

We look in shelters, in the streets, in beaten-down neighborhoods. We look for fuck-ups who don't have a future, nothing to lose. The Bible says: Look and you shall find. And it's true. Those who come to the laboratory are not human beings, but sacks of skin, bones, flesh. Many are sick: they have cancer, HIV, XX3Xx1. They don't want to keep on living, but they don't have the strength to commit suicide. We give them an option.

We set them up in beds in one of the buildings at the laboratory. We inject them with the first dose of L30. We analyze the results. Cameras record everything, all the time. ECGs study their brain waves. Some are able to stay connected for six or seven hours longer than the average, but die a little later. Others open their eyes, pleading for the night, for the darkness. We cannot understand what they are trying to say. It will take me a while to understand what they are talking about.

The cadavers are cremated in a large, industrial oven installed in the laboratory. The autopsies do not reveal anything important. The wind carries their ashes throughout the city. In its fury. Only two survive this first stage. Their connection times vary from seven to eight hours. They are enthusiastic. They ask us for more and more. More needles. We question them about the connection speed, about downloading images. They respond: excellent, everything is excellent; we want more, give us more.

We ask them about the stability of the interface. They say: there is no interface, just emptiness, blackness. We believe we have fried the neuronal chip, but their personal computers continue functioning the same. They can write letters, do mathematical operations, watch movies. We open their heads, study the chip directly. Everything is okay. We beat the inhibitor.

The process still isn't marketable: the mortality rate is quite high. The results, uncertain. But we have reached the first level. We have crossed a border. There is no going back. My coworkers begin to call me *La Hacedora*: The Maker.

In the laboratory, the team begins to wake up. They move their arms, their legs. They stretch. It is like seeing a tsunami of epidermis. I take several water bottles from the fridge, put them on the table. One by one they come into the kitchen, grab a bottle, gulp down its contents in one go. We look at each other without a word. Their skin is thin, a little yellow, but it still has mass. That is good. Their eyes are covered in a thick haze. I give them more water bottles.

Tatiana rests her forehead on the table, says: It's truly beautiful, Hacedora; words fail me, it works. And we all smile. We are excited. We talk quickly, make plans for the second phase: the boulevard. We return to the whiteboard, note our connection times, our impressions. We take photos, videos: we upload them to our MLOGs. No one asks about Mario.

I go up the stairs, into the bathroom. I take out a needle, give myself a small dose of Px. The dose isn't enough to connect me to the Internet. I wash my face, my hair. Tatiana is waiting for me outside: her hands in the pockets of her jeans. She goes into one of the rooms. I follow her. We close the door silently. I ask where everyone else is and she responds: They've gone to the beach. We kiss. Maybe I should stop doing this, but sex is just sex, right? Tati says: I want you to eat me out while I navigate. I don't hold back. I take a needle from one of the drawers of the wardrobe. I give her a dose that isn't as strong as this morning's: the skin on her forearm has begun to rot.

I lay her down on the bed; I take off her jeans, her panties. Her vagina is a purple flower. It's wet. She moans. She checks her email, Facebook. Her mind explores cyberspace while her body tries to hang on to the rest of her senses. It's a wonderful sensation. I have done it before. I stick two fingers inside her just to feel her body's warmth. She comes a few minutes later. She remains on her back, with her eyes closed, connected. I go downstairs and into the living room. I tell myself: Maybe I should stop doing this.

It is time to continue with Phase 2, but Mario's absence is bothering me. It's like a shadow on the wall that refuses to disappear. Maybe it's because I love him. Or because I think I love him. Or because he's part of the group. I connect to Facebook and send him a private message. The message says: If you come back to me, I promise I'll forgive you. I love you. Everything will be like it used to be. I close Facebook, update my MLOG. I disconnect.

Rodolfo (p. 66)

I get a job cleaning the pools at the beach club. I don't know how much time has passed: at any rate, it's been less than two months. A day always starts and ends the same: with a blood stain in the sink. I get up at four in the morning, put on my uniform, leave home. At the beach

club, I brush and clean the pools so that everything is ready at eight a.m. People arrive, fill up the benches, rub tanning oil on their skin. They all look the same. My shift ends at six in the evening. In the apartment I light a Rex, enter the Internet. I vomit more blood. Whatever is inside me has gotten worse. I don't want to know what's inside me.

I have created a fake Facebook profile to see the news. The photos women upload to their profiles. I am addicted to their bodies, to their lives. Facebook is the valley of endless JPGs. I save any photos that are worth saving to my hard drive, so I can see them even when I'm not connected. My disappearance has made the newspapers. The local news section, page eight. Nobody knows what has happened to me. My family is worried. The police don't have any leads. I don't think about that much; I mean, about my family. Abandoning them has been easier than I had thought. A man can fall between the cracks of this city. Lose himself in an ocean of nothing. I surely haven't been the only one. Sometimes, when I'm picking up all the shit that the visitors leave, I think about that: about the people that come and go, that leave their filth on the earth. A Coca Cola can, a bag of Doritos, a family, a lot of debt.

I am not sorry. My old life had no future. The life that I am living now doesn't either, but at least it's sincere. I take a long bath with hot water, I scrub my skin vigorously. I study my face in the mirror. Is this me-me, completely me, or just a shell harboring a virus? An obsolete computer? What is left of me? I waste my time browsing porn sites, MLOGS of all sorts (erotic, homophobic, xenophobic, racist, NetPunk), YouTube videos. The Web is a good substitute for real life. Its oxygen is my oxygen. I don't even need to eat. The pill's side effects begin to affect me less and less. Or maybe I'm caring less and less. I visit dark, uncomfortable places in the entrails of the Internet. This is the dirty part. Everyone seems fake to me. Violent just for the love of violence. No one is enough.

On my way home, I find a homeless guy begging door-to-door. He rings the doorbell or knocks on the door, gesticulates. No one opens their door. His language is quick, quiet. I'm hungry, please, something to eat. I watch him ring the doorbell at three houses, with no luck. I put a hand on his shoulder. I tell him: Come with me, I have food. And he follows me. At the store, I ask him to stay outside while I shop. I take him home. I've taken in a stray dog, not a human being. He sits at the table. He stinks. I think about asking him if he wants to shower, but I'm afraid I'd offend him. Offend a homeless person. I make rice and eggs. I put bread in the toaster. He doesn't say a word.

I serve him in a bowl. I cover his food with Ketchup™. I watch him. His eyes shift between the food and the place, as if he weren't sure what he should focus on. He grips the spoon firmly. Barely opens his mouth as he eats. He takes up the bowl in both hands, places his lips against the bottom, slurps. I gather the dishes, wash them. He stays seated at the table, staring blankly. I tell him: I don't have anything else. And he nods, gets up. I open the door. He stops at the corner across the street. I close the door, watch him through the curtain. He doesn't move all night. I connect to the Internet. The next morning, he's there, still standing: a watchman of all things pathetic.

Today I'm off. I invite him in again. I make coffee, I serve him food once more. I ask him if he wants to use Internet. He shakes his head. He bows his head forward, parts his hair, shows me the scar. I mean, the place where the scar should be. There is nothing there. He's a disconnect. I ask him his name, he shrugs. I tell him: My name is Rodolfo. He wipes his hand on his shirt, extends it towards me. I shake it. Why not? He finishes eating, stands up. He moves his head as if saying thank you or asking for forgiveness. He returns to the corner, guards the house. Things change. Things stay the same. Everything changes between Yolanda and me after the miscarriage. The other pregnancy is even worse: we have given up on having

children, on dedicating our lives to each other. Soon our life isn't ours, but someone else's, a nameless fetus. There is nothing worse than becoming a dad when you don't want to be a dad. And my life is no longer mine; it belongs to a hobo, a disconnect.

The next day, I don't think twice about letting him in. While I make dinner, I go to the bathroom, lean over the sink. Everything goes black. When I open my eyes, the hobo is kneeling next to me, holding my head. Next to me, a pool of blood. I say: Jesus. I choke to death and die in a pool of my own blood. I get up, drink some water from the tap. I use toilet paper to clean the blood. I toss the stained paper into the toilet. He looks at me without a word, like always. His eyes reflect fear or simple curiosity. I can't explain it to him.

I serve the food, light a Rex. I offer him one. He takes it. We smoke in silence. I am full of rage. Why must I help this man? Because he saved my life? Who is this stranger? Is helping him going to help me in some way? I'm damned anyway. I think about kicking him out. I think about grabbing a knife, killing him. I've never believed in karma. What good is karma to me now? Who is going to ask about him? He's nothing more than a dog. No one will miss him. I've never killed a man. I have nothing to lose. He isn't a man: he's a dog. I can cut him into pieces. Eat his body, his soul. Rape him. I tremble. I can.

He notices, gets up from his chair. He thinks I'm about to faint again. I raise my hand, tell him: I'm fine. I take him to the door. He looks at me as if he doesn't want to leave. I smile, tell him everything will be fine. He returns to the sidewalk across the street: a lighthouse among the rocks. I close the door, take a pill. I open the browser, enter Google, search: vomiting blood. Result: over one hundred thousand pages. I click on the first one.

It says: Although not all situations are the result of a serious medical problem, it is difficult to determine without a medical evaluation. Seek medical assistance immediately. I'm

not going to seek medical assistance. The page says that vomiting blood usually occurs with bloody stool, but my shit is fine. It lists the possible causes:

Ulcer.

Defects in blood vessels.

Esophagitis.

Stomach or esophageal cancer.

Do you want to talk with a professional? No. I have number four. It could easily be number two. I can't be sure. I convince myself: it's number four. There is no other option. I open my eyes, disconnect. I stare at the wall. My mind is blank.

I wake up at four in the morning, put on my uniform, go to the beach club. The hobo is sleeping curled up against the wall of a house. The wind is hitting his back. This satisfies me. It's the first time I see him sleep. I do the work I need to do. I watch the people who arrive to tan, to swim. A group of kids comes in. They start to take photos with a digital camera. It's Sunday.

They claim some benches next to the deepest pool. They take some needles from their bags. Drugs. One of them ties a rope around his arm, sticks the needle straight into his vein. The others do the same. Their bodies fall on the chairs, their eyes dart from side to side. They are connected to the Internet. I've never seen anyone connect to the Web that way. They wake up at almost four in the afternoon. They have been connected for some seven hours. Their skin is yellow, translucent. They get up, drunkenly, dip into the pool. I see them smile, play together. It is incredible.

I call one of the guys over with a whistle. He is a kid, some 22 years old, tall, dark-skinned, muscular. He gets out of the pool, looks at me as if I were a tumor. He's partially right.

I ask him about the needle, he smiles. He says: It's the cutting edge of L30. Supposedly it's going to enter the market soon, but we bought it illegally. His smile widens: he raises his eyebrows. I'm excited. I babble a question, it gets stuck on my tongue. I'm not sure if I've asked him where he bought it or if I can buy a bit off him. It doesn't matter. He says: I'll sell you one of the needles we have left for a thousand bucks. Half of what I earn on payday, but it doesn't matter. I ask for a second. I go to my locker, take out all the money I have left. It's not enough.

I beg him to take my money. I plead him. I drop to my knees. He says: It's cool, man. And he takes the money, gives me the needle. I put it in my pocket. I quickly walk home. The hobo is waiting at the same corner as always. I tell him: No, not today, please. He looks at me as if he understands, or as if he doesn't understand a thing. Sometimes it's the same. I shut the door in his face, pull the curtains closed. I lie down. I do what I saw those kids doing. I tie a bit of the sheet around my arm, wait until my vein swells, inject myself.

The connection is immediate. There is no interface. I'm in a black place: just like those years without LED lights at night. But there are no stars here. I can feel my body, but I can't see it. It's a strange sensation. I don't know what to do. I think about opening my eyes, but my chip informs me that I'm connected. I think about going to Google. I'm in Google. I am part of Google. I think about YouTube. The result is the same. The images are in HDX. Everything moves faster. I visit porn sites, watch hundreds of videos. I am part of them. I feel the skin, the sweat. It's real. It's so real. This time, I'm the one fucking Eva Angelina.

I open my eyes at two in the morning. My body aches. I'm drenched in sweat. My throat burns. There are just a few hours before I return to the beach club. Nothing matters. I stick my face under the showerhead. The droplets drum against my skin. I start the coffee maker. The hobo is in the same place as always, standing. I leave home, say hello to him. His eyes are closed, as if he were sleeping. I ask him to come back to the house with me. I serve coffee in

two mugs, heat up some sausage links. Reality is a little more disappointing. Colors are duller. My brain compares the inside with the Internet. I must get more needles.

At work, I look for the kids from the day before: they don't come back. Almost no one comes today: the beach club is empty for a couple hours. I will die if I don't get a little more L30. I'm running on empty when I get home. I make dinner for the hobo, sit at the table, light a Rex. I evaluate my situation. There isn't much food left in the cupboard. It's still one more week until I get paid. I put my hand on the hobo's arm. I tell him about the syringe. I describe the kids, in case they live in the city. I ask him: Don't you know anyone who can sell me a little liquid L30? I beg him like I've begged before.

He hears me enshrouded in silence. Finally, he nods. He has understood me. He smiles for the first time. His smile is a piano with a few extra keys. His grimace is awful, cruel. He finishes eating, stands up from the table, holds out his hand. We have a deal. He resumes his post on the corner out front: a pair of eyes in the darkness.

Alejandra (p. 79)

Any chick who doesn't go to the party is an idiot. I don't want to be an idiot. I've waited all week. Nothing in the universe will make me miss it. My dad said: Be careful, Alejandra María, or you're not leaving this house. And I do just that: walk around on my tiptoes all fucking week. No messages from school. No sneaking out at midnight. Three days in a row, I do the dishes before school, and then again at night. I pay attention. I hold my tongue. I bow my head. No one will dare to tell me no. I won't miss the party.

It's Friday night. I do my makeup, spritz my tits with perfume. From my closet, I grab a black top, a miniskirt, a pair of tiny panties. The four-inch black heels. I get dressed. I look at myself in the mirror. I don't need to smile. A smile is the best accessory for a woman who's poor or flat-chested. I may be poor, but I do have tits. I tell myself, out loud: You're a sadist,

David is going to go nuts. And I kiss myself; I mean, I kiss my reflection in the mirror. French kiss.

My dad is in the doorway. He's looking at me. He's holding a glass between the fingers of his left hand. His shirt is unbuttoned to his chest. Gross. Some beads of sweat drip down his cheeks. He is fat, old, pathetic. An embarrassment. He shouldn't even leave the house. But we don't blame kids for their parents' misery. He looks at me; says: You're not going anywhere like that. Who do you think you are? Your butt is hanging out, my God. And you, who are you pretending to be? The concerned dad? You think you're going to stop me? I don't say a word. He can't.

I go down the stairs. In the kitchen, I drink a glass of water. I hear a car stop outside house, honk. It's him. I stick my phone in a tiny gray purse. I leave without saying goodbye. David's car is a Honda Civic 2X.0, gray, neon lights around the wheels. I love cars, especially ones that are tricked out. Every time the engine purrs, I can feel the power in my tush. I get wet. I only go out with David because of his car.

I get in, kiss David's neck. But just a peck, so that I don't mess up my lipstick. He starts the car. I feel the pistons, I tremble. The night begins. My dad comes out of the house, staggers, trips. He doesn't let go of his drink. I roll up the window. Once again, I pretend he's not there, that he's not my dad. He yells: Alejandra! Alejandra! Get out of that car! NOW! I look at David and David looks at me. He puts his foot on the gas, the tires screech. My dad runs, continues screaming. Chao.

David puts his hand on my thigh. He slowly travels higher up my leg. With the other, he unzips my skirt. I push away his hand, resituate myself. Not yet. He says: It's just that seeing you like that makes me misbehave; we could stop by a hotel, arrive a little later. And I think about it. The Honda's engine gets me hot. If I could only feel the length of its chassis beneath me. Wow. But I really want to go to the party. We must not rush ourselves. Tomorrow is

Saturday: we have the whole weekend to fuck. I answer him: Later, baby, I promise. And I caress the seat's leather. David doesn't push it. He behaves like a real gentleman.

We leave the city. The buildings stay behind. The car climbs the side of a mountain in Aserrí. Below, the waste of three million souls crammed into a small area of land. I stick my head out the window. I feel the wind and speed in my hair. I feel happy, free. It's a hot night. In a few hours it will be better. We enter through a trail. The road is a narrow unpaved path. We're close. The party is at a private estate. According to my friends, the property belongs to some programmer, or a soccer player. Someone important, with a lot of money.

The where doesn't matter, just the how. The party sends out signals in a frequency that my body can intercept. The signals say: Alejandra, this is going to be amazing, the best night of your life. Fuck, yes. Yes. It'll be amazing.

We arrive at an electric gate with a guard. He comes over to the car, takes out a scanner. He writes down the car's plates, reads the barcode. He checks David's eyes; then, mine. The result is displayed on a small screen. The guard looks at me, says: She's not of legal age, man. David smiles, takes out a wad of bills, hands them to the guard. The guard shrugs his shoulders, takes the money. The gate opens. There's nothing more. Security is paid to let people in, not to clean shit up.

David parks the car. He turns off the motor, we get out. I check myself in one of the side mirrors. I adjust the miniskirt again. Everything's in order. David wraps his arms around me, kisses me: his dick seeks the warmth of my inner thigh. His hands land on my hips. I respond with a kiss. I can lay on the hood. Ask him to turn on the engine, to slip inside. But I don't. The party is calling me.

In the middle of the estate, an automatic house made of chrome with silver. The roof is retractable. Tonight, it's open to the breeze, to the heat, to the music. The house sunken into

itself. In the center, I find a huge dance floor. On the right side, a pool. It's impressive. Automatic houses are still a novelty. I've barely even seen the ad. The slogan is: A house, a conscience, a sole purpose. The theory is that the house is constantly connected to the Internet: it adapts to your needs. The owner must be loaded. If only I could meet him.

On the left side of the dancefloor, I see a wall with hundreds of bottles. In the back, they've installed a dozen desktop computers. Anyone can sit down, play Retro videogames. A DJ mixes music behind a rusty console. A waiter serves us shots of Bl1zzzrd™. We start drinking. We dance. Tonight, I feel like a slutty version of Belle: a DisneyPunk. I bite David's neck, hold my body against his. The youth of the world, we're beautiful. We light up the sky like hundreds of fireworks. Like shooting stars.

I find Sofia, Nancy. We hug. Nancy brings her lips close to my ear: We've been calling you! I explain that I haven't heard my phone because of the music. I show her the screen with her missed calls. I introduce them to David. He kisses their cheeks, behaves again like a gentleman. The night couldn't be going any better. The three of us go to the bathroom, pee, apply a little of Sofia's neon makeup over our eyes. She says: He's handsome, Ale. Of course he's handsome, slut. And he's mine.

David has gotten paranoid. I've only been gone a couple minutes. He moves his head from side to side
(like a fly);
constantly moves his arms and legs. His pupils have grown so that they almost cover his whole iris. I ask him: What did you take, dude? He continues moving his head, doesn't say anything. He hasn't heard me. What the fuck did you take, faggot? And he sticks his hand in his pockets, takes out a couple of multicolored sheets that shine in the darkness. I know what it is. You put them on your tongue, wait for them to dissolve. M01x is illegal; it's only used to daze, rape girls.

Everyone knows that! Its immediate effects are memory loss, paralysis of your body. One sheet turns any woman into the sluttiest robot in the universe. In other words, this is a real downer. I say: Shit! I look around. I want to find the son-of-a-bitch that's handing out M01x, hit him. I don't see much more than a ton of people swaying, feeling the music. Their eyes closed, tongues out. Hands in the air.

David says: Take one, it's good. And he offers me a M01x. I hit his hand with rage, knock the drug to the floor. He looks at it on the floor like someone who's dropped a glass, but doesn't understand how. I say: Idiot, asshole. Why'd you take that? Obviously, he can't respond. His body is completely immobile on the dancefloor. His vocal chords have closed. He can't move a muscle. I leave him there. I go look for Nancy and Sofía. They are in the pool with some dudes. I don't want to be the fifth wheel. When I return to the dancefloor, David's gone. And even though I know he couldn't have left on his own, his absence fills me with even more despair. They must have taken him off the dancefloor so he didn't bother everyone else. I'm left here with no boyfriend, no friends.

I gulp down another shot. The heat of the alcohol, of the oxygen, and of the bicarbonate rise from my stomach to my throat. Some guy comes up next to me, says: Hey. What's your name? I'm not in the mood. I think of telling him to fuck off. He's the DJ. A dude older than me, but not old. A tattoo on his left arm; another on his right eye. Piercings in his eyebrow, in his tongue. He's cute. He says: I'm Arturo. And I respond: Hi, Arturo, shouldn't you be at the console? He says: It's on automatic. No matter how old they are, computers don't need this silly human to tell them what to do. I laugh

(although it was actually a bad joke);

I tell him: I'm Alejandra, but you can call me Ale.

He says: Hi Ale, nice to meet you. And your boyfriend? And I respond: I don't know, someone gave him some sheets of M01x, I can't find him. Arturo smiles, takes some sheets from his pocket. I want to melt: his smile is beautiful, malevolent. I feel outraged, but flattered. I ask him: Why are you asking about my boyfriend if you know what happened to him? Arturo responds: To keep up appearances, I wanted to know if I had a chance with you. I didn't put them on his tongue, he did. He's shameless. I love it. He asks: Let's dance? And I say: Let's.

He kisses me. His breath tastes like vodka and zinc. We go to the computers. We play DOOM. First-person videogames quickly make me dizzy. Arturo sticks his hand under one of the CPUs, takes out a grey bag. Inside the bag, I see hundreds of needles filled with a brownish-purple liquid. Cyber-synthetic drugs scare me. I think: I should go look for Nancy. Arturo takes my hand, interlaces his fingers with mine. I ask him: What's in those needles? JiX0xxx? And Arturo says: No.

It's like this: someone

(he doesn't want to say who)

has asked him to hand out a new form of liquid L30, in needles, at parties. He asks: Wanna help me? And he sticks his fist into the bag, takes out a couple needles, puts them in my hand. My job is to hand them out. I do it, but I'm scared. Many people take the needle, inject it immediately. Nobody knows what's in it. Nobody asks me what it is. Their bodies fall to the floor. Their eyes move. The music doesn't stop. The dance floor becomes an ocean of skin. They've all connected to the Web.

Arturo grabs ahold of my arms with force, sticks me with a needle. I feel myself fall and rise at the same time. I've never felt anything like it. It's wonderful. I'm in the Internet. I have no interface. I'm surrounded by black. I can feel the body. It's not mine, it doesn't belong to me. I think about opening Twitter. I'm in Twitter. I am Twitter. My soul flies in every one of those messages. I'm part of the community, of the universe. I've found my place in the world.

I disconnect. My throat is dry. My muscles, sore. My skin, yellow. I see all the other bodies still scattered across the dancefloor like remains from a butcher's shop. The sky is light-blue. The sun's come up. Arturo helps me get up. I kiss him with the little bit of saliva left in my mouth. My tongue is sand. He hands me a bottle of water, I gulp it down. He asks: Wanna go to my house? And I respond: Yeah, I do.

Arturo packs up his console, a couple CPUs. We go to the car. I remember David, vaguely. I feel so many things. So many new things. I tell myself: I'm sure he'll be fine, he can take care of himself. I decide it in that moment. There's no need to think twice. Arturo turns on the car: an unmodified Toyota™ V1ntxg3, but with an integrated computer. The car drives us back to the city. Arturo doesn't even have to put his hands on the wheel. On the trip, we devote ourselves to kissing, groping each other over our clothes.

Arturo lives in a modern apartment building that, many years ago, had been the prison. That's what the plaque on the entryway says. An automatic door scans the car before letting us in. The car goes up a ramp to the third floor, parks in a spot near the elevator. Arturo takes his things out of the car. We take the elevator to the twenty-second floor. The apartment's door is also automatic. It has a retina scanner. It's a luxury. From the window I see the skyscrapers of central San José, the mountains beyond.

The apartment would be nice without so much shit thrown on the floor. Books, papers, clothes, CDs scattered everywhere. It's like visiting an old history museum after a hurricane. I bend down, pick up a CD. I didn't know they still made them. It must be Retro. The case says: Nine Inch Nails. Arturo places the CPUs on a table, says: I like everything that's Vintage and Retro; it's like a hobby. Did you know I even have some cassettes? And I don't know what a cassette is, let alone who or what Nine Inch Nails is. But since I don't want to be the dumb chick, I say: Yeah.

Arturo grabs the CD, asks: You like it? Want me to put it on? And I say: Yes, yes. The music comes from the speakers. It's loud. The sound waves envelop the room, hit against the walls. Arturo kisses me. I kiss him back. He lies down on the sofa. I lie down on top of him. I feel his erection between my legs. He holds my head between his hands, looks into my eyes. He says: You're not eighteen, are you? I don't know how to lie to him; I mean, how to lie to him right now. I can't breathe. I tell him: No, I'm fourteen, almost fifteen.

I'm afraid he's going to kick me out of the apartment. But no. He asks: And are you a virgin? I respond: No, but I haven't been with many guys either. It's the truth. He pinches me, not hard, not with disgust, but with something like tenderness. He says: You can't have everything in life, Ale. He slides his tongue into my mouth. He promises to guide me. The room begins to spin. I find myself on my back on the rug. Arturo's on top of me. Inside me. The music stops.

Paula (p. 87)

When I get home after school, I lock myself in my room. I close the curtains. I strip in front of the mirror. I examine myself carefully. I see the cellulite on my arms, on my stomach, on my butt. My belly should be flatter. My butt, smaller. My anus, pinker. My face, rounder. I should go running more. Hire a personal trainer. I grab my iPhone, take a million selfies in different positions. I look at them one by one. I call myself: Pig. Gross. Disgusting. Skanky. Hideous. Filthy. FAT. How dare you wear THAT? Don't you see those rolls? I continue on like that until a knot forms in my throat. It would be easy to send one of those photos to one of my contacts: to hear them say how beautiful I look. How much they want me. How much they'd like to be my boyfriend. But it's a lie. I mean, I know it's a lie. Now you all know it too. Call me stupid, superficial, bitch, slut, whore, *perra*, *zorrra*, whatever; but never a liar.

My parents are normal people. They aren't like me. They don't deserve a daughter like me. My mom is a housewife. My dad, an office worker. She cooks dinner; he watches the news, takes a pill. My house is how a house should be. If they knew what I do, I wouldn't know what to tell them. How would they react? I lie down on my bed, take a deep breath, think: Nothing matters, Pau, nothing really matters. Human beings live as if they or their actions were going to last an eternity, but that's a lie. Nothing matters. The urge to cry disappears. What's left is a hole that no astronomer could measure. But a hole can't do anything: it's just that, a hole. I can't deny that I find a bit of pleasure in what I do. A bit of voyeurism. It's like having an itch, itching it. You keep digging your nails in. The burn fades, but remains. Everything's okay.

I put on my pajamas, wash my face, go downstairs. I sit on the sofa. My dad's watching TV. He places one of his hands on my knee. This makes me feel a little better. The news is always the same: a burnt house, an accident, a dead person. Nothing interesting. They talk about that man who disappeared about three weeks ago. Nobody knows where he is. No clues so far. The authorities are confused. He must be dead. Thinking about that comforts me a little more. He. Must. Be. Dead. His son is
(Or is it was? Who does that past tense belong to?)
my classmate at school, although I don't know exactly who he is. His picture is a blurry photo. Sometimes all people seem the same to me.

My parents exchange a look. My mom says: Pau, honey, you haven't noticed anything odd about him? And for a second, I don't know who they are talking about, if it's the dead guy or who, but then it hits me. I shrug. No, of course not, I haven't noticed anything weird. What else can I say? That people always seem weird and inexplicable to me anyways? That people in my life are like dancers in a music video? You are all ugly like an illness. We eat. We talk

about other things. I forget about it for a while. My mom tidies up the kitchen. I take a pill, enter the Internet.

I look for that boy's profile. His name is Eugenio. I open his profile. His cover photo is from a music album from some unknown rock group. Lame. I check the other photos. In one, I find him: tan, black haired, messy, dirty. In summary: ugly. I mean, maybe he's not ugly, but he's definitely not handsome. A notch below mediocre, maybe. He threatens the camera with his gaze, something that people who know they aren't very photogenic do. His profile is normal. He doesn't mention his dad in any of his posts.

I open ChatR00m™, start talking with some friends about high school, TV. We make plans to go to the Mall this weekend to buy clothes. Why do we have to go out if we can buy clothes online? It's tiring, but I don't say anything. If they go out, maybe a guy will be driven to talk to them. For me, it's boring. They try to talk to me every day. I think: If that happens, I'll return home immediately, alone. Deciding that makes me feel better. Good girl. I am better than you, bitches. I say goodbye, disconnect. I turn off the light in my room. I sleep. The alarm goes off at six just like every other day. Welcome to my routine.

In the shower, I scrub my body with soap. My stomach is a little bloated: I'm about to get my period. I insert two fingers inside myself. I smell blood. I like that. I get dressed, go downstairs. My mom is making pancakes. I eat three. Good job, fatty. You're a pig. OINK. PIG. Dad is reading the newspaper, joking about high school, my classmates. He brings me to the high school. We say goodbye. He kisses my cheek, close to the corner of my mouth. His breath is warm: it tastes like coffee. He hasn't brushed his teeth.

On the way to my classroom, I look at my belly. It throbs. I feel ugly, common, fat. I feel a cramp rise from my inner thigh to my throat. It hurts. I say hi to my friends without much enthusiasm, take my seat. Eugenio sits at the desk behind me. He doesn't say: Hi. Good

morning. People are talking about him. Maybe I should turn around, smile at him, say hello. And what am I going to tell him. Sorry your dad died? Or left you? Being ugly isn't your fault; I mean, can you say that to someone? Like, seriously?

I think so much about what to tell him that I end up not saying anything. The English teacher walks into the classroom. We take out our iPads. Class starts. English is boring, easy. I focus on drawing geometric figures in Sketch™. Here a cube, there a triangle, over here a circle connected by a couple of lines to a trapezoid. Nothing means anything. Pointless as fuckin' life. The figures don't even have exact shapes, but it's more fun than paying attention. I would like to say something to Eugenio. I think I should say something to him. Isn't that what you do when you want to be nice? I can send him a private. I open iMessage, write: Hey, I'm so sorry about your dad, really; I hope you're okay. If you wanna talk to anyone, you can talk to me. I send it. It's not a nice or uplifting message, but it's what I think of. It's sincere. Take it or leave it, dude. In the lower part of the message I read: Delivered. Nothing happens. And that's it.

Eugenio reads the message. He holds his breath; I mean, I hear him hold his breath. It seems impossible but that's how it is. I'm nervous. I'm sweating. I feel a new cramp in my ovaries. It's the end of the word. I get his response. I jump at the message. I read it. The message is only one word, Helvetica 12, black ink. The word is: Thanks. Next to it, a smiley face. I'm nice. Like the fucking teenage Mother Theresa. I'm proud of myself. Yey for me. I smile at him. He smiles at me. We aren't friends, but we share a secret.

The day ends. I say goodbye to my classmates, wait for my dad. His kiss brushes against my lips. We take the express lane. My dad says: Today we have to cook for ourselves, honey, your mom is visiting your grandmother. I respond: Fine. I mean, my dad doesn't know how to cook. Watching him will be funny. We go into an AllMarket™. My dad parks the car far

from the door. In the entrance, two old guys are fighting for a cart. They raise their fists, hit each other's face. I go inside without paying them much attention.

I buy bread, milk, pasta, eggs, spaghetti sauce. I pay with my dad's credit card. I walk to the car. The old guys have left: remains of blood on the pavement; in the distance, the scream of sirens. The rest of the way, my dad drives in silence. Some problem at the office. I take the bag, get out quickly. I leave the bag in the kitchen, go up to my room. I take off my clothes. The pad is full of blood. I grab shorts, some random shirt. I get changed. I wash my face. I dampen my hair. I've left my phone in the car. I plan to go look for it. My dad is waiting for me in the doorway.

He's furious. I know it just by looking at him. He's holding my phone in his hands. I don't know how to react. I take a few steps back, sit on my bed. I want to unlock my gaze from his, but I can't. My dad says: I checked your phone; I found the photos, you fucking slut. Fuck, my daughter is a whore. And before I can say anything, even before opening my mouth, my dad slaps me across the face. The hit is so hard that it almost knocks me off the bed.

The taste of blood floods my mouth. The world is a bucket full of guts. This blood is different than the blood I tasted a few minutes ago: it's not mine. I don't like it. It smells of sorrow, of fury. I've bitten my lip. Everything goes blurry. My dad continues yelling. I don't understand what he's saying. My neck hurts, my cheek, my head. A tear rolls down my cheek. My dad grabs my arm, holds me with force. I complain (dad, it hurts, *me duele*), but he doesn't loosen his grip.

The scene dissolves into the third person. I become a fly on the wall.

One of his hands travels down to his crotch. He unzips his pants. He takes out his penis. He puts his semi-erect penis several inches from his daughter's face. She tries to move her head away, but cannot: he's holding her firmly. Now his penis is hard. It's small, fat, ugly. She doesn't understand what's happening. She does know, though, that it should not be happening. His eyes don't only reflect anger, but also hate, rage, contempt. The girl on the bed is not his daughter. She's a foreign woman, from a lower class.

He screams: If you want to be a whore, I'll teach you to be a whore. You want to be a slut? That's why I'm paying for your high school? That's your future? Suck it, stick it in your mouth, all of it. Now! He slaps her again, forces her to open her mouth. She struggles, tries to break free. But she can't. He sticks his penis between her teeth. He chokes her. She tastes something like bleach mixed with blood. Her face wrinkles in disgust. She begins to gag, but swallows the urge. She coughs. He takes his penis out of her mouth. She cries.

No words come out of her mouth. They trip on her tongue, bounce against her teeth. He masturbates without taking his eyes off her. He comes all over her face, in her hair, on her shirt. The semen mixes with tears, both of which are the same: a waste. He takes a deep breath. He turns around, leaves without saying a word. He slams the door behind him. She curls into a ball on the bed. She's full of pain, of rage. She's confused.

I clean my face with the sheets. My shirt is stained with blood. I look at myself in the mirror: the start of a black and blue mark on my cheek. My hair full of semen. I think about getting into the shower, turning on the water, cutting open my veins. I think about jumping from my bedroom window to the cement below. What they've said about me is true. Everything goes on. I go into the bathroom, sit on the toilet. I breathe. I dampen my face with water. Rinse my hair.

I grab my backpack. I throw the notebooks in a corner. Inside, I put clothes, pads, underwear. I carefully open my bedroom door, walk down the edge of the stairs. And I listen. Nothing. The silence is pure like a wooden box. I peer into the kitchen, into the living room. No one. I tiptoe to the front door, open it. The bathroom door also opens. I feel him there, behind me. My dad is the shadow that covers my body.

I run. I only think about escaping. I go through the hall, the front door. My dad runs behind me. I feel him outstretch his hands. He grabs the backpack. I let go of it. He loses his chance to grab hold of me. I run faster. I'm in the street. I turn right. I don't stop. My dad falls behind. I put several yards between us. Further and further. He yells. His shouts are faint. I run until I can't hear them at all.

The Prince (p. 102)

I lose my name in a bet. Since then, everyone, I mean, all the people that see me in the street, call me: The Prince. But my name, my real name, was lost playing poker with some dudes who I had never seen before. This was many years ago. The guys were well dressed: suit, tie, dark sunglasses. No matter how hard I try, I cannot remember how I ended up at the table. Alcohol often does this to me. It's as if someone hosed down my brain. I am sitting around a table in a dark room.

Opposite me, a fat, bald guy. Next to me, two equally somber dudes. I have a good hand. I feel safe. Right under my cards, I find a good number of chips. I've had a good night. I raise my next bet. The others shift in their seats. I've got them by the balls! But the fat one looks at me over his glasses. He opens his mouth as if to say something to me. He raises the pot, reaches his hand into his pocket, takes out a USB. The USB, into the pot. It's the USB to his car.

Silence falls over the table. The others continue the play. What the fat guy is doing is illegal, but no one says anything. I have a good hand. I fix my gaze on the fat guy, I spit out: I don't have a car; I don't even know how to drive. I reach out my hand to take the USB, to remove it from the pot. The dude stops me. He says: It doesn't matter, it doesn't matter. His voice is smooth, I mean, it's not the voice of a fat guy. And I say: But you don't get it, I am poor. I only have the clothes on my back and the name my parents gave me. He goes quiet, looks at his cards, the pot of chips. He says: Well, okay; the rest of your chips and your name. My name.

Has anyone ever bet their own name before? What does a person do with someone else's name? What is a name? Nothing. A name is useless, empty. I respond: Okay. I put the rest of my chips in the pot. And my name. Losing is impossible. I place my cards on the table. A flush. The fat guy contemplates the cards: his face, impassible. That passivity bothers me. I want to grab his neck, beat him to shreds. I want to jab pieces of glasses into his cheeks. He places his cards on the table. Royal Flush. I can't believe it. He has cheated, but I don't know how to prove it.

I think about calling him out, but when I open my mouth no words come out. My tongue coils back, shrivels. It's nothing more than a wart, a dry branch. The branch becomes sand. All of the sand in the world floods my mouth. I spit the pieces of my tongue on the floor. The dudes next to me spread their legs, look at me. They are pissed. I want to apologize to them, but I can't make a sound. The guys hit me, kick me out of the room.

That night I sleep in the storm drain, surrounded by insects. I become The Prince.

I lose more than my name. My ability to chew, for example. I break up little pieces of food, swallow them whole. Like a duck. The process is slow, complicated. It is the only thing I can do. That or starve. I'm not ready to die yet. Or maybe I fear the solitude. They tell me that

there are still things left for me to do, that something is waiting for me beyond the next corner, that I can still be useful.

I watch him go to work. HIS skin is pale, yellowish. It's been several days since HE's slept, eaten. When the sun goes down, HE lets me in. I sit in the kitchen while HE rushes to shoot up. HE spends most of HIS time connected to the Internet. HE comes out again at two or three in the morning. Runs to the bathroom, vomits blood. The blood splatters in the toilet, on the floor, the walls. It looks like someone had burst open in there. Maybe a balloon. HIS remains slip around the whole room. I grab a rag, a sponge, the mop, a little disinfectant. I go into the bathroom, clean the filth.

I remove what is left of HIM from the bathroom walls. Shouldn't I also clean HIM, his body, to cleanse HIM of his sins? But they haven't asked me to. Does HE know a sick soul? HE is in the shower. I hear the water hit his skin. But water is not enough; soap is not enough. The sins of humanity can only be cleansed with fire.

I am a pet. I sit when I'm supposed to sit. I go out and wait when I'm supposed to go out and wait. You tend to get used to everything. The blood inside and the shit outside are the same thing.

I walk around the streets. I try communicating with people. Impossible. I walk up and down the sidewalks; I count the number of windows that buildings have, the number of bars on gates. I make friends with the grackles and the pigeons. They ruffle their wings when they see me pass. I count the red cars in a parking lot, then the blue ones. I kill time. The sun's heat enters through my eyes. People give me a coin or something to eat. Some ask how they can help me, but when I don't answer, they assume I'm nuts. They don't ask me again.

My parents were poor, that's why I'm a disconnect. I'm naked amongst the masses. No one understands me. One day I go into a retro movie theater to find shelter. I sit on a bench in the back. They turn off the lights; the movie images parade across a white screen. The movie is weird: people in a space ship find a monster. Everyone dies. In one of the scenes, the captain looks through one of the portholes, screams. But you can't hear his scream.

I am the captain. My ship is going into a black hole. The movie theater is demolished a couple years later. They build a parking lot. Daily: ten red cars, three blue, three green, eight gray, two black.

I tell them about the house. About what it means to be inside, in a warm place. But they are difficult to impress. They don't pay attention to me. I ask them to hit him. I tell them that his body is weak. They respond: No. Not yet. There is a time for planting, and a time for harvesting. That time has not yet come. There are things that must first be done. I don't understand what these things are

(in fact, I don't even understand what time it is now)

but I don't ask them. They work in their own way. It's better not to get involved in those things.

And they are right. Tonight, HE doesn't arrive alone. A fat dude wearing a black shirt comes with him. A photographic camera around his neck. The guy must be thirty something. I wave at them. The fat guy looks me up and down, holds out his hand. He says his name is Mario. It's all the same to me. HE says: He can't talk, or, well, he doesn't talk. As if that explained everything. Mario responds: Ah. He's afraid, but tries to hide it. A dude of his size should not scare so easily. Faggot. He holds the camera as if he were about to hit us, to bolt. And what can a couple of freaks do to him, a skeleton, an addict? They don't want him, just HIM.

HE prepares food for both of us. We eat in silence. Mario washes everyone's plates. HE rushes to the bedroom, locks himself in. Mario discovers the syringe between his fingers.

He tries to talk to him through the door. He says: Rodolfo, dude, that isn't good. I don't pay much attention. Mario's voice is like the croak of a frog. It's annoying. HE doesn't open the door. Mario asks me: How long has he been shooting up? How often? How many hours? It's all the same to me.

I ask them to light the house on fire. It doesn't matter if I'm still in there. The only answer is the wind licking the windows. The lines are busy. Mario sits on a sofa in the living room. I sit opposite him, watch him. If things get ugly, I won't protect him. Mario raises his camera, takes my picture. The camera's flash is a punch to my jaw. He shows me the photo on a small screen on the back of the camera. He points at the face, says: This is you. But that's not me. Mario takes a step back.

It isn't easy to live without a name. How could I explain it. The body on the screen is a defeated worm. This isn't anyone's fault. I don't want to scare you. At two in the morning, HE opens the door again. HE runs into the bathroom. Vomits. Mario sleeps with his head on the back of the sofa. The sound of HIS heaving wakes him. He knocks on the bathroom door. Mario asks if everything's alright. HE answers: Yes, I'm fine. HE comes out, serves himself a glass of water. Once more, I clean the bathroom.

I hear them through the door. Their voices go up and down like the elevators in an apartment building. Mario says something about the needle. HE just repeats one sentence: It doesn't matter, that doesn't matter. And the truth is that HE is right: that doesn't matter. They will arrive soon. Everything is part of the plan. I come out of the bathroom, sit at the table. Mario snores lightly. I beg them: Destroy HIM. But the sky is becoming light-blue. It is time to put on the uniform and go to work. HE scribbles a note on a napkin, puts it on the table. On the napkin, the keys. We leave.

Some grackles sit on the telephone lines. They tilt their heads to see us. We split ways on the corner. People leave their houses. Others arrive. I don't know how many hours I sit on the sidewalk for. I count the lines in the tires of a car to fight off sleep. The lines are still occupied. It's hot. Mario leaves the house, gets lost in the city. The car's owner arrives, tosses me a coin. I look for another car, start again.

At night, they arrive together again. HE says to me: No, not today, please. His attitude reminds me of an office worker at the end of the day. I don't insist. They turn on the lights in the living room. Tonight is not the night either. But it's soon. I know it. I want to scream. I lean against the walls, against cars. I put a foot on the bars, climb up to the roof. I walk carefully on the nails. I lie down, put my ear against the zinc metal panels.

I hear them get up, wash the dishes. A door closes. The wind, around us. We are closer and closer. The pigeons tell me: Soon. Patience is not one of my virtues. A little now is better than a lot later. But I wait. And I wait and wait and wait.

Mario (p. 108)

The car has been in the shop for many days. No one wants to tell me exactly what the problem is. And not moving makes me sick. I feel her shadow extending over the country like an enormous arm about to tear me apart. I don't have cash. I cannot use my credit cards. She would find me immediately. The situation has gone from bad to complete shit. I think about selling Frida. The day after I check myself into a hotel, I visit a pawn shop. When I get to the counter, I know I won't be able to do it. I walk out with my head hanging low, but proud. I take photos as a reward. There, my shadow on the sand. Here, my toes in the water.

I look for a place to eat. I observe storefronts, windows, the mechanical trees. I find a dead bird in a storm drain, the graffiti of a skull on one of the walls on the west end. I take

photos of both, save them on my hard drive. The disproportion between buildings stands out immediately. My whole body sweats. The only natural thing is the ocean. I escape the verticality, go to the beach club. I don't know why. I'm not even wearing a bathing suit.

I ask the guy who helps me for a pill. I'm afraid to enter Facebook. I find two new messages in my Inbox. I respond: Please, leave me alone; move on with your life, with your projects, with Merck, with the other bitch. I don't love you. But it's a lie. I log out, open Spotify. I listen to sad music that makes me think of her. I open a random book, but I can't concentrate on what it says. I disconnect. The city is a book in a foreign language. I return to the hotel, pay for another night with the last bills in my wallet. I remove the sand from my boxers. I lie down to sleep.

I am on the street before the Sun. I walk west, stop again in front of the skull graffiti. It's as if it wanted to tell me something. I snap a photo. I return to the beach club. I ask for a Coca Cola, another pill. I don't have any means of paying. She hasn't responded to my message, but she's read it. I feel like a perverse version of *Pretty Woman*. I don't know where to sleep tonight. I find a package of Dunhill in my backpack. I light one, think about my life. The cleaning guy comes over, he says: You can't smoke here, buddy; you have to go to the smoking section. I put out the cigarette. The flame is smothered against the concrete. My life is just that: a butt soaked in chlorinated water.

I cry like I haven't cried in a long time. It is pathetic to see an almost forty-year-old man crying, but it shouldn't seem weird. The cleaning guy gets worried, sits next to me. He asks: What's wrong? And everything is wrong. I tell him about my life from the beginning; I mean, from the beginning of the end. The moment when she started to change like a freshly polished sword. The time she fucked her best friend. I haven't talked to a real human being in days.

What kind of a person thinks that the guy who cleans the pools at the beach club is a psychologist? I do. Analyze that.

The cleaning guy says: If you want, you can spend the night with me. There's room at my house; I live alone; a little company wouldn't hurt me. I have no other option: it's free. I accept. I hear her voice in my head: This is so typically Mario. I lower my head. He pays for the soda, the pill. We meet again when he gets off work. The Sun disappears beyond the horizon. The light posts blink on. I hear the sound of thousands of office workers drudging on until the early morning. I take pictures. He comes back without his uniform, greets me. His name is Rodolfo. I tell him: My name is Mario.

We walk along streets that become increasingly poorer. We pass the skull. We get to a narrow boulevard, a homeless guy approaches us. He looks like a character straight out of *Metro 2033*. Rodolfo says hello. The three of us walk to a red gate. An alarm goes off in my head. They are going to rob me. Oh, Mario, she says, again? You really can't take care of yourself? I think about turning around, bolting. Rodolfo looks at me, says: Don't worry, he is just a friend; I help him out with food, that's it. My fingers firmly grip Frida. They enter the house. I could escape if I wanted to, but I don't. Under the yellow light of the living room, the two of them look sick. If something bad happens, I could probably take them both on. I won't be Rambo, but I will be great.

The place seems like it preludes something, like a delivery room. We go into the kitchen. The homeless guy and I sit at the table, Rodolfo serves the food. The homeless guy eats slowly: each bite is his last. I touch one of his shoulders. He raises his head, looks at me. I touch my chest, say: Mario. And I point to him with the same hand. But he does not respond. I don't push it. Rodolfo takes a syringe from one of his pockets, goes into his room. Based on the color of his skin, it could be heroine or Kr0k0dil. Then I remember his skinniness. The absent look in his eyes. The dead flesh on his arms. It's Px, the same kind she has released onto the street.

I get up from the chair, bang on his bedroom door. I yell. I try to explain to him that what he is doing is, for lack of a better word, suicide. Px is the worst shit in the world. I ask him to open the door, to let me in. He doesn't hear me. I ask the homeless guy how long Rodolfo has been connecting with the needle; for how many hours; how many times a day. But he doesn't answer either. No one understands me.

I lean my head back on the cushion, close my eyes. The homeless guy sits opposite me. He seems to be looking at me, looking at a point beyond me at the same time. He makes me feel uncomfortable, like wearing an Iron Maiden shirt at a Malpaís concert. I grab the camera, take his picture. The flash momentarily blinds him. I show him himself. He does not see himself on the screen. He smiles at me: his smile has too many canines. I am nobody's hero, I guess. She tells me: It is your fault that you are here, in this situation. I think: Only I would think to come to the house of a stranger who then leaves me in the living room with another stranger.

I sleep. When I open my eyes, my neck aches. I am suffocating a cushion between my hands. The bedroom door opens. Rodolfo runs to the bathroom, vomits. I knock on the door, ask him if he needs help. He responds: No. He comes out soaked in water, in sweat; his clothes sticking to his skin. We sit at the table. I tell him: What you're taking is going to kill you, it's suicide. And he answers: It doesn't matter. I don't listen to him. How can someone care so little about his own wellbeing? I continue: She says the resistance time is four days, but sometimes it can be even less. Dude, listen to me: your skin rots, it falls off; your body shuts down, the damage is not reversible. We'll all die of Internet.

He answers: I don't care, Mario. I ask him why he wants to throw his life to the wolves. But he is dying. He tells me about the blood. It's a tumor. Something tells him it's a tumor. He tells me about his family. Sick people attract the sickly. He does not want to make them suffer

more than is necessary. I don't understand it. It's a type of sick euthanasia. The world is a sickness: we are all sick. Finding each other was inevitable. I would like to tell her: Some sicknesses are worse than others, like illnesses of the soul. A broken heart heals faster than cancer, or doesn't heal at all. I get comfortable on the sofa, sleep. If I dream at all, I don't remember it the next morning. It's better that way.

Rodolfo has left. The homeless guy too. On the table I find a note that says: I left for work, I'll be back in the afternoon. On the note, keys to the house. The fridge is empty. In the pantry I find a box of cereal. I mix it with tap water in a bowl: breakfast of champions. I go into the bathroom, take off my clothes. The bathmat is sticky. The shower, full of mold. Never before have I been so grossed out to bathe in a place, any place. Not even in that hotel full of cockroaches. I don't dare to touch the bar of soap.

I leave the house. The homeless guy is waiting on the corner, I wave to him. I walk to the shop where I left the car. It is disassembled: it looks like a cadaver on an operating table. It is worse than before. The mechanic's shirt is stained with grease. He wipes his hands on a cloth he keeps in his back pocket. He says: The computer is bad, boss; I can't fix it because it's a software problem, but I already ordered the part. I ask him: How long will it take for the part to get to the shop. He says: A day or two.

The dude takes a little box from one of his pockets, he shows it to me. He says: I also found this hidden in the engine, I don't know if you knew. And he looks at me as if expecting me to recognize it. I don't know what it is. Who do you think I am, Batman? He responds: It's a GPS 3.1 with a locator, it works like a tracking device; it gives off a signal. I go pale. I don't understand anything he says after signal. It's her. The box is her. I think about her. She knows where I am. She's coming for me. She's close. That's why she hasn't answered my messages. I could pass out.

The mechanic asks me if I'm okay. His eyes widen. I have to get out of the city immediately. I won't be able to take the car. I tell him: It's an emergency, I don't need the car. If you want, I can sell it to you; you can use everything that works. The mechanic agrees. Maybe this has happened to him before. He strokes the hood of the car, tells me: I can give you a hundred thousand dollars, because of the cost of the computer. I respond: A hundred thousand is fine; a hundred is perfect. A hundred is a rip-off, but what's it matter? I have to go.

I run to the beach club to say goodbye to Rodolfo, give him the keys to the house. We enter an office, he takes out two cigarettes. I tell him what has happened. Rodolfo listens to me seriously. We smoke. He asks me to stay with him one more night. I tell him: I can't dude, I can't. He says: It's impossible to get a seat on a bus to San José at this hour, Mario; it's better to leave on the bus at five in the morning. Hide for one more night. She doesn't know exactly where you are. One more night doesn't matter.

Why do I agree? I have no reason to stay. I don't owe anything to anyone. I could stand in the aisle on the bus, ask someone to take me. I have money in my pocket, the desire to flee. Why do I stay? You all know: it's because I want her to find me. To come back to me crying, crawling, begging forgiveness. Her shirt dirty, her hair tangled, her make-up streaked. We are all sick. I hear her voice echo in the city outside: Sometimes you can be such a drama king, dude. Incredible. She's right. This is absurd. Things won't turn out how I planned.

Rodolfo lends me his bed. He sleeps on the sofa. I dream that he is a scarecrow made of the wood from a baobab tree. His legs break. He falls to the ground. He shatters like a glass. Then the image changes. I dream about an enormous WalMart. The aisles are a straight line. All of the cashiers are her. It sells needles in bulk. Customers buy thousands of needles. All of them are happy. Their flesh rots, dies. Their skin falls off in pieces. The epidermis is a headless snake on the linoleum. Hundreds of glasses sitting on a shelf that's about to fall.

The light filters through the curtains. I wake up. What time is it? Where am I? I try to turn over, get out of the bed, ask Rodolfo why it is so bright outside. But my hands are tied to the headboard; my legs, to the sides of the bed. I struggle, but I cannot free myself. I scream. I scream louder. Rodolfo comes into the room, puts a handkerchief over my mouth. And I cannot scream anymore.

The Maker (p. 115)

Mario has been gone far too long. He doesn't answer my messages, my emails, or Skype. If he thinks I don't know how to find him, he's wrong. My car has a GPS. I enter the Internet. Three seconds later I find him in Puntarenas. I disconnect. I put clothes in a backpack, several syringes. I ask Andrés for the USB to his car. He doesn't ask questions. I tell him: Phase two will have to wait until I'm back, but check and see if you can communicate with Merck. And he responds: Okay. I stick the USB in the door of the car, try to start the engine. It doesn't start. I take a Dunhill from my pocket, put it between my lips. I say out loud: Come on, piece of shit, come on. I try again. The machine coughs, stays on. I light the cigarette with the car lighter, shift into gear.

The needle is my idea. I synthesize the components of the pill in a single syringe. An injection of L30 directly into the blood would be better than waiting for the pill to dissolve. Thanks to the syringe, I reduce the death rate by thirty percent. Just one problem: the needle is more addictive than the pill. Government and FDA regulations put my research at risk. At the beginning, L30 has the same effects as a dose of Kr0kr0d1I 2.0.

A strong dose, with which the chip can stay connected at speeds higher than 512MG, is enough to create dependence. The body loses mass, the throat narrows, the skin becomes

wrinkled. Epidermal cells die. L30 consumes the system's resources. The desire for a needle increases. We try to stop the dependence of our patients. To clean their organisms. Dozens die. In their agony, they are nothing more than cadavers with the desire to be on the Web.

The Government visits the laboratory. They see the tests, evaluate the results. One of them gets scared when he sees my patients. He asks to cancel the research. The panic spreads amongst the other members of the board. I explain that in all research, there are always periods of delay. What they are seeing is normal. What importance do some invalids, some retards have in the world? Isn't the sacrifice of a few necessary for the common good? Give me more time, more money. The problem can be solved.

They don't hear me. They turn their heads, avoid my gaze. I call them stupid, cowards, traitors. They drag me out of my own laboratory. I want to beat them to death.

I contact Pfizer, offer them my research. In exchange, 100 million dollars, leadership of my own laboratory. The terms aren't negotiable. I can demand whatever I want. Pfizer accepts. We move to a private laboratory in Heredia. We continue the search for patients. Studying their brain is not enough. We need to understand them. I have to enter with them. On day W, I take a syringe, look for the vein in my arm, connect.

I indulge in the cyberuniverse in all its splendor for the first time. It is beautiful. Concentrated L30 overwhelms the interface. The chip's operating system is obsolete. The only thing that's left is darkness. We have regained the night. When I think about a domain or a website, I am immediately there. I am part of the Web. My name is The Web. I feel how the terabytes are downloaded. We have created a cybernetic paradise: Reality superimposed on another reality.

I become an addict. The cyberuniverse is bigger than us. It passes through the borders of the human brain. We have found Infinity. The MetaReality. God's lap. I disconnect. The side effects attack me harshly. But there is no way for me to go back. I have achieved something that no one else has even dared to dream. I am a visionary. An entrepreneur. The future Nobel Prize in coding.

If I don't connect regularly, even if it's just a small dose, my body shuts down. My extremities tingle. They fall asleep. The applications in my body stop working. Patients die from a lack of L30: their lungs, their livers or their hearts stop working. This is a general failure. A virus. I keep my discovery far from my team, far from Mario. Sometimes he can get so worried. Trying the needle in themselves is prohibited until we get clearer results. I review the components one by one: all in perfect order. I have achieved so much. Starting over is impossible.

I devote my free time to observing how blood behaves when injected with L30 using a microscope. I need to find a solution. What I find: without L30, the cells and the red blood cells attack each other. I have created cannibal organisms. Self-destructive. I estimate the disconnection time at twenty-four hours, scarcely a little more.

I thoroughly analyze the cellular components of the human body. I download several biology books. I read the words of the experts: Severo Ochoa, Lynn Margulis, Craig Venter, James Watson. The theory of symbiogenesis and the transfer of genetic material pique my interest, but nothing offers an answer to my problem. Biology is another dead end. Changing all the cells of a living organism is impossible. Expensive. Pfizer rejects it.

The answer is: controlled doses at defined intervals. Complete disconnection of the individual is not permitted, at the risk of death. Eternal Internet. Twenty-four hour connection.

One year with Pfizer. I still haven't found a better solution. I bang my head against the whiteboards. Against large chains of chemical components. It is impossible. It is just a matter of time before Pfizer cancels my research. Finally, the day arrives. I return everything. My career is over. My surname forever linked to failure. I lock myself in my apartment. I seriously consider stopping injecting myself with L30. Committing suicide. But if I am afraid of failure, I'm even more afraid of nothingness.

Mario comes to my apartment every day. He bathes me, gives me food. He says: A true innovator does not give up. A true pioneer does what she has to do, she doesn't give up. And stupid things like that. Sometimes you can be so naïve, love, so optimistic. But this time you're right. There are no solutionless problems in the world because science does not accept the inexplicable. The realm of vagueness belongs to religion. Reality is ours. My team decides to continue with the research.

We decided to get out of the capital. It is necessary to find a place where we can work without being interrupted. We print a map of Costa Rica. Mario points out a beach in the far north. Cuajiniquil. Border areas are no one's land. They belong to the big drug traffickers. The Government cannot control them. We rent an eighteen-wheeler, load up the laboratory in the trailer. We leave the city behind.

We are happy. The laboratory is located a few minutes from the town. We have the sun, the beach, the ocean, L30. We have permission to be daring. To keep ourselves running, we sell small needles to the locals. To those tourists who come to the beach. Our fame grows. Soon people are asking us for hundreds of syringes. We give them to them. We export backpacks full of needles to San José. I call Arturo. We have some distributors. In Rome, do like the Romans. We remain in the shadow of the market. We are a micro-business: some

young people looking for a quick way to make money, retire before we hit 40. The dream has not died.

The next step is to hack the neuronal chip. If we can get into the data base, we will have the opportunity to modify the cellular behavior of the organism. This is also my idea. Linking two chips has always been dangerous. We need live patients. To carry out our tests, we kidnap tourists from the beaches neighboring the laboratory. We bring them to the lab, drug them. We experiment. *Ciencia et cultura pro omine*.

The nanochip is protected by a dozen firewalls. I tiptoe towards our patients' hard drives. Carefully. I follow the established maps. The process consists of touching their minds with my mind. Creating a link. It's like magic. I see their chip within my reach, but I don't have the key to get in. If I go a half inch off track, I will cause a general overload. Snow crash. I try a thousand times: nothing works.

Causing the blackout is Tatiana's idea. The plan is to introduce a virus into the system. Cause a failure. If the chip tries to defend itself (which it will), we will go in. It is like attacking a castle during the few seconds when it must open its doors to let out its armed guard. I trap one of the viruses from porno sites. I modify its code. We inject the virus into one of my patients; I link to the patient's system. I wait.

The alarms go off seconds later. The system defends itself. I hurry to find the openings: I find them. *Vini, vidi, vici*. I am inside the chip of another person. I modify its code, the basic code. I reprogram the system to what I think is right based on the biology books. I tell it how to behave from now on. The possibilities are infinite.

The patient dies three days later, but it is just a matter of perseverance. I discover how resistant the mind is to pain, suffering, dissatisfaction. Hope makes them tolerate the most extreme conditions. I torture them. I cling onto the survival instinct to carry out my experiments. I alter the codes, destroy the senses. I prevent one of my patients from feeling pleasure or happiness. I cut their arms, make them watch their own blood. Everything is for the benefit of science. The body is nothing more than a vessel. True life is on the Internet. I become a Goddess, a soul collector. What I want is the brain.

We successfully diminish the harmful behavior of the cells, but we don't remove it. The cells always behave aggressively without L30. We increase the disconnection time of the organism: from twenty-four hours to just under sixty. That is enough for the drug to not be dangerous. Who among you would spend that much time without the Web? It will be necessary to put a little warning on the box. Nothing that a good marketing department can't fix.

The new code is injected into the nervous system with the first dose of L30. In the rest of the doses, the program will remain inactive, since no one can install the same application twice while this one is still installed. The research goes on for more than a decade. It takes the lives of countless patients. To avoid legal problems, I baptize the new drug with the name Pxs1t3x, or Px. I require my assistants to take a dose. Mario refuses. He is so correct, so idealistic. Things between us have changed. One day he tells me: I don't like this person you've become.

I send hundreds of syringes to San José. To all of the cities in the country. The Beta stage has begun. Mario continues consuming L30 in pills. This is his betrayal. He avoids listening to me. It's difficult to believe that the attack is coming from him. My betrayal will come a few days later. Sick of his behavior, I fuck Tatiana in the bed that I share with Mario. But it doesn't mean anything: sex is just sex. And this was vengeance. The relationship falls apart.

Mario complains about me. We fight. I hit him, just once, with my open palm. I see the sadness in his eyes like a dark ship that gets lost in the horizon.

Other things do not go as planned either. The new code does not eclipse the old one. My body's disconnection time has remained the same; I mean, at 24 hours. Sometimes less. I don't have an explanation for this. Maybe the code only works in previously unmodified chips. That's my conclusion. It isn't the best, but it's the one I have. If I don't want my body to shut down, or my lungs or my liver or my heart to stop working, I shoot up a dose of Px every couple of hours. This kind of dose is not enough to connect me to The Web, but rather enough to keep me from shutting down.

In other words, like a diabetic. The Internet is my insulin. Addiction is an excellent marketing strategy. Human beings are willing to take any kind of medication as long as it improves our quality of life. We do not need to know where it comes from, how it's made, how it works. Or the side effects. Being oblivious to things we can't understand is what lets us sleep. With the needles in the streets, with the code functioning, there is little that the Government or the FDA can do.

I put my foot on the gas, turn on the radio. An accident in San José, riots in Alajuela. It's noon. The automatic trees on both sides of the express route protect themselves from the sun with their branches. My shirt is drenched in sweat. My arms itch. My legs are starting to fall asleep. I have been driving nonstop for a couple hours: I feel tired, thirsty. The GPS is still sending out its signal from Puntarenas. I need to get there as soon as possible.

I roll down the window. My cheeks fall asleep, I feel my throat closing. I can't get enough air. I park the car on the shoulder of the highway, take a syringe from my purse. I inject it into my leg. My body explodes. It feels like I'm climbing up some steep stairs. Blood returns to my legs. My airways open up. Again, I shift into gear.

Evening falls upon the highway. I see a sign that says: Puntarenas, 94km. I will be there in less than an hour. I say, out loud: Mario. The wind picks up the letters, the sounds. It carries them with it. Every so often, his name returns to my ears, changed, perverted. His name is scattered along the highway. Maybe we can start over. In the distance, the pollution is spread through the night. It hides the stars.

The highway becomes a tongue. Hundreds of animals emerge from their dens, line up along the route: spectators in a parade. The animals are wolves, coyotes, tapirs, dogs, grackles, pigeons, foxes, canaries. They turn their heads to watch me pass. They bow slightly. They applaud me. One by one they lie down on the tongue. The car's tires run them over. The weight of the carriage crushes them. Their blood dyes the trees, the leaves, the cement. Their remains are left on the road. They are a welcome mat, just for me: Ms. Reality.

The Maker (p. 143)

I get to Puntarenas at nightfall. Hundreds of boats cover the ocean as if someone had installed a wooden floor. The masts are fists raised up towards the sky. Canoes, small motorboats, sailboats: all boats that are suitable for fishing, not for sailing the open sea. If you enter the city from the old pier, you will get the impression of entering a ward full of terminally ill patients. The big cruise ships for tourists set anchor a few miles down the shore.

The GPS stopped sending out its signal a few hours ago, but Mario must still be around here. I can feel him. I know that you haven't left, darling. I park the car in a spot on the coastal road. I walk on the sand. On the dunes, I find hundreds of little holes made by crabs. I fill them back in with sand, because it's nice to think that they will be buried alive or unable to find their burrows. Back to zero.

I look for a McDonald's. Behind the counter, a gray man in a green jacket. I take a photo from my wallet, I ask him: Have you seen this dude? He could even be wearing the same shirt. That's how he is. The dude squints, holds the photo between his fingers, places it back down on the counter. He answers: No, I really haven't. I take the tray to a table by the window. I take the lid off the drink, drink Coca Cola straight from the plastic cup. I light a Dunhill. I feel pins and needles throughout my body. My left arm is dead.

I go back to the car. I sit behind the wheel, take a needle from the glove box. I shoot up. I count my breaths. My arm springs back to life. I throw a couple needles in my pocket, return to the street. I think: There's no way on Earth that Mario found the GPS. Someone must have opened the hood, looked inside the engine. And that someone must understand engines.

I visit every mechanic in the city. At the fifth, a fat guy tells me that he had seen Mario several hours earlier, that he bought the car off him. He asks me: You're not here to take back the car, are you? And I respond: I don't care about the car, I want to know where he is. The guy looks me up and down, as if thinking: That fatty screws this chick? But if he knows anything about us, he doesn't say it. I insistently ask about him. The fat guy stresses that he doesn't know anything about Mario: just another client, the car's computer was bad, etc. He tells me that Mario was in a hurry.

The car deal

(a deal better for him than for Mario, from what I understand. You were never very business smart),

is the most important thing. Mario takes the money, hurries away. It's my fault. Once the GPS is found, it doesn't take a genius to know I am on my way.

I run to the bus stop. I ask all the drivers, the passengers, about him, but no one has seen him. It can be one of two things:

Mario successfully got on a bus without anyone seeing him or he's still in Puntarenas.

I lean towards the latter. Mario is not a man who goes unnoticed. We go to the car. I buy a new cell phone, call the laboratory. No one answers. I walk around the streets not knowing where to go, where to search. I go into the city. I get lost in its streets. I look for a hotel, pay for the night. The room is dark. On the wall facing the bed, a flat-screen TV. I prepare a dose, connect to the Internet. I check Mario's profile: days without updates. I write him another message. The message says: I'm in Puntarenas, I've come for you; talk to me, I'll forgive you for everything if you'll forgive me. Twenty minutes later he still has not seen it.

I lie down on the length of the bed. It is as if I had laid down across the entire cyberuniverse. I sleep. In my dream, I am a Queen sitting on a throne of cables: plastic, copper, chrome. My subjects are computers. The computers are mine to name and treat as I wish. A HP-Pavillion p6-2100 CPU is Mike. Mike is a loyal subject: worried about his family, fearful of the Queen. He pays his taxes, respects the rest day. Good, Mike.

Mike paces the throne room, talks to me in binary language. 0101, he means: Hello. 10010: How are you? Then: 0101100100101010001000101010000101010010101000101. Hello, Ma'am. How are you? I wanted to ask you... And then he presents me with a list of commands that I must revise or reject. I am the head of a software/hardware kingdom. It is like being the Task Manager in Windows. Ctrl + Alt + Delete.

Tired of everything
(everyone),

I retire to my room. Waiting for me on my bed is a young laptop, thin, shapely. Her skin is soft: aluminum, plastic. I get into bed with her, our bodies intertwine between the sheets. I caress her CD-ROM drive. I kiss her, we exchange files. That's how we machines make love.

I wake up drenched in sweat. I don't know what time it is. Half of my body is dead. It doesn't respond to the commands from my brain. I think: My subjects have revolted. And pieces of my dream fall to the floor, shatter. Their sharp edges cut my feet, my hands. I throw myself from the mattress to the floor. I carefully drag myself along the floor between the pieces of my dream until reaching my purse. I bleed. I take out a needle, jam it into my neck. My lungs take in air, I open my eyes.

Once standing, I go to the bathroom. I throw a little water on my face. I take the needle out of my neck. I lie on the mattress without closing my eyes. I cannot close them. I do not want to close them. I stay there until the morning's light shines in between the curtains. I take another dose of Px, put two more needles in my pockets. I get dressed, go downstairs for breakfast. I go back out into the city. My name is a pin piercing my heart. I look for Mario on every corner. I don't find him. He doesn't exist.

I walk west. On one of the walls, I find graffiti of a skull. I stare at it: it is a mirror. Mario has also seen it. I know that, too. I find a street with a row of houses sick from so much sun. It's hard to believe that this neighborhood belongs to the city behind me, but it does: a wound on Godzilla's skin. It is an old neighborhood, an aftertaste of forgotten futures. In a corner, a homeless man sleeps against the wall. I sit on the curb a few yards from where he is, take out my telephone.

This time, Tatiana answers. I say: Hey. And she responds: Hey, where are you? You went to look for him? And I say: Far, that doesn't matter; I'll be back soon. Have we already talked to Merck? I hear her groan, she says: Yeah, they say that they want to come and discuss the contract, they are interested but... I answer: But nothing. Tell them to come to the laboratory, I'll take care of them. Tati says: Tell them when you get back. And hangs up.

The homeless man gets up, looks around. He comes over. I show him the photo of Mario. He gestures something. I don't understand. I tell him that. He moves his hands faster. I take out my phone, open a blank notepad, give it to him. I ask him: Do you know how to write? And he grabs the phone. He types slowly, as if pressing the buttons was an effort beyond his physical capacity. I look at the message. It says: Mro thr. Mro thr. It doesn't say anything. I look at the homeless man. He points at a house almost at the end of the avenue: one with a red gate.

I stop behind the bars, look for a bell or scanner. Nothing. I knock on the gate. I hate things without technology. The homeless man does not move from the corner. I feel him watching me, his eyes on my back. I knock harder on the gate, no one answers. I knock again. A few seconds later the door opens

(Mro thr),

a skeleton emerges from within the house. He's a man, but his skin is dry, wrinkled, stuck to his bones. He has needle marks on his arms, dead skin. I recognize my work.

The skeleton asks me: What? The homeless man's gaze is fixed on my back, on the gate, on the house. I ask: Sir, I'm looking for someone, I was wondering if maybe you had seen him. I take out Mario's photo, stick my hand through the bars. I hand him the photo. A shadow comes across his face. His hands tremble: the photo between his fingers is a leaf fluttering on a tree's branches. The man answers: No, I don't know him. He returns the photo, goes back inside the house, closes the door.

Mario there.

Mro thr means Mario there. I clutch the bars, scream: Liar! I demand him to open the door again, to let me in. He doesn't do it. I run over to the homeless man: his gaze is a blank canvas. I ask him not to let the man escape if he leaves the house. I will be back in five minutes. The homeless man nods, looks towards the sky. He smiles: his face is a house with too much furniture. My destiny is drawn in his face.

I sit behind the wheel. I give myself a big dose of L30 so that I'm ready. I start the engine, drive to the avenue. The journey takes an hour. That's what it feels like. I park the car in front of the house with the red gate. The homeless man is waiting on the corner: a lookout. I ask him to come over. I take a rope out of the trunk. I ask him to tie one end to the bars of the gate; the other, to the car's bumper. I put the car in neutral, step down on the gas. From twenty to thirty, from fifty to one hundred. The tires smoke. The sound is like the song of a million birds.

The rope goes taut. I hit the transmission, put the car in reverse. The force of the movement makes the gate break free from the house. It hits the hood, the windshield of the car. It is like seeing an odontologist pull out a molar. I get out of the car, run towards the house, ram my shoulder into the front door. Once, twice. The door gives in. Two hits later, it opens completely. I go in. I notice the silence, both inside and out. The man has left: he has left me his hate.

The living room and kitchen are both empty. Behind the bedroom door, I hear something. A moan. I kick open the door. I see the guy lying at the foot of the bed, naked, his hands on his head. Then I see the other body on the mattress. Also nude: his extremities are tied to the edges of the bed. His skin is purple. His hair covers his face, but I don't need to see his face to know who he is: Mario.

The Prince (p. 150)

This also happens a long time ago, after losing my name: two pigeons land on my shoulder. It is a normal day. Both of them peck my cheeks. The sound of their beaks against my skin is soft like honey. It is a hot day. I whistle. The pigeons say: Keep quiet, don't make a sound. I keep quiet because I don't like to contradict God's creatures. One of them suddenly stops, looks me in the eyes, tilts its head. She asks me: And who are you? I shrug my shoulders, scare them. I point to my mouth, move my head. I cannot speak. But this pigeon understands me. The other pecks my nose, my lips. It tickles a little. The first one asks the second to stop.

The pigeon coos. It calls more birds: canaries, grackles, toucans, parrots. They all land on my body. They sink their feet into my skin. The pigeon says: Sisters, this man here understands our language, the language of the wild; he will do what we ask of him, right? The birds flap their wings in unison. Their feathers surround my body. I become one of them: baptized for the second time in my life. The birds speak to me. They ask me for things. For example: the pigeons need someone to spill their blood over the grave of the recently deceased, in order to feed from their souls. The grackles always watch people who behave badly so that they can tell God of their sins. And they all need the Internet. That's how it is.

They tell me about a man. A guy who, to me, may seem like anyone, but to them is just one. This is what they say: One will arrive who is a virus, a door. It is important for us to take control of him; it is essential to survive. One day HE arrives. They land on my head and say: That's HIM. I don't tell them anything: they know better than me. The plan is for me to get close to this man, to enter his house. I prepare my soul. They are wary. The grackles watch the house (and me too), but no one opens their beak. I lose hope. It is time to take action. They say: Not yet, not yet, patience. But the more time that passes, the harder it will be. I tell them that, but they don't

listen to me. One of them tells me: Everything will happen when we say, not when you say. She says it harshly, looks me in the eyes. I wait.

Finally, the day arrives.

A woman is sitting on the curb, a few yards away. She is thin like a wire. The pigeons say: Her. I get up, touch her shoulder. The woman looks at me. She shows me a photo. I know. I must tell her that the person she is looking for is in the house with the red gate. I move my hands, hit my lips. She doesn't understand me. She tilts her head from side to side. She takes out a cell phone from one of her pockets, gives it to me. On the telephone, a blank sheet, a pencil. I have not written a word in a long time: I write two.

The woman squints, I point to the house. She goes, knocks on the door. No one opens it. She insists. I think I hear her talk with someone, take something from her wallet. The door to the house slams shut, she grasps the bars. Thankfully they are not electrified. The woman comes back. She asks me to watch the house. Yes, but not for her; for them. The woman walks away down the road. She disappears.

A car pulls into the neighborhood, parks in front of the gate. The woman gets out from the driver's seat. She hands me a rope, asks me to tie one end to the bars; the other to the car's bumper. I do it. She starts the engine. The rope goes taut. The woman puts the car in motion. The force pulls the gate free. She goes into the house. I am behind her.

Intermission: the biggest bird in the world is the condor; I mean, the biggest bird that can fly. There are 10,000 species of birds across the Earth, but not all of them talk to me. I think that some of them are like me: they have forgotten or lost their names. Or maybe they don't have a name because no one ever gave them one. They migrate from city to city looking for a

warm place to spend the winter, like shooting stars. I follow them. This is the only way I know to write in the clouds: a V, or sometimes an L. A blue background.

It seems like the place is emptier than before. HE is in the room, naked. The woman unties Mario without taking her eyes off HIM: she fears an attempted escape, an attack against her life, anything. But HE doesn't have the strength to try anything else. With one of the towels, I tie HIS arms to one of the legs of the bed. The woman brings Mario to the car. I watch her from the window. She lays him in the backseat, brushes a lock of hair from his forehead. She locks the door and leaves the window open.

She takes a gray backpack from the passenger's seat. She returns to the house, comes into the room. I lock the door. We are alone: they are outside. The woman takes several needles from the backpack, places them on the floor. Thank the birds it's not a gun. What would I have done then? The woman says: If you like the Internet so much, you can become part of the Internet. I am the Internet, I turn men into a modem. HE doesn't say anything. Are you listening? I heard. She raises her head, looks me stupidly in the eyes. There is nothing left of him: a virus behind a fence made of meat.

She sticks a dozen needles throughout HIS body with the precision of a torturer. HE falls to the floor, unconscious. I hear the cawing of the birds: satisfied. She leaves the room, ignorant of her role in an act far too large for her to comprehend. She gets into the car. I make sure to leave the door open. The woman starts the engine, tells me: Thank you. I have done nothing for you, just for them. It's time to return to the room. I sit facing HIM. His eyes writhe beneath his eyelids. His eyes go completely still. The birds arrive.

One of the pigeons tells me: Bring one of those needles, heat up some water, don't interrupt us, be quiet. I take one from the floor, place it on the bed. I look for the bucket that I

used to use to clean the bathroom, fill it with boiling water. The steam fogs my vision. I bring the bucket back to the room. I must be careful: I don't want to spill a drop. The pigeons are perched on the headboard. The other birds have perched around the room without any apparent order. A grackle shares the windowsill with a toucan. A canary and a turtledove squeeze together against the lightbulb. They are all aware of my movements.

They count: one, four, eight. If I do something wrong, they caw. They flap their wings. The pigeon says: You have to dip the needle in the water until it turns red, hot. I stick my hand in the bucket. I feel the water lick my skin. The bubble of the first blisters. They think it's funny: they whistle, dance, flap their wings. The pigeon lands on my shoulder, watches my hand turn red in the bucket. She's impatient, not worried. She says: Now, now you can take it out.

Now listen to me closely: I need you to stick that needle into my heart until it passes through my body. After that, you'll stick it in his body, so that he and I are one, connected by the syringe. Do you understand? No, I don't understand anything. Sometimes it's better not to ask. The other birds are nervous. The pigeon says: It has to be precisely in MY heart; anywhere else and all of this will have been for nothing; we will all eat your skin; shit it out on roofs, windows; that will be the end of you and your soul. Her hate extends over my body like the shade of a tree at noon.

I hold the pigeon between my fingers. I stroke her feathers, look for her chest. I hold the needle with the other hand, gauge her heart. I remember many things, many dreams. Things that happened centuries or weeks earlier. Others that haven't happened at all. The images make no sense and have no order: they are a corrupt version of Reality. Like us.

An example: I am six. I'm lying in a small bed in a small room in a small house. So much smallness is essential: it's part of my childhood. An older woman is holding a book in her hands, reading me a story. I mean, she's holding a physical book in her hands! I don't know who she

is. Her voice is a thread. I open my eyes so I don't miss a single movement of her lips. I inhale when she exhales to feel her breath fill my lungs. The story goes like this, or something like this: The witch asks for Snow White's heart. The hunter takes the heart of a deer that he killed earlier out of his bag. He gives it to the witch. And then I ask her: Nana

(she's my grandma, I only ever called her Nana),

Nana, so, a little girl's heart looks that much like a deer's heart? And she looks at me, puts her hand on my head. She says: All hearts are the same, my dear, as long as they hold love, affection, sacrifice.

I penetrate the pigeon's heart with the needle. I pierce his body with the syringe. It gets dark. The room is motionless. The only sound is that of my own breathing. The other birds eventually leave the room. The city is the city is the city. I hear the sirens of police cars. Ambulances. The neighbors have gathered in front of the house, they look inside: darkness is a wolf's mouth. What have I done? I leave slowly, get lost in the crowd. No one looks at me or says anything to me. No one tries to stop me.

Paula (p. 164)

I wake up at a clinic. My throat, my arms, my eyes, my legs all hurt. My mother is at my side: her eyes swollen, red. She hugs me, cries. A doctor arrives. He's young, handsome. He has a white lab coat, dirty with coffee stains. He asks if I can remember what happened. I answer: Yes, for the most part. He takes out a small flashlight, shines it in my eyes, asks: And what happened? My mom is holding one of my hands, she's squeezing it between her own. I don't look up. I talk about the thing with my dad. My visit with Eugenio to the Mall. I don't know why, but I don't say exactly what happened on the rooftop. It's something private.

He puts a hand on my cheek, says: Everything will be okay. I have to go out to get the police, they are also going to want to hear your version. He leaves the room, leaves me and my mom alone. She kisses my forehead. She tells me: When I got home and couldn't find you, I almost went crazy; you weren't answering your phone so I called the police. Your dad confessed what he had done, he told me it was a nightmare, he cried. He's checked himself into an Internet rehab center. He won't be home for a while.

Three months. I mean, three months to think about what we need to do. I just want to think that nothing has happened. The police enter the room. I tell them everything once more. It's like the same dream, once again. Hours later, they all leave. My mom says goodbye, promises to return the next morning. I turn on the TV in the room, watch advertisements until I fall asleep.

I dream about a hand. The hand is closed. Inside, I mean, in the fist, I find a jewel. A dozen ants do aerobics on the fingers wearing Adidas™ clothes. I see them clearly through a microscope: their headbands, their runner sneakers, their leg warmers

(Or are they claw warmers?);

the only thing they care about is looking good. Both outside, inside. They look at each other with jealousy: who is the skinniest, the most beautiful.

They have a competition to choose which one has the best body. Life's a fuckin' beauty pageant!

One by one they parade in bikinis across the index finger. I can't take it. I move away from the microscope: the hand belongs to an amputated arm. The wound drips blood. The blood falls to the floor, splashes onto my shoes. The fingers loosen their grip, let go of the jewel. When it falls to the floor, the world's doors open. It's still dark when I wake up. My interface says it's two thirty in the morning.

I put my feet on the floor, stagger to the bathroom. I pull down my panties, sit on the toilet. My pee smells like L30, like medicine. I think about Eugenio. Have I maybe tried to protect him? The police must have gone to his house. What might he have told them? I flush, pull up my panties without wiping myself or changing my pad. I wash my hands, look at myself in the mirror. The black and blue mark is almost gone. My cheek is swollen.

I lift up the robe, hold my boobs in my hand. I think: my boobs could feed the cubs of a wild wolf. My boobs are the color of the snow where wolves walk without leaving a trace. My boobs shine like the blade of a scalpel in an operating room. And I think like that for a while, alone, in front of the mirror, I don't know why. I don't feel anything: my face reflects whatever feeling. I am like a kind of virus. I look for my phone, lock myself in to take photos.

I go back to the bed. Something inside of me has changed for good. I have seen myself from the other side of the mirror. The path between the glass leads to deception. I settle in between the sheets, fall asleep. This time I don't dream of anything.

Two days later I return home. My mother has asked for some days off from work. We stay home: we watch movies, surf the Internet. My friends call me every five minutes to ask how I'm doing, when I'll be back in school. They tell me that Eugenio has been suspended from school for a week for using illegal drugs. The Mall has made him pay for the damage to the glass. They complain about me not having called them in the first place. And what can I tell them.

One of those days, I wake up in the middle of the night. I have become an ant. I touch my legs, my face. I feel my ant legs, my antennas, my ant eyes. I'm afraid. I want to scream but the shriek gets stuck in my throat

(It's not like ants have a throat, even though they do have a jaw, maxilla, lips. The information is on the Internet. Look it up);

I run to the bathroom, turn on the shower. The water hits my body. I carefully examine myself. Although I haven't transformed into a bug, I'm not human either.

One time at school we have an art class in the National Museum. A classical art exposition is being exhibited. The teacher wants us to see Picasso's paintings. If I wanted to see paintings, I'd go to Google, but attendance is mandatory. A museum is the most boring thing in the world. In short. We go into the room, we walk around for a bit between the paintings. We see fragments, parts. A leg here, on this side an arm, maybe an eye. No human is complete. Behold! This one is me early that morning in the shower. Broken: a grouping made up of different fragments. I mean: two legs, two tits, an ass, a pussy. The parts are sold separately. If those pieces are bought together, let's say, in a puzzle, the result is my body: an alien named Paula fuckin' Piedra.

In school my classmates look at me differently. They feel sadness. They are cautious, but still want me. I become. How pathetic. How vulnerable. I have become the woman that needs to be rescued. Society says that a woman can only be rescued by a man. The most popular videogame in the world (which has sold some 60 million copies throughout the World per Wikipedia. Look it up!) is about exactly that: a small plumber embarks on a journey to save the princess from the claws of a dragon. It's pathetic. Inaccurate. We don't need to be saved. Or in something even worse: a black hole. I swallow planets, worlds, dreams. I don't reflect light. Nothing escapes the weight of my gravity. A little closer and this is event horizon. You all should be running from me now. Sound track. The credits roll.

Eugenio comes back to school on the same day. He gets to the classroom late, sits behind me. He doesn't say good morning. I don't either. Class starts. We take out our fucking iPads. A message appears in my Inbox. It's from him. I open it. He has written a single word, in Helvetica, size 12. A question. It says: Wanna?

Do I wanna what, mother fucker? I manage. I scribble something quick, respond to the message. The class ends we go out to our first recess. I sit with my girlfriends on the steps of the gym. The other boys take out their cell phones, send text messages, watch YouTube videos. Automatons. Each of them tries to be better than the rest. You must know something that the others don't know. See something that the others haven't seen. Read a comment that nobody else reads. That's how it is. Your grade is the number of likes on that post on your wall. My God, what's happening to me? What have I become? Unmentionable. Sterile like the light in an abandoned hallway. But you all, what the fuck do you talk so much about in your text messages, in the Facebook comments or in YouTube, in emails? What is so stupidly important that it cannot wait? What are you looking for? Where are you going with such urgency?

My problem with Reality is that I can't stop watching it. It's like the image of your parents fucking. You close your eyes: it's everywhere. I can't tell my girlfriends what I think: they won't understand me. I'll be one of those rejected girls who sit by themselves. Who don't talk with anyone. Who take out a book. My god, help me: I hate books.

For the Spanish exam, we read something about a guy who pulls out his eyes for having fucked his mom. I look for the synopsis on the Internet. It's something with a sphinx. In short. The professor says: Oedipus takes out his eyes because of all the bad things he's done. Bullshit! He removes his eyes because he fucked his mom. That is the story, no? But maybe the guy pulls out his eyes because he can see Reality. He can't stop seeing Reality. Now I

understand, as much I possibly can understand a guy who died six hundred thousand years ago. I would pull out my eyes too, if that were enough. Stop the lies!

The dismissal bell rings. I make a getaway, go back to the gym. I find him sitting on the steps of the gym. We say hi, I sit next to him. We talk. He says: I love you, I want to make you mine forever, I want you to learn to love me. STOP! Stop being such a pussy, faggot. You should flee at 3,000 miles per second. You should get away from me. He takes my hand, brings me behind the steps. He makes sure that nobody is watching us. I feel his tongue on my lips, on my teeth. Clumsy. He unzips his zipper, takes out his penis. He makes me get on my knees.

That is what they want, no? Isn't that what you all want? Me, the bug, Me, a fucking bug, a technical error in the system. Like those programs that can destroy a computer's hard drive. My power is destroying users' minds. Glitch girl. The bastard Siri. I infect both the hardware and software. You don't even have to be connected. Our language is no different from the language of any computer. If what you want is a show, I'll give you a show. Get ready. Are you ready? My jaw clenches. My teeth are a guillotine.

The Maker (p. 176)

I drive to the lab. From time to time, I slow down to shoot up another needle. On the express route, the trip takes an hour and a half. Mario sleeps in the back seat the whole way. I look at his swollen face in the rear-view mirror. We arrive in Cuajiniquil. He opens an eye, looks at me. I park the car opposite the lab, get out. I help him out. He limps. He says: Walking hurts a little. Time heals everything.

We go into the lab. We go up the stairs. I lay him down. The room's windows face the ocean. Tati was eying us from the doorway. I ask her to bring something to eat. A lot of water. She doesn't move from the door. I demand that she does it. I hear her go downstairs, into the kitchen. I caress Mario's face. Was this, perhaps, what you wanted? A sign from me? Tati comes back with a tray, a glass of water. I moisten Mario's lips. Make him take little sips.

He refuses to open his mouth. He tells me: I can't, my throat hurts; here too. I touch his jaw, the bottom part of his stomach. Nothing broken, just sore. The food gets cold. Waves break against the rocks. Mario rests his head on the pillow, closes his eyes. I take a needle from my pocket, shoot it into his arm. I light a Dunhill. Tati says: You went looking for him. I respond: Mario is just as much a part of the team as you are.

I go into the bathroom, take off my clothes. I take a dose of Px. I stick my head under the stream of water. It all fades: the trip, the heat, the sand. I get dressed, go downstairs to the living room. Eduardo is lying on the sofa, connected. I push him, he disconnects. I ask him: What happened with Merck? He answers: They are waiting for you to call them, dude. Where the fuck were you? You were gone for almost three days! I say: A last minute thing.

I call Merck. *Guten Tag, Maker*. I demand to talk with the manager. We arrange an appointment for the next day. The company's legal representatives will arrive at the laboratory in the morning with the contract. I hang up. Eduardo looks at me, asks: Well, that's fine. And now what happens? I answer: Now is when we start to get rich, dude. Phase two in motion.

I sleep in the same bed as Mario. The sounds wake me up: waves breaking almost against the edge of the mattress. A whistle, a man calling his dog. My watch reads two in the morning. I sit on the edge of the bed, light another Dunhill. Mario shifts beside me. He opens his eyes, screams. I toss the butt on the ground, it goes out. Everything will be fine. He looks at me, but doesn't see me. He says: You went looking for me after everything. Why? I respond:

I don't know, I guess I kind of care about you. He says: Things can't go back to how they were. I tell him: It's clear that none of this would have happened if you weren't so dramatic. Sometimes I feel like I'm your mom, damn it. I say: We are doomed to be together.

I light a cigarette for him. The second one is for me. We smoke in silence. Love is getting high together. Mario sticks the cigarette in a mug, says: I still don't understand why you did what you did. Is that love? Or the lack of love? I answer him: It's neither, hon, neither. His response is silence. Mario still loves me, for better or for worse. He says: I am not the kind of guy that gets off with two chicks. I answer: Now you have a piece of me in your blood, not much matters; you can look at your arm. Mario touches the mark the needle left on his skin. Skin dies. Mario turns his back to me. A little later, I hear him snoring.

A helicopter lands on the beach. Some guys wearing dark suits get sand in their Gucci shoes walking to the lab. I invite them in, offer them coffee. We sit at the table. They adjust their ties. Put a black suitcase on the wood. Inside, a trial tube protected by a layer of styrofoam. Some crumpled papers. One of them says: OK, so those present at the table are here to discuss Merck's Corporation auction over the new liquid L30, otherwise known as Pxs1th3a, or Px. Is that correct? I answer: That is correct.

The other one takes off his glasses, says: Well then, Merck Corporation is willing to offer one billion dollars, that is correct, one billion dollars, for a good first sample of Px. Here's the contract, read it if you will. I don't need to look at the contract. I respond: One billion dollars is unacceptable, here's a contract I prepared myself. You will find my requests inside, anything less than that is unacceptable. I put my version of the contract on the table. I want the company: 51% of Merck's stock.

The lawyers read it. They look as if they'd been slapped. The first one gets up from the table, says: I am sorry, ma'am, we are not in the capacity to accept such terms. I tell him: *Muy*

bien, fine, then I guess there's nothing left to talk about, is there? You might as well leave. I'll call Bayer, see what they think. The lawyers whisper to each other, respond: May we have a few minutes in private, please? Of course. I leave the laboratory, sit on the sand.

Tatiana is here. She says: And? I tell her: They're thinking it over. It's not every day someone asks to take over the company. There is a hierarchy, someone who won't want to lose their job. She answers: Is that what we are doing? Switching jobs? I'm a programmer, not an administrator. No, that's not for me. I say: You will continue working with me. She brushes a lock of hair from her face, says: Sometimes, if not always, you can be a true son of a bitch, you know, right? She says it with a smile. I know.

Tati sticks her hand in my pocket, takes out a Dunhill. She says: Without me, you wouldn't have done anything. Maybe it's true. I ask: Are you negotiating with me? She says: You don't miss a thing, Maker, not a single thing. I want my own lab, my own research, my own team. How's that for a start, Mademoiselle Hacedora? I smile. It's not a bad start.

The lawyers stand up. One says: We've got an answer for you, and the answer is yes, we agree to your terms. A new team is coming by with a new contract for you to sign. I respond: That's good. The other one looks at me, says: Meanwhile, could we have ourselves a taste of the new Px? Of course. I ask Andrés to prepare two needles. The lawyers sit on the sofa. I look for their veins, inject the syringes. Their bodies bounce against the cushions, fall to the floor. Andrés asks me: They accepted? I say: You thought they weren't going to? We celebrate.

Phase two is real estate.

Pasithea is the oldest of the Charites. Hypnos' lover. She's the mother of Morpheus, Phobetor, Phantasos. Her sisters are Mirth, Splendor, Good Cheer. Pasithea is the goddess of

relaxation, meditation, hallucinations. She is the goddess of drugs. During Dionysus' war against the Hindus, Hypnos makes enemy soldiers fall asleep so she can torment them with nightmares.

The lawyers' bodies are dry, wrinkled. Exhausted from so much Internet. I offer them a shower. They go into the bathroom together. I ask Andrés and Eduardo to pack all the equipment in boxes, to disassemble the laboratory. I go outside to the beach, call the Ministry. As president of the Merck Pharmaceutical Company, I am filing a complaint about a violation of the property rights of one of my products. I threaten to take immediate legal reprisals if they don't get all the needles off the streets. The Ministry is scared shitless.

We fly to Germany. Mario is with us.

The cyberuniverse doesn't allow for urbanistic innovation. The topography is lackluster. There is no way to measure distances or give places names. The first time that we hit cyberspace in our research, we discover an elusive place. Our challenge is to make it look like something concrete. Users need familiarity to understand the unexpected. We expand the concept.

The boulevard is not just a large chat room where we interact with users, but also a highway. The express route of the Web. A user travels to any other domain in seconds. The boulevard extends towards infinity. Building is done in large geometric blocks (that's what can be done with bits, which are less flexible than people believe); the composition is basically octagonal. In a game of 45-degree diagonals, it's not difficult to discover the harmonic laws of Renaissance geometry.

We build a city where there is no class division, inequality. A city where no one should feel different, excluded. It's perfect. Internet's gift to the world is equality. Complaisance. Social conscience. Political correctness. In my city, we erase the lines that tell us our place in the world. Poor people don't have to live in the south, in favelas, in shanty towns. No one has a passport. My cyberuniverse does not accept concepts like ownership. We use inclusive language. My city is called Hzssmxnn. It's utopia: every human can be proud.

Life in Hzssmxnn is better than in any other city in the world. We have parks, cafes, movie theaters, huge arcades. Ice cream stores sell impossible flavors of ice cream. There is no flu, cancer, HIV. Our clinics cure all malignant code. If in Reality you can only be one thing (a failure, unsatisfied, mediocre)

here you can be whatever you want: a pornographer, a writer, a fighter, a pilot. The possibilities are infinite because Hzssmxnn itself is infinite.

Andrés comes into the office, tells me that he's been thinking about a way to access the Internet permanently. This is in the time of the Radiant City: unlimited connection hours is the most important issue. I ask him to tell me his idea. Andrés says: Imagine capsules, containers the size of an average human being, where we can place patients; completely submerge them in Px, or even better, in a gas. A gas we can cover the world with. Humans need to draw new lines in the sand. Innovation is perpetual. I tell Andrés to start the project. He has the Company's resources. I imagine the market. The name of our new product. It will be called Hypn0s.

I find Mario lying in front of the TV. He is watching a documentary on the Discovery channel about evolution. The narrator says: Evolution has allowed the human beings to become the dominant species on the planet. Their dreams, their desires, are the dreams and desires of

all the species. Their spirit is untamable. Mario asks me: Do you think we will still evolve more as a race? I ask him: Something like growing wings to fly or gills to breathe underwater?

He says: No, well yes; but I don't mean anything specifically, but rather if there are still steps in evolution, steps that we haven't taken. I answer: I believe so. I believe that if you make a species endure certain conditions for many centuries, then that species will naturally evolve to adapt to its environment; that's Darwin. I take a beer from the fridge, lie down next to him.

Mario asks me: And how do you think human beings will be in five hundred, six hundred years, or in a thousand or two thousand years? I tell him: I believe that we will have realized that space is a sterile, unattainable place, that no one lives out there. We will have conquered the cyberuniverse. We won't need eyes or ears or a mouth to communicate; we'll live in a state of eternal connection. Our bodies will be modems; we'll live our lives in our heads, in the Web. Our memory will be stored in the cloud; the body dies, the soul lives on. And what are we waiting for?

In five hundred, six hundred, a thousand, two thousand years, people will remember Hzzsmxnn as the first city founded by humans in the cyberuniverse. My city, my buildings, will be the subject of study. They will admire them. They will respect them. I will live in their code. In each of their files—an indelible mark in the vacuum of the Internet.

Mario (p. 184)

Many people come into the laboratory. They bring black suitcases, cell phones, ties. They sit in the kitchen or the living room. They shoot up Px. Their bodies fall motionless anywhere, in any position: clothes hanging in the Sun. I know that they are alive because their eyes move behind their eyelids. Others go outside with enormous boxes loaded into trucks. The movement

is cyclic. I lock myself in my room. I try to ignore the noise, the commotion. It's hard. The laboratory is a party.

She comes into the room, sits on the bed, tries to take my hand in hers. I let her. She tells me: We're leaving first thing in the morning. That night I sleep alone: I think about the ocean, about my family. I will never see either one of them again. I won't see the lights of San José or Puntarenas again. My eyes will belong to another city. I will be another person: without dreams, without memories, without a future. With a finger I pick at the hole the needle left in my forearm.

The next day I feel the silence of the laboratory. I go into the bathroom. I wash my face, brush my teeth. I go downstairs with the hope that they've forgotten me. She is waiting for me in the doorway. She's smoking a cigarette. She says: It's time. I leave the laboratory, get into one of the helicopters. If I look back it's to look at the house like a father looks at one of his children who has grown too much, too fast. So much success, so much catastrophe. The helicopter takes off. I say goodbye to my past, my future, myself.

We arrive at the airport. We take out the suitcases, register. We sit in the waiting room. The plane to Germany leaves in two hours. Tati and Andrés shoot up, collapse into their seats. She closes her eyes, works on her computer. I walk around the stores of the airport for a bit: I don't buy anything, I don't talk with anyone. But something is missing. The flight to Darmstadt has no layovers.

On the plane, I rest my head on the window. I sleep. I dream of Rodolfo. I'm tied to the bed. Frida is father away, watching us. I ask her for help. He isn't going to do it, but he does. When I wake up, I cry. I bite my lower lip so I don't scream. The taste of blood flows down my

throat. She holds my head, asks me what's wrong. I tell her: My camera, I forgot Frida, I forgot her. My friend, my confidant. I go into my hard drive, delete all the pictures that I've taken with her, I delete the connection between us. It's not a grand farewell.

We land in Frankfurt. We get our bags, leave the airport. A limousine is waiting to take us to Darmstadt. I drink a Coca Cola. I look out the window. The city is bigger, different. The buildings are impressive. Andrés and Eduardo take notes in an old notebook. Tatiana opens a file on her computer. She taps on the glass, says something to the car's computer. The car stops. She gets out. She comes back with a big box under her arm. She says: Mario, this is for you.

I hold the box between my hands, open it: inside there's a new camera. It could be Frida's beautiful twin. I take her between my hands. I feel her curves, her weight, her texture. I look through her lens. The city takes on new shapes: corners are corners, ordinary sidewalks, normal trees. A picture: the color, the light, the movement. The camera makes contact with my computer. I upload the photo to my hard drive. I save the file as movement1.jpg.

I name the folder: Josefina. I start a new life in another city.

Merck's box of Px goes on sale three days after landing in Frankfurt. The launch is global. Production sets new world records for assembly, distribution. She confesses to me that some people in Costa Rica have died from a lack of Px on the market. She thinks about Arturo. She's worried. I tell her to call him. For her, we are all experiments. Dispensable. I know her well. Her concern is not death; it's losing clients.

A label on the box indicates the side effects of the needle. The warnings about its use. The FDA does not anticipate the avalanche of buyers. Addiction runs through the streets. If

they want to do something about Px, it's too late. Merck, or rather, she, has become the most powerful pharmaceutical company in the world. Bayer and Pfizer go bankrupt: they are absorbed by Merck. That is how the world's first pharmaceutical megacorporation is created. There is no competition. Every pill that passes through the door of any store has been produced by her.

The cybercity is applauded for its classic, simple design. Hzssmxnn wins the award that year for the best urbanistic design. People connect, go for a walk. They visit a new, unexplored place. They can have a coffee at StarbucksOnLine, walk around gardens, chat on the boulevard, visit any company on the Internet. Everything is as easy as entering a building or sitting at a table. The Px experience is unrivaled.

Life in the cyberuniverse is better than life in the cities. For example: Hzssmxnn does not permit the use of vehicles. People walk, think about a place to arrive there. Without vehicles there is no pollution, accidents or traffic. The streets are void of trash and poverty. Users let their frustrations out. They fulfil their fantasies. They are not afraid of the consequences or diseases. The city exists solely for pleasure. It's marvelous. We become slaves to the city, to its hallucinations.

Working at Merck demands a lot of time. Sometimes I spend up to three days alone, but I don't care. I go out to the street, try to capture the city's movement. I take a ton of photos, videos. I save them to the cloud. I draw on the photos, experiment with hybridization. I think about approaching a gallery, offering an exhibition. I feel good, active, important. I have left my past behind.

I ask her if it would be possible to connect with Josefina to have a photo session in Hzssmxnn. She says yes. I shoot up. The cyberuniverse blossoms like a flower. I walk around the boulevard, take photos of the buildings, of the users. I observe the code that she writes for the trees, the streetlights. The sky is full of balloons. I get lost in all the beauty. I look at the photos: despite the darkness, they are clean. I outstretch my hand, touch Facebook.

She is anxious, paces the room. I ask her: What's the matter? She looks at me; I mean, she looks through me. She says: Some shit, dude. She lights a cigarette, fills her lungs with smoke. A mission has gone south. Some programmers

(she calls them cybernauts)

have found lights in inner depths of the cyberuniverse. Lights that should not be there. There's another city. They called it The Radiant City. The cybernauts could not find their way into the city or see any of its buildings.

I ask: And what does that mean? At that moment she thinks I'm an idiot. I see it in her eyes. She says: It means that maybe someone's beaten us, that they've created another city without us knowing, something different from Hzssmxnn, without our permission. That can't be, we are the only ones with rights to the cyberuniverse. I don't understand. A city before Hzssmxnn? Lights in the cyberuniverse? A new mission is readied to explore the Radiant City. I tell her: And what happens if you really find other people, other structures? She answers: In that case, I think the first war in the cyberuniverse would begin, don't you? But no one wants a war.

We eat in silence. I touch the dead skin on my arms. We sit down to watch TV. We watch a documentary about nomads in some desert. She takes the remote, mutes the TV, asks me: Do you know what I'm thinking? I answer: I never know what you're thinking; I don't think I

ever have. She says: I have never had a problem with the concept of infinity, because infinity just is and nothing happens, but now I wonder what's beyond infinity; what there is after infinity ends. Maybe it wasn't that Bayer did not know how to improve the pill, but that they knew it was better not to because of that question: what's beyond infinity? I can't think of an answer. She turns up the TV's volume, we go back to the documentary.

The mission is a failure. I hear rumors of dementia, self-mutilation. Ghosts of the Dropbox. Demons in the iCloud. I don't ask about The Radiant City again.

I get my first exhibition in a gallery in Berlin. It's called *A Story of Two Cities*. In the first group of photos, Darmstadt can clearly be identified. In the second, concurrent with the first, one can observe the growth of Hzssmxnn. Both series give the impression of being parallel stories that are altered together, but that are not necessarily connected. Among the attendees I recognize some avant-garde fashion designers. They call me visionary, interesting. Others call me superficial. I save the photos with any personal value. The rest are sold, photocopied, scanned, downloaded.

I don't often think about my past. My past is resentment, hate, violence. My dreams are full of people that I don't remember having met. We are in a cage, we pace its length without ever finding the iron bars. So we think we are free. But in reality, this is nothing more than a cage.

Alejandra (p. 191)

I'm dead. My body's organs shut down like a program that closes at the spur of the moment. And that's that. At least that's what the doctor will write in my file once he finishes the autopsy.

Once he closes the box where my body will rest. I have no identification. No one will ask about me. My dad will think that I ran away with my boyfriend for good. My friends, that I switched high schools because I'm a slut. There's a pain in my arms, in my legs. The agony is horrible. The applications in my computer are behaving in a strange way. I think they are trying to communicate with me. My body falls on the floor in the Mall. Behind death, there's an expansive, fierce, unknown darkness: the frightening and vast realm of the imagination. And on such blackness, anything can be projected.

Chacón Ortiz, Luis. *Ciudad Radiante*. San José, C.R.: URUK Editores, 2015. Print.

Research Report

1. Introduction

1.1. General Description

This graduation project embarks on an investigation of style in translation. We will explore this topic through the analysis of character point of view as an aspect of style in Luis Chacón's *Ciudad Radiante*⁷ and its subsequent influence on its translation into English. This novel was published in 2015 by Uruk Editores, a publishing company that, according to its mission statement, focuses on the literature of today, striving to preserve and spread "bibliodiversity" ("About," my translation). *Ciudad Radiante* is set in a futuristic San José, Costa Rica, where the cutting-edge way to consume the Internet is being developed in the form of a direct injection into the bloodstream. Chacón fuses science fiction and investigative reporting, conveying the plot through the perspectives of each character to shine light on the dark side of society and technology.

The research conducted in this graduation project will address the problem of style in translation, specifically the issue of the construction, and reconstruction, of point of view in three female characters in Luis Chacón's *Ciudad Radiante* and its subsequent translation into English. This analysis will seek to answer the question of how Chacón's linguistic choices create these characters' perspectives and to explore the linguistic choices to be implemented by the translator to reproduce such perspectives. The characters selected for analysis are La Hacedora (translated as The Maker), Alejandra and Paula. Consequently, all the chapters bearing these three character's names will be included in the translation. Chapters corresponding to Mario and El Príncipe (translated into English as The Prince) will additionally be included in the translation, given that they are central to the plot, and, thus, contribute significant cohesion to the translated text. Analysis will only be carried out for La Hacedora,

⁷ Chacón Ortiz, Luis. *Ciudad Radiante*. San José, C.R.: Uruk Editores, 2015. Print.

Alejandra and Paula to allow for a deeper analysis of each of these three character's points of view, the linguistic features used to construct them, and their effect on the translation into English. These linguistic features will be analyzed using the Fowler-Uspensky model, as it is one of the most widely used models for analyzing point of view in literary translation. In the translation, Eugene Nida's formal and dynamic equivalences will be applied as general translation strategies.

1.2. Background

The author of *Ciudad Radiante*, Luis Chacón Ortiz, was born in San José, Costa Rica, in 1986 and has studied Spanish Philology and Translation at the University of Costa Rica and the National University, respectively. Prior to *Ciudad Radiante*, Chacón wrote two poetry books, *El Sur* (2006), with which he won the "Ángel Martínez Baigorri" international contest, and *Poetry is Fearless* (2012) (Chacón, inside front flap). *Ciudad Radiante*, his first novel, has been well-received by critics who have called it "original, daring, crude, but also, at times, truly poetic" (Mario León Rodríguez in Chacón, back cover, my translation), describing his style as "intermittent and sharp, like electroshocks" (Enrique Winter in Chacón, back cover, my translation).

Ciudad Radiante belongs to Uruk Editores' Colección Sulayom, which, according to their Facebook page, is a collection of narrative works that have met Uruk's most demanding criteria for quality, written primarily by renowned Central American authors, with the exception of one Puerto Rican and one Spaniard ("Colección Sulayom"). A search for 'Colección Sulayom' on the Worldcat database yielded 69 novels of which the following were published in 2015, the same year as *Ciudad Radiante*: *Los últimos días* by Juan Ramón Rojas, *Te busco en las tinieblas* by Guillermo Fernández, *Espejos* by Vanessa Núñez Handal (El Salvadoran author), *Las diosas de Elam* by Isolda Rodríguez Rosales (Nicaraguan author), *Cómo ríe la luna* by Vernor Muñoz, *Condenado sin proceso* by Nacer Wabeau and *El general Morazán* by

Julio Escoto (Honduran author) (*WorldCat*). None of these novels have yet been translated into English. However, another novel from the collection, *En clave de luna* by Costa Rican author Óscar Núñez Olivas (2004), was, in fact, translated into English under the title *Cadence of the Moon* and was published in 2008 by Aflame Books for distribution in the United States and England (“Colección Sulayom”).

Ernest Hogan, a “controversial” science fiction writer and the author of *Cortez on Jupiter* and *High Aztech*, among others, shared his review of and comments about *Ciudad Radiante* on his blog *La Bloga*. In his review, he states the need for more eye-opening, modern novels in the United States, proclaiming “we need writers like Luis Chacón Ortiz, from places like Costa Rica.”

1.3. Literature Review

In Costa Rica, two studies in literary translation stand out. The first, Francisco Javier Vargas Gómez’s Ph.D. dissertation entitled “Avatares de la poesía costarricense traducida durante el siglo XX: la traducción de literaturas periféricas,” is a descriptive study aimed at discovering how those who participate in the translation of poetry from minority literatures and their sociohistorical actions influence the selection and translation of texts, thus providing a tangible analysis of the reality of literary translation within the context of Costa Rican literature. A second study, completed within this Master’s program, is Elizabeth Díaz Venegas’ graduation project entitled “Uso de lenguaje coloquial para traducir el dialecto como recurso humorístico en *The Free Rangers: A Story of the Early Days along the Mississippi*.” Díaz’s graduation project is an example of implementing stylistics in literary translation through the application of Eugene Nida’s method of dynamic equivalence, a method that will also be applied as a general translation strategy in this graduation project.

Regarding translation theory, several key works greatly influence the development of this graduation project. Foremost, the model employed herein for analyzing point of view as an

aspect of style was the brainchild of Boris Andreevich Uspensky, and later expanded upon by Roger Fowler. The Uspensky-Fowler model and the theory supporting it are mentioned in Jeremy Munday's *Style and Ideology in Translation*, and serve as the basis for analysis in works such as Siobhan Chapman's scholarly article "'From Their Point of View': Voice and Speech in George Moore's *Esther Waters*," Mona Baker's "Towards a Methodology for Investigating the Style of a Literary Translator," and Charlotte Bosseaux's book entitled *How Does it Feel?: Point of View in Translation: the Case of Virginia Woolf into French*. The latter, as we will later see, has a similar aim to that of this project, as it seeks to develop a methodology for analyzing original texts side-by-side with their translations (9). Also pertinent in this graduation project is Eugene Nida's theories on formal and dynamic equivalences, which are considered as general strategies in the translation of *Ciudad Radiante*.

1.4. Research Objectives

General Objective:

To produce an English translation of Luis Chacón Ortiz's *Ciudad Radiante* that reproduces the specific points of view of different characters in the novel through the analysis of the stylistic choices and devices employed in the source text.

Specific Objectives:

- I. To identify the linguistic features that convey voice and contribute to the construction of the specific points of view of three female characters in Luis Chacón Ortiz' *Ciudad Radiante* using the Fowler-Uspensky model of analysis.
- II. To identify and assess the translation techniques used to recreate the perspectives conveyed by these linguistic features in the English translation of Luis Chacón Ortiz' *Ciudad Radiante*, employing Nida's formal and dynamic equivalences as general translation strategies.

1.5. *Justification*

Ideally, the translation of Chacón's *Ciudad Radiante* will be published in the United States. Today, the demand for high quality literary translations is higher than in preceding years. To demonstrate this, a search was performed within the *Novel and Short Story Writer's Market 2017* for the term "translation," which appeared 44 times, most frequently in the "Needs" section of various literary publishers and in criteria for several awards (Randall). In contrast, in the 2016 version of the same guide, the term "translation" appeared 38 times (Randall); in the 2009 version, it appeared a mere 27 times (Pope). This data evidences that there is a growing demand for translated novels by American publishers, and therefore justifies a market for the translation of Chacón's *Ciudad Radiante*.

Further information to support publication of the translation of *Ciudad Radiante* in the United States comes from a study conducted by the Dalkey Archive Press in March 2011, entitled "Research into Barriers to Translation and Best Practices: A Study for the Global Translation Initiative." This study, while slightly outdated, aimed to address the challenges of literary translation into English from a global perspective and established the percentage that translations represent in the publishing markets in various countries (9). The study identified that very few literary translations are published by publishers outside the United Kingdom and the United States (54), that in 2009 the US was responsible publishing approximately 45% of the total books published in English-speaking countries (18), compared to the UK being responsible for 22% of them (17). Additionally, of the English-language books published that year, the US was responsible for publishing more translations: 2-3% of the total (18), versus 1.5-2% in the UK (17). The study also mentioned that the US has more publishers who have published at least one literary translation than the UK, with 46 in the US (18), compared to a mere 30 in the UK (17). Combined with the trend of increasing demand for translation, the information collected by the Dalkey Archive Press points to there being more publishing options

for translated books in the United States, thus identifying it as the most promising market for the publishing of the translation of *Ciudad Radiante*.

Regarding the potential profitability of the translation of *Ciudad Radiante*, let us consult the 2008 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, which was published in “Reading on the Rise,” a report from the National Endowment for the Arts. According to the results of this survey, it was found that while poetry and drama readership is on the decline, 47.0 percent of all adults in the United States read fiction (defined as novels and short stories), and 64.2 percent of all poetry and drama readers also read fiction. Additionally, it concludes that while from 2002 to 2008 the percentage of U.S. book-reading adults dropped slightly, the absolute number of such adults increased by 3.5 million people (7). Given these statistics, it can reasonably be inferred that there is more demand for, and thus more probability of profit from, the translation of fiction than other types of literature.

While numerous side-by-side analyses of style in source and target texts are available (such as those of Malmkjaer and Munday), these analyses do not propose methodologies for the translator to recreate the style of the original works. In his article ‘The Translator’s Voice in Translated Narrative’, Theo Hermans, however, recognizes the absence of a focus in translation theory on the translator’s role in reinterpreting voice, posing the question “Can translators usurp the original voice and in the same move evacuate their own enunciatory space?” (qtd. in Bosseaux 7). Furthering Herman’s theory, in “There is Always a Teller in a Tale,” Giuliana Schiavi proposes that new “entities” are inevitably incorporated into a translation that ultimately influence its structure, recognizing the translator’s role as both a co-producer of discourse and a parrot of the source author (Bosseaux 7). Building off this, Charlotte Bosseaux’s study employs the analysis of the original text with its corresponding translation using the Fowler-Uspensky model, seeking to create a methodology for evaluating the translator’s discursive presence in a translation (xv). Baker’s 2000 study also attempts to

propose a methodology for analyzing the translator's style, though the focus is more on defining translator's unique style than on providing strategies for recreating style. As such, this graduation project's aim to explore analysis of point of view as a tool to be used during the translation process to recreate the effect of the original characters' voice is a novel approach to the area of style and voice in translation.

1.6. *Outline*

This research project is divided into chapters based on the focus on theory and methodology, source text analysis, and the translation process. Chapter 2 describes the critical apparatus, which embarks on the presentation of the theoretical and methodological frameworks. Fundamental theories for the analysis of the source text and translation strategies are explained, and key terminology used throughout the project is defined. In this chapter, we also discuss the methodology used to attain our objectives, elaborating on the procedures and techniques used in the selection and evaluation of linguistic features that contribute to character point of view, and for the analysis of the translation strategies employed to recreate the style of character point of view in the translated text.

Chapter 3 encompasses the exploration of the first specific objective, which is identifying the linguistic features that convey voice and contribute to the construction of the specific points of view of three female characters in Luis Chacón Ortiz' *Ciudad Radiante* using the Fowler-Uspensky model of analysis. In this chapter, we analyze two of the three planes of the Fowler-Uspensky model, the ideological and psychological planes, presenting examples selected from the source text and their analysis as to precisely how they contribute to the creation of character point of view.

In Chapter 4, the second specific objective of this project is developed, which is to identify and assess the specific translation techniques used in the English translation of Luis Chacón Ortiz' *Ciudad Radiante* to recreate the perspective conveyed by the linguistic features

discussed in Chapter 3, while applying Nida's formal and dynamic equivalences as general translation strategies. The chapter is divided by character, and excerpts from the translation, most of which are examined in Chapter 3, are presented side-by-side with the corresponding original text. Each excerpt is analyzed to identify translation techniques used to recreate, and even enhance, each character's voice.

Following these three chapters, our conclusions are presented, in which our achievements, the meeting of the objectives and the recommendations for future work are discussed.

2. Critical Apparatus

2.1. *Introduction*

In this critical apparatus, the fundamental theories on which this graduation project is based and the terminology to be used throughout the theoretical framework is presented. First, an overview of academic works is introduced, initially with a focus on style in literary translation in Costa Rica, then moving forward to research on point of view in translation theory. It clarifies terms such as 'style,' 'point of view,' and 'modality,' as well as the ideas of the Fowler-Uspensky Model as they apply to issues in literary translation. The theoretical basis for general translation strategies employed within the translation is discussed. Lastly, the methodological framework is addressed as to how the original and translated texts are analyzed, providing the procedure and techniques for selection and evaluation.

2.2. *Theoretical Framework*

2.2.1. *Research on Style in Literary Translation in Costa Rica*

Prior to delving into the heart of the theoretical framework, the corpus of related works in the context of Costa Rica must be explored. One of the most complete studies on the modern translation of Costa Rican literature, with a focus on poetry, is Francisco Javier Vargas Gómez's Ph.D. dissertation entitled "Avatares de la poesía costarricense traducida durante el siglo XX: la traducción de literaturas periféricas." Vargas' dissertation is a qualitative, descriptive and explicative study of twenty-six published translations of Costa Rican texts that seeks to identify how participants in the translation of minority literatures and their sociohistorical actions influence the selection of texts and the production of their translation. Vargas' research identifies that "in general terms, the translation of minority languages is an activity regulated by social interactions among the leading agents who take part [in] it" (465). He claims that, in order to fully understand the "specific textual realities of translation," we must first understand human social interaction in the specific sociohistorical contexts of a given translation act (479).

In a search of graduation projects completed within this Master's program, Elizabeth Díaz Venegas' project entitled "Uso de lenguaje coloquial para traducir el dialecto como recurso humorístico en *The Free Rangers: A Story of the Early Days along the Mississippi*" is a concrete example of an investigation on the use of stylistics in literary translation. Díaz applies Eugene Nida's method of dynamic equivalence to "create a humorous effect that is similar to the effect produced by a specific character in the original text," concluding that using colloquialisms is a valid option for translating dialect, although equivalence is not entirely preserved (vi). Nida's definition of dynamic equivalence "in terms of the degree to which the receptors of the message in the receptor language respond to it in substantially the same manner as the receptors in the source language" is also applied in this graduation project as a general translation strategy (qtd. in Kim 63). Beyond simply achieving a thought-for-thought translation, this graduation project seeks to analyze the linguistic features employed in the source text to initially create character point of view and subsequently recreate their effect in the translated text, paving the way for the establishment of a methodology for the translator to analyze and recreate point of view in fiction.

Another relevant graduation project is that of Georgina Alvarado Sancho, entitled "*En una silla de ruedas* de Carmen Lyra: la traducción inversa como una reescritura funcional." In this project, Alvarado combines the theories of functional translation and Skopos with André Lefevere's theory of translating as a rewriting process to create a functionally appropriate translation of a Costa Rican novel that serves as "a bridge of intercultural communication between the source language/culture and the target language/culture" (4, my translation). She concludes that approaching translation as a rewriting process rejuvenates the source text, both culturally and linguistically, thereby giving it more probability to survive in the modern world (190).

A third graduation project that embarks on the translation of a Costa Rican novel is María Luz Méndez Salazar's "*Cuentos de angustias y paisajes de Carlos Salazar Herrera: The Plausibility of Substituting a Folk Dialect with a Regional Dialect.*" In this project, Méndez substituting a Costa Rican folk dialect in the source text with African American Vernacular English (AAVE) in the translation as a means of establishing an equivalent cultural, historical and linguistic charge of the vernacular variant in the translation as in the source text (165). She claims to adhere to the conventions of 'style' of the source text which she defines as "the aspect of the text which carries the attitude, the world view, and the voice of the original" (qtd. in Méndez 121). In the translation process, she established a systematic procedure for handling incorporating the social content and geographical characteristics of a source text into the words of the target text (164). Additionally, this project yielded a comprehensive list of AAVE phonological elements and guidelines for how to apply them, with examples.

2.2.2. *Research on Point of View in Translation Theory Based on the Fowler-Uspensky Model*

On the topic of translation theory, Boris Andreevich Uspensky and Roger Fowler are considered the founders of the model for analyzing point of view as an aspect of style in translation and its corresponding theory. Jeremy Munday's *Style and Ideology in Translation* defines point of view as a measurable aspect of style, defines and proposes the Fowler-Uspensky model for carrying out stylistics studies, and presents concrete examples of analysis on each plane. Another scholarly article, Mona Baker's "Towards a Methodology for Investigating the Style of a Literary Translator," while also rather dated, is important in that it is one of the first studies present in the area of stylistic analysis in translation that aims to propose a methodology for the analysis of a translator's style using pattern analysis tools. According to Baker, translation—especially literary translation—is not merely a reproductive activity, but rather a creative one (22). She proposes the study of style as a means to go beyond analyzing the translator's faithfulness to the original author's style, but instead to investigate the style of

the literary translator himself (Baker 22). Despite the similarity between the topics addressed in Baker's article and this graduation project, this project seeks to analyze the style of individual characters within *Ciudad Radiante* and to recreate that style in the corresponding translation, and not on the literary translator's inherent style. A final piece of pertinent research, Charlotte Bosseaux's book entitled *How Does it Feel?: Point of View in Translation: the Case of Virginia Woolf into French* is, perhaps, the study that is the most applicable to this graduation project in that Bosseaux employs the Fowler-Uspensky model to combine the analysis of point of view within the framework of translation studies with the creation of a method to analyze original texts with their corresponding translations (9). Bosseaux explores the linguistic features that contribute to the development of point of view in a work of fiction and how those features are adapted by the translator in the translation, discussing the impact this adaptation has on point of view the translation (back cover). In her conclusions, she commends computer-based searches for their ability to save time, but identifies the need for qualitative analysis of individual examples to understand the relevance of certain linguistic features (120).

The research highlighted in the paragraph above provides the basis for the analysis of point of view as an aspect of style in Chacón's *Ciudad Radiante*. The work of Uspensky and Fowler are viewed together as the Fowler-Uspensky model (see Section 2.4), and give us a procedure for conducting this analysis. The work of Bosseaux serves as a comprehensive example of a Fowler-Uspensky analysis that further elaborates on elements set out in the model and how to explore them in a text. Information taken from these three authors allows for an analysis of the stylistic features of character point of view to be conducted in *Ciudad Radiante*, and give us the basis to propose translation techniques to recreate that style in the translated text.

2.2.3. Definitions of 'Style' and 'Point of View'

Given that this graduation project is an investigation of point of view as an aspect of style, a definition of these fundamental concepts must be set out. For our purposes, we will use the concise definition of 'style' that Katie Wales presents in her *Dictionary of Stylistics* as "the perceived distinctive manner of expression" (qtd. in Boase-Beier 15). Style, thus, refers to the way in which an author presents a text, and is comprised of elements such as linguistic features. When analyzing a work of literature, we can analyze the author's style, which is a key component of literary criticism. In a translation, the translator's style can also be identified and compared to that of the author of the source text, as is carried out in the research of Malmkjaer, Parks, and Munday. Another way to view style is through the analysis of point of view. To define 'point of view,' we consider Charlotte Bosseaux's comments on the matter:

[T]he notion of point of view is located in the areas of variation in the telling of a story. . . . In a work of fiction, a novelist creates a fictional world that is presented from a particular angle, refracted through the values and views of a character or narrator. (15)

As such, for the purpose of this graduation project, 'point of view' is defined as the variation in the narration of a story resulting from the standpoint of the character or narrator as it is modified by his/her value systems and views. Given the aims of this project, that definition must also encompass the question of how to preserve said variation in the translated text. This definition now leads us deeper into translation theory, to the Fowler-Uspensky model, which provides the basis for analysis of the translation of Luis Chacón Ortiz' *Ciudad Radiante*.

2.2.4. The Fowler-Uspensky Model

In 1970, Boris Uspensky published *A Poetics of Composition* to address the interpretation of point of view in fiction. Uspensky's model encompassed the compositional, ideological, phraseological, spatial, temporal and psychological categories, or planes, for analyzing fictional point of view (Uspensky). In 1996, Roger Fowler, who claims that Uspensky's

stance is “usefully . . . between literature and linguistics” (13), expanded upon Uspensky’s model to render it more linguistic, thus offering concrete examples on which to base stylistic analysis. Fowler also reduced the planes for analysis to the principal three: the psychological plane, the ideological plane, and the spatio-temporal plane. He claims that the ‘phraseological plane’ is not broad enough to represent an independent plane, given that it only encompasses character naming and how characters’ speech is represented, and thus falls into the ‘psychological plane’ (162). Simpson (*Stylistics* 77) refers to this model as the Fowler-Uspensky model, a term that is used throughout this graduation project. The Fowler-Uspensky model is used herein to analyze the linguistic construction of narrative point of view, thus identifying structures to which adaptation strategies are applied in the translation in an attempt to recreate the original point of view. As such, we must define the parameters for the planes to be analyzed.

2.2.4.1. *The Ideological Plane*

Uspensky establishes that the analysis of the ideological plane seeks to explore the problem of “whose point of view does the author assume when he evaluates and perceives ideologically the world which he describes” (8). For the analysis of this plane, he suggests examining phraseological features, or “the strictly linguistic means of expressing point of view,” stating the utility of this technique for characterization, and thus, the determination a character’s world view (15). To achieve this, Fowler recommends identifying modal structures (131-132). Paul Simpson succinctly defines ‘modality’ as “a speaker’s attitude towards, or opinion about, the truth of a proposition expressed by a sentence...[and] extends to their attitude towards the situation or event described by a sentence” (88). In English, there are four modal systems: (a) the deontic system, or the system of duty, obligation and commitment, characterized by verbs such as ‘may,’ ‘should,’ and ‘must’ (88-89); (b) the boulomaic system, or the system of ‘desire,’ which includes verbs such as ‘hope,’ ‘wish,’ and ‘regret’ (89-90); (c) the epistemic system, which deals with the speaker’s confidence, or lack thereof, in the truth of the premise he expresses

based on his knowledge, belief and thoughts, and includes a wide array of verbs and adverbs (90-92); and (d) the perception subsystem of the epistemic, which demonstrates a speaker's commitment to the truth through some reference to human perception, such as through adjectives in the "be...that" constructions (92-93).

Justification for the Analysis of Specific Modal Systems on the Ideological Plane in Spanish

Given that this graduation project seeks to identify linguistic structures and their effect on narrative point of view in the source text originally written in Spanish and to analyze their transfer into the English, it is important to identify modal structures on the ideological plane that overlap in both languages. The Fowler-Uspensky model was founded on the analysis of the linguistic constructions of narrative point of view in Russian and English, and thus does not consider which modal systems predominate in the Spanish language.

In Spanish, a number of modal systems exist, including the epistemic and evidential, as comprehensively researched by Bert Cornillie, as well as the boulomaic modal system (Hengeveld 239). As set out in section 2.4.1 above, the epistemic and boulomaic modal systems also exist in English. Given this overlap in both English and Spanish, only these two modal systems would be apt for discussion in this graduation project. However, given the breadth of these modal systems and the limitations of time in this project, it is necessary to further restrict our analysis. As such, we shall explore the findings of Bert Cornillie.

In his research, Cornillie derives data from the 20th century subcorpus of the online *Corpus del español*, compiled by Mark Davies from peninsular and Latin American Spanish sources, which includes three types of discourse—fiction prose, oral discourse and non-fiction prose—and contains approximately 20 million words divided almost equally into the aforementioned categories (7). From this database, Cornillie extracted the occurrences of the verbs *parecer*, *resultar*, *amenazar*, *prometer*, *poder*, *deber* and *tener que*, which he determined to be representative of the epistemic and evidential modalities, and categorized the examples

of the individual verbs into their types of discourse. While *amenazar* and *prometer* were the most prominent in the fiction prose category, *poder*, *parecer*, *deber* and *tener que* were the overwhelming majority in the oral discourse category (8). After analyzing the distribution of *parecer* constructions, Cornillie finds that:

more than 45% of the oral examples are followed by a *que*-clause; more than half of these constructions have an overt conceptualizer (*me* 'to me' and *le* 'to him'). Less than 2% of the occurrences in the spoken corpus have an infinitive, whereas this construction constitutes more than 34% of the written *parecer* examples. In other words, when looking at the distribution of the three clausal constructions alone, in the written language the infinitive (72%) outnumbers *parece que* (24.4%) and *me parece que* (3.6%), while the reverse is true for the spoken discourse: *parecer* + infinitive only represents 3% of all clausal constructions. Adjectival attributes occur in 24% of the attested spoken and written examples, while nominal and zero complements appear in about 9% of cases. (16)

Following further analysis, he finds that occurrences of *poder*, *deber*, and *tener que* have a much simpler appearance in texts and are highly representative in the epistemic modality (182-190). Additionally, as discussed by Cornillie, *parecer* more frequently falls into the category of evidentiality, which is not analyzed in this graduation project. *Poder*, *deber*, and *tener que* have constructions that are simpler to identify without complex analytical tools and are in no way devoid of modal value. As such, in this graduation project, it is decided to analyze just these three epistemic verbs in our exploration of the ideological plane, so that we can dissect several examples from each character in detail and determine their effect on the construction of the points of view of three female characters in *Ciudad Radiante* and its translation into English.

2.2.4.2. *The Psychological Plane*

The psychological plane refers to how “narrative events are mediated through the consciousness of the ‘teller’ of the story” (Simpson, *Language* 11) and includes the characters’ thoughts and feelings. Fowler explains that this plane addresses who in the narrative is established as the observer of the events and the types of discourse that occur between the narrator and character (169-170). This plane is divided into two categories: internal and external perspectives. Internal narration refers to a character’s conscious point of view, including “his thoughts or feelings about and evaluations of the events and characters of the story” (Fowler 135). External point of view is the description of characters and events outside of the characters’ consciousness. Internal and external narration are further divided into four types. Types A and B, which respectively correspond to narration from a participating character’s point of view and that from the point of view of a narrator who has knowledge of the characters’ feelings, belong in the internal narration category. External narration encompasses Types C and D, which imply a narrator without any privileged information from the characters’ consciousness, who describes the events from the point of view of an outsider (Fowler 170). This graduation project does not embark on an analysis of external point of view, due to it being almost entirely absent in Chacón’s *Ciudad Radiante*. Only Type A narration is present in the novel, apart from a brief switch to Type B narration, which is analyzed in Chapter 3. As such, our primary focus is on Type A narration.

In *Language, Ideology and Point of View*, Simpson sets out a further subdivision of Type A narration based on patterns of modality. These subcategories are positive, negative, and neutral (55-56). The A positive category is characterized by a use of *verba sentiendi*, Uspensky’s term for words denoting feelings, thoughts and perceptions, and evaluative adjectives and adverbs (Simpson 56). This category favors the deontic and boulomaic modal systems, suppresses the epistemic and perception systems, and the narrator’s desires,

obligations and duties are made clear by word choice (Bosseaux 40). In the A negative category, by contrast, the epistemic and perception modalities predominate and comparative structures based in human perception are present (Simpson 41). The A neutral narration lacks modal structures that allow the narrator's subjective opinion and evaluation to be discerned (Simpson 41).

Justification for the Analysis of Specific Verba Sentiendi and Perception and Epistemic Modal Adverbs on the Psychological Plane in Spanish

For analysis on the psychological plane, it is necessary to identify a linguistic construction that permits us to differentiate between the A positive, A negative, and A neutral categories. In her research, Bosseaux identified the verb 'feel,' conjugated in the first-person singular, as a *verba sentiendi* that can be investigated to determine whether a narration has positive or negative shading and to analyze the "feel of the text" (54). In her semiological encyclopedia, María Isabel Filinich similarly recommends analyzing the equivalent *verba sentiendi me siento* ['I feel'] when analyzing a Spanish text on the psychological plane (31-32). The presence of *verba sentiendi* is evidence of positive shading of the narration (Bosseaux 54).

According to the Fowler-Uspensky model, the second aspect that must be considered in an analysis conducted on this plane is the presence of epistemic modal adverbs (such as 'maybe' and 'probably') and perceptual modal adverbs (like 'apparently' and 'evidently'), which are indicative of Category A narratives with negative shading because they convey narrator uncertainty (Bosseaux 29). The Spanish equivalents of *aparentemente*, *quizás* and *evidentemente* are used for analysis on the psychological plane because they also function as epistemic and perceptual modal adverbs in Spanish. Examining the presence and use of these three modal adverbs reveals key information about the type of shading of Category A narrative styles used for each of the characters analyzed. Other epistemic modal structures, including

modal auxiliary verbs (such as ‘could have been’), can also be analyzed on a case by case basis to reveal further information about Category A shading.

2.2.4.3. *The Spatio-Temporal Plane*

The spatio-temporal plane addresses both the representation of time within a novel, including the natural flow of the novel and disruptions, as well as the linguistic presentation of the spatial relationship of people, objects, landscapes, and other physical elements within the text (Fowler 127-128). To examine the spatio-temporal plane, Fowler recommends analyzing deixis (79), which includes linguistic features that relate to the location and identification of people, objects or events referred to in an utterance, including personal pronouns, demonstrative pronouns, temporal terms and tense (Bosseaux 28-31). Deictic features aid in the identification of the relationship of the teller—the narrator or narrating character—and a given character: their spatial position may or may not concur with relation to one another (Uspensky 57-65). With regard to time, Uspensky recommends analyzing the sequence of chronological events and identifying the multiplicity of temporal positions, and whether they overlap or are presented back-to-back (66). Identifying tense, and changes in tense, gives us information as to the temporal position of the teller (69-70). For example, abrupt shifts between the present and past tenses in a passage in which a memory is narrated would allow the narrator’s point of view to coincide with the temporal position of the character. This technique transports the audience into the action of the narrative, thereby enhancing reader empathy towards a particular character.

Omission of the Spatio-Temporal Plane in the Analysis of Ciudad Radiante

In this graduation project, we will not conduct an analysis on the spatio-temporal plane. This is primarily due to the fact that Chacón’s *Ciudad Radiante* was written almost entirely from the first-person perspective, using the present tense. There does exist one important example of perspective shift, from first- to third-person, but this example also represents a shift in

narration style and will be analyzed on the psychological plane. Additionally, both Fowler and Bosseaux recommend the use of computer-based corpus-processing tools, such as WordList, KeyWords, or Concord, to distinguish the linguistic features being investigated in the texts analyzed (Bosseaux 63). In the case of the spatio-temporal plane, the use of these tools is especially important for the identification of elements of deixis, due to the complexity of the search. Given that such an analysis would add a different dimension to the research conducted herein, the identification and analysis of elements on the spatio-temporal plane is omitted from this graduation project.

2.2.5. *Equivalence in the Translation of Chacón's Ciudad Radiante*

While different translation techniques are applied in the translation of *Ciudad Radiante* to recreate the character perspectives identified in the initial analysis, there are two general strategies that were employed throughout the translation. These strategies, formal and dynamic equivalence, theoretically justify decisions made during the translation process. In order to understand these terms, we must first discuss the theoretical roots of equivalence itself.

The term 'equivalence' was first coined by Roman Jakobson in 1959 when he considered the problem of equivalence in meaning between words in different languages, observing that 'code-units' (words) in various languages rarely have full equivalence (Munday, *Introducing* 36). This is due to a fundamental difference in how each language partitions reality. According to Jakobson, it is possible to convey the whole semantic meaning of a code-unit can be conveyed in a distinct language, but it may need to be distributed into two or more separate concepts. He states that language differences are present at the levels of gender, aspect and semantic fields (37). In *Introducing Translation Studies Theories and Applications*, Munday presents the example of the English verb *to be* comprising two code-units in Spanish: *ser* and *estar* (37).

Building on Jacobson's concept of 'equivalence,' Eugene Nida began publishing his theories on equivalence in the 1960s (Munday, *Introducing* 37-37). Nida is known for his contribution to the 'science' of translation, which aimed at establishing a procedure for the translator to decode the source text and encode the target text using a tool he refers to as equivalence (Munday, *Introducing* 39). He set out two 'types of equivalence,' formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence. Formal equivalence is message-oriented, and aims to match the source language elements that convey the form and content of the message in the receptor language. Due to the dependence on the source structure, Nida suggests using scholarly footnotes to bring the reader closer to the source culture's customs and language, even if this introduces an air of 'foreignness' to the target text (Munday, *Introducing* 41). Dynamic equivalence, on the other hand, is based on Nida's 'principle of equivalent effect,' which aims to recreate the relationship that exists between the message and the source receptor for the target receptor and, thus, is receptor-oriented. Dynamic equivalence seeks naturalness of expression in the target language (Munday, *Introducing* 42). For both types of equivalence, Nida emphasizes that for a translation to be successful, it must comply with four basic requirements: "(1) making sense; (2) conveying the spirit and manner of the original; (3) having a natural and easy form of expression; (4) producing a similar response" (Munday, *Introducing* 42).

It cannot go without mention that the ideas of formal equivalence, dynamic equivalence, and equivalent effect, presented by Nida in 1964, have faced criticism over the years due to the subjectivity of his 'science' of translation. However, Nida's work has also been influential for numerous subsequent scholars, such as Peter Newmark and Werner Koller (Munday, *Introducing* 42-43). Despite the existence of more recent work on this subject, for the purpose of this graduation project, preference is given to the application of Nida's original terms given the clarity of these ideas in providing a basis for the translation decisions made herein.

In the English translation of *Ciudad Radiante*, both formal and dynamic equivalences were applied for two distinct purposes. In the stylistic recreation of character point of view, dynamic equivalence strategies are used to create the most natural equivalent that produces a similar response for the target audience. For this, the translation strategies identified in the side-by-side analyses of the source and target text in Chapter 4 were employed. Conversely, given that *Ciudad Radiante* is rooted in a futuristic Costa Rican society, a certain amount of 'foreignness' is permissible in the English translation, especially in the translation (or lack thereof) of proper nouns such as institutional names. In these cases, the use of footnotes is applied to expand upon the receptor's understanding of a foreign concept, without bogging the text down with in-text explanations.

2.3. *Methodological Framework*

To address our two distinct objectives, this graduation project contains a chapter addressing each of the two specific objectives. Chapter 3 is dedicated to an analysis of linguistic structures used by three female characters on two of the three planes of the Fowler-Uspensky model, in an effort to identify the linguistic features that transmit the characters' voice. From this analysis, Chapter 4 seeks to analyze the translation techniques used to recreate the perspective conveyed by the linguistic features in the English translation, employing Nida's formal and dynamic equivalence as general translation strategies. Chapter 3 is broken into sections based on the two planes of analysis: the ideological and psychological planes. Chapter 4 is divided by each character analyzed.

To explore the effects of linguistic elements on character point of view in the source text, *Ciudad Radiante*, specific elements have been identified for analysis on the ideological and psychological planes within Chapter 3. These specific elements, taken from the sections *Justification for the Analysis of Specific Modal Systems on the Ideological Plane in Spanish* and *Justification for the Analysis of Specific Verba Sentiendi and Perception and Epistemic*

Modal Adverbs on the Psychological Plane in Spanish, above, are presented in Table 1 below, the methodology for which is explained in this section.

Table 1. Elements for Analysis Using the Fowler-Uspensky Model

		Elements Analyzed in Chapter 3	
Fowler-Uspensky Plane Analyzed	Element Category	Term to identify in source text	
Ideological Plane	Epistemic modals	<i>poder</i>	
		<i>deber</i>	
		<i>tener que</i>	
Psychological Plane	<i>Verba sentiendi</i>	<i>me siento</i>	
	Perception modal adverb	<i>evidentemente</i>	
	Epistemic modal adverb	<i>tal vez</i>	

2.3.1. Methodology for Analysis on the Ideological Plane

As set out in the theoretical framework, the epistemic modal verbs *poder*, *deber* and *tener que* have been selected for analysis on the ideological plane due to their relatively simple appearance as compared to other epistemic verbs, and because they are highly representative of the epistemic modality (Cornillie 182-190). For the selection of textual segments from the original text, we require an editable Microsoft Word version of the text to be analyzed; specifically, the chapters corresponding to La Hacedora (The Maker), Alejandra and Paula. Within these chapters, a search is carried out using Microsoft Word's find function, for each of the three epistemic verbs in all their potential conjugations in the indicative present, preterit, imperfect and future tenses, conditional tenses, the participle, and the subjunctive present tense. For example, when searching for the verb *poder*, a search is conducted not only for the infinitive, but also for *puedo*, *puedes*, *puede*, *podemos*, *pueden*, *pude*, *pudiste*, *pudo*, *pudimos*,

pudieron, podía, podías, podíamos, podían, podré, podrás, podrá, podremos, podrán, podría, podrías, podríamos, podrían, podido, pueda, puedas, podamos, and puedan. While the original text is written almost exclusively in the present, the past tenses are included to complete an exhaustive search. It should be mentioned that the present and future tenses, as well as the conditional mode, tend to be more charged with the teller's confidence, desire and intent, than the past tenses. As each occurrence of the verb is identified, it must be highlighted for easy identification in the source text. Occurrences of the verb *poder* are highlighted in yellow, those of the verb *deber* in light blue, and those of *tener que*, in pink. This color coding is simply a system for ease of visual identification of the epistemic modals in the source text. Once all the occurrences have been identified, tables are created to tally the number of occurrences per modal verb analyzed for each of the three characters examined. These tables appear within the text of Chapter 3.

Once the occurrences of each verb have been identified in the source text, each occurrence is subjectively evaluated based on the context. Several occurrences of each epistemic modal verb are chosen for in-depth analysis within Chapter 3 based on representative value. This analysis includes a brief explanation of the context, to orient the reader. Then, the use of the modal verb is analyzed, drawing from the conclusions of the analyses carried out by Bosseaux. Any other narratological structures that may appear within the context of each occurrence that are determined to contribute to the narrative point of view are also analyzed. In the analysis of each excerpt, conclusions are made about narrative voice and characterization based on the linguistic construction analyzed in order to set the stage for their translation.

In Chapter 4, passages are presented side-by-side with their corresponding translations, and the strategies employed by the translator to recreate the perspective

conveyed by the linguistic features presented in Chapter 3 are explained in order to illustrate the utility of applying the analysis of character point of view in literary translation.

2.3.2. *Methodology for Analysis on the Psychological Plane*

As discussed above, the three characters are to be analyzed on the psychological plane through evaluating the presence and application of the *verba sentiendi me siento* ['I feel'], the term of perception modal adverb *evidentemente* ['evidently'], and the epistemic modal adverb *tal vez* ['maybe']. These three terms are selected from the list presented in the theoretical framework after conducting a preliminary search in the Microsoft Word file containing the editable chapters to be analyzed using the find function. This decision was made based on the number of occurrences of each, as well as the richness of the examples with regard to a subjective analysis within the context of each occurrence. On this plane, we apply a similar methodology to that used on the ideological plane. A search is conducted in Microsoft Word using the find function in the file containing only the editable chapters to be analyzed, in which we find all the occurrences for the first-person singular *me siento*, the perception modal adverb *evidentemente*, and the epistemic modal adverb *tal vez*. The occurrences found are highlighted in gray, after considering the following. In the case of *me siento*, an ambiguity exists between whether the first person singular conjugation refers to the verb *sentirse* ['to feel'] or the verb *sentarse* ['to sit']. In this graduation project, we are only interested in the conjugations corresponding to *sentirse*. This distinction is easily made by reading the whole context in which the conjugated verb appears and determining which of the two verbs is being used based on that context. In the case of *tal vez*, only occurrences that fall into the epistemic system are highlighted. As we can recall, Simpson defines the epistemic system as being related to the speaker's confidence in the truth of the premise she expresses based on her knowledge, belief and thoughts (90-92). Thus, the appearances of *tal vez* are assessed in their context to determine if they contain epistemic clues regarding the teller. Again, we make tables to be

included in the text of Chapter 3 with a tally of the number occurrences of the terms highlighted in gray per character examined.

Once the table of occurrences of *me siento*, the epistemic *tal vez*, and *evidentemente* has been created, one to two examples are chosen each for La Hacedora, Alejandra, and Paula for a comprehensive analysis on the psychological plane. This analysis is qualitative and addresses how the use of the terms analyzed contributes to the construction of each character's specific point of view.

In addition to the analysis of shading in Type A narrations, we also analyze one specific case of a shift in narration style: the rape of Paula by her father. As mentioned above, *Ciudad Radiante* is written almost exclusively in the Type A narrative style, making it appear as if the actions in the novel occur before the reader's eyes. This specific scene, however, presents a unique case of a shift in narrative style that contributes to the identification of aspects of character point of view. In Chapter 3, we analyze how the linguistic constructions that denote the shift from Type A to Type B narrative style allow for further character development. In Chapter 4, we analyze how the perspective is recreated in the English translation by identifying the translation techniques employed.

2.4. Conclusion

The critical apparatus of this graduation project seeks to provide the theoretical background and methodology for the analysis of style in literary translation, through the analysis of the linguistic features that develop character point of view in Luis Chacón Ortiz's *Ciudad Radiante*. It also endeavors to set out the groundwork to identify and analyze the translation techniques used to recreate this point of view conveyed by the linguistic features identified, focusing on the preservation of the effect created by the style of the source text. Having paved the way for this analysis, specific cases of aspects of point of view and equivalence strategies will be presented in Chapters 3 and 4.

3. Textual Analysis of *Ciudad Radiante* Using the Fowler-Uspensky Model

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the first objective of this graduation project is developed, which is to identify the linguistic features that convey voice and contribute to the construction of the specific points of view of three female characters in Luis Chacón Ortiz' *Ciudad Radiante* using the Fowler-Uspensky model of analysis. This chapter is divided into the analysis of the two of the three planes of the Fowler-Uspensky model of analysis: the ideological and psychological planes. Within each plane, specific examples are taken from the source text following the parameters set out in the critical analysis, above, for the identification of linguistic features that transmit the characters' voice.

3.2. Ideological Plane

In this plane, we embark on the analysis of the linguistic features through which each selected character's point of view is constructed. Mainly, these features fall into the epistemic modal system. As established in the critical apparatus, the epistemic system allows us to define the speaker's confidence, or lack thereof, regarding the truth of the premise she expresses. Presented in the subsections below are examples taken from the source text of each of the three verbs to be analyzed within this modal system—*poder*, *deber*, and *tener que*—for each of the characters discussed in this graduation project, and the explanation of how they contribute to the construction of each respective character's development.

3.2.1. The Case of Poder

Given the preference for the first-person perspective in Chacón's *Ciudad Radiante*, the majority of the occurrences of the modal verb *poder* fall into the epistemic category. According to Cornillie, "the epistemic verb *poder/may* is most often defined in terms of autonomous assessment of the possibility that the proposition corresponds to reality" (184). As a result, it is an excellent modal for assessing the speaker's commitment to the premise of the utterances,

and thus for giving insight into her characterization. The table below tallies the total number of occurrences found in the chapters analyzed of the modal *poder* and its corresponding conjugations. Specific examples are then reprinted and analyzed following parameters set out by Uspensky, Fowler and Cornillie.

Table 2. Occurrences of *poder* in the chapters analyzed

Character	La Hacedora (The Maker)	Alejandra	Paula
Number of occurrences	35	14	8

3.2.1.1. *La Hacedora (The Maker)*

- (1) El proceso aún no es comercializable: la tasa de mortalidad es bastante alta. Los resultados, inseguros. Pero sí hemos llegado al primer nivel. Hemos traspasado una frontera. De aquí no podemos regresar. Mis compañeros comienzan a llamarme *The Maker*: La Hacedora (Chacón 52, my emphasis).

This excerpt is taken from La Hacedora's narration of the history of Pxs1t3x, the injectable drug of her creation that connects the users' minds directly to the Internet. She is describing the first threshold she and her team crossed in their research: blocking the nanochip's inhibitor which limits how the user experiences Px.

The use of the modal *poder* in this example reflects the speaker's belief that things can never again be as they were before. Leading up to the sentence containing the affirmation with *poder*, the speaker presents information about the results, why the product is still not ready to be put on the market. Generally, deductive inferences are not combined with the modal *poder*, but in this case the presentation of evidence illustrates La Hacedora's systematic, analytical way of thinking. She bases her opinions on her scientific assessment of the situation, thus

presenting her opinion as irrefutable, as if it were a substantiated scientific finding. Such confidence in her own propositions evidence her vanity and determination.

- (2) Les explico que en toda investigación siempre hay etapas de rezago. Lo que están viendo es normal. ¿Qué importancia tienen en el mundo unos inválidos, unos retrasados? ¿Acaso el sacrificio de unos pocos no es necesario para el bien común? Denme más tiempo, más dinero. **El problema puede solucionarse** (Chacón 116, my emphasis).

Further along in the drug's development, La Hacedora receives government funding and, as a result, her work is placed under the scrutiny of officials from the Ministry of Health. When government officials see the state of her patients, they get spooked and decide to cancel research. This excerpt is La Hacedora's reaction.

This use of the modal *poder* in this excerpt further demonstrates La Hacedora's conviction in her utterances. Objectively, "*el problema puede solucionarse*" communicates her belief that the possibility of resolving the problem exists. Subjectively, La Hacedora conveys that she is certain of the possibility that the problem can, and will be solved. Her reaction evidences her dissociation from a compassionate member of humanity and her shift into a result-driven scientist. She begins with a justification, explaining that a normal part of research is occasionally hitting dead ends. As if the officials were not receptive to this justification, she delves deeper, lessening the importance of the individual for the greater benefit of mankind. Finally, she makes the demand for more time and funding, sealing her argument with the modal statement, strengthened by her own conviction.

- (3) Contacto a Pfizer, les ofrezco mi investigación. A cambio, 100 millones de dólares, la jefatura de mi propio laboratorio. Los términos no son negociables. **Puedo exigir lo que quiera** (Chacón 116, my emphasis).

After losing government funding in the research, La Hacedora turns to the pharmaceutical company Pfizer. In this excerpt, she lays out her demands in the negotiation.

In this statement, La Hacedora uses the modal *poder* not only to objectively express the possibility of demanding anything that she wants, but to subjectively assure the reader of her confidence in the truth of her statement. Given the circumstances, she not only ‘may’ make any demand that she wants, but she will. The combination of the weak modal *poder* [‘may’] with the directive “*exigir*” [‘to demand’] also demonstrates high speaker confidence in her statement, and thus her belief that she has the upper hand in the negotiation. It evidences her manipulative and vain nature.

3.2.1.2. *Alejandra*

(4) Es viernes por la noche. Me maquillo, me perfumo las tetas. Saco del clóset un top negro, una minifalda, un calzoncito pequeño. Los tacones negros de diez centímetros. Me visto. Me miro en el espejo. No necesito sonreír. La sonrisa es el mejor accesorio para una mujer pobre o sin tetas. **Podré ser pobre, pero tetas sí tengo** (Chacón 79, my emphasis).

In this excerpt, Alejandra has just gotten ready for the party she has been waiting for all week and is pondering her reflection in the mirror. She knows she looks good and is giving herself a sort of mental pep talk.

In this example, Alejandra presents a conclusion drawn from looking at herself in the mirror: “*no necesito sonreír*” [‘I do not need to smile’]. She supports this with the declaration that a smile is the best accessory for someone who is poor or flat-chested, justifying, “*podré ser pobre, pero tetas sí tengo*” [‘I may be poor, but I do have tits’]. The modal *poder* is conjugated in the future tense, which imparts additional speaker confidence in the statement: Alejandra knows she is poor. However, as a testament to her self-worth, she changes the tone of the sentence with the contrastive conjunction *pero* [‘but’], adding the positive statement “*tetas*

sí tengo”, which includes the double affirmation using the positive conjugation of “*tener*” [‘to have’] and “*sí*”, functioning here as [‘do’]. From such a statement, Alejandra’s high self-worth—at least in her physique and sexuality—as well as her confidence in her ability to manipulate men are clear.

(5) **La noche no podría estar saliendo mejor** (Chacón 82, my emphasis).

Alejandra, having arrived at the party, is completely content. She is in awe with the house and the elaborate details. Her boyfriend is crazy about her. She has just found her friends. Everything is playing out exactly as she had hoped.

Through the use of this modal construction, Alejandra is expressing that there is no possibility for the night to play out any better. The use of the negative communicates the highest speaker confidence in the truth of the premise: there is no doubt in Alejandra’s mind that the night is anything but perfect. As we will later discover, the night takes an unexpected turn and Alejandra becomes deeply disappointed. These abrupt changes of opinion, exemplified by contrasting statements with high speaker confidence, characterize Alejandra as fickle.

3.2.1.3. *Paula*

(6) En el cole mis compañeros me miran diferente. Sienten tristeza. Me tienen cautela, pero no menos ganas. *I become*. Qué patética. Qué vulnerable. Me he convertido en la mujer que necesita ser rescatada. **La sociedad dice que una mujer solo puede ser rescatada por un hombre**. El video juego más popular del mundo (el cual ha vendido unas 60 millones de copias en toda la Tierra según Wikipedia. *!/[sic] Look it up!*) trata precisamente sobre eso: un pequeño fontanero inicia una travesía para salvar a la princesa de las garras de un dragón. Es patético. Inexacto. *We don’t need to be saved* (Chacón 167, my emphasis).

In this excerpt, Paula has returned to classes after everything that has happened: being raped by her father, running away from home, meeting up with Eugenio at the mall and having a bad reaction to Px that landed her in the hospital. She dislikes how everyone is treating her, feeling vulnerable and pathetic, comparing herself to the princess in a videogame that needs to be saved.

In this comparison, Paula comes to a conclusion about society: “*La sociedad dice que una mujer solo puede ser rescatada por un hombre*” or [‘Society says that a woman can only be rescued by a man’]. The modal *poder* objectively informs us that, according to society, the sole possibility for a woman to be rescued is by a man. While this opinion is expressed in the third person, Paula’s opinion shines through in two ways: first, by presenting the statement in the third person with “*la sociedad*” [‘society’] as the subject, she is removing herself from the assessment expressed in the modal expression; secondly, by stating an ultimatum, an overgeneralization, she provides a basis on which to contrast her viewpoint. The generalization is constructed using the word “*solo*” [‘only’]. Logically, it is impossible for one hundred percent of society to agree with such a definitive generalization that ‘a woman can only be rescued by a man.’ Based on the preceding excerpt and analysis, it is clear that Paula is upset. She does not agree with the treatment she is receiving and is blaming society. The use of this generalization evidences this, as she does not include herself in the category of ‘society’ and, thus, is beginning to view herself as an outsider.

(7) Mi problema con La Realidad es que no puedo dejar de verla. Es como la imagen de tus papás cogiendo. Cerrás los ojos: está en todas partes. **No puedo decirle a mis amigas lo que pienso: ellas no me entenderán.** Seré una de esas rechazadas que se sienten solas. Que no hablan con nadie. Que sacan un libro. Dios mío *help me*: odio los libros (Chacón 168, my emphasis).

In this excerpt, Paula is back at school. She is contemplating the insignificance of Reality, of why everyone feels such an urgency to check and communicate on social media. She feels like she no longer identifies with her friends but fears becoming a social outcast.

Paula utilizes the modal *poder* to emphasize her lack of confidence in there being any possibility of telling her friends what she thinks. She does this by using the negative conjugation of the modal, thus imparting strong speaker confidence in the truth of the premise. This use of *poder* gives the reader insight into Paula’s way of thinking; her point of view is filtered through her opinion that she is distinct from her peers. To punctuate this, she employs the future tense, “*ellas no me entenderán*” [‘they will not understand me’], to express her definitive conclusion. This excerpt evidences Paula’s realization of her independent nature, of her distance from her peers.

3.2.2. *The Case of Deber*

The modal *deber* is often used to express conclusions, and thus commonly appears with evidence, inferences or other types of reasoning, which must also be analyzed as a part of the modal structure (Cornillie 187-189). In *Ciudad Radiante*, there are very few epistemic uses of *deber* that do not employ inductive or deductive inferences. In fact, only one example was found in the chapters analyzed in *Ciudad Radiante* that illustrates a purely epistemic modality (see example 13, below). *Deber* tends to express stronger speaker commitment to the veracity of the proposition expressed than *poder*, but is not as strong as *tener que*. The total number of occurrences of the modal *deber* and its conjugations are expressed in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Occurrences of *deber* in the chapters analyzed

Character	La Hacedora (The Maker)	Alejandra	Paula
No. of occurrences	11	8	9

3.2.2.1. *La Hacedora (The Maker)*

- (8) **Quizá debería dejar de hacer esto, pero sexo es sólo sexo, ¿no es así?** Tati dice: Quiero que me chupés mientras navego. No me contengo. Saco una jeringa de una de las gavetas del armario. Le inyecto una dosis menos fuerte que la de la mañana: la piel en su antebrazo ha comenzado a podrirse.

La acuesto sobre la cama, le quito el jeans, los calzones. Su vagina es una flor púrpura. Está húmeda. Ella gime. Revisa su email, el Facebook. Su mente explora el ciberespacio mientras su cuerpo intenta aferrarse a los sentidos restantes. Es una sensación maravillosa. Yo lo he hecho antes. Introduzco dos dedos en su interior sólo para sentir el calor de su cuerpo. Ella se riega pocos minutos después. Permanece acostada, los ojos cerrados, conectada. Yo bajo las gradas, entro a la sala. Me digo: **Quizá debería dejar de hacer esto** (Chacón 53-54, my emphasis).

In this excerpt, after the disappearance of Mario and the success of Phase 1 of the research, the reader becomes aware of La Hacedora's romantic relationship with one of her employees, Tatiana. Prior to and following the act, La Hacedora contemplates breaking off this relationship.

Before engaging in sexual acts with Tatiana, La Hacedora states the clause '*quizá debería dejar de hacer esto*', 'maybe I should stop doing this'. While López Sánchez points out that speaker commitment is higher in *deber* constructions than *poder* ones (Zamorano-Mansilla et al. 353), given our characterization of La Hacedora as calculated and vain, it can be assumed that her use of the modal *debería* is not to convey high speaker commitment, but rather to acknowledge her awareness that her affair is morally incorrect and that, despite this fact, she chooses to continue it. The use of the particle "*quizá*" ['maybe'] emphasizes her low speaker commitment to the truth set out in the aforementioned clause. She repeats this clause after leaving the bedroom, further highlighting her awareness of the injustice to Mario, her boyfriend, and her decision to proceed. As a result, La Hacedora's use of the modal *deber* in this excerpt

reinforces her disregard for social and moral norms and supports her characterization as a cold, unsympathetic character.

- (9) Pienso: No hay forma en el mundo en que Mario haya encontrado el GPS. **Alguien debe haber abierto el capó, mirado dentro del motor. Y ese alguien debe entender de motores** (Chacón 144, my emphasis).

This excerpt is taken from when La Hacedora is searching for Mario in Puntarenas, after he had stolen her car in an attempt to flee from her and the laboratory. Once La Hacedora realizes that the hidden GPS has been uninstalled from her car, she determines that Mario had taken the car to a mechanic and, retracing his steps, visits all the mechanics in town asking for him.

Based on the logical assumption that Mario could not have discovered the GPS himself, La Hacedora uses the modal *deber* to express a series of deductive inferences. After having analyzed the situation, she states that someone “*debe haber abierto el capó*” [‘must have opened the hood’] and that this person “*debe entender de motores*” [‘must understand engines’]. True to her nature as a scientist, La Hacedora’s character approaches the situation as if she were in her laboratory: she first makes observations, then arrives at conclusions based on those observations. The consistent implementation of inferences based on logical reasoning by La Hacedora, as evidenced by the use of the epistemic modal *deber*, contributes to her characterization as highly analytical.

3.2.2.2. *Alejandra*

- (10) En medio de la finca, una casa automática construida en cromo con plata. El techo es retráctil. Esta noche está abierto a la brisa, al calor, a la música. La casa entregada a sí misma. En el centro encuentro una gran pista de baile. Del lado derecho, una piscina. Es impresionante. Las casas automáticas son aún una novedad. Apenas si he visto el anuncio. El eslogan es: “Una casa, una consciencia, un sólo propósito”. La teoría es que la casa permanece todo el tiempo conectada a Internet: procura acomodarse a tus

necesidades. **El dueño debía estar cagado en plata.** Si pudiera conocerlo (Chacón 81-82, my emphasis).

In this example, Alejandra has just arrived at the party she had been longing to attend all week and is admiring the luxury of the host's home. The house itself employs a novel technology that only recently hit the market and she contemplates the owner's wealth.

As commented by Cornillie, a majority of *deber* constructions do not evidence the highest speaker commitment because the speaker's beliefs are subject to outside influences, including the opinions of others (199). This excerpt is an example of such inductive reasoning. Alejandra first observes and comments on the features of the host's home, the immense luxury. She calls it "*impresionante*" ['impressive']. Then, she refers to information projected by propaganda for automatic houses, stating the advertising slogan. Third, she interprets the slogan to mean that "*procura acomodarse a tus necesidades*" ['it adapts to your needs'], an interpretation that reflects her admiration for the technology. Lastly, she arrives at the conclusion that the owner "*debía estar cagado en plata*" ['must be rolling in dough'], using the *deber* construction to make a further assumption based on the observed information. The final comment, "*si pudiera conocerlo*" ['if only I could meet him'], punctuates the paragraph with an expression illustrating her yearning to make an impression on the wealthy, to move up in society. This comment highlights the speaker's commitment to the truth of the *deber* construction as she expresses a desire founded in her conclusion.

(11) David dice: Tomáte una, es rico. Y me extiende una mano de M01x. Le golpeo la mano con ira, boto la droga al suelo. Él la observa en el suelo como alguien a quién [sic] se le ha caído un vaso y no entiende bien cómo. Le digo: Estúpido, imbécil. ¿Para qué tomaste eso? Obviamente, él no puede responderme. Su cuerpo está completamente inmóvil sobre la pista. Sus cuerdas vocales se han cerrado. No puede mover un músculo. Lo abandono. Me voy a buscar a Nancy y a Sofía. Están en la piscina con

unos maes. Yo no quiero ser la quinta rueda. Al regresar a la pista, David se ha ido. Y aunque yo sepa que es imposible que él se haya largado por su cuenta, su ausencia me desespera aún más. **Lo deben haber sacado de la pista para que no molestara a los demás.** Me quedo sin novio, sin amigas (Chacón 83, my emphasis).

This excerpt was taken from the same chapter as excerpt 10 above. Alejandra has just arrived at the party with her boyfriend, David, and she runs into her friends from school. In this excerpt, we can observe Paula's reaction to finding a snag in her perfect night: David has willingly taken a date-rape drug.

This implementation of the modal *deber* is an instance of deductive inference. When Alejandra returned to the dancefloor and could not find David, knowing that he had passed out and was incapable of leaving himself, she deduces that 'they' must have removed him from the dancefloor so that he would not bother anyone else. Her use of the implied subject "*ellos*" ['they'] illustrates her lack of interest in exactly what happened to David. Her seemingly logical inference that he was removed from the dancefloor is sufficient to calm her worries about his wellbeing. As evidenced by the final sentences of the excerpt, she quickly moves on to her concerns about her own wellbeing in the absence of her friends and boyfriend. Instances such of these portray Alejandra as self-absorbed and easily influenced.

3.2.2.3. *Paula*

(12) Al llegar a casa después del colegio me encierro en el cuarto. Pliego las cortinas. Me desnudo frente al espejo. Me examino atentamente. Veo la celulitis en los brazos, en el estómago, en las nalgas. **Mi vientre debería ser más plano. Mi trasero más pequeño. Mi ano más rosado. Mi rostro más redondo.** Debería salir a correr más seguido. Contratar un *personal trainer* (Chacón 87, my emphasis).

Here we are introduced to Paula in an intimate scene of self-deprecation. She gets undressed in front of her mirror in order to find flaws with herself, criticize herself for not being thinner,

prettier, more perfect. Following this excerpt, Paula takes photos of herself so that she can continue putting herself down. She claims to be any number of horrible things—from pig to whore—but not a liar.

In this example, Paula uses several modal constructions with *deber* to express her low self-image. She states that various body parts “*deberían ser*” [‘should be’] different: her stomach flatter, her anus pinker, her face rounder. These inductive inferences are based on the evidence she has gathered of herself from the mirror and from her judgment of what society deems beautiful. The use of the conditional form of the verb *deber* (‘*debería*’) represents weaker speaker conviction that would be conveyed by employing, for example, the simple present. This string of self-critiques, presented using parallel structure and all depending on the verbal phrase “*debería ser*,” thus evidences Paula’s point of view that everything should be different, but that she does not see change as a possibility. It reveals how Paula’s character sees the situation, how she views herself. From this, Paula is characterized as insecure and self-loathing.

(13) Pienso tanto en qué decirle que al final no digo nada. La profe de inglés entra al aula. Sacamos los Ipads. Empiezan las lecciones. Inglés es aburrido, fácil. Me dedico a dibujar figuras geométricas en el Sketch™. Aquí un cubo, aquí un triángulo, aquí un círculo conectado con un trapezoide por un par de líneas. Nada significa nada. *Pointless as fuckin life*. Las figuras ni siquiera tienen forma exacta, pero es más divertido que poner atención. Me gustaría decirle algo a Eugenio. **Creo que debería decirle algo**. ¿No es eso lo que uno hace cuando quiere ser amable? (Chacón 90, my emphasis)

In this example, Paula is in her high school English class. The father of one of her classmates, Eugenio, has gone missing, and she is contemplating whether to reach out to him about it, and what to say if she does.

In this excerpt, Paula employs *deber* as a purely epistemic modality. Leading up to the construction, her utterances are expressed as trains of thought, shifting their focus as she loses interest in each idea. She begins thinking about what to tell Eugenio, then decides against telling him anything. She changes her focus to her English teacher and class, but gets bored easily, deciding to sketch instead. Paula gets frustrated that her geometric shapes mean nothing, and that life, too, is meaningless, but resolves that sketching entertains her more than class. At the end of the paragraph, she returns to wanting to say something to Eugenio. We can infer that Paula intends to distract herself from her desire to reach out to Eugenio, but is unsuccessful in focusing on anything else, given that she returns to the idea after just a few sentences. The sentence “*creo que debería decirle algo*” [‘I think I should say something to him’], utilizes the subjective hedge “*creo que*” [‘I think’] which, according to Cornillie, evidences the belief state of the speaker (201). Cornillie claims that by combining such hedges with the modal *deber*, the explicit reference to evidence and the inductive process is replaced with a strictly epistemic interpretation. When we apply Cornillie’s conclusions to Chacón’s novel, excerpts analyzed for *La Hacedora* and *Alejandra* contain clear examples of how combining *deber* with hedges results in an epistemic reading of the text. It is thus concluded that Paula has strong speaker commitment to the premise of her statement. She believes, perhaps because of the social obligations that have been instilled in her, that it is necessary for her to speak to him. This is again reinforced by the repetition of the idea of talking to Eugenio.

3.2.3. *The Case of Tener que*

Tener que is quite similar in modal function to *deber*. It is, however, the modal that implies the strongest speaker commitment of all those discussed herein. While rare, it can exist as a purely epistemic modality without any apparent reasoning, but it is usually accompanied by inductive or deductive inferences. As evidenced in the table below (Table 4), very few examples of *tener que* were found in the text analyzed. In fact, no examples were found in the

chapters corresponding to Alejandra—which we can attribute to her generally low speaker commitment, in accordance with the excerpts analyzed above—and thus no analysis is presented for this character. Given the scarcity of examples, only one example each is presented for La Hacedora and Paula.

Table 4. Occurrences of *tener que* in the chapters analyzed

Character	La Hacedora (The Maker)	Alejandra	Paula
Number of occurrences	3	0	4

3.2.3.1. *La Hacedora (The Maker)*

(14) Continuamos con la búsqueda de pacientes. Estudiar su cerebro es insuficiente. Es necesario comprenderlos. **Tengo que entrar con ellos.** El día W tomo una jeringa, busco la vena en mi brazo, me conecto (Chacón 116, my emphasis).

After losing government funding for her research, La Hacedora offers it to Pfizer. The pharmaceutical company accepts all of her demands and the research facilities are moved to a private lab. La Hacedora, in an attempt to improve the results of her research, decides that it is necessary to inject herself with the research drug.

In this excerpt, La Hacedora implements inductive inferencing to arrive at the conclusion “*tengo que entrar con ellos*” [‘I have to enter [the Internet] with them’]. The strong speaker commitment of this construction illustrates La Hacedora’s desperation. For her, the researcher, there is no other possibility. Losing Pfizer’s funding is not an option because this research has become her life. The use of *tener que* makes it clear that La Hacedora only sees one option in this situation. High speaker commitment phrases such as this one aid the reader in empathizing with La Hacedora’s way of thinking.

Additionally, this moment represents a turning point for La Hacedora’s character. By taking the drug herself, she becomes addicted to it. Her decision to make her body dependent

on controlled doses of her invention to survive underscores her conviction in the project's success.

3.2.3.2. *Paula*

(15) Mis papás son gente normal. No se parecen a mí. No se merecen una hija como ésta. Mi mamá es ama de ama [sic]. Mi papá, oficinista. Ella cocina la cena; él observa las noticias, se toma una pastilla. **Mi casa es como tiene que ser una casa**. Si ellos supieran lo que hago, no sabría qué decirles. ¿Cómo reaccionarían? (Chacón 87, my emphasis)

Following her self-loathing photo session in front of the mirror, Paula goes downstairs to where her parents are and compares herself to them. She considers them normal people in a normal house and wonders what they would think of her if they knew what she does. She calms herself by thinking about the impermanence and unimportance of mankind.

This excerpt has a deductive inferential reading. Paula argues that her parents are normal. She has established herself as abnormal and states “*no se parecen a mí*” [‘they are not like me’]. She offers the evidence that her mom is a stay-at-home mom and cooks, her dad works in an office, watches the news and takes pills to connect to the internet. Based on this information she concludes “*mi casa es como tiene que ser una casa*” [‘my house is how a house should be’]. She uses this logical modal construction to contrast herself: she does not fit in.

3.3. *Psychological Plane*

On this plane, we determine the shading of the Type A internal narration style of the three characters analyzed. As we can recall from the critical apparatus, Type A narration style refers to narration from a participating character’s point of view, and is the only narration style used consistently throughout Luis Chacón’s *Ciudad Radiante*. In accordance with the methodology for analysis on this plane, we shall evaluate the presence and use of three specific terms throughout the chapters corresponding to La Hacedora, Alejandra, and Paula. These

terms include the *verba sentiendi me siento* ['I feel'], the perception modal adverb *evidentemente* ['evidently'], and the epistemic modal adverb *tal vez* ['maybe'], and were chosen because each is characteristic of different types of shading of the narrative style. The application of *me siento* is indicative of A positive narration, that of the modal *tal vez* is characteristic of A negative narration, and that of *evidentemente* represents a term that is generally absent from A positive narration (Bosseaux 28) but common in A negative narration (Bosseaux 31).

The table below represents the results of the search and preliminary assessment of the terms mentioned above in the chapters analyzed. Interestingly, in the *me siento* category, both La Hacedora and Paula present the same expression: "*Me siento orgullosa*" ['I'm proud'], both of which are analyzed in this section.

Table 4. Occurrences of *me siento*, *evidentemente*, and the epistemic *tal vez* in the chapters analyzed

Character	La Hacedora (The Maker)	Alejandra	Paula
No. of occurrences of <i>me siento</i>	6	3	2
No. of occurrences of <i>evidentemente</i>	1	0	0
No. of occurrences of epistemic <i>tal vez</i>	3	0	2

3.3.1. *La Hacedora (The Maker)*

- (16) La explicación siempre fue la misma: la L30 es producida por una máquina que alguien (¡Nadie decía quién!) ha programado mucho tiempo atrás. El lenguaje, obsoleto. El código binario, inservible. ¿Acaso querían que pensara que Dios ha [sic] creado la pastilla? Dios no existe. Evidentemente todo es mentira. No sobre la máquina

(que sí existe, porque la he visto. Insisto),
sino sobre su ignorancia. Sobre qué pasa exactamente. El silencio es un secreto corporativo. Bayer desea esconder su propio fracaso. Las carencias, los defectos, los efectos secundarios de la pastilla, son muchos. Es increíble que en tantos años no hayan podido mejorar la estabilidad ni la velocidad de la conexión (Chacón 46-47, my emphasis).

In this excerpt, La Hacedora has recently received funding for her research from the Costa Rican government, with the expectation that she will make the country a world leader in the L30 market. She is currently science's 'it' girl and riding on the wave of her success and popularity. Here, she contrasts her success with the failure of Bayer. She reflects on a visit to the Bayer factory in Germany, presenting her conclusions about the secrecy surrounding the L30 pill making process.

Here we have an excerpt that is laden with A positive shading. La Hacedora scoffs at Bayer's secrecy by posing the sharp question, "*¿Acaso querían que pensara que Dios ha [sic] creado la pastilla?*" An equivalent translation in English could be 'Did they *really* want me to think that God had created the pill?' The irony is confirmed with the punctual, sweeping generalization that follows: "*Dios no existe.*" This raw categorical assertion lacks epistemic modifiers to soften the claim, thus conveying the highest degree of speaker commitment (Bosseaux 25). This firm belief fits in with her characterization as having high self-value and her confidence in her seemingly well-founded conclusions.

Next, the perception modal adverb *evidentemente* is employed in a sentence that actually presents positive shading, contrary to the typical use of such modal adverbs. It does, indeed, present her opinion as that of an outsider passing judgment on Bayer, but by combining it with the generalization "*todo es mentira*" ['everything is a lie'], she makes her opinion and disapproval clear. True to her analytical way of thinking, La Hacedora refines her

generalization, delimiting that it only applies to the intangible, to that for which she has no visual evidence: “sobre *su ignorancia*” [‘about their ignorance’] and “sobre *lo que pasa*” [‘about what exactly occurs’].

La Hacedora refers to Bayer’s ‘desire’ to hide its failure without any modal adverbs to denote uncertainty about this observation: “*Bayer desea esconder su propio fracaso*” [‘Bayer wants to hide its own failure’]. The use of the *verba sentiendi* “*desea*” [‘wants’] denotes almost intimate knowledge about the thoughts and feelings of the company’s administration. This A positive narration style presents La Hacedora as the most omniscient teller of the three women. Her observations and conclusions are represented as if they were facts, without terms that imply doubt.

The final sentence of this excerpt leads in with an explicit comment with an evaluative adjective “*es increíble que*” [‘it’s incredible that’], which is, according to Bosseaux, strongly characteristic of the A positive narrative style (28). Again, this demonstrates La Hacedora’s self-assurance through her high speaker confidence in the truth of the statement.

(17) Rodeo el laboratorio. Entro por la puerta principal. Observo los cuerpos sobre la alfombra, sobre el sillón, la mesa. Andrés, Tatiana, Daniel. Dieciocho horas conectados a Internet de manera ininterrumpida, a solas con el ciberuniverso. **Me siento orgullosa de ellos**, de su piel seca, amarilla. De sus ropas empapadas de sudor, de orina. Son como mis hijos (Chacón 44, my emphasis).

Excerpt 17 is part of the second paragraph of a new chapter in which La Hacedora awakens to the realization that Mario, her boyfriend, has fled the laboratory. She walks the beach contemplating his absence, surprised that he was gutsy enough to go through with it. When she returns to the lab, she sees her co-workers, who now double as test subjects, just waking up from an eighteen-hour period of being connected to the internet.

This passage begins in A neutral because we are presented with a straightforward description of the La Hacedora's physical movements and observations. The first five sentences ("*Rodeo el laboratorio... a solas con el ciberuniverso.*") are entirely void of narratorial modality, and thus give us no insight into the teller's opinion or judgments. This is consistent with La Hacedora's analytical nature.

The next sentence, "*me siento orgullosa de ellos*" ['I'm proud of them'], represents a shift in narration shading from A neutral to A positive because of the use of the *verba sentiendi me siento*, which denotes La Hacedora's subjective point of view. As is established above, La Hacedora is extremely result-driven, and this narration style allows us to observe her warm feelings towards her coworkers: the vessels that deliver positive results in her investigation. In the final sentence, La Hacedora states "*son como mis hijos*" ['they are like my children']. This simile highlights her responsibility as the 'Maker' of this new form of L30, alluding to her god-like role. God created Earth and is the father of all mankind; La Hacedora created liquid L30 and is the mother of all those who consume it. Further analysis of her nickname itself on the psychological plane reveals even stronger ties to her god-like status. According to the *Diccionario de la Lengua Española* published by the *Real Academia Española*, the noun 'hacedor(a)' is defined as "se aplica especialmente a Dios, ya con algún calificativo, como *el Supremo Hacedor*, ya sin ninguno, como *el Hacedor*," and thus, is a synonym for God, a connotation that holds true in the English translation: The Maker. Given the feminine article and -a ending, La Hacedora, also implies a role reversal from the typical perception of God as a male figure. The capitalization of both La Hacedora and The Maker further emphasize the character's divinity.

3.3.2. *Alejandra*

(18) **Esta noche me siento como una versión zorra de Bella**: una DisneyPunk. Muerdo el cuello de David, pego mi cuerpo al suyo. Los jóvenes del mundo somos hermosos.

Iluminamos el cielo como cientos de juegos pirotécnicos. Como estrellas fugaces (Chacón 82, my emphasis).

This excerpt is taken from just after Alejandra arrives at the party on Friday night with her boyfriend. She is overjoyed with the luxury of everything, with how perfect she perceives the night to be. Soon after, this image will be contrasted by her boyfriend taking a double dose of a date-rape drug, seemingly leaving her to be a third wheel.

In the opening sentence, Alejandra employs the *verba sentiendi me sientio* to signal her subjective point of view, labeling herself with strong evaluative adjective “zorra” [‘slutty’], highlighting the confidence she has when applying such a term to herself. This is a prime example of A positive shading in the narrative due to the implementation of the *verba sentiendi me sientio* and the complete lack of the epistemic modal system. As we move through the excerpt, we continue seeing evidence of A positive narration. In the sentence “*Los jóvenes del mundo somos hermosos*” [‘The youth of the world, we’re beautiful’] we are presented with a generic statement with a timeless reference to the young people of the world, which Bosseaux claims to be characteristic positive shading in the narration style (29). When using similes to describe the young people (“*iluminamos el cielo como cientos de juegos pirotécnicos*” [‘we light up the sky like hundreds of fireworks’] and “*como estrellas fugaces*” [‘like shooting stars’]), comparative structures based in human perceptions, which are common in A negative shading, are avoided, opting instead for the active verb “*iluminamos*” [‘we light up’] and the simple comparative “*como*” [‘like’]. The words paint a vivid image for the reader, without any glimmer of uncertainty arising from the narration style. This style is consistent with the high speaker confidence we observed in the sections above, and further evidences her high self-assurance.

3.3.3. Paula

(19) Estoy nerviosa. Sudo. Siento un nuevo calambre en mis ovarios. Es el fin del mundo. Me llega su respuesta. Me abalanzo sobre el mensaje. Lo leo. El mensaje es sólo una

palabra, Helvetica 12, tinta negra. La palabra es: Gracias. A la par, una carita sonriente.
Soy amable. Como la puta madre Teresa *teen*. **Me siento orgullosa.** *Yey for me.* Le
sonríó. Él me sonríe. No somos amigos, pero compartimos un secreto (Chacón 90-91,
my emphasis).

In this excerpt, Paula has just finished her long internal debate regarding whether to send Eugenio a private message, deciding in favor of reaching out to him. She deliberates over what to write, sends the message, and sees that he has read it. Waiting for his response, she becomes anxious.

The beginning of this passage is laden with *verba sentiendi*, and thus is in the A positive narration style. The reader has no doubt about Paula's thoughts, perceptions, and feelings: "*estoy nerviosa*" ['I'm nervous'], "*siento un nuevo calambre en mis ovarios*" ['I feel a new cramp in my ovaries'], "*es el fin del mundo*" ['it's the end of the world']. It is clear that she is anxious to receive Eugenio's response. Her nervousness is even reflected in sentence length. The sentences are short, creating tension and mimicking the pounding of her heart.

When Paula receives a new message from Eugenio, she over examines the one-word response, from the font to the text color. This A negative description ("*El mensaje es... Gracias.*"), although devoid of modality and evidencing her judgment based on the linguistic construction, reflects how much she reads into the importance of social niceties. She confirms this importance by again switching into A positive with the *verba sentiendi* "*me siento orgullosa*" ['I'm proud']. This being proud of herself signifies an accomplishment in fitting in with the world around her.

(20) Está furioso. Lo sé sólo con verlo. Sujeta mi teléfono entre sus manos. No sé cómo reaccionar. Doy unos pasos atrás, me siento en la cama. Quisiera apartar los ojos de los suyos, pero no puedo. Mi papá dice: Revisé tu celular, encontré las fotos, grandísima zorra. Sos una zorra. Puta, mi hija es una puta. Y antes de que pueda decir

algo, antes incluso de abrir mi boca, mi papá me abofetea. El golpe es tan fuerte que casi me bota de la cama.

El sabor a sangre inunda mi boca. El mundo es una cubeta llena de tripas. Esta sangre es diferente a la de hace unos minutos: no es mía. No me gusta. Huele a tristeza, a furia. Me he mordido un labio. Todo se pone borroso. Mi papá sigue gritando. No entiendo qué es lo que dice. Me duele el cuello, la mejilla, la cabeza. Una lágrima rueda por mi cachete. Mi papá me agarra el brazo, me sostiene con fuerza. Me quejo (papá, me duele, it hurts), pero él no afloja.

La escena se desenvuelve en tercera persona. Me transformo en una mosca en la pared.

Una de las manos de él baja a su entrepierna. Baja el zipper del pantalón. Se saca el pene. Pone el pene semi-erecto a unos centímetros de la cara de su hija. Ella intenta apartar la cabeza, pero no puede: él la sostiene con fuerza. Ahora su pene está erecto. Es pequeño, gordo, feo. Ella no entiende qué está pasando. Sí sabe, pues, que no debería estar pasando. Los ojos de él no sólo reflejan enojo, sino también odio, furia, desprecio. La que está en la cama no es su hija. Es una mujer extranjera, de una clase inferior (Chacón 91-92, my emphasis).

In this excerpt, we are presented with Paula's father's confrontation with his daughter over photographs that he found on her phone. The first time that the reader is introduced to Paula, she locks herself in her bedroom to take naked pictures of herself as a means of self-deprecation. Her father assumes the worst, and proceeds to treat her like the promiscuous girl he thinks she has become, by physically and sexually abusing her.

The beginning of the first paragraph of this passage is written in the A negative narrative style, because the perception verb "sé" ['know'] is repeated twice. Then, a shift to A neutral

occurs, in which the teller's subjectivity is removed from the narration. The events are simply narrated as they occur, without modalities, as evidenced in the following sentences: "*Doy unos pasos atrás, me siento en la cama*" ['I take a few steps back, sit on my bed'] and "*Mi papá dice: Revisé tu celular, encontré las fotos, grandísima zorra*" ['I checked your phone; I found the photos, you fucking slut']. Prior to the actual rape, it is interesting to note that Paula continues referring to her father as "*papá*" ['dad'] a diminutive of the term "*padre*" ['father'], which denotes her love for him as well as her identity as a child.

Once her father hits her, Paula's narration undergoes a marked shift. We are given the explanation: "*La escena se desenvuelve en tercera persona. Me transformo en una mosca en la pared*" ['The scene dissolves into the third person. I become a fly on the wall.]. From this point onward, the scene is described from the third-person perspective, and thus Paula removes herself, linguistically, from the role of participant. This marks a shift from Type A to Type B narration in narratorial mode, in which the narrative is presented from a "position outside the consciousness of any of the characters" (qtd. in Bosseaux 30). This narratorial B narration has positive shading because modalities are altogether omitted and the feel of a bird's eye, or fly on the wall, view is created. However, in the final paragraph of the excerpt, there are moments in which negative shading comes through, made evident when the narration includes intimate information about Paula's thoughts, for example, "*Ella no entiende qué está pasando. Sí sabe, pues, que no debería estar pasando*" ['She doesn't understand what's happening. She does know, though, that it should not be happening.']. The verbs "*entende*" and "*saber*" illustrate Paula's internal perception and thoughts. The modal *deber* gives us information about Paula's judgment of the situation.

3.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, we have explored numerous examples of modal constructions and their implications on the ideological plan, ranging from low speaker commitment with the modal

poder, increasing in commitment to *deber* and the modal with the highest speaker commitment, *tener que*. On the psychological plane, we assessed the narrative styles of La Hacedora, Alejandra, and Paula, through the identification and analysis of *verba sentiendi*, the modal *tal vez*, and the perception modal adverb *evidentemente*. These linguistic constructions were analyzed to reveal information about the construction of the specific perspectives of three female characters in Luis Chacón Ortiz' *Ciudad Radiante*.

La Hacedora's position in the novel is that of the drug developer. She is a highly educated scientist and is the only character analyzed that provides information about the world outside of Costa Rica. Her personality is established as being result-driven, unsympathetic and vain. Her values include the success of her research and science, and expressly exclude religion. Mario and the preservation of their romantic relationship can also, loosely, be considered as one of her values, though it clashes with one of her main personality traits: her vanity.

The position of Alejandra in the novel is that of a popular high-schooler, from a low-income family. Her character provides us insight into the consumer side of L30. Her personality is characterized by her fickleness and self-absorbed nature. The values that shape her decisions consist of rising in social status and the search for pleasure and wealth.

The character of Paula is a high-schooler who considers herself an outsider. She is characterized as self-loathing and independent. She is mainly driven by societal values, or rather, the struggle to comply with and resist against them in her personal identity as a pariah.

Keeping in mind the analyses of the modal structures mentioned above and how the position, personality and values of these three characters lead to their points of view will aid us as we progress into Chapter 4 in the assessment of the equivalent techniques employed in the translation of these excerpts and in the recreation of character point of view.

4. Recreating Character Point of View Conveyed by Linguistic Features Analyzed

4.1. Introduction

This chapter addresses the second objective of this graduation project, which is to identify and review the translation techniques used to recreate the perspective conveyed by the linguistic features discussed in Chapter 3 in the English translation of Luis Chacón Ortiz' *Ciudad Radiante*, employing Nida's formal and dynamic equivalences as general translation strategies. The chapter is divided into sections corresponding to each character analyzed: Paula, La Hacedora (The Maker), and Alejandra. Within each section, examples are taken from the source text and presented with their corresponding translations, and an analysis of the translation techniques employed to recreate, and when possible, enhance, each character's voice is carried out. It is acknowledged that in the translation process, some of the linguistic features from the source text cannot be conveyed in the target text. However, this chapter seeks to present ways in which the translator has woven in techniques to add linguistic features that fit in with the established character perspectives, thus creating a text in the target language with a depth of character perspective and voice that mirrors that of the source text.

4.2. Paula

In Chapter 3, the analysis of the linguistic structures employed by Paula's character within the ideological and psychological planes revealed her to be an insecure, solitary outsider whose point of view is shaped by her struggle with the urge to fit in with her high school peers. These aspects allowed us to define the filter through which Paula's ideas and the novel's plot she relates pass.

As we can recall from previous chapters, the ideological plane of point of view deals with the belief systems, values and categories of reference held by the characters (Fowler 165). Fowler suggests analyzing modal structures as a means of exploring a character's ideology given that modal structures directly evidence a narrator or character's beliefs and judgments

(166). In our analysis, we discovered that Paula uses the modal verb *poder* in a generalized statement about society, avoiding the use of the inclusive ‘we,’ to separate herself from ‘society’ and society’s ideas, evidencing her struggle with societal values. The modal verb *poder* is conjugated in the negative to assert her conviction that her peers are incapable of understanding her, further separating herself from them. Using the verb *deber*, Paula evidences her insecurities in her physical appearance and her need to conform to the societal duties instilled in her upbringing. Additionally, the modal *tener que* is implemented to establish a stark contrast between the normalcy of her home and parents, and her lack of normalcy.

On the psychological plane, which addresses how narrative events are told through the teller’s consciousness, we examined the narration type of distinct excerpts corresponding to Paula. Shifts identified in narration type reflect Paula’s perception of the narrative event being told, which agrees with the characterization and voice set out in the ideological plane in Chapter 3. For example, in excerpt 19, Paula employs an A neutral narration style when over-analyzing Eugenio’s one-word text message, commenting on every detail of his message, from the font type to the color. This style corresponds with Paula’s struggle to fit in with her peers, her draw to comply with social niceties. Below, we explore the process of translating the original text in a way that recreates Paula’s characterization and preserves the narration type.

In this first passage, Paula is having a less than perfect day at school and is contemplating talking to Eugenio, a classmate whose father recently went missing. He is really nothing more than an acquaintance at this point in the story, but Paula feels a twinge of pity given that most of her classmates are gossiping about his situation behind his back.

Passage 1.

Saludo a mis amigas sin mucho entusiasmo, tomo asiento. Eugenio se sienta en el pupitre	I say hi to my friends without much enthusiasm, take my seat. Eugenio sits at the
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<p>de atrás. No dice: Hola. Buenos días. La gente habla sobre él. <u>Tal vez debería volverme, sonreírle, saludarlo.</u> Y qué voy a decirle. ¿Sorry que tu papá se haya muerto? ¿O que te haya abandonado? No es tu culpa ser horrible; o sea, <u>¿eso se le puede decir a alguien? Like, seriously?</u> (Chacón 90, my emphasis)</p>	<p>desk behind me. He doesn't say 'Hi.' 'Good morning.' People are talking about him. <u>Maybe I should turn around, smile at him, say hello.</u> And what am I going to tell him. Sorry your dad died? Or left you? Being ugly isn't your fault; I mean, <u>can you say that to someone? Like, seriously?</u></p>
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In the excerpt above, the use of the epistemic modal adverb *tal vez* ['maybe'] denotes uncertainty and thus exemplifies the A negative narration style. This style is maintained in the English translation by implementing literal translation: 'maybe'. By maintaining this A negative narration, we preserve Paula's characterization as insecure. As the sentence progresses, a translation difficulty arises. In Spanish, it is necessary to affix the unstressed object pronouns '-lo' and '-le' to the verbs "*sonreír*" and "*saludar*" in order to avoid ambiguity. The English equivalent of both '-lo' and '-le' is 'him', and thus, if literal translation is applied to the rest of the sentence, we would be left with, 'Maybe I should turn around, smile at him, say hello to him.' The repetition of the object pronoun 'him' creates an emphasis on Eugenio that is not present in the original text. As such, we can omit the second 'to him' in the translated text without creating ambiguity since it is clear that Paula is referring to Eugenio. The literal translation could have caused the reader to mistakenly give more importance to Eugenio. As we will see in Passage 2, Paula is preoccupied with the idea of saying something to Eugenio, not Eugenio himself.

In the penultimate sentence, Paula poses a rhetorical question, "*¿eso se le puede decir a alguien?*", which could be literally translated as, 'Can that be said to someone?' Rhetorical

questions are asked for the effect, not for the answer, because they “directly assert a biased position” (Rohde 142). In this case, the question in the original text demonstrates Paula’s strong upbringing. It is apparent that she knows what is socially appropriate to say, and what is not. The literal translation of the question does not carry the same impact. Rhetorical questions in English tend to be direct, using ‘you’ which applies to both the second person singular and second person plural audience. Hence, the indirect ‘can that be said’ lacks conviction and reflects an uncertain tone, causing it to no longer sound rhetorical. To recover that original rhetorical intent, a direct, biased ‘you’ question is formed in the translation.

Another difficulty in the translation is the use of English phrases within the Spanish text. This is a technique employed more by Paula than by any other character in *Ciudad Radiante*. According to Chávez-Silverman, the use of two languages in literature “enriches the message with cues to aspects of the sentence the speaker has chosen to highlight” (157). Given this definition, the translator’s decision to preserve the original text, without offering any alternative way to foreignize or highlight the text, results in a loss of emphasis. However, this decision was made in an effort to avoid reader confusion. In the context of Costa Rica, English is the most predominate second language spoken and anglicisms are commonly inserted into everyday speech, especially in bilingual high schools and workplaces. This, perhaps, adds authenticity to the characterization of Paula as a student at a bilingual high school in the original text. This idea is supported by Cecilia Montes-Alcalá’s justification that, “in literature [code-switching] may be used for stylistic or aesthetic purposes, to communicate biculturalism, humor, criticism, and ethnicity or as a source of credibility” (qtd. in Guzzardo et al. 194). Just as a Chicano work of literature would not be credible if it were not written in Spanish, perhaps, in the context of Costa Rica, the dialogues of a teenager educated in a bilingual high school would not be credible without some degree of code switching. In the translated text, however, the English-language reader may not have such intimate knowledge of the educational system in Costa Rica, nor of

the Spanish language itself. Translating the phrases that are in English in the original text into Spanish would not be an appropriate technique because it may exclude potential readers.

Passage 2, which was presented in Chapter 3 (see excerpt 13), is taken from the same page as Passage 1, above. After deciding against talking to Eugenio, Paula is unsuccessful in her attempts to focus on anything else.

Passage 2.

<p>Pienso tanto en qué decirle que al final no digo nada. La profe de inglés entra al aula. Sacamos los Ipads. Empiezan las lecciones. Inglés es aburrido, fácil. Me dedico a dibujar figuras geométricas en el Sketch™. Aquí un cubo, aquí un triángulo, aquí un círculo conectado con un trapecoide por un par de líneas. Nada significa nada. <u>Pointless as fuckin life.</u> Las figuras ni siquiera tienen forma exacta, pero es más divertido que poner atención. Me gustaría decirle algo a Eugenio. Creo que debería decirle algo. <u>¿No es eso lo que uno hace cuando quiere ser amable?</u> (Chacón 90, my emphasis)</p>	<p>I think so much about what to tell him that I end up not saying anything. The English teacher walks into the classroom. We take out our Ipads. Class starts. English is boring, easy. I focus on drawing geometric figures in Sketch™. Here a cube, there a triangle, over here a circle connected by a couple of lines to a trapezoid. Nothing means anything. <u>Pointless as fuckin' life.</u> The figures don't even have exact shapes, but it's more fun than paying attention. I would like to say something to Eugenio. I think I should say something to him. <u>Isn't that what you do when you want to be nice?</u></p>
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In this passage, a subtle translation strategy was employed by the translator to recreate Paula's voice in the lines, 'Nothing means anything. Pointless as fuckin' life.' These two consecutive sentences each contain six syllables, which, when read together, convey a sense of monotony, reflecting Paula's boredom with school and with the social intricacies of life. Thus,

it highlights her disconnect with her classmates and foreshadows her imminent break from being emotionally dependent on anyone else, a break which occurs following being raped by her father. While the foreignness of the original interjection of the English expression 'pointless as fuckin' life' in a predominantly Spanish text is lost, the translator breathes this new strategy of repeating sentence length in syllables into the translated text.

In passage 2, above, we are again presented with a rhetorical question. The literal translation would be, 'Isn't that what one does when he/she/they want(s) to be nice?' In this case, the intent of the rhetorical question is not lost in the literal translation; however, two new issues do arise. First, we have the issue of gender. "*Uno*" is seamlessly translated as 'one,' but the personal pronoun that makes reference to 'one' needs either to have a gender, in the case of a singular generic personal pronoun, or to be replaced with the gender-neutral 'they.' 'They' would work well in this rhetorical question, but before choosing, let us address the second issue: the difference in register between "*uno*" in Spanish and 'one' in English. In Spanish, "*uno*" is quite informal and sounds very natural in a stream of consciousness narrative. In English, however, the neutral 'one' tends to be used in more formal contexts, and therefore does not mesh with the register of the rest of the excerpt (Leech and Svartvik 59; Westin 151). As a result, it is decided to implement the informal 'you' in both cases, thus avoiding the gender issue and preserving the register of the original text in the translated text, resulting in a translation that reads, 'Isn't that what you do when you want to be nice?' The process of arriving at this translation reflects the application of dynamic equivalence to recreate the effect of the original rhetorical question in the English translation.

Another example of adding linguistic features in an attempt to accurately recreate character point of view in the translated text appears in the following passage:

Passage 3.

<p>Mis papás son gente normal. No se parecen a mí. No se merecen una hija <u>como ésta</u> [sic]. Mi mamá es ama de ama [sic]. Mi papá, oficinista. Ella cocina la cena; él observa las noticias, se toma una pastilla. Mi casa es como tiene que ser una casa. Si ellos supieran lo que hago, no sabría qué decirles. ¿Cómo reaccionarían? (Chacón 87, my emphasis)</p>	<p>My parents are normal people. They aren't like me. They don't deserve a daughter <u>like me</u>. My mom is a housewife. My dad, an office worker. She cooks dinner; he watches the news, takes a pill. My house is how a house should be. If they knew what I do, I wouldn't know what to tell them. How would they react?</p>
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In the second and third sentences of the translation, parallel structure is added at the end of the sentences. By punctuating these consecutive sentences with the same two words, “like me,” the contrast between Paula and her “normal” parents is underscored. The source text had actually taken the focus away from Paula in the second sentence by stating “*como ésta*” or ‘like this one’ instead of saying “*como yo*” or ‘like me.’ The change employed in the translation reestablishes the direct reference to Paula in that sentence, and thus her relationship to her parents. This serves to distance her from normalcy and to establish herself as an outsider.

Based on the observations and conclusions made in Chapter 3, the translation techniques employed in Passages 1 through 3 hold paramount Paula’s perspective, as set out above. In Passage 1, we see the importance of identifying ambiguity and over-emphasis resulting from applying formal equivalence in the translated text that do not agree with the character’s style. Two cases of using dynamic equivalence to recreate the effect and intent of rhetorical questions are presented, again highlighting the dangers of literal translation. Passage 2 presents the addition of a new literary strategy that was not present in the source text, the creation of same syllable length sentences to reflect monotony, which compensates for the

translator's decision to omit some cases of foreignization via code-switching so as to avoid audience exclusion. Another addition is seen in Passage 3, in which new parallel structure is created in the source text that capitalizes on Paula's characterization as an outsider.

4.3. *La Hacedora (The Maker)*

Through the analysis in Chapter 3 of epistemic modal structures, we established the character of La Hacedora's personality to be result-driven, unsympathetic and vain. Her position in the novel as a highly-educated scientist was unique as it gave us insight into the development of L30, a glimpse into the international world of pharmaceuticals. Additionally, her character was driven by the values of attaining the success of her research, belief in all things that can be proven, and loosely by her desire to have a successful relationship with Mario. La Hacedora's point of view, as defined above, shape the way the plot is presented through her voice.

As we can recall, her character employs the highly subjective *poder* in objective situations, basing her opinions on a series of evidence. Her combination of the weak modal with the directive *exigir* ['to demand'] in excerpt 3 ("*Puedo exigir lo que quiera*") evidenced her high speaker commitment and sense of entitlement stemming from her vanity. Her combination of the low speaker commitment *poder* with deductive inferencing in an investigative context in excerpt 1 evidences her science-oriented way of thinking. In excerpt 8, her weakening of the modal *deber* with the adverb *quizá* ("*quizá debería dejar de hacer esto*") when addressing interpersonal commitment shows her lack of sympathy. Our analysis of *tener que* in excerpt 14 revealed La Hacedora's desperation and need for having success in her research and attaining positive results regardless of the cost. Additionally, analysis of La Hacedora's narration style on the psychological plane in excerpt 17 reflects her analytical nature as it begins in the A neutral narration style, which is devoid of narrational modality.

Keeping in mind the characterization established above, let us analyze the translation of several excerpts to discuss the translation techniques employed by the translator to recreate La Hacedora's perspective.

Passage 4.

<p>El proceso aún no es comercializable: la tasa de mortalidad es bastante alta. Los resultados, inseguros. Pero sí hemos llegado al primer nivel. Hemos traspasado una frontera. De aquí no podemos regresar. Mis compañeros comienzan a llamarme <u>The Maker: La Hacedora</u> (Chacón 52, my emphasis).</p>	<p>The process still isn't marketable: the mortality rate is quite high. The results, uncertain. But <u>we have reached</u> the first level. <u>We have</u> crossed a border. <u>There is</u> no going back. My coworkers begin to call me <u>La Hacedora: The Maker.</u></p>
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This passage, analyzed in Chapter 3 (see excerpt 1), presents two interesting challenges for the translator. First, we must decide to what degree contractions should be used in the translation to preserve the tone of the original text. On a scale of formality, it is clear that La Hacedora's tone is the most formal, when compared to that of Paula and Alejandra. Evidence of the heightened tone of La Hacedora lies in her scientific background and her repeated use of deductive inferencing. She is the oldest of the three, the most educated, and the one with the most authority, a fact which is reflected in her nickname, 'La Hacedora.' As discussed in Chapter 3 (see excerpt 17), this nickname conveys a godlike status. This reference to God is maintained in the English equivalent, 'Maker,' which, according to the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, when capitalized, is a synonym for God, just as it does in Spanish. Alejandra, in contrast, employs a number of colloquialisms that impart a highly informal tone, such as "*el dueño debía estar cagado en plata,*" the translation of which is analyzed in Passage

6, below. Despite La Hacedora's authoritative status, she still exudes a youthful quality and occasionally uses foul language. To maintain this tone in her stream of consciousness, this translation makes use of a few contractions. Contractions in English convey informality, but can also convey a sense of intimacy (Westin 151). As documented by Westin, with the passing of time, newspaper editorials have been accepting more contractions in their publications, the most common of which include negative *n't* contractions and non-negative 's contractions, as well as *they're* and *you've* (34). Given the tone mentioned above, only these contractions currently employed by newspaper editorials are used in the English translation of La Hacedora's narration. Therefore, throughout the excerpt, the present perfect tense is never contracted, but in the first sentence "*no es*" is translated as 'isn't'.

The decision to not contract the present perfect tense for La Hacedora was not only made to preserve the tone of the original text, but also to inject the characterization of La Hacedora into the translated text. Above, we set out that La Hacedora is result-driven. By not contracting the present perfect tense, more emphasis is given to the positive auxiliary 'have', thus drawing the reader's focus to what they have achieved. In contrast, the first sentence mentions a landmark that has not been achieved, which is something La Hacedora would not wish to draw attention to. Keeping in line with La Hacedora's persona, the negative statement is reduced to a contraction, thereby understating it. This decision is supported by the presence of "*aún*" ['yet'] in the original text, an adverb that has a similar function: it conveys the narrator's confidence that the product will one day be marketable.

While the equivalent has already been established for the translation of the teller's nickname, La Hacedora, the translator is faced with a decision when presented with the English and Spanish nicknames side-by-side in the original. As mentioned in the analysis of Passage 1, above, the interjection of English terms or phrases in a Spanish text serves to highlight them. In this case, Chacón ensures the reader's comprehension of the nickname's meaning by

offering the translation. Additionally, various characters refer to La Hacedora by both her Spanish and English nicknames, seemingly without reason, throughout the text. If nothing else, the implementation of both languages creates a sense of foreignness. To preserve this foreignness, the order of the nicknames in the translated text is switched, thereby respecting formal equivalence. ‘La Hacedora’ appears first and, after the colon, it is translated as The Maker for clarification. As was identified in the analysis of excerpt 17 in Chapter 3, the nickname ‘La Hacedora’ highlights the femininity of the teller, celebrating the contrast in images between the traditional male Christian God and this young female. Gender is lost in the English translation, a loss that also existed in the original text when La Hacedora’s English nickname was used. Similarly, the Spanish version maintains the feminine gender markers ‘*la*’ and ‘*-a*’.

Another excerpt analyzed in Chapter 3 (see excerpt 2) to be examined against its English translation is the one below. In the face of the Costa Rican government refusing to continue funding her research due to the number of research subject fatalities, La Hacedora’s raw beliefs are exposed.

Passage 5.

<p>Les explico que en toda investigación siempre hay etapas de rezago. Lo que están viendo es normal. <u>¿Qué importancia tienen en el mundo unos inválidos, unos retrasados? ¿Acaso el sacrificio de unos pocos no es necesario para el bien común?</u> Denme más tiempo, más dinero. El problema puede solucionarse (Chacón 116, my emphasis).</p>	<p>I explain that in all research, there are always periods of delay. What they are seeing is normal. <u>What importance do some invalids, some retards have in the world? Isn't the sacrifice of a few necessary for the common good?</u> Give me more time, more money. The problem can be solved.</p>
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This passage is a prime example of the A positive narrative style used by La Hacedora. The first two sentences contain universal references—“*en toda investigación*,” “*siempre hay*,” and “*para el bien común*”—attempts to normalize the extreme conditions of the research subjects. Epistemic modals such as *deber* and *poder* are avoided, and the case of the latter is presented with evidence and inferencing, thus removing the low speaker commitment. La Hacedora’s desires are clear: the research must continue. This A positive narrative style is preserved in the target text by translating as literally as possible and employing formal equivalence, so as to avoid any negative effect on the overall perspective of the teller that avoiding such subtle features could imply.

In addition to the elements discussed above, this excerpt presents two rhetorical questions to support La Hacedora’s determination that “*el problema puede solucionarse*.” In these questions, La Hacedora’s bias is evident. Her eye is only on the result, and she is willing to achieve it at any cost, even if that means that people die. By expressing that some humans are expendable, she is demonstrating her lack of compassion, especially towards those she deems dispensable. Unlike the case of rhetorical questions posed by Paula, above, these questions do not lose their intent when translated literally. In fact, the translator decided against inserting the inclusive ‘we’ into the second question so as to preserve the cold, scientific feel of the clause. The contraction ‘isn’t’ was used to preserve a moderate level of formality in speech; ‘is not’ would have transformed the utterance in an overly formal, almost archaic question.

Passages 4 and 5 above exemplify translation decisions that, at their roots, respect La Hacedora’s characterization as result-driven, conceited and callous, as well as her character’s tendency towards Category A narration with positive shading and strong speaker confidence. In Passage 4, we observe the analysis of tone based on La Hacedora’s education, status of authority supported by her nickname’s allusion to God, and use of fewer colloquialisms when compared to the other three characters examined. From this analysis, the translator concludes

that given the formality of her tone compared to that of Paula and Alejandra, the contractions employed in the English translation will only be those permitted in newspaper publications. Additionally, the translator chooses to preserve the foreignness of code-switching, thereby employing formal equivalence, when translating La Hacedora's nickname. In Passage 5, a case is presented in which the techniques of literal translation and formal equivalence are embraced to preserve the A positive narration style.

4.4. *Alejandra*

The analysis in Chapter 3 revealed the personality of Alejandra's character to be that of a self-absorbed, fickle pleasure-seeker. She is a popular high school student from a poor family. Alejandra's character is motivated by the values of rising in social status and seeking pleasure and wealth. These elements of her point of view define how Alejandra's judgments and narration of the plot are manipulated in accordance with her persona.

Her implementation of the modal '*poder*,' which tends to have low speaker commitment, was frequently used in high speaker commitment situations by conjugating it in the negative conditional ("*no podría*") (e.g. "*La noche no podría estar saliendo mejor*," excerpt 5), thereby completely removing doubt, or by combining it with the conjunction "*pero*" ['but'] (e.g. "*podré ser pobre, pero tetas sí tengo*," excerpt 4), refuting the low-commitment statement that came before it. *Deber* is implemented in one case to make an inference about someone's social status based on her observations ("*el dueño debía estar cagado en plata*," excerpt 10), in order to conclude "*si pudiera conocerlo*" ['if only I could meet him']. In another case, she uses it to justify her lack of interest in finding her drugged boyfriend, allowing her to continue enjoying herself at the party ("*lo deben haber sacado de la pista para que no molestara a los demás*," excerpt 11).

As we saw in the analysis of the psychological plane, the narration styles used in her narrations concur with her characterization. For example, in excerpt 18, Alejandra employs a

consistent A positive narration style, relying on *verba sentiendi* (*me siento*), colorful evaluative adjectives (“*hermosos*”) and similes (“*como cientos de juegos pirotécnicos... como estrellas fugaces*”), always conjugating verbs for the first-person plural subject, thus including herself in the statements. This concurs with her high self-confidence.

In the passages below, we explore the decisions made in the translation of the chapters written from the point of view of Alejandra in order to recreate the narrative style and characterization identified in the original text. Passage 6, below, which was analyzed in Chapter 3 (see excerpt 10), exemplifies several strategies employed by the translator.

Passage 6.

<p>En medio de la finca, una casa automática construida en cromo con plata. El techo es retráctil. Esta noche está abierto a la brisa, al calor, a la música. La casa entregada a sí misma. En el centro encuentro una <u>gran</u> pista de baile. Del lado derecho, una piscina. Es <u>impresionante</u>. Las casas automáticas son aún una novedad. Apenas si he visto el anuncio. El eslogan es: “Una casa, una consciencia, un sólo propósito”. La teoría es que la casa permanece todo el tiempo conectada a Internet: <u>procura acomodarse a tus necesidades</u>. El dueño <u>debía estar cagado en plata</u>. <u>Si pudiera conocerlo</u> (Chacón 81-82, my emphasis).</p>	<p>In the middle of the estate, an automatic house made of chrome with silver. The roof is retractable. Tonight it’s open to the breeze, to the heat, to the music. The house has sunken into itself. In the center, I find a <u>huge</u> dance floor. On the right side, a pool. It’s <u>impressive</u>. Automatic houses are still a novelty. I’ve barely even seen the ad. The slogan is, “A house, a conscience, a sole purpose.” The theory is that the house is constantly connected to the Internet: <u>it adapts to your needs</u>. The owner <u>must be loaded</u>. <u>If only I could meet him</u>.</p>
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This excerpt contains numerous indicators of Alejandra's A positive narration. We can see explicit comments with evaluative adjectives such as "*impresionante*" ['impressive'] and "*gran*" ['grand/large']. Terms describing the internal state of the narrator are completely absent. Epistemic and perception modal verbs are also avoided.

While in the case of La Hacedora (The Maker), A positive narration was recreated utilizing the techniques of formal equivalence and literal translation, this case requires the implementation of dynamic equivalence to uncover equivalent evaluative adjectives that inspire the effect in the audience as the source text adjectives. For the adjective "*impresionante*," ['impressive'] conveys the same sentiment. However, in the case of "*gran*," the translator is faced with a choice. While the adjective 'grand' would construe the same meaning, it would result in a change in tone, since 'grand' is not found within the dialect of the average high schooler to describe the size and splendor of an object. Another option could be 'large,' which would fail to transmit the 'impressive' aspect. The translator chose the equivalent 'huge' because of its connotation: the pool is large and awe-inspiring. This is consistent with A positive narration and also with the vocabulary of a high schooler.

An interesting case to analyze in recreating the A positive narration style in the translation is the clause "*procura acomodarse a tus necesidades*," which literally translates to 'it seeks to adapt to your needs.' This literal translation is not consistent with the positive shading of the narration style or the tone of the paragraph because it lacks directness. The translator proposes simplifying the translation to 'it adapts to your needs.' The use of a single, active verb conveys a sense of conviction, which is in line with both the narration style and Alejandra's esteem for all things opulent, a feature of her fickleness.

Translating the idiom "*el dueño debía estar cagado en plata*" using dynamic equivalence forces the translator to consider several aspects. First, it must be identified that this idiom is informal and vulgar; it paints a vivid picture in the mind of the reader. While no translation exists

in English that is equally informal and profane, there are several translation options: 'filthy rich,' 'well-off', 'loaded' and 'rolling in dough.' The first two options successfully convey the idea of being extremely wealthy, but they are not particularly colloquial. 'Loaded' and 'rolling in dough' are both highly colloquial, transmitting a similar tone to the original. Ultimately 'rolling in dough' is rejected because of its closeness to the more common idiom 'rolling in the dough' which means to earn large sums of money. Additionally, 'loaded' is generally used in situations in which the speaker feels some degree of envy for the wealthy individual(s), which is consistent with Alejandra's characterization.

The final sentence of this passage, "*si pudiera conocerlo*," conveys a sense of yearning, which is consistent with Alejandra's fickleness. If translated literally, we would be left with 'if I could meet him,' which lacks the desire of the original Spanish statement. To recreate this effect, the translator opts for the expression 'if only,' which is used to address something that someone wants to see happen. We are left with the translation 'if only I could meet him,' which transmits that same yearning as in the original that fits in with Alejandra's characterization.

In passage 7 below, taken from several pages before the one above, Alejandra walks us through how she gets ready for the party. This excerpt was also analyzed in Chapter 3 under excerpt 4, in which we discovered proof of her self-worth and her confidence in her ability to manipulate men.

Passage 7.

<p>Es viernes por la noche. <u>Me maquillo, me perfumo las tetas.</u> Saco del clóset un top negro, una minifalda, un calzoncito pequeño. Los tacones negros de diez centímetros. <u>Me visto. Me miro en el espejo. No necesito</u></p>	<p>It's Friday night. <u>I do my makeup, spritz my tits with perfume.</u> From my closet, I grab a black top, a miniskirt, a pair of tiny panties. The four-inch black heels. <u>I get dressed. I look at myself in the mirror. I don't need to</u></p>
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<u>sonreír. La sonrisa es el mejor accesorio para una mujer pobre o sin tetas. Podré ser pobre, pero tetas sí tengo.</u> (Chacón 79, my emphasis)	<u>smile. A smile is the best accessory for a woman who's poor or flat-chested. I may be poor, but I do have tits.</u>
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From the description of the process of getting ready until Alejandra looks in the mirror, the narration is presented in the A neutral style. No modal verbs, modal adverbs or even evaluative adjectives are used. The grammar is simple, direct, and thus lends itself to literal translation. As a result, much of the translation remains stylistically unchanged because the literal translation achieves the same effect as the source text. However, certain decisions must be made given the number of reflexive verbs (“*me maquillo*,” “*me perfume las tetas*,” “*me visto*,” and “*me miro*”) and the absence of an explicit subject due to the fact that the subject, ‘yo,’ is implied in the conjugation of each verb. The second sentence—“*me maquillo, me perfumo las tetas*”—contains a parallel structure that, while succinct in Spanish, would draw out the sentence in English. It is necessary to make both the subject, ‘I’, and the possessive ‘my’ explicit in the first clause: ‘I do my makeup’. In the second clause, instead of forcing parallel structure, the subject is omitted, thus creating a dependence on the first clause, which produces a similar effect as in the original text: ‘I do my makeup, spritz my tits with perfume.’ In the rest of the description, the subject ‘I’ is added to avoid incomplete sentences, given that short sentences in the Spanish text are grammatically correct.

As Alejandra looks in the mirror, the narration type is primarily A positive, with an interjection of A neutral shading.. She begins with positive shading using the *verba sentiendi* “*no necesito*” [‘I don’t need’]. This is followed by the A neutral generalization: “*La sonrisa es el mejor accesorio para una mujer pobre o sin tetas*,” which is translated as ‘A smile is the best accessory for a woman who’s poor or flat-chested.’ The decision to neutralize the translation of

“*sin tetas*” to the adjective ‘flat-chested’ as opposed to ‘without tits/boobs’ was made to create agreement between the verb ‘*is*’ and both adjectives that follow: “*pobre*” [‘poor’] and “*sin tetas*” [‘flat-chested’]. The impact of “*tetas*” in this sentence is regained in the translation of second and final sentences of this excerpt, in which “*tetas*” is translated as the vulgar term ‘tits’. Finally, an affirmation using the weak modal “*podré*” was made, which imparts relatively low speaker confidence, but Alejandra reinforces her certainty by separating the clause containing the modal *poder* with the conjunction “*pero*,” and negating the weak speaker confidence with the declaration “*pero tetas sí tengo*.” This A positive narration is recreated in the translated text by maintaining the same syntax. The contraction ‘don’t’ is used to preserve the informal tone. In the last sentence, the effect of the blunt, affirmative statement is recreated in the translation by inserting the affirmative ‘do’, thus supporting Alejandra’s characterization as having high self-esteem.

Alejandra’s characterization from Chapter 3 as a fickle and self-absorbed teen serves as a foundation for translation decisions made throughout Passages 6 and 7. In Passage 6, we are presented with a case in which dynamic equivalence is used to find equivalent evaluative adjectives within A positive narration that do not deviate from vocabulary typical of a high schooler. Dynamic equivalence is also applied in the translation of an idiom, in which the vulgarity of the original Spanish idiom is lost, but the translation is supplemented with a new aspect of envy that highlights another aspect of Alejandra’s character. In Passage 7, we observe an instance where parallel structure from source text, which serves to unify clauses, is omitted to avoid forced structure, instead creating dependence on the first clause in the second clause and achieving a similar unification of the sentence. We also see a case of adding an emphatic ‘do’ to highlight Alejandra’s high self-regard.

4.5. *Conclusion*

In this chapter, we analyzed the decisions made by the translator to recreate the perspectives conveyed by the linguistic features discussed in Chapter 3. The linguistic features analyzed in the twenty excerpts highlighted in that chapter were limited in that just a few linguistic structures were analyzed on the ideological and psychological planes. The side-by-side evaluation of the seven passages carried out in this chapter permitted us to analyze how the features analyzed in Chapter 3 were rendered in the target language in a way to preserve character point of view and style. Additionally, this deeper side-by-side analysis allowed for further identification of linguistic features that had not fallen within the search parameters set out for Chapter 3, their impact on character point of view, and how that impact was recreated in the target text, thereby enriching our original analysis. Following this analysis, it is determined that the resulting translation into English does succeed in transmitting the effects of the distinct perspectives of each character analyzed. However, it is clear that the translation process could have benefitted from a more exhaustive preliminary analysis, something that the time constraints of this graduation project would not have allowed for.

5. Conclusion

In this graduation project, we have used the Fowler-Uspensky model to investigate the language used by three characters within Luis Chacón Ortiz's *Ciudad Radiante*, identifying the linguistic features that collectively contribute to the construction of each character's specific point of view on the ideological and psychological planes. Evaluation of the usage of the modal verbs *poder*, *deber*, and *tener que* allowed us to define speaker confidence regarding the truth of the premise she expresses. The identification and analysis of the effect of the *verba sentiendi me siento* ['I feel'], the perception modal adverb *evidentemente* ['evidently'], and the epistemic modal adverb *tal vez* ['maybe'] allowed us to determine the predominate types of shading of the Type A internal narration style of the characters analyzed. Together, these linguistic aspects contributed to identifying the perspectives of Alejandra, Paula and La Hacedora (The Maker), which subsequently served as a basis for style-centered decision making in the English translation.

We have identified and analyzed the translation techniques used in the translation into English that recreate the perspective and characterization conveyed by the linguistic features mentioned above.

Paula's character is characterized as a self-loathing outsider struggling with idealistic social standards, gave the translator a concrete foundation on which to make translation decisions. Passage 1 exemplifies the importance of identifying any ambiguity and/or over-emphasis that may be introduced into the translated text through the application of formal equivalence, thus setting out a risk associated with this strategy from the perspective of style. This risk is further highlighted in examples of translating rhetorical questions where dynamic equivalence is key to achieving stylistic consistency. In Passages 2 and 3, we see how the translator, by considering Paula's characterization, was able incorporate two new literary

strategies into the translation—the creation of same syllable length sentences and the introduction of parallel structure—that enhance character features.

In Passages 4 and 5, we see the influence of La Hacedora (The Maker)'s characterization as result-driven, conceited and unsympathetic. Passage 4 employs an analysis of tone based on character traits and language usage that leads to the establishment of guidelines for the use of contractions in the English translation, resulting in consistency with La Hacedora (The Maker)'s characterization. In contrast with the passages pertaining to Paula, the techniques of literal translation and formal equivalence prove successful in the translation of La Hacedora (The Maker)'s chapters due to her character's implementation of primarily A positive narration style and high speaker confidence which require few stylistic changes from Spanish into English.

Based on Alejandra's characterization as fickle and self-absorbed, the general strategy of dynamic equivalence was applied throughout the translation of Passages 6 and 7. In Passage 6, we use this strategy to find equivalent evaluative adjectives and to translate an idiom, both of which ultimately contained connotations that added new features consistent with Alejandra's characterization. Passage 7 reveals a case in which parallel structure present in the source text is omitted to avoid forced structure in English, and instead, a similar unification of the sentence is achieved by creating dependence of the second clause on the first clause. This passage also includes the addition an emphatic 'do' to underscore Alejandra's high self-esteem, something that could only be achieved using dynamic equivalence.

As mentioned above, through this graduation project, formal equivalence has been demonstrated to have limitations when the focus of a translation is recreating character point of view. While it did prove successful in the translation of A positive narration style with high speaker confidence, the application dynamic equivalence would also result in an accurate translation because it would ensure the preservation of the effects of that narration style and

speaker confidence. The fact that these features are preserved in translations employing formal equivalence is an unintended, albeit positive, consequence of literal translation in certain contexts. Dynamic equivalence, on the other hand, consistently aids in the recreation of character point of view because, by nature, it seeks to reproduce the effect of the message, which is the goal of recreating character point of view.

Given the achievements mentioned above, we determine that the objectives of this graduation project were met. This investigation showed the value of the analysis of character point of view using the Fowler-Uspensky model as a translation tool. Through the evaluation of linguistic elements, the importance of each individual textual element in the construction of character style and point of view became a clear guide in the translation process. We saw how a seemingly superfluous element, such as a single *tal vez*, when viewed in conjunction with several other such elements, can enable the translator to determine a character's narration style and voice. Such scrutiny grants the translator access to the complete picture of character voice and point of view, affording her a vantage point from which to add or omit linguistic elements, as part of her translation strategies, in a way that recreates, and sometimes even enhances, character point of view. Due to fundamental differences between languages, it is impossible to produce a translation that contains all of the same nuances as the original. By affording the translator the ability to shift her focus to point of view, translation decisions can be made to reinforce character features. It is important that a translator is aware of the elements available to him. This analysis calls attention to the importance in literary translation of adhering to the essence of the source text and offers the literary translator another tool to recreate character voice and point of view in the target language.

While this graduation project succeeded in meeting its objectives, further investigation is needed into the analysis of character point of view and voice as an aspect of style and its influence on the implementation of translation techniques to recreate the point of view. The

methodology for this project was limited by constraints of extension and time. As such, similar analyses can be conducted using different linguistic features set out by scholars such as Fowler and Bosseaux on the Fowler-Uspensky model. In fact, the entire spatio-temporal plane has yet to be investigated herein. Based on the results of further analysis, I recommend creating a guide to analysis of point of view as an aspect of style for literary translators, highlighting the linguistic features that are deemed most valuable for analysis.

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