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Queer Memory in Translation:

The Work of Pedro Lemebel

by

Jordan GeRue

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Master of Science in Spanish

Minnesota State University, Mankato

Mankato, Minnesota

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Queer Memory in Translation: The Work of Pedro Lemebel

Jordan GeRue

This thesis has been examined and approved by the following members of the student's committee.

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QUEER MEMORY IN TRANSLATION: THE WORK OF PEDRO LEMEBEL

JORDAN GERUE

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
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MASTER OF SCIENCE IN SPANISH

MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY, MANKATO
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ABSTRACT

Translating texts produced by marginalized communities offers readers the chance to learn about the political and social realities of the marginalized in their own words. However, in the process of creating a work that can be consumed by the target audience, it is possible to omit cultural differences in a way that hinders rather than helps readers understand the original culture. By translating representative samples of the unique “crónicas” of Chilean author and artist Pedro Lemebel with attention to queer translation praxis, readers can explore and better understand the queer urban subculture of Santiago de Chile from the 1970s to the early 2000s.

“There are so many children who will be born

With a little broken wing

And I want them to fly, comrade.”

Pedro Lemebel¹

Introduction

The first part of this project is an introduction to Chilean author and artist Pedro Lemebel and how his unique *crónicas* can be used to examine the intersection of queer studies and translation studies. The second part is a translation of selected works from the books *Loco afán: crónicas de sidario* and *Adiós mariquita linda*. These works explore themes of everyday queer life, love, and sociopolitical marginality in Chile both before and after the military regime of Pinochet from 1973 to 1990. Lemebel’s work is part of a corpus of testimony coming from post-dictatorship Latin America that gives voice to this period, and through his writing we can approach a queer memory of these events.

¹ All quotations from Spanish have been translated by me.

Lemebel's work is of special interest for its examination of the intersection of race, sexuality, gender, and economic-political struggle. This positionality gives his chronicles a unique place among the multitude of testimony literature to appear in Latin America in the 1980s and 90s when dictatorships were ending and democracies were being restored. Democracies in Chile carried on the neoliberal economic practices introduced to Chile by the dictatorship under the direction of the American "Chicago Boys" economists (Hutchison et al. 438-39). These states did not fully represent of the needs and desires of those marginalized people who were especially touched by the cruelties of the military regime. In his "Manifesto (I Speak for My Difference)" Lemebel asks: "Because the dictatorship ends and democracy comes, and right behind it socialism. And then what? What will you do with us, comrade? (*Loco afán* 122)"

Although the dictatorship was a period of repression for queer individuals, attempts at reconciliation in the democracy that followed also fell short of achieving long-lasting positive change for marginalized people. The National Commission for Truth and Reconciliation Report failed to give a full account of events during the dictatorship, leaving many, including Lemebel, to question how society can move past traumatic events when there is no public resolution and accountability (Osborne 223). To simply forget the atrocities committed during the regime rather than seek justice was inexcusable, and Lemebel's focus on the lives of

marginalized people reoriented the discussion toward the experiences of those who are not included in reconciliation committees or national reports.

Although the government had been transformed in name and in scope, many of the same individuals and institutions continued to hold political power in Chile after the transition to democracy. As of this writing in 2020 – thirty years after the transition to democracy – Chile still uses the constitution that was written during the Pinochet years. This constitution contains mechanisms that purposefully maintain the state of institutions under the military regime, and Pinochet and his administration continued (or continue) to exert power over the state (Garretón and Garretón 118, 126). Protests in 2019 finally led to the concession by the Piñera government to hold a referendum on the future of the Chilean constitution in 2020. The national plebiscite was originally scheduled for April but has been delayed until October due to the global COVID-19 crisis.

Translation of Lemebel's work provides the invaluable perspective of underrepresented communities to new readers, but few complete books by Lemebel are available in English. Since most academic publication on Lemebel has been published in Spanish and my focus is translation to English, this essay was written in English to combat the feedback loop of academic work that becomes available in different regions. As of this writing in 2020, only his novel *Tengo miedo torero* is available in English as *My Tender Matador* translated by Katherine Silver. Academic discussion of Lemebel's work has been ongoing

steadily in the Spanish-speaking world and among academics of Spanish-language literature around the world, but until the worldwide translation and publication of *Tengo miedo torero* his work was not accessible to speakers of other languages.

My goal for this project is to add to the body of research involving Lemebel's work and the work available for popular consumption so he can be studied further by academics and appreciated by all. His anti-assimilationist views on politics and identity make him a poignant voice in global queer movements. Furthermore, I discuss the process of my translation and the unique challenges and considerations of translating literature – and snapshots of life in the *crónicas* in particular – by an author from a marginalized subculture (gender non-conforming and indigenous urban Chilean). Among these challenges are vocabulary unique to Chile or to the circles in which Lemebel circulated, and the neo-baroque style employed by Lemebel.

My own experiences as a queer person and my time studying in the Chilean capital provided me with the political education that serves as the foundation of this project. The Chilean university students and older gay men I met pushed the boundaries of the narrow political awareness I had in my own country viewing the world from a position of privilege despite my sexuality. As a white, gender-conforming queer person in the United States my lived experience as a queer person does not mirror that of Lemebel, leaving me with an outsider's perspective shaped by having interactions with queer Chileans, but not being one myself.

Methodology

In order to successfully translate the work of Lemebel I had to address several questions about how to approach certain aspects of the text. Lemebel frequently uses slang and turns of phrase unique to Chile or to the queer subculture of Chile. He paints the page with a rainbow of swearing and sexual innuendo. He also uses slurs frequently or invents his own words incorporating slurs². When I began my translation process I attempted in each case to find words that were similar enough to North American English as used by queer people. However, I found it difficult to bridge the gap between creating a work of art accessible to the target audience and a work that sufficiently illustrated the unique cultural-political positionality of the original, which was one of my goals.

Translation theorist Friedrich Schleiermacher differentiated between the domestication and foreignization of a text by the translator. A domesticated text attempts to bring the writer toward the target culture while a foreignized text attempts to bring the reader toward the author's culture. I was able to use this theory of translation to hone my focus toward helping the reader understand the culture of Lemebel rather than making Lemebel into a North American author. He did not see himself or his indigenous/mestizo, socialist,

² Such as *maricueca*, a portmanteau of *marica*/maricón and *cueca*, the national dance of Chile.

working-class community reflected in the white, neoliberal activism taking place in the United States (Barradas 72).

Many of the conclusions I reached about the role of translation came after I had already begun translating Lemebel's work. William J. Spurlin's concept of "translation slippages" especially sparked a revelatory moment for me. After reading Arielle Concilio's article on genderqueer translation praxis I started rewording translations to include more of the original language from the source text. The use of vocabulary unique to the original language community can help readers of translation approach a deeper cultural understanding of the original, rather than producing a text that caters to the target language reader at the expense of understanding the culture of the original text. Words like *loca* and *travesti* in Lemebel's work provided the spaces for cultural understanding of differences in the global queer community and our self-conceptualization, while words like *roto* and *cuico* show the importance of class differences in Chilean social interactions.

In this thesis I first explore the life of Pedro Lemebel and the genre of *crónica urbana* to give context to the work discussed, then I will review the process of my translation and the decisions made. Finally, the last section of the paper consists of three translated *crónicas* from *Loco afán: Crónicas de sidario* and *Adiós mariquita linda*.

Pedro Lemebel

Pedro Segundo Mardones Lemebel³ was born in 1955 in a squatter settlement along the banks of the Zanjón de la Aguada channel, in the San Miguel Commune of Santiago de Chile. He moved with his family to various locations in Santiago's south side before settling in 1962 in an apartment in the San Miguel commune⁴, where he spent most of his childhood. His neighborhood was a settlement made available to the working poor by the socialist and communist parties of Chile and was deeply connected to the political left and the indigenous Mapuche community, of which his father was a part. Lemebel credits this closeness to the working-class and the Mapuche with shaping his worldview in his formative years (“Trazo mi ciudad”).

In the late 1980s, Lemebel chose to adopt his mother's maternal surname as a pen name. His grandmother had invented the name Lemebel for herself when she left her home and passed it on to her daughter. Lemebel's choice to use this name not given by a man but chosen by a woman was a way to ally himself with the feminine, the homosexual, and the transgressive in a culture that privileges normative masculinity. Lemebel throughout his life

³ In Spanish-speaking cultures, both parents' family names are used. The paternal surname Mardones precedes the maternal surname Lemebel.

⁴ A commune is the smallest political subdivision in Chile. Several communes make up a province, which in turn makes up one of Chile's 16 regions.

would reject the restrictive nature of Chilean machismo and substitute it with his own brand of militant homosexuality.

Although he later became famous for his chronicles, Lemebel's first endeavor in writing was in the genre of short stories, winning the Javier Carrera National Story Contest in 1982 (Celleri 1). He published his first book, a collection of short stories titled *Los incontables*, in 1986 under the name Pedro Mardones. Although Lemebel himself stated that fiction was restrictive and that the *crónica* afforded him more freedom, academic Maria Celleri argued in her "Rebirth of Lemebel" that in *Los incontables* we can already see the subversion of hegemonic relationships and binaries that would characterize his later work and that the book signified a watershed moment in the transition from "Pedro Mardones" to "Pedro Lemebel."

The year of his first publication was the same year in which Lemebel made his homosexuality public. He appeared, uninvited, at a meeting of leftist political groups in Santiago with a hammer and sickle painted on his face and wearing high heels. There he read his "Manifesto: I Speak for My Difference" in which he lambasted the Chilean left for its homophobia and indifference toward the plight of the poor who are marginalized at the intersection of class and sexuality; "Don't talk to me about the proletariat, because being poor *and* a fag is worse" (my emphasis).

Shortly after this incident he co-founded his performance collective *Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis* (The Mares of the Apocalypse), consisting of Lemebel and another writer/artist,

Francisco Casas. Together they interrupted literary and political events to break the silence surrounding queer identities in the dictatorship era; handing out a crown of thorns to Raúl Zurita at his Pablo Neruda Poetry Award ceremony, riding naked on horseback through a University of Chile campus, dancing cueca – the national dance of Chile – on a map of South America covered in broken glass from Coca-Cola bottles while wearing ballet tights and high heels. At a campaign event attended by Chilean politicians and intellectuals the pair held up a sign that read “homosexuals for change,” and Casas kissed Chilean politician Ricardo Lagos on the mouth (“Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis”). These provocative actions⁵, although less than twenty in total, made them an iconic (and controversial) force for gender and sexual minorities in Chile that could not easily be ignored.

It was in 1995 in the cultural and political context of transition to democracy and near the end of his time with the Mares of the Apocalypse that Lemebel published his first book of chronicles, *La esquina es mi corazón: crónica urbana* (*The Corner is my Heart: Urban Chronicle*). The book compiled chronicles published earlier in magazines and newspapers that dealt primarily with the marginality and instability of queer people and the poor in Chile, especially those engaged in clandestine sex or sex work. The choice to move from the short story to the chronicle was later explained by Lemebel as being related to the ability of the

⁵ Documentation of the actions of The Mares of the Apocalypse can be found at <http://www.yeguasdelapocalipsis.cl>

chronicle, more than fiction, to function as testimony and resistance for marginalized people as well as being a more accessible genre for the poor due to its brevity and the ability to broadcast them on radio programs, which he did on leftist networks like Radio Tierra and on his own radio show, *Cancionero*. By the end of the 1990s Lemebel and Casas began to develop their own separate projects and the Mares gave their last performance in Cuba in 1997.

During his life Pedro Lemebel rose to national prominence. In 1986 Pedro Mardones was only able to be published in a feminist publisher; his work was not accepted by the academy or the general public. In 2013 he won the José Donoso Iberoamerican Letters Prize and following year was the subject of a campaign to be awarded the Chilean National Prize for Literature. He was not the recipient of the national prize but had experienced a transformation; the subaltern with no access to the machinations of a post-colonial, post-dictatorship state who rises to prominence as a national intellectual figure. This unique position allowed him to deconstruct national culture from the margin, but also to occupy a position of authority from within the hegemony from which he could speak.

The Chronicle

Lemebel's preferred genre and the one for which he is most well-known is the *crónica urbana*. The Latin American chronicle combines the artistic expression of literature with the informative nature of journalism. The urban chronicle shaped the landscape of Latin American literature with authors such as José Martí and Gabriel García Márquez having written in the genre (Mahieux 2). I use the Spanish *crónica* rather than chronicle to emphasize this unique history in the region. It is a type of testimony, a way of preserving memory for those who were denied the possibility of expressing themselves in official histories. Through the *crónica*, Lemebel hoped to find a literary outlet where he could express himself without being confined to a certain genre and its expectations. The *crónica* as a genre isn't as set in stone as the novel and can include other genres like biography but even politics and popular music ("Trazo mi ciudad").

It is only in recent decades that the chronicle has received attention from academia, coinciding with what Colombian academic Andrés Alexander Puerta Molina called a "New Boom" of the Latin American Chronicle, such as what had taken place with the novel in the earlier Latin American Boom of the 1960s and 1970s. In the 1980s and 1990s chronicles experienced rapid growth all over Latin America. Carlos Monsiváis published an anthology of Mexican chronicles in 1980 (Mahieux 2). Literary magazines gave space to narrative

journalism, the Excellence in Journalism Award from Alberto Hurtado University in Chile was created, and the work of *cronistas* was compiled into anthologies (Poblete Alday 1-2).

In the post-dictatorship period literature from what has been called the Southern Cone (Chile, Argentina, and Uruguay) was flooded with testimony by the survivors and victims of dictatorships. However, testimony from marginalized people was only deemed consumable in the mainstream if their sexuality, gender, and race was not a focus (Celleri 15). The literature produced in this period admirably recounts the experiences of those who were affected by military regimes, but the silence in mainstream publishing surrounding issues of identity limited the genre in terms of what it could accomplish for marginalized people. The chronicle functioned as a point of resistance by being able to work outside the sphere of the literary establishment that neglected these narratives.

Lemebel's radio program *Cancioneros* combined the spoken word with background music, bringing chronicles to the masses whether or not they were able to buy his books or even read them. Lemebel's chronicles were also often published in newspapers or magazines before they were collected and published. According to Spanish scholar Ángeles Mateo del Pino, (re)collected conversations, wordplay, and stories were written down for the express purpose of being read aloud and given back to the street where they came from (Mateo del Pino, 20). This cycle of orality allowed Lemebel to escape the censure of the literary establishment by circumventing institutional publishers altogether at the beginning of his

career. His co-opting of the chronicle destabilizes the "normativizing and hegemonizing scheme as he speaks from Santiago's periphery as a subject of multiple marginalized identities: communist, homosexual, indigenous, and lower class" (Osborne 215).

The characteristics and goals of liberal gay activism are not representative of the needs of the working class and other groups who are marginalized even within the LGBT community. The radical beginnings and eventual assimilation of the gay rights movement into a capitalist endeavor shifted the focus of gay rights away from the issues of the poor or marginalized: violence, drug use, AIDS, youth homelessness, etc. and toward issues of a mostly middle-class, white demographic that could more readily adapt to a heteronormative capitalist society: same-sex marriage or LGBT people in the military for example. Lemebel's work subverts the established narrative of assimilation to advance a liberation ideology that celebrates non-heteronormative aspects of homosexual identity that neoliberal activism minimizes.

Discussion of Lemebel and the *crónica urbana* fit into a larger discourse surrounding memory and its relationship to (hetero)normative methods of preserving history. In Lemebel's chronicles, particularly in *De perlas y cicatrices* according to Elizabeth Osborne, the *resentimiento* (resentment) that charges the writing serves to challenge the official history that seeks only to reconcile and forget the atrocities of the dictatorship. Collective *resentimiento* reflected in the chronicle denies this forgetting and replaces it with the lived experiences of

those who live on the margins of society. In this way, the chronicle keeps the discourse of the past alive, resisting the imperative by the hegemony to “move on” (Osborne 219).

The battle for memory in Chile and other Latin American countries (especially the Southern Cone) has been one of the greatest political and social struggles of the century. Post-dictatorship struggles between the “move-on” imperative and the call for collective remembering and justice-seeking have been at the center of public debate and political action, first in Argentina and later in Chile and Uruguay, though in the latter two countries continued presence and influence of the military and the right in government complicated or even halted the process, especially in Chile (Jelin 32-33).

Elizabeth Jelin described the importance of the political struggle over memory by noting that “[w]hat can change about the past is its meaning, which is subject to reinterpretations, anchored in intentions and expectations toward the future” (26). The *crónica urbana* then is a space of creative freedom that grants the author a voice in determining the recording of memory in the national context, and few accomplish this with as sharp analysis and moving prose as Lemebel.

Queer Translation Praxis

What is the purpose of translation? Is it only to take a text written in one language and simply rewrite it in another, keeping the text as “true” as possible to the original? This way of thinking reduces the translation to a mere copy that can never live up to the implied superior original text. Newer conceptualizations of the place of translation in regard to literature elevate translation to an art in itself. When we create an original literary translation we are attempting to convey not only meaning but also beauty to the reader.

For Arielle Concilio, the translator's position vacillates between writer, reader, and critic in such a way that it becomes impossible to place the translator in one role in any given moment (465). The translator should be recognized as an author because the translated text is produced in a process of creation that creates an echo of the original but is a new work of art owing to its new situation in the cultural framework of the translator.

The nature of translations is to explore and liberate the original for a different cultural environment. Though languages themselves are fluid and constantly evolving over time and through contact with other languages, they are viewed as static objects connected to the nation-state and therefore embedded in colonial ideas about belonging through national identity. The process of translation *creates* borders if one understands the translation as a mere copy of a superior original. We overcome this by seeing translation as “not a ‘secondary

practice' between two separate and unified languages but a 'multi-directional' and intercultural 'transfer of discourse' that blurs and subverts supposed boundaries between languages" (Concilio 464).

To achieve a work that reflects the original but stands on its own, liberties must at times be taken with the text itself. In an interview at the University of Oregon, Lemebel translator Katherine Silver said that in translation, to create a work of art *is* to remain faithful to the source text, and that the dichotomy between accuracy and beauty is false (*My Tender Matador*). This reflects the more common contemporary approach to translation as a social practice rather than simply a formulaic linguistic one (Enríquez-Aranda 90).

When translating Pedro Lemebel it has been important to consider the ways that the text is deeply entrenched in Chilean queer subculture and the political scene under the Pinochet regime from 1973 to 1990. This socio-cultural context manifests itself considerably in the work of Lemebel because the chronicle attempts to be a window to the experience of a marginalized person who is real or is an amalgamation of real experiences lived by multiple people⁶. Lemebel's work specifically explores the lives of queer and/or indigenous people in the city of Santiago.

⁶ The indigenous feminist activist Rigoberta Menchú Tum famously drew criticism for using events from other people's lives in her testimony, although this type of knowledge production has been defended by others for its heuristic value (Avant-Mier and Hasian).

Lemebel's own terminology to describe the subculture he identifies with does not fit neatly into the existing terminology of queerness in English-speaking countries. The primary example in all of his work is the word *loca*, which is used to describe those who contemporary English-speaking queer culture would identify as transgender women, effeminate gay men, or gender non-conforming/genderqueer people; however, Lemebel would not have used these words or their underlying assumptions to describe his peers. Translating "queer" literature is difficult because the conceptualization of queerness differs so much depending on culture and time and the terminology is rarely neatly analogous. The word queer itself is rooted in English-speaking, Western ideas about sex and gender. How then do we approach texts from non-English speaking, non-Western, and non-contemporary cultures when we translate them?

When translating any literary work, liberties are taken with the source text to create a work of art that reads well in the target language culture. When texts from marginalized communities are translated, they offer the chance for readers in new cultures to learn about the political and social realities of people who would otherwise be separated from them. In the process of creating a work that can be consumed by the target audience, it is possible to gloss over cultural differences in a way that hinders rather than helps readers understand the original culture. William J. Spurlin identified such spaces as translation "slippages" – places where the translation elides two different concepts into one (Spurlin 300). Translators of queer literature then must ask themselves in what ways they are advancing understanding of global queer

identities and to what extent are they removing them to create a readable text. How can a balance be struck?

One example of these translation slippages that Spurlin identifies is the word “motsoalle” used in Lesotho to describe women in close relationships with other women (Sprurlin 300). These relationships are intimate and even erotic and exist alongside heterosexual marriage. The motsoalle relationship can even be the primary sexual relationship for a woman who is married to a man, but it would be inappropriate and inadequate to simply refer to these as lesbian relationships. They also go beyond the frequently given translation of “very special friend” (“Queering Translation” 300).

Arielle Concilio’s article on genderqueer translation praxis suggests that certain words in a text by a queer author be left untranslated to avoid the cultural colonization of a text for the benefit of the reader (469-470). As I utilized this strategy and translated Lemebel into English I found that it became cumbersome to include too many Spanish words that were not easily understood from context, especially in a longer text where the target reader would be exposed to multiple new concepts, sometimes in the same sentence. While some Spanish words are well-known in English, the particular vocabulary used by Lemebel as a queer Chilean author might not be understood by the English-speaking reader. For that reason some words that Concilio left untranslated I have decided to translate.

The word *travesti* which can be rendered as “transvestite” in English carries emotional weight associated with the history of mischaracterizing transgender people as merely adopting the dress and effect of the “opposite” gender. However, leaving the word *travesti* untranslated – the way some other slang can be – might not have a positive effect, given that English readers would be likely to read the word as the English “travesty.” I decided to render *travesti* as “transvestite” because it is in line with the way Lemebel subverts heteronormative discourse and reclaims words used in bad faith by those outside of the community.

Words I did decide to leave untranslated when feasible were those I found unique to a Chilean sociocultural understanding of gender or class, such as the word *roto* which literally means “broken one” but in Chile is a derogatory term for the poor and working class. It carries derogatory meaning but after the War of the Pacific was repurposed for nationalistic goals; the *roto* became a working class hero, a patriot who conquered the desert with his gun and his labor (Fierro 200). It is a word that has become part of the national consciousness of Chileans but would not be readily understood even by Spanish speakers outside of Chile and its neighbors. By leaving this “translation slippage” present the reader is moved toward the culture of the original text, rather than moving the original text toward the reader.

In all of Lemebel's work the word *loca* is a ubiquitous term used for people who modern western English-speakers would identify as transgender women, but they didn't identify themselves as such in Chile during the period in which Lemebel was working. *Loca* or

the masculine *loco* literally means “crazy” but has a number of different connotations in Spanish that its English equivalent does not carry. According to the dictionary of the Real Academia Española the word *loca/loco* – in addition to its uses similar to English – can refer to an effeminate man, a woman who has emotional relationships with many men, or a prostitute (“Loco/loca”). The word is therefore not used as often and casually in Spanish as it is in English.

In Katherine Silver’s translation of *Tengo miedo torero*, she translates *loca* as queen. This translation works well because of the historical and contemporary use of “queen” to refer to gay men (especially effeminate gay men) and in some cases femme-presenting transgender people, as well as being a term used among queer people as a term of endearment. However, I think the use of the word *loca* left untranslated offers the reader a glimpse into the specific culture of Lemebel.

In a 1994 interview on Radio Tierra, Lemebel recounted that in New York he had met transgender people, and described them as “homosexuals who get operations, cut off their peckers, but to be lesbians” and concluded that “there are many sexualities” (“Lemebel Oral” 25). Although in a North American queer context today this would be construed as a gross misunderstanding since transgender identity is now understood to have nothing to do with genitalia or sexuality, it does help us understand the way queer people in that period in Chile conceptualized gender and sexuality. These *locas* would not have self-identified as transgender

women in the way 21st century U.S. readers understand the term but they share many of the same struggles. To capture these historical concepts through translation in time, in societies/cultures and languages is one of the great challenges of literary translation for contemporary readers.

A comparative case in point: transgender identity as a distinct label was not solidified until the last two decades of the 20th century and did so first in the United States. American queer activist Marsha P. Johnson called herself gay, a transvestite, and a queen and founded the Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries activist organization. The word transgender was first published in a medical text in 1965 by the psychiatrist John F. Oliven as a synonym of transsexual meaning someone who had used surgery to transition their gender. In 1969 it was used by the early trans activist Virginia Prince in the form “transgenderal” with a clear distinction between sex and gender (“What Does the Word Transgender Mean?”).

Today the word transgender refers to those people who do not identify with the gender they were assigned at birth (“A Glossary: Defining Transgender Terms”). This umbrella term for a wide array of lived experiences reflects the way language can fail to express the ways people understand and relate to gender. The evolving understanding of even our own identities illustrates the necessity of understanding how things have changed and how these concepts continue to evolve around the world, not just in our own cultural context.

Another linguistic challenge is exemplified by the word “sidario” which appears in the subtitle of the book *Loco afán: Crónicas de sidario*. This word is used to describe either one who suffers from AIDS or a hospital for patients with AIDS. In “Manifesto: I Speak for My Difference” Lemebel asks the assembled left-wing political figures: “*Nos amarrarán de las trenzas en fardos con destino a un sidario cubano?*” In *Loco afán* the title refers to the stories which predominantly deal with the AIDS crisis in Chile. Leaving the word *sidario* untranslated presents a challenge because SIDA does not appear enough like the English acronym AIDS, nor does it exist frequently in other Spanish texts for a reader to explore on their own. For that reason I attempted to translate Lemebel’s invented *sidario* and other AIDS-related puns into close English equivalents.

There is also a pervasive use of slurs for homosexuals in Lemebel’s work. Being “gay” carries neoliberal and assimilationist assumptions and is entrenched in an anglophone North American political-cultural context that can’t be generalized to include all same-sex relationships globally. The civil rights-oriented approach to LGBT liberation that accelerated in the 1990s (especially for cisgender gay male subjects) framed the fight against homophobia as one of a minority campaigning for full citizenship rights in the liberal state, similar to the strategies used by the Black Civil Rights movement in earlier decades (Bassi).

Lemebel’s work is riddled with words like *marica*, *maricón*, *coliza*, *mariposón* – and Lemebel takes these words meant to harm and celebrates them to take away their power and

aggressiveness (“Lemebel Oral” 29). He appropriates this language to chip away at the cage of masculinity, including the hegemonic ideal of masculinity adopted by “gay culture” in the 70s in the United States and later other parts of the world. Of these perhaps *maricón* is the one most likely to be understood by an English-speaking reader, at least in the United States where Spanish-speakers number in the tens of millions. Therefore, in my thesis *maricón* has been left untranslated.

Representative Texts and the Translation Process

I chose three chronicles by Pedro Lemebel to include in this project. The first chronicle I have included is titled (in English) “Night of the Minks, or The Last Party of the Unidad Popular.” I chose this piece because I think it is emblematic of the themes that carry throughout his work; it explores gender performance, queer life in Santiago, and political struggle leading up to and during the Pinochet years, revealing how the struggles against AIDS, the dictatorship, and capitalism were woven together in the author’s life and work (Carta 117). This chronicle offers readers a glimpse into the sociopolitical struggle of queer people from a point of view not available in North American popular culture.

The following excerpt from “Night of the Minks” shows the way urban queer culture specific to the Chilean context appears in Lemebel’s writing:

“Todo el mundo estaba invitado: las locas pobres, las de Recoleta, las de mediopelo, las del Blue Ballet, las de la Carlina, las callejeras que patinaban la noche en la calle Huérfanos, la Chumilou y su pandilla travesti, las regias del Coppelia y la Pilola Alessandri.”

And my translation into English:

“The whole world was invited: the poor locas, the ones from Recoleta, the small-timers, the Blue Ballet girls and the ones from Carlina, the street walkers that paced up and down Huerfanos Street at night, Chumilou and her whole transvestite crew, the regias from Coppelia, and Pilola Alessandri.”

Leaving the word *loca* untranslated and also not italicized serves to place the reader into the world of Lemebel, and places the Spanish vocabulary at an equal standing as the original⁷.

Regias was left untranslated; I was unsure about this choice but decided to leave it as is because of its frequent use in the community. I chose not to leave *travesti* in Spanish because it looks too close to “travesty” in English and I believe the use of the word functions in a way that closely mirrors its English equivalent.

The second representative chronicle among my translations is “New York Chronicles” which recounts the author’s visit to New York City to visit the Stonewall Inn, where the

⁷ This strategy is employed in creative writing by other bilingual writers including the Chicana feminist Gloria Anzaldúa.

modern American gay rights movement was born. The hegemonic, white masculinity on display left Lemebel feeling like the Stonewall Inn and the gay rights movement in the United States did not represent him. Lemebel says:

“Basta entrar en el Bar Stonewall, que siempre está de noche, para darse cuenta que la concurrencia es mayoritariamente clara, rubia y viril, como en esas cantinas de las películas de vaqueros. Y si por casualidad hay algún negro y alguna loca latina, es para que no digan que son anti-democráticos. “

And in translation:

“It’s enough to just walk in to the Stonewall Bar, that never sleeps, to realize that the patrons are mostly pale, blond, and masculine like in one of those cowboy movie cantinas. And if by chance there is some black man and some loca latina, it’s so no one can say they’re not diverse.”

Throughout his life, Lemebel was critical of the American gay rights movement and even gay identity, relating it with neoliberalism and colonialism. This is apparent even in the “Night of the Minks” chronicle, at the end of which Lemebel says that the transformation of homosexual identity in Latin America is mainly due to the “imported model of gay status, so fashionable, so penetrating in its bargain with the new style of homosexual masculinity” (*Loco afán* 33, my translation).

The last chronicle selected for translation is “Wilson” which is the story of a romantic and sexual relationship Lemebel had with a young man from the rural south of Chile. The young man was new to Santiago and exposed briefly to the politically radical urban literati circles that Lemebel frequented. The struggle with translating this chronicle was the titular character’s use of a Spanish variety associated with the rural working class of Chile. I decided to translate Wilson’s use of the very informal Chilean voseo with so-called “nonstandard” spellings and contractions typical of rural American English. For example:

“His huasteco voice repeated: You were on TV? Well, of course, but that was some time ago. I ain’t from Santiago, he was itching to tell me, I’m from Llanquihue and I’m lookin’ for work ‘cause there ain’t nothin’ to do down there.”

This phrasing and spelling can make the reader understand how the character would be perceived by a Spanish-speaking reader, but is imperfect because it moves Wilson toward the target language rather than moving the reader to Wilson.

Translations

Night of the Minks, or The Last Party of the Unidad Popular

Santiago swayed with earthquakes and political upheaval that threatened the stability of the young Unidad Popular. In the air a blackish mist carried the scent of gunpowder and the sound of rich women playing a duet of banging pots and rattling bracelets and jewels. Those blonde society ladies demanded a coup d'état at the top of their lungs, a military regime change that would put an end to the Bolshevik scandal. The workers looked at them and grabbed their packages, offering them sex, roaring with laughter with straight lines of teeth. They breathed happily in the open air while standing in line in front of the UNCTAD⁸ building to have lunch. Some locas were strolling among them, acting like they had lost their exchange voucher, looking for it in their artisan handbags, taking out shawls and cosmetics until finding it with small cries of triumph, with lascivious looks and hasty fingers sliding across sweaty bodies. All those proletarian muscles in a line, waiting for a tray at the People's Cafeteria that distant December of 1972. They were all happy, talking about the latest episode of Música Libre, the young Mauricio and his olive lips, his Romeo haircut, and about his elephant bell jeans so tight, hugging close on his hips, cleaving to his secret garden. They all loved him and they were

⁸ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, held in Santiago April 1972.

all his secret admirers. I saw him. He told me. The other day I met him. They hurried to invent stories about the eligible bachelor from the TV, assuring everyone that he was one of us, a confirmed bachelor, and one even promised to bring him to the New Year's party, the grand feast promised to us by Palma, the poor loca with a chicken stand in La Vega who wanted to seem rich and so invited all of Santiago to her end-of-the-year bash. She said she would kill twenty turkeys so the locas would get their fill and not run off. She was so pleased with Allende and his Unidad Popular she said that even the poor would eat turkey that New Year, and she spread the news that her party would be unforgettable.

The whole world was invited: the poor locas, the ones from Recoleta, the small-timers, the ones from the Blue Ballet, the ones from Carlina, the street walkers that paced up and down Huerfanos at night, Chumilou and her whole transvestite crew, the regias from Coppelia, and Pilola Alessandri. They all met on the patios outside the UNCTAD to talk about how they would look like models tonight. I'll wear the pleated shirt, the Saint Tropez belt, the striped pants; no, better wear the wide-pleated maxi dress ones with flats and the mink coat, whispered Chumilou. The rabbit coat you mean, love? Because I don't think you have a mink. And you, regia? What color is yours? I don't have one, said Pilola Alessandri, but my mother has two. I'd have to go see. Which do you want, the white or the black? Both, said Chumilou defiantly. The white to say goodbye to '72, that's been a party for us poor maricones. And the black to welcome '73, that with all this pot-banging shit seems to me like it

will be a drag. Pilola Alessandri, who had offered up the coats, couldn't back out now, and on the night of New Year's Eve she arrived in a taxi to the UNCTAD, and after the hugs she took out the immense furs stolen from her mother, saying they were authentic and that her father had bought them at the House of Dior in Paris and that if anything happened to them they would kill her. But the locas weren't listening to her. They were wrapping themselves up in the furs, posing and modeling while they walked to take the bus to Recoleta, commenting that none of them had had a bite to eat; Pilola even less, who in her rush to take the coats had missed a splendid family meal with lobster and caviar. She was dying of hunger, her stomach in a knot, desperate to get to Palma's place to try the rota's turkeys.

When the group passed in front of a police station the regias sped up so they wouldn't have problems, but the pigs still shouted something. Then Chumilou stopped and, letting the mink slide off her shoulder, took out a fan and said that she was ready for the night. Later on the bus she swept her coat through the aisle incessantly, pretending to be a stewardess. Singing a cabaret number she transformed the trip into a show full of laughter and jokes from the other girls who were overheated by the summer night.

When they arrived there wasn't a morsel of turkey left; a punch bowl of wine with fruit and bitten pieces of canapé were scattered about the table. Palma was asking for forgiveness, running from one side to the other because in had walked the regias, the stars, the posh society women, sucking their teeth at you while getting down from their private jet.

Those stuck-up donkeys snubbed us all on Huérfanos Street, they're the same *bai class* locas that hated Allende and his porotada popular. They're the ones who cried streams of pearly tears because the rotos had expropriated mommy's estate. Astaburuaga, Zañartu, and Pilola Alessandri, the gossips, so starry-eyed, so elegant in their mink coats. Yes, they came all the way to Recoleta on the bus in mink coats like Liz Taylor or Marlene Dietrich! I'm telling you the whole neighborhood cleared out to see them, as sophisticated as movie stars, like models in Paula Magazine. The girls from the local shanties couldn't believe it; they were frozen speechless when they saw her walk into Palma's house. To the fag party she had been preparing for months. And upon seeing them arrive, all of them covered in furs in this heat, surveying the house with disgust, looking askance saying: this plating is so lovely, darling, about the plaster candelabra that decorated the table. The poor table with its plastic cloth where some chicken bones and food scraps were still swimming about. Palma couldn't find a place to squeeze in, giving explanations, repeating that there was so much food; twenty turkeys, cases of champagne, salads, and ice cream of every flavor. But those rotas were so starved, they didn't leave anything. They ate it all, as if a war were coming!

That first dawn of '73 the night was sprinkled with maricueca⁹ cumbias. As the party wore on with new bottles of pisco and pitchers of wine that the royals sent for, social nuance was lost in toasts, embraces, and desire on full display on the patio adorned with balloons and

⁹ A portmanteau of *maricón* ("faggot") and *cueca*, the national dance of Chile.

streamers. Ghetto alliances, mutual seduction, ass-grabbing, and squeezing of the blue collar neighbors who came to greet the pompadoured royals, friends of the lady of the house. Stumbling and more ironies that break out in laughter and insinuations about the missing spread. Amongst the music, Pilola yelled: Your turkeys flew off on you, niña! And again Palma launched into explanations, collecting the deskinning remains and feathers, revealing a cemetery of bones that were piling up on the table. At first the lady of the house blushed in disgrace asking for forgiveness when the cumbia stopped and the regias yelled: catch that turkey, niña! But then the alcohol and the intoxication turned her embarrassment into a game. Everywhere, the locas gathered bones and went about arranging them on the table like a great pyramid, like a mass grave that they illuminated with candles. No one knew from where but one of those she-devils got hold of a little Chilean flag and planted it in the summit of that sinister sculpture. Pilola Alessandri took offense at that point, indignantly saying that such a display lacked respect to the soldiers who had done so much for la patria. How this country was a populist nightmare with this Unidad Popular government that has everyone dying of hunger. How you loca peasants don't know a thing about politics and have no respect at all for the flag. And how she couldn't possibly spend one more minute here, so could they pass her minks so she could leave. What minks, dear? answered Chumilou, fanning her face. We peasants here don't know of such things. What's more, with this heat, in the middle of summer? One would have to be quite silly to wear furs, love. Then the group of pitucas

realized that it had been some time since they'd seen the fine furs. They called the lady of the house, who was still drunkenly collecting bones to erect her monument to hunger. They searched in every corner, tore apart the beds, asked around the neighborhood, but no one remembered having seen white minks flying among the metal-roofed shanties of Recoleta. Pilola couldn't stand it anymore and threatened to call her military uncle if her mother's coats didn't appear. But all the locas looked at her incredulously, knowing that she would never do it for fear that her honorable family would discover her moral sickness. Astaburuaga, Zañartu, and some arribistas left out of solidarity, indignantly swearing never again to set foot in this roterío. And while they waited for a taxi to carry them away from these lands, the music again started to boom in Palma's shack, the pelvises started shaking once more and Mambo #8 kicked off the transvestite show. Suddenly someone turned off the music and everyone yelled in harmony: Your mink flew off on you, niña, you better go catch it!

The first morning of '73 was a colorless chiffon over the open mouths of the faggots sleeping like logs where they fell in Palma's house. Cigarette ashes everywhere. Under the arbor trampled garlands. Weak groans of frustration could be heard from the messy beds. Half-drunken glasses, shaken from the movement of a reclining ass cheek, hushed giggles remembering the flight of the mink. The light flits through the window, a smokey light floating through the wide open door; as if the house were a skull illuminated from the exterior; as if the locas slept ass-out in a five skull hotel; as if the veiled bone pile, still erected in the

middle of the table, was the altar of some unseen fate, a prediction, a yearly horoscope that blinked black tears on the candle wax, about to go out, about to extinguish the last spark of social fireworks over the little paper flag that crowned the scene.

From there, the years crashed on like a cascade of logs that laid to rest the party we'd had in this country. The coup came and the blizzard of bullets caused a stampede of locas that would never again dance on the flowered patios of the UNCTAD. They looked for other places, they got together on the newly-renamed streets of the dictatorship. They kept having parties, more private, more silent, with less well-mannered people because of the curfew. Some discos stayed open, because the military regime never cracked down as much on fun like they did in Argentina or Brazil. Perhaps comfortable homosexuality was never a subversive problem that offended their delicate morality. Perhaps there were too many right wing locas who supported the regime. Maybe in the high class neighborhood the stench of fag cadaver was softened by their French perfume. But even so, the morbid stink of the dictatorship was just a preview of AIDS, which made its premiere at the beginning of the eighties.

Of that liberated synopsis the only thing that remained was the UNCTAD, the great cement elephant that for many years housed soldiers. Later, the democratic government reclaimed the terraces and patios, but the sculptures that Unidad Popular artists had donated no longer remain. There are also enormous auditoriums and conference rooms where they now hold forums and seminars on homosexuality, AIDS, and tolerance.

There is only one photo left from that party, an unwashed card where fag faces reappear far off from our contemporary gaze. The photo isn't good, but what jumps out is the sexual militancy of the group therein. Framed in the distance, their mouths are extinguished laughs, echoes of gestures frozen by the flash of the last toast. Words, thoughts, expressions, and insults hang about to fall from their lips, about to release the irony in the poison of their kisses. The photo isn't good; it's blurry, but the haze of its focus forever wards off the stability of memory. The picture is blurry, perhaps because the ruined tulle of AIDS adorns the double disappearance of nearly all of the locas. That shadow is a delicate cellophane bandage tied around the waist of Pilola Alessandri, supporting her maricola hip on the right side of the table. She bought the epidemic in New York. She was the first to bring it in a special exclusive, the most authentic, the recently released fashion of gay death. The latest funerary fashion that made her thin like no diet had ever achieved. It left her as skinny and pale as a model in Vogue, stretched out and chic like a sighing orchid. AIDS wrung out her body and she died so cramped, so wrinkled, but so well-styled and beautiful in the aristocratic economy of her paltry death.

The photo is so bad one doesn't know if it's in black and white or if the color ran off to some tropical paradise. One doesn't know if the loca's blush and the plastic mantle's wilted roses were washed out by rain and floods while the photo was hung from a nail in Palma's shack. It's hard to decipher its use of color, to imagine colors on the shirts stained by the frost

of poverty's winter. It was but a yellow halo of moisture, the only color that livened that photo. It was only that moldy trace that lightened the paper, poured over a sepia stain that crossed Palma's breast. It crosses her, pounding her like an insect in the butterfly house of the people's AIDS. She got it in Brazil, when she sold the chicken stand she had in La Vega, when she could no longer stand the soldiers and said that she was going to whore it up on the sands of Ipanema. That's why one is crazy and has to live as if it's always Carnival and samba your life away. What's more, with the dollar at 39 pesos, the Carioca piñata was within arm's reach - the opportunity to be queen of the ball for one night at the cost of her life. *Y qué fue* - And what of it, she said in the airport imitating the cuicas. You simply spends what you have.

The AIDS that graced Palma was generous, meandering, rolling around with whichever starving wayfarer asked her for sex. You could almost say she got it in a buffet line, shared and distributed to death through the passionate viaducts of Copacabana. Palma slurped up Kaposi sarcoma to the last drop, like someone without a care who grew weary for their own end. Burning with a fever, she returned to the sand, spreading her contagious serpent among the idle, the beggars, and the lepers she found in the shadow of her black Orpheus. A drunken AIDS of samba and debauchery swelled her up like a faded balloon, like a condom inflated by the wheezes of her pious anus. Her philanthropic anus, echoing tambourines and kettledrums in the burning heat of plagued colitis. So it was a party, a samba class to die covered in sequins and fall through the streets of the favelas, through the African perfume on the air, wetting the

jet black street, Atlantic Avenue, the streets of Rio, always ready to sin and to cancel firsthand the pleasures of its delirium.

Palma returned and died happily in her ragged agony. She said goodbye listening to the music of Ney Matogrosso, whispering the saudade of her departure. See you at some other party, she said sadly, looking at the photo nailed to the boards of her misery. And before she closed her eyes she saw herself so young, almost a blushing maiden raising a cup and a fist of bones in that summer of '73. She looked so beautiful in the mirror of the photo, covered by Pilola's white mink. She looked so regal in the albino halo of hair that she hung Death's bony hand before her to contemplate herself. She told the reaper to wait a moment, and she held onto one more moment of life to satisfy her narcissism. Then, she relaxed her eyelids and let herself go, floating in the silk of that memory.

The photo isn't good, the shot is rushed by the jumble of locas that surround the table, almost all of them clouded by the quick posing and the mad desire to jump to the future. It looks like a Last Supper of fag apostles, where the only clear thing is the pyramid of bones in the middle of the table. It looks like a biblical frieze, a Maundy Thursday watercolor trapped in the vapors of the carafe of wine Chumilou holds aloft like a Chilean Holy Grail. She stood in dead center, occupying the place of Christ for lack of luminarias. Standing on tip toes in her eight-inch clogs, Chumilou shined in her transvestite glamour. Pilola's black mink slipping off the whiteness of her shoulder is an animal hug that warms her fragile heart, her delicate native

virgin sigh. Every bud, every gloved rose bud on the mink foliage. Some photo from the movies reminds her of a raised cheek offering a kiss. Just a kiss, she seems to say to the camera lens recording her gesture. A single kiss from the flash to hail it with glitter – dazzled by the lightning of her own reflection. Her lying reflection, her false image of a proletarian diva clutching a pound of bread and tomatoes for her family's breakfast. Betting them all on the sodomite whore corner and knife-fighting over the territory of her brothel. The other transvestites said Chumilou was brave. Chumilou would take up arms when someone stole her client. She was the favorite, the most sought after, the only consolation for bored husbands who drank in her burning maricón scent. For this reason, the AIDS-stinger chose her as bait for its miraculous catch: for swallowing them all, for never eating, for being a tireless sodomite under the lucrative moon. In her gluttony she didn't notice that she had no condoms in her wallet. And there were so many bills, so much money, so many gringo-paid dollars. So much makeup, so many razors and depilatory wax. So many new dresses and shoes that let her throw away out-of-fashion clogs. So much bread, so many eggs and noodles that she could take home. There were so many dreams pressed into that bundle of dollars. So many open-mouthed little brothers chasing her night after night. So many rotten teeth in the mouth of her mother who couldn't afford a dentist and waited for her in her sleepless dawn. There were so many debts, so many school fees, so much to pay, because she wasn't as ambitious as the other fags said. Chumilou was content with a little, just a pile of American clothes, a little blouse, a

skirt, a tattered rag that her mother sewed up here and there, attaching lace and glitter, tidying Chumi's work uniform. Telling her to be careful, not to mess with anyone, not to forget the condom that she bought herself at the corner pharmacy and was ashamed to ask for. But tonight she had none left and the impatient gringo in a rush to mount her offered her a green fan of dollars. Chumi closed her eyes, reached out, and grabbed the bundle of bills. Her luck couldn't be so bad for just one time, once in how many years that she did it raw, that she would catch the bug, right? And so Chumi, unintentionally, crossed the plaited porch of the plague, slowly plunged into the slimy waters and booked a one way trip in the sinister boat. It was inevitable, she said. And I've lived so long, my twenty five years have been so long, that death doesn't seem so bad. In fact I welcome the vacation! I just want them to bury me dressed as a woman; in my work uniform, with my silver clogs and my black wig. In the red satin dress that brought me such good luck. No jewelry. I'm leaving my diamonds and emeralds to my mom to have her teeth fixed. The country estate and the beach houses for my little brothers who deserve a good future. And to you transvestite fags I leave the fifty-room mansion that the Sheik gave me, so you can make a rest house for the older girls. I don't want mourning, no crying, no crown of thorny flowers bought quickly in the street market. Especially not those gaudy stiff ones that never dry, as if they never finished dying. At most a withered orchid on my chest, sprinkled with raindrops. And replace the electric lights with candles – so many candles – hundreds of candles on the floor everywhere, going down the stairs, sparkling in San

Camilo Street, Maipú, Vivaceta and La Sota de Talca. As many candles as in the blackout, as many as the disappeared. So many small flames splashing around the wet fringe of the city. Like fiery sequins for our rainy streets. As many as pearls in a broken necklace. Thousands of candles like coins from a broken piggy bank. As many candles as stars torn from a neckline. So many, like sparks from a crown to brighten defeat... I need that warm glow to make me look fast asleep. Barely pink from Death's vampire kiss. Almost unreal, in the trembling halo of candles, almost sublime submerged under the glass. Let everyone say: It looks like Chumi is sleeping, like Sleeping Beauty, like a serene and intact virgin. The miracle of death erased her scars! Not a trace of the disease. No bruising, no pustules, no dark circles. I want snow-white makeup, even if they have to remake my face. Like Ingrid Bergman in Anastasia, like Bette Davis in Jezebel, almost like a girl who fell asleep waiting. And I hope it's early in the morning like when I came home from the palace after dancing all night. No masses, no priests, no maddening sermons. No Lord forgive this poor fag and let him enter your holy kingdom. No crying, nor fainting, nor tragic farewells. I was well paid and well accomplished like all cabaret girls. I don't need last rites or the kisses that love denied me... Nor love. Look, I'm crossing the foam now. Look at me one last time with envy, for I won't return. With any luck I won't return. I feel the silk soaked with death covering my eyes, and I tell you in this last minute I'm happy. I'm not taking anything with me from here because I never had hardly anything, and I lost even that much.

Chumilou died the same day democracy came. Her poor funeral procession crossed paths with the marches on Alameda celebrating the triumph of the “No” vote ending the military regime. It was difficult to get through that crowd of painted youths waving colorful flags, yelling, singing euphorically, hugging the locas that accompanied Chumi’s funeral. And for a moment pain was confused with joy, sadness with carnival. As if death stopped in its path and got off the hearse to dance one last cueca. As if Chumi’s dying voice could still be heard when she learned the results of the election. Give my regards to democracy, she said. And it seemed that democracy returned the greeting in person in the hundreds of shirtless youths who climbed onto the hearse, jumping on the roof, hanging from the windows, taking out spray paint and covering the whole vehicle with graffiti that said: Goodbye Tyrant. See you never Pinocchio. Death to the Jackal. Thus, before the horrified eyes of Chumi’s mother, the hearse was turned into a rolling allegory, into a raucous street band that accompanied the funeral for several blocks. Then it resumed its mournful march, its pachyderm trot through the deserted streets toward the cemetery. Among the flower crowns someone strung a triumphant rainbow flag – the symbol of the “no” vote. A white flag crossed with color that accompanied Chumi to her winter garden.

The photo of Palma’s party is, perhaps, the only vestige of that era of social utopias where the locas glimpsed the fluttering wings of their future emancipation. Interwoven in the crowds, they participated in that euphoria. Both to the right and to the left of Allende, they

played saucepans and from their public anonymity they carried out timid flashes of protest, stammering speeches that would shape the history of their minority in pursuit of legalization.

Of the group that appears in the photo there are almost no survivors. The pale yellow of the paper resembles the faded sun-yellow of an eviction notice for the bacchanal skins on the daguerreotype. The filth of flies dotted their cheeks with moles like a makeup preview of the sarcoma. All of their faces appear mottled from that purulent drizzle. All of the laughter fooling around on the photo's balcony are scarves waving goodbye from an unseen prow. Before the new millennium ship docked in 2000, before even the legality of Chilean homosexuality, before the gay militancy that brought homosexuals together in the 90s, before men's fashion prevailed as a uniform of the Salvation Army, before neoliberal democracy gave us permission to fuck. Long before these privileges, the picture of the locas that New Year is recorded as something that shines from an underground world. Their obscene crystalline roars of laughter are still subversive, confusing assumptions of gender. Still, in the tattered image you can measure the great distance, the years of the dictatorship that virilely imposed mannerisms. One can establish the metamorphosis of homosexualities at the turn of the century; the demise of the loca sarcomified by AIDS, but mainly decimated by the imported model of gay status, so fashionable, so penetrating in its bargain with the new style of homosexual masculinity. The photo says goodbye to the century with the threadbare plumage of the locas who were still devious, still folkloric in their illegal gestures. It looks like an archaic

frieze where the intrusion of the gay master has not yet left his mark. Where the native territory had not yet received the contagion of the plague, like a recolonization through bodily fluids. The photo from that time shows a cheerful carousel, a dance of sparrow laughs so youthful, so pubescent in their dislocated way of rearming the world. Of course, another tribal corpus differed in their rituals. Other desires baroquely enriched the discourse of Latin American homosexualities. The Chilean marica was weaving her future, daydreaming about her emancipation together with other social causes. The “homosexual man” or “Mr. Gay” was a narcissistic power construction that could not fit in the malnourished mirror of our locas. Those bodies, those muscles, those biceps that sometimes came from foreign magazines were a First World Olympus, a physical education class, a bodybuilder ecstatic with his own reflection. A new conquest by the blonde image that ignited the social climber in the most well-traveled locas, the regias who copied the model of New York and transported it to this end of the world. And next to the Superman mold, precisely in the aseptic envelope of white skin, so hygienic, so perfumed by the capitalist spell, so different from the opaque leather of the local geography. In that Apollo, in its beardless marble, the immunodeficiency syndrome was sheltered, as if it were a traveler, a tourist who came to Chile passing through, and the sweet wine of our blood made him stay.

Surely, the common end shared by Palma, Pilola Alessandri, and Chumilou, speaks of AIDS as a public deliveryman absent of social prejudice. A fateful generosity flaunts the AIDS-

ridden hand in its clandestine partition. It seems to say: there's enough for everyone, don't crowd around. It won't run out, don't worry! There will be passion and agony for a while, until they find the antidote.

Perhaps the little stories and the great epics are never parallel. Minority destinies are still burned by the policies of a market always on the lookout for any escape. And in this micro-managed map of modernism the cracks are detected and patched with the same cement, with the same mixture of corpses and dreams that lie under the scaffolding of the neoliberal pyramid. Perhaps the last spark in the eyes of Palma, Pilola Alessandri, and Chumilou were a wish...rather, three wishes, that were left waiting for the lost mink at that party. Because it was never discovered where Pilola's royal skins ended up. They disappeared into the air of that summer night like a stolen dream that continued to build the anecdote beyond our nostalgia especially in the loca's zero positive winter, when the snowy cotton of the epidemic frosted their feet.

New York Chronicles (The Stonewall Bar)

If one is invited to New York with all expenses paid to participate in an event at Stonewall twenty years after the gay chicas led a police beating in 1964 [sic¹⁰] and took control of a bar in the Village, if they tell you the story and one feels obligated to make the sign of the cross at the scene of the crime; a dark little bar, shrine of the homosexual cause where sodomite tourists come to offer flowers. There in the window they display faded photos of the hippie veterans that resisted for who-knows-how-many days against the attack of the law, the police assault that tried unsuccessfully to vacate them. Why not shed a tear in this grotto of Gay Lourdes that's like a sacred altar for the thousands of visitors that take off their Calvin Klein visors and pray respectfully for a few moments as they parade in front of the club? Why not fake sorrow at least if you're visiting New York and the militant gringas, so sanctimonious and capitalist with their political history, are keeping you full and paying for everything? Why not feign politely that you feel something for the faces in those black and white photos that could be from an old movie that we never saw? Those photos of gay heroes that look like they're from Woodstock wearing crowns of roses and colored ribbons in the window of the Stonewall Bar, just like the rest of the block, just like the whole Village, decorated like a cake with fag fashion. When you get off the metro at Christopher Street you're slapped in the face with a

¹⁰ The Stonewall Riots took place in June 1969.

metric ton of muscles and bodybuilders in mini shorts, shaved and wearing earrings, male couples on roller skates flying by you hand-in-hand as if they didn't see you. What might they think of you, so damn ugly, dragging your malnourished third-world loca ass around the world? They won't give you the time of day with your Chilean face astonished by the Olympus of virile, well-fed homosexuals that look at you with disgust, as if telling you: we're doing you a favor bringing you to the cathedral of gay pride, little Indian girl. One wanders so distracted on these stages of the Big World looking at the shops full of sadomasochist fetish gear: nails and pin hooks and screws and clothespins and whatever other metal junk for torturing your skin. Ow! What a shock to see that Leader's group with their motorcycles, their mustaches, their leather, their boots, and that fascist brutality that reminds you of the gangs of machos in Chile that you'd avoid, crossing the street and standing up straight, pretending to look the other way. But here in the Village at the little plaque in front of the Stonewall Bar there is an abundance of that masculine potency that inspires panic, that makes you feel small like a Latina mosquito standing in this barrio of blond sex. In this sector of Manhattan, the Zona Rosa of New York where things cost an arm and a leg, the epicenter of commercial tourism for the homosexuals with money that visit the city and even more so in this massive party where Manhattan Island shines in all the colors of the gay rainbow. But more like just one: just white; because maybe what's gay is what's white. It's enough to just walk in to the Stonewall Bar with its party always going to realize that the patrons are mostly pale, blond, and

masculine like in those cowboy movie cantinas. And if by chance there is some black man and some loca latina, it's so no one can say they're not diverse.

That's why I didn't stay long in the historic little bar. A quick look around and you realize you have nothing to do there; you don't belong to the perfect postcard of their classic muscled aesthetic. New York City has other dives where you don't feel so strange, other more contaminated bars where el alma latina salsas its territorial song.

Wilson

I told you one day I'd write our little story in *The Clinic*. And though you didn't believe it then, I swore you'd be the protagonist of a chronicle evoking the worried look on your boyish southern face, an unemployed wanderer on these streets sweltering in the summer heat radiating off the cement. I saw him come winding down the sidewalk with the swagger of a dark-skinned leopard. I can tell he's in a hurry rapping and walking with a bounce directly toward our meeting. It was on la Gran Avenida, in broad daylight and blistering heat, that summer I met Wilson. He stopped me suddenly, his dark face topped with a gelled punky 'do asking: "You that writer? You that guy on TV? And before I could answer he gave me time to size up his long muscles dripping with sweat, and gave me the pleasure of peeping around his navel and down to the waistband of his underwear that could be seen above his rapper jeans,

half on his hip, half on his ass. His huasteco voice repeated: You were on TV? Well, of course, but that was some time ago. I ain't from Santiago, he was itching to tell me, I'm from Llanquihue and I'm lookin' for work 'cause there ain't nothin' to do down there. And you think there's much to do around here, I replied batting my eyelashes. There's gotta be something I could do, whatever, any work, anything for some cash, 'cause I don't have anywhere to stay, I'm up at the Salvation Army now. Call me at this number, I whispered to him, quickly losing myself in the horde getting on and off the bus on the bustling Gran Alameda. At six in the afternoon, when I was relaxing with a good joint, the phone called out, the phone shouted his name. And that's how I crossed paths with Wilson in that wicked city, and then there were beers and joints and in short order we fell into the cot half-dead, half-drunk off that serendipitous meeting where we told each other everything, where we slurred all our words, as if the ceiling of that room were the only sky we'd see before sunrise. Between drinks he told me about his brief years of wandering searching for some hope to remedy his lack of childhood education. Ya know I didn't finish middle school, he told me. 'Cause I hardly got to seventh grade and they threw me out of school and then I left home, 'cause they fucked with me so much, 'cause I didn't work, I spent my time wandering with my Walkman stuck in my ear trying to rap and dance like the black guys in New York that I saw on TV. And that night Wilson danced just for me, spinning like a record to the beat of the party cassette he guarded like a treasure. And I also found out that night that Wilson was a virgin, he'd never

had anyone caress his carnal flower - not a woman or a man; I realized he didn't know how or where, and paradise flashed in front of his eyes when I gave him some sloppy head, asking: do you wanna see God, loco?

Wilson wanted to be something more, and I didn't want the big-bad city swallowing him up in its cruel gluttony. One afternoon I invited him to a book presentation by the director of The Clinic so he could meet people. What's that, he asked me with his glittering charcoal eyes. It's a newspaper I write for. Like the shopper? No, lindo, this is much more anarchist, I responded tenderly while we while we walked down Providencia toward the pub where the event would take place. When we arrived, Wilson didn't want to go in. It's just that I'm not dressed right, he murmured, seeing the blonde girls and the intellectual boys that were clustering in front of the door. And what does that matter, mi cielo? Clothes don't make the man. Let's get something to eat and drink. Aren't you thirsty after that walk? And so we waited for the long-winded speeches to end and for the cocktail hour to begin and Wilson devoured kebabs, finger sandwiches, candies and empanadas by the fistful. Later came the trays of pisco sour and rosé in elegant high-stem glasses. Cheers, my beautiful rapper, I said to Wilson clinking the fragile crystal cups the boy couldn't stop admiring. If you want, take the glass as a souvenir, I whispered to him encouraging him to steal. Now, while no one's looking, put it in your pocket. Come on, one cup is nothing! Hand me your backpack, wrap these other ones up for me, and get the one on that table, and the one that pituca emptied, and the

one the old big shot with the nasty face downed and grab me that one that the hippie grandpa melon-head with bangs slobbered all over. And so Wilson's backpack filled up with glasses that clinked while the boy went around picking up more and more cups, high on the adrenaline rush of the heist. Let's get out of here, Pedro, I don't understand the shit these people talk about. Wait a bit, I'm going to say hi to Carlitos, my lawyer, and to David, a student, and to Rodrigo, who's a journalist. And that whole group took the Metro to keep the party going at my house. At the next stop, in Bellavista, we bought some wine and ended up at my place drowning ourselves in drinks, discussing art, politics, and all the boring things that leftist university students are passionate about. But not Wilson. He drank and drank with despair and paced around the house like a caged lion. And then at last he couldn't stand it anymore and told me: I want them all to leave so we can be alone. I had just met the lad and he already thought he was my husband! They're my friends, I told him firmly, and if you don't like it the door is wide open, loco! He didn't pay attention to me and he kept annoying everyone, raging, changing the music, taking out Manu Chao and putting in his dreadful cassette with that romantic Chayanne song. Look, listen: "Es la primera vez que me estoy enamorando" he sang in my ear, trying to make my ears for him alone. But the heated intellectual debate with my friends kept me from paying him much attention. And Wilson ended up shouting his cocky love ballad at the top of his lungs. Then David asked me sarcastically: You like Chayanne now, Pedro? I didn't bother to answer him, because Wilson had seized a beer and leapt at David

right at the moment in which my off-key shriek made him freeze still holding the bottle in the air. If you're going to fight, get the fuck out of here I yelled, mustering a gruff voice learned in the slums. And that's the only way I managed to avoid a disaster. But that night the cards were stacked against us, and they kept fighting and drinking until I had to throw them all out, including Wilson, who I saw for the last time as he disappeared into the dawn's pink drizzle. And just before he turned the corner, he turned his cheek slightly and I was stirred by the orphaned love in his southern eyes.

I never heard anything from Wilson after that, and the frost of forgetting ended up diminishing him in my day to day thoughts. Then, only a couple months ago, the telephone rings and I hear the flute-like voice of the operator asking: will you accept a collect call from Mr. Wilson from Llanquihue? Of course, I hurried to say. My heart almost jumped out of my chest when I heard him ask me to forgive him for the nonsense, that it was the wine's fault, and that after that night he had gone north to work in a circus, helping lift the tent, feeding the animals, in short, doing whatever until he saved up the money for a ticket back south. And how is your life going now? I dared to ask, remembering his rock hard body bent in the rapper moan that moistened my sheets. Much better, he told me more calmly, and added with an aftertaste of sad irony: I read *The Clinic* now and I'm studying at night to understand what your friends are talking about.

Evaluation & Next Steps

In the task of creating a new work of art that speaks to the target audience while answering to the original, the translator's own cultural context becomes a lens through which the original work is reflected in a new space and time. It is unavoidable that our cultural ideas should influence our translations, but this challenge of accommodating new ideas about gender and sexuality can be a positive force for change in translation as a field and society.

In the future I would like to translate the entirety of *Loco afán* which I believe contains the most salient examples of Lemebel's conceptualization of gender, sexuality, and the political reality of his community. This project would require more study of the author and Chile, and I would like to find a translation partner in Chile to assist with the project to assure my understanding and create the best work of art for the target language readers.

In translating the work of Pedro Lemebel my intention has been to amplify the historical voices of marginalized communities who would otherwise not be accessible to English-speaking readers. At the same time I want the writing to be an authentic vehicle for understanding the subculture from which it comes, and not simply a story that erases differences for ease of consumption.

The translations included in this thesis are a starting point for future work in translating queer literature, especially the work of Pedro Lemebel. Through this work I hope

to contribute to what can someday be a fully-realized queer translation praxis that uses decolonizing methods to make queer voices available in other languages without compromising their integrity.

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