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“Spanish Is a Language Tu”

Hemingway’s Cubist Spanglish and Its Legacies

In a letter from Kenya in 1954, Ernest Hemingway writes to the art collector Bernard Berenson:

> I have many funny things to tell you and you alone. How you say that in W’Kamba [the Kamba language] is with one word *Tu*. This means you alone, you only, you who I love, you who I see again, you with who I share a tribal secret. . . . It is strange that you should say it the same way in Spanish the only language I really know. If I had been born in Spain like your defunct friend [George] Santayana I would have written in Spanish and been a fine writer I hope. As it is I must write in English, a bastard tongue but fairly manoeverable. Spanish is a language Tu.[1]

Hemingway is rarely, if ever, discussed as a practitioner of the cross-linguistic wordplay associated with high modernism. His spare, minimalistic English prose seems far removed from Ezra Pound’s rhyming “τροίη” and “lee-way” or from James Joyce’s multilingual portmanteaux in *Finnegans Wake* (1939). But in this letter, he speculates on a word in Kamba and its homophone in Spanish and on the similar concepts that they encompass, all of which are grounded in intimacy and secrecy between an “I” and a “you.” English, by contrast, is for Hemingway born of infidelity; it violates a sacred I-you bond that he sees in other tongues. Yet its “bastard” nature, its ability to be manipulated, makes it a generative font for him: at the end of this passage, Hemingway plays on the English “too” in order to bring his native language into this interlingual network. The Spanish word *tú* (*you*—Hemingway tellingly forgets the diacritical mark here) and the topics that this letter highlights also lie at the center of *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940). Hemingway’s novel of the Spanish Civil War famously employs nonidiomatic

English dialogue full of *thee*s and *thou*s to create what Edmund Wilson called a "strange atmosphere of literary medievalism."[2] As a group of Spanish-speaking Republican fighters and the Anglophone protagonist speak lines such as "What passes with thee?" or "Go and obscenity thyself," they have alternately absorbed and alienated generations of critics and readers. The implications of the novel's complex linguistic experimentation have been overshadowed, however, by a focus on Hemingway's personal politics, obscuring its place in the histories of modernism, of the twentieth-century novel, and of the English/Spanish language politics of its era. To bring together and revise these histories and to recover the rich estrangement and the subdued formal artifice of *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, this chapter reads it as a work *of* and *about* translation that disorients the very "round and whole and solid" style of writing that Hemingway helped consolidate.[3]

To consider *For Whom the Bell Tolls* as a translation of any sort might seem strange: it is not a translation of a preexisting foreign-language text, and Hemingway, unlike most of his modernist peers, never published such a translation in his entire career. But in fact, from its composition and its narrative operations to a pervasive web of symbolic scenes, historical allusions, and thematic strategies, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* posits and reforms a capacious theory of translation in need of delineation. Combining techniques of the Poundian "beauty of mistranslation" with his sense of the Gallicized Russian that Leo Tolstoy fashioned in *War and Peace* (1869), Hemingway produced at nearly the same moment as the publication of *Finnegans Wake* a radical experiment in linguistic synthesis in a superficially realist novel.[4] My understanding of the text as an exploration of translation—and its failures—is borne out by a crossing of actual and fictional worlds that Hemingway stages. The protagonist, Robert Jordan, an American volunteer in the brigades of the Spanish Republican army, has been sent to blow a bridge near Segovia, and his literal and symbolic role as translator hinges on the prior death of one "Kashkin." Kashkin, a Russian dynamiter who previously served Robert's role, never appears in the novel except in other characters' discussions of "the other one." Robert initially tells his Spanish comrades simply that Kashkin is dead; later, he says that Kashkin had

committed suicide rather than be captured by the enemy. Only later still does Robert confess to his fellow fighters that, in truth, he shot Kashkin at the Russian's own request (to spare him his suffering, he says) and that he kept his comrade's gun and felt "absolutely no emotion" over the killing.[5]

Such a revelation would seem typical enough in a Hemingway novel were it not for one detail: Kashkin was the name of Hemingway's real-life friend Ivan Kashkin, a leading figure in the Soviet era of socialist realism who translated many of Hemingway's works into Russian. Hemingway called him "the best critic and translator I ever had"; one who "knew what I was trying to do better than I did"; one with whom he corresponded on his plan for the brand of multiperspectivalism that he crafts in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*; and one who translated, while Hemingway was composing the novel, his germane report "On the American Dead in Spain" (1939).[6] Robert has killed off the namesake of Hemingway's translator and placed himself in the role of cultural mediator and translator only to fill this role poorly, even disastrously—and at times, he is suicidal himself. Furthermore, Hemingway's familiar realistic narrator turns out to exercise a peculiar mode of self-censorship, which becomes its own version of unreliable translation and miscommunication. The narrator can no more stabilize a "corrupted" wartime Spanish language than can the archetypal Hemingway hero Robert, originally a college Spanish instructor in Montana, exert any real impact on the civil war.

To read *For Whom the Bell Tolls* through its alienating collision between English and Spanish, set against a backdrop of a war involving soldiers speaking Russian, French, and other tongues, makes it less the gripping, realistic wartime epic or call to arms that it was proclaimed to be in the 1940s and more a cacophony full of ironies, misdirections, false cognates, mistranslations, and heteroglossic ploys too extensive to catalogue fully here. In a veiled effort at becoming a "fine writer" in Spanish, Hemingway offers, in short, a text suspended *between* languages in an era in which English was simultaneously expanding globally and homogenizing. *For Whom the Bell Tolls*'s willful distortions further complicate Hemingway's signature style, a style that has been shown in recent scholarship to be "actually highly idiosyncratic, highly

stylized . . . a particularly mannered version of experimental modernism" and not "an especially 'natural' brand of literary realism."[7] *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, moreover, merges two evolving strands of cubist and translational practices that stretch across Hemingway's career. While Hemingway's literary cubism, rooted in his plan to translate Cézanne's revolution in visual arts into literature, has been noted often, it has rarely been mentioned outside of his early works such as *In Our Time* (1925) and *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), and it has not been considered in translingual contexts. *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, as a work of cubist Spanglish, culminates an arc of Hemingway's stylistic trajectory in which his incomplete knowledge of Spanish combines with his serious study of Spanish literary history to become a theory of novelistic narrative, censorship, and epistemology that approaches a Beckettian version of writing. He buries affect and depth in language with formal experiments in translation as a register of oscillating linguistic movement. His Spanglish, that is, enacts a reading of Spain's literary past and political present during the Spanish Civil War. The alternative portrait of Hemingway as a maker of a minoritizing literary dialect—a Spanglish produced by deep, historical linguistic structures rather than traditional linguistic contact zones—diverges from his well-known legacy of influence from Harlem to Moscow, and it opens new ways of conceiving of late modernism's responses to both high modernist experimentation and the specter of total war, in the contexts that this book has adumbrated.[8]

As Hemingway constructs what is also an unorthodox response to the presence of the United States in Spain during the civil war, he points also to what was effectively a multinational invasion of Spain in the late 1930s and, thus, a counterpoint to the era of Spain's own imperial ventures, to which he often alludes. Toward the end of this chapter, I consider this reading of Spain as a transtemporal contact zone and of the war's literary-linguistic legacy in several other varieties of literary Spanglish that are tied to Spain: those created by Felipe Alfau, Malcolm Lowry, and Ben Lerner. Where the last chapter focused on a poetic past, this one traces out a network of affiliations to sketch a sample genealogy of English-through-Spanish in the novel, from late modernism through to postmodernist and contemporary literature.

On Not Knowing Spanish: Hemingway's Experiments in Illiteracy

Hemingway put not "just the civil war [but] everything I had learned about Spain for eighteen years" into *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, producing a text that he defended as the greatest he wrote in a style that he abandoned afterward (and he did not publish another novel for ten years).[9] But despite all of his time in Spain and his exotic romanticization of the land and its people; despite his writings on bullfights and wine, his Orientalist infatuation with the rich nobility and crude barbarity of Spaniards; and despite his absorption in the country's literary history, Hemingway was at best semiproficient in Spanish. He could read well and could converse (with great struggle) but could hardly compose at all. He suffered from what he called, with some nativist pride, "analfabetismo agudo con derrame" (acute, overflowing illiteracy), yet imagined himself to be an American author only by accident—a Spanish writer expressing himself in English.[10] Spain was, for him, "the best country in Europe" and "the most Christ wonderful country in the world," and he believed that his "future may yet lie in the Peninsula."[11] But his experiences indicated otherwise. Indeed, Hemingway attempted to insert himself into Spanish literary history by proclaiming the influence of Pío Baroja's realist novels on his own works. But when he made a pilgrimage to see Baroja on his deathbed, Baroja shouted dismissively in Spanish, "What the fuck is this guy doing here?"[12]

Despite these limitations, Hemingway used Spanish to varying degrees in a number of his works, all the while imagining that he would never be able to access parts of the language. He reflected to Edmund Wilson that Spanish

> is easy to learn superficially. But there are so many meanings to each word that, spoken, it is almost double talk. In addition to the known meanings of a word there are many secret meanings from the talk of thieves, pick-pockets, pimps and whores, etc. This occurs in all languages and most of the secret language is very ancient.[13]

As in the letter to Berenson, for Hemingway, the inaccessible part of a foreign language is that which is buried by time ("very ancient") and which encodes "secret," contraband, and intimate words or topics in "double talk"—a version of intralingual translation. Spanish is, for him, "the roughest language that there is," one that accreted mystery and unintelligibility simply by way of aging in one place, contrasting what he imagines the "bastard tongue" of English to have lost in the course of its global spread.[14] He plays with this liberty and openness that he sees in Spanish and meditates on the effects of translation in his semiprofessional Hispanist study *Death in the Afternoon* (1932), which also includes a glossary of Spanish terms:

> Suerte is an important word in Spanish. It means, according to the dictionary: Suerte, f., chance, hazard, lots, fortune, luck, good luck, haphazard; state, condition, fate, doom, destiny, kind, sort; species, manner, mode, way, skillful manoeuvre; trick, feat, juggle, and piece of ground separated by landmark. So the translation of trial or manoeuvre is quite arbitrary, as any translation must be from the Spanish.[15]

Hemingway's notes on the necessarily "arbitrary" nature of translations from Spanish, as he perceives it, and on the endless multiplicity of meanings attached to *suerte* indicate both a broad exploration of the depth of particular words and a resignation to their untranslatability—their bottomlessness.

Rather than translating anything from Spanish, Hemingway began developing in the 1920s a theory of the incomplete Spanish language as a tool and a foil for his manipulations of English. He experimented with his mannered illiteracy both in private (in letters and in conversations, the latter of which he often mentions in his correspondence) and in published works. His letters reveal his dialectal and multilingual experiments in development—everything from fanciful phoneticized spelling to cross-linguistic doggerel to calques—in a way that resembles the practices of Pound, Eliot, and Stein, practices that Michael North has highlighted in their correspondence.[16] He employed broken Spanglish with the painter Waldo Peirce, for instance: "Querido Valdito mio: ?Que tal hombre? lo siento un barbaridad no to see you

anymore."[17] And in a revealing letter to Arnold Gingrich in 1933, Hemingway details what he learned from his modernist predecessors and peers, then concludes with a self-consciously garbled Spanish-Italian "confession." Here, he acknowledges learning some "technical" elements from Joyce, a great deal from Stein "before she went haywire," little from Ford Madox Ford and Sherwood Anderson, and "how to say what you felt about [your] country" from D. H. Lawrence. Abruptly, he stops and writes, "What the hell is this, confession, "benedeteme parde porque ha aprendido."[18] The phrase means, roughly, "Bless me, father, for I have learned," but the misspelled "padre" becomes "parde," doubling the request for "pardon" that is implied in the blessing, and "ha aprendido" is actually in the third-person singular ("he has learned"), distancing Hemingway from the "I" who seeks forgiveness in the already incorrect "benedeteme."

His first significant public laboratory for crossing Spanish and English was *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), in which a number of sexual, religious, and even racialized anxieties surface through figurations of "translation." In Spain, amid the fervor of the holy *fiesta*, the lapsed Catholic Jake Barnes notes that "San Fermin was translated from one church to another," referring to the obscure ecclesiastical sense of "translation"—the transfer of holy objects and bodies of saints.[19] Moments later, his friend Bill Gorton repeats the term when he urges, upon hearing that Brett Ashley wants a bath, "Let's translate Brett to the hotel" (*S* 163). This meaning—to move or transfer—is retained in the Spanish *trasladar*, the false cognate that Hemingway uses to "infect" English with the Spanish of the setting, as he will throughout *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. In contrast to these awkward uses of the word "translation," the critical Spanish term *afición* (and *aficionado*) remains only vaguely translated. It is clearly meant to signal homosexuality but is given by Jake only as "passion"—specifically for bullfighting. In the novel's climactic scene, Jake serves literally as a translator for Brett and the bullfighter Pedro Romero, who share a sexual passion for each other. Pedro admits here that he knows English but says that he cannot speak it in public, for that would tarnish his image as a matador. Jake's successful translation makes him—as Robert Cohn charges—a "pimp" (*S* 194). Throughout the

novel, then, translation binds and occludes the intimate, the sacred, and the profane.

Hemingway refracted this dynamic, in part, into the wartime pidgin Italian of *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), and in *To Have and Have Not* (1937), the American smuggler Harry Morgan operates between Florida and Cuba, prefiguring Robert Jordan as a mediator between Anglophone and Hispanophone cultures.[20] But he was disappointed with the latter book, which includes only bits of Spanish. Instead, he built up his experiments across his non-novelistic works in the thirties, often around similar themes. In his short story "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place" (1933), for instance, Hemingway once again turns to religion and mixes the Spanish "nada" throughout the Lord's Prayer in English: "Our nada who art in nada, nada be thy name," and so forth.[21] His Spanish Civil War play *The Fifth Column* (1938) and the short stories from Spain that he published alongside it contain many characters speaking broken English and Spanish with various accents, alongside bilingual characters who turn out to be untrustworthy. Most notably, a "Moorish Tart" named Anita speaks a pidgin English that she learned in Gibraltar, the primary contact zone in Europe for English and Spanish. Throughout all of these works, Hemingway was engaged in a protracted effort to wrest and employ a language that he knew partially as the grounds for his practice of creative translation and composition. As he wrote part of *For Whom the Bell Tolls* in an Anglophone setting (the Rockies) and part in the Hispanophone Caribbean, his limited grasp but thorough exploration of the irreconcilabilities that exist between the Germanic tongue English and the Romance language Spanish became the springboard for his uncommon entry into the field of modernist mistranslation.

The Unfamiliar Familiar and the Failures of Translation

Many novels in English, such as *The Sun Also Rises*, that are set in non-Anglophone locales drop hints—foreign words in italics, untranslated phrases with explanations in English of their meaning—to indicate to the reader that the text is an imagined translation, but rarely is this

foreignness a premise for estranging the dialogue of the entire novel, as it is in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. The dialogue in the novel exists primarily between Robert and a group of Loyalist fighters with whom he is encamped for three days. This group includes Robert's self-absorbed nemesis Pablo; Pablo's outspoken wife, Pilar; and Maria, the Spanish gypsy with whom Robert immediately (and without explanation) falls in love. All of them, it is implied and sometimes stated by the narrator, are speaking Spanish nearly all the time. The source from which the novel unfolds its brand of interlingual defamiliarization into a sphere of irreconcilabilty, mistranslation, and unknowability is the familiar second-person-singular form of address. In English, the pronoun "thou" (with "thee," "thy," and "thine") was predominant until roughly the seventeenth century; forms of "you" were used for the plural and for formal address.[22] Forms of "you" overtook "thou" across almost all contexts: both the familiar and the formal, the singular and the plural. "Thou" became associated with elevated, rare literary language; in contrast to its roots, it appears to contemporary readers (as it did to Hemingway's) to be *more* formal, associated with Shakespeare or with Donne's Meditation XVII (1623), which supplies Hemingway's title. Like other Romance tongues, however, Spanish preserves with more regularity forms of *tú* as the familiar and *usted* for formal discourse. Linguists call this the T-V distinction (from the Latin *tu* and *vos*); the historical correspondence between Spanish and English thus would be *tú*–thou and *usted*–you.

Most critics have assumed that the T-V distinction in the novel follows a logical pattern of grammatical translation.[23] For instance, in an exchange between Robert and Pilar, we read, "'You please me, *Inglés*,' Pilar said. Then she smiled and leaned forward and smiled and shook her head. 'Now if I could take the rabbit [Maria] from thee and take thee from the rabbit.'" After beginning with the formal "you," she leans in closer and establishes familiarity with Robert before switching to "thee"; an uncomfortable Robert replies formally, "You could not" (*FW* 156). But the exchanges are actually far more confused than this. Robert and Pablo converse as follows:

> "Thou," he said to Pablo. "Do you think this snow will last?"
>
> "What do you think?"
>
> "I asked you."
>
> "Ask another," Pablo told him. "I am not thy service of information. You have a paper from thy service of information. Ask the woman. She commands."
>
> "I asked thee."
>
> "Go and obscenity thyself," Pablo told him.
>
> (*FW* 211)

NO INDENT Here, Pablo would presumably be switching from the familiar to the formal within one sentence ("Thou . . . you think") not once but twice ("thy service . . . You have"), and Robert would refer to him as "you" and "thee" just seconds apart. In other words, the shifts between "you" and "thee" do not have the logic of intimacy and familiarity that they should were the novel a direct translation of dialogue that was originally in Spanish. By a similar token, the verbs that accompany "thee" and "thou" are sometimes archaic ("canst") and sometimes contemporary, with little consistency. It is not simply that the novel is estranging readers by using "you" formally, then; it is muddying the very possibility of a translated Spanish grammar and suggesting that the process of translation somehow has been distorted. As Edmundo Desnoes put it, the novel's English is "españolizado"—"Hispanicized," or in a more appropriately awkward formulation, "Spanished."

Most pointedly, this vacillation occurs in Robert and Maria's intimate conversations, which jump illogically between "you" and "thee." Indeed, just lines apart we find "I love you" and "I love thee," thereby implying as its original the bizarre, almost comical Spanish construction *La amo,* or *Le amo,* for the common sentiment "I love you."[24] The novel employs these missed correspondences between English and Spanish grammars and registers them as a template for making camaraderie or love of any type linguistically unutterable. Intimacy is not an alignment of like points or emotions but an irreconcilability that the novel will transfer to multiple scenarios. (Indeed, in another moment, Robert tells Maria that his father and grandfather

were “Republicans” in the United States. Maria, relying purely on a transliteration of the sense of “Republican,” is surprised to hear that such an allegiance did not result in their being shot, as her Spanish Republican father was.) The shifting language and grammar of *For Whom the Bell Tolls* allow no emotional depth; we have only a surface of words clashing and missing one another, even beyond Hemingway’s likely intentions. The gaps between English and Spanish are evident even on the levels of spelling, typography, and orthography, which are inconsistent and riddled with errors throughout the text. The interplay between intimacy and translation that Hemingway employs here is as old as the metaphorical uses of “faithful” and “fidelity” to denote “accuracy” in translation. Here, a fabricated, multilayered foreignization projects a world in which the phrase “I love you” becomes an impossible, mistranslated statement. Such confusion is present even in the opening scene of the novel. Here, Robert and his elder colleague Anselmo (both as yet unnamed) speak to each other formally as “you,” and the English remains idiomatic, classically Hemingway, until “the old man” (Anselmo) says awkwardly that they might have to “climb a little in seriousness.” Robert asks him formally, “How are you called?”; Anselmo’s response switches to the familiar with “How do they call thee?” (*FW* 2). The two characters then switch directly back to the formal “you” in conversation. Robert’s answer (“Roberto”) points to the fact that his appellation in the novel is inconsistent: some characters call him “Roberto,” others “*Inglés*” (“English,” which he protests, since he is from the United States and only *speaks* English rather than *being* English). The narrator only calls him “Robert Jordan”—always the full name, unlike any other character in the novel—a technique borrowed from Stein’s “Melanctha” (1909).

Robert, after having disposed of Kashkin, assigns himself the role of cultural-linguistic intermediary only to become a victim of cross-linguistic interplay and irreconcilability. His sole, symbolic mission, after all, is to *destroy* a bridge. On one level, the novel’s discourse replicates the setting and plot: thousands of foreign mercenaries from all political stripes have descended on Spain during the civil war, and within their own ranks, they are unable to communicate clearly. But more specifically, Spanish, in its collisions with English, Russian, French, and more,

has become further fractured in ways that cannot be repaired by Robert, a mistranslator and a mistranslated figure himself ("*Inglés*" for "American"). Robert retains a naïve faith in English as a lingua franca and returns to it when he is frustrated with Pablo, admitting that

> "When I get very tired sometimes I speak English. Or when I get very disgusted. Or baffled, say. When I get highly baffled I just talk English to hear the sound of it. It's a reassuring noise. You ought to try it sometime." . . .
>
> "What do you say, *Inglés?*" Pilar said. "It sounds very interesting but I do not understand."
>
> "Nothing," Robert Jordan said. "I said, 'nothing' in English."
>
> "Well then, talk Spanish," Pilar said. "It's shorter and simpler[.]"
>
> (*FW* 180–181)

First using English to needle and tease Pablo, then to vent to Pilar, Robert finds himself both assured and baffled by English, which is reduced here to a defamiliarized and Steinian "reassuring noise" without content. Similarly, Robert thinks of his father, who committed suicide: "I'll never forget how sick it made me the first time I knew he was a *cobarde*. Go on, say it in English. Coward. It's easier when you have it said and there is never any point in referring to a son of a bitch by some foreign term" (*FW* 338). English has become uncanny—familiar yet estranged—for Robert. When thinking of Maria, his mind shifts across languages:

> Now, *ahora, maintenant, heute. Now*, it has a funny sound to be a whole world and your life. *Esta noche*, tonight, *ce soir*, *heute abend*. Life and wife, *Vie* and *Mari*. No it didn't work out. The French turned it into husband. There was now and *frau*; but that did not prove anything either. Take dead, *mort, muerto*, and *todt. Todt* was the deadest of them all. War, *guerre*, *guerra*, and *krieg. Krieg* was the most like war, or was it? Or was it only that he knew German the least well? Sweetheart, *cherie*, *prenda*, and *schatz*. He would trade them all for Maria. There was a name.
>
> (*FW* 166–167)

The deficiencies of English, the gender misalignment in French with his invented, hoped-for rhyme (*vie* and *Mari*-a), and the putative gravity of German all converge here in a polyglot disassembly—a meditation on the failures of language across utterances and meanings. Robert is not a polyglot arranger, and he cannot, in Poundian terms, "make it cohere."

Perhaps the greatest irony in the novel is that Robert's many communicative failures occur despite—or because of—his imagining that his profession as a Spanish instructor and author of an ethnographical travelogue on Spain would aid him. (He imagines, too, that if he lives through the war, he will write a "good book" about it [*FW* 165].) He tells himself that his comrades "trusted you on the language, principally. They trusted you on understanding the language completely and speaking it idiomatically and having a knowledge of the different places" (*FW* 135). But in an emblematically confusing scene early in the novel, Robert meets with the comrade El Sordo (literally, "The Deaf One"), who initially speaks to him in a "pidgin Spanish" because he does not believe the American will understand him (*FW* 147). Elsewhere Robert's closest friend Karkov (a Russian) speaks a "strange Spanish" that discomforts him (*FW* 239). Even Robert's attempt to make jokes and puns in Spanish fails: when he plays on "huevos" (literally, "eggs" but slang for "testicles") in a jab at Pablo's manhood, his colleague Fernando asks, "What eggs?", and Robert hastily explains away his flop (*FW* 199). He is grilled by his comrades for being so "presumptuous" as to teach Spanish without being a native speaker (*FW* 209). In this capacity, he serves (poorly) an extratextual function as Hemingway's surrogate, answering the charge of presumptuousness in the way he has used Spanish and the war in his English novel. "That I am a foreigner is not my fault. I would rather have been born here" (*FW* 15), he says, echoing Hemingway's dream of being a "Spanish writer." This intra/extratextual boundary is blurred more explicitly here when Robert's stable source of pride emerges: his superiority to Kashkin. Kashkin is disparaged by Pilar for being "nervous" and having "spoke[n] in a very rare and windy way." Kashkin's failure, it turns out, was one of speech and language. Robert notes, too, that the "one great difference" between himself and Kashkin is that "I am alive and he is dead." When Robert fears that his comrades see him as too much like the "coward"

Kashkin, he reminds them of this difference, in two languages: "'*Murio,*' Robert Jordan said into the deaf man's ear. 'He is dead.'" This translation is unnecessary: El Sordo speaks Spanish, so Robert is redundantly translating "He is dead" for his own purposes, just before he finally confesses, "I shot him" (*FW* 148). By contrast, in another real-life reference, Robert idolizes over against Kashkin his unseen comrade Duran, named for Hemingway's friend Gustavo Durán (*FW* 290). Durán, an artist turned soldier for the Republic, was Hemingway's unofficial consultant for the novel; he hastily proofread the novel's Spanish lines and accompanied Hemingway to New York to publicize the novel in interviews.[25] His presence and Kashkin's absence combine to suspend Robert, as a figure meant to cross diegetic borders, between the internal and actual worlds of the novel's translational engagements.

Moreover, the machinations at play here elucidate the role that Hemingway's idiosyncratic narrator plays in effecting them. Far from clarifying the disorienting dialogue, the narrator only compounds it with unnecessary repetitions, inconsistent translations, and nonidiomatic English borrowed from the characters' mouths. The narrator, for instance, begins to use awkwardly transliterated Spanish phrases such as "the woman of Pablo" rather than "Pablo's woman" or "Pablo's wife," makes obvious or redundant observations, and translates the same Spanish phrases differently while in the same contexts.[26] This provides, in turn, a hermeneutic lens for understanding the novel's notorious, bizarre excision of obscene words. *To Have and Have Not* was Scribner's first published title to include the word "fucking," which contributed to its low sales. Needing money for his impending divorce, Hemingway devised a strategy in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* that would allow this novel to enter the Book of the Month Club—and it paid off, as the novel sold half a million copies in its first five months.[27] But this novel uses self-censorship less as a tool for propriety and more as a rhetorical and narratological strategy in a multilingual environment in which it is yet another type of translation. The self-reflexivity is apparent in the fact that "unprintable" is used rather than "unspeakable":

> "Go to the unprintable," Agustin said. "And unprint thyself. But do you

> want me to tell you something of service to you?"
>
> "Yes," said Robert Jordan. "If it is not unprintable," naming the principal obscenity that had larded the conversation. The man, Agustin, spoke so obscenely, coupling an obscenity to every noun as an adjective, using the same obscenity as a verb, that Robert Jordan wondered if he could speak a straight sentence. Agustin laughed in the dark when he heard the word.
>
> (*FW* 45)

Not only is the narrator an auditor and transcriber of the conversation; he is also an editor who understands the nonprintability of what he records in the actual world of the novel's circulation. When Agustin says to "unprint thyself," he is not simply having an obscenity removed by the narrator-editor; he is also telling a character in a novel to unprint himself from the page, to wipe his being—which only exists in print—out of existence. As the narrator claims, "there is no language so filthy as Spanish. There are words for all the vile words in English and there are other words and expressions that are used only in countries where blasphemy keeps pace with the austerity of religion" (*FW* 318). Yet, when the characters' insults reach "the ultimate formalism in Spanish . . . the acts are never stated but only implied" (*FW* 93).

Indeed, in his manuscript revisions, Hemingway replaced everything from euphemisms to outright profanities in English with Spanish words: "make love" became *joder* ("fuck") while Spanish phrases like *me cago* ("I shit") remained intact.[28] French obscenities are also printed, as when Marty says, "*Nous sommes foutus*" ("We are fucked") (*FW* 428). The narrator, in short, knows how censorial codes operate in a largely monolingual book market like that of the United States, and for him, translation is censorship, and censorship is translation, insofar as both bury the original.[29] This explains, too, why Robert's relationship with Maria is marked not only by declarations of emotional intimacy that are depthless and nonsensical but also by sex that is rendered in prose in which formal artifice overtakes description ("the acts are never stated but only implied"): "one only one, there is no other one but one now, one, going now, rising now, sailing now, leaving now, wheeling now, soaring now, away now, all the way now, all of all the

way now; one and one is one, is one, is one, is one, is still one . . .” (*FW* 379).

Hemingway thus rewrites, through Robert, Conrad’s misplaced protagonist Marlow, who is a struggling narrator and reader of symbols and who replaces the unseen, dead Fresleven in the same way Robert replaces Kashkin.[30] Moreover, if Robert Jordan is a stand-in for “the American Dead in Spain” that Hemingway eulogized, he is an emblem of the failure of American volunteers (the United States refused to intervene militarily) to affect the war, for the war was over by the time the novel was published—indeed, Hitler had already invaded Poland, too. Rather, Robert, framed within the theory of language and translation that Hemingway implies, is more a combination and culmination of Hemingway’s laconic American male protagonists whose speech and thought is betrayed by translation into foreign settings. Maria, in turn, first voices Molly Bloom when Robert asks if she would like to have sex: “‘Yes,’ she said almost fiercely. ‘Yes. Yes. Yes’” (*FW* 73). More broadly, she embodies the untranslatable and ineffable that Hemingway saw in all languages—her name encodes the reference to the Virgin Mary, even as Hemingway forgets the diacritical mark in the Spanish *María*—and that both fascinated and frustrated him in Spanish in particular. Maria is wise, then, in attempting to preserve what exists of their relationship by requesting, “Do not speak. It is better if we do not speak” (*FW* 379). Robert’s dream of a life in the United States with Maria is a mixture of the idealized and the repressed: he imagines inviting his Spanish IV undergraduates to their home to smoke pipes and have “informal discussions about Quevedo, Lope de Vega, Galdós,” then notes that “Maria can tell them about how some of the blue-shirted crusaders for the true faith sat on her head while others twisted her arms and pulled her skirts up and stuffed them in her mouth” (*FW* 164–165). The only way in which the romance plot, and the intimacy projected inheres in it, could possibly succeed in this novel is through silence, not through translation.

Misreading Hemingway’s Cubist Late Modernism

To account for Hemingway’s project at a conjuncture of translation studies, modernist studies,

and a formalist history that would include literary cubism, we must first look to the ways in which *For Whom the Bell Tolls* was initially received and misread some seventy-five years ago. "The novel that has something for everybody," as it was advertised, was a polarizing work.[31] Critics and reviewers in the early 1940s seized immediately on the novel's dialogue and treated it in moral and judgmental terms, praising or condemning Hemingway for the merits of his Spanish accuracies or inaccuracies and for the political allegiances he allegedly reveals. On one side, despite relying often on essentialist and sometimes incorrect generalizations about demotic Spanish, were powerful claims such as V. S. Pritchett's (himself a translator of Spanish works). He declared that "in his astonishingly real Spanish conversation, [Hemingway] has surpassed anything I have ever seen. Keeping close to the literal Castilian phrase with its Elizabethan nobility, he gets the laconic power of its simple statements and also the terrific rhetoric of its obscenity."[32] Joseph Warren Beach concurred, and Carlos Baker later asserted that Hemingway, through "Marlovian" idioms "'corrected' towards modernity by the intermixture of the contemporary *lingua communis* with the slang removed," captured something in Spanish that is more organic, with intermingled sacredness and profanity that belong to the "real" cadences of "real" Spanish peasants.[33] Howard Mumford Jones added that "the conversation is carried over almost literally from the Spanish, and it would appear that colloquial Spanish permits a combination of dignity, rhetorical precision, and wild poetry unattainable in a Germanic tongue. . . . An immense part of the vitality of *For Whom the Bell Tolls* lies in the imaginative force of its dialogue."[34] Others disagreed vociferously, calling the novel a betrayal of the Republican cause for which Hemingway was agitating (as Alvah Bessie, a veteran of the Spanish war, charged) or, in Gilbert Highet's case, a "bloody awful kind of unspeakable Spanish . . . [turned] into a far more unspeakable American language."[35] In a now-famous essay, Hemingway's Spanish friend Arturo Barea castigated him for his exploitation of obscenities and sexual innuendos in Spanish that impugned the virtuous character of Spanish women.[36] Both the anti- and the pro-Hemingway camps pointed to the transhistorical nature of Hemingway's experiment, though few pressed upon its implications; almost none related it to Hemingway's previous works or to other

modernist texts, and most often, Tolstoy was the topical but not stylistic touchstone. In the decades since, these patterns have mostly held.[37]

Far from replicating actual speech, the novel in fact generates its dialogue between the poles of English and Spanish by restaging and distorting linguistic collisions across history. This process takes hold from the start, when Robert hears Anselmo speak "rapidly and furiously in a dialect that [he] could just follow. It was like reading Quevedo. Anselmo was speaking old Castilian and it went something like this, 'Art thou a brute? Yes. Art thou a beast?'" (*FW* 11). It is doubtful that Anselmo would speak like the baroque playwright Francisco de Quevedo, and Quevedo's Spanish was not "old Castilian," which was used from the tenth to fifteenth centuries. (Robert later confesses that Quevedo was "hard to read" and that Pilar was a better storyteller [*FW* 134].) The Spanish world Robert imagines throughout the novel with his stock of baroque-era references to Velázquez or Lope de Vega cannot align with the world of the war. Far from it, and from the ideals of Hemingway's glowing reviewers, the Spanish in the novel, which draws on both Quevedo and vernacular speech, is not a stable, uncorrupted, autochthonous tongue that even Hemingway himself dreamed at times.

Rather, in the 1930s, Spanish was undergoing dramatic changes in a time of political and cultural upheaval. There are some characters, like Fernando, who hinge their hopes for the Republic on its transformation of its registers of class in familiar address: "For me the revolution is so that all will say Don to all. . . . Thus should it be under the Republic" (*FW* 210). The praise bestowed on Hemingway for *capturing* Elizabethan or Marlovian or even contemporary Spanish speech is misleading, then, for this connection is something of a ruse. "What passes with thee?" was never spoken in any era in English but is entirely invented from a hodgepodge of translingual materials. Hemingway only *implies*, through the narrator and through Robert, the existence of an original Spanish text that appears realistic yet is linguistically impossible. To unpack this novel's linguistic world is to realize that Hemingway points to a Spanish ur-text that is as corrupted and contorted, if not more, than the English: an unlocatable original that is weird and inflected with pidgin English, French, Russian, and more and that yields a modified, laconic,

rhetorically rich English. Hemingway told Ivan Kashkin of his plan for the novel, "I try to show *all* the different sides of [the war.] . . . So never think one story represents my viewpoint because it is much too complicated for that."[38] His observation that despite his own ardent Republicanism, "the Spanish war is a bad war . . . and nobody is right" explains his determination here to avoid "writ[ing] like God"—from a single, omniscient viewpoint.[39] Indeed, Hemingway began his first draft of the novel in the first person, with Robert as the "I," but abandoned that by the third manuscript page.

Specifically, Hemingway's method is a version of cubism, a structural (rather than spoken or creolized) Spanglish that becomes a two-dimensional scaffolding for a wealth of strategies of mistranslation that the novel embodies, corrupts, and further confuses. One of the reasons that cubism in the visual arts was rarely translated successfully into literature was the difficulty of capturing in sequential words the simultaneity of multiple perspectives that Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, and Juan Gris were able to fuse into one flattened plane with paint.[40] The sanctity of the single viewing plane of representation, grounded in realism's adherence to a singular version of human perception, was violated by cubism, which refashioned representation around artifice, antinaturalism, and a multiperspectival collage of object and conception. Stein, Wallace Stevens, and Hemingway had to rely on repetitions to create such effects; the multiple perspectives are thus only visible as the time of reading passes. Most other practitioners of literary cubism—Guillaume Apollinaire, Max Jacob, several Dadaists and surrealists—were poets, too, and could at least use fragmented lines, collages of images in material juxtaposition, and manipulations of the space of the printed page in ways that were less common in novels. Hemingway saw himself as translating Cézanne into literature; returning to his trope for translation, he noted in *A Moveable Feast* (1964) that what he learned from Cézanne's techniques "was a secret."[41] He cut from the original draft of "Big Two-Hearted River" (1925) a passage, known as "On Writing," in which Nick Adams aspires to write like Cézanne painted. But critics have assumed that Hemingway's cubism, filtered through Stein, dissipated or transmuted into other techniques roughly after the late 1920s.[42] Daniel Worden reminds us, however, that the

frontispiece to *Death in the Afternoon* (1932) was Juan Gris's cubist painting *El Torero* (1913), which frames what Worden reads as a literary experiment in the synthetic cubism of the 1910s.[43]

Only a few years after the publication of *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, Joseph Frank would frame this dilemma and challenge in modernist literature, which he claimed sought to "undermine the inherent consecutiveness of language."[44] Hemingway's new cubism in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* not only moves beyond formalism and geometric abstraction in one language; it attempts to resolve the problem of the need for repetition and shifting perspectives by combining Spanish grammar and English content with no portmanteaux. The implied and buried translational referent—the semantic structures of the Spanish language and their verbal articulations—silently provides the backbone of an experiment that throws a light on, rather than glossing over or naturalizing, the process and limits of translation. The result is what we might call "structural Spanglish," as opposed to the better-known version of Spanglish that relies on code switching. The flatness of the canvas becomes the flatness of the fused linguistic unit, where "What passes with thee?" represents two linguistic "perspectives" that, alone, are incomplete, without semantic depth, never reconciled as organically whole "planes." Blending synchronic and diachronic approaches to translation, Hemingway uses these various planes to dig into and cut across the sediments of English and Spanish alike.

This novel thereby helps illuminate the stakes of several current conversations that originated in the field of translation studies. Translation has energized the transnational turn in modernist studies of the past two decades, for instance, by registering the scholarly shift away from analyzing modernism *in* various languages, nations, or regions (English modernism, Spanish modernism, Chinese modernism, African modernism, and so on) and toward the translingual networks of aesthetic practices, material objects, and writers themselves. Such approaches take up the implications of Pound's seminal struggles to dislocate and denaturalize English through translation.[45] Pound wanted to condense multiple temporalities of languages into one compositional instant in the present. The effects of this revolution have been traced in

poetry, from Pound's own "The Seafarer" or Canto I to Louis and Celia Zukofsky's homophonic translations of Catullus. Scholars have also brought fresh attention to the political or racial bonds effected through translation, as in Langston Hughes's versions of Nicolás Guillén's and Jacques Roumain's works. But such topics are rarely examined in Anglophone novels, with the singular exception of Joyce's works. Hemingway stands between and disorients both of these various modes of translation. While absorbing Pound's lessons and speaking *through* Spanish as Pound had, he chastised his one-time mentor for having "abandoned the English language for Unknown Tongue."[46] Hemingway's work instead aims to maintain, but to distort and deform, English around a foreign tongue, as Henry Roth did in an era of American nativism and as Conrad did while the British empire worked to homogenize English globally.[47]

That is, Hemingway manipulates English around his imagined, unreal Spanish, ranging selectively across history to fashion a "translation without an original," as Emily Apter has described James Merrill's *The Changing Light at Sandover* (1980).[48] In this way, Hemingway looks toward the antiepistemology of the postmodern approach to the flatness of language. The dialogue is a depiction of multiple interruptions of what Roman Jakobson described as the transition from interlingual to intralingual translation, in which signs are rearranged into idiomatic order in the target language, leaving no residual trace of the source language.[49] But here,, the interstices of the translational process are highlighted. And yet, the illogical fusions and their subtle misdirections in Hemingway's novel are apparent only to readers who know both English and Spanish (or at least some Spanish) and can see the colliding linguistic planes. The result is the minoritizing of a dominant, native language akin to what Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet characterize as literary "bilingualism," which is "speaking in one's own language like a foreigner," as Kafka and Beckett do.[50] Hemingway's dialogic suspension between English and Spanish calls itself out *in* English but *through* Spanish, as literary, artificial, and dislocated, in contrast to the homogeneity and global power of his native tongue. The multiperspectivalism that prompts this effect and its force upon the characters, the dialogue, the narration, and the plot of this novel stands next to the works of the writers Deleuze and Parnet name—Kafka and

Beckett—as forebears of the linguistic experiments best known in postmodernist novels.

To read Hemingway as a late modernist in literary history is to read him as a transitional writer who is commenting both on high modernism's multilingual architectonics and on his own reputation in novel history. *For Whom the Bell Tolls* blends third-person omniscient and limited narration; free indirect discourse and interior monologues through multiple characters; translated, mistranslated, transliterated, and half-translated (or semifluently translated) dialogue; self-conscious, self-aware, and/or self-censorial narration; false cognates, nonidiomatic expressions, and untranslatable jokes; linguistic misrecognitions; and often inaccurate or nonsensical varieties of Spanish and English across multiple demotics, registers, and time periods. Robert believes that "being in Spain was natural and sound"; even so, he acknowledges that "he never felt like a foreigner in Spanish and they did not really treat him like a foreigner most of the time; only when they turned on you" (*FW* 165, 135). The novel's mixture of languages and idioms replicates this dialectic of intimacy and foreignness—and finally, betrayal. Thus, it is only on the novel's final page that Robert is "completely integrated now," as he lies on the ground preparing to fire at enemy troops as he dies (*FW* 471). The many mistranslations and miscommunications of *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, however, remain impossible to "integrate," leaving us a late-modernist reading of linguistic collisions that face, as Robert does, the coming total war.

Alfau and the Americanization of Spain

I have suggested that Hemingway's novel not only marks a particular moment in late modernism and in the history of modernist translation more generally but also constitutes a critical part of an arc of postmodernist writing visible through commonalities and shared techniques across a diffuse range of texts in postwar literatures. This disoriented Hemingway connects, through his specifically English-Spanish *ostranenie*, to poets such as Hart Crane, Federico García Lorca, Jack Spicer, and Salvador Novo, each of whom used one language's idiom to dislodge their respective native tongues. A broader web would extend to Zora Neale Hurston's twisting of

African American idioms around Caribbean tongues or Anzia Yezierska's fusion of English and Yiddish grammars, the self-censorship in Peter Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang* (2000), the stilted speech in Jonathan Safran Foer's *Everything Is Illuminated* (2003), many of the texts in collections such as *Rotten English* (2007), and even the invented tongue of Paul Kingsnorth's *The Wake* (2014).[51] I will chart here something specific: a mode of novelistic Spanglish as mistranslation, for which Hemingway's late modernism stands as a hinge from Pound to the present. The genealogy I offer looks back to Spain and its literary history as the motivation for its dislocations and hybridizations of English.[52]

Felipe Alfau, a contemporary of Hemingway's who was all but forgotten until recent years, was born in Barcelona in 1902 and immigrated with his family to New York City when he was fourteen. He published a volume of children's stories, *Old Tales from Spain* (1929), which was followed by a novelesque collection of short stories, *Locos: A Comedy of Gestures* (1936), which critics have seen as a combination of *Pale Fire* and *Six Characters in Search of an Author*. Alfau immersed himself in New York's Spanish expatriate culture, writing music criticism for the Spanish daily *La Prensa* and even taking a course at Columbia with Onís.[53] His masterpiece novel, *Chromos*, was in galleys in the late 1940s when he abruptly pulled the text from production. After abandoning the text, Alfau turned away from writing and disappeared from the literary world, becoming a translator of financial documents for Morgan Bank in Manhattan. *Chromos* was published in 1990 by the Dalkey Archive Press and was nominated for a National Book Award. That same year, *Locos* appeared in Spanish translation, and a Spanish version of *Chromos* followed in 1991; Alfau, who resisted efforts in either language to recover his seminal importance as a writer, claimed to have hated both of them. By the time the critic Ilan Stavans interviewed him in a nursing home in 1991, he was a bitter, racist, suicidal man who had spent three-quarters of a century living in the United States.

As an experiment with multilingualism and narration, *Chromos* shares much stylistically with the works of Alfau's Hispanophone near-contemporaries Borges and Cortázar and thus has drawn the inevitable comparisons, but Alfau almost certainly had no knowledge of their works.

The novel follows a group of figures whom Alfau calls "Americaniards" (American Spaniards) through a narratorial voice of Spanish-inflected English.[54] Alfau himself believed that his "English is Iberian—an acquisition. It's half English and half my own creation."[55] Indeed, the very title of the novel looks like it is suspended between the two tongues: "Chromos" might appear to an Anglophone audience to be a Spanish word, much like the title of Alfau's first novel was (and *Chromos*'s epigraph is an untranslated misprint of the second line of *Don Quixote*), but, in fact, it refers to chromolithograph calendars that play a metaphorical role in elaborating the novel's formal structure. Similarly, the novel's opening lines make it sound as if it will be a familiar tale of immigrant life: "The moment one learns English, complications set in. Try as one may, one cannot elude this conclusion, one must inevitably come back to it. This applies to all persons, including those born to the language and, at times, even more so to Latins, including Spaniards" (*C* 7). But in the second paragraph, we leave behind the expected questions of assimilation for a less common speculation on the effects of English acquisition:

> when we [Spaniards] enter the English-speaking world, we find the most elementary things questioned, growing in complexity without bounds; we experience, see or hear about problems which either did not exist for us or were disposed of in what he [the narrator's friend Don Pedro] calls that brachistological fashion of which we are masters: nervous breakdowns, social equality, marital maladjustment and beholding Oedipus in an unfavorable light, friendships with those women intellectualoids whom Don Pedro has baptized perfect examples of feminine putritude, psycho-neuroses, anal hallucinations, etc., leading one gently but forcibly from a happy world of reflexes of which one was never aware, to a world of analytical reasoning of which one is continuously aware, which closes in like a vise of missionary tenacity and culminates in such a collapse of the simple as questioning the meaning of meaning.
>
> (*C* 7–8)

The unnamed narrator of *Chromos* offers dozens of sentences like this: wandering, unexpected,

and contorted by what we learn is a collision of languages with an allusive range that reaches from Cervantes to Ogden and Richards.

This and more goes into the making of what Jill Adams adumbrates as Alfau's "Iberian English, which shows itself occasionally in the hyper-correct diction of the non-native user ('Therefore the nickname El Telescopio with which our same authority on the typical had baptized it.'); the awkward use of Latinate words ('isochronous steps'. . . .), unusual and often jarring syntax," and untranslated Spanish terms.[56] Within this version of Spanglish in interwar New York, the unnamed narrator conveys a mostly aimless and nonchronological plot that replicates the wanderings, physical and intellectual, of the main characters. As in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, the majority of the dialogue originally takes place in Spanish—the narrator makes that explicit in *Chromos*—and is translated for readers by a figure who claims that his English is imperfect even though "translating" is his "business and means of livelihood" (*C* 51). The prose is pointedly ungrammatical and employs, perhaps more than any other "error," a lack of parallel structure in order to convey a sense of the two languages clashing: "Strong inclination to relive the past and he is the one who had got the tickets and had persuaded me to accompany him," he writes of his friend Garcia (*sic*), for instance (*C* 48).

The narrator's disclaimers about his English and his likely intentional errors are somewhat at odds with his career, in a doubling of Alfau himself, as a translator. This becomes clear through the long sections of the text that summarize the plot of an unremarkable soap opera, which becomes a novel within the novel, that Garcia describes in conversation to the narrator. The narrator constantly downplays his comprehension of English, writing that "I have it on good authority that [Don Pedro's] English was perfect, but he had nursed an invincible accent and an unassailable syntax" (*C* 14). The narrator also stresses his other limits: as he summarizes Garcia's story and dialogue, he writes, "I'll drop the quotation marks because I don't remember exactly Garcia's words" (*C* 53). Furthermore, the narrator creates multiple layers of translation within his narration. He notes, concerning a performance of *Don Juan Tenorio* that he and Garcia attend in New York, "as we Spaniards like so much to make puns, I had said something like this

to Garcia: ‘If we were speaking English, I could say that the drama was not ghostly but ghastly, get it?’ ” (*C* 48) The play on words only works in English, of course, so the implied original in Spanish is at once possible (he could be rendering a similar Spanish pun here) and inaccessible, thus unverifiable.

As the narrator and his fellow exiles wander—and as they praise “loitering” and lament that Americans do so little of it, even criminalize it—they discuss the decline of Spain, the transformations of Spaniards in New York City, and Spanish figures and tropes, from the Black Legend to *castizos*, from flamenco to Cervantes. Against the exhortations of his compatriots, however, the narrator attempts to rewrite the typology of Spaniards that was indebted to Cervantes: rather than the idea that Don Quixote and Sancho Panza represented the two types of Spaniards (idealist and pragmatist), he argues that his Americaniard friends Dr. de los Rios and Don Pedro represent a “national history and structure” that was “ethnological and racial within the same country, one showing the Visigoth and the other the Moorish influences” (*C* 11). For the narrator, Spain’s two types are the two ethnic groups identified by contemporary Spaniards as the sources of *castizo* purity and black/Arabic contamination, as the popular mythology of the early twentieth century held. Such an understanding of Spanish existence, he suggests, is only possible within the United States.

The narrator ultimately becomes one of the few Spaniards who can accept the “complications” that American English imposes. Don Pedro (“the Moor”) instead expounds a “theory of the Latinamericanization of the United States” through music and immigration, and the narrator asks, “But is this the new conquest of the Americas, by the Americas and for the Americas? This mutual transcontinental, translinguistic, transracial osmosis?” (*C* 16) The narrator sees an irony in the new U.S. imperialism: it imports cultures that it supposes to conquer and then makes those cultures—and, soon after, immigrants representing them—its own conquerors as white Americans become entranced by their music, languages, restaurants, and more. The narrator therefore concludes the novel by looking back to 1492 and asking “whether my ancestors were but immigrants disguised as conquerors, or whether all other aliens are but

conquerors disguised as immigrants" (*C* 348). He continues on the final page: "To express this in my own language would be superfluous. To attempt to describe it in another's impossible. In Spanish I don't have to explain my nation or my countrymen. In English, I can't. It is the question of the synthetic method as opposed to the analytic. . . . As I said in the beginning, complications set in" (*C* 348). *Chromos*, in other words, relies on an unending and transtemporal oscillation between English and Spanish that never settles—"complications" riddle it from start to finish—and thus becomes a figuration of asymmetrical interlingual penetration since 1492.

Two other novels, separated by over half a century, help clarify further points in this genealogical line. At almost the same moment that *Chromos* was in galleys came a better-known text of late modernism, Malcolm Lowry's *Under the Volcano* (1947). At the heart of its sometimes hallucinatory, confused narrative, which rewrites *For Whom the Bell Tolls* in several ways, lie a number of Spanish/English mistranslations. The stumbling, drunken Consul Geoffrey Firmin is not only a debauched version of Robert Jordan displaced in Mexico but also an even clumsier Quixote figure. (Indeed, Lowry writes at one point, "The Consul shut the door behind him and a small rain of plaster showered on his head. A Don Quixote fell from the wall. He picked up the sad straw knight . . . And then the whiskey bottle: he drank fiercely from it.")[57] The novel is also a commentary on the Spanish Civil War: its action takes place on 2 November 1938, as the war was turning definitively toward the Nationalists; the International Brigades had disbanded and left the country in October. Hugh Firmin, the Consul's half-brother and foil, is active on the British left, has recently been in wartime Spain, and will leave Mexico soon on a ship carrying munitions to the Loyalists.[58] Hugh's connections to Spain even bring a version of Spanglish to the text when he reads a telegram, presumably botched by local agents, that the novel transcribes as "DAILY GLOBE intelube londres presse collect following yesterdays *headcoming anti-Semitic campaign mexpress propetition see tee emma mexworkers*" (*U* 98).

And thus, in his final, fatal encounter, the Consul is accused by the Mexican police, in pidgin English, of "mak[ing] the map of the Spain? You Bolsheviki prick? You member of the Brigade Internationale and stir up trouble?" (*U* 372). The officer's English is not merely inflected by Spanish; it also contains elements of French ("Brigade Internationale" rather than "Brigadas internacionales") and possibly Russian. The Consul is then mistaken for being "*Sr. Hugo Firmin*," member of the "*Federación Anarquista Ibérica*" just before he is killed (*U* 385). The last page of the novel reprints the sign that the Consul—our filter for much Spanish dialogue, however distorted—has misread throughout the novel:

> ¿LE GUSTA ESTE JARDÍN?
> ¿QUE ES SUYO?
> ¡EVITE QUE SUS HIJOS LO DESTRUYAN!
>
> (*U* 134)

The Consul earlier had translated these "simple and terrible words" as "You like this garden? Why is it yours? We evict those who destroy!" (*U* 135). He incorrectly renders the sign into an English inflected with Spanish: *evite* ("avoid") becomes a false friend that he gives as "evict," which ties to the multilayered themes and metaphors of Eden, hell, and "eviction" that Lowry embeds in the narrative. But its meaning is lost on the misreading Consul, marking the novel's Spanish as an ur-text never translated or assimilated to its English narrative, but one whose mistranslation foretells his fate. Hugh therefore sees the sign later and correctly (to use the term provisionally) sees the Spanish as "¿Le gusta este jardín, que es suyo? ¡Evite que sus hijos lo destruyan!" He then translates—or the narrator translates through him, we are not certain: "Do you like this garden, the notice said, that is yours? See to it that your children do not destroy it!" (*U* 242–243).

Furthermore, this mistranslation is multiplied—and the terms "correct" and "incorrect" complicated—by the fact that Lowry himself originally mistranscribed the Spanish, and then his

printer followed suit.[59] Lowry later claimed to have copied the sign from a public garden in Oaxaca in 1938 and insisted that it was grammatically wrong there. "But in one way," he wrote to his editor, "it is immeasurably more dramatic as it is, even though wrong. . . . Indeed 'Evite' does *look* as if it meant 'evict,' even if not in the first person plural."[60] Lowry postulates that Hugh should correct it but that "both the sign as it appears in the book, incorrect as it is, and the Consul's hallucinatory translation of it, are of the utmost importance," so Hugh's version cannot erase these mistakes. Lowry then wanted the sign transcribed correctly on the final page of the novel, where it appears again, alone and verbatim as before, but both the "correction" he sent and the resulting printed edition are still not idiomatic: "que es suyo" should not be set off as a separate question since it is a clause that modifies the phrase in the first line.[61] That is, the "correction" on the final page repeats both the Consul's and Lowry's errors. A compounded mistranslation that crosses back and forth between the fictional world of the text and the world of Lowry's own incomplete Spanish becomes more than a thematic development: again, it scaffolds and articulates the novel's very structure, its mode of narration and dialogue and its development of symbolism through hallucination and paranoia coded as translation. Accuracy and inaccuracy are built into the processes of translation—even transcription and printing—so fully that they become motifs rather than markers of actual linguistic transference.

More recently, Ben Lerner stages a clever comic scene early in his novel *Leaving the Atocha Station* (2011), in which his protagonist-narrator Adam Gordon attempts to translate Lorca. Gordon, a poet paralyzed by his fear of being outed as a fraud, is on a fellowship in Spain, has planned to "teach myself Spanish by reading masterworks of Spanish literature," and has "fantasized about the nature and effect of a Spanish thus learned, how its archaic flavor and formally heightened rhetoric would collide with the mundanities of daily life, giving the impression less of someone from a foreign country than someone from a foreign time."[62] When he comes to Lorca, he practices a mode of translation indebted to the aleatory experiments of Language poets:

> I opened the Lorca more or less at random, transcribed the English recto onto a page of my first notebook, and began to make changes, replacing a word with whatever word I first associated with it and/or scrambling the order of the lines, and then I made whatever changes these suggested to me. Or I looked up the Spanish word for the English word I wanted to replace, then replaced that English word with a Spanish word that approximated its sound ("Under the arc of the sky" became "Under the arc of the cielo," which became "Under the arc of the cello"). I then braided fragments of the prose I kept in my second notebook with the translations I had thus produced ("Under the arc of the cello / I open the Lorca at random," and so on).
>
> (*L* 16)

Lerner's character imagines himself to be brilliantly original by way of an exercise that is wholly unoriginal: the combination of literary Spanish and English in order to alienate and foreignize both. The poeticized Spanglish that results presages the linguistic combinations that characterize much of the novel. Moments after this, Gordon listens to his love interest Teresa tell a story about her past, which he likely understands but gives in the novel's narrative in translational indeterminacy: "The father had been either a famous painter or collector of paintings and she had either become a painter to impress him or quit painting because she couldn't deal with the pressure of his example or because he was such an asshole, although here I was basically guessing" (*L* 30). This unsettled reciprocity between originals and translations culminates the novel when, in the closing lines, Gordon and Teresa devise a plan in which "Teresa would read the [poetic] originals and I would read the translations and the translations would become the originals as we read" (*L* 181). The version of Spanglish in this novel is a formal artifice that stretches Hemingway's experiments in new directions while pointing to the embrace of failure, error, and unoriginality that I will explore in the conclusion.