

CUTTING THE PURITY IN SWEET DIAMOND DUST:
TRANSLATING IDENTITY IN MALDITO AMOR

by

JENNIFER ANN DELANEY

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This thesis entitled:
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written by Jennifer Ann Delaney
has been approved for the Department of Comparative Literature

Dr. Leila Gómez

Dr. Nuria Silleras-Fernández

Dr. Christopher Braider

Date_____

The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we
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Delaney, Jennifer A. (M.A., Comparative Literature)

Cutting the Purity in Sweet Diamond Dust: Translating Identity in *Maldito amor*

Thesis directed by Associate Professor Leila Gómez

Rosario Ferré's successful polyphonic novella *Maldito amor* depicts the nebulous concept of a collective Puerto Rican identity. Yet, Ferré's own English translation of *Maldito amor* (*Sweet Diamond Dust*) subverts many of the issues associated with the search for Puerto Rican identity. In *Maldito amor*, Ferré addresses issues of race, political affiliations, and the role of women in Puerto Rico insightfully as they remain unresolved. *Sweet Diamond Dust* also explores these themes, but they are undercut by the didactic descriptions, diluted racial discourse, and pro-American sentiments. Ferré's stated objective in translating the novella was to provide an English version for a hybrid Puerto Rican-American audience, but she tarnished the translation by over domesticizing the content for the target audience. By examining the differences created and the similarities maintained by the act of translation, one can arrive at a better understanding of the assimilation still required in translating identity.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The role of contemporary Latin American female writers has become indispensable for dismantling established societal structures. One of the most prominent writers to emerge from this force majeure is Rosario Ferré, a Puerto Rican feminist whose own struggles with attaining independence within her patriarchal world of privilege influence her work. Ferré received a bilingual education spending many years at a boarding school in Massachusetts. Upon receiving her education, the traditional next step for the daughter of the governor of Puerto Rico was marriage. Yet it was not until she obtained newfound financial independence, owing to an inheritance from her mother, that she was able to divorce her husband and support her child, while freeing herself of her inscribed societal role as a woman. After the long and brutal divorce, Ferré gravitated towards the more radical movements within Puerto Rico during the late 1960s and early 1970s, much to the dismay of her social class. Inspired by many of the feminist writers of the time, such as Betty Friedan, Gloria Steinem, Hélène Cixous, and Julia Kristeva, she founded a literary magazine and began to write feminist literature. She wrote literary criticism, short stories, and poems that “focus on the multiple roles of women in Puerto Rican society” (Hintz 14). Eventually she had amassed enough material to publish her first collection, *Papeles de Pandora*.

Ferré’s first attempt at a longer work resulted in a short novel published in 1986 entitled *Maldito amor*. The book was a success and immediately received critical and popular acclaim,

topping the bestseller lists in Puerto Rico and Mexico. She continued writing and has established herself as an essential writer within the Latin American canon due to her ability to write Latin American female characters striving to emancipate themselves in a society where the role of women is still subverted. Her writing, however, is not limited to the impact society has on women since “el hombre, tanto como la mujer, es también víctima de las estructuras sociales establecidas; él también se ve forzado a desenvolverse en roles sociales preconcebidos” (Gutiérrez 21). This inclusive approach on redefining each person’s position in society encourages a search for identity that is more individual than collective. Ferré, as a bilingual hybrid individual, brings to light the complex nature of individual identity. Many issues come into play such as “hybrid identity, integration and assimilation, racial discrimination, Latino values and culture” (Fernandez 105) due to the “process of transculturation, that is, of readjusting and relocating to a new space as well as system of values: new language, customs, etc without exactly knowing what to do with one’s own, which will obviously cause an identity crisis that will remain with them for many years” (Fernandez 107). As a consequence of this evolving hybrid identity, an individual is marginalized and relegated to a subaltern group. The holes created by the process of fragmentation leave the individual with a feeling of emptiness and a desire to fill those spaces with whatever they can identify with, oftentimes with other subaltern or subculture groups. This further self-reconfiguration works to form an even more complex hybrid identity that goes beyond biculturalism.

As a way of addressing the complex identity of Puerto Rican-Americans and with a hope that “the melancholy of the Puerto Rican soul may perhaps...be assuaged, and its perpetual hunger for a lost paradise be appeased” (*Youngest* 163), Ferré translated *Maldito amor* into English. The result is a book called *Sweet Diamond Dust*, which was published in 1988 and has

been a source of contention within the literary world due to the liberties that Ferré took with the act of translation. In Ferré's preface to her second edition of *Sweet Diamond Dust*, she mentions that she has witnessed—over the course of the ten years since she first wrote *Maldito amor*—the metamorphosis of Puerto Rico from “the mythical ‘rich land’ into the ‘dangerous port’” (*Sweet Diamond Dust* x). It is a change from romanticizing the green, fertile island to facing the reality of a port that is presently rampant with drug trafficking. Ferré, however, never mentions in the preface of any of the editions the metamorphosis her novella made with her translation of *Maldito amor* to the English version entitled *Sweet Diamond Dust*. Through essays and interviews of the author Ferré explains her personal process of translation and she reveals her motivation for translating her own work. The drive derives from her belief that children of Puerto Rican parents living in the United States are committing a form of “cultural suicide” by refusing to learn Spanish. This dissonance can be understood as an attempt by the children to integrate more seamlessly with mainstream American society. Language is a way to connect with a cultural identity and this refusal, and ensuing loss, makes it more difficult to feel rooted in one's cultural history. As a result, Ferré has stated that “it is the duty of the Puerto Rican writer, who has been privileged enough to learn both languages, to try to alleviate this situation, making an effort either to translate some of her own work or to contribute to the translation of the work of other Puerto Rican writers” (*Youngest Doll* 163). This sentiment was published in 1991 in an essay entitled “On Destiny, Language, and Translation; or, Ophelia Adrift in the C. & O. Canal,” but in an interview conducted that same year, Ferré admits that she has no intention of translating the rest of her work since she would rather write and does not want anyone else translating her work either (Perry 102). This leads to the inevitable question: aside from trying to maintain

some semblance of authenticity in her work, her own translations or not, why would Ferré no longer feel it necessary to write for the hybrid Puerto Rican-American anymore?

It is understandable for an author to want to maintain complete authorial control in regards to any subsequent translations, especially a bilingual author, yet Ferré's translation of *Maldito amor* for a Puerto Rican-American audience fails to truly reconnect this hybrid identity with their roots. Writing a novel that encapsulates the nebulous concept of identity is difficult to attain, but by taking liberties with her translation, Ferré domesticizes the English-version of the novella. In other words, she reworks the text in order to better conform to American/English values and expectations of readability, which in turn falls short of successfully translating a Puerto Rican identity. The domesticized English narrative subverts the discourse on Puerto Rican national identity to a more sterilized and often romanticized portrayal of the island that is amended for a Puerto Rican-American audience. This way of translating *Sweet Diamond Dust* is particularly problematic in that it fails to fully capture the complicated relationship that Puerto Rico has with the United States, as a place—a port—that occupies an “inbetween space” that lacks the sovereignty of an independent nation as well as the rights of statehood in the United States. For that reason the portrayal of Puerto Rico in the English version (one that feeds primarily upon nostalgia to maintain a cultural consciousness that is slipping away exceedingly with each generation of Puerto Rican-Americans) weakens one of the main topics of *Maldito amor* that calls into question international involvement on the island.

In this thesis, I will discuss how Ferré's translation of *Maldito amor* fails to capture the Third Space—the “inbetween space”—that Puerto Ricans experience by her domesticization of *Sweet Diamond Dust*. This domesticizing is manifested by Ferré's addition of descriptions about the characters and the island that eliminate much of the intertextuality of the English version that

renders the reader to a passive rather than active role, tames the social context and subsequent implications in order to make the English version less jarring for its audience, and alters the historiography of the narrative that favors the United States. Why Rosario Ferré, an admitted subject of a conflicting hybrid identity, would make the changes from one language and cultural identity to another language and corresponding cultural identity will never be certain. But by looking at the differences between *Sweet Diamond Dust* and *Maldito amor* one may arrive at a better understanding of the assimilation still required in translating identity.

CHAPTER II

TRANSLATING IDENTITY AND THE HYBRID NARRATIVE

The act of translating a text can be described as a twofold process; the first step is the decisive act of choosing which texts should be translated and the second step is the translator's decision as to what translation technique is used. Though translations of English texts into other languages is common, it has increased "more than tenfold since the 1950s," translations of foreign texts into English have remained fairly stagnant at "roughly between 2 and 4 percent of total annual output" (Invisibility 11) of total publications. The repercussions of this imbalance are multifarious, ranging from perpetuating English and English speaking cultures as a hegemonic cultural power to oversimplifying cultural branding of those texts that are translated. Translating a text from another language into English is a process that involves many individuals and organizations. For a text to be translated into English, there must be a constituency that supports the translation project, which in turn means there is a motivation for the support. Frequently, the few books that do get chosen for translation still work within an English hegemonic framework, one that corresponds with "historical, ideological, political, and economic factors as well as literary ones" (Pollack 348). Programs such as the Association of American University Presses and the Center for Inter-American Relations, for instance, helped catapult Latin American literature into what is now referred to as the "Boom." Through grants, these programs helped publishers fund many of the translation projects of the 1960s and 1970s,

oftentimes with disparate motives. On the one hand, these programs were “seeking to promote cross-cultural understanding throughout the Americas...on the other, to further U.S. foreign policy interests” (Cohn 141) during the height of the Cold War. The “Boom” helped introduce a new genre of literature to English readers, yet at the same time it fabricated a cultural identity and branded it as such.

The power that a translated novel can have on the domestic audience is staggering. The translation choices often create cultural representations for the domestic audience that are lasting and reinforced by subsequent selections of texts for translation from that culture. The actual translation, if done in a domesticizing manner, can further inscribe the text with the domestic dialect and values of the audience. This dual impact that translation has for the domestic audience dilutes the difference that can be introduced. Martin Heidegger states that “making something understandable means awakening our understanding to the fact that the blind obstinacy of habitual opinion must be shattered and abandoned if the truth of a work is to unveil itself” (63). If the translation choice and the translation technique foster the domestic agenda rather than promote cross-cultural awareness, or difference, the text is ultimately subverted. Lawrence Venuti also addresses the importance of maintaining difference, particularly in terms of postcolonialism, in his book *The Scandals of Translation*: “Colonial and postcolonial situations show that translating is best done with a critical resourcefulness attuned to the linguistic and cultural differences that comprise the local scene. Only these differences offer the means of registering the foreignness of foreign cultures in translation” (189). Not only is content important in introducing the foreign, but what is also key is an attention to linguistics and language, especially in the second part of the translation project—the actual act of translating the text.

Interpretations of what is perceived as being an accurate translation is a point of contention that has been in existence in translation theory for centuries. The expectation of fidelity, the faithfulness of the text, and fluency, the ability to express the text easily and articulately, is shared amongst everyone; however a common understanding of what these terms mean differs. Heidegger expresses the complications of a faithful translation when he states, “there is no such thing as translation if we mean that a word from one language could, or even should, be made to substitute as the equivalent of a word from another language” (62). The impossibility of a verbatim translation where every word can be translated seamlessly with all the weight that it carries within its own cultural sphere is an impossibility that translators face. The decision must then be made as to how to convey the message and tone in a manner that lives up to the expectations of fidelity and fluency. It is at this point where there arises discord within translation theory, most notably in 19th Century England between Matthew Arnold and Francis Newman (*Invisibility* 108), as to whether to maintain an element of foreignness within the translation in order to emphasize “the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text, sending the reader abroad” (*Invisibility* 15) or to domesticize the text by lessening the cultural differences, specifically through the use of the target audience’s language and style. A domesticizing translation modifies the text in order to make it more accessible to the target audience by aligning itself with their values and language. A foreignizing translation strives to foster a sense of the foreign for the reader throughout the text. Despite their differences, both techniques are equally scrutinized by critics for the level of “fidelity” and “fluency” that is captured in the translation.

Many believe it is imperative to translate in a way that is in accordance and reinforces the morals and values of the target culture. This was particularly true in 19th Century England when

Matthew Arnold argued, and eventually succeeded in convincing the public that maintaining the acceptable “grand style” was vital in establishing “a national English culture” (Invisibility 115), and would aid in the development of the English character. Francis Newman, however, disagreed with this nationalistic approach to translation and wanted to maintain an element of foreignness by using archaic syntax and language. He felt it was necessary to create a feeling of remoteness from the text that would remind the reader of the difference of language and culture. This was accomplished by incorporating language “from various periods of English, but it deviated from current usage and cut across various literary discourses, poetry and the novel, elite and popular, English and Scottish” (Invisibility 103). In other words, rather than have Arnold’s elitist language that erased difference, Newman’s language was populist and democratic in the way it blurred class lines and historic periods. The disagreement between the two was interpreted as being laden with political intent. Arnold’s translations were believed to be able to forge a new and better nation with one identity, while Newman’s translations were considered too chaotic through the way in which it advocated for diversity and resisted established norms. Ultimately Arnold’s views prevailed and as a result, the trajectory of translation has continued in the same fashion so as to reach the greatest number of domestic readers in a way that reinforces a uniform set of domestic values.

Recently, however, there has been a resurgence of translators that favor a foreignizing translation to a domesticizing translation. The importance of recognizing difference and maintaining difference is now being understood as minimizing the violence that occurs with any translation. Lawrence Venuti asserts that the violence:

resides in the very purpose and activity of the translation: the reconstitution of the foreign text in accordance with values, beliefs, and representations that preexist it in the

translating language and culture, always configured in hierarchies of dominance and marginality, always determining the production, circulation, and reception of texts.

(Invisibility 14).

What he proposes, as a way to counteract the violence, is an ethics of translation that does not require the translator to be completely invisible for the sake of maintaining a text that does not exhibit any difference from the target culture. The target audience for Venuti, in this particular situation, is not necessarily for translators across the globe, but to the ones who translate foreign texts for the United States and the United Kingdom, whose translations only account for a small margin of the amount that is translated from English to other languages in other countries. For English speaking translators living in hegemonic powerhouses, there is an obligation to maintain cultural difference through translation in order to foster “a future more hospitable to the difference that the translator must negotiate” (Invisibility 277).

A future that is hospitable to difference is a future that is becoming increasingly dire in the face of constructing a sense of identity. Multicultural identities are pervasive and do not fit neatly into binaries or all encompassing national identities. Never fully being able to escape the old and truly assimilate to the new, the consequences of transplantation from one culture to another or the blend of various cultures can fracture one’s understanding of their own identity. The feeling of being part of “neither here nor there” can create holes in the construct of the self and a desire to fill the spaces in order to achieve a semblance of a complete identity. For this reason, a philosophy of difference that affirms and does not negate is essential. In order to understand an attempt at translating identity, it is important to discuss what hybridity and nationalism entail alongside translation theory to see how these notions can work together to

address the state of “in-betweenness”, not as a lamentable state, but rather as one that allows for a blurring of borders that gives root for multiplicity.

With the formation of nation states, a need developed to reinforce the concept of the nation state as being different from any other state, one that “is constructed solely in relation to other states, and often in opposition” (Casanova 332). One way to achieve a cohesive national identity was through the creation of a national literature that would simultaneously reflect and shape said national identity, just as Arnold attempted with his domesticizing translations. The consequence of such a construction is that it homogenizes the people of the state in the ways they are being represented (Bhabha, *Location of Culture* 141). This remains especially true in a postcolonial world and in postcolonial nations where a transcendental national identity is complicated by the fact that there is not one. A “Third Space of enunciation” needs to exist in order to ensure that culture remains unfixed and will “open the way to conceptualizing an *international* culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the *diversity* of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture’s *hybridity*” (Bhabha, *Commitment to Theory* 2372). The Third Space is essential in avoiding seeing the world in terms of polarity; it is the in-between space that allows for the understanding of culture.

The emergence of hybrid narratives reflects the growing need to express the existence of those in the in-between of cultures. In a national narrative or imperial history, there will always be “cracks and absences” (Bhabha, *Location of Culture* 168), but the Third Space allows for the hybrid individual to provide a counter narrative that fills the omissions and disrupts the essentialist nature of imagined communities. Another way of thinking about this is in terms of the concept of “smooth” and “strident” spaces. A strident space is one that is structured and coded; it works in binaries. A smooth space, on the other hand, allows for infinite possibilities or

lines of flight that can territorialize or deterritorialize. Without the Third Space, one is limited to a strident space where everything has a biunivocal relation with each other. The Third Space can abolish that limiting structure, or homogenous space, to create a space that encourages deviations thus creating a heterogeneous space (Deleuze and Guattari 371). Hybrid narratives function within that smooth space where an infinite number of identities can surface since they lie beyond the strident space of coded identities.

Similar to hybrid narratives are “literaturas escritas alternativas” that are a space where the marginalized sectors and hegemonic sectors meet. Two disparate cultural worlds can occupy that space, a space that is both ambiguous and conflictive but also stimulates heterogeneous discourse. This discourse destabilizes conventional literary discourse and allows a literature to emerge that captures diverse cultural systems. This destabilization permits a literature to move beyond transculturation, where mutual influence occurs yet with an oversimplification that does not permit a proper evaluation of the cultural interactions. Transculturation simply looks at the results; or acculturation, where there is an influence of one culture upon the other and it is understood that they are losing part of their essence. In his book *La voz y su huella*, Martin Lienhard discusses autochthonous versus Spanish literature and the emergence of alternative literature. This concept can be applied in terms of Spanish and English language, where English is the language of the informal colonizers. Lienhard asserts that there is very little evidence of any influence of a pre-Spanish language, or in terms of our discussion, Spanish language, in alternative literature. As a result, any semblance of hybridity is rarely found through language but rather archaic language. Since hybridity, in this case, does not derive from the language, it must derive from the narrative structure and syntax. The role of syntax is essential since many bilingual speakers translate their thoughts word for word from their primary language to their

secondary language. This translation is infused with the particularities of the primary language, which is most evident with syntax. Yet despite this merging, “si es verdad que en el terreno lingüístico se realizan ciertos fenómenos circunscritos de fusión, no es menos evidente que estos no logran borrar la coexistencia conflictiva de prácticas disímiles” (Lienhard 148). This unresolved hybridism does not necessarily allow for a harmonious understanding.

The Third Space that hybrid narratives embrace can be expressed by a translation that maintains the foreignness of the original text. A foreign text is a hybrid text, one that can cultivate difference by its foreignness within the language of the domestic nation. If a modern narrative sheds the ‘foreign’ traditions, the narrative no longer directly represents the voice of the marginalized subaltern groups. That being said, a foreign text that is translated with a foreignizing technique can be particularly helpful with hybrid individuals seeking to understand their culture despite not knowing the language. If the translated text reinforces the domestic culture, what results is the emergence of a hierarchy where those particular values are prioritized over any other culture. Another weakness a translation can have is that it can create trends to stereotype a culture by:

excluding values, debates, and conflicts that don’t appear to serve domestic agendas. In creating stereotypes, translation may attach esteem or stigma to specific ethnic, racial, and national groupings, signifying respect for cultural difference or hatred based on ethnocentrism, racism or patriotism” (Scandal 67).

The tremendous influence of a translation can create more harm than good in the development of identity since it may fail to take into account diversity within cultures. As was the case with the “Boom” where Latin American literature was thereafter erroneously marked solely by magical realism despite the prevalence of diverse types of literature (Pollack 351), an individual’s

identity cannot be effortlessly categorized. Oversimplifying a foreign text into a particular genre or stereotype perpetuates the “strident” space by reinforcing binaries, whereas fostering the difference creates a “smooth” space that allows infinite possibilities. It is through recognizing the “Third Space” that empowers hybrid individuals to embrace their hybridity and not feel inferior because of their difference.

A translated text has the power to introduce difference and it is essentially in the hands of the translator to communicate that difference. Like a hybrid individual that often struggles with the feeling of relentless in-betweenness where they belong neither-here-nor-there, they too must live in that space and “straddle the foreign and domestic cultures” (Scandal 87) of the translated text. But the responsibility does not fall solely on the translator; there must be a proliferation of texts that are being translated into English. Encouraging a more equitable cultural exchange in the rates of translations will mitigate the power of the hegemonic English framework. This will create a Third Space of enunciation that allows for multiplicity.

CHAPTER III

BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF THE NOVELLA

Before continuing with a detailed account on how Ferré's two versions differ, a quick summary of the plot and the structure is necessary. Through the narration of the family history in *Maldito amor*, Ferré uses the complex relations of the De la Valle family in order to explore the complex dynamics of class struggles and political issues of the island. Written with a plurality of perspectives like Bakhtin's polyphonic novel, five characters from various socio-economic groups are each given an opportunity to recount their version of the truth behind the family. The multifarious structure of the novella means that there is no fixed center of truth within the story—no one voice assumes the authoritative “true” voice—and the reader finishes the book with no real sense of closure, only an implied message based on the contextual interpretation of all the voices together. Using a mix between oral storytelling and prose, the reader is given conflicting accounts of the De la Valle's past, yet allows an inclusive text to emerge that makes the reader work to derive the meaning.

The first part of *Maldito amor* is an excerpt of a book that the progressive intellectual Don Hermenegildo is writing. He feels it is necessary to establish a Puerto Rican national hero in order to advance his pro-independence objectives and chooses the deceased Ubaldino De la Valle for that role. As Don Hermenegildo is writing about Ubaldino's origins, he is interrupted by Titina, the De la Valle servant. She shares with him that Laura, Ubaldino's widow, is dying

and wants him to mitigate a family feud over the inheritance and assure that the provisions of the real will is carried out. When Don Hermenegildo arrives at their house, he encounters Arístides who confesses his motives for wanting to destroy the will while revealing controversial aspects of the family's history. He shares that despite the lack of love from his family, he has always been devoted to maintaining the family's sugar mill; his love for Gloria and how he brought her into the family, just to have her married off to his now deceased brother Nicolás—who he believes to have been a homosexual; and the uncertainty of who the biological father of Nicolasito is, since he asserts that Ubaldino and the two brothers were all having sex with Gloria. Trying to tarnish Gloria's name, Arístides tells Don Hermenegildo that in addition to Gloria's sexual escapades within the household, Gloria works as a prostitute at night out of sheer pleasure, bringing more uncertainty to the future heir's true lineage. Arístides contends that for all of these reasons Gloria and her child should not inherit the plantation, but also reveals that he does not want it either since he has suffered within his family and thus will sell the land to his American brother-in-laws and leave the island.

Don Heremenegildo is shocked that the history of his national hero is tainted and corrupt and that the sugar mill, which had represented an independent Puerto Rico, would be sold to Americans. He enters Laura's room and she shares her version of the De la Valle's torrid family history, beginning with the fact that despite Don Hermenegildo's belief that Ubaldino's estranged father was Spanish, he was actually a black man from the island. Additionally, the repercussions of that fact are what led to her daughters being married to Americans because the locals on the island refused to interact with girls of black ancestry. Laura admits her disdain for her family members and their oblivion of their own history and the hypocrisy inherent in their racism, particularly Arístides' racial prejudice against Gloria who he sees as sexual property

rather than a member of the family. Laura also discloses that Gloria did in fact have sexual relations with Ubaldino and that she was grateful for that service since she was afraid of contracting his syphilis. She also confirms Arístides' assertion that Gloria only married Nicolás as an arrangement to assure that Gloria not abandon the family and in order to protect her against Arístides. It was intended to be a sexless marriage so that they, Gloria and Nicolás, could annul the marriage upon Ubaldino's death, yet they did indeed have sex.

The last voice in the novella is Gloria's and her account conflicts with the preceding narratives of the other characters. She addresses Titina and deliberately avoids speaking to Don Hermenegildo, who she sees as the white intellectual who in attempting to write a history of the island by using Ubaldino's story is in fact omitting the truth of the island. Gloria states that the relationship with Nicolás was legitimate and that they were in fact in love, and that the true culprits in his untimely death were in fact his own father and brother because Nicolás was too pro-independence. The diverse political affiliations within the family created rifts in their relationships and they all had different intentions for their role as major landowners on the island. Hearing Laura's story made Gloria realize that the best course of action for the sugar mill is to burn it to the ground and she does.

The story unravels with a plurality of voices, each voice asserting their truth while creating a conflicting narrative. As a result, the structure of the novella leaves the reader with an unresolved understanding of the truth. The representation of both intellectually written history versus the orality of the rest of the characters reveals that every voice has their version of truth. Even written history fails to incorporate everyone's voice. For this reason, Gloria is elated that bringing Don Hermenegildo to the sugar mill has forced him to hear truths about the national hero he wanted to create by writing Ubaldino's story; a story that Don Hermenegildo—as a

white, intellectual man—had begun to distort in order to write his sentimental history rife with ulterior motives. The novella ends with no clear truth, but it provides a polyphony of voices that can create a more inclusive approach to the truth rather than a didactic yet exclusive truth.

CHAPTER IV

DIDACTIC DESCRIPTIONS

Ferré's translation of *Maldito amor* is a way to explore and mitigate Puerto Rican-American's struggles of reconciling one's cultural origin with the present. Ferré has often discussed her own experiences grappling with a dual identity that can often seem irreconcilable especially when told "que tenemos que dejar de ser más para ser menos. Que debemos ser puros para evitar las confusiones. Que tenemos, en fin, que escoger entre ser ciudadanos norteamericanos o ciudadanos puertorriqueños" (*Sombra de tu nombre* 179). Being Puerto Rican, particularly a bilingual Puerto Rican, means that one is constantly battling affiliations with polar identities that are hard to bridge. For this reason, Ferré translated *Maldito amor* in an attempt at creating a hybrid narrative where the infinite possibilities of Puerto Rican identity may be explored and so that English-speaking Puerto Rican-American's could fill the voids with a greater understanding of their Puerto Rican cultural identity by reading a Puerto Rican text. Unfortunately, the translation fails to emerge as a hybrid narrative and does not speak to Puerto-Rican Americans; it simply reinforces the age-old binaries of English or Spanish, colonizer or colonized, *norteamericanos o puertorriqueños*.

One of the primary differences between *Maldito amor* and *Sweet Diamond Dust* begins within the content of the novella, particularly with the addition of descriptions of the island and social customs. The descriptions have a didactic tone that incorporate detailed historical context while romanticizing certain traditions and celebrations, particularly the food. The common

ground that is being created with the translation for Puerto Rican-Americans occurs primarily with what they can identify with the most, and that is food. Beyond that, since there is an assumed lack of knowledge in regards to history, language, as well as the island itself, Ferré augments the descriptions for a reader that may not be as informed. The results are a translation that is didactic; rather than convey Puerto Rico and Puerto Rican identity through storytelling itself, the novella comes off as stiff and pedagogical. Ferré teaches the reader about Puerto Rican identity.

One of the first major changes of the text occurs within the first few pages, of which is the addition of an entire paragraph on the history of the island. The beginning section is supposed to be nostalgic since it is a portion of Don Hermengildo's great Puerto Rican novel that plays upon the sentimentality of a lost past. Ferré alters this first section of the novella in the English version to further edify the reader. *Maldito amor* never discusses the Taino aborigines of the island, as though that was an inherent fact of the island that need not be explained. *Sweet Diamond Dust* presumes that the reader is unfamiliar with the history of the Taino and provides an anecdote of Taino legend on creationism:

In Taino legends, all living things on the island—men, animals, and plants alike—had been born from the sacred caves of Cacibajagua in Mount Guamaní, dwelling place of the god Yuquiyú. It was because the residents of Guamaní considered themselves to be the children of their mountain, which resembled from afar a huge green velvet breast, that they were a peaceful people, leery of war and ready to share what little they owned with their neighbors” (*Sweet Diamond Dust* 4).

The description continues, but within this excerpt, it is clear that Ferré is relating the creationist legend to provide the essential roots of Puerto Rican identity. Not only does it incorporate a

description of the island as a feminine land with mountains that are like verdant breasts and crevices that resemble the female sex, but she also incorporates the essence of the people. The ancestral roots of Puerto Ricans are a people that are peaceful and have an innate sense of community and work together as a collective. Here the implied assertion is that at the core, all Puerto Ricans still carry those qualities, no matter where they reside, even if it may not be apparent.

A few pages later within this first section in the English translation is a more extensive description on the gastronomy of the island and the natural abundance of exotic fruits and roots unseen elsewhere. Ferré's English translation extends beyond this inventory to include a lengthy description of meats commonly consumed by Puerto Ricans:

And presiding over all of this the fragrant suckling pig, slowly turning on its perfumed branch over the smoking embers; a golden deity sacrificed to an even greater glory of the sense, a crackling, sizzling, barbarous delight of which the ears, the snout, the curlicued tail, the labyrinthine blood sausages spiced with Hottentot peppercorns were the horror of our foreign visitors and the most exquisite morsel of our holy feasts (*Sweet Diamond Dust* 6).

The inclusion of traditional Puerto Rican cuisine, meals that are often served during holidays, is an aspect of Puerto Rican culture that is most accessible to Puerto Ricans that do not live on the island. Many aspects of a cultural identity may dwindle, such as knowledge of language and history, but the least resistant form of heritage to assimilation is food. By invoking holiday feasts that are often shared within the family, Ferré creates a connection between a description in the text and the Puerto Rican-American's personal history. Adding the detail that foreigners are disgusted by this traditional meal forges a greater alliance between Puerto Ricans due to their

commonalities in terms of traditional cuisine. This one sentence creates a unified identity where a sense of “us” versus “them” emerges from the text.

To further this feeling of a shared experience, Ferré embellishes the English version to recreate a common lifestyle in the not too distant past. In *Maldito amor*, Ferré briefly makes mention of life on the island for the privileged Puerto Ricans, stating that “la gente bien vivía en casas elegantes” and that “nuestras actividades culturales y sociales eran siempre del más acurado buen gusto” (*Maldito amor* 18). Yet in *Sweet Diamond Dust*, Ferré elaborates on the way of life of the “well-to-do families” by providing a detailed account of each gender’s social and cultural activities, such as:

the men never went to church, rode their spirited polo ponies, and practiced rifle shooting every afternoon, and in the evenings would pay a visit to Guamaní’s casino, where they played dominos, roulette, and baccarat; the women went to mass every day and visited one another at home, where they played rummy, fan fan, and checkers; and did constant charity work at the orphanage, as well as at the homes for the aged and for the blind” (*Sweet Diamond Dust* 6).

This evocation of illustrative memories from a seemingly golden era of Puerto Rico is a detail that may be intuitive for native Puerto Ricans, but no so much for Americans. Just referencing “actividades culturales y sociales” in Spanish is enough to summon these vivid images for the native Puerto Rican, but in order to conjure up the proper amount of nostalgia for a paradise lost for the non-native reader, Ferré included this passage in the English version of her novella. For Puerto Rican-Americans, perhaps they will connect this lifestyle to their ancestors, and for American readers it is a window into another culture.

The overworked descriptions in *Sweet Diamond Dust* oversimplify the text for the reader. By assuming that the target reader has no knowledge of Puerto Rico, Ferré debases the intertextuality that is present in *Maldito amor*. Ferré expects less of the reader and instead of translating the text to maintain a foreignizing element, she decides to use the translation as a platform to educate and evoke nostalgia. The additions to the English novella are ineffectual at aiding in any deeper understanding of issues of hybridity and are overwrought in comparison to the passages in the Spanish version.

CHAPTER V

SOCIAL ISSUES DILUTED

Part of the domesticizing of the translation of the novella is best understood by the dilution of the social issues rampant in Puerto Rico, the primary one being race. Isabalo Zenón Cruz asks this question best with “why is a black Puerto Rican identified as being black before he is considered Puerto Rican?” (West-Durán 48). The question of race is a central theme in both texts, yet *Sweet Diamond Dust* omits much of the more pejorative images of the racism, whereas in *Maldito amor* there are many more derogatory comments. The island is essentially a melting pot of cultures. Its position as a major port allowed Puerto Rico to give “albergue tradicionalmente a un sinfín de refugiados que han venido a tocar a sus puertas legal o ilegalmente; desde venezolanos ...a los dominicanos...a los haitianos...a los más de cincuenta mil cubanos” (*Maldito amor* 12). Puerto Rico has always had its ports open to immigrants, which makes questions of race problematic since it is a place that comprises all races.

Venuti discusses in his book *The Translation of Invisibility* the way racism is translated. The fear in translating a text that has racist characters is that the domestic audience may interpret the racism as being representative of the entire society, including the author. Venuti states that “translation complicates such descriptions by decontextualizing them, removing them from the social developments with which segments of [the original] (sic) readership would have been acquainted, whether or not a reader shared their politics” (155). In other words, the context of the social issues being addressed may not carry the same weight in the translated text and risk

being misunderstood by the domestic reader. As a result, *Sweet Diamond Dust* weakens the vehement racism, although one of the major themes in the text is still about race relations.

The first glaring difference in the novella occurs in the section called “La consulta/The Consultation” where Titina, the black slave/servant of the family De la Valle observes that the chances for fairness in terms of the will are slim. She visits Don Hermenegildo, a white Puerto Rican intellectual, for assistance but the odds of anything being done justly are miniscule, “porque los blancos, por más simpáticos que sean, siempre son blancos, y entre ellos se entienden” (*Maldito amor* 27). Titina apprehends that Don Hermenegildo will bestow favoritism upon the children of Ubaldino because they are white, or at least whiter than she is. *Sweet Diamond Dust* understates this aspect of the conflict with Ferré’s translation that “as you educated gentry are geese of a feather, and will always flock together” (*Sweet Diamond Dust* 17). The issue in the English version is not one of race, but one of opportunity. Educated people of a certain socioeconomic status will have more of an understanding, whereas in the Spanish version, the affinity is based on race.

The pejorative attitude on race is further represented in *Maldito amor* when Arístides is sharing his version of the family history with Don Hermenegildo. Acknowledging that he and his brother Nicolás were different people with different outlooks on life, he makes it all the more clear with the way he describes the workers of the sugar mill. Arístides explains how he could never understand why Nicolás felt compelled to reallocate plots of land to workers; he explains, “al regresar de Europa decidió ganarse la idolatría de esos salvajes recién descolgados de los árboles, que cultivan a regañadientes nuestras tierras, y comenzó a repartir entre ellos parcelas de terreno” (*Maldito amor* 52). Arístides reveals that he views the workers as savage and inferior, whereas in *Sweet Diamond Dust* Arístides’ animosity is geared towards his brother and his

paradoxical behavior towards the workers. The slant in his story being that Nicolás is trying to win the admiration of the workers actually has little to do with social justice since he still wears tuxedos and revels in the lap of luxury. Arístides only ever refers to the workers as workers and field hands and Ferré does not translate the offensive description.

Towards the end of *Maldito amor*, Laura is finally given the opportunity to explain why she wants to leave the mill to Gloria and Nicolasito instead of her own children. She explains that, in part, it is a way to rebuff the inherent racism within her family as well as the inherent racism on the island. A strong believer that “la función de la muerte [es] nivelarnos a todos en nuestra última hora de, obligarnos a reconocer que el coño y el carajo no tienen casta ni raza, y que, entre *feces et urinae*, todos somos iguales” (*Maldito amor* 76). Devastated by her family’s hypocritical attitude towards black people, she disinherits her children. This decision is made during Nicolas’ funeral where her younger son, Arístides flippantly remarks “déle gracias a Dios, madre, porque se lo llevó. Así ningún De la Valle volverá jamás a casarse con una negra” (*Maldito amor* 79). This infuriates Laura, and she cries “que qué era lo que se habían creído, que si Gloria era negra ellos también lo eran, porque su abuelo, Don Julio Font, era negro” (80). This scene appears in *Sweet Diamond Dust* as well, yet Laura’s intentions of bequeathing the mills to Gloria take on an entirely different context, as will be discussed in the next chapter. For Laura, she sees disinheriting her children as a way to challenge their specious understanding of racial heritage.

Race relations and cultural relations are addressed in both versions of the novella, yet the emphasis is different. Whatever the issues, whether racial or cultural, they are not resolved neatly by the end of the novella in a collective manner. Voices and identities are still going unheard and it is interesting that race, an issue so central to Puerto Rican identity, whether they

live on the island or not, is lessened in favor of emphasizing relations between the island and the United States by encouraging a future for Puerto Rico that involves the United States. By failing to accurately convey the tensions of race for a Puerto Rican-American audience, Ferré fails at capturing the essence of *Maldito amor* and the long-established issues of race.

CHAPTER VI

BLAME SHIFTING

Maldito amor emerges from a conflicting space that is simultaneously postcolonial and colonial. With Puerto Rico having been colonized twice, first by Spain and then by the United States, it still lies in an ambiguous place as a territory and despite a slow growth of rights since Spain ceded the island to the United States after the Spanish-American War in 1898, arguably it can still be considered a colony. *Maldito amor* and *Sweet Diamond Dust* address the nuances of Puerto Rico's history in opposing ways. The Spanish text focuses on and criticizes the more modern imperialistic influence of the United States in Puerto Rico. Whereas the English text shifts the negative impact of imperialism back onto Spain with accounts of the torture and slavery that minority groups on the island endured under their reign. Both texts address the presence of international influence on the island, but the question of Puerto Rico's uncertain future and the divisions that this political issue creates is attributed to two different foreign powers.

The first indicator of this major shift in culpability is seen with the changing of the name of the sugar mills. In *Maldito amor* the names of the sugar mills are "Centro Justicia" for the De la Valle's sugar mill and "Centro Ejemplo" for the American sugar mill. The significance of these names are rich with meaning within the Spanish text since they work as symbols for the role they play within the industrial realm in Puerto Rico. The De la Valle mill strives for economical justice in a country where the resources are being appropriated by North America

through the inequitable apportioning of technology and loans. The name “Centro Ejemplo” is rife with meaning since America establishes a model—an example—of where the future of sugar mills must go in a modern world that is advancing technologically. What is ironic is that the “Centro Ejemplo” has the pretense of merely being an example for other mills, but the reality is that the older creole owned mills will never be able to afford to modernize and most of them will eventually sell their property to the “Centro Ejemplo.” In *Sweet Diamond Dust* the name of the De la Valle’s mill is “Diamond Dust Sugar Mills” and the American’s mill is called “Snow White Sugar Mills.” All significance of the names is eliminated along with the antagonism associated with American presence within Puerto Rico that is expressed through the names of the mills in the Spanish version.

Maldito amor does not conceal the sense of animosity towards the United States within modern history, yet *Sweet Diamond Dust* modifies this sentiment and charges Spain as the malefactor of Puerto Rican history. This is best seen early in the English version of the novella through Don Julio Font’s character—who is supposed to be Spanish—with a diatribe against Puerto Rican idleness. Don Julio lectures his Puerto Rican wife and true heir of the sugar mill, Elmira de la Valle, when he states:

This island is a paradise, and you’re not even aware of it. In Spain one must do without such comforts, and we never complain about it. In winter the cold makes your bones turn to ice shards, and in summer water must be hauled for twenty miles away in mule packs. The conquistadors were born in my province, and this is why they could conquer Mexico and Peru with only a handful of men. It was the land that made them into heroes. It tempered them with sacrifice and deprivation, which are always commendable for the soul. That’s why this island’s elegant gentry are such good-for-nothing rakes, because

they've become softened by luxury and indolence, warmed by tropical breezes, and used to living without needing to work. Like your conceited and dissolute friends in town, for example, whose greatest ambition is to become world authorities in art, music, and literature, while they let the lands they have inherited from their ancestors go fallow and fall to pieces (*Sweet Diamond Dust* 11).

Don Julio proclaims the conquistadors as heroes, while disregarding the cruel and ruthless manner in which they took possession of those Latin American lands. He avers that without the efficient presence of the Spanish, Puerto Ricans would never reap the land to its utmost capacity. His own brutish temperament serves as an extension of the merciless conquistadors of the past, and he likewise obtains sole control of "Diamond Dust Sugar Mills" by disregarding Elmira's suffering until she dies from typhoid fever. Pitting Spain and Puerto Rico against each other within this excerpt establishes the antagonism that is found between North America and Puerto Rico in *Maldito amor*.

Though there are few passages that blatantly denounce the United States in *Maldito amor*, the tone is clear. Every time "norteamericanos" is used in *Maldito amor*, the translation in English is left vague with the word "foreigners". Spanish is not put in a favorable light either, yet it is not expostulated to the extent that it is in *Sweet Diamond Dust*. The understanding in *Maldito amor* is that selling the property to the Americans is the worst thing that could happen. Laura states that one of the major motivators for leaving the property to Gloria is that she would never sell the land to the Americans. This is expressed with she states:

porque a mí los extranjeros no me podrán quitar jamás la Central Justicia. Porque aunque mis hijas se casaron con los dueños de la Ejemplo; aunque un hijo me salió cipayo y el

otro me lo arrebató la muerte prematuramente, ahí me quedan todavía Gloria y Nicolasito, al que quiero como a un hijo, a pesar de ser sólo mi nieto (*Maldito amor* 76).

Gloria also brings up this question of politics as she is preparing to burn down the plantation. She states that “Doña Laura era independista” (82) and that the main cause of her heartbreak with Ubaldino was not his adultery, rather, it was his growing political affiliation with “sus antiguos enemigos, los dueños de la Central Ejemplo” (83) in order to pad his pockets. This all occurred at the expense of bringing real social justice to the people of the island. The only people in the family whose politics coincided with Laura’s were Nicolás and Gloria, and for that reason, as well as race relations, Laura leaves the property to Nicolasito and Gloria. In this vein, the Northerners are still made to be the enemy. They are not bringing progress to Puerto Rico, but taking advantage of the resources available. Contrary to *Sweet Diamond Dust*, *Maldito amor* conveys the strong anti-American message that progress and social justice on the island should be a grassroots movement and not one dictated or brought about incidentally as a result of imperialism.

One of the most drastic changes in the translation of *Maldito amor* to *Sweet Diamond Dust* is realized towards the end of the novella when Laura, Ubaldino’s wife, speaks to Don Hermenegildo. Laura discusses the benefits of the United States getting involved with Puerto Rico and becoming Americanized. She states that “everything I had been told since childhood about the northerners who had arrived on the island a few years before was a shameful lie.” Widespread improvements had emerged all across the island such as “wide, well-planned roads”, “steel bridges that flew over” rivers, and the installation of public schools meaning that “thirty thousand children enrolled a year after their arrival...and the problem of eight hundred thousand illiterate souls began to be resolved” (*Sweet Diamond Dust* 67). Admiring the foreigners’

idealism and holding them in “high esteem” (69), Laura reveals that with the “Spanish God”, the island was ignorant and “the sugar plantations were hell on earth” (68). Despite the abolition of slavery, the workers were still treated as slaves since they were living off of credit at the company stores, never earning enough to make it on their own. Before the presence of the United States, Puerto Ricans lived in squalor with “palm-thatched huts and our miserable mid streets, where stray dogs went so hungry they would attack women and children in packs, where children walked about barefoot and naked, floating about like tiny balloons on spindly legs, with bloated, parasitic abdomens sticking out before them” (69). Laura believes that the foreigners came to the island because they genuinely wanted to share their technology and transform the world by introducing progress since they “believed it their duty to better the destiny of others” (67). It is an addition of three pages to the English version where the United States is praised for coming to Puerto Rico. There is absolutely no mention of this by Laura in *Maldito amor*.

This embrace of the North by Laura is further explained with her understanding of Gloria’s role within Puerto Rico. Accused of being a prostitute, but never quite confirmed in *Maldito amor*, Laura praises Gloria as a “legendary prostitute” (*Sweet Diamond Dust* 76) who never discriminated against anyone. As a result, Nicolasito could be anyone’s child, not just a De la Valle, but immigrants and emigrants of the island. In Gloria, Laura sees Nicolasito as the “child of all” and that it is through Gloria’s “body, or if you prefer in her cunt, both races, both languages, English and Spanish, grew into one soul, into one wordweed of love. She’s the priestess of our harbor; pythia of our island’s future” (76). This positive and affirming characterization of a prostitute is “emblematic of Puerto Ricans’ future destiny...while Gloria’s prominence in the narrative structure and the plot of *Maldito amor* resides not in her identification as a prostitute but, more generally, in the oppression she has experienced as a

mulatto woman” (Jaffe 78). For this reason, Laura bequeaths the mill to Gloria in *Sweet Diamond Dust* since she is a “chink in our tropical moss [where] the North will talk to the South and the South will talk to the North, and one day they’ll finally understand each other” (76). In Laura’s much disputed will, Gloria is to sell portions of the land to aid those that have emigrated to the North so that they may feel they still possess a portion of their lost paradise. This characterization of Gloria is never made in *Maldito amor*; the role assigned to her is one of mitigating race relations, not American-Puerto Rican relations.

CHAPTER VII

FEMINISM AS CONSTANT

Despite the shifts in portrayals of nationalism and racism, one of the themes that Ferré remains constant about in both versions of the novella is the role of the woman. Inspired by Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, which documents the expectations of suburban women in the United States as mere homemakers, Ferré realized that she was living that limiting lifestyle and decided to rebel against her societal role by getting a divorce. A voracious reader of feminist theory such as Gloria Steinem, Luce Irigaray, and Julia Kristeva, Ferré has carved a place for herself within feminist literature and literary criticism. Ferré believes that "feminist literature is literature in which a woman searches for her identity...She looks for her identity and the real meaning to a woman's life within the confines of a male-dominated and male-centered world around her" (Hintz 17). For Ferré, the emphasis lies in the individual search for identity over a collective identity since this encourages a focus on obtaining power over one's own life rather than power over other people. Ferré also states that all women writers are feminine writers yet not all women writers are feminist writers. Feminist writers incorporate the "search for identity as a female" (Hintz 18) and not all women writers accomplish this. Additionally, for a woman to be a good writer, they must embrace all aspects of the societal role of being a woman, both good and bad, in order to be authentic. Authenticity is important because the narrative must be grounded in a reality other women can identify with before integrating descriptions of the potential of a utopian world.

A feminine voice that is based in real experience that incorporates a search for identity is what makes for a feminist writer, yet another issue that becomes problematic for Ferré is the tone that many feminist writers use in their narrations. Referencing Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's book *The Madwoman in the Attic*, Ferré agrees that many women writers write from a place of anger against the patriarchal society and what results from that are female characters that are the antithesis of the perceived ideal woman. Venting their feelings through a "madwoman" character creates a text that is negative in tone, which is why Ferré prefers a positive approach where the anger is turned into irony. Ironic subversion is a common technique used by women writers and Ferré aligns herself with Julia Kristeva's semiotic theory of language and "uses language ironically to subvert the patriarchal order" (Hintz 39). The language is the same for both men and women, but a word's meaning changes and based on the context that word can have multiple meanings. This explains why despite the fact that Ferré agrees with Hélène Cixous on writing for oneself and for obtaining collective power, she disagrees with Cixous' separatist belief that women use a different language than men. Ferré's separatist beliefs go as far as criticism and she avows that both men and women should be critiqued equally and feels that literature should not be categorized based on the gender of the author. That being said, she acknowledges that themes are different between male and female writers because the experiences of each group are different, but Ferré ultimately sees literature as being independent from gender.

All of Ferré's essays and fiction are feminist literature and *Maldito amor* is no exception, including the English version, *Sweet Diamond Dust*. One of the main markers for Ferré's definition of feminist literature is that the text must express a woman's search for identity. Within *Maldito amor* there are three generations of women within the family who are shown to

be striving to gain full control of their selves: Doña Elmira, Doña Laura, and Gloria. Each of these characters represents different stages of the process of finding one's identity in a society that is notoriously patriarchal and their roles as women are dictated to them. Incidentally there are two paths that emerge from the initial role of virgin, since every woman at some point is a virgin. From there, the path bifurcates and next comes the role of wife—which eventually leads to mother—and the role of prostitute. The options are limiting and when these roles overlap it disrupts the patriarchal structure, but within this disruption there is the opportunity for a woman to confront her identity on her own terms and establish a locus of enunciation within that Third space.

The first woman introduced in *Maldito amor* who attempts to forge an identity in her patriarchal world is Doña Elmira De la Valle, Ubaldino's mother. Although her voice in the novel is expressed through Don Hermenegildo's narrative on Ubaldino's origins, she is described as blue blooded and foreign educated. Doña Elmira is a pure descendant of European landowners in Puerto Rico and sole heir to Centro Justicia. Upon her return to Puerto Rico from Paris, she falls in love with Don Julio Font, whom everyone assumes is Spanish. Don Julio acquires control of the sugar mill and forces Doña Elmira to move to the dilapidated plantation. Described as “una mujer de talla menuda y constitución delicada, pero [con] un alma apasionada” (*Maldito amor* 21), Doña Elmira is initially a woman willing to assert her voice to her husband and express her needs, like running water for the house and a bathroom instead of an outhouse. Don Julio never acquiesces on any of her requests and she accepts her burden of being a housewife. Yet she attempts to remain an advocate for the workers of the sugar mill when Don Julio seizes the worker's plots of land, essentially disrupting the delicate balance between the workers and the owners. Doña Elmira confronts him in his private study where no one is

allowed to interrupt him. Don Julio is surprised by her behavior and compares her to an animal when he realizes that he will have to have patience with her as he breaks her in, just like he breaks in *paso fino* mares. The last attempt Doña Elmira makes in confronting her husband comes after an incident where an older worker loses his arm in a machine accident. Upon hearing of the tragedy, Doña Elmira is the first on the scene, “no perdió en ningún momento su presencia de ánimo” (*Maldito amor* 24) and gives orders as she personally aids in extracting the arm. That night, Doña Elmira criticizes the way her husband is managing the workers by improperly delegating the tasks. Don Julio responds by beating his wife while saying “en esta casa las mujeres hablan cuando las gallinas mean” (*Maldito amor* 25). Finally defeated, Doña Elmira’s passionate spirit wanes and she abandons her responsibilities as housewife. Shortly after giving birth to Ubaldino, she contracts typhus due to Don Julio’s neglect of the conditions of the house.

Doña Elmira’s attempts at finding her identity in the patriarchal world are thwarted by the abusive Don Julio. Willing to sacrifice her own refined tastes and desire for comfort, Doña Elmira is unwilling to see the treatment of the workers of her family’s sugar mills regress under the control of Don Julio. She attempts to have a voice that is heard and respected by her husband, but his inability to appreciate her as a person and beating her into submission leads to the rapid deterioration of her physical and mental health. These details remain untouched in the translation of *Maldito amor* into the English version. In both versions, Doña Elmira represents a wife in a patriarchal society during the 19th Century who has no power over herself or her life. Despite attempts to be active, she is continuously forced into a passive role to the point where it leads to her death.

The second female character from the De la Valle family that searches for their identity is Doña Laura, Ubaldino's wife. Doña Laura is given a voice within the novella but it arrives at her deathbed. She recounts to Don Hermenegildo certain hidden truths about Ubaldino and his family, such as their obsession with their ancestry and their upper-class superiority and Ubaldino contracting syphilis. When Gloria came to the house, she was the only one that could pacify him, and from that developed a mutual respect between Gloria and Doña Laura. Gloria eventually discloses to Doña Laura that she knew Don Julio and that he was "un mulato alto y fornido, el mejor domador de caballos de toda la región" (*Maldito amor* 75). This is when Laura realizes that Ubaldino's aunts tried to conceal the fact that Ubaldino was not as pureblooded as they would like. Doña Laura's own father was of mixed race and that had never embarrassed her, but witnessing the racism of her husband and children causes her anguish and she has a difficult time tolerating their sense of entitlement that is founded on race. She discloses that Arístides is the biggest perpetrator of racism since he sees Gloria as a sexual possession at his disposal that is not even worthy of walking in the front door. As a way to protect Gloria and assure that she stay, Doña Laura arranges a sexless marriage between Gloria and her son Nicolás. Months later at Nicolás' funeral, Arístides and his sisters make a tasteless comment that it is good that he died, because now no one in the family would marry a black person again. This insult infuriates Doña Laura to the point where she is willing to take action. Although she is less concerned with social statuses than she is with the truth, Laura remains passive up until the moment of her death. Her decision to be active in the future of the sugar mill and her family by creating a new will indicates that it is through her death that she is able to realize her identity. She still feels the need to protect the property and believes it will be in better hands with Gloria and Nicolasito who are mixed race like her and know it.

Doña Laura's voice is one that changes the most from the translation of *Maldito amor* into the English version, particularly in her portrayal of Gloria. In *Maldito amor*, although there are rumors that Gloria is a prostitute, it is never confirmed. In *Sweet Diamond Dust*, Laura confirms that Gloria is a prostitute and relishes in the fact that Nicolasito represents the son of all races from either North or South, the emphasis primarily on fortifying North American and Puerto Rican relationships. Bequeathing the property to Gloria in the Spanish version is about revealing the farce of the De la Valle name as a "blue blood" family of Puerto Rico and retribution against her children that have no respect for preventing Americans from obtaining ownership of the mills as well as their hypocritical racism. In both versions, Doña Laura still remains a woman who only succeeds in the search for identity when it is too late to be fully active within that identity. The changes made in Laura's section do not diminish Ferré's feminist message, they only modify the political slant that occurs with the translation.

The last person to have a voice in *Maldito amor* is Gloria and she encompasses a fully realized female identity. There is no change in her tone or the details of her section in either versions of the novella. Throughout the story, Gloria has been taken advantage of and abused, which seems consistent with a passive female character. It is clear that Gloria has complicated the patriarchal mold for women by maybe being a prostitute although definitely sexually active, a wife, and a loving mother. When Gloria is finally given an opportunity to speak at the end of the novella, she becomes an active woman asserting power over her own life. Although Laura's will states that Gloria will receive everything, upon Laura's death Gloria shreds the will, renouncing all rights to the sugar mill of the patriarchal family that dictated her life for so long. Thereafter, she goes to the basement and with Titina's help begins to set the place on fire. Her pro-independence stance will not allow her to have Arístides and his sisters sell the land to the

Americans. This active move becomes a social and political statement; she refuses to have her life dictated by a system that kept her in a passive role. By setting the property on fire, she is beginning to demolish the archaic structure that kept her bound and can now assert control over her own future.

As a feminist first and foremost, Ferré keeps both versions of *Maldito amor* consistent in terms of the role of the woman. Admitting that she wrote the translation with a Puerto Rican-American audience in mind, there were certain changes she made to make it more accessible for the new target audience. But Ferré did not make concessions with gender issues. By contrasting three different women within a format of progression, the reader can trace different stages of the search for identity. This didactic structure thus provides a blueprint for the female reader; and similar to Ferré's own history of obtaining independence, sometimes it is necessary to destroy everything familiar in order to move forward.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

Ferré's English translation of *Maldito amor* subverts many of the issues associated with the search for Puerto Rican identity. In *Maldito amor*, Ferré addresses issues of race, political affiliations, and the role of women in Puerto Rico insightfully as they remain unresolved. *Sweet Diamond Dust* also explores these themes, but they are undercut by the didactic descriptions, diluted racial discourse, and pro-American sentiments. Ferré's stated objective in translating the novella was to provide an English version for a hybrid Puerto Rican-American audience, but she tarnished the translation by over domesticizing the content.

Sweet Diamond Dust falls victim of a translation that domesticizes the text for an American audience, like so many other translations as Venuti reveals in his book *The Translator's Invisibility*. Venuti mentions that in *The Handbook for Literary Translators*, it states: "the translation should be a faithful rendition of the work into English; it shall neither omit anything from the original text nor add anything to it other than such verbal changes as are necessary in translating into English" (*Invisibility* 273). This can impede the translator's ability to foreignize the text in order to emphasize cultural difference, yet a translation that takes liberties with language is very different than a translation that takes liberties with content. Since Ferré translated her own novella, she possessed the rights to make any alterations she wanted—and she did. In an essay on translation, Ferré references the phrase "traduttore-tradittore" which refers to the level of betrayal in a translation, yet she continues by stating "but in translating

one's own work it is only by betraying that one can better the original" (*Youngest* 162). By betraying *Maldito amor*, the target audience is also being betrayed. Is Ferré really translating a Puerto Rican identity for the Puerto Rican-American?

After highlighting certain passages of the two texts, it is clear that certain values are accentuated while others are essentially marginalized. Of the various themes discussed, political, social, and gender, only one remains constant in both versions. Ferré places priority on translating women's search for identity. Ultimately, politics and race can be altered in the translation but Ferré makes no concessions when it comes to translating the women. Incidentally, it is only a reader from that Third Space of enunciation, a bilingual reader who can read both English and Spanish texts, who can fully comprehend the unresolved conflicting alliances at play within Ferré. In Spanish, there lies an allegiance to recognizing the problematic presence of the United States, while in English there is an appreciation of the progress introduced that ended years of Spanish tyranny. The messages themselves are unresolved and conflicting and it is only by examining these differences that the real issue of cultural identity and hybridity is illuminated, an identity that cannot be easily translated.

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