

HUIDOBRO AND THE NOTION OF TRANSLATABILITY

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In one of his manifestoes, “El creacionismo” (published in French in 1924), the Chilean poet Vicente Huidobro claims that the new “creationist” poetry should be translatable and universal (1:736). A desire for universality in poetry is not unusual - poets and critics like Shakespeare, Sidney, Shelley, Hoelderlin and Rilke have spoken of the cosmic implications of the poet’s act - but the intent to write poems that will be translatable is an anomaly in the history of poetics. We need only recall Frost’s dictum that poetry is “that which gets lost from verse and prose in translation” (Burnshaw, xi), or Whitman’s lines -

The spotted hawk swoops by and accuses me, he complains of my gab and may loitering.

I too am not a bit tamed, I too am untranslatable, I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world. (89)

to realize that poets have not intended to express themselves in ways that are readily translated. Even those poets who have written in more than one language have emphasized the differences between languages more than the possibility of transferring a text intact from one language to another. Thus, we find Rilke writing to Lou

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Andreas-Salomé in the very year Huidobro published his manifestoes, “a few times I even set myself the same theme in French and in German, which then, to my surprise, developed differently from each language: which would speak very strongly against the naturalness of translation” (2:336).

Furthermore, critical discussion of the theory and practice of verse translation has tended to center on the difficulty or impossibility of adequately translating a poetic text - that is, on the possibility of translating already existing texts - rather than on the consideration of theoretical questions, such as which elements in poetry are translatable and which ones are not, or on speculations whether a poem could be written that would lose and gain nothing in translation.(1) We need not be convinced that the traditional views on the impossibility of translating poetry are wrong, or that any poem ever has been or ever will be translated without suffering some essential change to think Huidobro’s opening of the question worthy of examination, both in its theoretical implications and in its practical consequences.

The relevant part of the manifesto “El creacionismo” reads:

Si para los poetas creacionistas lo que importa es presentar un hecho nuevo, la poesía creacionista se hace traducible y universal, pues los hechos nuevos permanecen idénticos en todas las lenguas.

Es difícil y hasta imposible traducir una poesía en la que domina la importancia de otros elementos. No podéis traducir la música de las palabras, los ritmos de los versos que varían de una lengua a otra; pero cuando la importancia del poema reside ante todo en el objeto creado, aquél no pierde en la traducción nada de su valor esencial. De este modo, si digo en francés:

La nuit vient des yeux d’autrui

o si digo en español:

La noche viene de los ojos ajenos

o en inglés:

Night comes from others eyes (sic)

el efecto es siempre el mismo y los detalles lingüísticos secundarios. La poesía creacionista adquiere proporciones internacionales, pasa a ser la Poesía, y se hace accesible a todos los pueblos y razas, como la pintura, la música o la escultura.

(1:736)

In this formulation Huidobro assumes that, 1) The goal of poetry is the creation of a new reality, separate from Nature and not subservient to it, a view developed further in the manifesto "*Non serviam*." 2) The vehicle of this process of creation is the "created object," which he calls here a "new fact," something which does not exist in nature.

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This may be an image, a situation or a concept. 3) All other elements in poetry - meter, rhyme etc. - are subordinate to the search for these "new facts." 4) Whereas phonetic and metrical elements of a poem are tied to the features of the specific language in which it is written, and are therefore untranslatable, the images in it, especially "created images" which are not tied to the experience of a specific time and place, are the same in all languages. 5) Creationist poetry is, therefore, translatable, unlike traditional poetry. 6) Because it is translatable, creationist poetry is as "accessible" to people of all languages and cultures as are (according to Huidobro) the plastic arts and music.

Elements of this theory are found in other writers, but I believe the whole, and the intention to build a poetry on the idea of translatability, is unique to Huidobro. However, let us briefly trace the analogues to these six points.

1) Guillermo de Torre, a Spanish Ultraist poet and author of a history of the avant-garde movements, notes that the idea of the creation of a separate reality was current among the whole group of cubists (painters and poets) with whom Huidobro was associated in Paris, as well as among thinkers such as Bergson and Ortega (Costa, 140-42, 159-62). Gerardo Diego, a Spanish creationist poet, adds that the idea is a lot older than that: that Sidney spoke in 1595 of poetry as creating a second nature, better than and separate from Nature (Costa, 222).

2) Huidobro's "created object"(2) is not very different from Pound's idea of "ply over ply,"(3) or the notion of combining antithetical ideas or things and juxtaposing discontinuous images espoused by Reverdy and the surrealists. (4)

3) Huidobro himself cites Emerson's "The American Scholar" for the idea that thought, not meter, is primary in the poem, and that each new period demands a new mode of poetic expression (1:225). His emphasis on imagery is widely shared by others in the avant garde movements of the time.

4) Ezra Pound in "How to Read" (1927 or 1928) discusses the translatability of different elements in poetry in a remarkably similar way to Huidobro. He differentiates between three kinds of poetry, that based on *melopoeia* (the sound of the words), on *phanopoeia* (the use of images) and on *logopoeia* (what he calls "the dance of the intellect among words," the emphasis more on the connotative than on the denotative power of language. He comments:

The *melopoeia* can be appreciated by a foreigner with a sensitive ear, even though he be ignorant of the language in which the poem is written. It is practically impossible to transfer or translate it from one language to another, save perhaps by divine accident, or for half a line at a time.

Phanopoeia can, on the other hand, be

translated almost, or wholly, intact. When it is good enough, it is practically impossible for the translator to destroy it save by very crass bungling, and the neglect of perfectly well-known and formulative rules.

Logopoeia does not translate; though the attitude of mind it expresses may pass through a paraphrase. (15)

5) Breton, in his lecture “Surrealist Situation of the Object” in Prague in 1935, echoes Huidobro in expressing a desire for translatability in poetry:

If we have never ceased to maintain, with Lautréamont, that *poetry must be created by everyone*,... it goes without saying that for us it implies an indispensable counterpart: *poetry must be understood by everyone*. For the love of heaven let us not work toward the raising of the barrier between languages. “Thus,” Hegel also wrote, “it is a matter of indifference whether a poetic work be read or recited. Such a work may also be translated, without essential alteration, in a foreign language and even in prose poems. The relationship between sounds may also be totally changed.” (262)(4)

But what in Hegel is an oddly mistaken view of traditional poetry, and for Breton is part of a Utopian desire for a people’s art, is a concrete part of Huidobro’s program.

6) The hope for a poetry as accessible as music, art and sculpture to the international public has been more recently voiced by the Concrete poets (Solt, 10, 11, 60-64, 68, etc.) though it is by no means clear that all of these art forms are actually as universally accessible as they, and Huidobro, assume.

Despite the heterodoxy of this idea of translatability, it has been practically ignored by critics of Huidobro, and has only been occasionally mentioned in the vast criticism devoted to the Chilean poet. Henry Alfred Holmes, in his book *Vicente Huidobro and Creationism* (1934), mentions the matter, as Cedomil Goic says: “Holmes citaba el emotivo “Fin,” que traduce, en nota, al inglés confirmando las posibilidades que la imagen creada tiene dentro del terreno de las traducciones donde no se ve afectada como el poema elaborado en base a la musicalidad o ritmo del verso” (149). After that, the matter is forgotten for more than thirty years until Gerardo Diego, in his article “Poesía y creacionismo de Vicente Huidobro” (1968), writes of Huidobro’s idea of universal poetry:

Su abandono ... de la lengua castellana ... perjudica a su poesía de modo notorio, especialmente cuando se la compara con las de otros primeros poetas de su tiempo que estudian y sienten

el heredado idioma del modo más profundo y más bello. Pero esta que puede parecer descastamiento aunque en rigor no lo sea, es consecuencia obligada de su concepto de la poesía como idioma universal, en el cual es indiferente usar una lengua u otra, porque en la imagen creada, su invención es válida en todos los organismos lingüísticos y resulta, en lo que tiene de creación, traducible. (Costa, 216)

Two years later, Enrique Lihn in his derogatory essay “El lugar de Huidobro” quotes from “El creacionismo” and then comments:

El objeto creado, lingüísticamente estandarizado, que “no pierde nada en la traducción de su valor esencial” y que surge de una evaluación parcial, esquemática de los que el poeta llama “detalles lingüísticos secundarios” - “La música de las palabras, los ritmos

de los versos” - es una aberración idiomática con la que habría que ver, a través del análisis estilístico, hasta qué punto la poesía de Huidobro está de acuerdo. Pues, evidentemente, el poeta no escribió en esperanto. (Costa, 372)

Lihn too flippantly dismisses the idea of translatability when he characterizes it as a sort of Esperanto, but rightly points out the necessity for a stylistic analysis of Huidobro's poetry in terms of his theoretical notion of translatability.

What are the logical consequences of Huidobro's idea of writing a poetry which can be translated? In Pound's terminology, the decision implies a focus on *phanopoeia* or imagery, with an avoidance of *melopoeia* (musicality) and perhaps a lessened emphasis on *logopoeia* (the connotative power of language). Thus:

1) Phonetic elements like rhyme, alliteration and assonance would have to be discarded or given only marginal importance, though phonetic poetry, in which sounds are freed from syntactic structures, like that of the Dadaists Ball and Haussman, would be cultivated by Huidobro later in the last canto of *Altazor*.

2) Similarly, regular meter could not play an important role, given the difficulties of its reproduction in other languages.

3) Visual elements in poetry might be expected to flourish - calligrams in the manner of Apollinaire, or even Concrete poetry in the contemporary sense - while the typographical disposition of words on the page (use of capitals, line and stanza breaks) might be used to bear semantic weight.(5)

4) Metaphor must be the focus of attention, with poems longer than the few lines needed to present a single image being structured around the juxtaposition of multiple

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images. Other rhetorical figures like syntactic parallelism, anaphora and breaks in normal word order (anacolouthon, hyperbaton, etc.) might be important.

5) Narrative, descriptive and thematic elements - what Shlovski and Lotman call *siuzhet* (6) - would be readily translatable.

6) On the semantic level, punning or paranomasia would have to be avoided, since the particular cluster of meanings it is based on would rarely coincide in two or more languages; thus, there would be a tendency to simplify the signification of the words, to concentrate on the most “literal” of the meanings.

Let us now examine a few texts to see whether Huidobro's practice followed along these lines. These texts have been chosen from Huidobro's main creationist period (1917-1922), contemporary with the writing of the creationist manifestoes.

The line “Night comes from others' eyes” quoted in “El creacionismo” comes from the poem “Hijo” in *Poemas árticos*, a volume published by Huidobro in Madrid in 1918 during a brief visit which Rafael Cansinos-Asséns described shortly thereafter as “el único acontecimiento literario del año” (Costa, 119), since it put a group of young Spanish and Latin-American poets (some of whom were soon to call themselves “ultraistas”) in touch with what was happening in the avant-garde movements in Paris. “Hijo” does not strike me as one of the stronger poems in *Poemas árticos*, and the line Huidobro singles out in his manifesto seems to me a particularly tepid example of a creationist image, but the poet's selection of it implies that the poem from which it combs (and, presumably, the book in which that poem appears) possesses translatability and universality. The text of “Hijo” reads:

Las ventanas cerradas

y algunas decoraciones deshojadas

La noche viene de los ojos ajenos

Al fondo de los años
Un ruiñeñor cantaba en vano

La luna viva
Blanca de la nieve que caía

Y sobre los recuerdos
una luz que agoniza entre los dedos

MAÑANA PRIMAVERA

Silencio familiar
bajo las bujías florecidas

Una canción
asciende sobre el humo

Y tú
Hijo

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hermoso como un dios desnudo

Los arroyos que van lejos
Todo lo han visto los arroyos huérfanos

Un día tendrás recuerdos (1:312-13)

To what extent does this poem conform to the norms we have proposed for the translatable poem? Let us proceed systematically:

1) The reader is immediately struck by the presence of rhyme, of both varieties (assonant and consonant) known to Spanish poetics. The first two lines contain the strong rhyme *cerradas - deshojadas*, which bears semantic weight because the two adjectives set up a closed, dead world in which the son will provide the only beauty and innocence. The rhyme scheme is not regular, but it continues throughout the poem, with a predominance of assonant rhymes in e-o (notably in the last three lines, *lejos - huérfanos - recuerdos*).

Assonance and alliteration also occur throughout the poem, serving to reinforce the semantic patterns at work. For instance, the assonance on the letter o in lines 17-19 serves to emphasize the key words with a positive valence in those lines (*hermoso, dios, arroyos, todo, arroyos*).

2) Metrically, there is no regular stress pattern or consistent line length, though there is a tendency to place stresses on the second and sixth syllables of the lines, with 11 of the 20 lines stressed on the second syllable and 9 of the 16 lines long enough stressed on the sixth syllable.

3) The poem is a mature example of what David Bary has called the “estilo Nord-Sud (68, 72, 87) - omission of all punctuation, use of line and stanza breaks to emphasize syntactic shifts or stops, use of capital letters for emphasis. The disposition of letters on the page is visually quite pleasing.

4) Imagery is central in the poem. There is one simile (“hermoso como un dios desnudo”), several personifications (“luna viva,” “luz que agoniza,” “arroyos huérfanos”), and other transferences of qualities from one thing to another (“decoraciones *deshojadas*”). More important, the images are juxtaposed in such a way - syntactic links are omitted, and there are apparent contradictions, such as shifts in verbal tense - that the only way to make sense of the poem is by linking the images.

That is, we are thrown back on the images to find meaning.

5) The most important element on the syntactic level is the discontinuity just mentioned. The first two lines lack a verb; the third line is a complete sentence in the present tense; lines 4-5 form a sentence in the imperfect; 6-7 form a sentence fragment, with line 7 (an adjectival phrase modifying the moon in line 6) in apposition to line 6, and so forth. This kind of discontinuity - an extended variety of anacolouthon, which we might call montage - is readily

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translatable, but no easier to make sense of in translation than in the original.

6) With regard to the "plot" of the poem, as Hugo Montes has noted of another, very similar, poem from the same book, "Niño": "Huidobro proclamaba una poesía no descriptiva ni anecdótica. Aquí nos deja apenas entrever un paisaje delicadísimo, algo esotérico" (Costa, 280). The poet is addressing his young son in the late winter or early spring. It is night; the moon is out *and* it is snowing. He is in an old house (the candles are moldy, the decorations ruined), next to a stream. He is probably in Europe because there are no nightingales in South America. (7) The speaker is apparently bitter and disillusioned, and expects that his son will feel the same when he is old enough to have memories.

All of these "facts" amount to what Lotman calls a *siuzhet* (103-6), or what Jonathan Culler calls a "poetic construct" (166-67). I assume it would come through easily enough in translation.

7) Perhaps the gravest problem encountered by the translator of this poem is on the semantic level, as several words have multiple meanings, and the translator must choose one and ignore the others. As Jakobson has observed: "The pun, or to use a more erudite, and perhaps more precise term--paronomasia, reigns over poetic art, and whether its rule is absolute or limited, only creative transposition is possible: either intralingual transposition--from one poetic shape to another, or interlingual transposition--from one language to another, or finally intersemiotic transposition--from one system of signs to another, e.g. from verbal art into music, drama, cinema, or painting" (Brower, 238). In this poem the heart of the difficulty is the word *florecidas*, which is an adjective meaning moldy or mildewed, but is also the past participle of the verb *florecer*, to bloom. The ambiguity is essential to the poem, because on the one hand we have a string of images of death, decay and estrangement (closed windows, agony, ruins, orphan streams) against which is set an equally powerful series of images of youth, vitality and poetry (spring, nightingale, song, naked god), and the two series intersect in the center of the poem by virtue of the double meaning of the word *florecidas*.

To sum up: "Hijo" probably does not offer insuperable problems for the translator, since it describes a scene through the juxtaposition of images, but, containing as it does such untranslatable elements as rhyme, assonance and paronomasia, it is not as readily translated as the passage in "El creacionismo" implies.

More briefly, I would like to comment on Huidobro's activity as a translator of his own work, since this obviously played an important part in the formulation of the ideas on translation which appear in the manifestoes of 1924. Let us compare "Nocturno" from *El espejo de agua* (published in Buenos Aires in 1916) with the French version, "Minuit," which appeared in the June-July 1917 issue of

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Nord-Sud and then again in the same year in a slightly different version, in *Horizon*

carré (Paris, 1917).

NOCTURNO

Las horas resbalan lentamente
Como las gotas de agua por un vidrio.

Silencio nocturno.

El miedo se esparce por el aire
Y el viento llora en el estanque.
¡Oh!...

Es una hoja.

Se diría que es el fin de las cosas.
Todo el mundo duerme...
Un suspiro;
En la casa alguien ha muerto. (221)

Now the French version:

MINUIT

Les heures glissent
Comme des gouttes d'eau sur une vitre

Silence de minuit déroule dans l'air

La peur se déroule dans l'air
Et le vent
se cache au fond du puits

OH

C'est une feuille
On pense que la terre va finir
Le temps
remue dans l'ombre

Tout le monde dort (1:230-232)

The principal difference between the Spanish and the French versions of this poem is typographical: the Spanish version, published before Huidobro met Reverdy and began to collaborate in *Nord-Sud*, makes conventional use of punctuation and stanza breaks, while the later, French version makes full use of the capitals and blank spaces of the *Nord-Sud* style, and replaces punctuation with breaks in lines and stanzas. The typographical disposition of the words on the page effects a deep change in the reader's

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perception of the poem: instead of a quiet, introspective meditation, we have in "Minuit" an effusive, vivid portrayal of a moment. The change is perhaps best observed in the move from "Un suspiro" to "UN SOUPIR." This kind of change may indeed make the poem more "accessible," to use Huidobro's word, and would of course be readily translatable back into Spanish.

Eras tan hermosa
que aprendí a cantar. (1:303)

The motif of the recollection of an yearning for a love which was almost inadvertently lost in adolescence is a common enough one in lyric poetry - one thinks of the sensual poems of Cavafy, Poe's "Annabel Lee" perhaps, and the moving poem "No me condenes" by the Mexican Ramón López Velarde. Here, though, we find a more perfect balance of form and content than in the others. The abrupt shifts between present and past, the insistence of memory, the non sequiturs and lack of causal connections, and the reiteration of regret all find their perfect vehicle in the creationist poem. How translatable is the text?

1) There is a loose pattern of assonant rhyme here as in our other texts. Certain of the rhymes are placed strategically so that the reader cannot fail to hear them: *mano-gastado*, *tembloroso-rojo*, *bebido-escondido*, *agonizaba-alejaba*. Each of these rhymes serves to underscore a semantic relationship (in the first three cases, between the drink in his hand and the memory that surges up in him; in the last case, attention is drawn to the non sequitur "Eran verdes tus ojos/pero yo me alejaba," which displaces the remorse he feels about abandoning her when "algo agonizaba" in her breast).

Alliteration and assonance abound in the poem, from the first line ("Pasar el horizonte envejecido") in which the sibilants in each case precede the stressed vowel). There are later clusters of the following vowels: e (lines 6/8), o (13-14), a (19-21). The last cluster is especially important in emphasizing the words which express his flight and remorse: *algo*, *agonizaba*, *alejaba*.

2) As in the other poems, there is not a regular metrical pattern, but stresses do tend to fall on certain syllables: here, 13 of the 23 lines have a stressed third syllable, and the same number, but not necessarily the same lines, have a stressed sixth syllable. There is a preponderance of heptasyllabic lines (10 out of 23).

We find in this poem, then, a greater concentration of rhythmic and phonetic elements, or, perhaps more accurately,

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a deeper relationship between these elements and other (metaphorical, syntactic, semantic) elements. Jakobson's assertion, "Phonetic similarity is sensed as semantic relationship" (Brower, 238), is more fully borne out here than elsewhere.

3) Visually, the poem offers a more sober example of *Nord-Sud* typography than do "Hijo" or "Minuit" - as if the more serious subject matter excluding the games with capitalization of words for the sake of emphasis. (After 1918, it should be noted, the poet rarely capitalized whole words.) Line and stanza breaks quite successfully replace punctuation: for instance, after line 16 the stanza break serves in place of a colon ("Ese sueño filial: ...").

4) The poem is structured around a tight core of images. The title is shown to be a metaphor in the first line ("el horizonte envejecido" - memory). The second line contains an unexpected substitution, and must be read metaphorically: "mirar en el fondo" implies the act of looking at a physical object, but this object (a glass) is here displaced by an abstraction (dreams), only to surface in line 15 as the "vaso escondido." (The adjective would seem to be transferred from the dreams, or from the action of the unconscious in memory). The third line, "la estrella que palpita," is based on a similar displacement: the noun which normally goes with *palpitar* is *corazón*, which surfaces in line 19 in the synecdoche *pecho*. Lines 7-8 introduce the principal metaphor in the poem, which dominates the whole central section through line 16: "Llevo en la mano/Aquel cielo nativo." The glass facilitates memory but also stands as a visible reminder of his betrayal of a woman so beautiful she was mute.

5) This poem is unique among the four we have examined in having a refrain: “Eras tan hermosa/que no pudiste hablar,” which changes in the last line to “Eras tan hermosa/que aprendi a cantar.” The poem is rich in other kinds of syntactic repetition: syntactic parallelism (“cielo nativo” - “sol gastado”, “Yo me alejé” - “yo me alejaba”) and use of the conjunctions *que* and *pero* in non sequiturs to imply causal relationships that are in fact absent. As we have noted before, syntactic elements of this kind tend to be readily translatable, at least between languages with similar syntactic structures.

6) The theme of the poem is, as I have already stated, a common one in lyric poetry. Since it is enunciated here in a clear, eloquent way, I would expect it to come through well in translation.

7) There are no striking cases of paronomasia. However, there are two lexical and grammatical matters which might not prove easy to translate. The infinitive in Spanish can be used as an imperative or as a verbal noun, so the first line might be rendered “To pass” or “Pass” or “Passing”. Also, it would be difficult to render the full force of the contrast between “Yo me alejé” (line 6) and “yo me alejaba” (line 21) in a language which did not

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distinguish between imperfect and perfect verbal aspect in the past.

On several counts, then, this would seem to be the poem which would lose the most in translation of the four we have examined. On the other hand, due to its lucidity and power, it might be expected to come across better in translation than the more diffuse poems we analyzed above. (9)

Summing up, in these four poems Huidobro succeeds in avoiding obstacles to translation in most respects. The first point is perhaps the area of least success - phonetic elements (rhyme, assonance, alliteration) are consistently quite important in these poems. But he succeeds in other respects. He avoids regular meter, exploits the visual possibilities of the poem, makes important use of metaphor, syntactical parallelism and disjunctions, and presents clearly delineated thematic and narrative elements. The last point - the avoidance of paronomasia - is perhaps the area of greatest difficulty for the translator of these poems, especially of “Hijo” and “Horizonte.” On the whole, then, Huidobro has succeeded in producing a poetry which we would have to adjudge translatable, at least in relative terms.

Of course, in absolute terms no text can be translated from any language to any other without undergoing some change, because no two words correspond exactly in meaning, to say nothing of their phonetic or grammatical structures. And the hopes of adequately translating a poetic text are even more slim, since the rules governing poetry are more numerous than those governing prose, and the information conveyed by each element is greater (Lotman, 32-33). Why, then, did Huidobro ever undertake such an unlikely enterprise?

Parts of an answer are supplied by Diego and Lihn in the comments cited earlier on Huidobro's idea of translatability. Plunged into the milieu of the Paris avant-garde at a critical point in his life, he made a virtue of necessity and celebrated his abandonment of his native tongue, even writing many years later in the preface to *Altazor*, “Se debe escribir en una lengua que no sea materna” (1:382). In order to have his friends read his work, he had to circulate it in French, and even after returning to Chile he continued to issue French translations of some of his work. Then again, the avant garde in Paris in those years was full of bilingual and trilingual writers - Marinetti, Apollinaire, Tzara, Dali, Arp, Jolas - so Huidobro's situation was hardly unique. Why, though, did he alone of all of these writers make a program of his bilingualism, announcing that his poetry was translatable? Lihn, for one, sees in Huidobro a peculiarly striking case

of the inferiority complex of the Latin-American intellectual, “su siempre presente pasado colonial, de subdesarrollo” (Costa, 372).

Huidobro’s poetry, at least that of *Poemas árticos*, does translate more easily than most other poetry. Why, then, has it not been as much translated (9) as, say,

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Vallejo’s much more difficult writing, which loses far more in translation? The answer, alas, is that translatability is not a very good criterion on which to build a poetics. Something can be translatable and yet not very interesting. And yet Huidobro deserves a wider audience for his poems, both in the Spanish world and beyond it.

NOTES

(1) For essays on translation see Reuben Brower, ed., *On Translation* and Arrowsmith and Shattuck, eds., *The Craft and Context of Translation*; the introductions to the following are also useful: George Steiner, ed., *The Penguin Book of Modern Verse Translation*, John Frederick Nims, *Sappho to Valéry: Poems in Translation*, and Stanley Burnshaw, *The Poem itself*.

(2) An interesting parody of Huidobro’s (and the *ultraístas*’ “created object” is found in Borges’s story “Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius”:

En la literatura de este hemisferio (como en el mundo subsistente de Meinong) abundan los objetos ideales, convocados y disueltos en un momento, según las necesidades poéticas. ... Hay objetos compuestos de dos términos, uno de carácter visual y otro auditivo: el color del naciente y el remoto grito de un pájaro. Los hay de muchos: el sol y el agua contra el pecho del nadador, el vago rosa trémulo que se ve con los ojos cerrados, la sensación de quien se deja llevar por un río y también por el sueño. Esos objetos de segundo grado pueden combinarse con otros; el proceso, mediante ciertas abreviaturas, es prácticamente infinito. Hay poemas famosos compuestos de una sola enorme palabra. Esta palabra integra un objeto poético creado por el autor. (435-46, original emphasis)

Borges was associated with the *ultraísta* group in Madrid from 1919 to 1922, and was in contact with Huidobro’s work at that time. The two later collaborated with Alberto Hidalgo in editing an anthology, *Índice de la nueva poesía americana* (Buenos Aires, 1926). Besides being an obvious parody of Huidobro, this passage in “Tlön” contains a good measure of self-parody: the lists of different kinds of images are characteristic of early *ultraísta* criticism such as Borges’s “Apuntaciones críticas” or Gerardo Diego’s “Posibilidades creacionistas.” For a more detailed commentary on the relations between “Tlön” and Borges’s *ultraísta* writings see James Irby, “Borges and the Idea of Utopia.”

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(3) In an interview with Angel Cruchaga in 1919, Huidobro describes Pound’s “ply over ply” technique in these words: “Los imaginistas pretenden hacer una exposición directa del sujeto, presentando las cosas desnudamente; sus poemas son una sucesión de imágenes de la cual debe desprenderse la sensación total” (Costa, 65).

(4) For a discussion of the use of montage in Reverdy see Rizzuto, *Style and Themes in Reverdy’s Les Ardoises du toit*, 91. On the use of juxtaposition by the surrealists, see Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, 37, 274-75 and Benedikt, *The Poetry of Surrealism*, xviii-xxi.

(5) Huidobro did not proceed much beyond Apollinaire in his use of visual elements in

poetry, but he often had his books illustrated by his friends-Gris, Delaunay and others - and once exhibited versions of his poems written in several colors of ink in an art gallery. See Herta Wescher, *Collage*, 173.

(6) See Yuri Lotman, *Analysis of the Poetic Text*, 103-6.

(7) Bary reports that when Huidobro was preparing to return to Chile in 1932, he wrote to Juan Larrea that he planned to carry some nightingales home in his luggage, to aid the propagation of poetry in his native land (Costa, 360).

(8) See Rizzuto, 35.

(9) See Sylvia Molloy on the oblivion Huidobro had achieved in France by 1972: *La diffusion de la littérature hispano-américaine en France*. In English he has fared somewhat better since the publication of the *Selected Poetry* in 1981.

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