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***EN UNA SILLA DE RUEDAS DE CARMEN LYRA:  
LA TRADUCCIÓN INVERSA COMO UNA REESCRITURA FUNCIONAL***

Traducción e Informe de Investigación

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

presentado por

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## RESUMEN

Este trabajo comprende la traducción de la novela costarricense *En una silla de ruedas*<sup>1</sup> de la escritora costarricense Carmen Lyra y el posterior informe de traducción. Dicho informe se fundamenta, desde una perspectiva general, en la teoría funcional de la traducción y, en un sentido más estricto, en los acercamientos funcionalistas de Christiane Nord, la Teoría del Skopos propuesta por Hans Vermeer y la traducción como reescritura de la obra literaria de André Lefevere.

La reescritura funcional-escopista que planteamos promueve la traducción como una actividad comunicativa que persigue un cierto propósito (skopos). Este propósito determina el método y las estrategias para producir una traducción funcionalmente adecuada. La traducción literaria funcionalista integra los aspectos lingüísticos y culturales, razón por la cual derriba barreras entre lenguas y culturas y se convierte en un puente de comunicación intercultural entre la lengua/cultura fuente y la lengua/cultura meta.

### **Palabras clave:**

funcionalismo, *skopos*, reescritura, literatura, comunicación intercultural

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<sup>1</sup> Lyra, Carmen. *En una silla de ruedas*. 4ª Edición. Editorial Costa Rica, 1997.

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**Traducción**

***In a Wheelchair***

**Carmen Lyra**



When this disgrace came, Sergio was not even two years old.

One morning, his mother opened the window and the boy remained motionless in his little bed as if the sun had not come into the place to swallow its darkness. There were no signs of the usual eye rubbing, the drowsy clumsy laughing, or the impatient arms waving and looking for the motherly neck. One could have thought he was dead except for his look that met his mother's in anguish.

The little boy was happy when he went to bed. Before going to sleep, he played and romped on old Canducha's lap. At bedtime when she nestled Sergio's head on the pillow and covered him well so he wouldn't be cold, he still had a smile on his face.

In his abandonment into the world of dreams, his life seemed to be heading to meet the sun; when he awoke, it was a life that luck had left behind in the foggy land of sadness. An evil fairy appeared to have slipped from the silence of the night into Sergio's bed to empty her wickedness to this new life that had just begun to unfold.

They called the doctor. He said it was a case of Polio. The family didn't understand what that meant. They managed to save his life, but the disease refused to abandon his legs.

When Sergio was born, the old doctor who attended the delivery was amazed to see him so perfectly created. He happily exclaimed, "Welcome, boy! Our Lord was certainly in a good mood when He made you. Here we have one who has been given the armor to walk through this valley of tears."

Time, however, showed that in spite of his medical knowledge, the doctor was definitely not a prophet. As he moved the little withered legs in all directions, the doctor grievously said to the colleague with whom he was studying the case, "Marionette's members, my friend. He's going to be a *culdejatte* (that is, a *legless cripple*) for the rest of his life. I wish I were wrong..."

As the doctor pronounced *cul-de-jatte*, Sergio smiled at the physician who was sitting by the bedside predicting a very different destiny from that he had foreseen for the child the day he was born.

A while later, they ordered Sergio a wheelchair from the United States. The seat and the back of the chair could be widened through a certain mechanism; the device would allow the chair to become bigger as Sergio grew up. It was made of termite-proof wood and wrought-iron decorated with golden ornaments and velvet-lined cushions. Although everything looked smooth and shimmering, the chair was a sad piece of furniture.

Neither Cinta, Sergio's mother, nor Canducha ever forgot the first day they sat the child on the chair in the middle of the soft cushions. The poor soul smiled and clapped as if they were playing a game.

The woman discreetly wiped her eyes with the tip of the apron and prayed, "Virgin of the Angels! Don't let little Sergio be on that chair forever! Do a miracle!" She promised the Virgin she would hang a pair of golden legs in her shrine as soon as her dear little child decided to walk like all Christians do.

Cinta pushed the chair. She rolled it into the garden. The sound of the wheelchair squeaking against the sand felt like a thorn piercing her heart.

The years went by and Canducha was still waiting for a miracle. The golden tones of the chair had lost their gleam many times, and they were polished once again. The velvet cushions were also renewed on several occasions. The child was still in the chair. Sergio and the piece of furniture were growing side by side.

Sergio's appearance was one that you never forget. He had pale dark skin. His wide forehead and his straight nose promised a noble male profile. Under his very long black eyelashes, his big eyes with a very white sclera had a look that reminded one of those watercourses swirling under the bushy forests. He had plentiful straight black hair that his mother trimmed around his delicate frail neck. The childhood energy and happiness trapped in a body doomed to live in a wheelchair would always pop up in his eyes and lips as those playful sunrays that manage to make their way through the rain and the fog on a dark day. His calm resembled that resigned stillness of trees on placid windless days.

All the energy his body was supposed to use for those unceasing childhood movements had become part of his brain and heart from where they emerged, with a sad smoothness, invigorating everything that was part of his world. From his chair, he took care of everyone and everything: his mother, her little sisters, Canducha, and Miguel. As if loving all human beings were not enough, his love reached out to his doves, rabbits, his female cat Pascuala, and his plants. He spent the mornings under an orange tree in the garden. Around his chair, the sparrows and the clay-colored robins assembled in their chattering. The sparrows came to his shoulders and lap to peck at the crumbs Sergio put there for them. They did it with the same trust as when they perched in the little myrtle tree.

Cinta, his two little sisters, Mamma Canducha, and Miguel's gentleness surrounded the boy. If someone had asked which of those endearments was the deepest, it would have been impossible to pin that down. Each demonstration of love was the deepest in its own way. Sitting on his chair, Sergio stood for the real home. He was like a small bonfire surrounded by industrious hands that worked hard to keep the fire from dying out. How comforting the warmth of his flame was!

Jacinta was Sergio's mother, but they always called her "Cinta" at home. For the child, nothing was more beautiful or better in the world than she was. When Cinta went out, he became sad and he didn't smile until he heard the gracious clicks of her shoes, her laughter, and her exclamations.

Cinta was a charming little person, but she was a bit absentminded. The truth is that if Candelaria had not always been watchful that house would have never run well. Sergio's mother was already in her thirties, but she never took any responsibility. She was thin and graceful and her head looked like a nest of dark curls. Cinta was like one of those small women-figurines that makes you feel like putting it as an ornament in a cabinet as if it were a valuable artistic knick-knack.

Gracia and Merceditas were younger than Sergio. Maria de la Gracia was also known as *Ding-ding* because she was always happy. Laughter chimes, singing and

dancing were everywhere she went. She could not keep an idea in her head for two seconds. Ideas seemed to itch, so she immediately let them out through her mouth. Cinta said her young girl's thoughts were musical because she expressed everything through singing. One day, when Ding-ding was focused on disturbing the kitchen, Candelaria said to her, "My child, you are like a bell hanging on a street intersection that begins striking with its clapper...ding, ding, ding, ding just at the wind's glance." From then on, Sergio called her "Tinkerbell" and the nickname became Ding-ding later. She made up all the games the kids played. Somehow, she managed to include Sergio in them as if he had no problem with his legs.

Merceditas was the youngest. She resembled a little grass strand. Some time later, Sergio remembered with emotion his youngest sister's soft small figure with her hair combed in two braids with big bows at the ends. He recalled Merceditas sitting at his feet with her loving silence while playing with a black rag doll the girls called Moon made by Mamma Canducha who had drawn the doll's eyes, mouth, and nose by embroidering them with a red thread. Cinta and Gracias' hilariousness barely made Merceditas smile, and she hid herself trembling when Gracia made Sergio play "Catch one... catch all."

Merceditas suffered deeply when she understood for the first time why Sergio was doomed to spend his life in a wheelchair she had believed a toy. One morning while they were giving Sergio a bath, she realized her brother's legs didn't look like hers or Gracia's. The sorrow she felt at the glance of that bluish skin stuck to the bones made her shiver with sorrow. She said to Candelaria, "Mamma Canducha, I already know why Sergio can't walk. He has his legs in a way that... Are they going to become like mine later, Mamma Candelaria?"

Crying, the old lady answered, "No, my dear, Sergio would probably never walk."

"I wish I could give him my legs, Mamma Canducha. I don't need them. I like to be sitting making dresses for Moon. Can I cut off my legs and give them to Sergio?"

“No, my dear, if that were possible I’d have already given him mine a long time ago.”

Then, Mercedes hid and cried. From that day on, she never ran again and she only did what Sergio could. Her little hands loved those legs with a tenderness nobody ever suspected. She constantly pressed them against her heart. At night, when Sergio was in bed, she looked for his feet and tried to warm them with her kisses.

At that time, however, Sergio was too young to measure the depth of such love. When he became a man, he pulled it out of his memory with his eyes filled with tears.

Old Canducha called Mercedes “Sweetie.” She told her, for instance, “Look, sweetie, would you like to help me take out the veins of these tobacco leaves?” Mercedes did it. Also, when Canducha had real trouble threading a needle with her tired eyes, she asked, “Sweetie, would you help me thread this needle? I can’t see very well...,” and Mercedes helped her very kindly. When Canducha came back from the market on Saturdays, she called Mercedes, “Sweetie, go see the little pots I brought for you to play house. I also brought some sugar cane treats.” These were brown sugar breads. The small clay pots were made by the potters from Alajuela, a province in Costa Rica, for the city children and they brought them to the market along with some bigger pots and jars. Mercedes became very happy. She climbed up to a leather stool in the kitchen to reach Mamma Canducha’s dark wrinkled face to kiss her tenderly.

*I know the way she went  
Home with her maiden posy,  
For her feet have touch’d the meadows  
And left the daisies rosy.*

*Tennyson  
(Excerpt from Maud)*

Candelaria was an old native woman from Guanacaste. She had this very dark complexion that resembled the color of a clay tile and rough facial features with protruding cheekbones. Inside her chest, Candelaria had a pure full-of-love heart.

Miguel used to say that she was like the coconuts with a white and tasty pulp wrapped in a hard brown husk.

The old woman was very tidy and she had that simple neatness of tender banana leaves. She dressed neatly. Jacinta said Candelaria was always spick-and-span with her immaculate sleeveless white linen shirt sparkling by the starch and the iron that showed the strong thin dark arms of a very hardworking woman. The shirt's only accessory was a zig-zag-shaped ornamental stitch work around the very low-cut neckline. She also wore a printed cotton skirt creased at the waist and quite well-starched. Candelaria covered her shoulders and chest with a cotton white and black plaid cloth. On Sundays, she would change the cloth to a colorful silk one to go to mass. The old woman went barefoot. Nobody could convince her to wear shoes. She said she needed to feel the soil under her feet.

Candelaria was a Christian. Hers, however, was a naïve basic Christianity that was woven in her mind together with the pagan faith of her native ancestors. On Good Friday, she used to pay her condolences to Our Lady of Sorrows for the death of Her Godlike Son. Since dawn on Wednesdays, Candelaria had the habit of leaving the kitchen door open so that Saint Cayetano could come in. She cleaned and polished the leather stool; when, in her fantasy, she reckoned the saint was already there, Candelaria invited him to sit down. Then, in a fervent low tone, she began to tell him all about her needs and grievances and those of her acquaintances. She especially asked the saint to cure the boy's legs.

Sergio asked her, "What does Saint Cayetano look like, Mamma Canducha?"

She replied, "Oh! He was a gentleman. He was a blond Italian man with blue eyes like Miguel's, but his were prettier. Saint Cayetano was very good looking and tall; besides, he was very wealthy. He distributed his wealth among the poor. All the poor from his country went to tell him about their needs, and Saint Cayetano listened to them patiently as he does with me. Oh! If all the rich were like Saint Cayetano..."

Sergio kept asking questions, “Mamma Canducha, do you see him when he comes in and sits down? Do you see him like you see me?”

“Well, you know, not exactly as I see you, no, my dear. Why would I lie? The point is he’s a spirit; he isn’t flesh and bones like us, but I see him sitting on my stool with such humbleness...”

“What does he wear? Does he wear pants and a tie?”

“Where did you get that? How on earth can you imagine Saint Cayetano wearing pants and a tie! Don’t you see he is a saint from heaven? He wears a golden sleeveless robe on a very white tunic... that might have been washed by the hands of the Holy Virgin Mary. He dresses as if he were ready to say mass.

Likewise, as she spoke about Saint Cayetano, Candelaria also told the children stories about the *capasuri* deer and the love-inspiring power of the rattlesnake tail.

“You are asking what a “*capasuri*” looks like? Well, it’s a little deer with his horns wrapped in a silk or velvet-like skin. The animal, though, dislikes having horns like those, so it goes and rubs them against the tree trunks to look like the other deer. However, it doesn’t know a *capasuri* is magical. Our Lord placed a small virtue stone in its heart. The hunters from my homeland chase it. They believe that the man who manages to kill a *capasuri* deer to take the virtue stone out and then hang it on his own chest is a very lucky one especially in matters of the heart. Besides, the stone will protect him against diseases and enemies by the virtue given by God. There is a condition, however. The *capasuri*’s heart should be taken out while it’s still beating. My husband had one of these stones inside a small bag on his chest; he used to say that he had taken it out of the heart of a *capasuri* deer. I told Melchor I didn’t like that he had done such a thing.

The children asked for more stories, and Canducha was always eager to tell them about the black stone Virgin that had appeared to a little native girl, or about the magic power of the rattlesnake’s rattles. She lifted the yellow cigarette butt and said, “Well, there in my town in Guanacaste, one of the best ways to make a woman fall in

love is giving her a serenade with a guitar carrying inside a rattle taken from the rattlesnake's tail itself. The secret is to catch the snake alive. The man should help himself with a pitchfork-shaped stake. He should press the snake's head with the pitchfork so that it doesn't bite him. While the snake is safely taken, the man tears one of the rattles from its tail. He must do it all by himself. No one can help. Once he gets the rattle, he immediately frees the snake. Then he puts the rattle inside the guitar box and the instrument instantly changes; it sounds as if you were listening to a very fine-tuned orchestra. At night, the man goes serenading the woman he loves. The guitar strings and the song sound as if someone were pouring witchcraft or enchanted liquor to one's ears, and everybody appears to be drunk. The selected woman has no way out: she falls madly in love with the man and follows him to the end of the world. That's what happens. My brother Chico, May God bless his soul, had a rattle inside his guitar. He himself had taken it off a snake's tail. What a way of serenading with that guitar on those full moon nights there in Nicoya! Blessed be our Lord! I still can see my brother Chico bending over his guitar drawing his ear near the instrument's box and singing a song that said,

"Oh, my little dove so fine and loyal  
In shackles and chains  
For a condemned man!"

The elderly woman voice broke, it became weak...one couldn't know if she was about to sing or cry.

Mamma Canducha went on with her tale that was tinted with the distinctive accent of her native land that she never lost. She didn't pronounce the "s" sound and used to lengthen the "i."



“Really, my brother Chico was quite lucky with women. They loved him because he was outgoing, a good flatterer, and a merryman...! Wherever Chico went, the place became full of laughter, joking, jesting, and singing. He said a man who had a guitar with a rattlesnake rattle should be very careful. He could return to the place where he had caught the snake only after seven years. If by chance the animal was around and saw the guy..., that would be his last day on earth! What also happens is the snake starts looking for its rattle everywhere, and if it comes to the house where the guitar with its rattle is, the snake goes inside the instrument’s box. The animal rolls up and keeps pretty still. They say that once there was a merryman with a rattle in his guitar. He went serenading one of his girlfriends. When he was at the best part of strumming the strings, he suddenly felt as if a flame were running through his whole body, and there, right there, he dropped dead. The snake had given him its poison. My mother told Chico that enchanting a guitar with a rattle was a devilish deed.”

Merceditas asked, “Did you see the rattle in Chico’s guitar?”

Concealing the lie, Candelaria answered, “Well, it happened so many years ago... and we forget things.”

On Palm Sunday, Mamma Canducha used to go to church for her blessed cut palm leaves. She wove crosses with them that she later used on stormy days to drive the thunder away. Then, she nailed the blessed palm crosses on the kitchen door. Sergio always remembered fondly another of the old woman’s superstitions. On clear evenings, when Candelaria saw there was new moon, she would take from her bosom the little bag where she used to keep her money; she would get a penny, and with that almost worthless coin, she greeted the moon so that “they wouldn’t run out of money,” as she explained to the children.

At night, Sergio listened to her praying the rosary softly and devotedly; she asked for the blessed souls in the purgatory. She especially pleaded for the solitary

soul, the poor one, which according to Candelaria was so lonely that nobody ever remembered it. She also prayed for the wayfarers, the sailors, and the fishers.

In her own particular way, Candelaria taught the children to pray and she started them in the mysteries of the Christian doctrine. The religion she taught was a mixture of the beliefs of the native and the Catholic faiths. She was unable to understand that someone could say that there was another god besides our Lord Jesus Christ. How on earth would Candelaria know about Buddha, Mohammed, Confucius, and of those people that hate or kill others for religious issues. One of the events she couldn't stand was Saint Peter's denial of our Lord. She openly despised Saint Peter for abandoning our Heavenly Father when He had needed him the most. If she, a simple woman, had been at the \_\_\_\_\_, she would have confronted those who had captured Jesus. She would have made them flee with stones and sticks or any other thing that had been at hand. How was it possible that Saint Peter, being a saint, could have denied that he knew Christ! Candelaria couldn't grasp it.

She taught the kids the All Faithful Prayer in the mornings while making the *tortillas*. Candelaria took out the big stone to grind corn with the same attitude the sun-worshipper Chorotegan Indian women might have done with theirs. She washed it well, and got the cooked corn ready in the clay bowl. She called her disciples who came and gathered around the grinding place.

"Cross yourselves," the theology teacher requested. The children then made the sign of the cross. They crossed their arms on their chest with devotion and began, "Every faithful Christian is very obliged..."

Bent over the stone, Candelaria broke the corn, and the monotonous measured sound joined the children's singsong. As the grains became white dough, the old lady would pant from the effort of moving the stone back and forth while she worked and reworked it. Candelaria skillfully clapped the *tortillas* between her dark hands, and her fingers moved neatly and rhythmically on the edges of the soft disk that she would cook

in the hot griddle. The kids repeated the Ten Commandments or the Confession of Faith, and when Mamma Canducha was about to turn the tortilla or put it to broil on the brazier, the children made faces at each other and laughed noiselessly. The kitchen environment became filled with that savory aroma of the tortilla that was being broiled. Forgetting about Christ suffering under the power of Pontius Pilate, the children cried out loud, "Mamma Canducha, give us a hot tortilla..." Candelaria took one of her big golden crusty salty tortillas, spread some homemade butter on it, and gave each of her disciples a piece. For a while, everybody forgot about the Roman Procurator who sentenced Christ to die on the cross.

When she was young, Candelaria was the house cleaner at Jacinta's parent's home. Later, she got married and had children but her husband and kids died. When Jacinta, at whose birth Candelaria was present, got married, she moved in with her and helped Jacinta to raise Sergio and the two little girls.

Candelaria was a faithful, selfless servant. She was one of those creatures who serve others without lessening her integrity; hers was an intelligent obedience, that is, the kind that ennobles the person who puts it into practice. Wherever Candelaria was, she made herself indispensable right away; she asserted herself inadvertently, and soon the old lady became the housekeeper. Almost always, her heart was at a higher level than her masters'. Whatever her dark knotty fingers touched became clean and neat. In spite of her rough language, she would always have the right word. In times of happiness, Candelaria burst out with innocuous sparks similar to those of a **whetstone at work**; in times of anger, she resembled the water that turns off the flames; in painful moments, the woman became a soothing drop of oil.

She had a humble and noble existence; her life evoked the lines of the English poet: *"For her feet have touch'd the meadow and left the daisies rosy."* If someone had ever told this to Candelaria, she probably would not have understood. Her bare dark hardened feet left tracks where flowers would later bloom. "Well, well, what a way of speaking!"

For the children, Candelaria was as indispensable as their mother. They called her Mamma Canducha. She loved all of them, but her fondness for Sergio was almost fanatic. After her own children and her husband died, her love had been left floating like a honey thread in the space. One day, Candelaria found Sergio's sad, delicate life, and there she stuck and wove a cocoon of tenderness around her.

She herself put Sergio to bed and woke him up, made his food, and tidied his clothes. Looking at her organizing Sergio's drawer was touching: Candelaria folded the shirts and the handkerchiefs neatly, and she put pieces of violet root in between each piece of clothing so the clothes would smell good.

Sergio was never able to forget the sense of welfare and safety that filled him at sunset. At that hour, Mamma Canducha held the boy in her arms to carry him to his special spot in the living room. There, she sat on an easy chair to lull him and tell him tales. Sergio felt the old woman's laps were softer and warmer than his chair's cushions; those laps had the living, loving softness the velvet of the cushions lacked.

Gracia and Merceditas sat at Canducha's feet on the small leather stools Miguel had made. Then she told them those stories such as "The Dumb and the Smart," "The Little *Mandinga* Roach," and "The Adventures of Uncle Rabbit" or instead, she made them play the *pisi pisi gaña* and the *pisote*, two common children games in Costa Rica. By the time Sergio's head had dropped on her breast and the girl's on her knees, she would sing simple songs to lull the kids:

"Oh! Who could be a black dog  
Black as the mamey seed  
To sneak into your kitchen  
And the cooked corn steal?"

She also sang Christmas carols:

The Virgin the clothes was washing  
Saint Joseph was there them hanging  
The Child was crying,  
And Joachim Him rocking!

These songs helped the children weave dreams that seemed like shiny cards while dozing. Sergio imagined the Virgin with her light blue robe covered with a white apron washing in a brook. The Virgin was wearing the big straw hat that Canducha wore to cover her head when she was hanging the clothes in the paddock. Saint Joseph had asked Sergio to hold his bloomed stick while the saint hung the white little shirts. Baby Jesus was sleeping in an improvised cradle made of a sheet hanging like a hammock from the avocado tree; but, then, a black dog, black as a mamey seed, came barking and the Child woke up frightened, but then He realized He was in Canducha's arms, and smiled peacefully.

*The scene, and all its belongings—how they seize and affect me!  
The sad, sharp-chinn'd old man, with worn clothes,  
and broad shoulder-band of  
leather;*

*Walt Whitman  
Sparkles from the Wheel*

Miguel was also part of those affectionate people keeping vigil around Sergio's chair... Old Miguel had such a strange last name that these friends who loved him dearly were never able to pronounce it correctly.

Sergio met Miguel on a very rainy morning. It was one of those seasonal rains that are very common in Costa Rica by the end of October. The child was looking at some workers fixing the street. A man wearing a dirty off-color green helmet caught Sergio's attention. The man was letting the mallet fall reluctantly. From time to time, he stopped as if his strength had abandoned him.

Through the rain, the vision of these soaked men covered with mud saddened Sergio. He imagined that the worker with the helmet was exhausted. Sergio wished he could dare to call all those workers. Then he would ask Mamma Canducha to offer them a cup of coffee, but he would whisper in her ear to pour the man with the helmet the coffee in his own little porcelain jar with a painted angel. Sergio was calling the

man with his heart, "Come, sir, come. I'm deeply sorry to see your muddy shoes and your soaking-wet shirt."

The man in the helmet stopped working. He looked up and down the street, and upon seeing a child at the corridor of a house surrounded by a garden, he came up slowly. Under the helmet, one could see a tanned face covered by a thick blond beard that was already showing the silver of the elderly, and his eyes were blue with a discouraged wandering look.

The corridor was in a high place surrounded by a fence covered by climbing plants. Therefore, the man could just see the kid's head. He took the helmet out humbly, and with a very strong accent, he asked for a glass of water.

When Sergio saw the worker coming, he began trembling. Had he possibly heard the voice of his heart? A glass of water? How would Sergio tell him he couldn't bring it? This was one of the times Sergio realized with a painful anxiousness how much he needed his legs.

He kept looking at the foreigner silently with his eyes wide open. The man thought the kid wasn't taking him seriously and walked away.

A while later, his little sisters found him sobbing. They ran to their mom and to Mamma Canducha. They worked hard trying to comfort Sergio, and find out why he was crying.

The man had gone back to work. Candelaria went looking for him to explain what had happened. She invited the man to come to the house and sit near Sergio. He accepted to have some hot coffee in the child's little jar. When leaving, the man patted the kid's head and kept staring at him with his enormously sad, kind, distant eyes. Sergio stared at the man, too. What did the stranger and the child tell each other with no words? Through their eye contact, they stepped together onto a marvelous bridge, and after crossing it, they embraced and their hearts fused in one.

A few days later, the man came to bring Sergio some funny carefully carved wooden animals. No toy had ever given him such happiness as those did.

The workers went on to another street. Each morning, however, Miguel, the man in the green helmet, paid Sergio a visit. On Sundays, he arrived early. His visit was like a party for the children. Everybody loved the stranger. He built a nest of love in that house with simple things: he carved artistic, clever toys for the children by using little pieces of wood he picked up anywhere; Miguel trimmed the garden plants and grafted the rosebushes, and this excited the children and Candelaria's curiosity. Miguel made Candelaria's kitchen a more comfortable place by opening pantries and hanging shelves everywhere. The old woman was delighted because she had the space to organize each and every can of preserves and bottle she got her hands on.

The kids surrendered to Miguel with that trust childhood gives to what is as simple as itself.

One day, Miguel didn't come by. A week went by, and he didn't show a sign of life. The washerwoman brought the news on Sunday when she arrived with the clothes. She said the blond man she had seen at the house on some occasion had been taken to the hospital because he was delirious with a high fever.

Miguel and the woman lived in the same neighborhood. She had picked up his belongings: a violin in a box and his clothes. The poor man didn't even have a bed, so he slept on some wooden boards.

Sergio's sorrow was deep. Cinta felt obliged to promise Sergio she would let him go see Miguel at the *San Juan de Dios Hospital* on visitor's day.

Candelaria took him. Gracia and Merceditas sent Miguel candies, and Cinta sent him a bottle of wine.

They arrived at the hospital. That place of pain was a great revelation for Sergio. He anxiously looked for his friend among the withered faces of the sick. Visitors were going in and out. The visit of love drew a warm smile on those faces. Such affection reminded him of those little columns of smoke coming out of the huts to show that there is a fire in a poor home.

Miguel was lying on a bed in the middle of the room. When his friends arrived, he was facing the wall. Maybe he had turned his face that way in an extreme minute of frustration as he witnessed those many indifferent looks that slipped in his heart as water drops on a greasy surface. Suddenly, he felt something like a sunray warming his body, and he turned over. His eyes met Sergio and Candelaria who were moving forward like winged messengers. They hugged. Sergio's tears wetted the old man's beard. Miguel stared at him. Cinta had dressed him with a black suit with a white collar. Under the felt hat, Miguel saw his pale face framed by a dense mane of straight hair. The eyes of the sick heedfully followed the movements of that infantile figure who looked beautiful and sad sunken there in middle of the cushions of the wheelchair. An expensive alpaca skin covered the kid's legs.

The sun came in through the open window. The birch trees in the garden had already bloomed, and they could enjoy the embalming aroma of their delicate flowers. The bells of *La Merced* Church were tolling happily, and when their mystic gibberish stopped, they could listen to the birds chirping on the trees of the Chapin Asylum, the place for the mentally ill. Miguel perceived those details just after his friend's arrival. Before, the poor old man hadn't paid attention to the sun or the aroma of the flowers, nor had he listened to the bells' tolling or the singing of the birds. Smiling, he ate the candy and drank in Cinta's health. Miguel showed them a little ship he had been carving for Sergio on a piece of wood. They laughed and talked. The other sick people were surprised to see the blond man so happy because he had been very quiet. Miguel promised to get well soon and finish the ship Sergio couldn't stop admiring; they would put it to sail in the garden pool as soon as he could leave the hospital. The hospital bell rang announcing the visit had ended. They had to leave. As they said good-bye, a tear trembled in Miguel's eyes. He also had a smile when he saw Candelaria walking away pushing the chair whose wheels made a sound that touched his heart profoundly. From the door, the old woman and the child waved good-bye.



Sergio convinced Cinta that Miguel had to live with them at home. How could his friend continue living in that poor damp room where he slept on some boards on the floor?

However, they wondered what Juan Pablo would say about that? Gracia would persuade him. Candelaria and the girls fixed up the room in the garden that had been built with wood for shelter during earthquake times. The seniors of the house called that room “the hut,” and the children had named it the “swallow’s room” because it was decorated with a light wallpaper with the pictures of blue swallow flying flocks. The room was clean and pleasant. A vine had covered the room’s window enlivening it with its pink flower bouquets that almost reached the bed. The old woman had lined the bed with clean cedar-smelling sheets. They had hung Miguel’s violin and clothes on a nail.

Cinta’s childlike brain had enjoyed rehearsing the scene when she would offer Miguel the room. The children laughed and clapped their hands at the thought of Miguel’s reaction the moment he found out his violin and his clothes were there.

One morning at last, they saw Miguel walking to the house slowly leaning on a cane. His beard had grown, and it looked grayish. The children were in the garden, and they run joyfully to meet the man. Sergio also came, his wheelchair pushed by Merceditas.

While he rested and built up his strength, the children glanced at each other expectantly. All of a sudden, they burst into laughter making Miguel feel confused. In vain, Candelaria threatened them with her eyes. When Miguel said he was leaving, no one tried to stop him. The man had the feeling his friends were anxious for him to go; he wondered, however, what the meaning of that cheerful procession that had followed him along the garden was. Mamma Canducha came at the rear pushing Sergio’s chair and Gracia was leading the group happily filling the air with her laughter.

Sergio said, “Come, Miguel, let’s go to the swallow’s room.”

When they went in, Miguel was intrigued to see his violin's box hanging from the wall next to his clothing.

Sergio took his hand, and with a trembling voice told Miguel, "This is your room, Miguel. We have fixed it for you. Mom had someone bring your violin and your clothes."

Miguel sat down and everybody saw how his hands were shaking as he grabbed the cane.

Sergio went on, "Are you staying, Miguel? We want you to live here with us, don't we, Mom?"

Canducha said, "It's sad, *don* Miguel, to live like a lost grain of corn or like the buzzards that spend the night on the first tree they find. You see, I was a lonely person like you, too, but one day I came to this house, and now, if they asked me to leave, they'd kill me 'cause I've planted my heart here, and it's grown roots even amidst the kitchen's clay jar. See, Mr. Miguel, I imagine the soul has its own blood just like the body, and that's the reason a person is able to feel. Besides, for *y'* information, a family isn't only made out by those with the same blood, but by the people who share the same feelings of the soul.

Touched, Miguel simply answered, "Well, I'll stay. May God bless you."

Miguel's arrival marked a new beginning in that house. From that moment on, a stronger feeling of well-being filled the place. Everyone felt as moving in a more comfortable environment. With Miguel and Candelaria's care, everything prospered and was spotless. The garden no longer had any weeds; the fruit trees and the ornamental plants had flourished marvelously the moment Miguel laid his wise fingers on them. The rabbits and doves had more comfortable, clean houses. During the rainy season, the leaks did not bother Canducha anymore. In other words, Miguel helped everybody; he provided thousands of small, humble services that produced in their hearts the same effect of those little water drops that fall again and again on the

same place, and finally make a hole even in a rock. Candelaria said Miguel was her right hand.

For Sergio, Miguel was one of a kind. The old man knew everything, and he always found a way for things. His mouth was a treasure chest filled with songs and tales. The boy got quite lost in daydreaming as he listened to Miguel singing in his foreign language. How mysterious and admirable Miguel was when threading those strange sounding words into a melancholic musical rhythm. His pockets were loaded with objects that others despised and threw away because they seemed useless. Miguel, however, picked them up. There one could find pieces of wood, iron, wire, hemp, and empty matchboxes. His hands made them into little baskets, small cars, marionettes, and other toys that he hung from a rod and sold in the street. The prettiest creations were for the children of the house. Miguel managed to save some money to build a sharpening machine he designed himself. He painted it colorfully and placed some labels written in black that read, "Scissors, knives and saws sharpening." The machine's beautiful wooden wheels were artistically engraved. In their rings, Miguel had placed a dog chasing some rabbits. The pottery for the water and other uses was shiny and well-polished. He took the machine and went out early in the morning for many days together with *Trinket*, the house's doggy that had become his devoted friend. When he got to the door, he played his harmonica with that sound scale going up and down and used to wake Sergio up. Miguel knew the boy really enjoyed listening to the harmonica. Sergio usually asked Miguel to lend him the instrument, and for a long time, he enraptured himself playing it. In Sergio's imagination, those sounds resembled sparklers going up and coming down rising as if they were chasing something mysterious and ineffable.

In the evenings, especially on the rainy ones while Cinta was distracted sprucing herself up in front of the mirror or reading novels, the rest of them usually got together in the big kitchen. Mamma Canducha kneaded bread or rolled cigarettes or she made some snacks for the children such as popped corn with honey. The grains

popped on a skillet and they looked like orange blossoms. While he was carving a toy, Miguel would tell them tales or adventures of his life. The flames sizzled in the fireplace. Outside, the rain and the wind showed their harshness. Miguel told them, for instance, that he had been born in a far away, very far away land called The Tyrol, on the other side of the sea. His town was located along a huge riverbank from which many boats sailed. The houses had many windows and since they were painted in green, yellow and blue, they looked very cheerful. The people of his town did not dress like the Costa Rican peasants. They wore colorful picturesque dresses that were the same colors as the houses. In his town, men's clothing had green ornaments, and they wore an eagle's feather on their hats. When he was young, he was very happy; his people were noisy and joyful. He would have liked the children to have seen his country's dances. Sometimes, he kept the suspense by staring silently to the burning wood. When he came out of that self-absorption, Miguel said he had seen very distant scenes again among the flames; he was a child again, and around the big fireplace of his parents' kitchen, there were many people together; his mother and older sisters were knitting; he and his little sister who they called Sava were sitting near one of their father's shepherds, a handsome sturdy boy that was singing Tyrolese songs with a zither. His brothers were carving pinewood to make the country's famous toys. He wondered what ever could have happened to his little sister Sava, so pretty and joyful. She had a radiant face; laughter was always pecking at her mouth like a little bird on a ripe cherry. That was why he loved listening to Gracia when she laughed. He remembered Sava as he had seen her for the last time; she was wearing a little white apron and a dark hat. She was waving good-bye to him with a handkerchief. He thought he could hear her trembling voice yelling from the kitchen, "May God guide you, dear brother!" Afterwards, he began to study. He said he had been a bad student because he spent most of his time playing the violin. A famous teacher from his country gave him lessons. Then, there was a part of his life that was lost into something dark and confusing which resembled a long-lasting night. He had wandered

a lot. One day, he found himself in Costa Rica, and here he was. What had happened to his relatives? If his sister Sava had not died yet, she would be an old woman like him now. What had happened with her beautiful smile? The coldness of old age would have made it fade away by now.

During the first months that Miguel lived in the house, at times he would not return home for some days. Cinta and Canducha found out that he used to get drunk. Cinta was suspicious. She started talking about sending him off. So, the old woman told her, "Wait, my child. We still don't have any complaints of his behavior at home. See, it might be that the nostalgia Miguel carries inside climbs up to his heart from time to time. Besides, I don't think he would ever disrespect us because he loves Sergio dearly, and he knows he would cause the child deep sorrow if he would ever see him in such a state.

When Miguel did not show up, the child got sad. The idea that something bad could have happened to his friend bothered Sergio. Once, when Miguel didn't come back for a week, Sergio became quite distressed. To calm him, Candelaria took her shawl and went out searching for the old man in every grocery store. At last, she found Miguel near the Central Market. He was sober. The woman lectured him and made him reflect on the fact that the child's health could be affected by the suffering. She said, "Sergio has barely slept these past nights because he's been tormented by the idea that maybe you were sick somewhere."

From that day on, Miguel was never absent again.

On December 7, Miguel used to earn some money by making fireworks, which he crafted very skillfully for the festivity in honor of the Virgin Mary of the Purest Conception. The children benefited from that activity because Miguel saved the best whirls, volcanoes, rockets, and firecrackers for them.

Weeks before this traditional celebration, Miguel started bringing home bundles of shatter cane. He also placed rolls of rope, packages, and jars full of substances with strange-sounding names on his big table. While Miguel handled all those materials,

Sergio and his sisters did not move away from the table or stop tracking each of the old man's movements. They inquired about everything sticking their noses everywhere. Mamma Canducha was frequently taking a look because she thought it was dangerous for the kids to be near the gunpowder. Miguel calmed her by assuring there wasn't anything dangerous there.

"God help us!" she said as she walked away without even daring to insist because Sergio was having a lot of fun.

Miguel explained for the children with his incredible patience, that when the barium chlorate and the shellac mix were fired, they would give off a green and silver light; he also told them that other mixtures would give off red or blue or violet and white lights. He said the secret for the whirls to twist around freely was so and so. "Look, I'm going to make some firecrackers that are more playful than Gracia. You'll see, children, how Canducha and Miss Jacinta will run away." With his skillful hands, which knew how to make everything, Miguel took a hollow cane reed, rolled it with a rope, and filled the hole with a mixture of soil, niter, sulfur, and cider coal. Very carefully, he placed the needle in the little leather circle that was that device's soul.

"How many days are left before December 7?" the children kept asking impatiently.

At last, December 7 arrived. That day, the children would not leave the cane devices alone as they waited for the sunset. Sergio knew which one kept the dark powder that would blow into wonderful golden manes that would run wild through the darkness; he could also tell apart the ones whose filings would burst in a rain of crazy little stars. With anxious eyes, they follow the sun's path. "What a lazy sun and how slowly it moved!"

Just when the sun went down, they went into the garden with the neighborhood kids. They started with the firecrackers and, holding their breath, waited for them to go off; Miguel was right. In fact, the firecrackers made Mamma Canducha run away and jump on those little feet. When darkness had finally covered the garden, they lighted

the whirls that spun fast around a post; the children put their hands in the fire and they did not get burned. Sergio was in charge of lighting the little candles that produced the red, green, or the violet or blue light that transformed the garden into an enchanted place. Miguel fired the rockets that went up to the stars and burst when it seemed they were about to crash against the dark dome of the sky. Right at that moment, bundles of shining flowers that faded in the heights appeared. The environment was full of gunpowder bursting, sparks, joyful yelling, and children laughter.

On summer afternoons, Miguel used to take Sergio for a ride around the city. The old man was fond of finding lonely places. They sat at the edge of the road, and Miguel said, "Look at the road, Sergio, but take a real good look at it." Then he crossed his hands on his knees and remained closely focused on the dusty strip that, wrapped in the melancholy of the dusk, lost itself into the unknown. They usually rested on a hill watching the afternoon go by. They could hear the sounds of the city, and the tiresome noise of the carts returning from work. The trees offered the fantasy of their leaves against the shining background of the west, and by the east, star dew began falling down from the sky. From time to time, the old man sighed.

On other occasions, they went by the edge of an old well, a big water deposit that was used during the summer to move the machines from the coffee processing mill to the North of the city. It was surrounded by alders, cypresses, and willows. Almost nobody visited that place. Miguel covered Sergio with a blanket and placed him on the grass; then he sat next to the boy.

The swallows broke through the enchantment of the evening flying over the sleepy water. When the dusk became golden, the water took on a honey-like color; the swallows wetted the tips of their wings, and as they flew up to the sky, they left some drops that looked like golden bees falling down. The soft wind gently moved the willow branches. The high dark tipped cypresses resembled spindles that provided the threads to weave the marvelous silence that surrounded that place. There were fireflies in the grass. After a while, one could perceive the little voice of a creek that slid

through that stillness as if on a velvet bed; the crickets opened tiny holes in that peacefulness with their sweet throbbing chirps. As Sergio listened to them and looked at the twinkling stars between the open gaps of the tree branches, he thought that it was as if the far away stars produced that music as they moved. Sergio drowsed, and the playful stars and the cricket's chirping mixed in his imagination. Then, as the shadows came forward, the frogs started their serenade; the child imagined the well was a drum on which the frogs stroke.

Once, when they came back from their trip, the old man took his violin and said, "Listen, Sergio. My violin will tell you what I felt at the well when the swallows flew over the water, and the singing of the crickets, the frogs and the ditch created a slight quivering in the silence that enveloped us. Later, I'll let you know about the scented road by the ironweed flowers over which the stars shined and whose silence was only interrupted by the noise of an oxcart.

This conversation was held in the "swallow's room," where the moonlight leaking in the open window curtained in green and pink by the *vine's* bouquets was the only light in the room. The boy closed his eyes and imagined that the silver brightness of the garden came out from a little fountain sprouting from his friend's violin. When he ended, they remained quiet. Back home, however, the child said with a quite excited voice, "Miguel, why don't you teach me how to play the violin?"

The chair stopped. With their hearts full of sweet happiness, they made plans about how and when the lessons would start.

One morning, Sergio saw his friend coming with a roll of paper. He went to his room and locked the door; they listened to him playing the violin until very late that night. The next day, Miguel brought the child a sheet of music entitled "My Friend's Wheel Chair." He had done a very careful neat work with different color inks. Miguel said, "Here I tell you what my heart felt that day at the hospital when I heard your wheelchair approaching. From then on, when those wheels roll by, I don't hear a noise but a kind of music with both sadness and happiness...and you are there,



Sergio, and so is Canducha with her golden heart, Mercedes with her sweet tenderness, Gracia with her joyful laughter; your mother so gracious and pretty. “Do you understand, Sergio? Maybe you don’t, but it doesn’t matter; you’ll understand later what all of you mean to me.”

The lessons began. Miguel gave Sergio his violin. It was an old instrument made of wood cut from the Alps in his country. By that time, Sergio was seven. Some time later, Miguel was proud and impressed with his pupil. Sergio’s heart could playfully run on the music with the happiness of a healthy boy in a field during spring. Not only could he run but he could also fly. Inside that body doomed to retreat, his heart had remained locked as in a cocoon until the day when the harmony of the sounds gave him wings. The black notes on the score were, for Sergio’s spirit, like cobblestones showing him the path leading to an enchanted palace.

If Sergio’s chair had continued going through life sweetly pushed by those caresses, the child’s existence would have been one of peaceful sadness and his story would have ended here. However, those forces that drive humans, seemed not to have made any distinctions between legs or wheels, and they treated Sergio very cruelly as if he were a strong being. Hostile events threatening the boy’s peacefulness started pushing his wheelchair and led it to unsuspected paths.

Cinta’s relatives and acquaintances were very happy when Juan Pablo Esquivel proposed. They thought, and so they said, that she had married well. Her girl friends felt something certainly close to envy tickling inside when considering her luck. Juan Pablo was a well-off trader. Cinta probably did not love him. She had married him simply because he was an excellent catch. Juan Pablo’s looks were quite ordinary and kind of unpleasant, but he dressed nicely, and this, together with the welfare he offered Cinta, were enough for that birdie-like brain that never stopped two minutes to think about this.

Juan Pablo thoughts were always focused on numbers; he didn’t care about Cinta’s feelings. Therefore, he wasn’t affectionate, and he showed his love to others

by surrounding them with material welfare. He was one of those men who are convinced that a woman just needs a well-stocked pantry and a full wardrobe to be happy.

After Mercedes was born, Juan Pablo bought a banana farm in a town called *La Línea*. He refused to take his family with him. He said the climate was unhealthy. He came home once in a while, and each week, he wrote Cinta a card with cliché phrases with no trace of tenderness. One day, Cinta found out that her husband lived with a woman on the farm, and that he had children with her, too. At first, she felt sad, but her youth and light-heartedness easily pulled up this thorn from her heart. Cinta devoted herself to her children and especially to Sergio. They had a quiet life in a little house in the suburbs surrounded by a garden and trees.

The children and Cinta got finally used to Juan Pablo's detachment. Gracia was the only one that approached him when he returned. His demonstration of affection to the children lacked credibility and seemed instead to be an obligation for him, so they did not produce any effect on the children's heart.

When his father was present, Sergio's feelings would shrink like the sleeping grass when slightly touched by some strange object. Juan Pablo always addressed the child in a tone of pitiful protection, which was extremely hurtful. The feeling was similar to the obliging smile in the powerful man's mouth when he puts his hand in his pocket looking for a coin for a beggar. Juan Pablo had this way of patting Sergio on the head while telling him at the same time, "Poor, son!" These words were to the boy's heart like an unrequited charity.

One day, when Sergio saw his father was already leaving for the farm, Sergio said to Candelaria, "How wonderful! He is leaving, I don't love him!"

The old woman answered gently, "Try not to feel that way, my dear, remember he's your father."

Have you ever wondered if at this precise moment in time someone who is totally unknown to you is leaving from some place on earth and heading in your direction to bring you happiness or sorrow?

The very moment when Sergio was putting his arms around mother's neck, a steamboat was sailing to Costa Rica from a port in Chile.

A friendly young engineer called Rafael Valencia was on board. Some time after his arrival to this country, he headed to the Atlantic to work in the construction of the bridges for the railroad. There he met Juan Pablo Esquivel, and they became close friends. He was Mercedita's godfather. Later, he settled down in the city and used to visit the house

Rafael Valencia fell in love with Cinta. The poor young woman, who had been neglected by her husband, lacked the willpower to overcome temptation. Her thought, light as a feather, could not go down to the bottom of her consciousness to measure the consequences of her decision. Cinta threw herself entirely to this new intoxicating feeling that had filled her with joy. Not even her children's little hands were able to defend her. Nevertheless, not everything that is said about this fact goes beyond being just an assumption; it indeed happened that way either for one reason or for another.

One evening Sergio and Miguel were in the "swallow's room." The room was dark. The old man had fallen asleep tired after telling Sergio stories. The boy was sitting by the window listening to the sound of the ditch that went across the garden: he imagined that the water's voice went murmuring, "Bye, Sergio, Gracia, and Merceditas..." He listened to some steps nearby as well as his mother and a man's voice. Oh! It was the godfather's.

Gracia and Sergio called Rafael Valencia "godfather" imitating Merceditas. He fell like shouting, "Well, Mother! You have taken too long on your trip... Come and take me..."

Then, however, Sergio thought he would better play the fool, so that she had to look for him. He would not answer if she called. The boy laughed at the thought of this joke on his mother.

He saw them passing. The godfather was hugging Sergio's mother. They stopped and he kissed her. She said, "No, no, let go of me, Canducha is coming..."

In fact, the old woman was coming down the corridor stairs to take Sergio home.

The child saw his mother and the man he called godfather hidden in the summerhouse. He felt something like a knot in his throat. His little heart experienced a painful sudden realization.

What did he think? Did he understand? The fact is that he did not say a word when his chair, pushed by Canducha, passed by the summerhouse, and he told nobody about "that."

From that evening on, he became evasive with Rafael Valencia; Sergio never called him "godfather" again or any other name as a matter of fact. Once when Rafael tried to pamper him, Sergio said annoyed, "I don't want you to touch me."

Cinta caught him looking at her oddly several times. She could not tell if it was either a look of pain or reproof.

One day, Cinta realized she was pregnant with Rafael Valencia's child. She knew she could not deceive her husband. Cinta thought of leaving to a distant place in the country where the little one would be born; she would trust the baby to a woman peasant who was Cinta's friend. After a while and back in the city, she would adopt the child.

She wrote to her husband telling him she was sick, so she was leaving to the country with the family. For the children's misfortune, Juan Pablo had gotten an offer to sell his farm. Selling was a splendid business. Thus, he asked Cinta to postpone the trip for a while because he was thinking of returning to the city where he would settle down and start a business.

At the same time, Rafael Valencia was offered a job as a mine manager in Peru. He asked Cinta to go with him. Being in a terrible predicament, she jumped over the sweet fence that Gracia, Sergio, and Merceditas had built around her heart.

The person who would push Sergio's wheelchair along a different path from that he had traveled thanks to the loving hands of Canducha, Cinta, Miguel and his little sisters was leaving from South America precisely at the same time Sergio, with a smile on his face, was affectionately hugging his mother's neck.

The years went by...

How many years had passed from those days! Sergio tells himself and his memory places him in front of luminous window or in the darkness of the night when he is alone and everybody is asleep.

Nothing from the past is lost. I move along these recollections as if I walked about a gallery with pictures that I myself have painted. Everything remains there untouched. Here are the shapes moving around the chiaroscuro, the lights, and the shadows that the painter's brush once left on the canvas; those details that had gone unseen by the childhood's suspicion are now strongly enhanced. The course of time has touched them with its patina of thoughtful sadness and resignation.

I stopped as if I weren't Sergio before each of the other Sergios sitting on their wheelchair. It is a long line that begins the morning when the roof that sheltered my life overturned, and the line gets lost into the unknown. Each of those Sergios gives me the illusion they are each of the glass beads of a necklace, which are linked by a thread of sadness. From time to time, the light of an illusion breaks down on one of the beads and kindles iridescent smiles. What would those still pending to be inserted be like?

Sergio goes on remembering and reflecting.

I am in the living room at home in my favorite spot. Mother is sewing under the lamp light. On the table, a vase that looks like a fine crystal stem displays the red rose I cut this morning for mother. My head is leaning on her shoulder; at my feet,

Merceditas is busy cutting pictures from a magazine. My hands are cuddling her little head. Gracia is studying her piano lesson. The scene repeats itself in the big mirror in the background. The light reflects on the bevels surrounding the picture with an unspeakable charm; there I am sitting in my chair: I smile to myself and feel sympathy and compassion for this pale boy who cannot walk. I make a gesture with my hand, and he replies with the opposite. I believe there is another world with a brighter atmosphere inside the mirror. That is mother. In my mind, I repeat the word "mother" and I grasp the full revelation of all what she means in my life. My forehead is leaning on her shoulder and her breath swings me... I keep repeating to myself, "Mother, mother..."

What about Merceditas? I see her gracious profile leaning as she looks to the paper she is cutting with Canducha's huge scissors. In the effort, she is sticking out her tongue. The two braids that give her that particular look full of homeliness and quietness rest on her back. Through the hand, I have on her head, I perceive a loving sweetness that warms me up like a sunbeam as it flows through my arm. Merceditas is always by my side placing her warm body near my legs in a quiet, diligent manner, and paying attention to my words and my looks.

I feel like leaning down to kiss her, but the fear of breaking the spell of the scene reflected in the mirror paralyzes me.

My sister "Ding-ding" who is studying her piano lesson is also there. All I can see is her back covered by a beautiful mantle of dark curls. How cheerful Gracia is! Her nickname is perfect: "Ding-ding, Ding-ding." Mamma Canducha once said that God our Father had seeded a plant of happiness in Garcia's heart that bloomed bouquets of laughter through her mouth. How I love her! If my legs could move, I would tiptoe to get close to her, and I would insert a little straw in one of her ears just for the sake of listening to her yelling and laughing. I almost can see her curls shaking. At the thought, I burst in laughter, and the charm is broken. Merceditas lifts

up her eyes staring at me inquisitively. When she sees I am laughing, she laughs, too. Mother says, "Are you crazy, Sergio?"

The bronze clock on the console announces it is eight. Several times in my life, I have dreamed I hear the clock announcing the time with its tuneful voice. Over the clock, there was a golden-beard pilgrim leaning on a cane and carrying a backpack.

Mother becomes anxious. She stops sewing and sighs continuously. My head is resting on her shoulder again, and it resents her anxiety. We hear steps in the garden, and she abruptly abandons her seat without caring about my forehead that hits against the wooden backrest. I complain, but neither the noise from the blow nor my wailing, makes her stop. I realize "that man" is coming. Merceditas stops what she is doing and comes next to me to comfort with her hand my aching forehead.

Mother comes in with "that man." She asks Candelaria to take me to my room and sends the girls to bed. Although I am a big boy now, Mamma Canducha carries me in her arms. I feel so good in those arms! She notices I am cold and shaking, so she has gone to warm up my nightgown. When I put it on, I smell the sandalwood aroma. To make my clothes smell good, the little old woman put tiny sandalwood chips with the coal she used to warm them. I keep staring at her, and the enchantment that fulfilled me while I was in front of the mirror a while ago comes back. Mamma Canducha is sitting at the bedside, and she makes me pray "The Blessed." I repeat the prayer mechanically, and look at this woman with her dark wrinkled face framed by a colorful kerchief that goes around her neck under her braids and goes up to end up in a knot on the forehead. I see the black shiny hair that I love dearly. I am unable to restrain myself, and I give her a hug and lots of kisses. Pleased, she says, "Be rational, my little one." She tucks me in very well, and makes the sign of the cross on my forehead.

I cannot sleep. The summer wind is back, and it blows the trees of the garden very strongly, and makes the doors and windows shake. That morning, when Mamma Canducha heard the wind, she said, "The Northern wind is here." A Northern wind is

one that starts blowing forcefully in November. My forehead hurts from the bump, and I think my mother does not love me. She did not even turn around to see what had happened. I have a knot in my throat. Through the open door, the murmur of my sisters' breathing coming from the next room provides me company.

Pretty late at night, my mother comes by my bedside tiptoeing in and gets close to me. She thinks I am asleep, so she leans down and kisses me. She is sobbing. A tear falls on my forehead. I cover her head with my arms and pull her toward me. All the resentment is gone. I anxiously ask her, "Why is my mommy crying?" "Did that man hurt you?" At the thought of such a possibility, I feel enraged. She says "no" with her head, but she keeps sobbing, and her dark curls shake over my face. Mom whispers in my ear, "You will never forget me, will you?" She kneels by my side and puts her head on my pillow close to my cheek. I fall asleep fully confident because I know that my mother does love me.

The noise of the garden gate wakes me up as it opens and closes. The morning light is coming in through the window. I remember a flock of parakeets filling the morning with their rough squawking that has always sounded to me like guavas are to my taste. They seemed to be dancing in the luminous air as a whirlpool of green trees that the wind had torn off from the fresh mountains. Mamma Canducha had told us that when the parakeets fly around, it means that summer has arrived. They come from the coast, she says, looking for small fruits. Each time I hear flocks of parakeets go past, that sad morning comes back to my mind.

I look for my mother next to me. "Well! What a fool I am!" It is already morning, and it was last night when she came with her affectionate words! Right at that moment, I hear a car leaving.

Gracia and Merceditas get up and asked about Mother. It's been a long while, and I don't hear either Mommy's voice or her fine walking. "Where could have she gone this early?" Mamma Canducha comes to dress me. I ask her about my mother. She answers that my mom has left (maybe she herself doesn't know for sure). I



perceive some restlessness in the old woman's face. The morning is pretty cold, and she leaves me in the sunlit corridor. My kitten Pascuala comes to play with me, but I don't feel like playing. "Where has Mother gone?" She never goes out so early. Miguel stays home. I wonder why he is not coming out with his sharpener as usual. Instead, he spends the whole morning in the kitchen talking to Mamma Canducha. I sense that something suspicious and perturbing is going on with those two old folks.

Far away at the police headquarters, the clarions announce it is noon. The wailing siren from a workshop cracks the dazzling brightness of midday. I do not know why these sounds that I have indifferently heard so many times make me anxious and taste like a cold uneasiness today? The day moves forward and my mother has not returned yet. We constantly ask, "Where has Mother gone?" Did something wrong happen to her? Why isn't she here? Miguel and Candelaria try to calm us down, but everything is in vain. They have this trace in their voice that makes me look at them suspiciously. As for us, the three kids, we do not move from the kitchen, and we keep watching Miguel and Canducha's faces. I catch the old little woman wiping her eyes on the sly. I ask her, "Why are you crying, Mamma Canducha?" And she answers, "No, it is the smoke..." but she is far from the stove, and there is no smoke in the room.

It is evening now so we go to the living room. Mother's couch is empty. I see her little sewing basket open on the table. Inside the basket, she left her handkerchief. I take it on the sly and kiss it. I perceive that carnation's aroma that characterizes her clothes. The red rose in the vase is withered, and its petals hang lifeless. Some of the petals have fallen to the foot of the vase. The lamp light seems darker. To me, it seems as if a quite noisy something has been suddenly silenced. The mirror reflects a sad scene; Gracia and Merceditas are next to me. Their heads are hanging like the limped rose in the vase. I smile to myself as I did last night, but the boy that is looking at me from the back of the mirror must be undergoing a very deep sorrow. The summer rain is striking the windows. The bronze clock on the console makes its tick-tock fall on the upset stillness of the room; the pilgrim's tired shape in his eternal

traveling attitude stands out. In such a mood, we have heard the clock announcing eight, nine, ten, and mother is not here yet. When Mamma Canducha takes me in her arms to go to bed, she bursts into tears.

I cannot sleep and I sense the night is deeper each moment, and that I am sinking into it with my eyes wide open.

At a distance, a dog is barking, and this increases the darkness, the loneliness, and the distance. They become very profound and painful as if they were part of my own flesh. I fall asleep, and then, the night itself starts barking in the distance. From the other side of the barking, I see my mommy opening her arms to me.

Mamma Canducha strives to protect us with her tenderness and my pain takes shelter there as if it were a nest wrapped with fluff and cotton. Her almost black face that for me is the whitest thing I have ever found in my life looks distressful and she is unable to hide it, although she does not want to see us suffering. Miguel has not gone out with his sharpener these days. He does not leave me alone. In vain, he has made us beautiful wood objects with his knife, and has told wonderful stories, but none of us three can pay attention to him. The violin is quiet. The instrument is like a good friend that shares his silent love at the verge of our sorrow. Here is Merceditas. She is sitting at my feet as usual. Her head is leaning, and she's pressing her body against my dead legs. Her always-busy fingers are idle today, though.

What about Gracia? She is also here. Since mother left, she has not combed her hair, so it looks as if there had been a fight in her head. She has a wild appearance with that untidy hair. Gracia, who could never keep quiet, barely speaks now. She has thrown herself on the floor next to me and started crying. After a while, she wets one finger in the little pools her tears have left, and draws flowers, human profiles, and animals; finally, my sister tries to make the tears that keep falling stand in line to write the word "mother."

Poor thing, my little sister Tinkerbell! Poor joyful heart that manages to find a way to play with her weeping!

Three days after my mother's departure, my father returns. He kisses us with a kiss that barely touches us. At the sight of my father, this coldness I feel since mother left intensifies. He goes out again without saying a word, and comes back at night. He finds us in the living room in the spot we used to spend the evening with Mom. He sits on the couch and starts smoking. Then, he stands up and rambles agitatedly. He stops from time to time, and I listen to the tick-tock of the clock. I have this feeling that I am inside time as if in a train's wagon whose wheels make that tick-tock. That train is going to leave me in a dark-sunken lonely station.

I do not dare to look at father face to face, but I do it through the mirror. His forehead is frown giving him a sullen appearance.

Gracia ventures to ask him, "Do you know where Mother is?"

He stares at us for a long time without answering. He has stopped walking, and I start listening to the clock's ticking again. "Oh, my God! The train has stopped.

At last, my father speaks, "You don't have a mother..."

I shout, "Did anything happen to her?"

And Gracia, "Is she dead?"

He answers, "I wish she were!"

Mamma Canducha comes in, and my father requests, "Candelaria, get Sergio's things ready because he is going to live with Concha."

Silence falls on us making our heads bend.

Trembling, she shyly asks, "And the girls?"

"They're going to a boarding school."

Silence again.

The old woman steps forward and asks with a tremulous accent, "*Don* Juan Pablo, why don't you leave them here? You know I love them as if they were mine. I'd take care of them as I'd take care of something mine..."

He brutally replies, "No chance at all. I can't leave a servant in charge of my household."

Everything fades away around me. I open my eyes and I am on my little bed. Mamma Canducha is rubbing my neck with aromatic herbs and my sisters are patting my hands and sobbing.

This is the morning when they are taking us away from home. They are going to take me to Aunt Concha who is one of my father's sisters. Gracia and Merceditas are going to be taken to the boarding school. They come out of their room wearing the uniform, and I think they look strange in those dresses. Their eyes are swollen from crying. I try to remain calm to give them courage. Mamma Canducha is not around because we agreed last night that we would not say goodbye.

My father is in charge of the girls, and Miguel is taking care of me. We leave silently. The wheels of my chair screech against the garden's sand. I ask Miguel to take me by the dovecote and the rabbits' cage. When I pass by, I see the rabbits show their little anxious noses and eat the tender morning glory. Among the leaves of the Lady tree, a flock of birds that have come to eat its yellow little fruits are singing. They will not wake me up with their gibberish anymore. A few days ago, a new visitor started coming. It is a red-breasted blackbird that probably escaped from a cage. Its quavering reminds me of the sound of a small jug as it empties. Since the bird is very little and orange, it looks like a leaf brightened by the sun and moved by the wind. The doves are cooing in their nests. I say goodbye to them, and to the sparrows that used to come so gently to eat from my hands; I wave goodbye to the flock of blue-gray tanagers that are assembled among the lemon trees doing a big hustle; I say goodbye to the orange tree under which I spent many mornings, to the myrtle the same age as mine, the murta shrubs, the summer flower arbor, the sparrow's little room, and to the ditch that freshens the garden, and goes by murmuring, "So long, Sergio, Gracia, and Merceditas." The gate makes a tuneful lament as it opens and closes producing a sound similar to the goldfinches' trill. Some days ago, that whining sound of the rusty hinges woke me up very early in the morning. That was the day when mother left. On top of the gate, the wind moves a signboard with this reading, "Furnished, for rent. For

more information, contact... etc.” When I finally get to the street, I turn my eyes to see the house. There it is with its big corridors enlivened by red, pink, and white flowers. The windows are closed and it gives me the impression the house refuses to see us leave. On the roof, the doves in line pump up their feathers in the sun. My wheelchair starts rolling followed by my father and my sisters. At the arrival to a turn on the road, we see our house’s roof showing between the Lady trees and the mountain oak that is fully covered with pink flowers as if dressed for a special occasion. Out of the chimney, a little column of smoke escapes heading up to the blue sky. I imagine the smoke is the handkerchief that Mamma Canducha is waving to say good-bye. My dear little old woman is probably in the kitchen sitting on her stool crying silently. Pascuala, my kitten is at the highest part of the roof spying on the doves. High above, the buzzards are flying, and it looks as if they were painting black scribbles on the blue firmament.

We split at one corner. We do not say a word. My sisters kiss me. Gracia is sobbing. Mercedes grabs my neck, “Oh, Sergio, little brother, oh, Sergio, little brother,” she says as she goes her way. I do not turn around to see my father. My chair is now heading down the road that leads to Aunt Concha’s place.

We see children who are going to school. They talk and laugh loudly with their books under their arms. Their mothers are at the doors watching their children go. Some of them say, “My child, may God be with you.”

For me, Aunt Concha and Uncle Jose’s house was that dark deserted station I imagined the other night in my living room at home. Aunt Concha and Uncle Jose have always made me feel the same detachment of empty places. We have never been acquainted. Why do I have to end up in this house? How desperate I am! I suddenly remember Ana Maria, and I feel as if I were a tired bug that has found a little grass plant to rest its wings in the middle of a desert.

My Aunt and Uncle’s place is in the small village of *San Francisco de Guadalupe*, which is very close to the city on the other side of the Torres River. The house is across from an insignificant small treeless public square surrounded by dirty

houses. Although it is an isolated area, it is not peaceful because of the constant noise of the streetcars going to *Guadalupe* from the city.

The big house is old with thick walls and raised windows protected by iron bars. Two orange trees flank the entrance, and the grass is growing on the roof. The rooms are big and cold with brick floors that my aunt often makes someone wax; so, at first sight, you would think they are wet. The furniture is huge and heavy. The living room looks mournful with the couches and the sofa upholstered with a dark fabric; pictures of unfriendly-looking grandparents hang on the walls. Inside a glass box, there is a sad mourning image of the Virgin Mary in her given persona, according to Catholic customs, as the Our Lady of Sorrows whose heart is pierced by daggers. It is a wooden sculpture that was brought from Guatemala, and my aunt values it like her own eyes. Under the big round coffee table, my Aunt Concha usually has sea cucumbers because they fill the room with their fresh sour perfume.

My bedroom is such a big place that the footsteps echo; the windows face the street through which you can see the little brick church that has been under construction for years. At night, I feel terrified by the sound of the tiny balls falling from the ceiling that termites have gnawed. My bed is by the shadow of a big wardrobe next to thickset dresser with many drawers that resembles Aunt Concha. I am afraid to wake up at midnight and find myself in the middle of that silence lit by a small oil lamp that my aunt keeps always glowing to show her devotion to the souls. The huge shadows of the furniture moved excitedly at the weak flame's rhythm. A clock in the dining room is another of my night terrors. It is a black-wooden box that looks like a coffin hanging vertically. A big golden pendulum shows through the crystal door; its strokes resound in the quietness of the night, and in my imagination, they are the breathing of those dreadful shadows surrounding me. Back home, I had a room where I was never scared.

Miguel left me in this house just yesterday morning, but I feel I have been here for years.

It is evening. They have left me near the window in my new room. The church bells have rung announcing the rosary. Some women all wrapped up, including my aunt, go inside the temple. A pale light is coming out the church windows, and I can hear the whispering of prayers. The gloomy outline of the church stands out against the starry background of the sky. I am wondering what happened to my mother and where Mamma Canducha and Miguel would have to go? What about my sisters? How dark the living room back at home would be! I remember the mirror scene from the other evening... Now, there are only shadows inside it! Maybe, the two old folks are in the kitchen and they are talking about us. I close my eyes and see Mamma Canducha's dark face leaning and staring sadly at the flames. My old friend with his kind face outlined by a silver beard is in front of her with his hands crossed on his knees.

My imagination flies to our house. I hear the drops from the faucet that someone failed to close tight dripping into the sink that was full of water in the laundry room. I also believe I can hear the yellow lemons falling down from the beautiful lemon tree in the garden. The laundry room and the garden are sunk in the darkness. The sink with all that water is like a big resonance box. As the drops fall, they make a sound that makes you think a little musical note had jumped. The note is so tiny that my ears are almost unable to perceive it. Tin, tin, tin, tin... Some very fine blue forelocks of the musical notes that resemble the little mirth flower's pistils are left behind floating on the sink's surface. The yellow lemons fall off the branches. They are so ripe they cannot hold on any longer, so they go through the night rolling playfully on the ground or just keep very still in the middle of a bed of leaves. The water from the ditch moves away singing its song, "So long Sergio, Gracia, and Merceditas..."

Suddenly, someone has put some small arms around my neck, and a little head comes close to my cheeks. Oh! It is Ana Maria! I did not notice her coming because she is barefoot.

Her soft kind voice asks, "Why are you crying, Sergio?"

I do not reply. The gentle tone of her voice invites my sorrow to overflow and sobs burst through my throat. She hugs me tighter and kisses me with her warm lips... Then, some shy sobs join mine.

My pain calms down, and I ask her, "Why are you crying, Ana Maria?"

"When I see your sorrow, I also feel like crying."

"I'm crying because they have brought me here. Oh, Ana Maria! Everyone at home has gone different ways."

"Last night, I heard your Aunt Concha said you would live with us, Sergio, and I felt so very happy..."

"You shouldn't have. I'm here because I'm like a prisoner in this chair. .. If my legs were healthy, I'd have run away, and I don't even know where... I don't love Aunt Concha or Uncle Jose. I don't love my father, either.

"What about me?"

"I do love you..."

"Why are you here?"

"Why? Because my legs aren't right. Have you heard where my mom is, Ana Maria?"

"Is your mom lost?"

"Yes."

We start crying again.

Sobbing, she asks, "Have they looked for her?"

"I don't know."

"That's weird! I thought grown ups didn't get lost. What about your little sisters?"

"My father sent them to a boarding school. If Mamma Canducha were here..."



I feel a knot in my throat again. Ana Maria leaves the room hurriedly, but she returns right away and places two objects in my hands. "Take these, and stop crying, Sergio," she says.

My aunt is back from the rosary and her thick voice resounds angrily, "Ana Maria, what's going on? Why haven't you turned on the lights? When are you going to learn to do things without having to be told?"

The girl slips out. I wish I could have continued crying in the darkness with her little arms around my neck.

By then, Ana Maria was about eight years old, but she looked younger. She was like the house's elf. Ana Maria seemed to have the gift of being present everywhere at the same time, and that annoyed my Aunt Concha. When one was expecting it the least, you would see that little thin figure with her cute head appear from in between the big furniture. Her dark face was adorned by her very dark almond-shaped eyes that looked like those of the goats. A thick fringe of very short straight eyelashes that make her look quite nice adorned her eyelids. Her little flat nose seemed to be always sniffing for pranks; on her cheeks, she had some dimples that showed up at the slightest pretext; they were like small wells of charm and roguery in her face. My aunt did not allow Ana's hair to grow; I guess it was to avoid combing it.

I remember Ana Maria used to wear blue polka dot or white flowered dresses with a long skirt so that she did not show her legs as my aunt said. They were plain dresses with no ornaments. Years later, Ana Maria explained why. At the beginning of the year, Aunt Concha used to buy enough blue fabric to make four identical dresses that she must wear the twelve months of the year and even more, if possible. Besides, for economy reasons, Aunt Concha had doomed the adopted child's feet to go barefoot through this rocky path of life.

Aunt Concha had taken Ana Maria out of the orphanage. In that pious place, they did not know who the girl's parents were. Aunt Concha bragged about what she

had done by saving Ana Maria from the orphanage as if the little girl had been so lucky to climb from hell up to heaven.

When daylight came, I looked at the things Ana Maria had given me the night before to make me stop crying. The gift included a triangular crystal prism like those that decorates the churches' light fixtures, and a little yellowish cross made of an engraved bone with a hole in the middle containing a tiny lens. Ana Maria came back to explain their value and use. Both presents are a gift to the eyes. Through the cross lens you can see a Baby Jesus sleeping on a flowerbed with His head leaning on a little lamb. Everything there shines, and I wish I did not have to stop looking at it. That dirty tiny yellowish cross with that bright scene of little Jesus sleeping amid the Madonna lilies with a white lamb as a pillow is great for my simple spirit! I would have spent hours looking up to the small crystal if Ana Maria had not taken it away to impress me with the other wonder: the crystal prism. When I started looking through the prism, I felt exactly as if I had entered inside a rainbow; suddenly, everything that surrounded me suddenly acquired a magic beauty. It was as if one of the fairies from Miguel's tales had touched everything with her virtue wand. The dirty old houses around the public square, the clouds, the grass, the old horse that is pasturing are filled with a kind of light in which all the gemstones have watered down. The church's walls do not show the rough bareness of its bricks; the still unfinished towers do not have that dull ugly look. Each object is covered by a layer of diamonds, emeralds and rubies; the light creates very delicate laces at all angles. The view makes me think of an enchanted palace. What about the garden? When I see it, I shout out of control, "Ana Maria, this is like going into Aladdin's garden!" Oh, Ana, If only we could get inside your glass and live there!"

Aunt Concha passes by the porch and the young girl naively says, "Look at Aunt Concha, Sergio, she looks different, too!" I do, and I am convinced that the unpleasant woman also looks bright.

Where did Ana Maria pick up these objects? She found the prism at the church, and she has had the cross ever since she lived at the orphanage. Ana Maria has confessed that she stole it from a woman guard. One day when she was grounded, the woman unpinned the cross from her rosary to comfort Ana Maria. The guard made her see the mystery that was inside it. Since then, she only yearned to own it. Being the owner of that cross was her idea of happiness. At last, she could take possession of the treasure. She hid it in a hole in a wall. When she was alone, she gazed upon the cross with emotion.

Only after many years, have I grasped the value of that young girl's detachment that moment when she gave me those objects that were all her happiness and her idea of beauty. By that time, I just vaguely understood it. I wanted to give them back to her, but she courageously said, "No, Sergio, keep them. I have many things to do, so I don't have much time left to look at them. Besides, if your Aunt Concha finds them, she would throw them on the roof. Do you know where I kept them? Well, inside an empty salmon can that I hid in the mango tree. They'll be safe with you, and when I have some time, I'll come and borrow them."

On sever I managed to forget my sorrow like I did that morning when I gazed upon life through Ana Maria's crystal prism or when I just looked at that tiny scene through the hole of the bone cross that gave wings to my fantasy!

Aunt Concha did not get tired of bragging about her charitable deed of taking Ana Maria out of the orphanage to treat her, as she said, like a daughter. However, Aunt Concha had done with the girl the same she did with the roses in her care. She did not care at all about the beauty of the roses. Her concern was the money she can make with the roses. Engracia, the cook, was right when she said referring to Aunt Concha that "the miser is always in want." If the young girl was not bent down on the floor polishing or waxing the bricks, then she was cleaning the windows, sweeping the yards and drainages, weeding the garden, taking the cows back and forth, or bringing firewood. The point is that Aunt Concha did not let Ana Maria alone. Luckily, Ana

Maria had a vivacious joyful imagination, and she transformed all her chores into games. When she was cleaning the floor of a room, she played a game; Ana Maria split the bricks into two teams: Aunt Concha and hers. The bricks on her side looked like mirrors when she finished, and she did not polished the others much to provoke them. If she was asked to sweep the yard, she made bonfires with the dead leaves, and they depicted huge fires in her imagination. Sometimes, she was merciful with a little branch twisting in the middle of the flames, and she saved it. The Black Prince roses were her favorite, so you would never find weeds around the rosebushes. If she had to bring cartloads of wood inside, she managed to make all the kids of the neighborhood help her; even the children of an important diplomat who lived in a beautiful house in the vicinity carried the wood bundles without caring about their splendid clothes. They spent the time making curious bets about who would bring more sticks or get to the shed first. They also told stories and had fun, and so the time went by. They dramatized the tales they read, and Ana Maria was either Cinderella or Snow White waiting for the dwarfs. I was Robinson.

On summer evenings, while Aunt Concha was at church praying the rosary, Ana took Sergio to the public plaza; other children joined them, and they played games in which Sergio could take part. They spent the time there telling stories under the moonlight.

On rainy nights, Sergio and Ana Maria went to the kitchen to feel the terrible joy of listening to the ghost folktales from Costa Rica that Engracia, the cook, told them like "*La Segua*" whom the night birds used to chase because they thought she was a pretty girl. After a long walk, *the Segua* turned around, and she left the chaser paralyzed by the shock when she showed its mare's snout with huge teeth. Engracia also told the children "*La Llorona*" legend. It was about a crying woman, who wandered along the river banks mourning the child she had thrown into the flowing water, or she told them other scary tales such as "*El Cadejos*," a big, black, red-eyed, hairy, chain-rattling devil-dog that roams the countryside during the wee hours of the morning to scare the

drunks, “*La Tulivieja*,” an old creepy woman who everybody believed came to take away the town’s children, the Headless Priest that was a bloody ghost that appears to drunks, and the Bad He-Monkey sent by the devil to teach a lesson to husbands and wives who fight too much. The children went to bed with a chill running down their backs. The shadows in Sergio’s bedroom got dreadful shapes and to be able to sleep, he covered his head with the sheets and his forehead was sweaty out of fear. However, the following day, the children asked Engracia to tell them more horrifying stories.

My father has come to say goodbye because he is going back to *La Línea* to finish some business. Ana and I were at the porch behind a pacaya palm, so he did not see us. Father says, “Maybe it would be better if Candelaria came to take care of Sergio.

In reply, Aunt Concha asks him, “How much will you pay her?”

“About so and so,” my father answers.

“Well, it’s not much, but you’d better not call Candelaria. I’ll look after Sergio myself... times are not good to waste a penny. Of course, you know, you’ll pay us a small allowance, which isn’t much. Juan Pablo, believe me, being the things as they are at present, this is a good deal.

“Ok, lady,” replies my father upset.

“What a hideous woman!” Then, she asks, “Have you heard anything about Cinta at last?”

“Yes. She’s gone to Peru.”

Concha asked, “What will your friend Rafael Valencia do over there?”

She has a disgusting rabbit-like giggle in her face. She gets a cold answer, “I don’t know...”

There is a pause, and I hear my heart beating. I feel like running away from the boundless desolation that filled my chest the moment I heard my father.

At night, when the only thing you can hear is the sound of the big clock, I start crying. My aunt has left the little oil lamp lit on the bureau to help the souls find relief and rest. I am surrounded by terrifying shadows that move as the flame dances. I cry and I do not cover my face with my hands. Suddenly, the house's elfin pops up from nowhere. In just one jump, she is beside my bed. She hugs me and we cry together like the other night. This has a soothing power in a way that not even the most eloquent words could have achieved.

"Ana Maria, do you know where Peru is?"

"No. Peru... Do you remember, Sergio? *A-E-I-O-U*, little guava from Peru, how old are you? Look what I have brought you," she says taking out a custard apple from her dress folds. "It's ripe. I took it from a hidden place I know near the riverbank. God forbid that your Aunt Concha discovers it. Let's eat it together!"

She doesn't wait for my answer, splits the fruit, and says, "This is like putting sugar pieces in your mouth, Sergio." The look of the fruit makes our mouth water. I smile under my crying and savor my piece. Pointing at a tear tangled in my eyelashes, Ana continues, "When the light hits you, that tear looks full of colors like my little glass."

Once I calm down, she makes me lay down and tucks me in like a thoughtful mother. I tell her Mamma Canducha used to do the same. Then she goes away and disappears behind the wardrobe.

I fall asleep, and I dream my legs are healthy, and I am running away from my aunt and uncle's place to go to Peru, which I see at the distance in my dream. Peru is a house. I see my little kitten Pascuala on its roof. My mommy lives there, and the air is bright as it is in Ana Maria's prism. I see Gracia who is running toward me happily singing, "*A, E, I, O, U*, little guava from Peru, how old are you?"

Aunt Concha was a ridiculous short chubby woman with a manly voice. Her quite heavily powdered face did not let you know for sure if she was young or old. Each night before going to bed, Ana had to braid her hair in a bunch of little braids. The hair around her forehead should be twisted in a series of little peaks wrapped in

white strips and paper. All this work was undone the next day with a great pleasure, and waves and curls help to make a wonderful hairdo. She suffered from migraines. When she woke up with one of them, she used to put some potato slices on her forehead that she held with a big white handkerchief. When Sergio saw Aunt Concha wearing that headband, he thought of a dead person who made you laugh. Ana and Sergio mocked behind her back. Those days when she had her migraines, everybody had to tiptoe and lower the tone of their voices. The poor little girl had to endure the sick woman's slaps and pinches. Aunt Concha's life was devoted to the floors and the plants, and she especially took care of the begonias. She was always after some "rose sprouts," begonia leaves, and fertilizer recipes for this plant or the other. The woman used every preserves can or useless pot where begonias could grow. She gave begonias a name upon her whim or based on the shape, the color, or the resemblance they had, such as "the playing card," "the bronze one," "and the lotto." In the mornings, I had to stay in bed until lunchtime because instead of taking care of me, the maniac woman spent her time grinding eggshells, crumbling dung, and mixing urine with water for her begonias. Since then, I grew a profound antipathy for those "precious" plants, and I have never been attracted to their complex litmuses or their whimsical little spots.

Do not get the wrong idea that she grew the flowers just for the sake of fun. Her ability for business had helped my aunt to transform that poetical hobby into a small business. Aunt Concha sold begonias and roses. She had a big rose garden, but her greedy eyes did not get any pleasure from the beauty of the colorful petals. My aunt and her husband just saw the coin behind each flower. In the afternoons, she counted the dimes that had bloomed in the American Beauty or the Frau Carl Dusky, and she made calculations on the coins that would bloom in the Black Prince roses. My Aunt Concha could certainly say that she had five-and-ten-cent plants.

You should have listened to her talking with her acquaintances for hours about the life and miracles of such and such plant. Aunt Concha told them where she had found the bush, how she had planted it this way or another, and that for a long time,

she had thought that it was dead. Oh!, but one day –as she was absently walking to give Engracia the baking powder for the bread, she felt like turning around to see... And, there it was the tiny sprout right before her eyes. Then, she had nurtured the little plant as it were a baby. She put it either at this corner or by the window, and she had fed it with little bits of water and urine.

Her husband was a big man who was younger than she was. Aunt Concha handled him as she did with one of her less appreciated begonias. I have never seen anything as humble as Uncle Jose's face. It was always slightly bent to the left. I'd never forget the gentle attitude this sturdy very tall man showed when he walked behind his short fat wife. His voice was never heard in that house, and if she deigned to ask him about any matter, he barely murmured, "As you wish, Conchita."

I also remember Aunt Concha monomania that drove Mamma Jacinta nuts. My aunt's hobby was finding out how old everybody was, especially the women, and keeping the record of her friends or her friends' daughters' age. Such monomania was truly annoying for her acquaintances to whom, when the conversation was about age; she put her fingers in front of their eyes with an inexorable gesture showing the number of years, months, and days they have breathed on this planet. May God have mercy on the girl who was over twenty-five, and dared to take away one or two years in front of Aunt Concha. She was there with her inquisitor's memory to remind the forgetful woman her date of birth, which had happened to coincide with the day of an earthquake, or the occurrence of such and such tremors or this, or that extraordinary event. I could never forget how wrathful my mother's beautiful eyes became when Aunt Concha reminded her she was over thirty.

What about her belief that God had put aside His divine tasks to particularly take care of Ms. Concepción Esquivel-Rojas' business and interpose His heavenly mediation so that all her deals went just the way that suited her? We frequently heard her cry out, "Oh, my God is so good to me! Look over there and see how He listened to what I asked for! I could never pay Him back for His help in this deal in which I easily



earned five thousand *colones*. If it hadn't been for Him, I could have not bought or sold that house or bought a good bond with that money, or sold the San Isidro land successfully." And Aunt Concha raised her eyes to Heaven in thanksgiving, or looked at the crucifix that hung above the headboard with a smile of gratitude. On Sunday, she let some nickels noisily fall on the charity tray. They made a metallic sound that the woman thought pleasant to the ears of the Supreme Doer.

Oh! This Aunt Concha with her bulging breasts where her double chin sank! Oh! Her fatness and all that flaccid skin that shook as she walked! Her only thought was how to make money. Today, she is out collecting the rent from the houses she owns; tomorrow, she will go looking for the interest on the money she had lent; another day, she will head to the open sale near the market, or else, she will go to the towns in the vicinity where she can buy corn, beans, and grease just a few pennies cheaper. Ana Maria said that when *Ms. Concha* sent her to the kitchen to help Engracia make the little cheese patties or the meat pies, she had to endure the woman's examination when she finished her work. Aunt Concha made Ana open her mouth wide open and looked with her unappeasable eyes up to the uvula to see if the girl had stolen any cheese crumbs or the pie filling.

Uncle Jose, on the other had, also had his monomania. His was the passion for birds. Aunt Concha allowed him this hobby for the sake of earning money since they can make good business transactions such as selling a goldfinch or a northern oriole.

On Fridays and Saturdays, he left very early in the morning to "La Merced" public square. By that time, there was a bird market there. Uncle Jose went just to look around or buy a good specimen. In the evenings, he took the cages to his bedroom and covered them with a piece of cloth to protect the birds from mosquito bites. Ana Maria told me that the mockingbird of the wonderful tunes that enraptured me was blind because that insignificant big man had shut off the bird's eyes himself. His greedy ears did not hesitate to sacrifice them for his delight. This detail made me see Uncle Jose with bad blood and aversion.

Some years later, I remembered Uncle Jose without that repulsion I felt toward him when I was a boy. Maybe, the old man's hobby for birds was the way of expressing his idea of beauty. It was a primitive emotion like the one children feel when they chase a butterfly with a net or a cap. Perhaps the routine of a wealthy man who had rented houses, lent money with high interest, and had to share his profits with a plain round woman like Aunt Concha had crushed his vital energy to go beyond the wings and the tunes shut in a cage. It is frequent to find these bird or music fans among those people who work in offices, the courts or town halls, or those in the military, or salespeople or grocery store workers and barbers. These people make a little hole in the wall of the prejudice and customs that has been built around their imagination. Through that tiny opening, they peep at life's transient bright passing in front of the daily dreariness. They are like prisoners who enjoy looking at the cloud, the piece of blue sky, or the tree branch through the jail bars.

How many times in my life the image of the fresh wide porch full of birds and ferns in the big old house in San Francisco has come to my mind! It had a roof covered by clay tiles placed on a grill of thin beams and reeds. The floor was covered with spick-span red bricks. A big damp black bag was on a hidden place of the wood cumbersome piece of furniture for the big porous-stone filter from the town of *Pavas*. Below the filter, I remember the paunchy colorful cold Nicoyan jar where the filtered water drops fell. The ferns that provided a green freshness were all around hanging from the beams, and so were the cages made of wire, sugar cane flower stalks, *tora*, or wild cane. Inside, the birds that Jose called "*juanitas*" looked like flowers because of the soft color shade of their feathers enhanced by black spots and the "*little monks*." These birds with their black collar and yellow turban jumped and chirped. Uncle Jose also had little roosters whose singing filled the slopes of Costa Rican mountains with joy. How beautiful these little roosters are with their yellow feathers arranged in the shape of a crest and a beard, which make them look like the domestic rooster! When I remember that porch, Uncle Jose's birds come to live again in my memory the same

way I heard them when they awoke at dawn many years ago. I recall the northern oriole with its bright yellow dress with some black brushstrokes, its red small gorget, and its lively black eye. When this bird got bored of being in the cage, it went out to perch on its owner's shoulder or wander around the house. The cat respected it. The northern oriole echoed the tickling sound of the drops falling from the filter, the sound of the water coming out of the pipe, the singing of the caged birds, and it mimicked the cook's laughter and songs with a hint of insolence. There were also goldfinches of grayish feathers and yellow beaks and legs. Those had been brought from *San Carlos* or *the Carpintera*. In the mornings, they played their silver flute, putting on a spell in the air. You could also find thick-billed euphonies, from the town of *Ujarraz* and manakin birds from the Pacific area. The manakins looked very beautiful with their greenish-blue, red, green and yellow feathers. Uncle Jose also had golden-browed chlorophonias that were as green as tender tree leaves, one white-chested calandria from La Línea with its spotty-brown wings, and a mountain clay-colored robin with its white collar and glasses that make it look like a doctor. This bird's singing was sweet and mysterious, and I imagine it was something wonderful in the middle of a mountain.

The seedeaters that he had bought in Cartago in May belonged to the group, too. They were very wild lively small birds dressed in brown with a little black hat. Uncle Jose explained that they are caught with a trap or by using a stick covered with the milk of the yos tree. The seedeaters fly in flocks and they come down on the sorghum fields or on swamps where thistles grow. Uncle Jose spent a long time telling us about his raids to look for birds in different places of the country. He said that in the country town of Taras you could find seedeaters that were truly like music boxes. However, you should be willing to walk up a very steep path to catch them. Once at the top, you could enjoy a beautiful view of the green pastures and cultivated fields. Up there you could only hear the sound of the wind and the soft trill of the finches jumping in the oak trees. It was as if threads of water moved through the air in all directions with the tweet, tweet, tweet that sounded higher here or the tweet, tweet, tweet lower

there. When Uncle Jose described the finches, I imagined them threading their tiny musical notes, which were as round as little crystal pearls, in the strands of wind, and I could see the necklaces made out of chirps swinging over the pastures splattered with dandelion's yellow flowers. I would have really liked to have gone with Uncle Jose to the Taras hills to lie down on the grass under the oak trees, and listen to the finches singing as their song intertwined between the soft wind thickets to finally dilute in the silence of those golden-looking fields by the effect of the morning sun. However, I, no doubt, would have freed the little birds that would have stuck to the sticks spread with yos milk or that had been caught in the traps made out of cane that the bird hunters placed on the trees. One day, Uncle Jose returned with ten seedeaters in the traps. He managed to save only one. They fluttered wildly in the cages hitting themselves against the bars in an effort to flee from prison; but they finally fell down panting and exhausted with their little black eyes looking like sparklets. What about the finches? They were also part of my memories. I remember those birds with their yellow feathers and dark wings jumping in my mind as if it were a cage. In the morning, as soon as the filter was filled, and the drops from the Nicoyan jar began dripping, the finches started singing. At first, it was a very low sound that was rather the shadow of a chirp, and then the pitch went up little by little, and filled the cool environment of the porch with music from birds and water drops. The free sparrows jumped below the cages. They resembled graceful small beggars looking for the food crumbs that the prisoners dropped. The clay colored robin's complaining birdcall came from the coffee plantation, and from the "squash plants" the "squash-eater" did not stop repeating the chorus:

Jose, Jose, where are you?  
Jose, Jose, where are you?

Sitting on his easy chair with his hands crossed on his belly, Uncle Jose, just half-opened a cunning eye that seemed to be leaking with joy, and he laughed his head off.

Mamma Canducha worked thereabouts. On Sundays, she asked for permission to visit “her child.” When she arrived and when it was time to say good-bye, she pressed me against her heart for a while and it seemed it was hard for her to let go. I could hear the elderly woman’s heart beating: hers was a noble heart that even kings would have liked to have. She asked me if I was cold at night or if I had my cup of cocoa. She got mad if a button was missing from my shirt.

Miguel frequently came to give me a violin lesson, too. Some other times his excuse to be around was bringing the sharpener to San Francisco as if blunt knives and scissors were all over the neighborhood. Most of the times at the end of the day, he had not spun the wheel even once.

I was usually sitting by my bedroom window when I heard the sharpener’s music announcing Miguel’s visit in advance. “Here comes Miguel,” I said to myself. He is by the bridge... Now, he is passing by Missus Narcisa’s house... He is up the hill... Miguel is there by the little jicara tree...”

I began humming Miguel’s flute’s chorus: sol, fa, mi, re... and I felt a warm sensation in my body. At last, a hoarse voice at the other side of the window asked me, “How are you doing, sonny? Then, a blond-haired big hand came from in between the bars to give me a small package and a message, “Canducha sends this cake for you to eat with your cocoa. She says it’s pretty good.” Sometimes, he brought a little bundle with sugar cane chunks that he had bought for me in Santa Ana. They were soft pieces of white cane that melted in the mouth like a lump of sugar. Some other times, I got a piece of sugar cane candy wrapped in cane leaves that he had bought in the town of Escazu.

Once, Miguel said, “Young man, I’m going to Puntarenas because I want to see the ocean.” I saw great sadness in his eyes. I thought that he wanted to see the ocean that could take him back home where his sister Sava lived. Sava was the one who had kept waving good-bye with a white handkerchief from the hill when he left.

Back from the port, Miguel brought the kids dry plantain treats, cashews, a pot full of shells and seashells he had himself picked up at the beach. He gave each of my sisters a ring made of tortoise shell, and brought one to Ana Maria, too. The rings were personalized with the name of each of the girls written in golden letters; he brought me an orange-chinned parakeet with a yellow tuft. The parakeet came inside a brown paper bag, and it looked like a little grass plant with a daisy in the middle. The bird knew how to say “hurray, parakeet!” and he also could recite:

From Portugal came in  
the royal parakeet  
without a cent  
and dressed in green

As for us, the children, we loved the parakeet, but one day Aunt Concha’s big fat Moorish cat, that was as unpleasant as its owner gobbled it up.

Miguel’s tales about his trip to Puntarenas filled our imagination for a long time. He told us he had gone along the main street with his sharpener; in the previous century, the coffee exporter’s carts came and went along that same road. Miguel sharpened saws, scissors, and knives in the little country towns of La Garita, Atenas, San Mateo, and Esparta. He blew a whistle in the middle of the town square or the main street, and people would soon come out. The peasants were ecstatic with that wheel in whose ring a dog chased some rabbits. People gave him shelter for free, and he ate in the kitchen in the corner of the grinding table.

I asked him, “Miguel, and the ocean? Tell me about the ocean! What does it look like?” He tried to describe the ocean and the waves. He told us about the leading wave coming in ahead of the others the same way the shepherd leads his sheep. Miguel told us about the white beaches covered with shells and seashells. He also talked about the brightness that kindled in the water at night, the palm trees swinging with the wind, and the big ships that look like huge elephants that were tied in the pier.

“Oh! Ana Maria and I longed to see the ocean so much! Miguel said it was as big as the sky, so that the ships became smaller and smaller as they sailed away and you had the feeling that they were gradually sinking. At first, you could see a smoke column coming out from the big furnace, but, in turn, it became the size of a cigarette. Then, nothing! “Did we want to know how the ocean sounded? We just had to take the big seashell with its pearly interior that he had given us and bring it near our ear. He asked, “Do you hear it? “I could hear the “Ooooooh!” “Aaaah!” I asked Miguel when we could go to the ocean and he told me he would take me there some day.”

The sharpener’s music always awakened in me some visions that fluttered the same way as the swallows did over the large waves coming from very far away. I could see seashells resembling very small roses, green parakeets with their yellow tuft, little rings made of tortoise shell, and tiny fish jumping and laughing over the leading-wave foam.

Among the recollections of that time, I keep that of an old woman called Missus Joaquina. This remembrance moves around prayers, songs, and music.

Missus Joaquina was an elderly woman of the type that people called “ladies of pleasure.” When I think about her, everything revolves around a background of malicious mystery. I see her come and go snapping her light cotton fabric skirt and her white embroidered slippers. The skirt and the slippers were so starched that they rose themselves high resembling inflated balloons. Missus Joaquina grins at me through the time with her smile that makes her wrinkled face shine. Hers was a smile that harmonized with the colorful small flowers and the tortoiseshell back comb with gold inserts that adorned her gray hair.

The little old woman lived with her sixth or seventh husband in a small house near the bridge of the Torres River on the road to San Francisco of Guadalupe. The house was whitewashed and decorated with Prussian-blue lines. The small front garden had lots of impatiens. The aroma of basil, rosemary and ruda plant filled it, too.

From the street that was above the house almost at the roof's level, you could see the moss and lichen covering the roof's clay tiles.

Missus Joaquina was devoted to Saint Raphael Archangel. Therefore, each October 24, she organized a rosary with music and food such as sweet must and typical pastries. This party enlightened our childlike fantasy with tiny stars of many colors. A day before, Ana and I did not leave Missus Joaquina's house. We stuck our noses on each of the preparations. We were the first to arrive on October 24, and we sat in front of the shrine to admire the work of art Missus Joaquina and her closest women neighbors' hands had made. They hung white lace curtains on the wall; near that wall, they placed a table covered with a yellow silk quilt. Golden paper bouquets of big flowers, Madonna lilies, and artificial roses decorated the room; the women put long wax candles with their golden flame in a very well-polished cooper candelabrum at one end of the table. Saint Raphael Archangel who was wearing his pilgrim's cloak adorned with the familiar shell that help travelers to drink water was the focus of those many glories. He was holding young Tobiah' hand. Tobiah had a silver fish under his arm. Saint Raphael was a rough wood sculpture that some naïve Creole imaging maker had carved. San Raphael and Tobiah's clothes were painted with very shiny varnish colors.

"What an array of very bright, happy emotions Saint Raphael Archangel's party awakened in our souls! We felt as if thousands of tiny silver bells were jingling around our fantasy. How happy we were when we listened to the orchestra composed by one violin, an accordion, a guitar, and Chico Beltran's flute. Chico was a half-blind young musician who was pleased when he moved the instrument along his mouth as if he were eating pretty sweet scented fruits. The instruments joined the Hail Mary and the rosary litanies that the man leading the prayers sang with his nasal voice. Those prayers made us think of happy nuns who were slipping away to go to a ball. "*Turris ebúmas*"; "*Fidelis arca*"; "*estela matutinae*." Everybody answered with a song," *Ora pro nobis*."



However, we have our doubts about Missus Joaquina. We have read a sacred story about young Tobiah, the one Saint Raphael Archangel guarded. It said he had married a woman named Sara, and in the *novena* Missus Joaquina used to pray, we have read the following verse:

Seven husbands Sara had  
Seven wrecks they became  
Of the devil that killed them.

Missus Joaquina told us that a demon called *Asmodeous* had killed Sara's seven husbands. Why had Asmodeous killed Missus Joaquina's husbands? What a mess we had with Sara and Missus Joaquina's husbands! We wondered if Tobiah, the young man from the apocryphal gospel and Goyo, Missus Joaquina's seventh husband, had something in common. Where did Missus Joaquina devotion to Saint Raphael Archangel come from? I remember that we suddenly started laughing and laughing when we imagined Goyo wearing a short tunic showing his legs and with a silver fish under his arm. Or, the young Tobiah with the pita hat and Goyo's huge yellow shoes that shrieked as he walked. Ana Maria and I really had a bad time when we stayed late at Missus Joaquina's place and we thought we had seen Asmodeous' hot coal eyes and tail of fire in the shadows of the road. We believed he might be hanging about Goyo and Missus Joaquina.

Every morning when I wake up, I think I have my violin, that I live next to Ana Maria, and that Miguel will pay me a visit and give me the lesson. He says I am pretty advanced. I can already play famous music compositions, and I probably play them well because Miguel smiles with that expression he only shows when something really pleases him. He worships a composer named Haydn. Miguel told me this composer lived in country near his own where people adore music. In that country, when the farmers are guiding the plow, they are also singing. As the girls fill their jugs in the fountain, they sing, too. Haydn's father was a wheelwright who played the harp by ear; his mother was a good singer. At night, the couple sang choruses surrounded by their children. Sitting on a bench in a nook of the humble house, the little boy listened to that

music and joined the chorus. The school teacher's violin inspired him to build one for himself. He made a similar instrument with waste wood. In the soirees, he joined his parents, and he mimicked the school teacher's movements.

Haydn had a difficult life, but Miguel says one day the king and queen called him. At that time, a call from a king to entertain the Lords of the Court was something great. Miguel spends hours playing Haydn's music. In the swallows' room inside a carefully knife-carved frame, Miguel had the Croatian musician's picture.

I forget my sorrow among the quavers and semi-quavers written on the pages I study every day. For me, they have the same meaning that Ana Maria's cross has for her. Nobody would tell by their insignificant appearance that they hold a wonder inside. My violin's arch opens those notes; I listen and I perceive the sound shut in there. My ears are dazzled by them... I know they are beautiful, but I cannot pin down their form precisely. I don't know why these are my favorite among the others. Some of the notes join in the shape of a path that fades out into the horizon. Where might that road take you? I find pieces of music that bring about the same mysterious charm that was behind a particular wall in a solitary street that I passed by once when Miguel took me for a ride in the afternoons. The wall was high and made of rocks. It was covered with moss and decorated with climbing rose bushes. At the highest point of the wall, you could see the tips of some pines of harmonious foliage and some bamboo canes. When passing by, you could feel the smell of the roses and the angel's trumpet daturas. The sounds invited you to dream and wish for what you have never felt. I have never been able to give shape to the fantasies that came to my mind when I was in front of that wall on which my imagination placed the mysterious, the unknown, and the unspeakable.

My little sisters come twice a month to see me. Now, Ding-ding does not express her thoughts with music anymore, and her laughter does not sound like it did before. Mamma Canducha once called my sister "the little plant of joy"; today that plant has withered; the bunches of laughter are weaker, and they have lost their brightness.

Merceditas is very sick. She looks pale and her hands are cold to the touch, and they do not get warm in spite of my kisses or keeping them holding them between my hands. Gracia says she eats like a bird. When she comes, nobody can take her away from my side. She puts her head on my shoulder and there she stays until Gracia says it is time to go. I have told them about my friendship with Ana Maria, and that I love her a lot. The next visit, Merceditas brought Ana Maria her doll Moon as well as the doll's bed and a big box with its dresses.

Now, I go to school. I did not go to school before because Gracia and my mom taught me the letters and the numbers at home. Ana Maria takes me there. The school is near the house, and I am happy because everybody treats me nicely. My teacher is short, young, and plump. We love her pretty much. When she smiles, we can see her very white teeth. Her hands are full of dimples. The day the lessons began, everybody wanted to go with her. When she gets angry, she frowns and tightens her lips, but then, she begins laughing and we make a big uproar. I have seen some of my classmates bring her flowers, and I tell so to Ana Maria. We already know that we cannot even think about Aunt Concha's roses.

Ana Maria is making a bouquet of blue mist, ferns, and delicate grass ears that she is picking from the walls and edges on the road to school. She has tied it with lace she secretly took from my Aunt's sewing box. She gives it to me and says, "It isn't bad, is it? This is for your teacher, Sergio." What a nice aroma the blue mist flowers have!

That was a pretty bouquet; the purple little flowers still kept some dew in middle of their stamens and their aroma was lovely. I felt moved when I gave it to my teacher. She took it and gently pressed the flowers against her chest. Then, she passed her hand on my head and said, "What a nice bouquet, Sergio! This is the most beautiful one I've been given this year!"

I already know where Peru is. I asked my teacher, and she brought a globe and showed me Costa Rica and Peru's location. She explained that each millimeter on the

globe actually represents thousands of kilometers. To get to Peru, you need to go by ship and sail several days. “Oh! How far away my mom is then! ...”

For many years whenever I thought about my mom, I imagined her walking about a pink field because Peru was painted in pink on the globe.

It has been ten months since we left our home. We are on vacation now, and I have said good-bye to my teacher and classmates. When Ana Maria picked me up from school, I had a knot in the throat. My teacher and my peers were by the class window saying good bye.

My little sisters have written these letters to me:

Sergio, dear little brother: We already are on vacation and all our classmates have gone home. Since we don't have a place to go, father has managed for us to stay here at school. A few days ago, a French Sister, Mother Stephanie, arrived. She's good to us and she loves Merceditas a lot. She is young and beautiful! I'm very grateful that she is so nice to Merceditas because that makes her happy. I feel very sorry for Merceditas because she is always quiet and she looks pale; she sits by the garden under the sun and stays there for hours with her head bent like a sick bird. “Oh, Sergio! Why did Mother leave?” Some nuns here keep looking at us, give us a little pat, and say, “Poor things...!” I don't like that.

This morning, we stayed at the flat roof from where you can see San Jose. Some doves flew by, maybe, they were yours. We saw the San Francisco church towers, and we thought you lived nearby. Can you believe that we already love the towers because we feel they have something of you? We go there each morning to see them. Don't forget and look at them too, so that our looks meet. Guess what we saw? The tall palm tree from our home's garden. The wind was moving the palm and its head bent toward us as it was calling us. Who would be living

there now? Who would be the new owner of the rabbits and the doves? What had happened to your kitten, Pascuala? I can't forgive Aunt Concha for not letting you take her with you. She was probably afraid she would eat Uncle Jose's birds... I think it is better to eat the birds than make them blind.

One night I dreamed we were playing house in the summerhouse and Mom was on the porch.

Now, we can visit you more often.

I send you lots of kisses,

### **Ding-ding**

Dear little brother of my soul: I don't write as much as Gracia because I'm very cold. You know I don't know how to write what I feel, but you also know that I think about you every minute of the day. I won't tell you about Mother Stephanie or the flat roof because Gracia already did. You can't imagine how very quiet the school is now. I think this quietness resembles the silence that follows after a heavy rain. I felt very sad when I saw my classmates leaving. How happy they were! The street was full with their laughter. Since we don't have a house, we have to stay here. If you see Mamma Canducha and Miguel, tell them I send lots of kisses.

We are going spend a long time with you and Ana Maria very soon. I'm always with you, little brother.

### **Merceditas**

However, Sunday went by and my sisters did not come. On Monday, I begged Miguel to go to their school and ask about them. Miguel found out that Merceditas was sick with a very high fever. From that moment, a thought started buzzing inside my head like a black beetle when flying in a room.

Three days later, someone hastily knocked on the door. The door opened and an unknown voice said, "I have news from school: the little girl Mercedes Esquivel has just died."

.....

Gracia and I are hugging each other in a spot at a white chapel. Miguel and Mamma Canducha are with us; Aunt Concha is around, too. A bluish light comes through the huge windows. Mercedes is in the middle of the church surrounded by many flowers. We listen to the organ playing and to a woman's voice singing.

.....

I am back in my room again. It seems bigger and colder than before. The oil lamp with its dim and uneasy light is on the bureau, and the big furniture shadows around make me company with their dreadful silence.

The pain has dug my soul and has gone deep to core of bitterness. I can say for sure that from now on, a tear will always be in my eyes because the wound has reached that place where the inexhaustible fountain of crying is.

For the first time in my life, the idea of death entered my mind there in front of my little sister's corpse. The peaceful detachment of her face made me feel completely desperate. My heart, thirsty for love, realized that her sweet voice and her warm hands would disappear under the ground. I think I am going to understand very soon the feeling that the notes of the pentagram arouse in me, and whose mystery I have not been able to decode yet. What is inside this note that is called death overwhelms my spirit. It represents the unknown for me, but behind this wall, the roses do not bloom and the pines are not melodious. Mercedes is on the other side. However, she is not the still Mercedes in the church, but the little girl who used to put her head on my shoulder and lent my legs her sweet warmth. I call her and imagine her small hands

stretching toward me. I remember when I say to her, “Sis, find a piece of cane for the carbuncle...” and Merceditas then went and brought me the piece of cane with her loving small hands. I begin murmuring, “Sis... sis...”

This night of infinite desolation, however, at that hour when silence is more intense, my neck feels Ana Maria’s little arms affection, and my sobs have not flown alone in the cold environment of my room.

.....

What Sergio never knew was that his sisters lived in that place surrounded by a faithful coldness. After their arrival came the murmuring, as well. The nuns and the students made remarks that the mother of those two girls had abandoned her husband and children for another man. The innocent students gossiped in delight about that situation while they curiously checked on Gracia and Merceditas. Some even asked them questions loaded with malevolence. These young girls’ parents, who belonged to honorable families, would have been shocked at their daughters’ knowledge about the sixth commandment. The good nuns, on the other hand, crossed themselves on their untainted forehead each time the thought of those children’s mother fluttered in their head with its sinful wings.

Ana Maria’s little bare feet were my chair’s wheels inseparable companions. Although my friend had lived her first years at an orphanage where charity, instead of being the loving mother as Saint Vincent of Paul had wished, was more a teacher that showed the children how to lower their pride, Ana Maria did not have low self-esteem. Who knows what weapons her mind grabbed onto defend itself! The truth is that orphanage’s charity and the protective manners of Aunt Concha were unable to destroy the girl’s internal strength. In any case, everywhere Ana Maria went, she moved about as if she owned the place and without even planning it, she managed to attract people’s attention.

During the childhood years I spent in the big house in San Francisco, the first days of summer Ana Maria would not stop pushing my wheelchair in spite of Aunt Concha's lectures and punishments. When the carts full of ripe coffee began to pass by in their way to the coffee processing mill in Tournon, which was a French company that had been established in Costa Rica a long time ago, Ana Maria was ready for action. She took me to the neighboring coffee plantations to see how the women coffee-pickers arrived with their baskets full of grains to empty them in the carts, or else, to go to the coffee mill courtyards on the Northern side of the city opposite the Torres River. Ana Maria befriended the laborers, Tomas Quesada and even *Monsieur Amon*, a dreary-faced Frenchman with a big mustache at whose presence everybody shivered.

Monsieur Amon's wife was a very pretty Costa Rican lady who lived in a big house located in the middle of the coffee mill courtyards. The house was very beautiful and surrounded by gardens, with very formal furniture, curtains, and rugs. Ana Maria took me there to nose around the rooms and the kitchen. We believed the kings' castles from my storybooks were like that place. We always tried to meet with the pretty woman on the road bordering the courtyards where coffee dried. She wore light-colored silk and lace dresses. She raised the skirt with her gloved hand flirtingly. The woman protected herself from the sun with a blue tulle-covered umbrella, and she wore hats with feathers that the wind moved. She covered her face with a thin veil through which, we could see her eyes and lips shine. A very handsome young boy whose curly blond hair fell on his shoulders and who wore a sailor suit used to join her. He was her son and his name was Eloy. Ana Maria said that maybe he was a prince.

Sometimes, Ana Maria played she was the pretty woman, Monsieur Amon's wife and Sergio was Monsieur Amon. She made Sergio a huge mustache out of corn silk. The girl wore Chepa's (the laundrywoman) or Engracia's (the cook) skirts, and Aunt Concha's old boots. Besides, Ana Maria made a hat with a piece of an old bright fabric and she adorned it with a cane flower to simulate ostrich feathers. She covered



her face with a piece of a lace curtain that was the hat's veil. The gloves were a pair of old Uncle Jose's socks, and the umbrella was a big castor bean leaf. As she walked, Ana Maria pulled the skirt up with a prissy gesture, moved her head from front to back to make the flower of the cane move as the feather in the pretty woman's hat did. Jumping like a bird, Ana Maria would come close to me. At that point, I was not Monsieur Amon anymore, and she gently touched my cheek with her gloved hand, saying and in a protective mood, "How is my little son doing?"

The person the children really admired, however, was Rafael Vargas. He was a handsome peasant that made them think of a big gentleman although he was barefoot and simply dressed. They imagined he was a disguised king who had come to walk around the Tourna house dominions. Rafael Vargas wore a very thin pita hat, a soft flannel shirt, a silk handkerchief around the neck, and a red strip with braided silk threads in his waist. He was a really tall man of about 6 feet 5 inches who had a very wide chest and a strong back. His hair and his mustache were blond. His blue eyes had a sweet expression. Why was he barefoot? Perhaps he did not wear shoes to feel better the ground from where he had come from and to which he would eventually have to return. When Ana and Sergio watched him walking with his clean strong big feet, they thought no other man on earth could tread the ground with the same self-confidence as Rafael Vargas did. It seemed as if he were taking possession of the land with his strong feet. As he passed by our side, he would show us his affection with those huge hands and we felt his fingers became silky to pat our heads. We felt so truly happy with Rafael's gesture that we had the feeling of being covered by the nice pleasant shadow of the big mango tree in the paddock.

Ana Maria and I wandered around the coffee mill and nobody bothered us. Laborers and landlords looked at us with affection and sympathy. They probably looked at me that way because of my wheelchair, and at Ana Maria for her witty face, her turned-up little nose, and her graceful dimples. We watched how the coffee cherries were cleaned up in the big crushing machines. We talked about the fact that the red

coffee produced such a stinky odor in the river water. Ana Maria and I saw how the ripe red fruits became black, and the way the grain's rind fell down to be covered by the roasted membrane that shone in the courtyards as if it were gold. The laborers came and went busily reminding us of laborious ants. They moved the piles of coffee with their shovels; then, they covered them with huge pieces of canvas; later, the laborers took the grains to the machine to peel off the skin, and classified them. We certainly knew the coffee mill really well!

The big wheel's song that on summer time whirled at the other bank of the Torres River was always present in the world of sounds that inhabited in my imagination. You could compare it with the sound of thousands of people talking, laughing, and singing. I knew all the neighbors were acquainted with the monotonous song of the wheel of the coffee mill.

On the left bank of the Torres River, there was a building made of wood where coffee was selected and got ready to export. The peasant women in charge of the selection were mostly from the town of Tibas, and they were very kind to us. The laborers carried my wheelchair up to the second floor and Ana Maria pushed it around the tables and benches from the big rooms. I have never forgotten the sounds and the murmurs that this busy activity produced; one could hear the sound of the women worker's hands hitting the tables when selecting coffee or the stream-like sound of the selected coffee when it drained into the boxes to measure the right amount, or that of the boxes when their contents were poured in the big hopper or the noise of the machines' belts, pulleys, and wheels. I remember the sound of women's chattering and laughing, and in the middle of all that noise, I recall the young voice of a girl singing a song, which I compared with the way bird's songs would have probably sound amidst the thick foliage of a forest when the weather is rainy and sunny at the same time.

Sometimes, Ana Maria and I slipped away to the small park behind "Sorting," as they called the building where the black grains were taken away from the coffee. A

peacock whose squawk was heard in the peaceful environment of Amon's neighborhood for years walked around the park. We loved watching it showing off its tail. That tail reminded us of the colorful radiance inside Ana Maria's crystal prism. Ana's main idea, however, was to go to the stable to steal from the horses' trough some pieces of sugar cane that the grass shredder machine had cut. She filled her apron with the chunks, and she came out triumphantly with the booty and offered me some. The man in charge of the stables, a lame old man with a sweet look caught us several times. He turned a blind eye or pointed at us with a harmless finger saying, "Well, well! Are you stealing the horses' cane? If Monsieur Amon finds out, he is going to spank you."

In the afternoons, Ana Maria would take me to the big pile of dry skin that had been peeled off from the coffee grains. The pile was at the bottom of a hill, and the children who went there to jump from a high rock wall. They let themselves fall the same way the sparrows did from the roof down to the street. The kids opened their arms as if they were wings, and they fell on the pile of black and yellow waste shouting and laughing. Ana Maria forgot about me because she became intoxicated with those jumps and runs that I gazed upon from the fixedness of my chair.

We had a friend, a girl called Pastora, at the Selection Building. Pastora and another woman were in charge of sewing the bags full of the clean coffee closed, ready to be sent abroad. We thought Pastora was very pretty. She was thin, with a well-shaped small head. Pastora had curly brown hair with golden highlights. She arranged it in two braids that she sometimes rolled up in the shape of a crown, or on other occasions, as a roll that she wore on the back of her neck. She put on a little bow of blue ribbon or a red flower in her braids, which looked nice on her. Pastora wore shirts and she said she would never wear a shawl. By that time, the townspeople considered that wearing a blouse and a shawl was like going up one-step in the zoological scale. Pastora's shirts were made of white chambray, and they were pretty

well starched and tidily ironed. The shirts had baggy short sleeves, and they had a very stiff ornament in the neck made of very small folds.

Pastora covered the neckline with authentic silk kerchiefs that the little worms from China or Provenza had spun. They were beautiful and colorful, and they make turnsoles that resembled the peacock's tail. She wore a black ribbon in her neck with a small golden locket. Ana Maria opened it to see a tiny blond curl inside. Pastora told us the curl belonged to her young child who had died. Our friend looked beautiful when she passed by moving graciously as she dragged her long brown skirt and wearing that shirt full of folds, and the straw-like yellow silk handkerchief with white embroidery. Ana said she looked like a butterfly.

Pastora lived alone in a small house in San Francisco. It was pink with just one window. The window was lined by an immaculate white curtain tied up with pink ribbon bows. One day Ana Maria took me there to peek through the window, and we saw a bed with a blue spread. A vase full of purple orchids was on a round table, and everything in the house was very clean.

One time at the grocer's shop, we heard that Pastora was someone's mistress. Our children's sensibility perceived the uncouth tone of the comment.

"What is that, Sergio? Why do they say Pastora is somebody's mistress?" Ana asked.

"I don't know, I rushed to answer." I have heard Aunt Concha with the story that "Cinta was Rafael Valencia's mistress."

As years have passed by and I am older, I enjoy pondering about those times when I watched Pastora and the other woman stitching the jute bags that a laborer had previously filled with clean coffee beans that came out of the mouth of the huge hopper. I felt the jute bags and the parchment coffee beans' peculiar aroma again. Near there, a laborer labeled the empty bags with black letters: "H. TOURNON AND BURDEAUX CIA." Sitting on the bags full of warm coffee beans, the women stitched busily with a huge needle threaded with hemp; on their hands, they wore a piece of

leather that they tied with a belt. It had a metal circle to push the needle. As the women worked, they raised their arms very high, and at the distance one could have thought the women were waving good-bye. The laborers then loaded the bags on the colorfully painted carts pulled by yokes of well-cared for fat oxen. The long lines of oxcarts moved along heading toward the Atlantic Station with their loads of coffee. *Mr. Pablo*, a very kind Frenchman who sometimes gave us some pennies explained to us, "That coffee is going to France, my homeland."

In my fantasy, the coffee mill wheel and the oxcart's sounds got mixed with the light and the summer wind as well as with Pastora's fine head and her white shirt adorned with all those folds and the image of Tomas Quesada whom I remembered standing on a big pile of premium coffee.

Pastora loved us dearly. Each time we went to Sorting, she gave us coconut fudge or apricots. She caressed us with her eyes full of tenderness, and she told Ana, "If my son were alive, he would be your age." Once, we went to Pastora's house, and we saw a brightly colored picture with a golden frame on the wall above the headboard. It was the Virgin when she was very young and she was dressed up as a shepherdess. She also wore a cute hat with a flower garland and she had a stick in her hand. A herd of white sheep surrounded the Virgin. During their visit, Pastora explained to the children that the picture showed the image of the Divine Shepherdess, her patroness; the sheep represented the sinners, and the sheep whose head was on the Virgin's lap was Pastora's soul. Pastora also told them she was an orphan since very young and she had nobody in this world. When Ana heard that, she held on to the woman's knees and started kissing her with loud kisses that exploded like firecrackers.

We did not know, though, that Pastora was really sick. One day she did not get up from bed. When we went to see her, the woman who looked after her told us in a low voice that the doctor had said Pastora was very sick and she would not last long. I brought her a beautiful box Miguel had given to me. Ana Maria gave her a little hen she had won at the town festival. Pastora smiled at us kindly; she touched our cheeks

with a very thin hand that gave me a painful feeling, and then, she thanked us for the gifts with an extremely weak voice that seemed to us as if it had been uttered by another person. Pastora never knew someone had gone to Aunt Concha with the news that we had visited her. Aunt Concha was so angry that she punished Ana Maria with the hideous whip, and then, she lectured me. Aunt Concha expressly forbade us to visit Pastora again. Ana Maria heard when Concha furiously told Aunt Jose that the kids had been at the “floozy’s,” and Ana Maria was to blame, and she added as the moral, “Birds of a feather flock together.”

Taking advantage that Aunt Concha was not at home, Ana Maria took the whip the woman kept in her bedroom which she used to torment Ana Maria and the guardian dog. She threw it madly in the latrine. In those times, there were just a few toilets in Costa Rica. Covering our nose with our hands to avoid the unpleasant smell coming from that stinky black hole, as revenge shone in my friend’s eyes, we witnessed the sacrifice of Aunt Concha’s whip, a hard twisted leather strip that resembled a serpent ready to jump on its prey. It had bitten the girl’s flesh many times incited by the remorseless hand of the old woman! Ana Maria and I really hated Aunt Concha’s whip. Ana raised the latrine cover. With a gratifying sigh, my friend let the whip fall into that gloomy pestilent mouth. Afterwards, she took me out of there triumphantly.

One day we found out that Pastora was dead. The children heard one of the neighbors say they could not bury her in a white coffin because she was not “pure.” They said they were happy that Pastora had not died in mortal sin. Almost at the end, Pastora had confessed, taken the Holy Communion, and had been given the Unction for the dying. The corpse was taken to the San Francisco church, and we saw some laborers from the coffee mill carrying the black coffin. The bells tolled and the funeral procession walked away along the dusty street. Ana Maria and I began crying. We knew we would never see Pastora again.

The mourning Novena was at some neighbor’s place, and since it was about “praying,” Aunt Concha let us go. In a big dark living room with an earthen floor and

smoked walls, they had built the shrine. It was a table covered with a black fabric, some white curtains, a few pine branches, a crucifix, and the image of the Virgin of Carmen representing the moment when she was taking out the souls from the purgatory. We did not miss one night of the rosary praying. After the rosary, the women talked and said that Pastora had luckily saved herself, and she was glorious in Heaven. Ana Maria imagined her like a white sheep resting on the Divine Shepherdess' lap. On the ninth day, the neighbors put some new pine branches and flowers at the shrine. They lighted some tall wax candles whose flame looked sad and made you think about the souls in the Purgatory. They prayed endless rosaries since early morning. They offered lunch and dinner to the partakers who were also given snacks and glasses of "guaro," one of the traditional alcoholic beverages of Costa Rica, mixed with syrup. The woman leading the prayers recited them with a nasal voice, and she insistently claimed Our Lord for the souls, and especially for Pastora's soul...

"In the name of the Holy Souls, we beg you Lord," sang the woman who prayed, and the people answered, "Give her eternal rest in the name of your Holy Passion." I lulled remembering Pastora's fine head and her braids adorned with a blue bow. I could see her lifting up her naked arm, stitching the coffee-filled bags with that huge needle that seemed to be threaded with a yarn of fire.

"...for the relief and rest of Pastora's soul..." the woman who prayed mumbled.

I awoke when they served hot cocoa and sweet bread, hard biscuits, and baked corn flour cake.

That was how Pastora's nine days ended.

How many painful facts of life Ana Maria and I learned thanks to Pastora! The image of this humble young woman went deep inside our soul in a clear and pleasant manner although it was chased by winks and cunning words full of dark moist intentions that rotten inside the duskiness of our ignorance, and surrounded her memory with a mist from which Pastora emerged the same way the moon does through a thick fog.

Months and years have gone by...

The elderly aunt and uncle must travel to Europe to seek for help to cure some of Aunt Concha's maladies that have been bothering her. The doctors have said this trip is absolutely necessary. Convincing them to spend some money on the trip has been extremely difficult. The miracle happened only when she was told she could have cancer.

Unknowingly, Sergio's emotional life has become rooted to this small but delicate and strong being called Ana Maria. This barefoot and playful girl who has grown up abandoned. She has had the inspiration to give Sergio the love nobody ever gave her. She knew how to get into the kingdom of his feelings and walk along the paths that could be compared with the superb triviality of the ant's trails. She entered that world with tales that fed Sergio's imagination with wonders and worthless objects like the little cross and the crystal prism that had become quite valuable for his fantasy. Ana Maria had conquered the land with a naïve tenderness, tears poured together, and wild flower bouquets.

Ana Maria will go to Europe with Aunt Concha and Uncle Jose because her company is absolutely necessary for Aunt Concha. Three days before the trip, the girl comes to Sergio's bedroom dancing on the tips of the boots they bought her for the occasion. At the same time, with her playful face, she makes a gesture of comic suffering. After making sure Aunt Concha cannot see her, she takes her feet out of the black prison, and starts running freely on the waxed floors. She throws the shining shoes far away, and cries out disdainfully, "Oh, Sergio! Making me wear shoes is like making the wind wear them!" and she adds as she rubs her feet, "Oh, my poor little feet! They would have to go to Europe wearing those black things!" The little squeezed toes now freed from the boots look like a line of fledglings loosing up on the roof.

Ana Maria is wearing a ridiculous austere dress the color of tobacco for the trip that Aunt Concha made with her dreadful taste. The dress is so long that it almost



covers her feet. The day they left, she was wearing an old-fashioned straw hat with a stiff bow and a goose feather dyed in red on the side adorned by the same hand that had sewn the dress. Any other time, Sergio would have burst in laughter to see his friend in that outfit, and Ana Maria would have probably joined him. However, they hugged and Sergio started crying when he saw the high goose feather moving away through the rosebushes as it shook with Ana Maria's sobs.

At night, all by himself, with his head on the pillow, Sergio thought about Ana Maria. However, he didn't see her the way she looked when she left, but as the barefoot girl with that eternal blue dress. He remembered the girl who always came to keep him company in that large brick paved room that was inhabited by huge shadows. In the middle of that awesome coldness, Ana Maria's affection beat as a little flame whose warmth Sergio had trusted his cold spirit several times.

Juan Pablo divorced Cinta and married the other woman with whom he had lived on the farm. Gracia was forced to live in that new place, and "Beats the hell out of me," as Mamma Canducha used to say, the bad times the poor Gracia would have faced because Canducha had heard some rumors that the second wife was ill-tempered. Juan Pablo asked Sergio to come live with them, but Sergio clearly answered that if he was taken there, he would find a way to kill himself. He would first live in the streets as a beggar. Concha's return from Europe was uncertain. Nobody knew for sure when her journey in search of health would end.

Juan Pablo perceived in his son's answer a tone of suffering energy that struck his businessman soul. Therefore, he decided to take him to the Salesian High School in Cartago.

#### A LETTER FROM ANA MARIA TO SERGIO

"I have found your letter when I returned from London. Realizing it was yours, my hands shook out of happiness as I opened it. You are the only person who has written to me.

We have spent two months in London because your Aunt Concha was recommended an English specialist. However, since she wants to be healthy in the blink of an eye, she has not been patient enough to wait; so we have come back to Paris. She says she feels better there. Besides, she wants to pay a promise to the Lourdes Virgin.

You could not imagine how ugly London is. I prefer San Jose even though we don't have the beautiful high houses you find here, or the noise of trains and cars. It is like staying at Panchita's smoky kitchen. Remember, Panchita the old woman who lived down the hill in San Francisco. You could not imagine how I have missed our sky, which seems as if Our Father God keeps painting in blue every day. In Costa Rica, you just have to open the door to see the mountains, so green and twinkling right there at the end of the street. The sunset here is different. It doesn't have the luxury of those colored clouds our sky does. Not even at night, do they have so many beautiful stars! You barely see the sky from time to time in the middle of that cloud of smoke. However, there certainly are beautiful gardens. The other day I went for a walk at the Kensington Gardens. There was Peter Pan's statue, the child that refused to grow up and become a man. Do you remember that tale? He is an almost naked kid who looked very pretty standing on a tree trunk that was fake one because it is made of metal. The trunk is surrounded by mice, rabbits, and branches.

You cannot even guess how sorrowful I have felt for the difficulties you say you have endured! Life indeed makes a big mess, Sergio! It would be fairer if Mamma Canducha or me were there taking care of you, wouldn't it? I should be the one pushing your chair with so much love that you wouldn't even notice the many rocks on the road.

This is what I can tell you about my life. I have been to-and-fro in Europe for three years now, but I can say that I have been able to see just the

tip of the nose of the countries where I have been. The illness doesn't allow your Aunt Concha a moment of peace and, therefore, she doesn't let others find theirs. My duty is not to leave her alone. It's been three years since I have felt the fresh air. I spend each day of my life shut up on ships, trains, cars, medical offices, and hospitals. My eyes feel like going after those wonders I see, but the poor things must stay right here with their owner. You don't think it is wrong that I complain, do you?

Poor *Miss Concha*! I am the only person she has to look after her. You already know that the ninny Uncle Jose is only good at taking care of those clay-colored robins.

Now, I am going to confess a lie: the nurse that helps me take care of your aunt has become my friend. She is always telling me about her two brothers who are sailors and she praises them to the skies. The minute they write, she hurries to show me these very loving letters. I have felt truly envious! I didn't want her to know I'm all alone in the world, and I told her I have a brother called Sergio who loves me a lot. You don't mind this white lie, do you? Yours is the only close affection I have, and remembering you as my brother gives strength to my mind. You can't imagine how much I talk to Mademoiselle Ternisien about my brother Sergio. Fortunately, Aunt Concha doesn't even understand a word because, you should know, my brother, that I can speak French. Since we have been in France for more than two years, I handle French at will and speak it well. Luckily, your Aunt and Uncle don't get it.

At night, when I am in bed and *Miss Concha* is asleep, I close my eyes and go to the house in San Francisco. I see you behind the window bars and the street with the jicaro tree up the road, the brick factory, the church, the orange trees at the house's entrance; I walk around the shiny floors that made me sweat so many times, and I listen to Uncle Jose's birds...

Last night I was laughing, but I also felt like crying upon the recollection of those times we used to play that Panchita's cottage was "The House of the French Toast." Do you remember how scared the old woman looked like when she saw me getting out of the coffee plantation running with you in the chair? Poor Panchita! She could not even guess that, in our game, we pretended she was a witch who ate children.

I long to see you, my dear brother. I think about that wide sea and all the ground that keep us apart. A hug from your sister,

Ana Maria Esquivel

My dear brother:

Your Aunt Concha has told me I don't have a last name. She doesn't know who my parents were. However, since I am your sister, I am, therefore, Ana Maria Esquivel.

#### FROM SERGIO'S JOURNAL

*March 29, 19...*

Today is my birthday. Before, on my birthday, but, how far away is that now! my mother would have thrown a party and she would have given the guests sugar candy bars that looked as if they were made of silver. My mommy and Candelaria made wonderful snacks in the shape of flowers and baskets that they then offered the guests on top of lemon or orange leaves.

Today's party has certainly been very different. This morning, Miguel took me to the Atlantic Train Station where my father was waiting to take me to the Salesian High School in Cartago.

I was very touched as I looked at this old man pushing my chair up the station street to get on the train! He walked in silence, but I knew he was kind of moved. As I listened to the noise of his spiked shoes and to the sound of my chair's wheels, I pondered how my life would have been if I would not have had this man who came from a unknown country on the other side of the sea, to show me and my dead feet the path that leads to the wonderful world of sounds. My life is not a desert because he taught me how to listen. His presence filled my world with rivers, forests, and cities.

Which of the pedestrians we have met on our way could imagine that inside this poorly dressed old man with his head covered by a dirty greenish helmet, miraculously durable, there lives a great musician? The modest knife sharpener and toy maker is not a virtuoso, but his imperfection is maybe even more valuable because he loves music in a naïve way. He is not a prig. To him, music is not a means to gain money or fame. When listening to his thoughts and feelings expressed by sounds, I tell myself that he is maybe one of those mysterious and divine people from legends who came to earth disguised as beggars.

I have turned my head around to see him, and I tell him with a shaky voice, "Miguel...!" He stops and looks at me with his childish blue eyes as he answers, "Do you need anything?"

Unable to control myself and not caring that I am in the middle of the street or that some curious eyes are looking at us, I hugged him.

He replies, "Boy, boy," but he looks pretty moved.

Then, we go on.

As the train went across dry pastures and dusty coffee plantations, I remembered that my violin was inside my trunk and that thought comforted my spirit. I knew I could not devote every moment of my life to it because I would have to study the details and precision of numbers as well as the warfare experience of many Caesars and Napoleons. What did I care about all that? The teachers never imagined that while they were filling the board with numbers or giving the list of battles and dates,

I was exploring the world of sounds. How wonderful everything on it was! My eyes, my sensibility, my senses of taste and smell went up to the ears; I perceived the shape of those sounds and their color; they had flavor and aroma. The sounds were fresh like the water or rough, silky, or warm. They were the sounds of the storm, the light, the hammer on the anvil, the soft wind and laughter. They became one and gave me different feelings such as those of the dawn, a storm, a sunset or loneliness, silence, and confusion.

My wheelchair has rolled down the streets of Cartago, and I think the squeaking of the wheels sounds shy and distrustful. A cold wind welcomed us while it raised some dust clouds all over. I like the looks of this city. They have been rebuilding it since the 1910 earthquake. The streets are wide. The houses have little front yards, and inside them, even in the humblest house, one can see the green of the waving ferns. In the background, the Irazu Volcano stands up fogless today showing its cultivated slopes which are also filled with small houses.

The high school building is not finished yet. The principal came out to welcome us. He was a tall old skinny man with a tanned face. He spoke kindly. My father said goodbye with the usual patting on the shoulder. As I saw him walking across the room to leave, it seemed weird to think that he was my father. Until then, I had not paid careful attention to his short chubby body. My father looked very much like his sister Concha. When he walked, his flesh shook. I felt sorry when I realized that I did not love him.

The principal pushed the wheelchair and took me inside the building. It was break time. The students were in the courtyard, which had a dovecote in the middle.

The bedroom is an ugly big room and the walls are not whitewashed. The roof beams are exposed. There are rows of identical plain beds. At each bed's foot, there is a tin washbowl and a towel. Through the window, one can see the blue sky where some buzzards are flying and it seems as if they were sliding. I sigh, and the principal looks at me and smiles gently.

“Are you sad?” he asks.

At night, when everybody is sleeping, I sit up on my new bed that is very cold. I listen to the breathing of my roommates who are sleeping by my side. I wonder what I am doing in middle of these bundles lying close to me. On the back, a candle with a dim light that hardly drives away the darkness of the room keeps vigil in front of a saint’s sculpture. What must those I love be doing right now? Where on earth my mom would be sleeping? I wonder if she still lives in Peru, that country that in my childish imagination I perceived as a big pink spot?

Through a hole, a moon ray comes inside the room and falls on my pillow.

Miguel has not visited Sergio in two months. The boy does not know his friend is drinking again. He is not aware either that the poor man who sharpens knives has been taken to the *Chapui* Asylum (an institution for the mentally ill). If he gets out of there some day, he might explain that, once again, his life went into something “dark and foggy like a very long lasting night.”

Sergio describes one of Candelaria’s visits in one of the pages of his journal:

*Sunday, July 10:*

“After mass, someone came to announce I had a visitor. I thought it was Miguel. They took me to the parlor. It was not Miguel, but Mamma Canducha, my dear old little woman. No one in this world has loved me the way she does. The proof of her affection was the hug she gave me and her tears falling in my hands. She was wearing a colorful silk striped shawl that smelled like violet root and a wide wool creased skirt. She has had these clothes since I was a child, and I think they are older than I am. She keeps them at the bottom of her trunk for special occasions. The shawl was imported from El Salvador in the last century. It was very colorful and made of crispy silk. Mamma Canducha did not get tired of looking at me, and she smiled as her tears ran through her dark wrinkled cheeks. For me, those tears were like a rich diamond vein on an uneven rough land. Time went by and we did not even notice. We laughed, talked, sighed as we remembered the things that we had shared,

and we did not care about the groups of visitors around us. When the train whistle blew, Candelaria left in a hurry. We could not finish saying goodbye. After her visit, I was very happy the rest of the afternoon. The rooms seemed brighter and my roommates friendlier and I played Mendelssohn's music."

What Sergio never knew was that Candelaria had been fired because the woman for whom she worked did not give her permission to go out on Sunday. However, Candelaria could not endure not seeing Sergio anymore and she did not respect the prohibition. She spent most of her savings buying snacks and gewgaws for Sergio. Nor was he aware that the train had already left when the old woman arrived to the train station. Since there were no car services by that time, a distressed Candelaria had to wander around the streets of Cartago. When it got late, she sought for shelter at a doorstep. Under the cheerful striped shawl, the old little woman was shivering from the cold and the fear. Someone with a pitiful heart found Candelaria around eleven at night and offered her shelter. Sergio could not imagine how hard the old woman had tried to find another job and that she had begged for hospitality while she was jobless.

*On Christmas Eve:*

The priests and the boys are busy building the nativity scene. The aroma of *uruca* and fresh moss as well as a feeling of joy fill the place. They have left me alone in a corner. I am looking at the music that Miguel left, and I have chosen a violin sonata from Bach. I start playing and I forget I am Sergio. Everything around me is irrelevant. Someone interrupts. I have visitors. Maybe it is Miguel (who has forgotten me for a long time!) or Mamma Canducha.

I enter the guest room and I see my father stepping forward with three well-dressed skinny children with a dark complexion. Father hugs me but his hug that does not go beyond the shoulders, and he points me out to the children and says, "Your brothers, Sergio. This is Juan Pablo, the oldest; this is Jose Joaquin, but we call him Quincho and this is Francisco. There are four more at home. You will eventually meet



them.” He pushes them toward me and a constrained little smile shows up as he speaks.

I do not feel any attraction at all for those children who are looking at me with curiosity and fear. The eyes of the youngest call my attention because they remind me of Gracia's.

“Come on, aren't you saying anything to your brother?” my father asks them. They have brought you a present, Sergio. Give it to him, Juan Pablo.

The boy gives me a package silently, and my father tells me there are shirts and ties inside. I thank him half-heartedly. My father is clearly interested in encouraging the relationship between his children. He is talkative. He has never behaved this way before. He explains that they come from San Jose where they bought many things for the Christmas celebration. They have already sent most of them to the farm where they live now, but they have chosen to bring the fragile stuff such as the gift for the children's mother and Gracia and for the children's presents with them. I now understand what those packages mean. Tonight they will have dinner. My father smiles as he alternately looks at his offspring.

One of his sons is sitting on his lap and my father touches his cheek gently. The others are leaning against him. I remember that we did not dare to get close to him.

I ask the youngest to give Gracia a kiss in my name.

They say goodbye, but I never heard any of my brothers' voices. I feel no pain as I see them leave; I go back to my violin and Bach's music makes me forget completely about my father and brothers.

*On the First Days of the New Year:*

My classmates are playing in the courtyard and their yelling is mixed with the murmuring of the wind. A very light rain is falling down and it shines with the sunrays. I feel happy, but I don't know why.

Someone has come to tell me that a woman wants to see me, so I am taken to the visitor's room.

The light from the outside has blinded me, and I get in the room unable to perceive anything clearly. Before I have chance to figure out what is going on, a cloud of tulle and perfume covers me; passionate kisses cover my face and a loved sobbing voice that I recognize, cries out, "Sergio, my son!" For a second, I lose control. The light coming through the windows wipes out. When I regain consciousness, my head is leaning against my mother's chest. I hold her hands and kiss them. My heart has come to my lips, which trip up with her leather gloves. I pull her toward me, and I cover her face with kisses. I am unable to speak. I feel as if I am about to die.

Oh, yes! It is not an illusion. It is my beautiful mother with her young woman's dark complexion and rosy cheeks. Below her hat, her bright black curls show up. Long time ago, that child-like head rested next to mine on my pillow. She is wearing a nice gray silk dress and a funny straw hat adorned with a big red rose.

I hear a sound behind my back. Mother steps aside. Then, I see her approaching with two children that I did not notice before. One is a girl dressed in white. She has a sweet pale face and big light eyes; the other is a little boy whose small white rosy face shows up like a flower amidst all the laces of his dress.

"These are your brother and sister, Sergio. This is Maria Navidad and his is Rafael Junior. There is another one, Rodrigo, but he is at home because he has a runny nose." My father's scene introducing his children as you do to a stranger repeats itself in my mind. Juan Pablo, Quincho, and Francisco. I do not know why I like these two better. Maybe I feel this way because they are my mother's children.

I smiled at the toddler who was happily walking toward me with his little steps and extending his arms trustfully. On Christmas, I saw Merceditas smile brought back to life all of a sudden. I kissed the children tenderly. My heart that had moved right up

to my lips when I felt mother next to me was still there. The girl looked at me. She seemed startled when my tears wet her cheeks.

The little boy smiled and jumped to my lap and called me father. Mother pushed the chair around the room, and the child was ecstatic. The pictures of important priests that were hanging from the walls seemed to be smiling kindly at the sound of that baby talk.

Maria Navidad did not say a word; she just remained there looking at me with those big light eyes. When our eyes met, I felt as if Merceditas smile has come to life again in her lips.

I told that to my mother, and she answered, "She is also good and quiet like Merceditas." My mother wiped her eyes and became somber. Then, she told me, "I have come back to Costa Rica because I could not stand my situation anymore. "Oh! Sergio, I have lived as if my heart were divided in two: one part is here with you and the other is with them," as she pointed to the children.

My mother had been in Costa Rica for two weeks, and had spent all these days looking for us. Somehow, she found Candelaria who told my mother everything about us and even gave her the news of Mercedita's death.

My mother said she was responsible for that death and begged God for forgiveness. She could not see poor Gracia, but asked me to give many kisses to her. She did not live in Peru anymore. Now, she was in Colombia. My mother gave me a card with her address so I could write to her. She will be in Cartago only for two more weeks because she had to return and join her husband.

Other children and other expectations! From time to time, my mother spoke seriously and sadly; something like a wind passed through her eyes and her mouth; I thought that her sorrow would blow them out, but the flame inside them immediately came to life again. Then, I discovered that I could see her soul. I realized that she did not have any thoughts in her soul for her dead little girl or for Gracia or his son, who

was spending his life in a wheelchair. I wished I could have gotten her inside my chest so that nothing or nobody could take her away.

Mother stands up. She promises she will come every single day while she is here. I feel very sad as they say goodbye. I hug my mother around her neck. She opens her wallet to give me money, but I strongly oppose. “No, no, no. Don’t give me money, mother! I beg you. I ask for her picture and the children’s, and she promises she will bring them next time.

She lowers her hat’s veil, and walks away with the gracious clicking of her shoes that I have not heard for a very long time; as she leaves, the rustle of her silk dress and her perfume remain in the room. At the door, she asks the children to blow me kisses with the tips of their fingers. Maria Navidad smiles at me and mother waves her gloved hand goodbye.

I have a knot in my throat, and I feel I am going to burst in tears.

“Mother, could you please lift the veil so I can see you,” I ask.

She does it. However, I realize what a fool I am! Her face is as radiant as always, and it does not show any trace of sorrow. That hurts me. Would she feel the same pain that I feel deep inside?

I carefully listen to the steps and the sounds as they walk away.

Sergio, however, did not see Cinta anymore. When Juan Pablo Esquivel got the news that she was in Cartago, he knew that she had come to see Sergio. Then, he instructed those at school that whenever “that lady” came asking for Sergio, they must tell her that she could not see him.

Cinta’s visit made Sergio fully understand that she had abandoned him. To relieve his pain, he looked for comfort in his memories of the past. The most pleasant recollections in his heart were those that had to do with Mamma Canducha. Now, his life was surrounded by the coldest loneliness! The warmest, the softest person in his life had always been that old little woman from Guanacaste. In an effort to feel warm, Sergio imagined that he could extend his spirit toward her and pretend to put his

forehead and his stiff cold hands in middle of the creases of tenderness of her smile and the gestures of the elderly woman. Those were all humble plain memories. The one that moved Sergio the most was the image of Mamma Canducha sitting on the leather stool in a corner of the kitchen rolling up cigarettes. He remembered her with the bowl of minced tobacco on her lap, and those times at Lent or Eastern when Canducha made the fine-smelling pickle preserves in the glass jar also came to his mind. Sergio recalled that occasion when Canducha told him and his sisters that if someone took a bath on a Good Friday, that person would become a mermaid. The old woman was astonished when Gracia came to show her wet hair asking relentlessly, "So, Mamma Canducha? I took a bath today, on a Good Friday, and look! I didn't become a mermaid."

Canducha was really good at rolling the mixture of minced tobacco and a little piece of a roasted crumbled fig leaf in the yellow piece of smoking-paper. The smell of tobacco cured with rum, honey, cloves, and lime peel filled the room. She kept the tools she used to please her innocent "smoking" vice in a cupboard. Mamma Canducha had a half-moon-shaped knife to chop the tobacco, a strainer for the chopped tobacco made out of a tin bowl that she had pierced with a nail, a small bottle for the curing, and a bowl with yellow papers. Sergio and Mercedes helped her to take out the stem of the tobacco leaves that Mamma Canducha used to buy at the Acosta Ladies' store across from the police office or at Miss Fermina Morales' place.

At night, while Miguel was telling his stories, Mamma Canducha was rolling cigarettes. Sometimes, she stood up, lit one in the fireplace, and started smoking so quietly that she seemed to become one with the shadows. Once in a while, something like a small red flower shone in middle of the darkness. It was the cigarette's glowing tip. In the afternoons, when she went to the neighborhood church to pray the rosary, the children saw her taking from behind her ear the cigarette's butt that she always had at hand to give it some puffs.

And what about that glass jar so spotless that could be easily confused with the air around it? For Eastern, Candelaria used to fill it with clear perfumed banana vinegar that she made from the plants she had cultivated with her own hands in the backyard. She also added some baby beans, cucumber slices, and cauliflower florets, small chunks of carrots and chayote, small green wild plumbs that did not have a hard seed yet, and slices of onion. To make the preserve spicier, she put some cloves and bay leaves. Among the tameness and kind innocence of those ingredients, Canducha mixed hot red peppers, those that are really hot, that looked like some little devils who were scaring peasant maidens.

Ana Maria is back and Sergio has returned to the big house in San Francisco thanks to his friend.

In the eve of the last surgery that Aunt Concha had, Ana Maria knew how to take advantage of the excited sensitivity of the woman who was willing to make any promise or even to bring back to Earth all the available saints in heaven just for the sake of successfully coming out of her hard ordeal. Ana Maria told her a white lie that she had planned to have the intended effect to favor Sergio. Ana Maria had recently gotten a very sad letter from him. Then, she told Aunt Concha about this dream she had had. She told Concha that she had heard a voice advising the woman to make a promise to the Black Lady of Los Angeles (Costa Rican's Catholic people's patroness) to bring Sergio back home because he was an abandoned boy. Ana Maria added that in exchange, the Virgin had promised the surgery would be a success.

The dream touched the troubled woman's heart, and she agreed to let Sergio live in her home again. The surgery was successful, and after several years in Europe, they returned to Costa Rica. When they got used to their routine in San Francisco, Ana Maria reminded Aunt Concha of her promise and Sergio could come back and live with Ana Maria.

Nevertheless, the Ana Maria that had returned was quite different from the one Sergio once had seen going away.

The transformation appeared to be the result of a sort of witchcraft. It seems as if a magic wand had embellished Ana Maria with its touch. She was not the child with straight hair anymore, but a pretty young girl whose black braids were arranged in the shape of a crown; her goat-like eyes showed a new light that brightened her face; her little nose was still kind of flat, but it had new lines that gave her face an infinite beauty. The dimples were there, but they were not those rascally holes from the old times; now, they gave her smile an unspeakable charm. The clumsiness and rudeness of her movements of childhood had been left behind; instead, they had become silent soft curved lines. She did not wear those ugly long dark gowns that Aunt Concha made her wear. Instead, she sewed her own pretty dresses that she made with inexpensive fabrics guided by her good taste and what she had learned during the trip.

Youth had placed a luminous grace on the new Maria standing there in front of Sergio's eyes. She was almost beautiful, but Sergio missed the barefoot child who wore the blue dress and used to come out of the corners like a friendly elf to cling to his neck surrounding it with her tender arms when he needed a loving one next to him.

Once again, Sergio was living with Aunt Concha and Uncle Jose. They both had new monomanias similar to those of the birds and the begonias. Once again, he had to cope with the waxed floors and with his bedroom inhabited by huge shadows at night, which did not scare the young boy anymore. The big old clock was still there. The tick-tock of the big pendulum did not get tired to cast away to eternity the drops of time that seemed to become as heavy as lead inside the black box.

Ana Maria treated Sergio with the same sweet dedication of the past. She was always ready to serve him with affectionate care. However, Sergio felt that she was distant. The fact was that Ana Maria was in love. She had met the man on board the ship when she was coming back to Costa Rica. He was a Costa Rican who was also returning to his country after studying in Europe. They liked each other, and he came every evening to talk with her through the window bars behind the old folks' back. Ana Maria's happiness hurt Sergio. What a fool he was! Since he could not tell anybody

about this weird feeling that he could not explain, his violin became his confident. It was then when Sergio wrote his inner harmonies for the first time. That was his first “wordless romanza” that is, the kind of music that only romantic young people appreciate and which makes the old musicians of refined taste pull their lips down scornfully.

Sergio peeped at the girl in love and he noticed that she had become very quiet. Sometimes, he saw her looking and smiling at the broom fixedly or at the brick that she was polishing, or she just stayed in front of a wall in ecstasy.

“Hey! Ana Maria. What are you looking at? Sergio asked.

She shook her head and blinked as if she had just come out of a dream; her cheeks looked as if they were burning, and she answered, “Nothing. What do you expect me to see?”

Some other times, Sergio noticed that the girl’s face looked so dull that even her dimples seemed to have totally disappeared. Sergio called her and asked her to sit at his feet. He lovingly cuddled her head. As if this were a signal, her tears started to fall. They first trembled in her eyelashes and then, they dropped down the cheeks.

With the power of affection, Sergio made her reveal the secret of her sorrow.

“Oh! Sergio. He did not come last night.”

When sorrow had overrun her, Sergio felt that Ana Maria was very close to him; she looked after him and talked about her grief. However, happiness split them since because she savored it alone in those corners among the fabrics, the needle, the thimble, and the thread where she found shelter. Nevertheless, Sergio caught her with the needle high above, the fabric left in abandonment on her lap; her eyes fixed nowhere, and smiles and dimples.

Sergio, who became a philosopher, reached his own conclusions. For him, human beings had a strong tendency to enjoy pleasure in isolation, but to share their sorrow with others.



At night when Sergio was already in bed, he listened to the murmur of their conversation, their laughter, their kisses, and their silences. Then, the image of love came to his life as a beautiful bright vision that was like a far away star hanging from the depth of night. The most ardent tears flooded his eyes, and he felt an intoxicating sorrow in his heart. Melodies that he had never heard before were vibrating inside him.

One day, Miguel returned. Sergio had not had any news of him for a long time. Ana Maria had tried to find out where the old man was, but nobody could tell anything about him.

For people, every man with a sharpening machine is one and the same. "There goes the man with the sharpener."

Who would miss a little old man with a blond beard that now showed silver highlights and who wore a light brown velveteen suit full of patches and a helmet covering his head and barely allowed his light blue eyes to show up as if they were blue wild flowers among dry moss? What obligation did busy people have to get acquainted with the life of someone who made their worn out tools useful again? For a second, they noticed that there was someone sharpening their scissors and knives at their door; they might even see the sparks behind the grinding stone. Then, they automatically took out some coins of little worth to pay for the work, and forgot about the man with the sharpening machine.

Some children did notice the absence of the little old grinder whose machine had many interesting things that caught their attention. They had seen that the machine's frame was made of wood and Miguel had carved some ornaments on it. His machine was always very clean. He had many small containers similar to those used for preserves that he had probably found in the street. He covered them with shiny caps that he had decorated with his own hands. Neatly organized inside the jars, Miguel kept many shiny small tools. The whistle was in a case on which he had carved a cat sharpening its nails with a wheel. All these things that meant nothing for most people, made the children and the humble nose peasants happy. He let them snoop

around while he explained the usefulness of each of the things; sometimes, he gave them the toys he had made.

Miguel was older now; his body looked bent, and his beard barely showed blond hair. It was almost gray. When Sergio asked Miguel where he had been, he replied he had left the *Chapui* Asylum just yesterday, and had immediately walked to Cartago to find Sergio. The principal offered him shelter at the high school facilities and some money so that he could return to San Jose. Before, he did not know...

Sergio found something bewildering in Miguel's eyes. It seemed as if they had kept the dust from that mysterious place from which he had come back.

Ana Maria had become taciturn. She did not smile at the broom or stare at the walls in ecstasy anymore. Sergio had not heard the rumor of smiles and kisses because the dates had stopped quite a while ago. The girl had lost weight; that rosy dust that the blissful youth spreads had disappeared. She became careless with her dresses; her hair did not rise triumphantly on her head, but it languidly fell on her curved neck. She did not cry either. Sergio caught her sitting up with her hands crossed on her knees and her somber eyes fixed on the bricks that she once had looked with a smile. Sergio knew the reason. This primitive creature that had spent almost all her life in isolation was so sad for that man that she loved with all her soul and body.

Poor Ana Maria who one day said, "Do you know how it is for me to love Diego, Sergio?" "Do you remember the prism I gave you when I was a child?" Well, loving him is as if, all of a sudden, you feel like someone puts the prism in front of your eyes, but not the eyes in your face but some others that should probably be in our heart. Everything shines more, and you feel like laughing even with the rocks. It is as your life had been bathed with that color that the fields have when the sun is rising.

One day Sergio ventured to ask her, "Ana, Is Diego sick?"

"No," she answered sadly.

Months went by this way. One night when it was very late, Sergio woke up startled. Something unusual was going on at home. He listened to the hurried steps of Aunt Concha and the two house cleaners, and Uncle Jose's fake coughing when he was worried. Sergio called but nobody came.

Suddenly, a woman came in and let herself fall on a chair and started sobbing. Sergio's anxiety got to its peak.

"For God's sake, Aunt Concha, what's going on?"

In middle of spasms, she answered, "Oh, Sergio. I have given shelter to a serpent in my heart!"

"A serpent! Aunt Concha. Did it bite you?"

Sergio was so naïve that he took his aunt's words literally. He wished he could get up from bed to help her.

A newborn cry caught his attention. The lady sobbed strongly.

"Oh, God! The things I have to listen to in my house! May God give me patience! This is how Ana Maria pays us back! Don't you see that she just had a baby?"

The newborn unrestrained crying filled the darkness of the night, and nothing seemed to calm it down. You might say it was trying out Aunt Concha's patience indeed. At their sound, she stood up with a tragic attitude, "I even took her to Europe! You, Concepción, that's the thanks you get!"

A little bit calmer, Sergio mocked. Ana Maria's so cackled trip to Europe that the only thing that had meant for her was spending every moment under the apron of that impertinent sick old woman!

Very early in the morning, Aunt Concha sent her close friend Queta Alvarado a message. She was a maiden that Concha highly respected because she belonged to one of the most important families in the country. Concha needed advice to enlighten the dark path where Ana Maria's behavior had placed her. That was what she said when her mentor in skirts entered the room.

The two women spent all morning discussing in the living room with the gloomy furniture. From the porch, Sergio heard his aunt mentioning the orphanage and the trip to Europe several times. Aunt Concha kept saying the orphanage was the place from which she had taken out that ungrateful creature to treat her like a daughter. At last, Miss Queta Alvarado stood up and headed to the sinner's room with Episcopal dignity.

Miguel arrived. Although Aunt Concha gave him her usual derogatory look, she welcomed Miguel to talk about such an awful misfortune once again. The old man listened silently; after an hour, when she ended her story with the orphanage and the trip to Europe, he answered calmly, "There is nothing to be scared of, Ma'am. Those are very natural situations for young people. What should be done is not to despise or overwhelm this girl, but help her so that she doesn't take a wrong path. Don't you think it is normal to get roses from your rosebushes or that your cow gives you calves? And they have God's blessing."

Aunt Concha was astonished and said, "What nonsense! How can you compare a plant or an animal to a Christian with full understanding? No doubt, Miguel, you are nuts.

Miguel met Sergio and said, "Healthy young women just like Ana Maria are like flowers for me. I see the promise of a fruit in each flower that I find. It is the same with women; I see the promise of a child in each of them.

Sergio waited all day for Ana Maria to call him, but she did not. In the afternoon, he could not stand the waiting any longer, so he sent one of the house cleaners to ask Ana Maria if he could see her. She agreed, and Engracia took him there. She was very pale. Next to her with his fists tightened under his face, her little son slept. The baby was so wrapped up in diapers that he looked like a cigar.

Ana Maria started crying the moment she saw Sergio. He asked to have the baby put in his arms and started rocking him with clumsy tenderness.

"Why are you crying, Ana Maria?"

“It took you so long to come, Sergio. I thought you were mad, too... I don’t have a good reputation any more!”

“I was expecting your call. You can’t imagine how eager I was to meet your little son! He’s cute, Ana Maria! Look how he tightens his fists!”

Sergio’s voice was very sweet. He called her “Anita,” and tried to find the softest words to talk to her. Ana Maria felt she could cuddle in that warm voice, and hold on to the hand that was caressing her head the same way a bird looked for the warmth of its nest.

She stopped crying, and half sat up to contemplate her son. Sergio touched Ana Maria’s head.

“You’ll never abandon him, will you, Ana Maria?”

“Abandon him! Oh, no! That’s out of question!” She hugged the baby as to protect him from danger.

Ana Maria told Sergio some personal secrets quietly. She told him that Diego stopped coming the moment he knew she was pregnant. She felt hurt when she realized that Diego was the kind of man who did not take responsibility for his actions. She never called him. Some days ago, he had written a letter telling her they couldn’t get married because his parents were very proud people, and his mother would die just at the thought of her son marrying a poor woman. He also said he was too young and marriage would be an obstacle for his career. He had put some money inside, but she had returned it with no answer. She did not love Diego anymore. Ana Maria felt as if a cruel hand had pulled up that deep love from the roots leaving just a painful feeling of emptiness.

Aunt Concha said that she would force the man who had dishonored Ana Maria to marry her. Ana Maria, though, would prefer to be killed instead. Afterwards, when Aunt Concha and her friend Queta Alvarado knew who the father was, they quit insisting because they “perfectly” understood that the son of a respectable family could not marry a girl that had been taken from an orphanage and who did not even know

who her parents were. The marriage ethics for those two good women was crystal clear: "birds of a feather flock together." How could a gentleman belittle himself to wed a poor woman?

Of course, my Aunt Concha and Miss Queta were thinking of giving the child away to a childless married woman who wanted to adopt a baby. However, neither Ana Maria nor Sergio paid attention to those crazy reckless ideas of such respected women who enjoyed repeating the sentences they had read in romance novels or the phrases of the last sermon they had heard at church. Besides, Sergio had noticed that his aunt and uncle could not see a millimeter under the skin. They knew of begonias and roses that they sold for few cents, and they had knowledge about clay-colored robins and northern orioles, but they did not have any clue about feelings.

For Sergio, Ana Maria was the same. No, not the same, really. Now, he would open a bigger place in his heart for her little baby boy, too. Why had Miss Queta advised giving the baby away? That was, in Sergio's opinion, what one could call an act of dishonor. From now on, he would never think about Ana Maria without her son on her lap. Since she had brought him to life, she should be his guide and protector. Sergio decided that he would take the place of that man who had refused to honor his fatherly duties.

Sergio gave a lot of thought to the fact that the baby's birth had caused all that weeping and curses from Aunt Concha as well as the gaunt frown of the dumb Uncle Jose, the whispering and maliciousness of the house cleaners, and the scandal that became drawn in Miss Queta's mouth with her big mustache. Who could have guessed that the woman was the same one who had used of all her fondness to dress the *Sweet Name* at the *El Camen* Church, who was caring enough to spoil her castrated dog that slept on a satin cushion that she had lovingly embroidered, and that she fed with soup she especially made for the animal. Sergio thought about this for a long time.

It was late, but Sergio could not sleep. Ana Maria was asked to leave the house. He felt uneasy at the thought of her. He acted as a mediator before Aunt Concha, but everything was in vain. Aunt Concha said that Ana Maria could stay only if she got rid of the child. Keeping the baby was out of question. The baby would be an inconvenience. Besides, Aunt Concha said that she would blush out of shame. What would everybody say? They would say she was indulgent. She made it clear that she was definitely not. Aunt Concha said she wanted to show her proud face everywhere she went, and that nobody would ever have anything to blame on Concepción de Rodríguez.

Sergio convinced his aunt to give Ana Maria shelter for one more week while he found a place for her and the baby. Besides, he sent Miguel to the Piety Mount to pawn a suit and get some money to help Ana Maria.

Miguel also wanted to help her, but he did not have anything to sell or pawn. He had no idea where the sharpening machine, his only possession, was. He thought about the violin, but it would be the last resort. It was summer when the winds blew hard. A whirling leaf clinging to a branch gave Miguel an idea. He bought wood and colorful papers to make toys according to the weather like windmills, vanes, spirals, kites, small boats and cars. He hung the toys from a stick and went out to sell them. After a while, the children were running after him, and one hour later, Miguel had sold everything. He used this money to make the business bigger. He spent the nights awake manufacturing the toys. This morning he came back with 25 dollars and gave them to Sergio for Ana Maria. The violin was safe.

The only person Ana Maria could ask for help was a house cleaner who had once worked in the house. The woman was as good as a piece of white bread and she was always very affectionate with Ana Maria. She was a poor widow with four children who lived God knows how in a small town at the slope of the Barba volcano. Ana Maria wrote her a letter asking for shelter and promising the woman she would not be a burden but a helping hand. The answer arrived, and nobody paid attention either to the

blots in those letters that were the size of an acorn or to the irreverent syntax. They read the generous thoughts that shone in that letter the way a pearl would shine amidst dry leaves. She said Ana Maria could come. The house was very small, but they would be glad to shrink a bit to open a space for her. The woman said that where there were beans, plantains, and coffee for one, there would be for two.

That simple letter written out of the borders of the grammar kingdom pierced the darkness of those anxious souls like a star in the sky. It was most precious for them than all the great classic literary works on earth.

It was one o'clock. Sergio heard a noise, and Ana Maria came out from a corner as she had done years ago. However, she was not an elf anymore. That place had been taken by her son whom she carried in her arms.

At her sight, Sergio said, "Are you crazy, Ana Maria? What are you doing here with your son? Don't you see he can catch a cold?"

"We have come to say good-bye, Sergio. He won't catch a cold because he is covered. We are leaving early tomorrow to have time to take the eight o'clock train. Since I won't dare to come when your aunt and uncle are here, I came now. I do not want anybody to see me when I leave."

Sergio took the child in his arms and pressed him against his chest with emotion.

"Would you like to be his godfather? I would like to call him Sergio, like you."

"Yes, I will be his godfather because nobody else in the world would love him like I do. I'm afraid to bring him bad luck. I wish for him to be a happy Sergio. Sergio and Ana Maria hugged and cried over the baby's little head that was like a cocoon of hope. Do you remember, Ana Maria, when I just came to this house and you used to come at night to make me company? You have been good to me, Ana... Take good care of my little godchild who is also my nephew. Remember we are brother and sister. You will never abandon him, won't you? Swear you will never abandon him for anything or anybody in the world."



“Don’t be a fool, Sergio!” Ana Maria took her son from Sergio’s arms and anxiously hugged him against her chest. “Just at the mention of that thought, I feel that my body is shaking. Don’t you ever repeat it, Sergio? Good-bye.”

“Good-bye, Ana Maria, don’t forget to write!”

Sergio felt abandoned and a chill ran all over his body. He let himself fall down, and started crying like those who did not find any consolation. The innocent charming girl who used to hug him by his neck and cry with him had been left behind far away in time. The only noise he heard was that of the pendulum that never got tired of throwing seconds to the mouth of eternity.

The next day, Miguel came very early. He sat Sergio in the chair, and placed him near the window. Then, he went to help Ana Maria. They finally left. Ana Maria was covered with a black shawl that also protected her son. Behind her, Miguel looked bent with the traveler’s suitcase on his back. She came by the window bars and uncovered the baby telling him as if he could understand her, “Say good-bye to your godfather, and also tell him that your mother will teach you to love him above all things.” When she said that, she smiled and cried. She introduced her hand in middle of the bars and Sergio held it tightly between his.

When Sergio listened to the whistle of the eight o’clock train announcing that it was leaving, he opened his arms in that direction and murmured a good bye.

Sergio could not bear his life in that house after Ana Maria left. He wrote his father a letter begging to send him to the Home for the Incurable, that is, a place where disabled people were sent. He claimed that Ana Maria was the person who took care of him. Without her, he was definitely a burden for Aunt Concha. She already had enough with her own diseases and with Uncle Jose’s rheuma.

Aunt Concha did not object. Instead, she took advantage of her relation with those Catholic women who were in charity affairs so that her nephew was admitted in the Home after donating some money. She also arranged to allow Canducha to live with Sergio there.

It was Easter Sunday. The April sunlight warmed up the dust of the roads and played between the dry grass of the paddocks. Over the blue peaks of the mountains, some dark clouds showed announcing the rainy season. At churches, the bells that had gone quiet on Good Friday with the death of Our Lord had resuscitated with Him that Easter Sunday. Their music flew over the fields with mystical joy that intertwined with the aroma of the blooming flowers. The rows of houses along each side of the road had this look of naïve happiness with their whitewashed, blue, or pink walls and their small gardens enlightened by the red poinsettia leaves and the purple of last of summer's bundles of wild orchids. Groups of peasants who were heading to the city passed by, and as they did, they left behind the sound of their starched clothes and the sound of their bare feet.

A town fair that neighbors used to organize to raise funds to finish the church was taking place that Sunday. They had built some rustic booths. A mob of women whose talking reminded a henhouse moved inside them. They were busy with baskets full of "tamales" and big trays with garnished hens. The air of that bright morning was mixed with the bonfires' smoke, the smell of stew, the women's voices and the children's shouting. From time to time, the metallic music of the Guadalupe Band that had been hired for the party took control of all the other noises with its hubbub. As he had done before, Miguel was pushing the wheelchair to its final destination. The chair was going to the Home leaving the town's fair hustle behind.

Sergio's eyes and ears became a sponge that absorbed everything he saw and heard. He had decided to keep it inside him. All the things that surrounded him were meaningful for that spirit lying there as a fixed net, but paying attention to allow the flow of life came through its mesh.

He did not feel heart-broken as he had been those other times when his wheelchair had been pushed to a new room. Sergio was not expecting any pleasures, but when he remembered that Mamma Canducha and his violin would be there, he felt

fine. He was ready to live side by side the many miseries of the place. At this thought, he told himself he would try to relieve as many people as he could.

The building where the incurable were taken was on a high picturesque place surrounded by gardens and coffee plantations. Around its facilities, there were pastures and cultivated fields. Far away, you could see the city and its roofs that, at the moment of Sergio's arrival, were shining under a red-tinted sun from the effect of the smoke from the bonfires.

He found his little room pleasant. Mamma Canducha's loving hands had already been there. It was a wood construction attached to one of the building's wings. The place had been used by a gardener before. The room's walls and roof seem to have disappeared because the climbing jasmine with its tiny white perfumed star-like flowers had almost covered them. Through the windows, Sergio could see the meadows, the hollow where the Torres River ran, and the city at the distance. The San Francisco Church towers showed up between a group of pines. Sergio greeted them with his hand. Oh! They refused to abandon him! He promised that his eyes would visit the towers every day. His violin in the black box and the lectern's case were hanging on a nail. His chest of drawers and the shelf full of sheet music and some books were also there. The wall was decorated with the pictures of his mother, his brothers and sisters, Ana Maria and with some portrait reproductions of Beethoven, Haydn (Miguel's favorite), and other famous musicians. His very neat bed was in a corner. Mamma Canducha was still giving the final touches to each object. Sergio looked around, and he felt happy.

One day, he got this letter from Ana Maria:

My dear brother Sergio: I didn't write to you the moment I arrived here because my little baby has been very sick for more than a week. Thank goodness, he is well now. I was truly worried! I thought he would die.

Poor Rosa and her children had welcomed us better than they would have the president. They are good people and their poverty that offers so much

gentleness for us resembles the shack where they have given us shelter. *Miss Concha* would say that it is wretched, but I know it is clean. It is also full of holes through which the sun makes its way to introduce its warm golden fingers. However, it escapes by who knows what miracle from the very cold and grievous fingers of the rain.

You can't imagine how everybody helps me to look after Sergio. The moment he starts crying, they pick him up, and they do not know what to do to please him. Maybe, this is not a good education, but we feel sorry when we hear him crying, and we know he will be calm in our arms. It is better not to let him cry, isn't it?

I try to help Rosa as much as I can. Now, I'm learning to weave baskets. Rosa's older son goes to the mountains and brings us lianas. They are very hard and my hands bleed, but I will get used to it. Jesus will go sell what we have made to the market in Heredia on Saturday. Since the coffee picking is about to begin, we hope to sell the baskets well.

I have asked Rosa's children to tell everybody in town that I am a seamstress. I remember you liked the dresses I made for myself and for your aunt Concha. The year we lived in Paris, I learned how to sew and make hats with a young French girl who was the daughter of the woman who owned the hotel where we lived.

Sometimes I feel discouraged, but I look at my son and I regain my senses. I always remember your words that keep telling me that since I brought this child to this world, I must be his guide and protector.

Rosa's small house is on a hill. It has a front yard that is full of colorful impatiens and looks like a toy. There are also two *uruca* trees that fill the place with their party-like aroma. At night, when baby Sergio is asleep, I sit on the porch and I can see the lights of San Jose. Do you know how the city looks like at night? Like a worm of fire. When I think that you and Miguel are there in

the middle of those lights, I find comfort. I'm sorry I won't see the lights in winter because Rosa has told me that the valley is usually covered by clouds by that time.

Write and don't ever forget me! Your letters and my little son are my only recreation. Send me lots of advice, my dear brother.

Give Miguel a hug on my behalf. My son sends you lots of kisses. I hug you, my dear brother.

Ana Maria.

*If the only home I hope for is the grave,  
If I spread out my bed in darkness,  
If I say to corruption, 'You are my father,'  
And to the worm, 'My mother! or? My sister,'  
Where is my hope?  
Who can see any hope for me?*

Book of Job

Chap.17:13-15

How much misery surrounds Sergio! How much tormented yet resigned flesh!

Sergio felt that big house was like a honeybee where you could listen to the incessant buzzing of the bees that were making not honey but pain, instead. It reminded him of Job's home. Job was that incredibly patient rebel of the Bible who spent his time either reproaching God and "cursing his day" or scratching his ulcers with a piece of tile without even complaining. Laughter had another meaning in that home. It was just good to enhance the imprinted grimaces that deformity or sorrow had inflicted in its inhabitants.

From time to time, Sergio imagined that he lived on the planet of the crippled and that it was inhabited by the blind, the single-handed, the noseless or the legless men who crawled on their stumps that they protected with a thick piece of leather or those who hit the floor with a wooden leg or with the crutches as they walked. One of them was a strong young man. He suffered sudden seizures and when that happened,

he bounced like a rubber ball. His mouth contracted with a hellish grimace and covered with froth. Another inhabitant was this short white-haired man. He had protruding eyes and had developed breasts. His legs were pretty short, and he spent his time sitting in a toy car that he had made himself and he could drive. He was intelligent and good-tempered, and he enjoyed making fun of himself.

“Open space for Marin’s car,” he used to shout to the groups of inmates that he found in the hallways. “Would you like to go have a walk clinging from my arm to the park this evening?” he said to the big young man with the seizures. One day, however, Sergio found him crying hidden behind some branches. There was also a noseless boy whose hands and feet were very swollen. He never stopped buying lottery because he hoped to have money to buy a new nose. A man in his thirties who looked like a ball of grease and who wore a woman’s robe, and a blind teenager who spent his life lying down in a trolley also lived there. The blind teenager was so thin that it was possible to see his skull. His legs were as thin as a finger and when looking at his open eyes, you had the feeling to be looking to an empty house at night.

Women lived on the right wing of the building. The group was composed of crazy old women, paralytics, mute and blind, and deformed young girls whose youth was useful only to highlight their hideous ugliness. One of these girls with a squirrel-like face had her hair shaven and her face made you wonder what sex she was. She walked in a fantastic way because she wriggled her legs and fluttered her arms. There was also a woman with a goiter. Her hair was fully covered with very colorful ribbons and back combs. She owned hundreds of pins, tin medals, safety pins that she inserted in the bodice of her dress. She had a magpie-like brain and, as soon as a visitor came, she would ask with that reedy little voice of hers for any shiny object the newcomer might have. A sturdy young woman with a dark complexion was also part of the group. She had nice cheeks and black eyes that were lined with long curly eyelashes. She had very weak legs that make her fall and she needed help to stand up. She was always staring at her fingers and smiling with a stupid laugh full of saliva

that splashed everything around her. However, the person who really impressed Sergio was a very fat girl with this huge head that she endlessly swung with the rhythm of a pendulum. Each morning, when Mamma Canducha took him out of his room, he saw this woman sitting on a bench moving her enormous head and he imagined the tick-tock that this human pendulum made.

# **INFORME DE INVESTIGACIÓN**

**Introducción**



El análisis de la traducción al inglés de la novela costarricense *En una silla de ruedas* en el que se basa este trabajo de investigación propone la traducción literaria como una reescritura funcional de la obra.

En esta sección, se presenta un resumen de la novela traducida y su contexto literario así como información biográfica de Carmen Lyra. Además, describe el valor traductológico de esta novela y las razones por las cuales se tradujo.

### **En una silla de ruedas**

*En una silla de ruedas*<sup>2</sup> es una novela costarricense publicada en 1918 por Carmen Lyra, seudónimo de María Isabel Carvajal (1888-1949) y se le considera su mejor obra de juventud<sup>3</sup>.

Es la historia de Sergio Esquivel quien queda parálítico antes de cumplir dos años a causa de lo que la escritora denomina Síndrome de la mañana de West, y que actualmente se conoce como poliomielitis.

Sergio vive los primeros años en su casa junto a su madre, hermanas, la leal sirvienta Candelaria y su amigo Miguel. El padre de Sergio es indiferente y pasa la mayor parte del tiempo en una finca lejos de la ciudad, donde convive con una mujer con quien tiene otros hijos. En esta primera parte de la narración, Sergio vive rodeado de las atenciones de su familia en lo que parece una feliz existencia. Pasa el tiempo entre la casa y el jardín donde se entretiene con los pájaros y los animales domésticos y jugando con sus hermanitas.

Sin embargo, su vida cambia de forma drástica cuando su madre lo abandona para seguir a su amante chileno a Perú. La familia se desintegra. Sergio no tiene alternativa ya que, contra su voluntad, el padre ha decidido que vivirá con su tía Concha, una mujer frívola e interesada que no le presta la menor atención. A las hermanas se las interna en un colegio religioso donde son tratadas con gran insensibilidad. La narración presenta un claro contraste entre el calor y la seguridad

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<sup>2</sup> Carmen Lyra, *En una silla de ruedas*. 4ª. Edición.(San José: Editorial Costa Rica, 1997).

<sup>3</sup> Abelardo Bonilla, *Historia de la literatura costarricense*. (San José: ECR, 1966) 145.

del hogar ahora perdido y la frialdad y oscuridad del cuarto que recibe al niño paralítico y donde pasará su adolescencia, así como la falta de sabiduría y de respeto por parte de las monjas que cuidan a las niñas.

Lyra, sin embargo, introduce un elemento favorable con Ana María, quien será la fiel amiga de Sergio en adelante. Ella es una niña huérfana que Concha trajo del Hospicio de Huérfanos a vivir a su casa y a quien debe trabajar en las labores domésticas de su “protectora”. A pesar de ser una criatura oprimida por los convencionalismos de la época, su optimismo se refleja como el elemento positivo, como una luz en la oscuridad; esto es lo que sostiene a Sergio durante el tiempo que debe vivir en la casa de la tía. Sergio ha crecido y junto a él su habilidad con el violín. Una vez más, la existencia de este joven sufre un cambio dramático. Ana María debe irse de la casa de Concha porque ha quedado embarazada sin estar casada. Esto es una vergüenza y una afrenta para la hipócrita Concha. Por tal razón, sintiéndose incapaz de soportar su ausencia, Sergio decide internarse en el Hospicio de Incurables. Mediante las técnicas del realismo literario, la escritora revela con claridad las ironías de la herencia genética, describiendo las fealdades y los dolores del lugar con gran detalle. Sergio y su música apaciguan un poco el dolor que encierra el hospicio, y contribuyen a darle un poco de sentido a la vida de esos seres rechazados por la sociedad a causa de su imperfección. Pronto, gracias a sus dotes como violinista, el joven abandona el lugar y alquila el que será su primer hogar como adulto independiente. Allí se reúne con Ana María, Candelaria y Miguel, en un simbólico acto de la creación de una nueva familia: la de un grupo de personas discriminadas que se unen con un amor sincero que no necesita lazos consanguíneos.

### **Contexto literario**

*En una silla de ruedas* es una novela realista. Presenta una gran riqueza en la descripción. Margarita Rojas y Flora Ovares lo denominan realismo “lírico”, pues “denuncia la injusticia y apela emotivamente a la solidaridad del lector”<sup>4</sup>. Este tema se refleja al describir la situación de ciudadanos desfavorecidos, como lo son Sergio por su invalidez, Miguel, por ser un anciano extranjero y alcohólico, o Ana Maria, la huérfana. La novela es un medio para plasmar una crítica social ante la hipocresía moral y religiosa de la época y la marginación de los menos privilegiados. En su *Historia de la literatura costarricense*, Abelardo Bonilla explica la evolución literaria de Lyra y de otros autores costarricenses de la misma época:

“En el cuadro de costumbres de García Monge, Lyra, (...) el campesino folclórico, estereotipado y pintoresco del Olimpo, cede el paso a una plebe de marginados urbanos desarraigados, solitarios y tristes. Los nuevos personajes son campesinos o artesanos desplazados en busca de cualquier oficio, ancianos mendigos, mujeres desvalidas, niños solitarios y desamparados, son soñadores, locos o enajenados, inválidos del cuerpo y del alma; son seres cuya pobreza, inocencia, marginalidad o desamparo los enfrenta a la brutalidad o a la inclemencia de un mundo inhumano, grosero, hostil, ajeno a sus necesidades y aspiraciones, destructor de su subjetividad”<sup>5</sup>.

Para Bonilla, aunque la novela tiene los defectos de una obra de iniciación en el género, es la que “presenta mayor riqueza en pequeños detalles y en especial, en imágenes y figuras”<sup>6</sup>. Esta es una novela que utiliza un discurso indirecto, libre, “cuya palabra recoge los ritmos y modulaciones del lenguaje popular y refracta los deseos, percepciones y ansias de sus personajes”<sup>7</sup>.

En *Reseña biográfica de María Isabel Carvajal*, los autores señalan que los personajes en esta novela pueden identificarse por medio de la descripción de retratos

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<sup>4</sup> Margarita Rojas, Flora Ovares. *Cien años de literatura costarricense*. (San José: Ediciones Farben, 1995) 78.

<sup>5</sup> Bonilla, 30.

<sup>6</sup> Bonilla, 146.

<sup>7</sup> Álvaro Quesada Soto, *Breve historia de la literatura costarricense*. (San José: Editorial Porvenir, 2000) 30

nobles y simbólicos<sup>8</sup>. Asimismo, el narrador reprueba los abusos contra los menos privilegiados y exige justicia.

Según Álvaro Quesada, la generación del Repertorio de la que es parte Carmen Lyra, refleja en sus obras el tema de la “disgregación del grupo familiar, como una expresión simbólica de transformaciones en la vida y la conciencia de los costarricenses”<sup>9</sup>.

En *En una silla de ruedas*, los personajes se perciben, según Margarita Rojas y Flora Ovaes, “desde su interioridad, se muestran como seres humanos inmersos en la tragedia cotidiana y ya no como objetos pintorescos”<sup>10</sup>.

### **María Isabel Carvajal**

Esta integrante de la generación del Repertorio Americano nació en San José de Costa Rica, en 1888. Realiza sus estudios primarios en la escuela del Edificio Metálico en Barrio Amón. En 1901, ingresa al Colegio Superior de Señoritas, institución pública donde obtiene el certificado de Maestra Normal. En 1904, empieza a trabajar en el campo de la educación en la escuela rural El Monte en Heredia. En 1905, conoce al editor y maestro Joaquín García Monge, quien le da el seudónimo “Carmen Lyra”. En 1910, retorna a las aulas en el Centro Germinal en San José donde de parte, entre otros, con Omar Dengo y el propio García Monge, y discuten sobre el anarquismo y los nuevos enfoques educativos. En ese año, empieza a escribir y a publicar críticas y traducciones de la revista *Renovación*, de índole político-educativa. Cuatro años después, funge como editora de la citada publicación y se inicia en la escritura de leyendas folclóricas. En 1916, comienza a escribir dos novelas: *En una silla de ruedas* (publicada en 1918; revisada en 1946) y *Fantasías de Juan Silvestre*<sup>11</sup>. En estos primeros relatos, la escritora muestra personajes que son víctimas de la manipulación de una sociedad opresora pero que logran sobreponerse y

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<sup>8</sup> Gerardo Contreras, Irene Villalobos, *Reseña biográfica de María Isabel Carvajal (Carmen Lyra) (1888-1949)*, < <http://www.elespiritudel48.org/docu/h101.htm>> 1.

<sup>9</sup> Álvaro Quesada Soto. *Uno y los otros*. (San José: Editorial Universidad de Costa Rica) 87.

<sup>10</sup> Margarita Rojas, 78.

<sup>11</sup> *María Isabel Carvajal*. (4 setiembre 2006) online, Internet

vencer los convencionalismos. Introduce en esta novela un enfoque “feminista” y por lo tanto, se nota en esta novela una mayor “identificación con la perspectiva de los personajes femeninos “deshonrados, pertenecientes a grupos sociales (pobres o campesinas) subordinados”<sup>12</sup>. En 1920, publica *Cuentos de mi Tía Panchita* que alcanzó notable difusión. Ese año recibe una beca del Ministro de Educación para estudiar pedagogía en Europa. Carmen Lyra asiste a conferencias en la Sorbona en Francia y visita la escuela de Maria Montessori de Roma.

De regreso a Costa Rica en 1921, escribe para la nueva revista de García Monge, *Repertorio Americano*. En 1933, aparece “El grano de oro y el peón”, un relato sobre la industria del café en Costa Rica. Además, empieza a publicar una polémica columna denominada “Más en serio que en broma”. Dos años después, publica “Historia de la United Fruit y sus rapacidades” así como una historia alegórica llamada “De cómo hablar francés y viajar por Europa no enseña a ser humano”, y “Palco de platea en el cielo”. En 1936, escribe “Los diez viejitos de Pastor”. En 1938, edita de nuevo los *Cuentos de mi Tía Panchita*. En 1946, termina la revisión de su primera novela, *En una silla de ruedas*, que había publicado en 1918.

Sus actividades políticas le granjean dificultades y enemistades y durante la Guerra Civil del 48, Carmen Lyra y Manuel Mora, el líder del Partido Comunista son declarados proscritos. Se le recomienda a Carmen Lyra salir del país por su seguridad, por lo cual viaja a México el 29 de abril de 1948. Muere el 14 de mayo de 1949. Su funeral se lleva a cabo en Costa Rica. Hoy, después de más de 50 años de su muerte, sus obras se mantienen vigentes. La novela aquí traducida, por ejemplo, es parte de los materiales literarios de lectura obligatoria en los colegios del país.

#### **Valor traductológico de *En una silla de ruedas* desde el punto de vista temático**

Carmen Lyra fue una pionera de la literatura costarricense de su época y una activista política que demostraba mucha valentía para denunciar los problemas socio-

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<sup>12</sup> Álvaro Quesada Soto. *Uno y los otros*. (San José, Editorial Universidad de Costa Rica), 88.

políticos de entonces. Se le considera parte de la “generación del Repertorio Americano”, en donde la escritora se situaba a la altura de reconocidos escritores de finales del siglo XIX y principios del XX como Roberto Brenes Mesén, Luis Dobles Segreda y Joaquín García Monge. Su obra aquí traducida tiene noventa años y a pesar de ello, el tema que desarrolla no ha perdido vigencia, porque, aunque ubicada en diferentes períodos históricos, la marginalización sigue siendo un problema humano universal.

La traducción de *En una silla de ruedas* ofrece la oportunidad de tender un puente entre dos épocas y entre dos culturas con un tema que refleja la realidad de los menos privilegiados que los une, no solamente en el tiempo, sino también geográficamente, ya que en nuestra época globalizada los problemas del tercer mundo se han convertido en problemas para el mundo entero.

### **Hipótesis**

La práctica de la traducción como reescritura nos ayuda a ser más conscientes de las dinámicas culturales y a comprender que las prácticas discursivas de reescritura de la literatura reescriben también la sociedad y la recepción de las obras literarias.

### **Justificación desde el punto de vista traductológico**

La traducción funcional es un medio para lograr el acercamiento entre culturas tan promovido por las tendencias globalizantes de este nuevo siglo. Desde la perspectiva funcionalista de la traducción, ésta no sólo se limita al ámbito lingüístico sino que integra el cultural. Por tanto, la traducción se entiende como un acto de transferencia cultural entre lenguas. La literatura costarricense debe abrirse espacio en diferentes culturas y el traductor es un instrumento para conseguir este propósito. Por esto, la traducción de *En una silla de ruedas* al inglés, es relevante, en primera instancia, para paliar la falta de comunicación entre dos grupos destinatarios por motivos lingüísticos, y, en segundo lugar, para introducir una obra literaria costarricense en un sistema cultural diferente. La literatura costarricense debe

incursionar en nuevos mercados y la traducción es el medio más eficaz para lograr tal propósito. Como señala Pegenaute:

“Mediante la traducción, la literatura hispanoamericana se adentra en la conciencia de lectores cuyas experiencias vitales son muy diferentes a las de los personajes que habitan las obras y a las de los autores que les dieron vida. Percibir el mundo a través de unos nuevos ojos supone un reconocimiento de la especificidad del “otro”, lo que posibilita, en última instancia, un descubrimiento de nuestras propias idiosincrasias. En su sentido más amplio, la traducción constituye un medio de interpretación de una cultura extraña, una herramienta fundamental para conocernos a nosotros mismos a través de una percepción de nuestras diferencias”<sup>13</sup>.

### **Objetivo general del informe de investigación**

El informe de investigación se centrará en demostrar, mediante el análisis de ejemplos, que esta reescritura del texto fuente, lejos de ser una “profanación” o un “plagio” de la obra literaria, es simplemente una transformación del original, concepto que se ampliará en el marco teórico, y que se fundamente en la idea de Octavio Paz de que “el texto jamás reaparece (sería imposible en la otra lengua); no obstante, está presente siempre porque la traducción, sin decirlo, lo menciona constantemente o lo convierte en un objeto verbal que, aunque distinto, lo reproduce: metonimia o metáfora”<sup>14</sup>.

Es parte del objetivo, analizar la traducción como una reescritura funcional de la obra fuente, centrada en mantener las características del realismo “lírico” para dar a conocer la obra de Carmen Lyra a una comunidad anglohablante monolingüe, y como un pretexto para revisar el texto fuente con el fin de actualizar el lenguaje de la época en la versión en inglés. Esta reescritura no se hará de forma antojadiza ni libertina, sino que se guiará por un skopos de traducción definido por lo que Hans Vermeer denomina el “iniciador” del proceso de traducción. Por tanto, partimos de una situación hipotética en la que una editorial estudiantil en los Estados Unidos (el iniciador) solicita la traducción de la novela *En una silla de ruedas* para usarla,

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<sup>13</sup> L. Pegenaute. *La traducción del postmodernismo hispanoamericano: reflexiones sobre la interpretación de la cultura*. HOSTAL enero 2004 (10 junio 2006), online Internet.

<sup>14</sup> Octavio Paz, *Literatura y Literalidad*. (Barcelona: Tusquets Editores, 1971) .60.

posteriormente, en cursos de Literatura Latinoamericana, dirigida a estudiantes de entre 13 y 25 años, anglohablantes y monolingües.

### **Skopos de la traducción**

1. Mantener aquellos elementos que la distinguen como latinoamericana y, particularmente, como costarricense sin que para ello se recurra a la inclusión de notas al pie ni de otros recursos aclaratorios fuera del texto.
2. Conservar aquellos elementos que la caracterizan como una novela realista.
3. Adecuar las estructuras sintácticas, morfológicas y de estilo a las reglas de la lengua meta.
4. Neutralizar los aspectos lingüísticos de denotación/ uso popular costarricense.
5. Neutralizar cuando sea pertinente, aquellos elementos que pudieran resultar políticamente incorrectos o inusuales en la cultura meta.
6. Actualizar el lenguaje en el texto fuente para que se adapte a las peculiaridades del momento actual y sea más asequible a los lectores de los albores del siglo XXI.

### **Objetivos específicos de este informe**

1. Demostrar que un texto literario se puede traducir desde una perspectiva funcionalista que permite que “funcione” para un propósito definido y para las personas que lo usarán precisamente de la forma en que se desea que lo haga.
2. Demostrar, mediante ejemplos, que una reescritura funcional escopista lejos de ser una profanación del texto fuente, lo transforma dándole nueva vida y oportunidad de incursionar en otros mercados.

### **Contenido del informe de investigación**

En la **Introducción** hemos presentado un breve resumen de la novela, el marco teórico, e información biográfica sobre la autora. Incluye, una explicación sobre el valor traductológico de esta novela desde un punto de vista temático así como la justificación de este proyecto desde un punto de vista traductológico.



El **Capítulo I** presenta el marco teórico que se basa en las ideas y el trabajo de varios teóricos post-estructuralistas: Hans Vermeer con la Teoría del *Skopos*, el concepto de traducción como reescritura adaptado de las ideas de André Lefevere, y Christiane Nord, con su modelo funcionalista de la traducción. De sus conceptos partimos para analizar aquellos aspectos teóricos que contribuyen a que logremos un entendimiento más profundo del texto, sin que por ello nos veamos comprometidos a una adhesión estricta a una teoría en particular.

El **Capítulo II** revisa, mediante ejemplos, las estrategias usadas por la traductora para realizar la reescritura de la obra, de conformidad con los aspectos definidos por el iniciador en el *skopos*, es decir, el propósito del proceso traductológico. La naturaleza del *skopos* obliga al traductor, en primer lugar, a realizar transformaciones a nivel sintáctico, estilístico y morfológico mediante aclaraciones, explicitaciones, omisiones, adiciones y paráfrasis, para que el texto meta funcione adecuadamente. Además, muestra analíticamente aquellos cambios deliberados que buscan cumplir con las instrucciones del *skopos* que señalan que, para esta traducción en particular, se debe neutralizar/omitir aquellos aspectos lingüísticos de denotación/uso popular costarricense, así como aquellos elementos que pudieran resultar políticamente incorrectos o inusuales para la cultura meta y usar la reescritura como un recurso para actualizar el lenguaje en el texto fuente para que el resultado se refleje en un texto meta con un lenguaje actualizado en la lengua meta.

Este capítulo refuerza la idea de que, la reescritura es una transformación del texto, que lo adapta a una audiencia meta específica, permite una revisión y una modernización del texto con una ortografía y un lenguaje de la época en que se traduce; los ejemplos que desarrolla permiten demostrar, asimismo, que reescribir es presentar las peculiaridades de los tiempos de antaño sustituyéndolas por las peculiaridades de nuestro propio tiempo. Por este motivo, este capítulo también confirma que la reescritura no es ni será nunca una copia del original, sino una metonimia.

En la **Conclusión** se resumen los resultados y aportes obtenidos del análisis y la investigación.

# CAPITULO I

## MARCO TEÓRICO

Las traducciones no tienen que ver con *tipos* lingüísticos, sino más bien con *casos* lingüísticos. Las traducciones no ofrecen una comparación entre dos idiomas, sino la interpretación de dos textos en dos idiomas distintos  
Umberto Eco.

El análisis de la traducción al inglés de la novela costarricense *En una silla de ruedas* en el que se basa este trabajo de investigación está enmarcado desde una perspectiva general, en la teoría funcional de la traducción y, en un sentido más estricto, en las directrices funcionalistas de la Teoría del *Skopos* de Hans Vermeer<sup>15</sup>, y en los conceptos sobre traducción literaria de Christiane Nord<sup>16</sup>, ambos puestos en

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<sup>15</sup> Virgilio Moya, *La selva de la traducción*. (Madrid: Editorial Cátedra, 2004) 87-115

<sup>16</sup> Christiane Nord. *Translation as a Purposeful Activity*. (Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing, 1997)

práctica desde la perspectiva del concepto de traducción como reescritura de la obra, introducido por André Lefevere<sup>17</sup> en su enfoque denominado Estudios de Traducción.

### **1.1 Antecedentes de las teorías funcionalistas**

Las primeras propuestas de estas teorías funcionalistas proceden de autores como Katherina Reiss (tipologías textuales), Justa Holtz-Mänttäri (traducción como acción), Christiane Nord (análisis textual enfocado a la traducción) y, en particular, en Hans Vermeer (Teoría del *Skopos*); (*Skopos*, palabra griega que significa objetivo, propósito). La motivación común de estos autores es darle un carácter más pragmático a la traducción.

### **1.2 Antecedentes de los Estudios de Traducción**

Los Estudios de Traducción son una respuesta alternativa a los criterios muy arraigados de los enfoques tradicionales que hasta ese momento dirigían la traducción de una manera prescriptiva. El nuevo acercamiento propone analizar la traducción desde una perspectiva descriptiva:

Este descriptivismo les impone afrontar textos reales considerados a todos los efectos traducciones por sus respectivas comunidades culturales y olvidarse de hablar de cómo debería ser la traducción, práctica de un idealismo que había impregnado hasta el momento los enfoques tradicionales<sup>18</sup>.

Los Estudios de Traducción destacan más las traducciones y su función en la cultura meta. Susan Bassnett y André Lefevere se refirieron en la década de 1990 a un "giro cultural" para la traducción, explicando que "neither the word, nor the text, but the culture becomes the operational 'unit' of translation" (Lefevere and Bassnett 1990: 8)<sup>19</sup>.

Otro de los objetivos de los Estudios de Traducción es incluir la traducción literaria dentro del planteamiento con el propósito de analizar la manera en que

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<sup>17</sup> André Lefevere. *Traducción, reescritura y la manipulación del canon literario* (Madrid: Biblioteca de Traducción, 1997)

<sup>18</sup> Virgilio Moya, *La selva de la traducción*, (Madrid: Editorial Cátedra, 2004) 123.

<sup>19</sup> Bo Petterson, *The Postcolonial Turn in Literary Translation Studies: Theoretical Frameworks Reviewed*, University of Helsinki. (10 junio 2006), online, Internet

funciona la traducción de textos literarios en los diferentes sistemas culturales. Moya<sup>20</sup> explica que los Estudios de Traducción pretenden “pasar por alto la dicotomía entre traducción literaria y la traducción no literaria”.

### 1.3 Conceptos fundamentales de las teorías funcionalistas de la traducción

Las teorías funcionalistas conceden importancia a la función textual y a la función de la traducción. Conciben la traducción como comunicación intercultural y como transferencia cultural. Vermeer, por ejemplo, considera que la “traducción va más allá de lo lingüístico, integrando una teoría de la comunicación humana y cultural”<sup>21</sup>. El punto de partida es la idea de que el lenguaje y la cultura son interdependientes. En la comunicación interlingüística, además de la barrera del idioma, se presentan marcadas diferencias en términos de trasfondo y expectativas culturales, entre otros. Ante estos obstáculos, el traductor adquiere, además de su función como mediador interlingüístico, la de un mediador cultural. Desde este enfoque teórico, la traducción se realiza como una correspondencia entre dos discursos y no entre dos sistemas lingüísticos. Como explica Nord<sup>22</sup>, el traductor, tiende un puente entre los miembros de diferentes comunidades culturales. Para Vermeer, el texto original debe traducirse para que el receptor del texto meta pueda ser capaz de interpretarlo como coherente con su situación en función de un objetivo o propósito (*skopos*). El texto original deja de tener lugar “protagónico” para dar énfasis a la función textual.

En nuestra opinión, esta teoría es apta para el análisis de la traducción de una obra literaria pues, al introducir la idea de que el original no es “sagrado” como lo consideran algunas tesis estructuralistas, permite una gama de alternativas traductológicas más amplia. Además, le otorga una posición de mayor visibilidad al traductor porque le concede más libertad para decidir junto con sus clientes el *skopos*

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<sup>20</sup> Moya, 128

<sup>21</sup> María Mercedes Suárez De La Torre, *Análisis contrastivo de la variación denominativa en textos especializados: del texto original al texto meta*. Tesis doctoral. Universitat Pompeu Fabra, 2000. (10 junio 2006), online, Internet 129

<sup>22</sup> Christiane Nord, *Translation as a Purposeful Activity*. (Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing, 1997) 17.

de la traducción. Con este *skopos*, a su vez, se compromete y responsabiliza al traductor a producir un texto meta que funcione y cumpla con las instrucciones de traducción recibidas. El texto meta debe ser funcional para un grupo determinado de personas y por tanto “debe adaptarse a sus necesidades y expectativas”<sup>23</sup>. En este sentido, la traducción se entiende como una reescritura del texto fuente según las condiciones de la cultura receptora. Asimismo, esta teoría nos resultó apropiada porque consideramos que el trabajo de traducción literaria demanda mucha creatividad e interés por los aspectos interculturales y, a través de este acercamiento, tenemos la libertad de ser traductores “creadores” de un texto meta cuyo objetivo es establecer un puente entre culturas poniendo al alcance de lectores extranjeros una obra literaria que funcione apropiadamente para una situación específica, definida por el iniciador del trabajo de traducción, y dentro de un contexto de uso funcional en la cultura meta. Esta posibilidad hace que el traductor se convierta en un instrumento para garantizar la supervivencia de la creación literaria, pues como afirma Benjamín, la traducción es necesaria para que “los textos no caigan en el olvido y mueran”<sup>24</sup>.

Con base en lo anterior, la traducción literaria es una forma de “transferencia cultural”<sup>25</sup>. Una de las ventajas de los enfoques funcionalistas es que coinciden en la necesidad de considerar la traducción como un acto comunicativo que tiene lugar en un contexto de realización social. Para Snell-Hornby, la traducción es un evento intercultural “puesto que la traducción debe considerarse en el seno del lenguaje y éste se entiende como una parte integrante de la cultura”<sup>26</sup>. Al comprenderse de esta forma, el traductor deberá tener en cuenta que la función de la traducción depende ahora de la finalidad de la comunicación; es decir, que, por describirlo de una manera

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<sup>23</sup> Christiane Nord, *What do we Know about the Target-text Receiver*. En: Allison Beeby et al. (eds.): *Investigating Translation*, Amsterdam: Benjamins 2000 (=Benjamins Translation Library 32), 198-214. Agosto 9, 2006 <<http://www.fachkommunikation.hsmagdeburg.de/dozenten/nord75.htm>>

<sup>24</sup> Moya, 172

<sup>25</sup> Isabel García Izquierdo, *Análisis textual aplicado a la traducción*. (Valencia: Editorial Tirant Lo Blanch, 2000) 116.

<sup>26</sup> García Izquierdo, 118.

práctica, “el texto fuente” será la materia prima a partir de la cual el traductor realizará su trabajo. Sin embargo, desde su perspectiva funcionalista ya no estará sujeto a la idea de que la función de la traducción se deriva de manera exclusiva de la función del texto original o que tiene que lograr el mismo efecto que dicho texto tuvo en sus primeros lectores. El traductor comprende que para introducir una obra extranjera a un nuevo público, el cambio y la adaptación a las condiciones de la cultura meta son inevitables. Por tanto, el texto meta ya no será una “copia” del texto fuente, sino, como lo explica Octavio Paz, será una metonimia, es decir, “una descripción indirecta” del original<sup>27</sup>.

#### **1.4 La Teoría del Skopos de Hans Vermeer**

Por su parte, Hans Vermeer considera que la traducción no es una actividad exclusivamente lingüística, sino que integra la teoría de la comunicación humana y cultural. Con esto, pone en tela de juicio las teorías lingüísticas previas que entienden la traducción como una ciencia y cuestiona el concepto de equivalencia que se deriva de ellas. Vermeer propone la Teoría del *Skopos* en donde resalta la importancia de la finalidad de la traducción y las particularidades de cada cultura. Entiende la traducción como una actividad comunicativa que persigue un propósito que él denomina “*skopos*” Este *skopos* es importante porque, en primera instancia, permite al traductor saber por qué razón se va a traducir un texto y cuál será su función en la cultura meta; en segunda instancia, constituye un punto de partida para determinar las características del proceso de traducción y, en tercer lugar, permite al traductor definir cuáles estrategias podría utilizar para producir un texto meta funcionalmente apropiado.

En opinión de Vermeer, el texto fuente NO es el factor determinante de una traducción ni tampoco lo es la fidelidad al mismo. Lo que es fundamental es la “lealtad

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<sup>27</sup> Frances Aparicio, El ser y el otro. *Translation/History/Culture*. (Londres y Nueva York: Routledge, 2003) 70.

al Skopos” del texto meta. El texto meta es el elemento central. En este enfoque de traducción, por consiguiente, el traductor se propone la “producción” del texto meta y no la “reproducción” del texto fuente. Es importante tener en cuenta que el texto meta se diferencia del texto fuente en que la situación en que se produce es diferente a la del texto fuente, y que el emisor del texto fuente y el receptor del texto meta están separados por aspectos temporales, espaciales y lingüísticos.

Debe tenerse presente que en literatura, la lectura de un texto nunca se repite, pues diversas personas lo comprenderán de maneras distintas, aún cuando pertenezcan a la misma cultura. Tampoco existe una interpretación “única” de un texto literario, ni un significado “verdadero”, ni tal cosa como la autoridad del autor como lo explica Paul Valéry: “Sea lo que sea que el autor *haya querido decir*, ha escrito lo que ha escrito. Una vez publicado, un texto es como un aparato que todos pueden usar a voluntad y según sus habilidades: no es del todo seguro que el que lo construyó lo pueda usar mejor que otro que no lo hizo”<sup>28</sup>.

Partiendo de este concepto, Vermeer considera que un texto es sólo una oferta de información. Desde el proceso de la traducción, el texto fuente es la oferta de información de la que se parte, es un acto comunicativo que ya ha ocurrido. Su traducción, a la vez, es una oferta de información en la lengua meta para la cultura meta basada en la interpretación de la información ofrecida por el texto fuente en la lengua y la cultura fuente. Desde la perspectiva de Vermeer<sup>29</sup>, el traductor, tomando como punto de referencia las instrucciones de traducciones señaladas por el iniciador del proceso de traducción (es decir, un cliente o hasta el traductor mismo), escoge la información que considere relevante y apropiada según las expectativas que tenga el iniciador para los receptores meta. Es evidente, que la oferta de información con respecto al texto meta será distinta que la oferta de información del texto fuente,

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<sup>28</sup> Robert Sholes, *Protocols of Reading*. (New Haven y Londres: Yale University Press, 1989) 54 (Mi traducción)

<sup>29</sup> K.Reiss, H. Vermeer, H. *Grundlegung einer allgemeinen Translationstheorie*, (Tübingen, Niemeyer, 1984) 123



porque ambos pertenecen a comunidades lingüísticas y culturales diferentes. Por tanto, el traductor lo que ofrece es una información diferente de distinta manera y el grado en que las ofertas de información difieran dependerá del *skopos* de traducción. De lo anterior se desprende la regla general de la Teoría del Skopos: para Vermeer, la regla que un traductor funcionalista debe tener presente es que:

“Cada texto se produce con un propósito específico y debe servir para dicho propósito. Por tanto, la regla del *skopos* establece: traduzca/interprete/hable/escriba de tal forma que permita que su texto/traducción funcione en la situación en la que se usa y para las personas que quieren usarlo, y precisamente de la forma en que ellos quieren que funcione”<sup>30</sup> (Traducción personal).

En este sentido, el traductor es “libre” de decidir qué hará con el texto meta partiendo de la oferta de información que le facilita el texto fuente. Esta libertad no se convertirá en libertinaje, como lo sostienen traductores más conservadores que critican la posición de Vermeer, porque está delimitada por el *skopos* definido previamente por el cliente.

En síntesis, Vermeer formula una teoría general de la traducción que consiste en cinco reglas básicas y de una sexta que explica la forma en que se entrelazan las cinco anteriores. Estas son<sup>31</sup> (Traducción personal):

1. La traducción depende de su *skopos*, es decir, del propósito deseado.
2. La traducción es una oferta de información en una cultura y lengua meta a partir de una oferta de información en una cultura y lengua fuente.
3. Una traducción presenta una oferta de información y como tal, no es reversible (es decir, el texto fuente no puede reproducirse a partir del texto meta).
4. Una traducción tiene que ser coherente en sí misma.
5. Una traducción tiene que ser coherente con respecto al texto fuente.

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<sup>30</sup> Christiane Nord, *Translation as a Purposeful Activity*. (Manchester, St. Jerome Publishing, 1997) 29.

<sup>31</sup> Irene María Goussard-Kunz, *Facilitating African Language Translation in the South African Department of Defense*. University of South Africa, junio 2003. 24, online, Internet, 11 junio 2006.

La sexta regla, establece que las reglas anteriores están interrelacionadas en orden jerárquico según el orden estipulado.

De este ordenamiento se desprende que, en esta aproximación funcional de la traducción, el *skopos* tiene la prioridad y que las ofertas de información y la coherencia intertextual e intratextual quedan en posiciones subordinadas. Esta teoría resalta la finalidad de la traducción y a los aspectos específicos de cada cultura.

La traducción ya no se juzga en términos de los tradicionales principios de equivalencia, sino según su adecuación a las instrucciones de traducción. En este sentido, para Vermeer, el texto fuente puede “sacrificarse” de algún modo, si el *skopos* así lo requiere. A partir de esta idea, podemos inferir que la traducción se realiza con una intención, y en general, modifica una situación. Por ejemplo, en nuestro caso, la primera intención fue cerrar la brecha entre los receptores de la cultura fuente y la meta por motivos lingüísticos para introducir esta obra literaria en un sistema cultural diferente.

Desde este enfoque funcionalista que hemos adoptado aquí, coincidimos con la idea de la desacralización del texto fuente a favor de un propósito comunicativo y funcional. Aunque Vermeer no descarta una relación de lealtad o coherencia intertextual entre el texto fuente y el texto meta, la demanda de “lealtad” de su teoría se concentra más en el *skopos*. No obstante, si bien la lealtad debe estar dirigida al objetivo planteado por el iniciador del proceso de traducción, consideramos que la traducción literaria, precisamente por ser una oferta de información sobre una primera oferta de información, debe tener algún tipo de relación con el texto fuente correspondiente. Aunque en la teoría funcionalista no se habla de equivalencia textual, sí existe la noción de lealtad a todos los participantes del proceso de traducción, entre ellos, el autor del texto fuente y el texto fuente mismo, que plantea Nord:

“Let me call “loyalty” this responsibility translators have toward their partners in translational interaction. Loyalty commits the translator bilaterally to the source and the target sides. It must not be mixed up

with fidelity or faithfulness, concepts that usually refer to a relationship holding between the source and the target texts. Loyalty is an interpersonal category referring to a social relationship between people<sup>32</sup>.

Por consiguiente, esta lealtad es hacia el texto fuente como “materia prima” para la traducción, y según explica Suárez<sup>33</sup>, además de su responsabilidad con el autor, el traductor le debe lealtad al receptor meta y al cliente que ha iniciado y definido las instrucciones de traducción. Consiste en una lealtad “interpersonal” que entendida como tal, limita el rango de funciones justificables del texto meta para un texto fuente particular. Para Nord<sup>34</sup>, su propuesta “funcionalidad+lealtad”, es una respuesta a los críticos que expresan que las teorías funcionales permiten que los traductores, los clientes o ambos hagan lo que les venga en gana con cualquier tipo de texto fuente. Concordamos con Moya<sup>35</sup> quien al citar a Derrida sostiene que el “original y la traducción se complementan, los dos se necesitan, es decir, que la relación entre ambos no es dependiente ni hegemónica porque el “vínculo o la obligación de la deuda no se da entre un donante y un donatario sino entre dos textos (dos producciones o dos creaciones)”. Citado por Moya<sup>36</sup>, Paul de Man establece “no sólo la prioridad de la esencia y la existencia del original, sino también que la traducción le da nueva vida, completa lo ya completo, que ambos se necesitan...” Esta es la premisa con que abordamos la traducción de la novela aquí analizada. En nuestro caso, tratamos de mantener la compatibilidad con la función textual del texto fuente (literaria, novela, ficción). La interacción con la autora como parte de la investigación fue imposible pues ya falleció, pero realizamos el análisis extratextual que propone Nord a fin de recabar información sobre las posibles intenciones de la escritora. Este trabajo se resume en el Capítulo I. Para cumplir con el *skopos*, aplicamos aquellas decisiones, estrategias y criterios traductológicos que nos convinieran para conseguir

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<sup>32</sup> Nord, *Translating as a Purposeful Activity*, 125.

<sup>33</sup> Suárez, 131

<sup>34</sup> Nord, *Translating as a Purposeful Activity*, 127.

<sup>35</sup> Moya, 172.

<sup>36</sup> Moya, 175.

los fines establecidos y lograr que la traducción de la novela funcionara para los receptores meta. Es decir, nuestra traducción es una reescritura que se "nutrió" de la oferta de Carmen Lyra.

A diferencia de las teorías no funcionalistas, la Teoría del Skopos le permite más protagonismo a quien traduce; pero para nuestro caso no es pertinente el tema de la visibilidad o invisibilidad del traductor, tópico que genera discusión. Este mayor protagonismo al que hacemos referencia, lo enfocamos más hacia el desarrollo de su actividad profesional. En primer lugar, ahora participa en la toma de decisiones para realizar un trabajo conforme a las exigencias del iniciador, pues aunque tiene un marco de trabajo delimitado, la forma en que logre cumplirlo queda a su entera libertad.

Por otra parte, el traductor ya no está subordinado y dependiente del texto fuente. Como ya explicamos, la teoría funcionalista del *skopos* no percibe al original como "intocable". Más bien, como cita Moya<sup>37</sup> explicando a Derrida, "el original es el primer deudor porque "empieza por carecer de, y por implorar la traducción. Y esta misma exigencia es la que resta autoridad o autoría al original [...]". En los enfoques tradicionales, por ejemplo, el traductor "conservador" siente, según menciona Lefevere<sup>38</sup> una "reverencia al prestigio del original", sentimiento que le induce a pensar que es su obligación retener escrupulosamente todas las peculiaridades locales y personales insistiendo en imitar en la lengua meta incluso hasta las formas gramaticales de la cultura fuente. El traductor/reescritor "escopista" o "atrevido" como lo denomina Lefevere, siente menos admiración por el prestigio del original, por lo que logra "liberarse" y, para lograr un buen producto:

"se propone a representar las peculiaridades de los tiempos de antaño sustituyéndolas por las peculiaridades de nuestro propio tiempo y país. [...] Su intención suele ser la de sorprender al público "poniendo al día" el original...". Asume voluntariamente los riesgos implícitos en el anacronismo. En el fondo, su reescritura es subversiva, y está diseñada

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<sup>37</sup> Moya, 172

<sup>38</sup> André Lefevere, *Traducción, reescritura y la manipulación del canon literario*. (Madrid: Biblioteca de Traducción, 1997) 69-70.

para hacer que el lector cuestione tanto el prestigio del original como la interpretación “aceptada” que se ha hecho de él tanto en términos poetológicos como ideológicos<sup>39</sup>.

Desde nuestro enfoque de traducción, no existe una forma única de traducir un texto fuente, pues, en primer lugar no existe un significado único y estable ya que el lenguaje y la cultura se encuentran en constante cambio, y en segundo lugar, la traducción dependerá de la oferta de objetivos que, a su vez, son los que determinarán las estrategias para producir el texto meta.

“In the real world, of course, our work is slightly more complicated than switching words around like building blocks – it is much more complex, demanding an interchange of meanings. If it were an easy operation, automatic translation programs would be able to perform the task. However since it is necessary to exchange and change meanings, especially in order to achieve the much coveted fluency in the target language, nothing matches human thought and the human being’s capacity for abstraction. Our task is to transmit the text’s meaning, bearing in mind that it is not always possible to find exact equivalents. [...] Translation is an extremely complex mental process of substituting meanings, where we continually make choices based on our current lifestyle, the country where we live and even our own life history and experiences<sup>40</sup>.

Quien traduce contará con un terreno fértil para poner en práctica y demostrar sus habilidades sin las restricciones impuestas por teorías que hasta demandan que el traductor replique la puntuación del texto fuente en su traducción. Asimismo, al integrarse el concepto de interacción entre cultura y lenguaje, el traductor se concibe como un experto mediador en la comunicación intercultural en un mundo internacionalizado.

Ya hemos dicho que la Teoría del *Skopos* promueve una relación interpersonal pues involucra varios participantes en el proceso de traducción, a saber: el productor del texto fuente, el emisor del texto fuente, el texto fuente, el receptor del texto fuente, el iniciador, el texto meta y el receptor del texto meta.

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<sup>39</sup> Lefevere, 70.

<sup>40</sup> Claudia Moreira, *An Invisible Traitor*. Online, Internet (15 julio 2006)

Nord<sup>41</sup> explica que todos estos agentes desempeñan funciones particulares pero interconectadas en una compleja red de relaciones mutuas. Por lo general, un proceso de traducción no lo inicia un traductor porque decidió traducir un texto, sino que un cliente le solicita el trabajo. Esta persona que necesita la traducción es el se denomina “el iniciador”. El iniciador se acerca con un propósito particular que quiere lograr con receptores de una lengua diferente. Se encarga de delimitar el curso de la traducción y esto lo logra definiendo unas instrucciones de traducción según el *skopos* definido para el texto meta. La mayor interacción se da entre el traductor y el iniciador. Por su parte, el traductor desempeña un papel de suma importancia dentro de este proceso. Como experto en este campo, se convierte en el responsable directo de cumplir con lo establecido y acordado con el iniciador y obtener un producto final que cumpla con las instrucciones de traducción. El traductor realiza, a su vez, otras acciones o papeles además de la traducción, pues se convierte en receptor del texto fuente y en su lector. Su deber es leer el texto con una actitud crítica en su posición de receptor. Una vez realizada esta lectura, Nord<sup>42</sup> propone un análisis detallado del texto fuente que debe incluir el estudio de los factores extratextuales e intertextuales del texto fuente. A partir de éste, el traductor empieza a trabajar en el proceso de traducción. Puede decirse que el traductor es el productor del texto meta que “que expresa las intenciones comunicativas del emisor de la cultura fuente” (Traducción personal) (Nord<sup>43</sup>).

El material con que el traductor trabajará (texto fuente) fue previamente producido por un emisor (la autora) de dicho texto con el fin de presentarlo a los receptores de la cultura fuente. La participación del emisor y del productor es, casi siempre, indirecta. Una definición de los receptores, tanto del texto fuente como del texto meta, es importantes porque permite especificar los propósitos respectivos de

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<sup>41</sup> Christiane Nord, *Translating as a Purposeful Activity*, (Manchester: St.Jerome Publishing, 1997) 19-25.

<sup>42</sup> Christiane Nord, *Text Analysis in Translation*. (Amsterdam-Atlanta: Rodopi, 1991) 35-140.

<sup>43</sup> Nord, 21.

ambos textos. El receptor de la cultura meta es crucial por ser el que define indirectamente la función del texto meta. El iniciador debe proveer al traductor con un claro perfil de tipo de receptor del texto meta. Tanto Vermeer como Nord<sup>44</sup> concuerdan en que el traductor debe insistir en recibir información sobre los antecedentes socioculturales, las expectativas, o la visión del mundo en la cultura meta.

Por tal motivo, para el cumplimiento a cabalidad de su trabajo el traductor requiere de las instrucciones apropiadas. Cuando el iniciador entra en contacto con el traductor para encargar la traducción de un texto, su función es suministrar todos los detalles posibles sobre el propósito de la traducción de este texto en particular. Además, debe darle un panorama general sobre el tipo de receptores del texto meta, el tiempo, el lugar, el medio de comunicación que desea (por lo general, escrito) y la función que se espera que el texto tenga. Estas instrucciones permiten al traductor inferir el tipo de traducción que es necesaria. Sin embargo, no le imponen técnicas o estrategias traductológicas específicas ni le dicen cómo hacer su trabajo. Tales decisiones son su responsabilidad.

### **1.5 André Lefevere: la traducción como reescritura**

André Lefevere fue uno de los principales expertos en los Estudios de Traducción modernos. Su trabajo en este campo comprende una amplia gama de temas y se distingue por su originalidad. Fue uno de los preconizadores del “giro cultural” en los Estudios de Traducción, y además, quien introdujo el concepto de traducción como reescritura. Para Lefevere, la traducción es “la reescritura más reconocible y, en potencia, la más influyente por su capacidad para proyectar la imagen de un autor en toda cultura diferente a la suya”<sup>45</sup>.

En *Literary Translation: Recent Theoretical Developments*, Kektar<sup>46</sup> explica que “reescribir” es la palabra que usa Lefevere como un término conveniente para referirse a la mayoría de las actividades que se relacionan con los estudios literarios, entre ellos

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<sup>44</sup> Nord, 22.

<sup>45</sup> Moya, 154.

<sup>46</sup> Kektar, 4.

la traducción. En su sentido amplio, la reescritura adapta los trabajos literarios a una audiencia específica. Según Aksoy, para Lefevere “la traducción no es la producción de un texto equivalente a otro, sino un proceso complejo de reescritura del original que se desarrolla de forma paralela con la concepción total del lenguaje y de las influencias y el balance del poder que existe entre una cultura y otra”<sup>47</sup>. Desde esta perspectiva, Lefevere considera que los traductores no escriben literatura sino que la reescriben adaptándola a una audiencia diferente con la intención de influir en la forma que ésta lee el trabajo”<sup>48</sup>. Lefevere afirma que la reescritura es importante como fuerza que potencia la evolución literaria ya que contribuye a proyectar la imagen del autor a otra cultura borrando los linderos espaciales y temporales. El concepto de Lefevere es compatible con la Teoría de Skopos pues la traducción como reescritura del texto original se realiza bajo ciertas limitaciones y con cierto propósito.

Partiendo de Nord, la traducción es una reescritura del original que se realiza bajo ciertos límites y para ciertos propósitos.

De acuerdo con Marian Rebei citando a Chantal Zabus, “la reescritura es dependiente del texto fuente de manera parecida a la que un parásito depende del huésped y del lector. El texto original sirve, a la vez, como un punto de partida: es un pre-texto y un “pretexto” y, al mismo tiempo, le concede autoridad a la reescritura”<sup>49</sup>. Para Zabus, la reescritura de un texto se convierte en una entidad por sí misma, paralela al texto original, y ambos textos coexisten.

Según, Rebei<sup>50</sup>, la reescritura se apropia de una obra según una perspectiva alternativa y la moldea en algo nuevo. Esto permite que los textos antiguos, por ejemplo, se re-inventen y la literatura misma se renueve y revigorece. Por esto, reescribir puede definirse como una imitación formal, un reciclaje, un reprocesamiento, una actualización, un cambio de formas, y una revisión. Reescribir también significa

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<sup>47</sup> Aksoy, 1.

<sup>48</sup> Aksoy, 3.

<sup>49</sup> Marian Rebei, *Un genre de circularité différent : De l'écriture et la lecture a la relecture et la ré-écriture*. *La Revue LISA/LISA e-journal*, Vol.II No.5 (2004), online, Internet, 45.

<sup>50</sup> Rebei, 46-57.



modernizar, es decir, reescribir un texto con una ortografía y un lenguaje moderno. En este sentido, la reescritura es importante pues la temporalidad es un factor que interviene en el proceso de traducción. Uno de los problemas de las obras literarias es el transcurso de tiempo que existe entre el original y el momento en que se decide realizar la traducción.

En suma, cuando la traducción es una reescritura, lo importante no es buscar la esencia, o el sentido del texto fuente en la versión. La traducción como una nueva creación tiene vida propia cuando llega a los receptores. Cada lector de la traducción hace su propia lectura del texto según su experiencia individual de vida y las expectativas que del texto tenga. Una reescritura es una interpretación de una oferta de información.

## **CAPITULO II**

**La traducción inversa como reescritura funcional:**

**análisis de ejemplos**

«El lector ideal es un traductor. Es capaz de desmenuzar un texto, retirarle la piel, cortarlo hasta la médula, seguir cada arteria y cada vena, y luego poner en pie a un nuevo ser viviente».

Alberto Manguel

En este capítulo se describe analíticamente los cambios deliberados que realizamos en el texto, a fin de cumplir con las seis instrucciones dadas mediante el skopos de traducción previamente definido. El resultado es una “nueva lectura” del original, que ni lo restituye ni lo copia, sino que le otorga una nueva perspectiva mediada, en primera instancia, por otra situación temporal (escrita a principios del siglo XIX/ reescrita a principios del siglo XXI) y, además, por otra perspectiva cultural. Desde nuestro enfoque funcionalista, consideramos que nuestros cambios, aunque realizados en inglés, infundieron “nueva vida” a la novela de Lyra, concordando con Derrida: “Si el traductor no restituye ni copia un original, es porque éste sobrevive y se transforma. La traducción será en realidad un momento de su propio crecimiento, él se completará en ella creciendo”.<sup>51</sup> La reescritura de *En una silla de ruedas* se realiza como un “pretexto” para actualizarla en términos de lenguaje, para estandarizar el uso de expresiones populares con la finalidad de acercarla a una cultura angloparlante mediante procedimientos de neutralización, ampliación/explicitación y del aporte para su enriquecimiento expresivo mediante un juego fonético diferente o inexistente en el texto original. En algunos casos, las categorías de reescritura convergen y se entrecruzan. Algunos elementos textuales requieren tanto de una actualización como una neutralización. Nos propusimos transformar aquellos elementos que constituían un obstáculo para la producción de un texto meta adecuado a los requerimientos de un lector angloparlante monolingüe del siglo XXI. En este proceso, se procura plasmar el

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<sup>51</sup> Virgilio Moya, *La selva de la traducción*, (Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra, 2004) 172.

concepto de que la obra traducida es “un producto cultural que arranca sin duda, de un texto de partida y que, sin embargo, marca su propia alteridad portadora de un valor originario y al mismo tiempo de un valor autónomo”.<sup>52</sup> Nuestra traducción se considera, por tanto, un quehacer creativo de reescritura productiva, generada a partir de nuestra lectura minuciosa del texto fuente.

### **2.1. El Realismo en *En una silla de ruedas***

La novela aquí traducida se clasifica como una obra realista. Las características del realismo pueden compararse con una “fotografía” minuciosa que, enriquecida por los elementos naturales propios de nuestro entorno latinoamericano, nos permite volver al pasado en términos de aspectos sociales y culturales de principios de siglo XX. Nuestro propósito es reescribir tales detalles en el texto meta conservando los elementos que caracterizan esta novela como latinoamericana/costarricense, pero adaptando las estructuras gramaticales, los aspectos denotativos y connotativos del lenguaje, el estilo, y de ser necesario el lenguaje, a los requerimientos de la lengua meta. Para lo anterior, usaremos técnicas como la simplificación, la ampliación, el parafraseo, la transposición y todos los recursos necesarios, cuando así se requiera, para lograr un texto meta que sea coherente con las exigencias del skopos de traducción dado.

Como punto de partida, señalamos algunas de las generalidades del realismo literario que encontramos presentes en la novela de Carmen Lyra. Las siguientes son las características de esta corriente literaria<sup>53</sup>.

- Análisis de la realidad mediante la observación de los personajes, los espacios y el resto de los elementos narrativos, es decir, reproduce una especie de fotografía de lo que observa.

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<sup>52</sup> María del Carmen Ruiz de la Cierva, *La traducción en la sociedad digital*. ( 9 de mayo 2006), online, Internet.

<sup>53</sup> *El Realismo y el Naturalismo*. (1 mayo 2006), online, Internet.

- Uso de las *descripciones minuciosas*, para mostrar perfiles exactos de los temas, personajes, situaciones e incluso lugares.
- Uso de un lenguaje cotidiano, es decir, del habla coloquial común y corriente. Este lenguaje popular puede observarse en el uso de *refranes*, *sentencias* y *dichos*. Con ello, consigue aumentar la expresividad del realismo.
- Intención de conmover al lector
- Objetividad al máximo, por lo que no se expresa juicios de valor, ni se moraliza de manera directa. Sin embargo, sí se lo hace de manera indirecta, porque el escritor realiza la selección de los argumentos, de los personajes o de las situaciones desde un ángulo que se adapte a su forma de pensar.
- Intención de reflejar y valorar lo colectivo, el grupo social y los defectos y males que afectan a la sociedad.
- El escritor se refiere a lo que tiene más próximo y conoce mejor.
- El novelista refleja ampliamente la sociedad contemporánea. Se recoge una gran diversidad de ambientes. Entran ahora en la novela sectores sociales como los medios burgueses o las capas inferiores de la sociedad.
- El tema principal de la novela es el conflicto entre el individuo y la sociedad. Se pretende conocer la causa de la marginación del personaje dentro de la sociedad.
- El centro de la novela suele ser el personaje, que reúne y expresa los rasgos generales de su grupo social. Se consigue un retrato casi perfecto, no solo físico sino también moral.
- Muestra una variada pintura de ambientes, principalmente costumbristas; reuniones en casinos, paseos callejeros, culto religioso, fiestas populares, etc.
- Es una representación total de la vida. El autor muestra las miserias e intereses humanos de la época, convirtiéndose en crítico y juez, intentando mejorar la sociedad<sup>54</sup>.

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<sup>54</sup> Gabriel García Márquez, *Características del Realismo*. (25 mayo 2006), online, Internet.

En esta novela de Carmen Lyra se encuentran abundantes ejemplos de las características del realismo antes señaladas, que ilustramos a continuación, y que han sido reescritas en nuestra traducción por considerarlas elementos clave para cumplir con las exigencias de nuestro propósito de traducción.

## **2.2 Estrategias traductológicas aplicadas para conservar los elementos del Realismo**

En esta sección se da énfasis especial a mostrar las estrategias aplicadas para conservar los elementos del realismo presentes. Sin embargo, como la traducción es un proceso holístico, se hace referencia a todos aquellos procedimientos que, dentro de los ejemplos escogidos, también cumplen con las instrucciones de otros skopos definidos para esta traducción indicándolo así en la explicación del proceso.

### **2.2.1 Reescritura de las imágenes de la naturaleza asociadas a descripciones físicas de los personajes**

En el texto fuente, las imágenes de la naturaleza se emplean para describir y reforzar características físicas y de personalidad. Aunque la novela está ambientada en un entorno urbano, las alusiones a la naturaleza hacen pensar en una particularidad de la vida costarricense, esto es, que aun en un espacio urbano, se mantiene el contacto íntimo y hasta sorprendente con la naturaleza. En este sentido, Lyra recurre a lo que tiene más próximo y conoce bien, es decir, los elementos naturales para construir imágenes literarias (usualmente símiles). Estos le inspiran en la descripción minuciosa de los personajes cumpliendo así con una de las características del realismo literario. como ilustramos en el ejemplo 2.1.2.a que describe a Sergio. Él es costarricense y por tanto, parte de este paisaje tropical lluvioso característico de este país latinoamericano, representados por bosques tupidos, ríos revueltos, días sin sol con lluvia y niebla con que se comparan sus rasgos personales.

## Ejemplo 2.2.1

### TEXTO FUENTE

Sus ojos grandes de córnea muy blanca miraban bajo las pestañas muy largas y negras con una mirada que hacía pensar en las corrientes de agua que se arremolinan bajo los bosques tupidos. (p.16)

### TEXTO META

*Under his very long black eyelashes, his big eyes with a very white sclera had a look that reminded a **watercourse swirling under the bushy forests.*** (p.3)

#### 2.2.1.1. Recuperación de connotaciones

Nuestra lectura del pasaje nos hace pensar en un paralelismo entre los elementos naturales y la descripción física, de la siguiente manera:

**Bosques tupidos=** pestañas muy largas y negras

**Corrientes de agua que se arremolinan=** la mirada

Los ojos del personaje se comparan con corrientes de agua que se arremolinan en un bosque tupido. La imagen de la naturaleza nos hace pensar, por tanto, en unos ojos cuya mirada tiene una gran fuerza expresiva. Partiendo de esta premisa, decidimos recrear tal paralelismo, pero tomamos la decisión de realizar un cambio en la secuencia temática mediante cambios sintácticos y estilísticos que describimos a continuación.

#### 2.2.1.2 Reestructuración sintáctica y estilística

Consideramos que en nuestra reescritura en inglés podríamos lograr un mayor impacto de tales connotaciones, por medio de una inversión de la frase, es decir, mediante un cambio en el orden de las estructuras sintácticas. En primer lugar, quisimos establecer más claramente la relación naturaleza-rasgos físicos. Se centró la atención en las pestañas con una frase adverbial de lugar en el texto meta al

empezar el párrafo como punto de partida para la descripción de los ojos que ellas circundan. De esta forma, fue posible dar énfasis al elemento principal de la descripción, esto es, la mirada y ligarla enseguida a esa fuerza de la naturaleza presente en la descripción. Además, realizamos otra simplificación estilística para reforzar dicho concepto. La frase adjetiva en español (que se arremolina) la reescribimos como una frase gerundial pues consideramos que en inglés, esta idea de progresión y movimiento presente en un gerundio (*swirling*, en el ejemplo) añade otro aspecto connotativo de fuerza a las aguas arremolinadas y, por ende, a la mirada del joven. Con ello, se recrea el realismo a través de las imágenes y lo hace con mayor impacto y de una manera más concisa. La mirada queda inmediatamente ligada a las corrientes de agua (*watercourses*) y la descripción de las pestañas al inicio concuerda con el concepto de bosques tupidos (*bushy forests*). Es decir, iniciamos y terminamos con el mismo elemento, como cerrando un círculo. Tal reordenamiento sintáctico contribuyó, además, a una lectura más consistente y directa en el texto meta, pues permitió una simplificación léxica que redujo el texto fuente de treinta y tres palabras a veintiséis en el texto meta. Este ahorro de palabras contribuye a dar coherencia textual a nuestra reescritura. Notemos el proceso partiendo del texto fuente.

**Texto fuente:**

*Sus ojos grandes de córnea muy blanca miraban bajo las pestañas muy largas y con una mirada que hacía pensar **en las corrientes de agua que se arremolinan bajo los bosques tupidos.** (33 palabras)*

Si se hubiera realizado una traducción “literal” del texto, este sería el resultado:

*His very big eyes with a pretty white sclera looked under the very long black eyelashes with a look that makes one think of watercourses that swirl under bushy forests. (30 palabras)*



Al compararlo con la traducción, esta re-estructuración resuelve, en primer lugar, el uso excesivo de palabras que resultaría de una traducción literal y, además, presenta más consistencia estilística con los parámetros de la cultura meta:

*Under his very long black eyelashes, his big eyes with a very white sclera had a look that reminded a **watercourse swirling under the bushy forests.** (26 palabras)*

### Ejemplo 2.2.2

#### TEXTO FUENTE

La inquietud y la alegría de la infancia, prisioneras en este cuerpo condenado a vivir *en una silla de ruedas* asomaban siempre por sus ojos y por sus labios como esos traviesos rayos de sol que en un día oscuro saben abrirse camino a través de la lluvia y de la niebla. (p.16)

#### TEXTO META

*The childhood energy and happiness trapped in a body doomed to live in a wheelchair would always pop up in his eyes and lips **as those playful sun rays that manage to make their way through the rain and the fog on a dark day.** (p.3)*

#### 2.2.2.1 Recuperación de connotaciones

A pesar de la parálisis que ata a Sergio a la silla de ruedas por el resto de su vida, la inquietud y la alegría de la niñez logran trascender los límites de la incapacidad abriéndose campo por medio de la expresividad de sus ojos y de sus labios. Este es el contraste positivo que se logra a través de la imagen de la naturaleza que hemos resaltado en negrita y subrayado arriba. Las palabras **prisioneras** y **condenado** en el texto fuente tienen una connotación negativa que reafirma la marginación como elemento propio en las obras de los escritores realistas. Este ejemplo, también contiene ese elemento del realismo “lírico”, esto es, el uso de recursos literarios para apelar a las emociones del lector con el fin de provocar una reacción. Para reescribir esto, fuimos detallistas en la elección de las palabras que “re-crearan” el efecto emotivo del texto. En cuanto a la elección léxica, se pudo haber reescrito “**condenado**” usando el término “**condemned**”; sin embargo, se procuró dar con un

término con una denotación más contundente para expresar que ese “estar condenado” era a consecuencia de una causa trágica fuera del control humano y con ello reforzar, a la vez, esta idea presente desde la primera línea de la novela que nos informa sin preámbulo que leeremos sobre una desgracia: “*When this disgrace came, Sergio was not even two years old*” (p.1). Por tanto, “**doom**” con su significado de “*adverse fate, to be destined to an adverse fate*”<sup>55</sup> permite un mayor impacto comunicativo a esta descripción, pues no da lugar a dudas de que la situación del niño es irreversible.

El símil construido con elementos naturales transmite un mensaje positivo que comunica que, a pesar de todo, es posible traspasar las barreras de la adversidad. Los **rayos de sol** representan la inquietud y la alegría que vencen la prisión de unas piernas paralizadas. Estas piernas son ese **día oscuro**. La oscuridad tiende a hacer que se paralicen muchas actividades. Se relaciona con el invierno, en donde la actividad se reduce a espacios cerrados y por tanto limitantes. La **lluvia** y la **niebla** representan más obstáculos que vencer. Encontramos un simbolismo de la luz implícito en este ejemplo y lo reescribimos, porque además de representar elementos de nuestra región, la imagen tiene un sentido universal y, por tanto, presente en la cultura meta.

“El simbolismo de la luz, por lo demás, es prácticamente uno de los universales de la cultura. Tanto para la *Qabbalah*, el *Corán*, el *Rig-Veda* o el mazdeísmo, por no mencionar sino un par de ejemplos, aparece la luz como la forma suprema en la transformación de la realidad, el paradigma de la vida, de la felicidad, del triunfo”<sup>56</sup>.

### Ejemplo 2.2.3

#### TEXTO FUENTE

#### TEXTO META

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<sup>55</sup> *Random House Webster's School & Office Dictionary*. Nueva York: Random House, 1993. 132.

<sup>56</sup> El simbolismo del sol. Estudios. Filosofía-Historia-Letras. Invierno 1991-1992. 24 de mayo 2006. 2 < [biblioteca.itam.mx/estudios/estudio/letras27/textos4/sec\\_4.html](http://biblioteca.itam.mx/estudios/estudio/letras27/textos4/sec_4.html) >

(\*) Nota: se introduce un (\*) adelante para hacer hincapié en que el uso de “resignada” de esta forma, no es un error de la autora del presente trabajo al copiar el texto. Aparece de esta manera en el texto fuente, página 16.

Era tranquilo con esa \*resignada tranquilidad resignada de los árboles en los días apacibles cuando no hay viento. (p.16)

*His calmness resembled that resigned stillness of trees on placid windless days.* (p.3)

El texto elegido para este tercer ejemplo, ilustra un rasgo de la personalidad de Sergio mediante una imagen de la naturaleza. Concuerda con una de las características del realismo que consiste en el uso de descripciones minuciosas para mostrar perfiles exactos del personaje:

- a. **Árbol = no** puede desplazarse, “atado al suelo” vs. **Sergio:** no puede caminar, “atado a una silla de ruedas”.
- b. **árbol=** resignados vs. **Sergio:** resignado
- c. **árbol= Sergio**

#### 2.2.3.1 Reescritura como revisión de estilo

Al iniciar el proceso de traducción, notamos que el ejemplo en cuestión, repite, por causas que desconocemos, la palabra **resignada**, como mostramos a continuación:

Era tranquilo con esa \*resignada tranquilidad resignada de los...

Como la reescritura también se utiliza como un pretexto para revisar y reeditar el texto fuente, la primera decisión en su reescritura fue “solucionar” dicha situación eliminando la repetición del adjetivo, para alcanzar así una estructura más coherente.

#### 2.2.3.2 Reestructuración sintáctica

Para reescribir esta imagen de tranquilidad de Sergio que nos refuerza el símil con los árboles en días apacibles sin viento, nos inclinamos por un cambio en las estructuras sintácticas presentes en el texto fuente. Como la tranquilidad que caracteriza este personaje es el elemento central que se enfatiza a través del elemento natural, decidimos convertirla en núcleo del sujeto. Hablamos de “**su**

**tranquilidad”/“His calmness”** (determinante + sustantivo) en contraposición a la estructura del original “Era tranquilo” (sujeto+ verbo+ adjetivo). Con esta decisión de cambio de introdujimos un paralelismo sintáctico que nos permitió una reescritura concordante con los criterios normativos de la lengua meta al describir la tranquilidad de Sergio y la tranquilidad de los árboles estableciendo no sólo un paralelismo entre elementos naturales y de personalidad, sino entre estructuras sintácticas: *determinante + sustantivo: His calmness* y *determinante + sustantivo: the stillness* que difiere del texto fuente. Consideramos que esta uniformidad sintáctica, permitió transmitir el sentido del símil con mayor precisión. Como resultado de la reestructuración sintáctica, logramos un ahorro léxico de dieciocho palabras en el texto fuente a doce en su reescritura.

### 2.2.3.3. Cambios morfológicos y juego fonético

La recurrencia del sufijo **-ness** en los dos sustantivos “*clave*” del ejemplo *calmness*, *stillness* así como del adjetivo (*windless*), permitieron introducir repetición de sonidos que dan unidad fonética a esta oración y que, a nuestro criterio, añaden un elemento “poético” por el efecto sonoro logrado y que no está presente en el texto fuente.

### Ejemplo 2.2.4

Candelaria era una anciana india de origen guanacasteco, con la piel muy oscura, **color de teja**,... (p.20)

*Candelaria was an old native woman from Guanacaste. She had this very dark complexion **that resembled the color of a clay tile**... (p.5)*

Otros elementos de la naturaleza y muy característicos de la cultura fuente que se reescriben como tales en el texto meta son las comparaciones con hojas tiernas de banano, los cocos, el color barro de las tejas y hasta los ojos de las cabras. Todos

**TEXTO FUENTE**

**TEXTO META**

ellos reflejan las características de un país tropical que están ligadas a estos personajes y que contribuyen tanto a describirlos como a enmarcarlos geográficamente.

El ejemplo anterior describe el color de la piel de la anciana guanacasteca por medio de la comparación con un elemento de la naturaleza. Para reforzarlo y mantenerlo usamos las siguientes estrategias.

#### **2.2.4.1 Reestructuración sintáctica y estilística**

A diferencia del texto fuente, dividimos el párrafo en dos oraciones en busca de mayor concisión y claridad. La primera es una oración simple y la segunda, una oración subordinada. Creemos que este cambio nos permitió resaltar dos aspectos descriptivos del texto fuente: la procedencia geográfica de la anciana y el color de su pie

#### **2.2.4.2 De gentilicios a topónimos**

No se dispone aún de una opción para la reescritura del gentilicio “guanacasteco” como tal en inglés. Con el fin de evitar la transposición cultural de un término que tiene sus raíces exclusivamente en la cultura fuente y, por tanto, presentar confusión al lector meta, decidimos usar el topónimo, Guanacaste. Al introducir este elemento, adicionamos la preposición inglesa ablativa “*from*”, que indica procedencia. Con esto, también ubicamos al personaje dentro de un contexto geográfico como lo entendería de inmediato un lector de la cultura fuente, pero valiéndonos del topónimo que funciona como un elemento más claro, pues al escribirse con mayúscula y estar precedido por dicha preposición, el lector meta no tiene mayor dificultad en su lectura.

#### **2.2.4.3 Adición de un símil no presente en el texto fuente**

Al dividir el contenido del texto original en dos oraciones introducimos un símil de nuestra creación en la segunda oración, adicionando la palabra “resembled” para establecer una comparación más concreta entre la piel y el color del barro.

#### **2.2.4.4 Adición de un adjetivo no presente en el texto fuente**

Asimismo, en la segunda oración se incluyó una referencia al material (clay) de la teja. Para los lectores de la cultura fuente es fácil relacionar una teja con el color de la tierra oscura o café rojizo que caracteriza el suelo de nuestro país. Sin embargo, en la cultura meta, se encuentran tejas de diferentes materiales tanto naturales como artificiales y no necesariamente de color café o marrón. Por eso, esta adición se convierte en un elemento aclaratorio que explicita una característica particular de las tejas en nuestro país: éstas proceden de la tierra misma.

### **2.3 Reescritura de connotaciones negativas de los personajes como elemento del Realismo**

Carmen Lyra también introduce el elemento del realismo mediante el cual el autor busca una representación total de la vida mostrando las miserias e intereses humanos de la época. Lo hace mediante la descripción minuciosa de los personajes. Con adjetivos “negativos” describe a Concha, a Juan Pablo, al tío José, y a la niña Queta. Tal escogencia léxica logra el rechazo o repulsión por parte del lector ante estos personajes. Sin embargo, Lyra resalta las bondades de los menos privilegiados de la novela: Merceditas, Miguel, Canducha, Gracia y Ana Maria mediante el uso de adjetivos “positivos” con lo que crea una empatía y una solidaridad muy fuerte entre ellos y el lector.

Tomamos como ejemplo para ilustrar nuestro trabajo de reescritura de estos atributos negativos a la tía Concha, quien representa la burguesía elitista, fría, e hipócrita que se otorga el derecho de dominar y humillar a los que no son de su

condición social. Se presenta a Concha con calificativos que generan reacción por parte del lector y le inducen a identificarlo como un instrumento de opresión dentro de la novela. Siendo uno de nuestros objetivos mantener dichas características del realismo en el texto meta, reescribimos a los personajes acercándolos hasta donde nos fue posible, a los descritos en el texto fuente.

### 2.3.1 Recuperación del significado y del significante

Asimismo, tratamos de mantener la mayor cercanía posible en el significado del término y además, en su significante, entendiendo éste último como el conjunto de sonidos de una palabra.

- **Descripción de Concepción Esquivel (Concha)**

En la descripción de Concha, se utiliza el adjetivo *antipática* que reescribimos como *unpleasant*, para mantener una configuración morfológica similar, es decir, usamos un adjetivo modificado por el prefijo negativo “un-“. Con ello, además logramos una aproximación de sonidos entre el adjetivo en español y el que escogimos en inglés.

#### Ejemplo 2.3.1

...la **antipática** señora (p.74)

...*the unpleasant lady* (p.34)

Este mismo efecto lo logramos el adjetivo “rechoncha” que reescribimos en el texto meta con el adjetivo “chubby”. En inglés, pudimos haber elegido la palabra “stocky”, pero al buscar sinónimos de este adjetivo, encontramos el adjetivo “chubby”, que dio un mejor resultado para tratar de incorporar alguna semejanza con *rechoncha* no sólo en términos de significado sino de significante. El fonema /t/ inicial en el adjetivo en inglés se asemeja al fonema /ch/ del español.

#### Ejemplo 2.3.2

... una mujer bajita, rechoncha y **ridícula** de voz **hombruna**. (p.79)

*Aunt Concha was a ridiculous short chubby woman with a manly voice.* (p.38)

#### Ejemplo 2.3.3

¡Ah! sus gorduras y mondongos que le temblaban el andar” (p.83)

*Oh! Her fatness and all that flaccid skin that shook as she walked! (p.39)*

En algunas otras descripciones optamos por alternativas por completo diferentes. Por ejemplo, para describir la gordura de Concha, Lyra utiliza el término “las gorduras”. Nuestra decisión es usar el término en singular (fatness) y hacer una explicitación de lo que para nuestro entendimiento se denominan “mondongos” en la novela. Esta es una expresión popular que debimos cambiar por un concepto más estándar. Por esta razón, reescribimos la idea indicando y resaltando una de las consecuencias de la gordura: la piel flácida y colgante: “that flaccid skin.” Este es un término que, actualmente, se lee y escucha con frecuencia cuando se invita a las personas a perder peso. De ahí su escogencia, con la cual neutralizamos, además, la denotación popular en el texto fuente en cumplimiento del Skopo 4.

## **2.4 Reescritura de las costumbres y creencias de la época**

La novela realista muestra una variada pintura de ambientes, principalmente costumbristas entre las que son frecuentes los ritos religiosos y las fiestas populares, entre otros. En la novela encontramos varios ejemplos que concuerdan con esta tendencia; por ejemplo, Candelaria narra a los niños la leyenda del venado capasuri, la costumbre de cortar la cola a la serpiente de cascabel y colocarla en una guitarra con la que después se va dar serenata a la mujer que se quiere. La autora también nos narra costumbres religiosas como la creencia de la palma bendita, los rezos de novenario, o el culto a los santos. También describe el ambiente de un “turno” costarricense. Estos relatos se reescriben en el texto meta con riqueza de detalle para comunicar elementos de la cultura costarricense.

### **Ejemplo 2.4.1**

#### **Protección contra los rayos:**

El Domingo de Ramos iba mama Canducha a la Iglesia a recibir su palma bendita que ella usaba en los días de tormenta para ahuyentar el rayo, haciendo cruces con pedazos de la hoja que clavaba en la puerta de la cocina. (p.26)



*On Palm Sunday, Mamma Canducha used to go to church for her blessed cut palm leaves. She wove crosses with them that she later used on stormy days to drive the thunder away. Then, she nailed the blessed palm crosses on the kitchen door. (p.8)*

#### **2.4.1.1 Reescritura mediante la adición y explicitación parcial**

En el ejemplo 2.3.1 se refleja una costumbre religiosa católica en Costa Rica. En la cultura meta, la religión católica no es la religión predominante. Por tanto, hubo que realizar la reescritura usando los recursos de adición y de explicitación con el fin de hacer más comprensible una costumbre religiosa particular: en lugar de reescribir “blessed palm” por palma bendita, introducimos *cut palm* (“blessed (cut palm) leaves”), para aclarar el concepto de las palmas, y explicitamos el concepto de entretejer las palmas en forma de cruz (*wove crosses*). No recurrimos a recursos aclaratorios como pie de páginas, notas del traductor o glosarios para “explicarle” al lector meta los detalles de costumbres religiosas/culturales, pues no es nuestra intención, como traductores de una obra literaria, convertir su reescritura en un texto informativo. Consideramos que es productivo que el lector de la cultura meta quede “en la oscuridad” sobre algunos aspectos ligados a la cultura meta, a fin de motivarlo a la búsqueda de conocimiento.

#### **Ejemplo 2.4.2**

##### **El cascabel dentro de la guitarra para enamorar a la amada para siempre**

-Pues allá en mi tierra de Guanacaste, uno de los medios más eficaces para enamorar a una mujer es echarle serenatas con un guitarra dentro de la que se hayan puesto un cascabel cogido de la mismita cola de la cascabela. La cosa es coger viva **la animala**. El hombre se ayuda con una estaca que tenga una horqueta en la punta y con la horqueta va y prensa la cabeza de la cascabela para que no vaya a ser cosa que le meta los colmillos. Mientras la tiene asegurada, le arranca de la cola uno de los cascabeles, pero toda la diligencia tiene que hacerla solito, sin ayuda de nadie. Enseguida la deja irse. Va y mete el cascabel entre la caja de la guitarra y ya está, el instrumento al momento cambia y se pone a sonar que es como oír una orquesta bien tocada. Por la noche va el hombre a serenatar a la mujer que quiere y suenan las cuerdas de la guitarra y suena la canción de una manera que es como si a uno le estuvieran echando en los oídos un maleficio o un licor encantado y toda la gente se va poniendo como borracha. Y con la mujer serenateada no hay tu tía: se enamora del hombre y va con él hasta el fin del mundo. (p.24)

*“Well, there in my town in Guanacaste, one of the best ways to make a woman fall in love is giving her a serenade with a guitar carrying inside a bell taken from the rattlesnake’s tail itself. The secret is to catch **the snake** alive. The man should help himself with a pitchfork-shaped stake. He should press the snake’s head with the pitchfork so that it doesn’t bite him. While the snake is safely taken, the man tears one of the rattles from its tail. He must do it all by himself. No one can help. After he gets it, he immediately frees the snake. Then, he puts the rattle inside the guitar’s box and the instrument instantly changes; it sounds as if you were listening to a very fine-tuned orchestra. At night, the man goes serenading the woman he loves. The guitar strings and the song sound as if someone were pouring out witchcraft or enchanted liquor in the ears, and everybody appears to be drunk. The woman in question doesn’t have a way out: she falls madly in love with the man and goes with him to the end of the world.*

#### **2.4.2.1 Recuperación del significado y neutralización de denotaciones populares**

Candelaria describe en detalle una costumbre de la tierra guanacasteca de donde es oriunda. En la reescritura se omiten usos populares del lenguaje, a saber, “la animala”, “la cascabela”, que representan una tendencia en el lenguaje popular que hace alusión a un mayor tamaño que se expresa mediante el uso del femenino. Según Arroyo, este uso que pretende expresar que se trata de un animal muy grande y, de manera especial, se utiliza con serpientes.<sup>57</sup> Como esta es una característica del habla costarricense con una connotación desconocida para la cultura meta, decidimos omitirla haciendo referencia simplemente al tipo de serpiente (rattlesnake) y en la mención del animal usamos *the snake*. Caso contrario, nuestra opción hubiera sido usar, por ejemplo, *the she-snake*, o *the female-snake*. Sin embargo, nuestro *skopos* de traducción nos indica que debemos “neutralizar” el lenguaje popular en nuestra reescritura del texto meta. Se omite también en la reescritura en inglés, la expresión “no hay tutía”, por la misma razón. Según la información en la página web [Fundéu](#), esta expresión significa que no hay remedio para una determinada circunstancia<sup>58</sup> ; mediante el recurso de parafraseo, reescribimos la idea con la frase “*doesn’t have a way out*”, es decir, no tiene escapatoria o salida, que tiene la misma denotación.

#### **2.4.2.2 Reescritura como compensación**

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<sup>57</sup> Arroyo, 53.

<sup>58</sup> FUNDEU. *Dichos y refranes*. (2 de junio 2006), online, Internet.

Se pudo haber omitido la frase nominal the snake, sustituyéndola por el pronombre “it”. Sin embargo, a manera de compensar la connotación de tamaño que implica, según Arroyo, el uso de “la animala” se tomó la decisión de “reconfirmar” el hecho de que se está ante una serpiente, manteniendo la frase nominal mencionada.

### 2.4.2.3 Reescritura por adición

En el mismo texto, se logró marcar una mayor intensidad al enamoramiento que el embrujo de la guitarra provoca en la mujer que recibe la serenata, introduciendo la expresión “*falls madly in love with*” como un recurso que, a nuestro juicio, resalta aún más el efecto mágico de los cascabeles.

## 2.5 Reescritura de las costumbres populares costarricenses

### 2.5.1 Aspectos religiosos

Un alto porcentaje de ciudadanos costarricenses profesa la religión católica y esto se refleja en muchos pasajes de la novela. Escogimos para fines ilustrativos el de la Virgen Dolorosa. Las estrategia traductológicas escogidas fueron la explicitación y la adición para efectos de mayor claridad lo concerniente a la referencia sobre una “dolorosa” enlutada y triste, pues, como ya lo aclaramos, nuestra audiencia meta no es católica en su gran mayoría. Explicitamos el término “dolorosa” por medio del uso de *Virgin Mary* y, aunque sin dar explicaciones exhaustivas, explicamos que se trata de una de las personificaciones dadas a la virgen por los católicos que en inglés se conoce como “*Our Lady of Sorrows*”<sup>59</sup> El resultado es el siguiente:

#### TEXTO FUENTE

...y dentro de un frenal una **dolorosa** enlutada y triste con el corazón atravesado por puñales. (p.68)

#### TEXTO META

Inside a glass box, there is a sad mourning image, **that according to Catholic beliefs, represents the Virgin Mary in her given persona as the Our**

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<sup>59</sup> Los católicos mexicanos reverencias a la Virgen María en muchas personas diferentes cada una de las cuales encarna ya se diferentes eventos y épocas en su vida (llamadas advocaciones), o en sus muchas apariciones en el curso de la historia. Nuestra Señora de los Dolores, es una advocación que muestra a la Virgen sufriente a los pies de la cruz donde su Hijo está muriendo”.

**Lady of Sorrows**, whose heart is pierced  
by daggers. (p.44)

El término dolorosa en el texto original se usa como sustantivo común. Este uso contribuye a dificultar la comprensión de un lector que no practica la religión católica, pues ni siquiera le sugiere la idea de que se trate de alguna persona. Por este motivo, se recurre a la explicitación/ampliación añadiendo dieciocho palabras al texto para aclarar su significado sin recurrir a las notas al pie de página tal y como lo demanda el Skopos 1.

### 2.5.2 Reescritura del folclor: leyendas y cuentos costarricenses

La anciana Canducha les narraba a los niños cuentos costarricenses entre los que se menciona “El tonto y el vivo”, “La cucarachita Mandinga”, “Las Aventuras de Tío Conejo”. De estos nombres, reescribimos por medio de equivalencia los dos primeros. Para El tonto y el vivo, aplicamos una reescritura de adjetivo por adjetivo tonto/*dumb* y vivo/*smart*. Con respecto a las Aventuras del Tío Conejo, en la cultura meta existe un libro de cuentos para niños y adultos que se denomina The Tales of Uncle Remus: The Adventures of Brer Rabbit<sup>60</sup>. Dada la similitud del título con el de la historia en español, decidimos mantener el mismo orden de palabras, esto es; *determinante +sustantivo+preposición+sustantivo+sustantivo* y asemejar el título al del libro mencionado.

En la reescritura del título “La cucarachita Mandinga”, mantuvimos el término Mandinga en español. Según Arroyo, en el lenguaje popular en la literatura costarricense, **mandinga** es un adjetivo que significa “maricón, cobarde”<sup>61</sup>. En este cuento, ese no parece ser el significado porque la cucarachita no presenta estas características. Por lo tanto, la traducción “The Mandinga Little Roach” no es la más exacta, pues en tal caso, “mandiga” se clasificaría como un adjetivo de descripción

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<sup>60</sup> Julius Lester, *The Tales of Uncle Remus: The Adventures of Brer Rabbit*. (Dial Books, 1999).

<sup>61</sup> Victor Arroyo Soto, *El habla popular en la cultura costarricense*. (San José: Publicaciones de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 1997) 240.

general en inglés. Nos inclinamos a pensar que el término “mandinga” se refiere al color de la cucaracha pues nuestra investigación en textos paralelos nos llevó hasta un grupo africano denominado los “mandinga”. Son personas negras que viven en África occidental.<sup>62</sup> Además, en un artículo crítico sobre un musical que se presentó en Panamá basado en este cuento, su autor, Erick Jackson describe el tema del musical de esta manera: “Well, this *is* a musical about a foxy chola cockroach looking for a mate, and she *does* end up pairing off with a mouse.”<sup>63</sup> Nótese el término “chola”, que según la definición del DRAE, es el término que se usa para designar a un mestizo. Para Arroyo<sup>64</sup>, en el habla popular “el cholo” es un moreno. En algunos textos paralelos consultados escritos en inglés se hace referencia a la cucarachita como *Mandinga, the Little Roach*: “Tells **Mandinga, the Little Roach** and Rooster and his Coin from Under the Mango Tree, Stories from Spanish Speaking Countries by Elida Guardia Bonet. This award-winning tape is also available in Spanish and is called *Debajo del árbol de mango*.”<sup>65</sup> En estos, se deja el nombre en español: “Unlike any other roach, “**La Cucarachita Mandinga**” was a very clean roach. She swept her house inside and out. She washed the dishes and did the laundry. Cucarachita Mandinga swept under the rug and even under the bed.”<sup>66</sup> En el primer caso, pareciera que Mandinga es el nombre propio de la cucaracha pues se le separa del resto mediante coma. No tenemos indicio de que este sea su nombre. La opción en español no fue la nuestra pues nuestra intención fue reducir al máximo la interferencia del español. Decidimos considerar “mandinga” como un adjetivo de color y por tanto lo colocamos de acuerdo al orden de los modificadores del sustantivo en inglés de la siguiente forma: determinante +tamaño+ color+ sustantivo= “The Little Mandinga Roach” que significa The Little Black Roach)

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<sup>62</sup> *Mandinga*. ( mayo 2006). <http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mandinga>.

<sup>63</sup> Erick Jackson, Rogelio Sinán, *Classic on the Admin Building steps*. Volume 12, Number 4. (19 abril 2006), online, Internet.

<sup>64</sup> Arroyo, 211.

<sup>65</sup> *Texas State Library and Archives Commission Website*. (19 abril 2006), online, Internet.

<sup>66</sup> *Wikipedia*. (19 abril 2006) [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/La\\_Cucarachita\\_Mandinga](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/La_Cucarachita_Mandinga).

La reescritura de estos nombres de los tres cuentos mencionados se realiza sin explicitación en el texto meta como puede verse a continuación.

| <b>Texto fuente</b>         | <b>Texto meta</b>                     |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| El tonto y el vivo          | <i>The Dumb and the Smart</i>         |
| La Cucarachita Mandinga     | <i>The Little Mandinga Roach</i>      |
| Las Aventuras de Tío Conejo | <i>The Adventures of Uncle Rabbit</i> |

Por otra parte, en el texto fuente se relata que la cocinera en casa de la tía Concha solía contarles “cuentos de espantos” a los niños. El narrador menciona las conocidas leyendas costarricenses “La segua”, “La llorona”, “El cadejos”, “El padre sin cabeza”, “La tulevieja”<sup>67</sup>, y “El mico malo”. Para los cuentos de “La Segua” y “La llorona”, el narrador ofrece una explicación sobre cada personaje. Sin embargo, no lo hace con el resto de las historias mencionadas.

### **2.5.3 Transliteración: conservación del origen latinoamericano/costarricense**

No reescribimos los nombres de los personajes ni de las leyendas costarricenses La segua, La llorona, El cadejos, y La tulevieja. Nuestra decisión fue mantenerlos en español para cumplir con el escopo en términos de preservar el hecho de que la novela es latinoamericana. Sin embargo, en el caso de las leyendas y cuentos realizamos reescritura mediante la adición de una breve y concisa explicación para cada una de las leyendas emulando la descripción realizada por la escritora en las dos primeras, pero que interrumpe en las demás. Retomamos la idea y usamos la explicitación como instrumento de reescritura cuyo propósito fundamental consistió en facilitar la lectura y, de algún modo, instruir, de manera breve, al lector meta sobre el tema principal de cada leyenda. En relación con “El padre sin cabeza” y “El mico malo” reescribimos ambos títulos al inglés para compensar el uso del español que

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<sup>67</sup> Se escribe de este modo aunque se encuentra también en algunos textos como Tulivieja.

decidimos mantener en los nombres de las otras leyendas. Además, ambos títulos se refieren a conceptos más universales que pueden relacionarse con historias de fantasmas similares en la cultura meta. Con respecto a la historia “El mico malo”, explicitamos en el texto meta que se trata de un mico macho. En español tenemos el masculino y el femenino para mico. No sucede lo mismo en inglés. Nuestra decisión consistió en adicionar el pronombre de tercera persona masculino singular “*he*” delante de “*monkey*”, para mantener el detalle de que se trata de un mono macho.

A continuación se describe el proceso de análisis y aplicación de las estrategias:

#### **Ejemplo 2.5.4**

##### **Texto fuente:**

“En las noches de invierno se iban a la cocina a experimentar el terrible placer de escuchar los cuentos de espantos, referidos por Engracia la cocinera: el de **la Segua**, a quien el trasnochador perseguía tomándola por una linda muchacha la cual al cabo de mucho caminar se volvía y dejaba tieso a su perseguidor, mostrándole los enormes dientes de su hocico de yegua; el de **la Llorona** lamentándose en las riberas de los ríos por el hijo que había arrojado en la corriente; **el del Cadejos**, **el de la Tulevieja**, **el del Padre sin Cabeza**, **el del Mico Malo**”. (p.77)

##### **Texto meta:**

(Se deja destacado el recurso de explicitación/ampliación que empleamos para lograr una lectura más inteligible en la cultura meta)

*On rainy nights, Sergio and Ana Maria went to the kitchen to feel the terrible joy of listening to the ghost folktales from Costa Rica that Engracia, the cook, told them like “La Segua” whom the night birds used to chase because they thought she was a pretty girl. After a long walk, the Segua turned around, and she left the chaser paralyzed by the shock when she showed its mare’s snout with huge teeth. Engracia also told the children “La Llorona” legend. It was about a crying woman, who wandered along the river banks mourning the child she had thrown into the flowing water, or she told them other scary tales such as “El Cadejos”, a big, black, red-eyed, hairy, chain-rattling devil-dog that roams the countryside during the wee hours of the morning to scare the drunks, “LaTulvieja”, an old creepy woman who everybody believed came to take away the town’s children, the Headless Priest that was a bloody ghost that appears to drunks, and the Bad He-Monkey sent by the devil to teach a lesson to husbands and wives who fight too much.* (p.36)

El párrafo en el texto meta tiene ciento ochenta y siete palabras lo que representa una adición de ochenta y siete palabras. De ellas, veintidós se adicionan para explicar qué es “El cadejos”, catorce describen a “La tulevieja”, nueve se refieren a la historia de “El padre sin cabeza”, y dieciséis relatan la del “El mico malo”. El resto de las palabras (veintiséis) se añaden con el propósito de aclarar (ghost folktales from Costa Rica) o de crear cohesión (or she told them other scary tales such as...) para lograr una unidad tanto semántica como gramatical.

## **2.6 Reescritura de las emociones como elemento del Realismo**

En el realismo “lírico” se apela a los sentimientos del lector para conmoverlo e, idealmente, hacerlo reaccionar ante las diversas situaciones de injusticia o marginación que describe la obra. En la novela realista abundan los sustantivos, adjetivos y verbos que denotan sentimientos y emociones. Por medio de un análisis página por página, se comprobó que varios procedimientos lingüísticos están orientados a conmover. En la mayoría de las 160 páginas traducidas, encontramos léxico que expresa sentimientos o que se utiliza para crear una reacción emotiva. Notamos que en las páginas 68 a 71 es donde se plantea con claridad el fuerte impacto negativo que ha tenido para Sergio la disolución de su familia y la inesperada circunstancia de ir a vivir a un lugar que él nunca hubiera escogido. Los hechos que se narran en ellas son precedidos por una ambientación descrita por el niño: ha ido a vivir en una casa de habitaciones vastas y frías, una sala con aspecto lúgubre (en contraposición a la calidez de la sala de su antigua casa). Los adjetivos que escogió la autora del texto fuente en el siguiente ejemplo, definen el dramático cambio de Sergio a una existencia sin padre y sin madre que le lleva a vivir en lugares donde nunca siente que “echa raíces”. Creemos que esta escogencia de adjetivos es estratégica y logra conmover al lector al imaginar al niño en este ambiente triste y, según, se puede inferir, solitario y sin calor humano, como se sugiere con la mención de los retratos de abuelos de “cara de pocos amigos” como se ilustra con el siguiente extracto:



Las habitaciones son vastas y **frías**, con el pavimento de ladrillos que mi tía hace encerer a menudo, y que a primera vista se creerían mojados. Los muebles son pesados y grandotes. La sala tiene un aspecto **lúgubre** con sus sillones y sofá forrados en tela oscura, en las paredes retratos de abuelos de **cara de pocos amigos** y dentro de un fena una dolorosa enlutada y triste con el corazón atravesado por puñales. (p.67-68)

*The rooms are big and **cold** with brick floors that my aunt often makes someone wax; so, at first sight, you would think they are wet. The furniture is huge and heavy. The living room looks **mournful** with the couches and the sofa upholstered with a **dark** fabric; pictures of **unfriendly-looking** grandparents hang on the walls. Inside a glass box, there is a **sad mourning** image of the Virgin Mary in her given persona, according to Catholic customs, of the Our Lady of Sorrows whose heart is pierced by daggers. (p.31)*

### 2.6.1 Reescritura de las emociones mediante cambio del aspecto verbal

En las páginas 70 y 71, el lector se conmueve profundamente con el encuentro de Sergio y de Ana María y el diálogo sincero de ambos niños que desde ese momento quedan unidos gracias a la marginación que la sociedad les impone. En estas dos páginas notamos que el verbo “llorar” aparece 7 veces.

Encontramos una gran concentración de uso de este verbo en sus diferentes conjugaciones en tan sólo dos páginas. Consideramos que tal repetición tiene una intencionalidad definida, esto es, demuestra la reacción del personaje ante un evento crucial y, además, busca crear un efecto emotivo en el lector, que consideramos se logra con la repetición frecuente del verbo “llorar”.

En los siguientes ejemplos, introducimos un cambio en el aspecto del verbo. La pregunta ¿Por qué llorás, Sergio? está en presente simple indicativo.

#### Ejemplo 2.6.1.1

Su voz suave y cariñosa pregunta: -¿Por qué llorás Sergio? (p.70)

*Her soft kind voice asks, “Why **are** you **crying**, Sergio?”(p.32)*

#### Ejemplo 2.6.1.2

El dolor se va calmando e interrogo: -¿Por qué llorás, Ana María? (p.70)

*My pain calms down, and I ask her, “Why are you **crying**, Ana Maria?”(p.32)*

En la reescritura, se mantiene el sentido de pregunta y el mismo orden de los elementos de la oración. Sin embargo, se realiza un cambio de aspecto verbal, pasando del presente indicativo en español al presente progresivo en inglés. En el desarrollo del diálogo en inglés, la acción está en progreso mientras los dos niños hablan. Una traducción literal, por ejemplo, (¿Por qué llorás?/Why do you cry?) cambiaría la connotación del diálogo en cuestión, pues la respuesta a eso, refiere a los usos del presente simple en inglés, en este caso, la respuesta, haría referencia a hechos por los cuales se llora. Por lo tanto, el cambio de aspecto en el texto meta ayuda a mantener el “sentido” del diálogo y, por ende, el impacto emocional que se logra en estas páginas.

## **2.6.2 Reescritura de las emociones mediante paráfrasis, cambio sintáctico y cambio morfológico**

### **Ejemplo 2.6.2.1**

Porque me dan ganas de **llorar** cuando te veo **llorar** (p.70)

“When I see your sorrow, I also feel like **crying**.” (p.32)

En el ejemplo anterior además del cambio de infinitivo a gerundio (llorar/crying) exigido por el uso de la preposición “like” en “feel like”, se acudió a una paráfrasis con el fin de evitar la repetición de llorar del ejemplo (llorar cuando te veo llorar/*because I feel like **crying** when I see you **crying***). Para evitar la repetición, se reescribió mediante una paráfrasis el texto bajo análisis, y haciendo resaltar que es la tristeza del muchacho la que conmueve hasta las lágrimas a Ana María.

## **2.7 Reescritura de modismos: neutralización de frases populares costarricenses**

En las obras literarias, al traductor se enfrenta ante la especial dificultad de reescribir ciertas cláusulas o frases que, en la lengua fuente, poseen un alto grado lexicalización. Al valorar la traducción de refranes/expresiones idiomáticas, es conveniente en cuenta lo que propone Cáceres<sup>68</sup> citado por Constantin Marret:

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<sup>68</sup> Constantin Marret P., Cristina Estevez, *Los refranes: ¿Mero calco lingüístico? Una aportación a la paremiología comparada*, (Junio 22, 2006), online, Internet. 1

“La paremiología comparada nos enseña que una gran proporción de los refranes que realmente pretenden condensar la experiencia humana y aleccionar a las generaciones futuras es común, no en la forma, pero sí en el concepto, a muchos pueblos distanciados por la geografía o por la historia”.

En el texto fuente encontramos varios modismos. Nuestra decisión de traducción se orientó a buscar conceptos análogos en la cultura meta que, a su vez, neutralizaran expresiones de uso popular costarricense. Muchos de ellos no tienen correspondencia en la forma, es decir, no se traducen palabra por palabra; a pesar de ello, recrean, de manera cercana, la connotación que tienen en el texto fuente adaptándose a la experiencia del lector meta, como se ilustra en los siguientes ejemplos.

### 2.7.1 Andar “hecha un ajito”

#### TEXTO FUENTE

Jacinta decía que Candelaria andaba siempre “**hecha un ajito**”; camisa zonta de lienzo blanco, immaculado, reluciente por el almidón y la plancha... (p.21)

#### TEXTO META

*Jacinta said Candelaria was always **spick-and-span** with her immaculate white linen shirt **sparkling** by the **starch** and the iron.*(p.6)

En Costa Rica, esta expresión se refiere a una persona que se destaca por su gran limpieza. Una de las opciones era una traducción uno a uno y decir “*clean as a freshly peeled clove of garlic*” que es la alternativa que escoge Elizabeth Rosa Horan<sup>69</sup> para la misma expresión en su traducción de “El Cotonudo”, uno de los cuentos en *Cuentos de mi tía Panchita*.

Se buscó expresión en la lengua meta que comunique esta connotación de gran limpieza. Consideramos que **spick-and-span**<sup>70</sup>, que significa “*very clean*”, es una expresión diaria informal más fácil de comprender en la cultura meta que el de limpieza asociada al concepto de un ajo.

### 2.7.2 No arrancar pelo sin sangre

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<sup>69</sup> Elizabeth Rosa Horan, *The Subversive Voice of Carmen Lyra. Selected Works.* (Gainesville: The University Press of Florida, 2000) 129.

<sup>70</sup> Richard A. Spears, *NTC's American Idioms Dictionary.* (Illinois: National Textbook Company, 1990) 303.

## TEXTO FUENTE

Razón tenía Engracia la cocinera al decir que “la niña Concha **no arrancaba pelo sin sangre**”. (p.75)

## TEXTO META

*Engracia, the cook, was right when she said referring to Aunt Concha that “**the miser is always in want.**”* (p.35)

Este es un refrán que alude a aquellas personas avariciosas que por mucho que tengan siempre quieren tener más. Una alternativa sería reescribir el modismo con un “no modismo, por ejemplo, mediante el uso de adjetivos relacionados con avaricia en inglés (*greedy, stingy, avaricious, miser*) para describir a la persona que “no arranca pelo sin sangre”. Sin embargo, esta no nos pareció la mejor reescritura pues el refrán en el texto fuente tiene una fuerte intención enfática que resalta un defecto en el temperamento del personaje. Por lo tanto, omitirlo le quitaría el énfasis que se da a esta condición que, además, se recalca en varias ocasiones más dentro del texto. En busca de una reescritura de modismo por modismo, decidimos usar la alternativa “the miser is always in want”<sup>71</sup> que también tiene su equivalente en francés (*l’homme avare nést jamais riche*) y en latín (*Eget semper qui avarus est*)<sup>72</sup> para transmitir esta característica tan acentuada en la personalidad de la tía de Sergio que le hace abusar de todos cuantos le rodean para conseguir sus fines.

### 2.7.3 Como Pedro por su casa

## TEXTO FUENTE

El caso es que Ana María se metía por todas partes **como Pedro por su casa** y conseguía sin proponérselo que la tomaran en cuenta. (p. 105)

## TEXTO META

*In any case, everywhere Ana Maria went, she **moved about as if she owned the place** and without even planning it, she managed to attract people’s attention.* (p.51)

Este refrán describe a una persona que se mueve con desenvoltura, con total y absoluta libertad en un sitio que no le es propio, es decir, con el mismo comportamiento que se tiene cuando se está en la casa de uno. Encontramos una

<sup>71</sup> Delfín Carbonel Basset, *Dictionary of Proverbs Spanish/English and English/Spanish*. (Nueva York: Barron’s, 1996), 127.

<sup>72</sup> Bob, Patrick, (11 de mayo 2006), online, Internet.

expresión análoga en términos de sentido en inglés, no así, a nivel de forma, pero la usamos pues consideramos que recrea adecuadamente la intención del modismo en el texto fuente.

#### 2.7.4 Sonreír como un bendito

##### TEXTO FUENTE

El tío José, sentado en su poltrona –las manos cruzadas sobre el vientre – entreabría un ojo malicioso que parecía relamerse de gusto, y se ponía **a sonreír como un bendito**. (pp.88-89)

##### TEXTO META

Sitting on his easy chair with his hands crossed on his belly, Uncle Jose, just half-opened a cunning eye that seemed to be leaking with joy, and he **laughed his head off**. (p.42)

La expresión indica que la persona expresa diversión e hilaridad por medio de la risa. La reescritura más apropiada fue por medio la frase idiomática según el *Rogert's II: The New Thesaurus*<sup>73</sup> "to laugh one's head off" que, además, tendría el efecto de neutralizar cualquier asociación con espiritualidad que el refrán costarricense pueda tener y que no sería tan relevante en la cultura meta.

#### 2.7.5 Hacerse el zorro/ hacerse el zorrillo

##### TEXTO FUENTE

Pero luego pensó que se iba a quedar **haciéndose el zorrillo**, para que ella lo buscara. (p.52)

##### TEXTO META

*Then, however, Sergio thought he would better **play the fool**, so that she had to look for him.* (p.23)

Significa hacerse el desentendido o el tonto. Lo traducimos como "play the fool" en el texto meta que sirve como elemento descriptivo análogo al del texto fuente.

#### 2.5.6 De Ceca en Meca

##### TEXTO FUENTE

De mi vida te contaré lo siguiente: Ya hace tres años que ando de **Ceca en Meca** por esta Europa, pero... (p.121)

##### TEXTO META

*This is what a can tell you about my life. I have been **to-and-fro** in Europe for three years now, but...*(p.60)

<sup>73</sup> *Rogert's II: The New Thesaurus*, Tercera Edición.. (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1995), online, Internet.

Este es un dicho común entre los españoles; significa ir de acá para allá, sin quedarse en un punto fijo<sup>74</sup>. En inglés, la expresión *to-and-fro* también expresa la acción de moverse de un lugar a otro y devolverse al lugar de partida, cada vez., que, en esencia, transmite lo mismo del dicho en español.

### 2.7.7 Ponerse en funcia

#### TEXTO FUENTE

Cuando comenzaban a pasar las carretas llenas de café maduro, rumbo al beneficio de Tournon –casa francesa establecida desde hacía mucho tiempo en Costa Rica –Ana María se **ponía en funcia**; llevaba a su amigo a los cafetales de los alrededores a ver cómo las cogedoras iban llegando con sus canastos llenos de fruta a vaciarlos en las carretas; (p.105)

#### TEXTO META

*When the carts full of ripe coffee began to pass by in their way to the coffee processing mill in Tournon, which was a French company that had been established in Costa Rica a long time ago, Ana María **was ready for action**. She took me to the neighboring coffee plantations to see how the women coffee-pickers arrived with their baskets full of grains to empty them in the carts,...* (pp.51-52)

Según Arroyo<sup>75</sup>, este dicho costarricense significa ponerse en acción. Decidimos traducirlo como “*to be ready for action*”. Con esta reescritura transmitimos de manera análoga la intención del modismo y a la vez, eliminamos el contenido popular específico de nuestra cultura.

### 2.8 Reescritura como proceso de actualización

#### 2.8.1 Un pretexto para actualizar el texto fuente

La lectura analítica del texto fuente mostró la necesidad de modernizar, como primer paso, el texto fuente. En primer lugar, notamos una serie de diferencias ortográficas que debieron ser corregidas, algunas de las cuales constituyeron un “problema” de traducción, pues al desconocer su significado y ante la necesidad de usar el diccionario de la Real Academia Española, descubrimos que tales palabras no aparecían registradas en él. Dado que su ortografía era diferente, debimos

<sup>74</sup> *Wikipedia*, < <http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ceca>>.

<sup>75</sup> Arroyo, 295.

actualizarla como trabajo previo a la traducción. Además, descubrimos un caso de asimilación vocálica que, según Arroyo<sup>76</sup>, constituye una característica del habla popular costarricense. Decidimos neutralizarla, usando la forma aceptada por la Real Academia para adecuarla a un español costarricense más actual.

Un segundo aspecto que requirió la actualización fueron ciertos vocablos de uso popular, comunes en la época en que se publicó la novela, pero no tanto en el lenguaje costarricense actual. Nuestro propósito fue lograr que el texto meta se leyera con más fluidez para evitar aclaraciones innecesarias que requerirían las tan incómodas notas al pie dentro de una traducción literaria.

Una vez resueltos estos problemas, se realizó la reescritura al inglés tomando como base la reescritura del texto fuente.

Nuestra traducción debía cumplir con el skopos de actualizar el texto fuente como paso previo a la reescritura del mismo en la lengua meta, con el propósito de que se adaptarlo a las peculiaridades del momento actual y fuera más asequible y coherente para la audiencia meta.

### **2.8.2 Reescritura como medio de revisión ortográfica**

Como paso previo a la reescritura en la lengua meta, trabajamos en la enmienda de las ya mencionadas diferencias ortográficas; una vez realizado este paso, tomamos nuestra reescritura del texto en español para la reescritura propiamente dicha en el texto meta.

#### **Ejemplo 2.8.2.1**

**Texto fuente:** \*zorgales

**Texto fuente actualizado:** sorgales

- **Texto fuente:**

“Contaba el tío José que se cogen con trampa o con varillas untadas de leche de yos, que vuelan en manadas y que se dejan caer en los zorgales o en los pantanos en donde crece el chile de perro.”

- ✓ **Reescritura en español:**

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<sup>76</sup> Arroyo, 33.

*“Contaba el tío José que se cogen con trampa o con varillas untadas de leche de yos, que vuelan en manadas y que se dejan caer en los **sorgales** o en los pantanos en donde crece el chile de perro.”*

**Reescritura en inglés:**

*“Uncle Jose explained that they are caught with a trap or by using a stick covered with the milk of the yos tree. The seedeaters fly in flocks and they let come down on the **sorghum fields** or on swamps where thistles grow.” (p.41)*

**Ejemplo 2.8.2.2**

**Texto fuente:** \*amahaca

**Texto fuente actualizado:** hamaca

- **Texto fuente:**

El Niño dormía en la cuna improvisada con una sábana suspendida a modo de **amahaca** en las ramas del aguacate...” (p.31)

✓ **Reescritura en español:**

El Niño dormía en la cuna improvisada con una sábana suspendida a modo de **hamaca** en las ramas del aguacate...” (p.31)

**Reescritura en inglés:**

*“Baby Jesus was sleeping in an improvised cradle made of a sheet hanging like a **hammock** from the avocado tree...” (p.11)*

**Ejemplo 2.8.2.3**

**Texto fuente:** \*berolís

**Texto fuente actualizado:** verolís

- **Texto fuente:**

Alrededor, los helechos –surtidores de verde frescura- y colgando de la solera y de las vigas, las jaulas de alambre, de **berolís**, de tora, de caña brava, dentro de las cuales saltaban y piaban los pájaros del tío José: ... (p.85)

✓ **Reescritura en español**

Alrededor, los helechos –surtidores de verde frescura- y colgando de la solera y de las vigas, las jaulas de alambre, de **verolís**, de tora, de caña brava, dentro de las cuales saltaban y piaban los pájaros del tío José: ... (p.85)

**Reescritura en inglés:**

*“The ferns that provided a green freshness were all around hanging from the beams, and so were the cages made of wire, **sugar cane flower stalks**, tora, or wild cane.”*



#### Ejemplo 2.8.2.4

**Texto fuente**<sup>77</sup>: \*espulznantes                    **fuentes actualizados**: espeluznantes

Este uso se debe identificar como un caso de asimilación vocálica que se observa con frecuencia en el habla popular en palabras como **absoluto** que es pronunciado como *ausuluto*<sup>78</sup>. \***Espulznante** es otro ejemplo y forma parte del texto fuente. La palabra no aparece registrada en el diccionario de la Real Academia Española. En el proceso de reescritura, decidimos neutralizar la asimilación vocálica en la reescritura en español.

- **Texto fuente:**

“Pero al día siguiente volvíamos a pedir a Engracia más relatos **espulznantes**”. (p.77)

- ✓ **Reescritura en español:**

“Pero al día siguiente volvíamos a pedir a Engracia más relatos **espeluznantes**”. (p.77)

**Reescritura en inglés:**

*“However, the following day, the children asked Engracia to tell them more **horrifying** stories.”* (p.36)

### 2.8.3 Reescritura como instrumento de modernización y neutralización de términos populares o políticamente incorrectos

#### Ejemplo 2.8.3.1

- **Texto fuente:**

“Ella le ofrecía unas piernas de oro que iría a colgar en su altar apenas viera que su **cholito** se decida a andar como los cristianos”. ( p.15)

Según Víctor Manuel Arroyo en *El habla popular en la Literatura Costarricense*<sup>79</sup>, **cholo** es un adjetivo que significa **moreno**. En el texto se usa el diminutivo y además

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<sup>77</sup> Esto se denomina asimilación vocálica en español.

<sup>78</sup> Arroyo, 33.

<sup>79</sup> Víctor Manuel Arroyo, *El habla popular en la literatura costarricense*. (San José: Publicaciones de la Universidad de Costa Rica Serie Tesis de Grado N0.18, 1971) 211.

se cambia su categoría gramatical pues se usa como sustantivo. En Costa Rica es común que las personas usen “negro o negrito” como una forma de llamar con cariño a otra. Según esta acepción, una posibilidad de re-escritura sería:

○ **Reescritura 1:**

Ella le ofrecía unas piernas de oro que iría a colgar en su altar apenas viera que su **negrito** se decida a andar como los cristianos.

**Neutralización de términos políticamente incorrectos**

Sin embargo, esta alternativa planteaba el problema de que, si bien su modernización no representa conflicto alguno en la cultura fuente, sí resultaba políticamente incorrecta para la cultura meta. Por tanto, valoramos la connotación afectuosa del “cholito”/“negrito” costarricense y decidimos recrear la idea de la siguiente forma:

○ **Reescritura 2:**

Ella le ofrecía unas piernas de oro que iría a colgar en su altar apenas viera que **su querido muchachito** “se decida a andar como los cristianos”.

Es a partir de esta paráfrasis que se reescribe el texto en inglés. Como puede verse, conserva esta connotación afectuosa que se manifiesta en el texto fuente al mismo tiempo que se adapta a las tendencias no discriminatorias tan difundidas en la cultura meta.

 **Texto meta:**

*She promised the Virgin she would hang a pair of golden legs in her shrine as soon as her **dear little child** decided to walk like everybody else.”*

**Ejemplo 2.8.3.2**

Siempre dentro del uso de la reescritura para modernizar términos, uno de los textos que requirió una investigación un poco más minuciosa fue la descripción del atuendo que solía llevar Candelaria a diario.

• **Texto fuente:**

“camisa **zonta** de lienzo blanco, inmaculado, reluciente por el almidón y la plancha, sin más adorno que un **caballito de hiladilla** que corría alrededor del cuello muy escotado; las mangas cortas que dejaban al descubierto los

brazos morenos, delgados y recios de la mujer que trabajaba fuerte. La **falda de zaraza** plegada en la cintura”. (p.21)

A continuación, mostramos el análisis de los términos del ejemplo en cuestión.

- ✓ **Zonta:** Según la definición de la Real Academia Española se denomina así a una persona a la que se le han cortado las orejas o de un objeto al que se le han cortado las asas. Se infiere por medio de esta definición que la blusa es de mangas cortas o sin mangas y esto lo refuerza más adelante la descripción. Sin embargo se decide eliminar la palabra porque la escritora especifica unas líneas adelante que la blusa es sin mangas. Por lo tanto, su omisión no afecta la descripción detallada de la manera de vestir de la señora.
- ✓ **Caballito de hiladilla:** Según Arroyo<sup>80</sup>, un caballito, en este contexto, es un adorno para vestidos de mujer que consiste en una cinta angosta en forma de *zig-zag*. Este término puede no ser problemático para el lector de la cultura fuente; por lo tanto, no se cambia en español, pero en inglés se realiza una amplificación del término mediante adjetivos para explicar el tipo de adorno.
- ✓ **Falda:** el término es de uso poco común en Costa Rica, prefiriéndose **enagua**.
- ✓ **Zaraza:** según la Real Academia, es una tela de algodón estampada.

Una vez comprendidos estos términos, se reescribe de la siguiente forma:

○ **Reescritura en español:**

“camisa de **mangas cortas** de lienzo blanco, immaculado, reluciente por el almidón y la plancha, sin más adorno que un **caballito de hiladilla** que corría alrededor del cuello muy escotado; las **mangas cortas** que dejaban al descubierto los brazos morenos, delgados y recios de la mujer que trabajaba fuerte. La **enagua de tela de algodón estampada** plegada en la cintura. “(p.21)

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<sup>80</sup> Arroyo, 193.

De esta versión se parte para la traducción al inglés, en la que se omite **de mangas cortas** en la primera oración, pues en el mismo párrafo en español se vuelve a mencionar esta característica de la camisa. Para evitar repeticiones y con ello mejorar el estilo como parte de nuestro skopos, tomamos el contexto y re-organizamos la idea en inglés dando énfasis al color y al material en la primera oración. Para transmitir el significado de **caballito de hiladilla** ampliamos el término usando una definición de la apariencia del adorno de la blusa y seguimos el mismo procedimiento para describir el material de la enagua. Esta ampliación la logramos mediante el uso de adjetivos descriptivos del trabajo de costura que llevaba la camisa.

 **Texto meta:**

*“...her immaculate **sleeveless white linen shirt** sparkling by the starch and the iron showed the strong thin dark arms of a very hardworking woman. The shirt’s only accessory was a **zig-zag-shaped ornamental stitch work** around the very low-cut neckline. She also wore a **printed cotton skirt** creased at the waist and very well-starched.”*

### Ejemplo 2.8.3.3

• **Texto fuente:**

“Fue que la serpiente le **echó traca**”. (p.26)

Una expresión que requirió investigación fue **echar traca**. Este es un costarriqueñismo que significa “asir fuertemente”<sup>81</sup>. Sin embargo, el texto se refiere a una serpiente dentro de una guitarra. Esta serpiente es una cascabel, que es venenosa. Por eso, decidimos recrear el texto de la siguiente manera:

○ **Reescritura en español:**

“Fue que la serpiente le **había inyectado su veneno**”.

 **Texto meta:**

*“The snake had given him its poison.”*

### Ejemplo 2.8.3.4

• **Texto fuente:**

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<sup>81</sup> Arroyo, 277.

“Me parece ver a mi hermano Chico **embrocado** como pegando el oído en la caja del instrumento...” (p.24)

En este ejemplo se encuentra la palabra **embrocado** que no es de uso común para los hablantes del área urbana entre los 13 y 25 años.

Las definiciones del Diccionario de la Real Academia (DRAE) explican el término como poner una vasija “cabeza abajo”. Sin embargo, se determina por contexto y por la posición de los guitarristas que estar “embrocado” es estar “encorvado” con la cabeza hacia abajo tocando la caja de la guitarra.

○ **Reescritura en español:**

“Me parece ver a mi hermano Chico **encorvado** como pegando el oído en la caja del instrumento...”

🚩 **Texto meta:**

*“I still can see my brother Chico **bending over** the guitar in his arms drawing his ear near the instrument’s box...”*

**Ejemplo 2.8.3.5**

- **Texto fuente:**
- “Ana María era entonces una **peloncilla** de unos ocho años. ... pestañas “**chuzas**” ... La naricilla **ñata**...” (p.72)

Este ejemplo se toma de la descripción física de Ana María. Contiene tres expresiones que necesitan clarificación:

- ✓ **Pelona** es una persona que lleva cortado el pelo a rape o en su acepción coloquial, alguien de escasos recursos económicos. El contexto nos permite comprobar que Ana María representa las dos cosas. Por tanto, se decide eliminar **peloncilla** porque su omisión no afecta la comunicación y al especificarse la edad en la descripción, es obvio que se trata de una niña.
- ✓ **Chuzas:** un joven estudiante de enseñanza media utiliza el término **chuzo/chuza** para describir algo que es muy moderno o muy actual. Por

ejemplo: Ese carro es un **chuzo**, ó dicen simplemente, ¡Qué chuzo! Sin embargo, el término coloquial en el contexto de la novela significa **lacio**.

- ✓ **Ñato/ñata:** Se dice de aquella persona que tiene la nariz chata.

Con base a lo anterior, el texto en español resultante es:

- **Reescritura en español:**

Ana María tenía entonces unos ocho años. ... pestañas **lacias** .... La naricilla achatada...

- ✚ **Texto meta:**

“By then, Ana Maria was about eight years old... ... of very **straight** short eyelashes that make her look quite nice. Her little flat nose...” (p.33)

### Ejemplo 2.8.3.6

- **Texto fuente:**

“Se dio de almorzar y de comer a los asistentes y éstos fueron obsequiados repetidas veces con copas de **guaro mistado** con sirope...” (p.116)

El término **mistado** significa mezclado. Arroyo<sup>82</sup> lo registra como mistao/mixtado y lo define como una mezcla de varios licores. El diccionario de la Real Academia no lo registra tal cual aparece en el texto fuente. En este caso, el guaro mistado sería como un cóctel, pues es una mezcla de sirope y licor. En la reescritura en español omitimos el mezclado porque la preposición “con” refleja la mezcla. El término **guaro**, una bebida alcohólica típica costarricense requiere de aclaración para los lectores meta. Se reescribe en inglés el término “guaro” pero añadiendo el uso de comillas para indicar que es una palabra propia de la cultura fuente y mediante el recurso de explicitación se introduce su significado como elemento aclaratorio y adicional dentro del texto a fin de facilitar la comprensión de este elemento cultural.

- **Reescritura en español:**

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<sup>82</sup> Arroyo, 244.

“Se dio de almorzar y de comer a los asistentes y éstos fueron obsequiados repetidas veces con copas de **guaro** con sirope...

 **Texto meta:**

*They offered lunch and dinner to the partakers who were also given snacks and glasses of “**guaro**”, one of the traditional alcoholic beverages of Costa Rica, **mixed** with syrup. (p.57)*

**Ejemplo 2.8.3.7**

• **Texto fuente:**

“En otra ocasión el muchacho habría prorrumpido en una carcajada al ver a su amiga **perjeñada** de aquella **guisa**, y...” (p.118)

En la página 118 del texto fuente, se encuentra la palabra **perjeñada**. La investigación en el diccionario de la RAE indica que la palabra no existe tal cual está escrita en el texto fuente. Es probable que se trate de otra variación en la ortografía, pues comprobamos que en diccionario de la RAE en línea el término que aparece es **pergeñar**. En la versión escrita del mismo diccionario se encuentra que **pergeño** (p.1731) es una expresión coloquial que hace referencia a la apariencia o disposición exterior de alguien o algo. Encontramos aquí un doble obstáculo: una palabra coloquial poco usual en el vocabulario actual y, además, una diferencia ortográfica que dificultó la comprensión del texto, así como el proceso de investigación del término. Omitimos el término en la reescritura actualizada de donde partimos para nuestra traducción. Otro término que decidimos actualizar es **guisa**, cuyo significado es modo o manera (RAE), de uso algo más común en el lenguaje costarricense actual.

**Reescritura como revisión ortográfica y modernización**

“En otra ocasión el muchacho habría prorrumpido en una carcajada al ver a su amiga **perjeñada** de aquella **guisa**, y...”

**Reescritura actualizada:**

“En otra ocasión el muchacho habría prorrumpido en una carcajada al ver a su amiga **vestida** de aquella **manera**, y...”

En el texto meta prescindimos de ambos términos, es decir, no realizamos una reescritura uno a uno, sino que la hicimos a nivel de sentido. Sustituimos los

enunciados **pergeñada** y **guisa** mediante el uso de un pronombre demostrativo (that) y un sustantivo.

 **Texto meta:**

*On another occasion, Sergio would have burst in laughter to see his friend in that **outfit**, and...* (p.59)

### Ejemplo 2.8.3.8

- **Texto fuente:**

¡Cuánto hizo pensar a Sergio eso de que si el nacimiento del **chacalincillo** de Ana María...” (p.148)

En el habla popular costarricense, **chacalincillo**, según lo define Arroyo<sup>83</sup>, significa niño. En la reescritura en español, decidimos usar **chiquito** pues, si se tratara de actualizar el texto fuente para la publicación de una nueva edición, el término sería más apegado al habla popular/coloquial costarricense actual que niño o bebé, que omitirían el efecto popular que pudo haber tenido **chacalincillo** en su momento. En el texto fuente, el uso de “chiquito” mantendría un rasgo de la cultura costarricense. No obstante, en la reescritura “neutralizamos” el uso de “chiquito” por medio del sustantivo “*baby*”.

- **Reescritura en español:**

¡Cuánto hizo pensar a Sergio eso de que si el nacimiento del **chiquito** de Ana María...”

 **Texto meta:**

“Sergio gave a lot of thought to the fact that the **baby’s birth** had caused all...” (p.75)

## 2.8.4 Reescritura como actualización de la moneda y neutralización de la unidad

### monetaria costarricense

Entre los aspectos que han tenido un cambio evidente desde que la novela se publicó en 1916, podemos citar aquellos relacionados con el uso de la moneda.

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<sup>83</sup> Arroyo, 207.



En la novela se mencionan los “reales” en vez de colones. El término “reales” se hereda del conquistador español. Aunque ya en desuso en la primera mitad del siglo XX en nuestro país, es posible que la costumbre arraigada se resistiera a dejar de lado este uso del mismo modo que para muchos ciudadanos costarricenses tomó un tiempo cambiar el uso de varas (sistema inglés) a metros (sistema métrico). Para una población actual entre los 13 y los 25 años, el término “reales” es obsoleto, por lo tanto decidimos actualizar el texto fuente. En el ejemplo 3.5.1 puede notarse que **reales** se usa como concepto de “dinero”. Por tanto, omitimos el uso antiguo y lo reescribimos mediante el concepto “universal” de dinero.

A partir de esta reescritura se traduce al inglés y el resultado es un texto sin dificultad de comprensión para el lector meta, pues aunque se neutralizó un elemento cultural, se mantuvo el sentido de la comunicación. En los ejemplos a continuación, notamos que la escritora menciona denominaciones monetarias como “el cinco”, “el diez”, “la peseta” (veinticinco céntimos de colón). Estas monedas no circulan en el país desde hace varios años, y también resulta inconvenientes en términos de una lectura fluida en inglés. Para solucionar este problema, adaptamos dichas referencias al sistema monetario estadounidense, es decir, en términos de dólares y fracciones de dólares. Por supuesto, no tienen una equivalencia literal ni numérica con las expresiones monetarias usadas en el texto fuente, pero sí conservan el sentido de valor comercial con que se usan dichas denominaciones en el texto fuente. En los ejemplos 3.5.3 y 3.5.4, neutralizamos el concepto de **un cinco menos** y nos “**daba cincos**” en el texto fuente por medio de una reescritura más neutra y comprensible para el lector meta de la cultura fuente. En el ejemplo 3.5. 5, Sergio menciona que Miguel ganó 25 colones vendiendo juguetes cuya manufacturación le costó noches de desvelo. Realizamos un cambio de moneda dejando la ganancia en 25 dólares.

#### TEXTO FUENTE

#### TEXTO META

##### Ejemplo 2.8.4.1

Lo que ha costado que se decidan a *Convincing them to spend some money*

gastar sus reales, es indescriptible. (p.117)

*on the trip has been extremely difficult.*(p.58)

### Reescritura de actualización

Lo que ha costado que se decidan a gastar **su dinero**, es indescriptible. (p.117)

#### Ejemplo 2.8.4.2

Ellos no veían sino el brillo de la moneda que cada flor representaba. En las tardes contaba las **pesetas** que amanecían abiertas en las American Beauty o en las Frau Carl Dusky y en las monedas que se abrirían en las Príncipe Negro. Mi tía Concha sí podía decir que tenía matas de **dieces y pesetas**. (p.81)

*My aunt and her husband just saw the coin behind each flower. In the afternoons, she counted the **dimes** that had bloomed in the American Beauty or the Frau Carl Dusky, and she made calculations on the coins that would bloom in the Black Prince roses. My Aunt Concha could certainly say that she had **five-and-ten-cent** plants.* (p.38)

#### Ejemplo 2.8.4.3

“...o bien en ir a los pueblos de los alrededores en donde el maíz, los frijoles y la manteca se podían conseguir con **un cinco** menos”. (p.83)

### Reescritura de actualización

“... o bien en ir a los pueblos de los alrededores en donde el maíz, los frijoles y la manteca se podían conseguir **por unos cuantos céntimos** menos.”

*or else, she will go to the towns in the vicinity where she can buy corn, beans, and grease **just a few pennies cheaper**.* (p.40)

#### Ejemplo 2.8.4.4

“-nos había explicado don Pablo, un francés muy bondadoso que a veces nos daba “cincos”. (p.113)

### Reescritura de actualización

“-nos había explicado don Pablo, un francés muy bondadoso que a veces nos daba **unos cuantos centavos**”.

*Mr.Pablo, a very kind Frenchman who sometimes gave us **some pennies** explained to us, ...* (p.55)

#### Ejemplo 2.8.4.5

...en grande; no ha vuelto a dormir de noche, elaborando los juguetes y en esa mañana ha llegado con **25 colones** que ha entregado a Sergio para Ana María.

*He spent the nights awake manufacturing the toys. This morning he came back with **25 dollars** and gave them to Sergio for Ana Maria.* (p.76)

(p.150)

## 2.9 Reescritura como recurso de neutralización

### 2.9.1 Títulos de cortesía a la usanza costarricense

En *En una silla de ruedas* se utilizan varios títulos de cortesía: “ñiña”, el aféresis “ña” (doña), “don”, y un extranjerismo procedente del francés que la autora escribe de la forma en que los personajes lo pronuncian. Optamos por neutralizar todos los títulos de cortesía para hacerlos concordar con el uso de la cultura meta. Aunque anteponer *Mr.*, *Mrs.*, *Miss* al nombre no es una práctica común en el inglés estándar, este tratamiento de cortesía sí se usa en textos literarios estadounidenses. Entre otros, encontramos ejemplos de este uso en el libro de Gertrude Stein *Three Lives*<sup>84</sup> que fue publicado en 1909:

“Anna scolded and Molly swore strange oaths, and then Miss Mathilda would shut her door hard to show that she could hear it all.” (p.14)

“Miss Mary”, the words came slowly with thick utterance and with jerks, but always firm and strong. “Miss Mary, I can’t stand it any more like this.”

Al reescribirlos al inglés, logramos neutralizar una de las ambigüedades principales que representaría el texto fuente para un lector angloparlante que es el uso de “niña” para referirse a mujeres casadas o damas solteras, pero de edad madura. Por ejemplo, “las niñas Acosta” (p.136) que son unas mujeres entradas en años. Decirles “niña” significaba que no eran casadas, pero en el texto fuente, además se llama así por “respeto” a Cinta y a Concha que sí son señoras casadas. El efecto exotizante de la inserción del “niña” o la aféresis “Ña” no nos pareció una opción adecuada, pues oscurecía la comprensión del texto de nuestro lector meta que es monolingüe. El caso del aféresis “ña” presentaba el problema de ser un uso popular del habla costarricense. Conservarlo nos hubiera obligado a realizar anotaciones al pie de página o a crear un glosario, que en esencia, representan elementos de ruptura de la lectura fluida de cualquier texto literario.

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<sup>84</sup> Gertrude Stein, *Three Lives*. (Nueva York: Vintage Books, 1909) 29.

Actualmente, el uso de “niña” para las damas solteras de edad avanzadas no es costumbre arraigada. Se utiliza el título de cortesía señora/señorita. Para actualizar este aspecto, se omitió tal tratamiento y se transformó mediante el énfasis del vínculo de familia (tía Concha en vez de niña Concha) cuando la situación así lo permitía, reservando el título “Miss”/ “Mr.” a la usanza sureña estadounidense para aquellos casos en que el personaje no está unido por lazos de sangre a otro, como mostramos a continuación:

#### Ejemplo 2.9.1.1

- **Texto fuente:**

“-Anoche oí a la **niña Concha** decir que te ibas a venir con nosotros, Sergio, y me puse más contenta...!” (p.70)

- **Texto meta:**

*“Last night, I heard **your Aunt Concha** said you would live with us, Sergio, and I felt so very happy...” (p.32)*

#### Ejemplo 2.9.1.2

- **Texto fuente:**

-¿La **niña Cinta** se ha perdido? (p.71)

- **Texto meta:**

“Is **your mom** lost? (p.33)

#### Ejemplo 2.9.1.3

- **Texto fuente**

“La **niña Concha** con su enfermedad no tiene gusto para nada ni lo deja tener a los demás! (p.121)

- **Texto meta:**

*“The illness doesn’t allow your **Aunt Concha** a moment of peace and, therefore, she doesn’t let others find theirs.” (p.60)*

Cuando no existe relación de parentesco con el personaje o los personajes a que se hace referencia, se usa el título de cortesía que sugiere el contexto del texto fuente. Es decir, si se trata de una mujer soltera, como es el caso de la niña Queta

Alvarado, se usa Miss. En el caso de las niñas Acosta que son hermanas pero no parte de la familia de Sergio, reescribimos el título como “ladies”, que de alguna forma también rescata la ambigüedad que el uso de “niñas” en español.

#### Ejemplo 2.9.1.4

- **Texto fuente:**

“Por fin **la niña Queta Alvarado** se levanta y con dignidad episcopal se dirige al cuarto de la pecadora”. (p.145)

- **Texto meta:**

“At last, **Miss Queta Alvarado** stood up and headed to the sinner’s room with Episcopal dignity.” (p.73)

#### Ejemplo 2.9.1.5

- **Texto fuente:**

“(…) Canducha en persona compraba en la tercena **de las niñas Acosta**, frente al cuartel de Policía o en casa de doña Fermina Morales”. (p.136)

- **Texto meta:**

...that Mamma Canducha used to buy at **the Acosta Ladies’** store across from the police office or at Mrs. Fermina Morales’ place”.(p.68)

Con respecto a la solución para “ña” que significa **señora o doña**, éste introduce un elemento del habla popular rural más que de la urbana de décadas anteriores. No es parte del lenguaje diario y menos en el ámbito urbano. Se optó por neutralizar el término para eliminar el coloquialismo costarricense y optamos por un uso informal de Mrs, en inglés, esto es, “*Missus*”.

#### Ejemplo 2.9.1.6

**Texto fuente:**

“**Ña** Joaquina era una mujer ya entrada en años, de esas que llaman “viejas contentas”, y cuando pienso en ella toda danza sobre un fondo de malicioso misterio”. (p.92)

- **Texto meta:**

*“Missus Joaquina was an elderly woman of the type that people called “ladies of pleasure.” When I think about her everything revolves around a background of malicious mystery.” (p.44)*

En cuanto al uso de “don”, lo neutralizamos en el texto meta, reescribiéndolo como **Mr.** en los dos únicos casos en que aparece el término.

#### **Ejemplo 2.9.1.7**

- **Texto fuente:**

“-Es triste **don** Miguel, vivir así, como un grano de maíz perdido o como los zopilotes...” (p.38)

- **Texto meta:**

*“It’s sad, **Mr.** Miguel, to live like a lost grain of corn or like the buzzards...” (p.15)*

### **2.9.2 Reescritura de neutralización del machismo**

#### **Ejemplo 2.9.2.1: Concha: Concepción Esquivel de Rojas**

En Costa Rica constituye un rasgo cultural que las mujeres casadas añadan el apellido del esposo indicando pertenencia al varón. Este se indica mediante el uso de la preposición “**de**”. Esta no es la costumbre en los Estados Unidos donde, por lo general, se adopta el apellido del esposo. Con los movimientos feministas, la adopción del apellido del esposo queda fuera de contexto, por lo cual, tal uso ha tenido una variación gráfica que tiene más el efecto de asociación con el esposo que de posesión por parte del mismo. En la usanza tradicionalista de la cultura meta, deberíamos reescribir **Concepción Rojas** o **Mrs. Rojas**. Sin embargo, como se informa en el texto, ella es la que ejerce autoridad en el hogar manejando a su esposo “como a una de sus begonias menos estimadas” (p.81) decidimos darle un giro feminista a la reescritura utilizando un guión entre el apellido paterno y el de casada: **Concepción Esquivel-Rojas** para neutralizar el elemento indicador de posesión.

#### **TEXTO FUENTE**

#### **TEXTO META**

¿Y lo de creer que Dios hacía a un lado sus divinas tareas para atender *What about her belief that God had put aside His divine tasks to particularly take*

expresamente los negocios de *care of Mrs. Concepción Esquivel-Concepción Esquivel de Rojas* e interponer su celestial intervención a fin de que estos le salieran tal como a ella le convenía? (p.82) *Rojas' business and impose His heavenly mediation so that all her deals went just the way that suited her?* (p.39)

### **2.9.3 Neutralización de nombres y sobrenombres con contenido universal**

En el texto meta conservamos los nombres propios de persona y de lugar pues comunican que se trata de una obra latinoamericana/costarricense. Sin embargo, con respecto a los nombres de animales y de cosas tomamos la decisión de adaptarlos basándonos en la premisa de que son objetos universales no ligados a una cultura específica. Por tanto, buscamos alternativas más congruentes con la cultura meta por medio del cambio del sobrenombre de Gracia, la hermana de Sergio, del nombre del perro que acompañaba a Miguel, del de la muñeca de Merceditas y del cariñoso con que Candelaria llamaba a Merceditas.

#### **2.9.3.1 Gracia conocida como Tintín**

Reescribimos el apodo de Gracia para adecuarlo a la cultura meta. Ella es una de las hermanas de Sergio a quien, por su temperamento alegre, le decían *Campanita*, sobrenombre que luego sus familiares reducen a Tintín que es la forma escrita en que se representa el sonido de una campanita en español. El primer análisis para la traducción de “Campanita” es de relación. En la cultura meta, el sobrenombre tiene una semejanza con el del personaje del cuento infantil *Peter Pan*, razón por la que optamos por llamarla *Tinkerbell*. Posteriormente, le reducen el apodo emulando la onomatopeya de la campana, es decir “Tintín”. Nos pareció apropiado adaptarlo mediante un cambio a nivel fonético y gráfico. A nivel fonético el sonido de las campanas en inglés se produce gráficamente como “ding”. Por esto, transformamos “Tintín” en Ding-ding. Con ello, se busca que el apodo se adecue a los patrones de pronunciación y escritura del inglés.

## TEXTO FUENTE

A María de la Gracia la llamaban también Tintín porque estaba siempre alegre. (...)

Candelaria le dijo un día en que le estaba alborotando la cocina:

-Hijita, pareces una campanilla colgada en una boca-calle, que con sólo que la vuelva a ver el viento ya está golpeando con su badajito...**tin, tin, tin, tin...**" Desde entonces Sergio la llamó "**Campanita**" y de allí a darle el apodo de **Tintín** fue un paso. (p.18)

## TEXTO META

*María de la Gracia was also known as Ding-ding because she was always happy. (...)*

*One day, when Ding-ding was focused on disturbing the kitchen, Candelaria said to her, "My child, you are like a small bell hanging on a street intersection that begins striking with its clapper...**ding, ding, ding, ding** just at the wind's glance." From then on, Sergio called her "**Tinkerbell**" and the nickname became **Ding-ding** later. (p.4)*

### 2.9.3.2 Merceditas es llamada "Mamita"

En la narración se indica que Canducha llamaba "Mamita" a Merceditas, la otra hermana de Sergio.

Decidimos neutralizar el uso de "mamita" que es común en Costa Rica para referirse con afecto a una niña, porque en la cultura meta tal uso popular no tendría sentido. Así, optamos por "*Sweetie*" que también refleja afecto pero que se asemeja un poco más a la experiencia del lector meta.

## TEXTO FUENTE

La vieja Canducha llamaba "**Mamita**" a Merceditas. Le decía por ejemplo: -"Mire **Mamita**, ¿quiere ayudarme a desvenar este tabaco?" (...)

"-**Mamita**, ¿quiere ensartarme esta aguja? (...)

Quando Canducha volvía de hacer compras los sábados en el Mercado la llamaba: "**Mamita**, vaya a ver las ollitas que le traje para que jueguen de comidita". (p.20)

## TEXTO META

*Old Canducha called Merceditas "**Sweetie**". She told her, for instance, "Look, **Sweetie**, would you like to help me take out the veins of these tobacco leaves?"*

*"**Sweetie**, would you help me thread this needle?"*

*When Canducha came back from the market on Saturdays, she called Merceditas, "**Sweetie**, go see the little pots I brought for you to play house. (p.5)*

### 2.9.3.3 Luna, la muñeca



Merceditas tiene una muñeca de trapo que se llama Luna. En el texto meta, la muñeca se llama *Moon*. En este caso, buscamos el equivalente de luna en inglés ya que consideramos que el nombre Luna tiene una evocación poética y quisimos conservar el mismo misticismo que también tiene el equivalente en inglés. Es de notar que la muñeca es negra y simbólicamente el nombre es apropiado. La muñeca es muy querida por esta niña taciturna y amorosa y su nombre se relaciona con la luz en la oscuridad que es una razón de peso para una reescritura uno a uno del nombre de la muñeca.

#### TEXTO FUENTE

La recordaba sentada a sus pies, con su silencio colmado de ternura, jugando con una muñeca negra de trapo, a quien las niñas llamaban **Luna** –manufactura de mama Canducha –con los ojos, la boca y la nariz dibujados con arabia roja. (p.18)

#### TEXTO META

*He recalled Merceditas sitting at his feet with her loving silence while playing with a black rag doll the girls called **Moon** made by mamma Canducha who had drawn the doll's eyes, mouth, and nose by stitching them with a red thread. (p.4)*

#### 2.9.3.4 Tiliche, el perro

En la casa de Sergio vive un perro que se hace muy amigo de Miguel. Su nombre es Tiliche. En América Central y en México, un tiliche es un sustantivo que se refiere a baratijas o un grupo de cosas de poco valor. El nombre del perro tiene una intención. Nos revela que no se trata de un perro de raza. Nos interesaba mantener este simbolismo en el nombre, la idea de algo con poco valor por lo que decidimos usar el sustantivo *trinket*. Esta escogencia tuvo doble ventaja porque logramos cierta semejanza gráfica con el nombre en español y, porque nos permitió asemejar la fonética en la substitución del nombre.

#### TEXTO FUENTE

Con ella se iba muchos días desde buena mañana, acompañado por **Tiliche**, el perrito de la casa que se había convertido en su amigo inseparable. (p.40)

#### TEXTO META

*He took the machine and went out early in the morning for many days together with **Trinket**, the house's doggy that had become his devoted friend. (p.16)*

#### 2.9.3.5 Parálisis de la mañana de West

El día en que Sergio amanece enfermo es cuando empieza la desgracia que el narrador describe en las primeras páginas de la novela. El doctor diagnostica al niño con *Parálisis de la mañana de West*. En los siglos 19 y principios del siglo XX, a la enfermedad se le daban varios nombres y según opina Tony Gould, el más “poético” de ellos era en inglés “*Paralysis of the Morning*” para designar aquella situación en que los niños se iban a la cama en buen estado de salud aparente y se despertaban con fiebre y sin poder levantarse por la mañana.<sup>85</sup> En la actualidad, la enfermedad que afectó al niño se conoce como poliomielitis o polio. Polio es la forma corta y se utiliza de este modo tanto en inglés como en español, por lo cual, nos pareció adecuada para neutralizar y actualizar el término ya afectado por la dimensión tiempo. Logramos, asimismo, una diagnóstico claro de entender pues redujimos la explicación del texto original de diecisiete palabras a ocho palabras en el texto meta, mediante el uso de “diálogo indirecto” (reported speech)

#### TEXTO FUENTE

Se llamó al médico. Su diagnóstico fue que se trataba de un caso de la **Parálisis de la mañana de West**. (p.14)

#### TEXTO META

*They called the doctor. He said it was a case of **polio**.* (p.2)



La traducción funcionalista de la literatura constituye un excelente instrumento para abrir horizontes al concepto de traducción literaria. Los conceptos estructuralistas al excluir el aspecto cultural, se han quedado un tanto rezagados con respecto a las marcadas tendencias de este nuevo siglo, las cuales giran entorno a la internacionalización y a eliminación de las barreras impuestas por la lengua, la cultura o ambas. Es entonces que la traducción funcionalista entendida como una reescritura gana terreno porque comprende la lingüística y la cultura. De este modo, la traducción funcional de textos literarios se convierte un puente de unión de culturas y en

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<sup>85</sup> Tony Gould, *A Summer Plague: Polio and its Survivors*, BusinessWeek Online, 1995. (18 abril 2006), online, Internet.

promotora del entendimiento entre pueblos. Esta traducción funcionalista no implica el desdén del texto fuente. Aunque ya no se le considera el original intocable y sagrado, el texto fuente constituye otro elemento importante dentro del proceso de traducción. Podría decirse que es la materia prima de la que se parte para la reescritura en la lengua meta. Al comprender la función textual asignada al texto fuente, las decisiones de reescritura están también delimitadas por un *skopos* que determinará la funcionalidad de la traducción para una cultura meta específica y para el propósito que se quiere que cumpla la reescritura dentro de ella.

Las decisiones tomadas tienen como finalidad satisfacer a cabalidad el *skopos* establecido para el texto meta a fin de concordar con la función que se espera tenga para la audiencia meta. No debe creerse que la reescritura se realiza como un capricho del traductor en un afán de tergiversar un texto fuente. Si bien el traductor sabe que la traducción depende en cierta medida del texto original, también es consciente de que, al tener una función comunicativa, su traducción no le debe lealtad ni a la función del texto fuente, ni tiene por que reproducir el efecto que tuvo en los lectores de la cultura fuente, ni mucho menos la intención del autor. Según un enfoque sociolingüístico, el traductor debe transformar el texto para que cumpla con un *skopos*. Su "lealtad" está puesta en el propósito determinado para el texto meta. Por consiguiente, es evidente que el traductor trabaja, en principio, en interés de la cultura meta y no en interés de la cultura fuente. Los cambios al texto fuente no representan de ninguna manera una profanación: la reescritura es una variante o transformación del mismo a fin de cumplir con una necesidad o necesidades específicas y definidas para la finalidad de la comunicación.

## **CONCLUSIÓN**

Una de las posiciones más difundidas y respaldadas entre los teóricos tradicionalistas es que, en la traducción literaria, el texto debe reproducirse palabra por palabra. Tal pensamiento presupone que el traductor no puede alterar el texto fuente mediante interpretaciones, adaptaciones, actualizaciones, o reescrituras que pudieran ser necesarias, por ejemplo, para contemporizar el texto o cumplir con un propósito

definido para la audiencia meta. De hacerlo, se le otorgan títulos como traidor o detractor, entre otros y se considera que sus actos afectan e irrespetan no sólo al texto fuente sino al autor del mismo. Esta visión de la traducción literaria parte de la concepción de la traducción como una actividad meramente lingüística y prescriptiva que, además, gira en torno a una incuestionable sumisión al concepto de autoría.

En este nuevo siglo, en que se concibe el mundo como una aldea global caracterizada por relaciones internacionales que dan énfasis a la comunicación entre naciones, al entendimiento y al conocimiento intercultural, la traducción debe entenderse como un elemento de mediación, como puente y como punto común de intercambio tanto entre lenguas como entre culturas.

La contribución de esta traducción y de la investigación sobre el proceso que se ha llevado a cabo es centrar la traducción literaria de acuerdo con la necesidad(s) de una audiencia meta basándose para ello en un objetivo o varios de ellos que permitan a la literatura darse a conocer en una lengua y en una cultura meta que, de otra forma, no tendría acceso a la obra literaria. Nos liberarnos de esta restricción que imponen, en primera instancia, el concepto de que el texto original es intocable y, en segundo lugar, los muy defendidos conceptos de fidelidad al original que prescriben las teorías estructuralistas. Lo hicimos, pues al traducir entre lenguas y culturas y específicamente, cuando la traducción es literaria, es necesario reescribir el texto para conseguir el objetivo comunicativo que se intenta en la cultura meta. Dicho de otro modo, como reescritura, la traducción se realiza con una función y bajo el reconocimiento de que la reescritura no es, ni será nunca, una copia del original. No es posible pretender que una traducción deba ser una réplica del texto fuente porque el lenguaje y las culturas están en un constante cambio. Cuando se traduce entre culturas, es conveniente considerar que las expectativas y la visión del mundo de los lectores se transforman a medida que lo hacen las lenguas y las culturas. Por tanto, es necesario reescribir el texto, porque el texto mismo está en constante evolución. Su resultado será una metonimia que, lejos de “irrespetar” al original lo enriquece.

Dentro del proceso de traducción, el texto fuente se considera la materia prima para una nueva creación, esto es, el texto meta. Este último, es el resultado de una transformación regulada, es decir, una reelaboración discursiva y cultural para cumplir y llenar las necesidades específicas de la cultura de llegada. Nos referimos a una transformación regulada porque no se traduce el texto fuente con la intención premeditada de tergiversarlo o manipularlo por una simple ocurrencia. En un sentido amplio, se espera que el texto cumpla con una función comunicativa en la cultura de llegada, previamente definida mediante un *skopos*. Se trabaja para cumplir a cabalidad con las instrucciones específicas dadas para determinada cultura meta. La diferencia de este acercamiento es que el traductor no está limitado por una obligación de lograr una equivalencia o una lealtad entre textos, sino que su lealtad es para con el *skopos* que le ha sido asignado. Desde esta perspectiva, consideramos que las elecciones y soluciones por las que optamos para nuestra reescritura resultaron adecuadas porque satisfacen los objetivos planteados.

Muchos traductores y lectores discrepan con este acercamiento; sin embargo, desde nuestra posición, consideramos que cada texto demanda una aproximación particular, y, por esta razón, decidimos fortalecer una comprensión diferente, en primer término, de la traducción como fenómeno general y, en segunda instancia, de la traducción literaria.

De nuestra investigación se desprende que la reescritura es una opción válida para promover la evolución literaria, ya que le otorga nueva vida al original, actualizándolo, acercándolo a las nuevas generaciones de lectores y dándole la oportunidad de traspasar barreras geográficas y culturales. Si una obra literaria no se reescribe, no tiene muchas probabilidades de sobrevivir. La reescritura se “apropia” de una obra y la moldea en algo nuevo según una perspectiva alternativa y, con ello, los textos antiguos se reinventan y la literatura se renueva y se revigoriza. Consideramos que, con nuestra reescritura de esta novela, hemos contribuido a rescatarla del olvido y del aislamiento dándole, además, la oportunidad de traspasar las barreras

geográficas y de lengua para cumplir una función comunicativa en la cultura meta. Asimismo, este trabajo es un puente que permitirá enlazar dos culturas. Para los que no tienen el conocimiento para leer el original, podría decirse que la reescritura se convierte en el original.

Los traductores del siglo XXI no deben temer convertirse en *reescritores* de obras literarias, o traductores atrevidos que no se sientan limitados ni reprimidos por una malentendida reverencia al prestigio de original que les encierra únicamente dentro del ámbito de la palabra y les obliga a retener todas las peculiaridades del texto fuente.

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