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*Meridian 105°: Voices (Found) In Translation*¹

Introduction

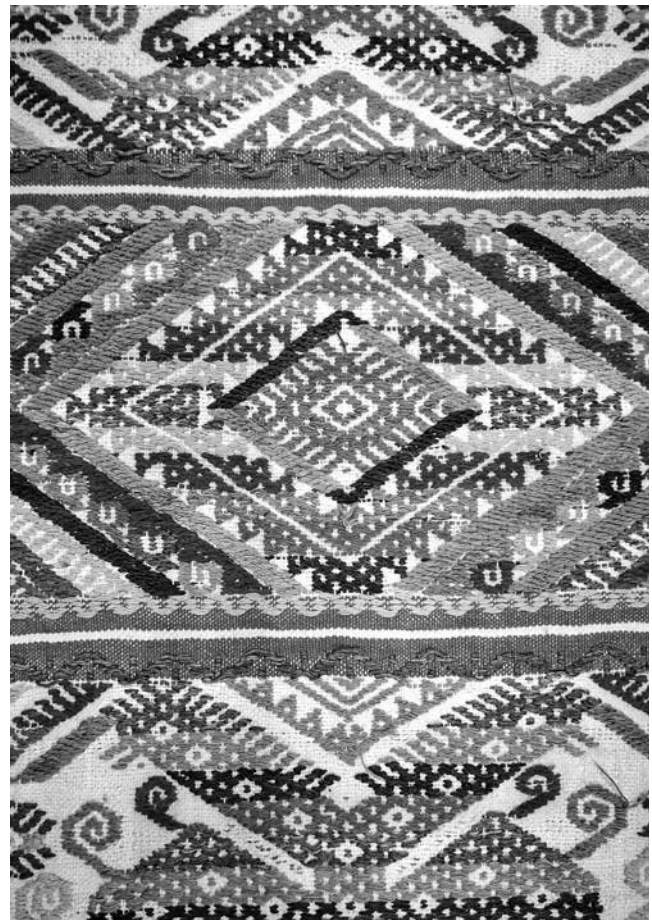
Implicit in the concept of translation is the supposition that the goal of the act itself is to facilitate the meeting of different linguistic cultures. The truth, however, is that every translated text reflects not only communicational intentions, but also the objectives of whoever commissions or carries out the translation. Thus, the bodies of translated literature implicitly represent the extra-textual factors that motivated the translation of this or that text and the agents involved in the process. This means that we can consider translated literature a bibliographical category or, in our case, a map of the different kinds of tensions underlying the decision to translate this text or the other.

Texts and Voices

The origins of the *Meridian 105°* project date back to 2004, when a group of poets and academics decided to illustrate through translation the convergence of some of the

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R. Schneider

Chinantec *huipil* from San Felipe Usila, Oaxaca, Mexico. Cotton woven and brocaded on a back-strap loom. This piece was made for the Remigio Mestas workshop.

underlying cultural, intellectual, ideological, historic, economic, and geopolitical factors in the dissemination of women's poetry in indigenous languages in Mexico and Canada. That year, the Margaret Atwood-Gabrielle Roy Chair, established by the UNAM and the Canadian embassy in Mexico, organized a conference of women's poetry in Cree, Mayan, and Zapotec with indigenous women poets from both countries. At the end of the conference, the participants noted the need to disseminate the poets' work more collectively and that spaces did not exist for doing that. That is why establishing a network of contacts to develop a way of disseminating indigenous women's poetry would be the project's central objective in its first stage.

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The project's (academic) coordinators asked the poets to each send a brief poem written in their indigenous language, accompanied by its translation to a "bridge" language (Spanish, English, or French). Parallel to this, they also more or less successfully sought out writers in other indigenous languages: in the case of Canada, poets in Haida or other variations of Cree; in the case of Mexico, in Náhuatl, Purépecha, Tzotzil, Tseltal, Wixárika (Huichol), and Zoque.

Once the poems had been gathered, together with their first translation, the next step was to translate them, using that first translation, to the other "bridge" languages. Then, the "bridge translations" were sent to each of the poets so they, or someone else from their linguistic community, ideally a woman, could translate them to the language of their original culture.

This was how the anthology began to be "knitted together": we began thinking about the format for publication, since the overlapping of the languages and voices showed us that each poem should be read accompanied simultaneously by all its translations. Given that, rather than hiding or eliminating the differences among the languages and cultures, what we wanted was to highlight and create a dialogue through these women's voices and experiences between the cultural and linguistic diversity of North America in ways that would question the current borders and political divisions imposed by colonial and modern projects, with their often painful consequences. We also did not want the "bridge" languages to occupy center stage in the project, as is usually the case in the publication of translated indigenous literature. The issue of the format went, then, from being an editorial complication given the multi-lingual nature of the project to becoming an essential part of it. However, it was at that point that the project came to an impasse.

Meridian 105° Is Born

It was in 2012 when the project took on new life, then under the name *Meridian 105°*, referring to the meridian

that traverses North America and represents for us an axis of textual union between Canada and Mexico.

The inspiration behind this second phase was the new digital publication platform formats, which are not constrained by orthodox publication models or by the profit margins determined by the hegemonic cultural consumption habits. We found that the electronic format and the open nature of the Internet were ideal for our purpose. And that is why we finally decided on this form of publication and not a printed version.

Since it does not use traditional publications in which everything circulates translated into a European language, publication online allowed us to represent not only the linguistic diversity that continues to exist in our continent, but also the possible connections and missed connections inherent in the poets' multilingual daily lives. That is why the final design of the book of poems, the central part of the anthology, offers a novel way of reading that blurs the lines between the original and the translation.

In the first place, the table of contents allows the reader to choose what language(s) he/she wants to read the poem in. This choice is not conditioned by hidden differences of power, as happens in printed editions. In the second place, the page on which each poem is read is designed to allow the reader to select two languages to read in simultaneously and in the combination that he/she prefers. This is a reading experience that, for us, reproduces the poets'—and indigenous people's— daily multilingual experience. In addition, this exercise also makes it possible to establish new dialogues between languages and cultures, since it presents the possibility of creating connections without having to necessarily pass through European linguistic and cultural filters. In that sense, the only criteria used to list the reading (language) options was alphabetical.

Thus, for example, if we decide to read Marilyn Dumont's poem "Recovery," the possible reading options allow us to combine Cree, Spanish, English, Tseltal, Wixárika, and Zoque, with translations pending for the rest of the languages present in the book.

M̄inowāyaw (Cree)	Recuperación (Spanish)	Recovery (English)	Cha'stael (Tsel'tal)
âhpo etikwe wâwîyak tîmew kîyohci tita pîhtikwêyin	puede ser muy profundo para que entres ahora	it may be too deep for you to enter now	Stak' najt' yu'un x-ochat yo'tik
mekwac kakiyah pîhtikwan	puedes entrar lentamente sabes	you can enter slowly you know	stak' k'un k'un x-ochat ya'bal ana'
pêyâhtik ki kiskêyhten	entras respirando profundo y cuando exhalas	you enter by breathing in deep and when	entras respirando profundo sok k'alal alok'es
mahkatahtamowinihk kitsi pîhtikwan	estás adentro un árbol ramifica	you breathe out	ik'
ekwa yehyeyini ki pîhtawenen	tus palmas que recorren el interior de los	you 're inside	ayat ta yutil xlok' sk'ab pejt' te'
esi wâtîhkwanowit mîyτος eh sowinis	troncos en brazos que buscan	a tree branching out your palms running up	tus palmas que recorren yot'an xch'ujt'
kâhtaman wîhpâhtikohk	el aire de la primavera y la esperanza,	the inside of trunks	te'etik ta k'abiletik te sleik
îsko esi tepî watîhkwanowik tehke isih	dedos extendidos que señalan	into limbs that reach for spring air and hope,	yik'al yuinal nichimetik sok bina yich maliyel,
miyoskamihk ekwa pâkoseymowinihk	hojas briznas de hierba, ahora dedos que	spreading fingers that point into leaves	sin' k'abiletik yak'ik ilel yabenaletik,
eh tâso iyhkcihce	recorren tierra	blades of grass, now fingers	sts'ujul wamaletik, yo'tik k'abiletik te
inskêstamihk nîpiyah	negra húmeda	running through black	ya st'un lum
maskosîsiyah mekwac	comestible	moist	ijk'
yayînkatew eh kaskitêwak	que inhalas y empiezas a nacer	edible earth	tep' ajch'em stak' lajinel
eh mîymâwak eh omîycowinowik asiskiy		that you inhale and enter birth	te asik' jich xkajat ta bejk'ajel
eh ôtâtâhtaman ekwa ôcihcî nîhtâwikihk			
Beverly Crier and Jerry Saddleback, Trans.	Liliana Andrade Llanas, Trans.		Adriana López Sántiz, Trans.

The Meridian 105° Anthology

In this first stage, *Meridian 105°* included seven Mexican poets: Briceida Cuevas Cob (Maya), Adriana López Sántiz (Tsel'tal), Enriqueta Lúnez (Tzotzil), Angélica Ortiz López (Wixárika), Elizabeth Pérez (Purépecha), Irma Pineda (Zapotec), and Mikeas Sánchez (Zoque). Four Canadians also participated: Marilyn Dumont (Cree), Louise Halfe (Cree), Rita Mestokosho (Innu), and Buffy Sainte-Marie (Cree).

Most of the poems speak of love (Angélica Ortiz, "Mi Nausi"; Irma Pineda, "Acaso un día"); birth (Briceida Cuevas, "Tu madre"); death (Enriqueta Lúnez, "Sobre el en-

tierro"); family and tradition (Adriana López, "Presencias"); daily activities (Elizabeth Pérez "Bordado"; and Mikeas Sánchez, "VIII"); and nature (Marilyn Dumont and Rita Mestokosho). Another characteristic is that they operate within atemporal frameworks, with a tone of recognition valuing the feminine situation or experience they describe. Finally, the voices that emanate from these poems tend to not be heavily marked by individual specificities; rather, they are voices that speak in the name of a collective of women.

One example of this is Briceida Cuevas's poem "A na":

<p>A na' (Mayan)</p>	<p>Tu madre (Spanish)</p>
<p>A na'e kiimachaj u yol. Ichil u jach taamil u yich p'och u ya'amaj. X-alansaj tu ya'laj ti' leti' ko'lel ken u siis le ka tu paaktaj ch'uyukbalech tu paak' xuuxil u chun u nak' a na'. A na'e kiimachaj u yol. Ti' u jach popok' look u dziibol pepekxik'naj u ch'eneknakil.</p> <p>Leti'e bin jel kaa' s'ijik kun s'ijikech.</p>	<p>Tu madre se puso contenta. Desde lo más profundo de sus ojos brotó su amor. La comadrona le dijo que serías hembra cuando te vio colgante del viento panal de avispa de tu madre. Tu madre se alegró. En el borbotello de su añoranza Revoloteó su silencio.</p> <p>Ella renacería con tu nacimiento.</p> <p>Briceida Cuevas Cob, Trans.</p>
<p>Your Mother (English)</p>	<p>Tshikau (Innu)</p>
<p>Your mother was glad. From the depth of her eyes Her love arose. The midwife told her you'd be a female When she saw you hang from your mother's wind-of-wasp- honeycomb. Your mother was pleased. In the bubbling of her yearning Her silence fluttered.</p> <p>She would be reborn with your birth.</p> <p>Liliana Andrade Llanas, Trans.</p>	<p>Mishta minuenitam tshikau Niuapatamuan uminuenitamun nete tahmit ussishukut U shatshitun utshipanu tahmit. Minanipan tshetshi ishkueu Kauapimuk nete peshish uteit Minuenitamupan tshikau Kie matenitakuanipan ishpish uakatshinuk Nash apu tshiekuanu petakuanit</p> <p>Kie utshimashkueuipan ka inniuin...</p> <p>Rita Mestokosho, Trans.</p>

However, we also find exceptions to this generalization. In the case of Buffy Sainte-Marie, for example, her poem/song "Universal Soldier" is an anti-war text, very current today, that does not address a women's issue. Louise Halfe's poem "So Sorry," which we include here, presents a Cree woman's critical, contemporary vision, with certain touches of black humor, of the role the Catholic Church played in colonizing Canada (see next page).

All this shows that, while certain common trends exist, we cannot —nor should we— say anything definitive in that vein, since these women explore their experiences anchored in their specific day-to-day realities, where women's indigenous identity is neither monolithic nor unchanging. Here, we also must clarify that we make many of our observations from the viewpoint of an academia marked by a world view that does not always share or profoundly understand much of what these poets are of-

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fering us. This can even give rise to putting a priority on stereotyped visions of what is understood by identity and indigenous women's experience.

In addition to all of the above, we have the fact that our contact is made through translations.

We must not forget that the poems by Mexican poets were translated into Spanish by the authors themselves, since in Mexico, the translation of indigenous language texts, above all literature, is still in development. This need to translate your own work often means that the poets write their poems thinking in advance of a later transla-

"So Sorry" (English)	"¡Qué pena!" (Spanish)
the pope said i'm sorry i sent a useless sack of scalped potatoes.	el papa dijo lamento haber enviado un inútil costal de costosas papas.
he said indian agents would give daddy a roll of twine, a box of shells and whisky. the spirits crawled inside my daddy and never left.	dijo que representantes indios le darían a papá un rollo de mecate, una caja con cáscaras y whisky. los espíritus se metieron poco a poco en mi padre y nunca se fueron.
he sent blankets and my babies died. he sent wooden sticks with a dead man to hang around my neck.	envió cobijas y mis bebés murieron. envió palitos de madera con un hombre muerto para que colgara de mi cuello.
he said if i prayed to you, geezus, ate your body, drank your blood, threw out my bannock, lived on my knees counting stones,	dijo que si te rezaba, gezús, si comía tu cuerpo, si bebía tu sangre, si tiraba mi pan, si vivía arrodillada contando piedras,
i'd never be without my family.	nunca me quedaría sin mi familia.
	Liliana Andrade Llanas, Trans.

Meridian 105° illustrates the convergence of some of the underlying cultural, intellectual, ideological, historic, economic, and geopolitical factors in the dissemination of women's poetry in indigenous languages in Mexico and Canada.

tion into a Spanish marked by culturally very specific poetic conceptions and conventions that are very different from their own, although that does not detract from the importance of the careful inter-linguistic effort they make and their reflections about the process. In this sense, we should underline the text by Zapotec poet Irma Pineda, "La amorosa traducción" (The Loving Translation), which speaks to the translator's constant concern to uncover the truth of the Other enclosed in a poem and to transfer it to a new text despite cultural and linguistic differences.

The case of Canada is even more complex since many of the poets, while they identify as indigenous, to differing degrees—and some completely— have lost their knowledge and mastery of their language. As a result, only Rita Mestokosho sent her version in Innu. The others had to seek out translators to enrich the project with their translations and comments, which was by no means easy.

Conclusion

In Mexico and Canada, contemporary indigenous literature has scant presence in each country's publishing industry. We think this is a reflection of the historic silencing of the indigenous peoples who produce it. Thus, the unusual characteristics of the *Meridian 105°* electronic anthology makes it an attempt to find those lost voices by opening up a novel space for contact and dialogue among poets, translators, and academics. In turn, this made the need to have more and more new ways of relating to each other increasingly evident and urgent.

These new forms, by reading translations accompanied by informed, careful reflections, allow us to develop the skills that promote the meeting and understanding of the many voices that inhabit our world today. This is why we are working on a second volume that will contain women's texts in other indigenous languages. The "virtual" nature of the anthology makes it possible for it to turn into a continual literary exercise in which more and more North American women and their voices can be present, above all indigenous women, in an affirmative, interconnected way and in a plural, open process. ■■

Notes

1 *Meridiano 105°* is available at <http://105grados.filos.unam.mx/>. Also see C. Lucotti and M. A. Rosas, "Meridiano 105°: An E-Anthology of Women Poets in Mexican and Canadian Indigenous Languages," in L. von Flotow and F. Farahzad, eds., *Translating Women. Different Voices and New Horizons* (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 194-208.



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