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CULTURAL WORKS

El clock de la estación, by Fabián Severo

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Abstract

Fabián Severo's collection of short stories, *Viralata*, was originally published in Portuñol, a hybrid mix of Spanish and Portuguese, as it is spoken near the city of Artigas in northern Uruguay. Portuñol, like other hybrid border varieties, has rarely been published, though it would seem that interest is growing since the 1990s, particularly in Uruguay.

As a scholar of hybrid, diaspora, and transnational languages I decided to explore the possibility of translating this work into Spanglish, the hybrid mix of Spanish and English commonly heard among Latinxs in the USA. Though the cultural realities of Portuñol speakers and Spanglish speakers are different, there are some important parallels: literature in both has emerged only relatively recently, little has been translated into either language variety, education is not conducted in either, and the dominant discourses around language in both contexts have traditionally favoured literature written in the prestige varieties of English, Spanish, or Portuguese—which should come as no surprise. Given this, I wondered about the experience, aesthetic, and cultural value of putting two distant borders of Spanish in contact through translation.

This is my first translation of Fabián Severo's work. The text was translated and published with the author's permission. The original story is from *Viralata* (Rumbo Editorial, Montevideo, 2015).

Keywords:

Fabián Severo; *Viralata*; Spanglish; Translation

El clock de la estación

El clock de la estación is stuck on nine to show that time is stopped en la frontera. On the shady side of the ibirapitá time slows down. If you spent much time there you could feel that the alma de los trenes still left people con ganas de llorar.

I didn't see the trenes porque cuando my roots started to spread they were already buried. Pero mi padrino told me many travel stories, always moving entre los campos, sintiendo the size of the world en el perfume del monte, in the arroyo that makes someone want to be happy. No sé por qué, en Artigas, they let the restos de la estación rot away como si the life of the bricks no valiera nada and the bones of the vías, rusting away in front of our eyes. Acá es así, when the hands on the clock stop turning, todo se envejece as if falling ash painted the walls of the city.

I played with trains en el patio de mi casa. Pondría one box of fósforos inside another and would travel the pueblos de mi patio, imagining the people subiendo y bajando, carrying bags filled with recuerdos in the rows of the car. En mi cabeza the trips that I had seen on TV se mezclaba con la imagen de los restos of the tracks tossed by the station. I tried to put my dreams en la caja de fósforos.

Sometimes, cuando mi madre hacía frijoles en la olla a presión, I thought I heard the train travelling from room to room in my house. Una vez I asked if that's how a train sounded and she said: '*Chicharra, tu siempre con la cabeza en las nubes.*' But she didn't tell me si el tren tenía la voz de la olla. Almost my whole life was like that, filling the holes that Artigas left in my skin con la imaginación.

The day the last train entró en el olvido, este pueblo turned to dust. That's why el polvo is always flying around, settling on everything. El polvo se va pegando en la piel and even if you bathe everyday you're still gonna have a dark line on your neck. Lavo mis manos varias veces al día, and the water always runs off brown. I have dust in my throat, in my eyes, en el corazón. En Artigas, whoever doesn't get out in time, envejece para siempre. Maybe that's why the train wanted to get out, para que su espalda wouldn't hunch over, it wanted to keep the cry of its tracks alive, se salvó de transformarse into a statue with a stone tongue and tombs for feet.

En la frontera, for twenty years it's been nine o'clock.