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# Translation as "Transcreation" through Author-Translator Collaboration: the Case of the Collaborative Work of G. C. Infante and S. J. Levine

## Yazar- Çevirmen İşbirliği Aracılığıyla "Yaratıcı Uyarlama" olarak Çeviri: G.C. Infante ve S.J. Levine Örneği

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**ABSTRACT**

This paper analyzes the author - translator collaboration in the English translations of *Infante's Inferno* and *Three Trapped Tigers* by Suzanne Jill Levine from Guillermo Cabrrea Infante's La Habana para un infante difunto and Tres Trigres Tigres, with a view of investigating whether the unique style of G. Cabrera Infante, prioritizing "sound" over "sense" and rich in wordplay, entails a "subversive" translation strategy as his translator S. J. Levine argues. Author-translator collaboration in challenging literary works like those of Guillermo Cabrera Infante appears to be an essential element of the "rewriting," or rather, the "transcreation" of the work and it is a frequent phenomenon in the translation of Latin American literature into English. In order to understand the poetological (as well as the ideological) motivations underlying the collaborative work in the case of the translation of Latin American Literature, the macro-context surrounding the translation activity should be taken into account. A brief survey of the Latin American Literary Boom in the 1960s immediately following the Cuban Revolution of 1959 reveals that the translation activity was performed as part of an ideological project under institutional patronage with the sponsorship of foundations like the Rockefeller Foundation and anti-communist lobbies. This reinforces the idea that literary and translational production is never practiced in a vacuum and that translation is never simply about translation: The ideological context ranging from the selection of the texts to be translated to the translation strategies employed is always at the background complicating the notions of what makes a literary work and an author popular in a different target culture.

**Keywords:** Author - translator collaboration, Latin American literature, "subversive" translation strategy, stylistic qualities, the Cuban Revolution of 1959

**ÖZ**

Bu makalede, Guillermo Cabrrea Infante'nin La Habana para un infante difunto ve Tres Trigres Tigres başlıklı romanlarının Suzanne Jill Levine tarafından Infante's Inferno ve Three Trapped Tigers başlıkları altında İngilizce'ye çevrilmesi süreci ele alınmakta ve G. Cabrera Infante'nin "ses"i "anlam"ın önünde tutan ve kelime oyunları açısından zengin üslubunun, çevirmeni S.J. Levine'ın dile getirdiği gibi, "tahrip edici" bir çeviri stratejisi gerektirip gerektirmediği irdelenmektedir. Guillermo Cabrera Infante'in romanları gibi, çevrilmesi zor eserlerde yazar-

çevirmen işbirliği “yeniden yazım”, ya da başka bir deyişle “transkreasyon”, sürecinin temel bir unsurudur ve Latin Amerika Edebiyatı eserlerinin İngilizce’ye çevirilerinde sık rastlanan bir olgudur. Bu olgunun altında yatan poetolojik (ve yanısıra “ideolojik”) gerekçeleri yorumlayabilmek açısından, çeviri edimini etkileyen makro-bağlamı göz önünde bulundurmak gerekir. 1959 Küba Devrimi’ni izleyen 1960’lı yıllarda Latin Amerika Edebiyatı eserlerinin İngilizce çevirilerinde görülen patlama incelendiğinde, çeviri faaliyetinin, Rockefeller Vakfı ve anti-komünist lobiler gibi kurumların himayeleri altında, bir ideolojik proje kapsamında yürütüldüğü görülmektedir. Bu durum da, yazın ve çeviri etkinliklerinin hiç bir zaman dış etkilerden yalıtılmış olarak yürütülmediğini ve çeviri olgusunun, asla yalnızca “çeviri metinden” ibaret olmadığını savunan görüşü destekler niteliktedir: Çevrilecek metinlerin seçiminden, benimsenen çeviri stratejilerine kadar pek çok unsuru kapsayan ideolojik bağlam, bir edebiyat eserinin ve yazarının farklı bir erek kültürde popüler hale gelmesini etkileyen etmenleri daha da karmaşık hale getiren ardalanı oluşturmaktadır.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Yazar-çevirmen işbirliği, Latin Amerika Edebiyatı, “tahrip edici” çeviri stratejisi, biçemsel özellikler, 1959 Küba Devrimi

> Translation seems to be all about intimacy. To have two intuitions working their magic on a single work at the same time, that sort of triangle of intimacy might be even more exciting than the collaboration between a lyricist and a composer, where the third side of the triangle is missing.
>
> Wechsler (1992: 203)

## Introduction

This paper analyzes the author-translator collaboration in the English translations *Infante's Inferno* and *Three Trapped Tigers* by Suzanne Jill Levine of Guillermo Cabrrea Infante's *La Habana para un infante difunto* (the Spanish title is a pun on "Pavane pour une infante défuncte," a piano piece by Maurice Ravel, and it is literally, "Havana for a dead infant" in English) and *Tres Trigres Tigres* with a view of investigating whether the unique style of G. Cabrera Infante, prioritizing "sound" over "sense" and rich in wordplay, entails a "subversive" translation strategy as his translator, or rather, his "collaborator" S. J. Levine claims. In posing the research question, it has been assumed that the collaboration between the author and the translator is an essential element of the translation, or "transcreation"[1] of contemporary postmodern Latin American Literature, as exemplified in the collaborative work of Cabrera Infante and Levine. Since translation is the most outstanding "(sub)version" of the source text, a subversive, rather than a subservient translation strategy is required; indeed, it is inevitable for the source text to be rendered, (re)produced, or rewritten entirely in another language. The subversive, or rather the "manipulating," translation strategy employed is evident even in the title, on which Cabrera Infante and Levine appear to have reflected and argued for a long time, as will be dwelt upon in the pages to follow. As Levine briefly refers to it, the "unfaithful English title is faithful and fateful: Dante ante Infante" (Levine 1984: 76).

*Infante's Inferno* is the third product of the Cabrera Infante – Levine collaboration, or "closelaboration," as Cabrera Infante preferred to call it, the first two being *Three Trapped Tigers* (1971) ("Tres Tristes Tigres") and *View of Dawn in the Tropics* (1979). *Infante's Inferno* is, in Levine's terms, "a Dantesque voyage into the Havana of Cabrera Infante's youth, in search of not one but many Beatrices, in search of love, or rather sex" and as in TTT, Levine appears to be the willing "apprentice of Count Dracula Infante, ready to tread upon his dread Transylvania, to follow him unfaithfully (traditora) into that dimension of the Living Dead,

1 The term 'transcreation' is used to refer to a translation strategy beyond 'translation proper' as Di Giovanni puts it: "This process allowed for a number of even radical changes to the original texts, which went well beyond the concept of 'translation proper' as it was and is still perceived within translation studies. The transcreated text had to be totally fluent and, most significantly, it had to be fully understandable for its target audience [….]More recently, the concept of transcreation has been applied by Indian scholars to the study of translation from new perspectives, steeped in postcolonialism and sometimes loaded with socio-political connotations." (Di Giovanni in Bollettieri Bossinelli)
For more on the use of the strategy of 'transcreation', see Rosa Maria Bollettieri Bossinelli's "James Joyce and the trans-creation of the word" available at: https://www.academia.edu/10327879/James_Joyce_and_the_trans_creation_of_the_word (last accessed: October, 2022)

the world of writing" (Levine, ibid). The author and the translator had apparently achieved to maintain a symbiotic relationship, despite (or, maybe, thanks to) being engaged in a continuous battle of words and wits, and metaphorically, of the sexes, and their coming together was far from coincidental. In fact, it was part of a wide-scale translation project, or an "ideological macro-context," in Jeremy Munday's terms.

Accordingly, the first part of the paper includes a brief survey of the Latin American Literary (translation) Boom following the Cuban Revolution of 1959, which put an end to the dictatorship of Batista and brought Castro to power. The Cuban revolution promoted the politicization of the whole continent as well as the establishment of a common Latin American identity through literature. It has had significant implications for the rising interest on the part of the North America towards the works of the major writers like Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Mario Vargas Llosa, Carlos Fuentes, Julio Cortazar, Jorge Luis Borges, and last but not least, G. C. Infante, who has closer affinities with Borges than with the other prominent representatives of Latin American fiction, in terms of a postmodernist and "experimental" style. The Literary Boom itself was part of a wider political and ideological project of transferring the Latin American "cultural capital"[2] with the aim of promoting certain cultural values or images for political purposes. Munday defines this process as "an intensification of the ideological context surrounding translation" under "systematic institutional patronage" (Munday 2008: 54).

In the second part of this paper, the notion of "collaboration" in translation will be analyzed with specific reference to the Cabrera Infante - Levine collaboration in order to scrutinize the role of the translator, which Levine herself defines as that of a "subversive scribe," rather than a subservient servant (to the source author and the source text). Despite the fact that the translation of Latin American Literature was conceived of and performed as part of an institutionalized patronage funded by the CIAR program (Center for Inter-American Relations) established by David Rockefeller, and author-translator collaborations are a common practice, as in the case of Mario Vargas Llosa- Gregory Rabassa or Jorge Louis Borges- Norman Thomas di Giovanni collaborations, the Cabrera Infante- Levine collaboration was "an exceptional instance of author- translator collaboration since in many places the text is completely remodeled in English, especially in its word plays, puns, and humour" (Munday 2008: 199). What makes this collaboration exceptional is that they seem to have established a symbiotic and harmonious relationship which produced remarkable results. Whether Levine might be considered as a perfect example of an empowered translator *on a par* with the source author having the final say in their "translation affair" is disputable, though. Acting as a "self-subverter" and providing full support and even encouragement to Levine, Cabrera Infante remained in full control of the process. What is certain is that they had a "shared secrecy," "a common mindset," which are the prerequisites of a successful collaborative work in translation.

2 The term "cultural capital" is borrowed from the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu.

The third part of the paper focuses on *Infante's Inferno*, which can be categorized as a memoir and an ironic comment on the romance tradition. The autobiographical quality of the book, which is a detailed account of the very young Cabrera Infante's passage to manhood, his sexual initiation and following search for not one but many ideal lovers, as well as its stylistic traits rich in "allusive alliteration," puns, and references to American movies are also discussed in this part. Textual examples are provided in this section in order to display the stylistic qualities of the book, although source text-target text comparison is beyond the scope of this study.

## I. The Ideological Macro-context Surrounding the Translation of Latin American Literature into English

> Latin American culture has to be translated if it is to be understood, especially outside its own environment … By translation I mean here interpretation, of course the recodification of a text into other languages (…) The actual translation of texts is an essential tool in that process, but always it has to proceed accompanied by the translation of the culture, or risk becoming an isolated effort without repercussions, if not, unfortunately, a contribution to the misunderstanding of … Latin America.
>
> (Rodriguez- Luis 1991: 2)

In his extensive study on the notion of "style and ideology" in translation with specific emphasis on Latin American Writing in English, Jeremy Munday defines "macro-context" as "the broader background" which affects the micro-features of the style of the translator with reference to Van Dijk's "context model" (Munday 2008: 47). He argues that the "macro-level context of culture, related to the predominant ideology of the society" has far-reaching implications for the translator's style (and I would add, "ideological and professional stance"). Thus, "(g)reater discussion of the macro-context is indeed essential in order to place the translator's stylistic choices within a coherent framework" and such a discussion surely involves an elaboration of the historical and political events which have played a key role in determining and shaping the macro-context in which translators operate (Munday 2008: 49). Theo Hermans also makes a similar point when he argues that the role of the institutions and how exactly ideology is mediated should be scrutinized in order to account for the phenomena of translation in a given period of time (Hermans 1999: 113).

In order to comment on the macro-context surrounding the Latin American Writing in English, The Cuban Revolution of 1959 should first be mentioned since it is one of the "huge political upheavals and traumas transpired in the second half of the twentieth century" having "a marked influence on North-South relations in the Americas ever since" (Munday 2008: 151). Doubtlessly, the Cuban Revolution has been a defining moment in history in terms of the relationship between the countries of Latin America and their powerful neighbor, the United States. In the sense that it has promoted the continent's politicization and helped create a

common "Latin American" identity through literature, the Revolution can actually be defined as "the most crucial political event" in the southern part of the Continent. It was after the Cuban Revolution that the ideological macro-context surrounding translation was reinforced by a shift from the stereotypes of the exotic and natural Latin America, as displayed in the works translated in the 1930s, to a much more politicized Latin America (Munday 2008: 51). Indeed, Latin American studies really took off in the 1960s and this was perhaps most evident in the field of literary translation. The Cuban Revolution also had significant implications for Cabrera Infante's literary career, as he fell from grace in 1961 despite once being a wholehearted supporter of the Castro regime. Cabrera Infante was accused of publishing material incongruent for the life style the revolution aimed to establish in the Communist newspaper *Revolución*, which was banned by Castro in 1961. This event marked the beginning of his exile years in London and his never-ending nostalgia for his homeland and specifically Havana.

The most emblematic work of the Latin American Literary Boom was Gabriel Garcia Márquez's *Cien años de soledad* (1967) (*One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1970)), translated by Gregory Rabassa, the most prominent translator of Latin American writing into English and the mentor of many other translators including Suzanne Jill Levine. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* gained enormous worldwide fame and Márquez's being awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1982 actually cemented the success and the reputation of the Boom (Munday 2008: 55). Among the other authors who shot to fame in the 1960s and 1970s include: the Mexican Carlos Fuentes who published his groundbreaking *La muerte de Artemio Cruz* (1962) (*The Death of Artemio Cruz* (1964)), the Argentine Julio Cortázar who published his masterpiece *Rayuela* (1963) (*Hopscotch* (1966)), the Peruvian Mario Vargas Llosa with his *La cuidad de los perros* (1963) (*The Time of the Hero* (1966)), and finally the Cuban Cabrera Infante whose most famous work is the *Tres Tristes Tigres* (*Three Trapped Tigers)*. Although the Boom writers are chronologically the descendants of Jorge Luis Borges, he also came to prominence in the U.S. and the U.K. around the same time as the Boom writers when the first comprehensive publication of his works in English was realized in 1962 (Munday 2008: 54). In terms of literary style and a relatively apolitical approach in comparison to the above-mentioned Boom writers, Borges and Cabrera Infante are to be evaluated as a different category. Borges' postmodernist style is echoed in Cabrera Infante's works, and like Borges who goes so far as to assert that translation is a more advanced stage in textual production, Cabrera Infante also contemplated translation, acting as a willing partner in the translation, or rather, the rewriting of his works in English (Borges in Levine 1991: I). I argue that underlying Cabrera Infante's willingness to actively participate in the "rewriting" of his works is his passion for word play, for the language itself.

As argued above, the ideological and political macro-context heavily impacted on the phenomena of the translation of Latin American writing which was performed through institutional patronage and by professional players who decided the dominant poetics. The major aim being the transfer of the Latin American "cultural capital" and thus procuring a means

to get to know and eventually influence "the Other", foundations which acted as sponsors as well as presses and journals which provided coverage to Latin American series were engaged in promoting Latin American Literature in the United States. Munday asserts that the most controversial institutional patron was the Congress for Cultural Freedom, an anti-communist lobby, which campaigned against the award of the Nobel Prize to the Chilean poet Pablo Neruda in the 1960s (Munday 2008: 58). Arguing that the implicit goal was to counter Cuba's Cultural Revolution, Munday states that from 1960 to 1965, the Rockefeller Foundation gave the Association of American University Presses $225,000 to publish Latin American authors. Another foundation which provided important support was the Inter-American Foundation for the Arts (IAFA), established in 1962 (Munday 2008: 56). The IAFA was soon to turn into the Center for Inter-American Relations, established by David Rockefeller in 1967. Within the context of the translation program initiated by the IAFA, the translation costs were subsidized by means of the funding provided by predominantly the Rockefeller and the Ford Foundations (Munday 2008: 57). The translation program also matched translators and publishers. In other words, the selection process of the books to be translated as well as the translators was institutionalized: the selection committee included the Uruguayan academic and critic Emir Rodriguez Monegal and the prize-winning translator and academic Gregory Rabassa, to both of whom Levine expresses her gratitude in *The Subversive Scribe*, recounting her own experience of translating Latin American fiction. It is also interesting to note that a great majority of the translators selected by the committee held (and some still hold) academic positions in Spanish Literature or Comparative Literature departments. In short, the translation activity regarding the Latin American writing was by no means coincidental; it was planned in advance as part of a larger cultural, political, and ideological project.

The institutional patronage playing a key role in Latin American writing (involving not just fiction, but also political essays) was backed by certain publications like *Mundo Nuevo*, whose editor was Rodriguez Monegal. The careers of many writers of the Boom was promoted by him, including Cabrera Infante. It was, in fact, Rodriguez Monegal who personally introduced Levine to Cabrera Infante. Despite becoming the "voice of Latin American Literature," *Mundo Nuevo* soon lost prestige and ceased publication in 1971 as it was funded by the Congress for Cultural Freedom, with rumors being spread that part of the funding came from the CIA.

The fact that the macro-context concerning the translation of Latin American writing was highly politicized does not necessarily imply that all the writers and the translators (the "rewriters") involved in the process were also political figures. Although some writers were encouraged to share the anti-Communist attitude to gain recognition and resources, some others like Marquez and Cortazar remained loyal supporters of the Cuban Revolution. Indeed, the policies of both writers "ran counter to those of the Center's political and philanthropic sponsors" and still they were widely published (Munday 2008: 60). Thus, it would be simplistic and reductionist to argue that the motives for publishing Latin American writers in English

were purely political and ideological. Nevertheless, the political and ideological background implicitly or explicitly impacted the recognition of these writers in the Anglo-Saxon culture, as the case of Cabrera Infante displays.

## II. Cabrera Infante- Levine Collaboration: It All Started with *Three Trapped Tigers*

No translator is an island.
Robert Wechsler (1998: 196)

Collaborative work in translation is far from infrequent. The translator often has a companion to help her/him in the painstaking process of translating a literary work, despite translation generally being regarded as a work performed in "solitude." Such a companion might be another translator, an expert in the field, a native speaker who acts almost like an "informant," or the author herself/himself. Arguably, the collaboration between an author and a translator is the most fruitful such relationship if it works well; otherwise, it is likely to bring about more trouble than ease. As Wechsler notes:

> Most translators are no more than cooperative. They believe in Milan Kundera's words much more than he himself does: "The writer who determines to supervise the translations of his books finds himself chasing after hordes of words like a shepherd after a flock of wild sheep- a sorry figure to himself, a laughable one to others."
>
> Wechsler (2008: 206)

Things seem to have worked well in Cabrera Infante-Levine collaboration. As Levine indicates, they seem to have formed a "symbiotic and harmonious relationship" producing remarkable results. Their harmonious relationship, which nevertheless also involved occasional disagreements, as revealed by their personal correspondence to which Levine refers to in *The Subversive Scribe* as being based on "understanding, affinity, immersion in the specific characteristics of the original" (Wechsler, 1992: 200). And I would add "a shared wit, a shared sense of humor," which provides intimacy and renders an otherwise tense relationship productive.

The collaboration between Cabrera Infante and Levine is specific in the sense that unlike "the 'European' style of Borges and Cortazar (…), (t)he intertextual references, and even quotations, from American film originals that appear in Cabrera Infante thus immediately complicate the notion of source and target since the Spanish ST is constantly being formed through reference to other English-language texts" (Munday 2008: 199). In the Introduction to *The Subversive Scribe*, Levine states that the Hispanic expressiveness, which is "deliciously exotic," evokes her Jewish background and that translating the most uncompromising texts like those of Cabrera Infante's is like solving the most difficult puzzles for her:

> Since it is at the level of language that the translator can be most creative, inventive and even subversive, I have preferred to translate writers like Cabrera Infante, Manuel Puig, and Severo Sarduy, who play with language, exposing its infidelity to itself, writers who create a new literature by parodying the old. Translation, another form of parody, is for a writer like Cabrera Infante 'a more advanced stage' of the writing of the book, as Jorge Luis Borges once said.
> (Levine 1984: 79)

The coming together of Cabrera Infante and Levine can be described as a "meeting of the souls," although it was also part of a well-planned ideological and cultural project, as described above. Levine accounts for the experience as follows:

> My collaboration with the Cuban (and now British) writer Guillermo Cabrera Infante as his faithfully unfaithful translator (how better to translate traduttore traditore?) started out as an exercise of parallel *repartees*, reparteasing one another in English and Spanish, in a two-faced monologue of compulsive punsters.
>
> Levine (1984: 75)

Levine states that their shared language was the city-wise humor of the American movies, to which there are frequent references in *Infante's Inferno,* as well as Lewis Carroll's universe of nonsense adding that subversive wordplay was their common ground (Levine 1991: 22). By declaring that she was a "subversive scribe" (supported, though, by the author himself who was a self-subverter) and defending her professional and ideological stance *vis-à-vis* the source author so firmly, Levine certainly stands out as an unorthodox, unconventional translator. Given the fact that most talented and prominent translators regard themselves as the faithful "messengers" of the source authors, Levine's attitude is definitely more self-confident, self-respectful and I should say, professional. Indeed, what might be termed as "the discourse of subservience,"[3] in Simeoni's terms, is so deeply internalized by translators that even Gregory Rabassa, the most prominent translator of Latin American fiction and Levine's own mentor asserts about authors: "...the masters will enable you to render their prose into the best possible translation if you only let yourself be led by their expression, following the only possible way to go" (Rabassa 2005: 17). Yet, her attitude might also be defined as "defensive." Munday asserts that Cabrera Infante played the dominant role in the partnership as Levine was a very young PhD student when she started translating *Tres Trigres Tigres* with Cabrera Infante, finding herself working creatively but on something that was oppressive to her. Indeed, Levine frequently refers to their constant struggle with words which also turned

3 In his article "The Pivotal Status of The Translator's Habitus", Daniel Simeoni argues that translators have predominantly internalized "the discourse of subservience" to the source author and the source text in order to gain recognition as a translator in the society. Their habitus being shaped as such through the norms imposed by the society, translators often prefer to go by the rule and accept the restrictions imposed upon them rather than trying to elevate their professional status. According to Simeoni, those who demand more professional prestige for translators are the peripheral observers, i.e. the Translation Studies scholars.

into a battle of sexes at times when they disagreed saying that she felt she was "a self-betrayer fallen under the spell of male discourse (…) as well as a subversive scribe, 'transcreating' writing that stretches the boundaries of patriarchal discourse" (Levine 1991: 181). Munday might have a point when he claims that Levine's position might be "a retrospective attempt at self-justification for (her) involvement in a project which was distasteful for her and in which her power was limited" (Munday 2008: 199).

In any case, I argue that the motives underlying Levine's attitude do not matter, as the end product of the collaboration are successful works which have enabled Cabrera Infante to gain worldwide fame and Levine to win a prize in translation. As Lefevere states translation is a form of "rewriting," actually, the most influential type of rewriting, as "rewriters have created images of a writer, a work, a period, a genre, sometimes a whole literature" (Lefevere 1992a: 5) and translation as "rewriting" "projects an author and/or those works beyond the boundaries of their culture of origin" (Lefevere 1992b: 9). In that sense, Suzanne Jill Levine is a rewriter, projecting Cabrera Infante and his works beyond the boundaries of the Cuban culture. No matter how harmonious the collaboration between an author and a translator may seem, it is my contention that the power struggle over meaning is always there. Rosemary Arrojo dwells upon the notion of the "will to power," which is a human condition so much in the foreground in textual production (Arrojo 2002: 64). Arrojo, who argues against textual unity, asserts that texts are continuously constructed and deconstructed by means of varying interpretations of readers. Nevertheless, as a "necessary outcome of the human nature," there is a "longing for property." "a will to power" in not only the author, but also the translator, who is both the reader and the rewriter of the author's text, with a double identity, so to speak (Arrojo, ibid). The "will to power," which manifests itself in the attempt to "control and imprison meaning," causes the author to claim "authorial power" and "sole mastery" over her/his work and to regard the translator as an "intruder." As far as the peritextual material on their collaboration is concerned, neither does Cabrera Infante consider himself as the "sole master" of his works, nor does Levine make any implicit suggestion that Cabrera Infante ever considered her as an "intruder." Yet, it is an undeniable fact that Cabrera Infante remained in full control of the translation process. In other words, he did not fully submit his authorial power to Levine by means of being the willing collaborator of her, ready to de/reconstruct his own work.

## III. The Stylistic Qualities of *Infante's Inferno*

> "Titles, like names, precede, float above and follow their bodies. Titles help us to read, but are also read through, their texts."
>
> (Lucille Kerr in Levine 1991: 18)

The very first comment to be made about *Infante's Inferno* relates to the title itself. The original title *La habana para un infante difunto* is an allusion to Ravel's piece "Pavane pour

une infante défuncte," a sign that Cabrera Infante himself, like his narrator who says that all writers aim to be musicians, is seeking to find the music in words, since music is the universal language. As Levine indicates, the title reveals not only an allusive alliteration to Ravel's musical piece but also to the writer's name itself; the name that the unnamed narrator earns at the end of the book as he is (re)born as a writer: The "infant" becomes the "Infante." In that sense, the title "Infante's Inferno" is an abusive substitution; indeed, the English title itself is an example of allusive alliteration alluding to Dante's *Inferno*, satirizing Dante's search for true, divine inspiration (Levine 1991: 115):

> Alliteration, the autobiographical "Infante", and the subterranean inferno metaphor for Havana and the female sex in both TTT and *La habana* (…) make Infante's Inferno a logical title (Levine 1991: 114).

The book (Infante refused to call it a novel, he preferred the term "memoir") narrates a voyage of discovery (of the narrator's manhood as he grows up to become a writer) from the very first lines. ("It was the first time I climbed a staircase. Few houses in our town had more than one floor, and those that did were inaccessible. This is my inaugural memory of Havana: climbing marble steps."):

> La habana is a Dantesque voyage, in search of not one but many Batrices, in search of not divine but profane love: The erring narrator discovers that true love is ultimately sexual obsession, that communion is an illusion (Levine 1991: 114).

I think *Infante's Inferno* can best be described as an autobiographical Bildungsroman[4] based on erotic memories. It can also be evaluated as a parody of the tradition of romance, since the protagonist is a Cuban Casanova rather than a chivalric knight. Apart from the challenge presented by the language itself, the reader is also challenged by the references to the particular qualities of Havana like certain neighborhoods, movie theaters and style of living. Like *Three Trapped Tigers*, it is reminiscent of a tormenting nostalgia of the exile, it is as if Cabrera Infante is looking for readers with whom to share the memories of an irretrievable past. The American movies and women appear to be the primary interests of the narrator and there are frequent references to famous movies as displayed in the following excerpts:

4 The Webster's *College Dictionary* definition of 'Bildungsroman' is "a novel dealing with the education and development of its protagonist" According to Penguin's *A Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 'Bildungsroman' is a term more or less synonymous with 'Erziehungsroman'-literally an 'upbringing' or 'education' novel. Although the genre has its roots in the works of such German writers as Goethe (*Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre (Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*), Schiller (*Über die ästhetische Erziehung Des Menschen (On the Aesthetic Education of Man)* and Mann, *(Buddenbrooks)*, it has been established as a tradition in English literature as exemplified in novels like Dickens' *Great Expectations* and *David Copperfield*, or Maugham's *Of Human Bondage*.

> I joined up with a local young gang. I had seen young gangs in the movies (in Dead End, for example, or in the mysterious The Devil is a Sissy, which was intriguing because there had been a power failure in town halfway through the movie and I never learned what finally happened to those romantic daredevil boys)
>
> (p. 10)

> I didn't think of that possible model then but rather tired to see her face or at least define her profile, which I couldn't see clearly, as with the girl in the Universal (…) I couldn't distinguish the shape of her lips, not pouting perhaps but more like those of the true protagonist of *The Seventh Veil*, the veiled blonde.
>
> (p.104)

Comparing the stylistic traits of *La habana para un infante difunto* with those of *Tres Tristes Tigres*, Levine states that the former is characterized by alliteration encouraged by "Spanish's musical exuberance" while the latter with puns. According to Levine, "alliterating words literally copulate" and since "*Infante's Inferno* opens a Pandora's box of memory, mostly erotic memories, the sensual device of alliteration best harmonizes with the book's sexual content, and comes closest to music, the conduit of memories" (Levine 1991: 52). After all, "to alliterate is to mock the conventions of propriety subverting the semantic, putting sound before sense, a kind of liberation" (Levine 1984: 77). The following are examples of alliteration in the book:

> "We settled in this **rumpled room** ruled by the exotic essence." (p. 2)
> "During the day the wide avenues offered an unlimited perspective, since the sun was less blinding than back home, where its light reverberated relentlessly off the white clay of the streets" (p.3)
> "I will always remember it, however, with its **petite-pleasure-palace** architecture, and unpretentious neighbourhood theater, friendly and noisy,dedicated to offering its **movie mass magnificat**, but caught between two eras: too late to be an Art deco temple, like the theaters built in the late thirties, which I would later discover in downtown Havana,and not pretentiously simple like the theaters from the end of the fifties, the last commercial cinemas built in Cuba.(p. 11)
> It was after school, as I was playing parcheesi with Esther, Rachel and Magdalena, that the first of a series of perturbing incidents occured, blurred in my memory by subsequent sequels. (p.19)
> My mother found him pale and poorly, and Raul confessed that Etelvina had infected him with an incurable disease: the feared word was whispered **secretly, sibilant: syphillis** (p. 35)
> At first, when his absences were not caused by a common cold or almost fatal flu, we thought he had a girlfriend" (p. 41)
> "Eloy Santos concluded his endless paragraph saying that I needed sunbaths- obviously, a **tempting tautology in the tropics.** (p.49)

Following Borges, both Cabrera Infante and Levine evaluate the original as one of the many possible versions. Both regard translation as a means to discover the mechanisms of one's own language. As mentioned in the previous section, Cabrera Infante dethrones himself by willingly rewriting his book with Levine in the form of a (sub)version. Being an intelligent reader of the original with a view to rewriting it for another audience, the translator uncovers subtexts "running within a work, visible at certain symptomatic points of ambiguity, evasion or overemphasis" (Eagleton in Levine 1991: 7). Thus, *Infante's Inferno* is a subversion in both senses of the term; it is not just the (re)creation of a book in the hands of the rewriters questioning and challenging language's dominion over meaning but also a version of the original, a subtext; another book in its own right.

## Conclusion

The author-translator collaboration in challenging literary works, like those of Guillermo Cabrera Infante, appears to be an essential element of the "rewriting," or rather, the "transcreation" of the work and it is a frequent phenomenon in the translation of Latin American writing into English. In order to understand the poetological (as well as the ideological) motivations[5] underlying the collaborative work in the case of the translation of Latin American Literature, the macro-context surrounding the translation activity should be considered. A brief survey of the Latin American Literary Boom in the 1960s immediately following the Cuban Revolution of 1959 reveals that the translation activity was performed as part of an ideological project under institutional patronage with the sponsorship of foundations like the Rockefeller Foundations and anti-communist lobbies. This reinforces the idea that literary and translational creation is never practiced in a vacuum and that translation is never simply about translation: The ideological context ranging from the selection of the texts to be translated to the translation strategies employed is always at the background complicating the notions of what makes a literary work and an author popular in a different target culture. The translation of Latin American fiction in the 1960s appears to have been driven by the motive of discovering a way to get to know the "Other" and be able to transfer its "cultural capital" for not only literary but also political purposes.

Thus, the Cabrera Infante-Levine collaboration was not coincidental. Levine was specifically appointed to translate Cabrera Infante's books thanks to her academic credentials. What made their partnership work so well, though, has to do more than the initial motives for selection. The most important factors rendering their collaboration successful are: their shared passion

5 The "poetological and ideological motivations" are the two basic components of 'rewriting' as conceived by André.Lefevere (1992b). "Ideological motivations" are tackled more emphatically by the post-colonial theorists who are critical of the images of the "non-West" created by the ideological rewritings of the "West". Although such motivations are categorized separately, there is a close connection and interaction between the two. The "ideological motivations" for rewriting appear in the form of conforming to or reacting against the dominant ideology, while "poetological motivations" have to do with a preference for the dominant or alternative poetics.

for language and sense of humor expressed through witty wordplay, their interest in the movies, and above all, their attitude of questioning the original's dominance over the translation.

Levine's professional stance, defining her role as a "subversive scribe," a rewriter in her own right rather than a nameless scribe, distinguishes her from most other translators who plead total "faithfulness," a sort of "subservience" to the source author. Another distinctive quality of Levine as a translator is that she has so masterfully elaborated on her experience in translation integrating theory with practice. Her writing is rich in theoretical insight and could perfectly be included as essential reading in the syllabus of a literary translation course to incite discussion not only on the notions of "the original" versus translation or collaborative work and style in translation but also on the professional and ideological stance of translators. In other words, *The Subversive Scribe* can be read as a perfect example of how theory can be integrated into practice. The ordinary reader, as well, who learns about the process, i.e. how translational decisions are made, enjoys the product better and is urged to question the traditional role assigned to the translator as the "faithful messenger" of the author: The more empowered the translator is, the better results are produced in translation.

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