

The plumed horn / El corno emplumado: poetry, translation and subversion

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ABSTRACT: In this essay, I study the importance of translation as a means of subversion through the bilingual literary magazine *El Corno emplumado / The plumed horn*. The journal was published in Mexico City in 1962 and ran for seven and a half years, until 1969. The editors and poets, Sergio Mondragón and Margaret Randall, wrote, translated, edited, and founded 31 volumes in total. It was a bilingual trimester publication—spanish/english—, of art and literature. Among the many objectives that the editors had were the ability to create a cultural exchange between the Spanish speaking countries and the English ones; to spread the pacifist ideas of the time, which came from a marked social conscience; and to translate unknown poetry from the entire American continent to inform its readers of the realities that oppressed nations by dictatorial governments, were going through. It is the case of the poem "America" by beat poet Allen Ginsberg and "México: sixteenth Olympiad" by the Nobel prize winner Octavio Paz, which I analyze in the text.

KEYWORDS: Literary translation, xxth century poetry, Mexican literature magazines, North American poetry, Beat poetry.

The plumed horn / El corno emplumado was a quarterly literary and art magazine, published during the 1960s (1962-1969), in Mexico City. The poets Margaret Randall (New York City, December 6, 1936) and Sergio Mondragón (Cuernavaca Morelos, August 14, 1935) from The United States and Mexico, respectively, founded, wrote, translated, managed, and edited the magazine, during seven and a half years. The 31 published volumes were distributed in "Latin America, The United States, Canada, England, Scotland and France" (Mondragón: Randall: 1) thanks to the representatives' network that Margaret Randall and Sergio Mondragón were able to organize. *The plumed horn* was and is still considered a cosmopolitan and avant-garde magazine, through which the most original literature of different cultures in the Americas became known (Blancarte: 313).

In 1961, the preparations to edit the magazine started when a group of travelling artists and friends from Latin America and North America met up in beat poet Phillip Lamantia's apartment in the Zona rosa, Mexico City. Some of the first artists to attend those gatherings were Homero Aridjis, Ernesto Cardenal, Raquel Jodorowski, and the editors, but the printing and distribution of their magazine was made official until 1962. It was a bilingual publication—Spanish/English—, of art and literature which aimed to facilitate a cultural exchange between the Spanish and English-speaking countries; disseminate the peace ideals of the time, which came from an evident social conscience; contribute in bringing together Latin American and North American writers. Such objectives determined the tendencies of *The Plumed Horn*: on one hand, the special attention to poetry—mainly, social poetry, rebellious, concerned with human rights, peace, love and freedom—; on the other hand, in a kind of literary miscellaneous genres, short stories, plays, essays, novel

fragments and some interviews were included inside its pages. These collaborations appeared alongside many examples of plastic and visual arts: photography, vignette, painting, illustration, engraving as well as a section for letters, both from collaborators and readers; that is, an interesting correspondence which allows, nowadays, to reconstruct, partly, the literary context of those years. The magazine, hence, became an international community of writers and artists, where dialogue in favor of poetry and culture positively contributed to the ideas of the "new man" and the "new era".

Furthermore, in 1964, the project was enriched by the arrival of three collections, derived from *The plumed horn* magazine, in total they edited twenty-one books: the first collection is called *Colección Acuario*, these are *plaquettes* of poets both north American and Latin American, it was printed with its corresponding translation and was accompanied by illustrations; the second one, *Colección la Llave*, were books only in English; and lastly, *Colección la Ola*, dedicated to the visual arts. These collections, with the magazine itself, were a bold attempt to publish a hybrid, different and peculiar art and literature project, unfortunately, the money was not enough to continue the editing of the collections.

Meanwhile, the magazine, with its position of *resistance* to social inequality, capitalism, racism, consumerism, institutional violence, and academicism, was published in a critical moment, both in the history of the United States and in Latin American history. The United States suffered the aftereffects of the war against North Korea (1950-1953) and the effects of the McCarthyism repression (1950-1956), when hundreds of activists, teachers and intellectuals were persecuted and imprisoned, accused of conspiring against the government, and of having connections with the communists, rep-

resented by the Soviet Union—with which the United States would have continuous confrontations, resulting in the Cold War (1947-1991). The battle for African American civil rights, as well as those of women, also emerge in the sixties at about the same time in which the United States intervened in Vietnam (1961- 1975). This action triggers youth indignation, which they expressed in a series of massive protests against the war. In these, art and ideology converged, especially among the countercultural groups at the time, like the Beat Generation, from which some members were published in *The plumed horn*: William Burroughs, Allen Ginsberg, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Phillip Lamantia and Carl Solomon are just some of them.

The Beat Generation and its proposals emerged in a moment when new laws against communists and anarchists were approved, such as the "Smith Act" or the "Smith Act Trials of Communist Party Leaders", and the "Espionage Act of 1917"—which punished those who interfered in foreign affairs or who were spies—, with which the government protected itself to censor mass media. Hence, many, tired of the oppressive system, and curious to know other places, ventured to travel into the neighbor country of the south in search of liberties denied by then in their country of origin. Among them, one can mention Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, Phillip Lamantia, Harvey Wollin, Robert Cohen—editor of the last two volumes of *The plumed horn*— and Margaret Randall herself, who arrived to Mexico City in 1961, with a clear goal in mind: to find an editorial space where she could express her ideals with freedom. On her arrival, she would meet Sergio Mondragón, with whom she would establish a friendship unified by literature, and were soon to form a family and the magazine.

In Mexico, the monolithic government of the Revolution and the only political party made it almost impossible to prompt non-conformities against the system. In spite of it, at the end of the 1950s teachers asked for a raise of 30% of their salary, which was denied, forcing them to manifest publicly against this measure. In 1958, thousands of teachers from junior high schools and high school level education marched to the main square in the city capital to protest against the violation of their rights. The then president, Adolfo Ruiz Cortines ordered groups of riot policemen to repress the protest. From that violent attack onwards, a series of strikes supporting teachers followed. Moreover, other movements developed: railroad workers, doctors, laborers, and students, whom united to face the government, which, in turn, continued to respond with violence.

The ongoing confrontations of the nonconformists with the police and military forces became more and more violent, until they resulted in the collective murder on October 2nd, 1968 in the "Plaza de las Tres Culturas", in Tlatelolco. This action affected the links between the government and the directors of the cultural magazines, like *The plumed horn*, which profoundly disapproved the actions taken by the Mexican government.

Intellectuals and cultural promoters were allowed to protest any foreign policy. For example, they could publicly disapprove of

the Vietnam war, as the editors Mondragón and Randall did in volume 18, or, speak out against the American military expansionism in Latin America, but they could not do it against the Mexican government, for this meant the loss of governmental subsidy. Anaya adds the following concerning the freedom of speech perspective that the magazine fought for: "the spirit that the magazine had tried to maintain, that is of a new poetic Word and its criticism to political oppressions, erupted that year" (Anaya). And that young and revolutionary spirit, as in later years Salvador Allende² would claim, lead *The plumed horn's* creators to share their "rebel conscience" with others, of diverse latitudes, specially the English one, to which they informed about the massacre in the 28th volume:

The *poem* and the *life act* are drawing closer together. They are being drawn closer together precisely by the diminishing credibility gap between *what is and what is said to be*. In the recent student violence in Mexico City no deaths were reported in the "democratic" press. Obviously, there were interests at work that didn't care to have the student deaths made public. The reality became public knowledge, however; increasingly, there are other roads to knowledge of *What is*. (7)

The plumed horn's happy years" and those of Gustavo Díaz Ordaz's government were coming to an end, but not the struggle for the democratization of the country nor the oppressive system orchestrated by the State, as it is evidenced in the "Dirty War" period (1960-1980),² when the rural guerrillas from Lucio Cabañas and Genaro Vázquez Rojas and the urban guerrillas like the "Liga Comunista 23 de Septiembre" were exterminated, already in the 1960s, with Luis Echeverría Álvarez (1970-1976) and José López Portillo (1976-1982) in the Poder Ejecutivo (executive governmental branch).

The magazine's end was unavoidable: it would soon disappear. In volume 29, one of the original founders was no longer there: Sergio Mondragón had resigned. Moreover, after two children and 29 *Horns*, Mondragón and Randall long relationship, also ended. She would take on the responsibility, alongside Robert Cohen, to publish the last two volumes, 30 and 31. In volume 29, at the same time she asked for support from readers to maintain the magazine alive, Randall would make Mondragón's resignation public, confirmed by one of his poems: "Con esta fecha quedo separado (y unido)":

Beginning with the month of July, the Mexican government has been battling a legitimate student protest which acquired the character of a popular movement. In our 28th volume of *The plumed horn* (October), we raised our protest against repression which, even then, had not yet reached its highest point. Immediately after our volume was published, the government suspended our subsidy (which constituted more than half of our magazine's funds) [...]. Also in October, one of our editors, Sergio

Mondragón, left the magazine. Not only did he help in the publishing of *The plumed horn*, but he was also the Spanish editor. His farewell poem can be read in page 104 (6).³

Years later, Sergio Mondragón explained that he had gone to teach at a university in the United States and during his absence, he learned that the magazine had been bought by another editorial. He was misinformed, yet it is clear that there was a crisis within the organization and between the editors, which, throughout seven and a half years, had been a democratic window for the Latin American, Mexican, and North American cultures.

The magazine closed in 1969. This was not the case with its contributions. As a meeting space, it made it possible for various Mexican poets to be known in the English-speaking world and for several poets from other times and cultures—like the native American, indigenous, Russian, Dutch, Finnish, Algerian, African, Latin-American or Spanish—to be in touch with Mexican readers. This led to one of the important and new purposes of *The plumed horn*: to include translation within its pages as they mention in the 18th volume:

To translate as much as possible in these pages as we possibly can, and publish poems written originally in Spanish into other languages, poems that have been important for the evolution of poetry today, poetry which forms one eye that can distinguish the poet of our days, in which the poetry of Mexicans is enriched (5).

The magazine, thanks to the translations, fosters the encounter of poetry and poets beyond the borders where they were born, becoming, thus, a “transcendental” cultural project, that is, significant, across-borders and across time. This was one of the most important aspects of the magazine, apart from its originality and freedom of expression offered within its pages, what differentiated it from the rest of the literary magazines being published during the same decade was its bilingualism. *The plumed horn* was, in addition, the only Latin American magazine that translated Cuban poets into English, in a time when the American government had imposed an economic blockade to everything that came from Cuba. Mondragón and Randall decided to lessen the cultural breach that distanced both countries when publishing political poetry written by Roberto Fernández Retamar, Belkis Cuza Malé, the controversial Heberto Padilla, Fayad Jamis and many others. Furthermore, it was the first magazine to translate *beat* poetry in Spanish and in Mexico.

The publication of *beat* poets’ works in *The plumed horn* had a reason. The editors, in the way of the romantic French poets of the XIX century, blindly believed in the idea of poetry being capable of changing the world, poetry, they thought, could be dedicated to guide the reader to do good, and, therefore, it was important

to publish the writers who recreated that other reality that was not seen, so that, in a way, it would awaken social consciousness in readers. The social poet, thus, projects utopic feelings, wishes good to all, and draws a world where the truth, freedom and justice, among other values, guide humanity towards happiness. In this sense, the objective of political poetry is double: artistic and communal. Nonetheless, the main objective is not beauty, nor to indoctrinate readers, but to, through beauty, create sense in the reader.

For the editors of *The plumed horn*, the *Beat* poets revealed the reality of many minorities, the ones who were looked down on, socially marginalized, and who lacked a comfortable life. The *beat* artists wrote poetry and prose, seeking to get away from the traditionalist paradigms so that they could find a new way to create. They wrote protected under the new conception of the world, which they tried to concentrate within the word *beat*, whose sense is clarified by Kerouac, in an interview in 1959:

Beat does not mean dejected nor exhausted; it means blessed, the Italian word that designates the beatific; the state of living in blessedness, like Saint Francisco, who tried to love life in all its forms, be sincere, stay patient during suffering, practice kindness, cultivate happiness. In which way to complete this in our modern world of multiplicities and millions? In solitude, keeping to oneself every now and then to extract the most precious gold: the vibrations of sincerity (71).⁴

It was Allen Ginsberg (Newark, New Jersey, 1926-New York City, 1927) who “howled” against the system first, under the skies of San Francisco, in 1955, with his scandalous poem “Howl”, where he condemns the evil impregnated in the society of his time. There, he informs about the other side of reality that the government insisted on hiding. Ginsberg, throughout his work, refutes that “idyllic” view, he tried to expose it, as it is well shown in his complete works.

In the Latin American continent, the poets in the second half of the XXth century stood by this poetry line to criticize social abuse in their countries. Highly influenced by the XIXth century French social poets, as Roger Picard called Victor Hugo, Alphonse de Lamartine and Gérard de Nerval, who were determined to “denounce the misery, loss, the suffering to rehabilitate the wretched and the fallen ones who demand society to reform itself and destroy the wrong doings and injustices that it has allowed to grow” (40), many XXth century Latin American writers chose this path as well. Some of the first ones to do so were César Vallejo (1892-1938), in the 1930s, as well as the anti-poetry by the Chilean Nicanor Parra (1914-2018), at the beginning of the 1950s. Other poets that were attracted to, and began writing these types of verses were the Argentinian Juan Gelman (1930-2014), the Uruguayan Mario Benedetti (1920-2009), the Cuban Roberto Fernández Retamar (1930) and the New Cuban poets of the 1960s, as well as Ernesto Cardenal and the Nicaraguan

exteriorists (Beverly; Marc Zimmerman: 123). All along the Latin American continent, groups of committed writers emerged, as well as writers without a group, who, through magazines, contests and congresses, formed a resistance against the abuses of political governments in their countries.

In Mexico, in the XXth century, the members of the group "La espiga amotinada" began incorporating social aspects into their poetry. Juan Bañuelos, Óscar Oliva, Eraclio Zepeda, Jaime Augusto Shelley and Jaime Labastida formed the group with the idea of writing verses where they could reveal Mexico's social and political truths. They did so in their first book *La espiga amotinada*, which was published in 1960. For Agustí Bartra, "Bañuelos, Oliva, Zepeda, Shelley and Labastida are inside a poetry whose spirit is adhered to man's destiny. Because they are soul and world at the same time, they are open and advance, like the rivers of their time, that is to say, they inherit".⁵ And those poems demonstrate the Mexican anomalies of the period: the absence of democracy, laborer exploitation, State crimes, the abandonment of the poor. As the purposes coincided with *The plumed horn*, these poets published and were translated in its pages.

The "espigos" were not the only committed poets of the period. Efraín Huerta, José Carlos Becerra, Joaquín Sánchez McGrégor and Octavio Paz also collaborated with political poetry in *The plumed horn*. Octavio Paz (Mexico City, March 31, 1914- Mexico City, April 19, 1998), for example, presented that other reality, which the government did not want to make public, with "México: Olimpiada del 68", written on October 2nd of 1968, after the student massacre in Tlatelolco. Both poems were translated —Ginsberg's to Spanish, and Paz's, to English— and published in *The plumed horn*. Thanks to those translations, the readers of the other culture could know that the idyllic reality told by those in power, was not so real.

Arnold Belkin (Alberta, Canada December 3, 1930- Mexico City July 3, 1992), was a Canadian muralist painter, creator of the murals in the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, and in addition, a literary translator. He translated into Spanish the poem "America", by Allen Ginsberg, published in volume 19th of *The plumed horn*. The poem is written in a free verse, meaning there is no strict form, because one of the poet's objectives was to write in an anti-academic or anti classic way. The text starts with a disheartened poetical self, who, weary, addresses America as if it was that girlfriend for whom he has gave it all and now is nothing "he dado todo" y "ahora no soy nada" (v.1).⁶ The first verse places the reader on January 17th 1956, where a disillusioned youngster asks: "¿América cuándo acabaremos con la guerra humana?" (v.4), alluding to the different war conflicts in which the United States was involved, as well as to the violence against minorities inside the country. The devastated tone becomes choleric when he yells to América "Jódete con tu bomba atómica" (v. 5), and continues, demanding to know if one day society will recognize the "Trotskyists", leftist group, advocate of workers' rights.

Through a synecdoche "¿cuándo vas a enviar tus huevos a la

India?" (v. 13), the poetic I accuses his country of being invasive and opportunist. By then, the United States had already dictated the destiny of the countries that had been colonized, with the argument of helping them to democratize and getting them into free market trade, although in reality, according to Ginsberg, what his country was seeking was to take control of the goods of those nations and impose in foreign land their transnational companies. He condemns the superficiality of how things work in the United States because many times, people only needs a "good appearance" to get what they want.

In this poem, eventually Ginsberg seeks the reconciliation with his America. To save from failure his links to it, he even confesses his desire to "be a saint". However, he loses the possibility of reaching an equilibrium, an agreement, and opts for self-exile, as William Burroughs would do too, when he took refuge in Tangier for being in disagreement with the society of his time, "Burroughs está en Tángier no creo que vuelva es siniestro / ¿Eres siniestra o es ésta alguna broma?" (vv. 22-23).

In the face of failure, the poetical I seeks to know if there is evil in America or if she is only playing. He resorts to oriental culture, with the image "las flores de los ciruelos están cayendo" (v. 28), alluding to the loss of peace in everyday life, massacred, among other facts, because of the trials of false murderers, referring with it to those who were unfairly accused of some crime and imprisoned, with the purpose of suppressing actions and thoughts considered "dangerous", "América me siento sentimental acerca de los Wobblis".

The poetical I, begins to express his political posture, he feels compassion for the "wobblis", the industrial workers of the world. He accepts having been part of the communist party as a child and not regretting it. He confesses his inclination to the marginal world and to the pleasures offered by drugs, alcohol and sex, "Cuando voy al barrio chino me emborracho y nunca me seducen" (v. 35). He has taken a posture: receives the "visiones místicas y vibraciones cósmicas" (64) with open arms, which are not approved by the New York and traditionalist world views in which he lives.

Through the flow of consciousness, the poetical I points at the automatized, non-critical, society, consumer of publications like *Time Magazine*. Disheartened, he affirms that no one can escape from the mass media. Even he, sometimes, adapts himself to the norms imposed by society through the media:

La leo cada semana
Su portada me mira cada vez que me escurro por la
dulcería de la esquina.

La leo en el Sótano de la Biblioteca Pública de Berkeley.
Constantemente me habla de la responsabilidad.
Los hombres de negocios son serios.
Los productores de cine son serios.
Todo el mundo es serio menos yo. (vv. 40-16)

The automation of the American culture has reached the point of no return. There is no place for joy, or imagination, everything is seriousness. In contrast to the occidental culture, his interest for the oriental was born. (Let us remember that by then communism was stronger and stronger in China). He discovers, then, that he lacks the opportunities of a Chinese, and, hence, he is conformed with its "national resources": "dos cartuchos de marihuana / millones de sexos una literatura privada imposible de publicar" (64) and "veinticinco mil manicomios" (64) his, of course, is by own choice, otherwise he would have to go deep into the conventional world of his country. The anguished I seems to wonder why a nation like his, criminalizes and punishes its people in such inhumane ways; why are there are so many people that have been socially marginalized. He clarifies: "no hablo de mis prisiones ni de los millones de sub-privilegiados que habitan mis macetas bajo la luz de quinientos soles" (vv. 56- 57). He attacks the way of American production, and then teases it, along with the values of his society, but he is clear, when he mentions with irony that he will charge for his verses:

Continuaré como Henry Ford mis estrofas son tan individuales
como sus automóviles más porque todos son de diferentes sexos.
América voy a venderte estrofas a \$ 2. 500 cada una \$500 a cuenta
por tu estrofa vieja (vv. 64-69).

In the following verses, the poetic I demands justice for the innocents, unjustly condemned throughout history:

América libera a Tom Mooney
América salva a los republicanos españoles
América Sacco y Vanzetti no deben morir
América yo soy los muchachos Scottsborough (vv. 70-73).

The United States, from Ginsberg's perspective, is not the country it pretends to be: it supports injustice, it favors economic interests, production for itself; it condemns and massacres the social fighters and communist leaders. In this line, sarcastically, he mentions the paranoia of the government before communists and socialists:

todo el mundo debe haber sido espía.
América realmente no quieres ir a la guerra.
América son ellos los rusos malos.
Esos rusos esos rusos y esos chinos. Y esos rusos
(vv. 77-80).

By the time Ginsberg writes "America", the American military had left Korea, but not the Vietnam War, that one carried on. The American population disapproved the military intervention in the East, as

well as the plundering of the natural assets of those lands and even the confrontation with Russia. This last aspect is addressed with a mocking tone: the poetical I refers to the conflict of the Cold War, but victimizes the United States.

La Rusia quiere comernos vivos. La Rusia está loca por el poder.
Nos quiere quitar los coches de nuestros garajes.
[...] Ella querer nuestras fábricas de autos en Siberia. Él
gran burocracia dirigiendo nuestras gasolineras
Eso no bueno. Ugh. Él enseñar a indios a leer. Él
necesitar
negrotes grandes. Ha. Ella hacer nosotros todos
trabajar diez
y seis horas diarias. Auxilio (vv. 80-81, 3-83).

In "America", there is also, a criticism to racial discrimination, using for it the colloquial and wrongly written language, a language attributed to minorities. Many of those discriminated happen to be workers, who, ironically, maintain the production cycle in movement, while other classes enjoy a comfortable lifestyle.

After judging the American culture of laziness, whose symbol is "watching television" (v. 91) in a humorous tone, the poetical I exposes his own way of changing the social situation: "debería ponerme a trabajar" (v. 91). With that irony, he ends up refusing the American cultural ideals where time is gold: "soy miope y psicópata de / todos modos. / América voy a poner mi hombro neurasténico contra la rueda" (vv. 93-95). He accepts his condition of a social alienation, and assumes himself as someone weak according to American standards, but capable of fighting back and succeeding, that is, he believes he can change something in the society he forms part of.

Looking at reality in a different way, even in a subversive manner, is also the purpose of Octavio Paz in "México: Olimpiada de 1968". The poem was published in *The plumed horn*, volume 29, and, translated to English as "Mexico: the XIX Olympiad" by Mark Strand, American poet, translator and essayist. Paz sent his poem and a letter, written to the "Señores coordinadores del Programa Cultural de la XIX Olimpiada", who had extended him an invitation to write a poem that "praised the Olympic spirit". Paz rejects that invitation, but, when he hears about the events of October 2nd in Tlatelolco, he changes his mind and writes a "poema en conmemoración a esta olimpiada" (84).

The poem has its base in the student movement in Mexico and the brutal repression of the government towards the students. Paz, from New Delhi, watches some images in newspapers. It has been said that his disapproval to the violent acts forces him to resign from his position as ambassador, this is questionable, there were other personal reasons for this decision. Regarding the violent acts in Mexico City, he recreates the images of that fateful day in

his poem, written so that the stains of the murder are not washed away, as the government tried to do:

Clarity
 (Maybe it's worth
 writing it down on this clear
 White paper)
 is not clear: (vv. 1-5)⁷

Paz uses the white sheet as a metaphor to show how the reality invades the poem in development. The poetical I sees the images of an atrocious reality and this, at the same time, inevitably "stains" the page of the creator. Due to the massacre, rage is born, followed by shame, the same shame that Karl Marx experienced when he identified as a German, a nation that is blindly "patriotic", (Sheridan) as he mentions in a letter written to his friend the philosopher Arnold Ruge, and whom Paz translates in his poem citing Marx directly: "If/ a whole country feels shame / it is a lion crouched / ready to leap" (verses 15-16). Paz vents about the tragedy that devours him, because the murder occurs in his country and he, as ambassador, is part of a government capable of murdering its own people. Rage and shame lead to the limits of what is bearable, mainly because the government tries to disappear all trace of the crime:

(City
 employees wash away blood
 in the Plaza de los Sacrificios.)
 Look at this,
 stained (vv. 17-21).

And not only is the homicide denied, but it is also intended to conceal it with the Olympics festivities; hence the ironic title of the poem, where the intention of the poet was to debunk an event that gave the impression of a peaceful and stable Mexico, suitable enough to organize the Olympics, maximum representation of peace in the nations. The poet writes a poem not to "praise the Olympic spirit", but to talk about the terrible attempt against democracy, he wants to bring down the false idea that Mexico was a peaceful country, an image that was shown to the rest of the world. In the end, it is not possible to silence blood, is what the poet tells the reader.

The collective memory, the poet and his poem allow the massacred body and libertarian thoughts to live forever. Both defeat falsities and oblivion, as "America" by Ginsberg and "Mexico: the XIX Olympiad" by Paz, prove it. In both poems, the concealed truth is revealed. Things are not as they are made known. The poetical reality corrodes and destroys the distorted reality: the one of imperialism and its disastrous projects, in the case of Ginsberg: the one of a supposed democratic government that is respectful of human rights, in the case of Paz.

Having said that, the role of translation, sponsored, among other magazines, by *The plumed horn*, built a bridge between two

diverse cultures. It was this nuance which differentiated it from other magazines of its time. The arduous interchange of translation accompanied editors throughout the publication of the magazine, where even other translators collaborated, it was the case of the editor herself, Margaret Randall who was the most prolific translator of the magazine, as well as her mother who translated from English to Spanish. When the editors translated some poems to Spanish or English, they sent their versions to the writers for their approval. It was not in every case, but every time it was possible, they did it.

That was the case with some translations of Octavio Paz's poems into English, who, in addition, was a translator himself and considered such profession to be even more complex than creation, because the translator should submerge into the authors' mind and soul. From Paz's perspective, translation did not have to necessarily be faithful to the original text, but instead, he saw it as a place where it was possible to create his own version. He carried this thought out when he published *Versiones y diversiones*,⁸ a book where he compiles his poetical translations. There he explains that the original work has to be taken into account also, but not translate literally because this could lead to a misunderstanding of the sense of the original text. In a letter to Sergio Mondragón, Paz kindly asks the editors of *The plumed horn* not to publish some translations of some of his poems by Margaret Randall and he only approves of one translation "Al pintor Swaminathan" / "To the painter Swaminathan", written by him and painter Swaminathan, published in the anthology "24 contemporary mexicans" of *The plumed horn* volume 18. Paz considers that the translations are not ready and in addition gives his opinion regarding the work of the translator:

Todo eso implica un trabajo de varias semanas, Ella, [Margaret Randall] que es poeta y traduce poesía, sabe que es más difícil traducirla que escribirla. Es un trabajo lento y en el que el tiempo juega el mismo papel que la inspiración en la creación poética —es la inspiración, pero, por decirlo así, "en cámara lenta..." Y Margaret no tuvo tiempo (letter).

Translating, for Paz, implies both the process of creation as well as working meticulously to show nuances and be able to catch the sense of the original. In many translations, the poet Margaret Randall does a fantastic job, as many poets trusted their verses to her, yet, Paz prefers his own and that of Mark Strand. The rejection of Margaret Radall's translations did not affect the relationship with the editors. Paz seemed to support the magazine since he even consulted *The plumed horn* to make his own poetical anthology *Poesía en movimiento*,⁹ but, as it is shown here, he did not like some of the translations.

He was not the only critic of the translation work done by the editors. Salvador Elizondo, for example, disapproved the magazine's purpose, and surely was not fond of the translations published in it. He ironically mentions this in the first page of his translation

to the novel, *Finnegans Wake* by James Joyce, where to explain the word “orangemen”, which comes from “orangután”, that is “little man from the jungle”, Elizondo considers that most certainly Joyce referred to Mondragón and Randall. His criticism can be understood if some errors in *The plumed horn* are taken into account. Among the most evident, some editions contain orthographical or punctuation errors. Another error: in several occasions, the editor, Randall has regretted the fact of not having published more women. One more: some translations are not completely faithful, like Arnold Belkin’s—analyzed here—, which in several verses a vital word is censored, such is the case with this verse “America I’m putting my queer shoulder to the Wheel”,³⁰ translated in *The plumed horn* as “América voy a poner mi hombro neurasténico contra la rueda”, a closer and maybe bolder translation would be, “Norte América voy a poner mi hombro homosexual contra la rueda” (64).

In the case of the translation of “Mexico: the XIX olympiad”, the translator Mark Strand did a somewhat accurate job. The only

change that is worth mentioning is “On the cleanliness of this White paper” / instead of “on this clear white paper” (85), as it talks about the “cleanliness” of a sheet, not about a clean sheet. It is very possible that before publishing the poem and the translation, the editors had consulted Paz, as they did previously. Paz, undoubtedly, chose a good translation for his subversive poem.

Despite some mistakes in the magazine, mentioned here, the work carried out by Margaret Randall and Sergio Mondragón does not lose its value, much less the translation work. On the contrary, it was important because it allowed Hispanic and Anglo-Saxon readers to know about the injustices perpetrated by dictatorial governments of different parts of the world, and, specifically in Latin America, Mexico and the United States. Translation in *The plumed horn* revealed the black entrails of the *American Dream* to Latin American readers, and to Anglo-Saxon readers of “Mexico: the XIX olympiad” it allowed them to know the tinsel of the “Mexican miracle” in the history of this country.

NOTES

¹“To be young and not be a revolutionary is a biological contradiction”, claimed Allende in the speech given at the *Universidad de Guadalajara*, on December 2, 1972. See <http://publicaciones.anuies.mx/pdfs/revista/Revista19_S2A2ES.pdf>, consulted on April 7, 2016.

²The Mexican “Dirty War” is not very known in history books because the government did not want to make public the State crimes perpetrated against the guerrilla movements. The truth is that the kidnapping, tortures and murders to members of guerrilla members occurred during two decades. Among some of the crimes, there were the repression against the railroad workers movement in 1958, against *Unión General de Obreros* and *Campesinos de México* in Chihuahua, in 1963, and the Student Movement in 1968. The total number of missing people during those years is still blurry.

³Translated by me.

⁴Translated by me.

⁵Agustí Bartra, “Prólogo”, in *La Espiga Amotinada*, México, FCE, 1960, p. 10.

⁶*El Corno Emplumado*, Vol. 19, p. 63. The following citations belong to the same source and page; the quoted verse will be indicated in parenthesis. I am citing the poem in its Spanish translation.

⁷The original poem is:

| | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| La limpidez | ¿Por qué? |
| (Quizá valga la pena | La vergüenza es ira |
| escribirlo sobre la limpieza | vuelta contra uno mismo: |
| de esta hoja) | Si |
| no es límpida: | una nación entera se avergüenza |
| es una rabia | es león que se agazapa |
| (Amarilla y negra | para saltar. |
| acumulación de bilis en español) | (Los empleados |
| Extendida sobre la página. | municipales lavan la sangre |
| | en la Plaza de los Sacrificios.) |
| | mira ahora, |
| | manchada (84-86). |

⁸Octavio Paz, *Versiones y diversiones*, Barcelona, Galaxia Gutemberg, 2000.

⁹*Poesía en Movimiento*, México, Siglo XXI, 1966.

¹⁰“América”, *El Corno Emplumado*, Vol. 19, July 1966, p. 63.

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