

A Translation of and Reflection on *No hay isla feliz*

Statement of Intent

My Honors Thesis project will consist of an introduction to and translation of Sebastián Salazar Bondy's play *No hay isla feliz* into English. This play casts light on the provincial mountain region of Peru during the mid-1900s, yet the problems of this particular time and place have universal implications. This thesis (particular work) will expand understanding and awareness of poverty in rural Peru, the invading influence of United States culture, modern shifts in morality, chauvinism, and domestic violence.

In my introduction, or translator's preface, I will explain my approach to translating, discuss challenges I faced, and acknowledge the research that affected my translation. My intent is to develop my own philosophy of translation and explore the challenges of, and possible roadblocks to, translating a theatrical work from Latin America. I hope to address the translation issues of foreignization versus domestication, and sense-for-sense versus word-for-word translation and the impact they have on translation. I plan on domesticating the text enough that an American audience can understand and find interest in the play, and foreignizing it enough to allow the audience to travel to the world of southern Peru with the characters. Whereas a word-for-word translation could confuse the reader and slow the plot down, my translation will be more of a sense-for-sense translation, so that the text will read smoothly. I hope that this translation will bring greater understanding and appreciation for Peruvian culture to an English-speaking audience.

Background and Significance

Sebastián Salazar Bondy (1924-1964) was one of the most influential writers of Peru during the twentieth century, a time when Peru lacked development of the literary arts. Mario Vargas Llosa, an influential Peruvian writer today, argues in his article, “Sebastián Salazar Bondy y la vocación del escritor en el Perú”, that there were a lot of obstacles to Salazar Bondy becoming a writer: many Peruvians were illiterate, which meant that there was not much of an audience, and many others saw literature as unimportant. He argues that Bondy succeeded in the end, like few or none other Peruvian author before him, because he didn’t stop writing and he defended the need for an American literature (21).

No Hay Isla Feliz, published in 1954, is significant as part of Sebastián Salazar Bondy’s repertoire and is valuable as a piece of literature for its time period. The play centers around a family in a small town in the mountains of southern Peru, who witness domestic violence in their neighborhood, as well as alcoholism, chauvinism, immorality, poverty, and friction between their traditional culture and the more modern, Americanized culture. They wait for years for the government to build a highway to their town with the hopes that commerce will improve, but in the end, their town remains completely isolated. They try to find familial and financial success, but tragically realize that there is no escape from the difficulties that pervade their society.

Jose Miguel Oviedo, writer and critic, praises Bondy for developing his literary genius during an era of cultural drought (9). Oviedo discusses Salazar Bondy’s career as a poet and playwright and discusses *No hay isla feliz* specifically, analyzing various social issues, including that of poverty and isolationism in the provinces of Perú, the persistence of chauvinism, the influence of the United States and modern technology within an isolated culture, and the conflict between generations. Oviedo asks several critical questions concerning this piece, such as “¿Acaso el país no es cada uno de sus hombres?” and “¿Acaso la derrota [de esta familia] no es

sacrificio que la sociedad usufructúa?” (25). These questions and others ask the reader to dig deeper into the meaning, suggesting that the play is not just about the family’s failure, but about the state of Peru as a whole.

Based on my research, there have been no other translations of this play, so this translation would add to the small but growing collection of translated works from Latin America, allowing more English speakers to understand the Peruvian culture. Hopefully, after being translated into English, the play will prove more translatable into other languages as well, thus creating opportunities for this piece to reach broader audiences.

To achieve readability for the reader, I anticipate using more of a sense-for-sense approach in my translation. Given that this text is a play, it is especially important that the translation is readable, so a potential audience can both understand and enjoy the performance. This approach will preserve the fluidity of the text and allow the English-speaking reader or audience member to comprehend the author’s meaning without having to stumble through bumps. Fluidity has been the goal of many translators for ages. As Martin Luther said of his German New Testament translation “Now that it’s all translated, of course, it’s easy as pie to read. Anyone can skim over three or four pages without stumbling once, and never even realizing what stumps and stones used to lie in [it]” (86). However, even Luther said that it was important to have a balance: “now, true, I didn’t always let the letters go their merry way”, admitting that in some situations, it’s best to stick closely to the original (88). In the same way, the regional dialogue and certain key cultural words in *No hay isla feliz* maintain that “sense” of what it means to live in provincial Peru.

Methodology/Procedures

I plan to do some preliminary research to better understand the context that surrounds the play. I will conduct more research into the mid-1900s, using mainly secondary sources accessed through BYU library and any primary sources (i.e. any essays Salazar Bondy had written about his time period, or any entries his associates wrote about him) that I can find through BYU library, interlibrary loan, or other searches via the internet, including any books I can find via Peruvian websites. I plan to read a sampling of Bondy's other works in order to understand his style better and see how this particular play compares to his other plays, stylistically and thematically. The preliminary research will also include research into translation theories, to better understand some of the underlying issues involved in translating.

I plan to read the play several times: the first time for pleasure and to get an idea for the story, then for the themes, and finally for the language and style. Since Salazar Bondy was a poet, I will also analyze whether his prose has any elements of poetry or rhythm. I plan on translating the play with a sense-for-sense approach for the English-speaking audience in order to make the translation as readable as possible, but also allow for a few keywords to remain untranslated, to remind the audience that they are truly experiencing the language part of the culture in the world of the play. After finalizing the translation, I hope to hold a read-through of the play and will look into having it published, perhaps in the online magazine for international literature, *Word Without Borders*.

Preliminary Outline

- I. Translator's Preface
 - A. Sebastián Salazar Bondy: and his place in the Latin American Boom
 - B. *No hay isla feliz* as a valuable piece of literature
 - C. Challenges in translating this piece

- D. The importance of translating *No hay isla feliz* into English
- II. English translation of *No hay isla feliz*
- III. Original text by Sebastián Salazar Bondy
- IV. Bibliography

Literature Review

Bondy, Sebastián Salazar, and José Miguel Oviedo. Piezas Dramáticas. Lima: Francisco Moncloa Editores, 1967. Print.

This book contains the play I plan to translate, *No hay isla feliz* by Sebastián Salazar Bondy. It also has, by way of introduction, an article by José Miguel Oviedo entitled “Sebastián Salazar Bondy en su teatro”. He praises Salazar Bondy for giving cultural fertility during an era of cultural drought (9). Oviedo discusses Salazar Bondy’s career as a poet and playwright and discusses *No hay isla feliz* specifically, analyzing the social issues within it and asks several questions, such as “¿Acaso el país no es cada uno de sus hombres?” and “Acaso la derrota de Daniel no es sacrificio que la sociedad usufructúa?” (25). These questions and others ask the reader to dig deeper into the meaning, which understanding may be worth noting with considering certain word choices, as one word choice could have an effect on the philosophical meaning and interpretation of a text.

Bondy, Sebastián Salazar, and Mario Vargas Llosa. Comedias Y Juguetes. Lima: F. Moncloa, 1967. Print.

In the essay “Sebastián Salazar Bondy y la vocación del escritor en el Perú” by Mario Vargas Llosa, he mentions that (there were a lot of obstacles to) Salazar Bondy encountered a lot of obstacles in becoming a writer: many Peruvians were illiterate, which meant that there was not

much of an audience period, and many others saw literature as unimportant. This article argues that SSB succeeded in the end, like few or none other Peruvian author before him, because he didn't stop and he "defendió la necesidad de una literatura americana" (21). It also describes *No hay isla feliz* as being "realismo peruano existencial" (26).

Fuentes, Carlos. *Casa Con Dos Puertas*. México: J. Mortiz, 1970. Print.

Carlos Fuentes, an influential writer of his time, had met Salazar Bondy and remarked: "me sentí ligado a SSB por esa extraña -- extraña en América Latina -- aptitud para el dialogo y el respeto intelectual que él poseía en alto grado." (119). In this meeting they discussed a lot of social-political-economic problems that also come up in the play: the divide between the Latin-American world and the modern world, the problems of the United States culture against the Latin American culture, etc (120-121). This lets me see into Salazar Bondy's mind, and gives me some context about what was important to him and what socio-political issues he was thinking about when he wrote *No hay isla feliz*.

Llosa, Mario Vargas, and Elena Poniatowska. "Salazar Bondy y la vocación del escritor en el Perú". *Antología Mínima De M. Vargas Llosa*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Tiempo Contemporáneo, 1969. Print.

The essays in this book will give me more background into Salazar Bondy's perspective as a playwright. It contains Salazar Bondy's view of the theater in Peru: "Siempre sentí vocación por el arte escénico, pero frustró esa ambición la carencia absoluta de vida teatral en Lima cuando tenía la edad en que se concreta una vocación." (162). Salazar Bondy exiled himself to Buenos Aires, Argentina to find a more receptive audience. He lived in various other countries, including a year in France (1956) where he studied theater with Jean Vilar in the Conservatorio de Arte

Dramatico de Paris (180). This essay discusses his progress as a poet, as a playwright, and the things that influenced him and his style.

Luther, Martin. "Circular Letter on Translation." *Western Translation Theory: From Herodotus to Nietzsche*, edited by Douglas Robinson, UK: St. Jerome Pub., 2002, pp 83-88. Print.

My translation is mainly sense-for-sense in order to preserve the fluidity of the text. Hopefully, as Martin Luther said of his German New Testament translation "Now that it's all translated, of course, it's easy as pie to read. Anyone can skim over three or four pages without stumbling once, and never even realizing what stumps and stones used to lie in [it]" (Robinson 86). However, even Luther said "now, true, I didn't always let the letters go their merry way", admitting that in some situations, it's best to stick closely to the original (88). In the same way, the dialogue and certain key cultural words in *No hay isla feliz* maintain that sense of the Andean culture.

Murga, Jose Hesse, Percy Gibson Parra, Juan Ríos, Bernardo Roca Rey, Sebastián Salazar Bondy, and Enrique Solari Swayne. *Teatro Peruano Contemporáneo*. Madrid: Aguilar, 1963. Print.

This book discusses some of the performance history of the play by Salazar Bondy and how it was received, which should provide me with a better understanding of the influence this play has already had. I will then advocate for the kind of eye-opening impact it could have on a new audience, a modern, English-speaking audience. This book also discusses Peruvian theater history in general, from which discussion I can decipher the relative importance of this particular

play on the Peruvian culture since Salazar Bondy's day. The authors claim that Bondy was one of the playwrights that revived the art of literature in Peru in that era.

Núñez, Estuardo. *La Literatura Peruana En El Siglo XX*. N.p.: n.p., 1965. Print.

This book discusses the importance of theater as a genre. Peruvian theater had hit dead ends and didn't really get off the ground until Salazar Bondy: "el naturalismo dramático y tal vez la inquietud indigenista y regionalista despertó un nuevo interés por las piezas dramáticas incaistas como se advierte en la idea feliz de . . . Sebastián Salazar Bondy. . ." (61). This book also talks about his success among Peruvian playwrights: "El teatro . . . de intensidad dramática vino a ser planteado, como una suerte de drama expresionista, en las piezas de [Bondy]. . . Algunos autores con obra estimable. . . no llegaron a alcanzar el buen éxito de [Bondy]" (63). Bondy wrote a diversity of works: poetry, short story, novel, essay, periodical, and theater (65). *No hay isla feliz* was written as social or expressionist theater, and "en el teatro social y expresionista, Salazar Bondy llega a sus mejores logros." (65-66). This book also contains a summary / brief analysis of the social commentary within the play (66). All of this information will help me understand Salazar Bondy's play better.

Post, Chad W. "To Be Translated or Not to Be, PEN/IRL Report on the International Situation of Literary Translation, Edited by Esther Allen." *Publishing Research Quarterly Pub Res Q* 24.2 (2008): 143-44. Web.

As Esther Allen mentioned in her article "Translation, Globalization, and English," the survival of language has a lot to do with education and economics. "English is the world's strongest linguistic currency," she states (23). As the world is becoming more connected through technology and world marketing, that English has pronounced itself as one of the dominant

languages, while other languages have become endangered or extinct. Even though we Americans are “well-enough off” to just let other people assimilate to our culture and adopt our language, Allen submits that “English’s indifference to translation is not merely a problem for native speakers of English who thus deprive themselves of contact with the non-English-speaking world” (25). For this reason, I wanted to find and translate more literature from Latin America, and found that Salazar Bondy’s play was a valuable sample from that world.

Thorne, Carlos. *La Generación Del 50 Y El Periodismo: Un Testimonio Personal.*

Lima, Perú: Universidad De San Martín De Porres, Escuela Profesional De Ciencias De La Comunicación, 2007. Print.

Salazar Bondy had a lot of influence on the culture of his time and that his works also reflect the culture of the time. Thorne reveals where he got the cultural ideologies discussed in his play, including the conflict between Latin American and Northern American cultures. The author also mentions Salazar Bondy as one of the high-achieving artists of the time, being mainly a poet at the beginning of his career. It gives an account of his artistic history. This book contains several of Salazar Bondy’s own articles that talk about the socio-economic-political situation in Peru, which will give me an even better idea of how his personal views influenced his work.

Venuti, Lawrence. *The Translator’s Invisibility: A History of Translation.* 2nd ed.

London: Routledge, 1995. Print.

I translated for the reader and so have endeavored to translate the “sense” of the text, so that the text can be read fluidly, while at the same time preserving enough of the original language and style that it reflects the culture of the original text, giving the reader a taste of the world of the “foreign” play through its language, which Lawrence Venuti advocated. Otherwise, this

translation would reflect more of our own English-influenced, modern-day culture than the Peruvian-Andean culture of the play, thus not making it a translation at all but rather a narcissistic reflection (Venuti 12). Even though I am not going entirely with a foreignizing translation, Venuti has influenced me to strike a balance.

Qualifications of the Investigator

I am qualified to execute this project primarily because of my experience with, and excitement about, the Spanish language. I have studied Spanish for 10 years and have taken various Spanish classes at BYU such as SPAN 206, SPAN 211-12, SPAN 321, SPAN 322, and SPAN 355. During Winter semester of 2014, I lived at the Foreign Language Student Residence (FLSR) in the Spanish house, where the residents were expected to speak Spanish while in the apartment and also had house dinners five days a week in order to practice speaking with the rest of the house members. That summer I did an internship with HELP International (a non-profit organization) where I spent 10 weeks in Piura, Peru, helping with different humanitarian aid projects, often acting as interpreter and translator. Then, from 2014 to 2016, I served an 18-month mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Lima, Peru, where I became more proficient at the slang and culture-specific words from that country, which will help me with the translation of this particular work.

On the writing side, as a senior in the Humanities major I have written many analytical papers, which have helped to prepare me for the level of writing required for an Honors thesis. I also took PHIL 300 and ENG 311, both of which emphasized strengthening writing skills. This semester (Fall 2016) I will be taking SPAN 415, a class on translation approach, and SPAN 339, on Spanish literature. These classes, as well as my past experiences, will help qualify me for this project.

I have also had a lot of experience with the theater: I have performed and participated in more than 10 shows since 2006 and have also had some experience in playwriting, stage managing, and directing, which will help me in translating within this genre.

Qualifications of the Faculty Advisor

I have talked with Dr. Marlene Hansen Esplin from the department of Comparative Arts of Letters about advising my thesis project. Dr. Esplin's primary research interests include both Twentieth-Century Latin American Literature and Translation Studies. She has published articles in both of these fields and has expressed enthusiasm about my translation and the accompanying translator's preface. I recently took a senior seminar from Dr. Esplin on Translation Theory, and my translation of Bondy's play is motivated, in part, by class discussions. Dr. Esplin also coordinates the Humanities Center research group on Translation Studies with Dr. Daryl Hague from the department of Spanish and Portuguese. I have talked with Dr. Hague about being the second member of my committee.

Schedule

Proposal completed --- September 13

Preliminary research --- September 13 - September 31

First half of translation --- October 1 - October 20

Second half of translation --- October 20 - November 15

Translator's Preface --- November 16 - end of Fall semester

Editing of thesis --- beginning of Winter semester - January 31

Schedule thesis defense --- February 1

Thesis defended --- March 1

Final thesis turned in --- March 15

Expenses/Budget

Paperback copy of *No hay isla feliz* --- \$48.70

Photocopying (for advisor and reader) --- \$5.18

Two hardcopy prints of intermediate translation draft (for advisor and reader) --- \$11.62

Three hardcopy prints of final draft for proofreading/editing (for advisor, reader, and I) ---
\$32.55

Total requested expenses --- \$98.05

Works Cited

Bondy, Sebastián Salazar, and Mario Vargas Llosa. *Comedias Y Juguetes*. Lima: F. Moncloa, 1967. Print.

Bondy, Sebastián Salazar, and José Miguel. Oviedo. *Piezas Dramáticas*. Lima: Francisco Moncloa Editores, 1967. Print.

Luther, Martin. "Circular Letter on Translation." *Western Translation Theory: From Herodotus to Nietzsche*, edited by Douglas Robinson, UK: St. Jerome Pub., 2002, pp 83-88. Print.