

## Reading the Williams(-Amaral) Translation of Álvaro Figueredo's "Naked" and Other "Carlos" Personae of the Late Years

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"Don't just read for meaning, but for language too; appreciate the formal features of the translation."

—Lawrence Venuti, "How to Read a Translation"

"It looks as though our salvation may come not from within ourselves but from the outside."

—William Carlos Williams, "An Informal Discussion of Poetic Form"

William Carlos Williams produced a significant number of translations of both Spanish and Latin American poetry during the course of his literary career, starting in the decade of the First World War, and continuing through his final years in the late 1950s. Many of these translations were published in his collections of poetry and/or in little magazines, while others remained in manuscript until published with the rest gathered in *By Word of Mouth: Poems from the Spanish, 1916–1959*. Williams's translation work includes magnificent poems that demonstrate the force of his creative effort to bring Spanish-language poetry into American (Anglo) literature and to expand its bounds. Concerning form, he believed one good influence that Spanish could "have on us who speak a derivative of English in North America" was "to shake us free for a reconsideration of the poetic line," as he stressed in his talk at the First Inter-American Writers' Conference held in Puerto Rico in 1941 ("Informal Discussion" 43). As a translator, Williams

recognized that “a translation into another language involves in the first place a choice of the language into which the translation is to be made” (“Robert Lowell’s Verse Translation”). For him this language was not “English,” that is, the language of England, but the language spoken in the United States, which he famously called the American idiom. On this point he was emphatic, as he says in the note to *Sappho*, his folio translation: “I don’t speak English, but the American idiom. I don’t know how to write anything else, and I refuse to learn. . . . I have been as accurate as the meaning of the words permitted—always with a sense of our own American idiom to instruct me.”

Williams grew up in a Spanish-speaking home that clearly influenced his interest in translating Spanish poetry and fiction. He thought of himself sometimes as “half-Spanish” (*I Wanted to Write* 19). In his autobiography, in the chapter titled “Translations,” he describes his ambition: “I have always wanted to do some translations from the Spanish. It was my mother’s native language [she was Puerto Rican] as well as one which my father [English West Indian] spoke from childhood. But more than that the language has a strong appeal for me, temperamentally, as a relief from the classic mood of both French and Italian. Spanish is not, in the sense to which I refer, a literary language. It has a place of its own, an independent place very sympathetic to the New World.” Williams elaborates by saying “this independence, this lack of integration with our British past gives us an opportunity, facing Spanish literature, to make new appraisals, especially in attempting translations, which should permit us to use our language with unlimited freshness.” This “freshness” for him was always central to his aspirations as a poet in the modernist MAKE IT NEW tradition, and Williams approached making verse translations from Spanish as a way to extend the range and capacity of American poetry. “In such attempts,” he explains, “we will not have to follow precedent but can branch off into a new diction, adapting

new forms, even discovering new forms in our attempts to find accurate equivalents” (*Autobiography* 349).

Although Spanish was Williams’s first language, he never really mastered it in terms of native fluency or sophistication—“My Spanish wasn’t so hot” (*Autobiography* 73)—and so, in order for him to fulfill his desire to translate from Spanish, he needed to work with an informant fluent in Spanish. These informants during his career included his father, William George Williams, with whom he translated poetry and fiction during the First World War; Spanish professor M. J. Benardete, co-editor with Rolfe Humphries of *And Spain Sings*, to which Williams contributed verse translations; his mother, Raquel Hélène Rose Hoheb Williams, with whom he worked on his translation of the Golden Age Spanish novella, *The Dog and the Fever*, during the Spanish Civil War and following it; and, lastly, José Vázquez-Amaral, a Spanish professor at Rutgers University (and the Spanish translator of Ezra Pounds’s *Cantos*).<sup>1</sup> It was Vázquez-Amaral—or simply Amaral, as he was known in various Anglo spaces—who in the spring of 1958 gave Williams the opportunity to translate a group of poems by contemporary Latin American poets; namely, Jorge Carrera Andrade (Ecuador), Alí Chumacero (Mexico), Álvaro Figueredo (Uruguay), Eugenio Florit (Cuba), Ernesto Mejía Sánchez (Nicaragua), Pablo Neruda (Chile), Silvina Ocampo (Argentina), and Nicanor Parra (Chile).

Williams and Vázquez-Amaral had been corresponding since the early 1950s. In his first letter to the poet, in which he introduced himself and stated his desire to meet with him to discuss ways to advance inter-American literary exchange, Vázquez-Amaral said: “I have received the following ‘anonymous communication’ [i.e., from Pound]: ‘Dr. W. Carlos Williams is near you, at 9 Ridge Rd, Rutherford, N. J. An honest man, who has spent most of his life in Rutherford, he is part spanish, and has for 50 years been meaning to translate MORE spanish

into north-american. J.V.A. would do well to call on him, and Old Bill might help to stir up some enthusiasm at Rutgers” (13 Dec. 1951). Williams responded positively, and a literary friendship developed. Although the decade of the Second World War had seen a flourishing of translations of Latin American poetry, the dominant formalist New Criticism and the Cold War conspired to limit widespread appreciation of them. Finally, in 1956, Vázquez-Amaral told Williams: “The time is now ripe, I believe, for the pioneering work you mentioned to me in your letter of December 17, 1951. The work of cultural interpenetration between English and Spanish America seems to have arrived” (1 Feb. 1956). Two years later, Vázquez-Amaral received a Rockefeller Foundation grant to pursue his dream, and one of its prime objectives, as he explained in a letter to Williams, was “to encourage translations from Latin American literature by eminently qualified people like yourself. Only in this way do I feel that the cause of better knowledge of Latin American literature is served” (17 Apr. 1958). The Latin American feature in *New World Writing*<sup>2</sup> (volume/issue 14; to be published in Dec. 1958, titled “New Writing from Latin America”) was part of this project, for which he turned to Williams for translations of the poets named above.<sup>3</sup>

Vázquez-Amaral (1913–87) was born in Los Reyes, Jalisco, Mexico. He grew up in California in the San Joaquin Valley, in the small farming town of Corcoran, fifty miles south of Fresno. He was called Chicano in that world, in the sense of the word with its negative connotation before its transformation of meaning during the Chicano Movement of the 1960s. When he lived in Corcoran, certain businesses and the public restrooms in the town park had signs saying “NO DOGS | NEGROS | MEXICANS.” An outsider in the dominant Anglo community there, Vázquez-Amaral worked as a teenager on local farms, picking vegetables. He also excelled in school, graduating as valedictorian of his high school—to the dismay of the

white town. His English teacher had recognized his intelligence and took him under her wing, giving him literary classics to read on his own, and pointing him in the direction of higher education (Amaral). He subsequently received two baccalaureates in Mexico in 1935, one in philosophy and the other in literature, and then joined the faculty as an English professor at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) in Mexico City. He also studied law in Mexico and was admitted to the bar there in 1939. With the heightened interest in Latin American culture during the Second World War, he returned in 1942 to the United States for a one-year teaching position at Tulane University as a visiting professor of Latin American literature. He then took another position as a Latin Americanist at Swarthmore College. In 1947, he joined the Romance languages faculty at Rutgers, where he lived not far from Williams in Rutherford. In addition, he continued to hold a faculty appointment at UNAM, and spent summers in Mexico City (“Professor Amaral”). There, he was part of literary circles that included the leading poets and novelists of the day. He presented himself as Mexican in the United States. His Pan-American spirit motivated him to pursue literary translation—both English to Spanish, and Spanish to English—to help build bridges between the Americas to facilitate mutual understanding and appreciation of their different cultures.

For the Latin American feature of *New World Writing* of which he was co-editor with Francisco Aguilera,<sup>4</sup> Vázquez-Amaral sent Williams the Spanish texts of verse he had selected, along with literal translations he had made “to save [Williams] some useless trouble” (15 Apr. 1958). Williams’s job was to “make them into poems,” as Vázquez-Amaral later stated (14 Oct. 1958). Williams met the task with determination, telling Galway Kinnell in a letter: “I have been handed a job which I let myself in for without suspecting how hard it would be, the translation of about twelve longish poems from Spanish into English. It has me nailed to the mast. . . . [S]ome

difficult passages I can spend the whole day on before I can find a solution.” By “nailed to the mast” he meant that like those captains of sailing ships who fought battles at sea with their colors nailed to the mast to tell their opponent they wouldn’t yield or surrender, he was engaged in a creative struggle with poetry that he wouldn’t abandon.

In these translations, as Williams had been doing all along with his own poetry since *Al Que Quiere!* (1917), he explored the use of real speech, in keeping with the language used by the poets he was translating. He aimed for lines that offered poetic equivalence in the American idiom—the way English is spoken in America, what he deemed “one of the greatest of modern languages waiting only for a genius of its intrinsic poetry to appear” (Williams/Norse 39–40). Beyond the literal meaning of words, he wanted to instill the language of his translations with the character of “American,” which he defined in terms of its measure: “It is in the measure of our speech, in its prosody, that our idiom is distinctive” (Williams/Norse 40). He wanted to make translations that were living poems whose lines used cadences true to real speech; that is, the spoken measure and the intonational phrasing of his American idiom. He worked at giving each poet’s voice the quality of natural American speech, and at re-creating the tonal shifts and movement of the poems. Above all, he aimed to produce poems of the same poetic excellence as the authors’ verse, and to convey the implications of their words.

Although Vázquez-Amaral functioned in large measure as co-author of these translations, the decision was made that authorial credit for them in *New World Writing* would be given to Williams alone. This was Vázquez-Amaral’s promotional strategy: to use Williams’s name and talent as a well-established poet to attract readers to the work of the Latin American authors.<sup>5</sup> Comparative analysis of the literal translation of Figueredo’s “Desnudo” and its respective final version that was published in the magazine, as an exemplar, reveals the most significant aspect

of the Williams-Amaral translations, namely, the degree to which Williams exercised poetic creativity in producing translations as poems in their own right in the American idiom—poems that furthered his own poetic agenda. Other translations in this group demonstrate the remarkable degree to which Vázquez-Amaral contributed to their final form, such as Neruda’s “Ode to Laziness,” in which the majority of lines in the published translation are by Vázquez-Amaral (Williams changed only twenty-four of sixty-nine lines), and Parra’s “Piano Solo” (Williams changed ten of eighteen lines). It is the transformative work that Williams did with Vázquez-Amaral’s literal of Figuerdo’s poem and others in the group (e.g., Ocampo’s “The Infinite Horses,” Chumacero’s “Green Eyes,” Carrera-Andrade’s “Dictated by the Water,” Mejía Sánchez’s “Vigils”) that warrants special attention to appreciate Williams’s achievement as a poet-translator and the place of these translations in his canon.

Figueredo (1907–66) is an Uruguayan poet, essayist, and educator. During his lifetime, he published two books of poetry, *Desvío de la estrella* (1936; “Detour by the Star”) and *Mundo a la vez* (1956; “World at Once”), the latter of which is the source of the text that Vázquez-Amaral and Williams brought into English. Figueredo’s work has only recently begun to be more widely studied internationally. He is regarded as one of the major poets of Uruguay. Vázquez-Amaral thought he was “the [Uruguayan] poet most likely to follow the main stream of Hispanic lyric if he steps beyond the slight bonds of surrealism” (“Tradition and Innovation” 214). Williams’s translation pleased Figueredo, whose son relates: “My father was quite satisfied by that work by an American poet” (*By Word of Mouth* 155). Here is the original Spanish of the poem:

La azul la benemérita  
de su cauce de alondras o de espuma

naciendo sin cesar  
latiendo marmolísima  
allí donde el ombligo  
mediterráneo impone  
su majestad y lanza  
a la mejilla al pie círculos de oro  
avanza Sirio entre ambos senos que  
imparten dudas órdenes al viento  
dormida está la azul apacentando  
la lentitud del eco entre sus muslos  
ahora que abro la siesta para verla  
horizontal estricta gobernando  
los enjambres las fraguas los viñedos  
la embelesada flauta los glaciares  
azulazul los gallos  
de las veletas cuando  
su noble vientre aísla  
el curso del océano  
dormida está la joven cazadora  
y un abedul germina en su rodilla.

Here is the literal translation of the poem made by Vázquez-Amaral, which he titled “Nude”:

The blue one the benefactress  
of her channel of skylarks or foam  
ceaselessly being born  
beating in extreme marble  
there where the mediterranean  
navel imposes  
its majesty and casts  
precious blows of gold upon the cheeks  
Sirius advances between two breasts that  
give hard commands to the wind  
asleep in the blue one shepherding  
the slowness of the echo between her thighs  
now that I opne [sic] the siesta to see her  
strict horizontal ruling  
swarms forges vineyards  
instantaneous shadows the glaciers  
blueblue the cocks  
of the weathervanes when  
their noble bellies isolate  
the course of the ocean  
the young huntress is asleep  
and a birch germinates upon her knees.

Compared with Williams's relatively minimal reworking of Vázquez-Amaral's translation of "Ode to Laziness," his effort to poetize the literal of "Desnudo" is strikingly different. "Nude" becomes "Naked," and he repeats only four of twenty-two lines of the literal, highlighted here in italics:

The azure yielder  
of the skylark's way or the foam  
ceaselessly re-created  
made into ultimate marble  
*there where the mediterranean*  
*navel imposes*  
*its majesty and casts*  
precious strokes of gold upon cheeks  
advanced by Sirius between  
two breasts that give  
hard commands to the wind  
asleep in the blue shepherding  
slowness between her thighs  
now that I part them a siesta to see her  
strictly disciplined horizontals  
crowds forges vineyard country  
instant shadows glaciers  
blueblue cocks

of weather vanes when  
*their noble bellies isolate*  
the flow of the ocean as  
the young huntress sleeps  
and a birch tree quickens upon her knees.

Williams invested considerable energy to make the translation a living poem in his own terms, transforming both the language and the cadences of the literal into highly crafted verse, like the poem in its original Spanish.

Williams's rendering of the title of the poem as "Naked" is the first occurrence of his use of the American language. *Nude* is a work of fine art that has as its primary subject the unclothed human body, forming a subject genre of art. It is a traditional title of paintings, as in Pablo Picasso's *Desnudo azul* (*Blue Nude*). It most likely is what Figueredo had in mind; that is, his poem is part of this subject genre. *Desnudo* in Spanish can function as either noun or adjective, as *nude* does in English. Williams's rendering transforms the painterly art title, making it less abstract and more physical. *Naked* in English is only an adjective. Most important, *naked* for Williams is the more everyday American word, compared with *nude*, as the former derives from the "vulgar" (i.e., popular) Old English *nacod*, whereas *nude* is purely Latinate, deriving from *nudus* in Latin, the language of the elite in England following the Norman Conquest, together with French. *Naked* is American, not the "English" Williams rejected as "the language used among cultured Englishmen" (Williams/Norse 144). And *naked* conforms to his "choice of the language into which the translation is to be made" ("Robert Lowell's Verse Translation"); namely, his American idiom.

Compared with the literal, Williams's translation of the body of the poem is much more sensuous and sexual in its tonality, again like the original. He took creative liberties to ensure its vibrance. The poetic quality in the measure of the speech of the opening and closing lines of the translation are just two examples of Williams's artistry in the service of Figueredo: "The azure yielder / of the skylark's way or the foam" and "the young huntress sleeps / and a birch tree quickens upon her knees." His choice of "quickens" over Vázquez-Amaral's literal "germinates" (for *germina*) heightens the sexual overtones of the original. It deviates from the literal meaning of the Spanish and alters the image conjured by the line, but not its erotic intent.

Another effective creative liberty is seen in Williams's breaking a line in the poem. He felt—heard—the need to break line 9; in the original ("avanza Sirio entre ambos senos que") and in the literal translation ("Sirius advances between two breasts that"). The resulting rhythm Williams thus gives the poem in this passage is a rhythm distinctly his: "advanced by Sirius between / two breasts that give." It is a captivating rhythm heard in his own poetry. It elevates the language. Williams's effort here to poetize the literal clearly compelled him to apply his genius, while giving him the opportunity to advance his own poetic agenda and line.

Further comment on Williams's artistry exhibited in the translation's opening two lines, as representative, is warranted. Their formal features distinguish them, conveying the lyric quality of the verse. Fidelity to literal meaning must be secondary to form in this instance. The lines provided by Vázquez-Amaral—"The blue one the benefactress / of her channel of skylarks or foam"—are not only vague but wooden and graceless. The Spanish is pure song. In attempting to put these lines into equivalent English with accuracy, the translator faces the challenge presented by the subjectivity of Figueredo's image-driven symbolist poetics. Multiple possibilities of interpretation and translation are possible. Williams's solution of compressing the

“blue one” and “benefactress” into the single “azure yielder” preserves the poem’s tone and movement. By not allowing word-for-word meaning to determine the opening lines, he successfully re-created the poem’s essential lyric dimension. Not only that, he made the opening image suggestive of sea merged with sky, true to Figueredo. Indeed, he succeeded at giving the translation as a whole the mysterious opacity of Figueredo’s poem. Pound had told Williams early in his career: “The thing that saves your work is *opacity*, and dont you forget it. Opacity is NOT an American quality” (31). In “Naked,” while using the American idiom to his advantage, Williams did not domesticate the poem; he artfully conveyed its foreignness, together with its imagery and formal lyricism.

Williams’s praise of Robert Lowell’s *Imitations*, just after his collaboration with Vázquez-Amaral, is illuminating with regard to the matter of fidelity to literal meaning versus poetic quality in his translation of “Naked.” For Williams, Lowell as a translator is “a poet who knows what he is doing, devoted to the best in his language, with courage to go ahead with his own tasks, and a cultured addiction to his native way of speaking” (“Robert Lowell’s Verse Translation”). Lowell himself, in the Introduction to this collection, says: “I believe that poetic translation—I would call it an imitation [cf. Dryden’s definition of *imitation* in “Preface Concerning Ovid’s Epistles”]—must be expert and inspired,” and in keeping with “something equivalent to the fire and finish of the originals” (xi–xii). He argues that poetry must be translated freely—“reckless with literal meaning”—in order to get the right tone and “that in poetry tone is everything.” He says he aimed “to write alive English and to do what [his] authors might have done if they were writing their poems now and in America” (xi). Pursuing his poetic goal, he “dropped lines, moved lines, moved stanzas, changed images and altered meter and intent.” The translation poetics that Lowell describes here are similar to what Williams follows,

but Williams is much more literal compared with Lowell, and he generally avoids altering structure, images, and intent. Pound approached poetry translation more like Lowell, and he encouraged Vázquez-Amaral to take creative liberties in translating his *Cantos*. Not surprisingly, the Williams-Amaral translations are free translations that occasionally deviate completely from literal meaning but not from the poetic quality of the originals. The poet's principal mode in his work with Vázquez-Amaral is paraphrase, not imitation: it is, as Dryden states, "translation with latitude, where the author is kept in view by the translator, so as never to be lost, but his words are not so strictly followed as his sense" (6-7).

The Williams-Amaral translation of Figueredo's "Naked" examined here is representative of the collaborative "pioneering work" that Williams did with his Rutgers colleague to achieve their shared goal of "cultural interpenetration between English and Spanish America." This translation and the others demonstrate that when Williams departed from the language of Vázquez-Amaral's literal renderings, as done to varying degrees, he displayed his skills as a poet with an impeccable ear for American speech and its distinctive rhythms. Although he might have changed relatively few lines in certain translations, he was in all cases presiding over the poem as a whole. "Naked" shows the work of the poet listening to discover the right measure, or cadence, in the language itself for re-creating the poem ("always with a sense of our own American idiom to instruct me"). "Naked" and the other translations, moreover, served as Hispanic personae for Williams—dramatic masks he wore in the performance of poetry—allowing the "Carlos" in him to come to the fore in his exploration of the language and transnational experience of the New World. At the same time, they functioned as his importations from Spanish to help "shake us free for a reconsideration of the poetic line," among other things. Vázquez-Amaral knew the poems he asked Williams to do were a good fit,

in view of his particular modernist poetics. Williams's sympathetic attitude toward Neruda and his poetry, for instance, is articulated in his "Tribute to Neruda the Poet Collector of Seashells," in which he says the "changeless beauty of / seashells, like the / sea itself, gave / his lines the variable pitch / which modern verse requires" (*Collected Poems* 358).<sup>6</sup>

When in April 1958 Vázquez-Amaral visited Williams at his home in Rutherford to pick up the translations he had poetized for *New World Writing*, of which only five appeared,<sup>7</sup> the poet told him he had "sweated blood" to make "Vigils" by Mejía Sánchez (Mariani 5). Indeed, he had sweated a good deal to produce these translations. He had been nailed to the mast over them. Williams viewed poetry translation as a critical and creative endeavor. As he had told Nicholas Calas during the period in the early 1940s when he was translating Calas's poetry from French: "It is a *fascinating problem* to try to put [the] *exact meaning* into an *equivalent English*. I enjoy such work." The second letter Williams sent Calas that same day is even more revealing of Williams's attitude toward poetry translation: "All this fits well into my scheme. I don't care how I say what I must say. If I do original work all well and good. But if I can say it (the matter of form I mean) by translating the work of others that also is valuable. What difference does it make?" Translation for Williams was, above all, an act of poetry. It meant re-creation in American English. Translating gave him the chance to pursue his own poetic agenda, and during a period of personal challenges related to aging and illness, Vázquez-Amaral aided and abetted him with his translation project, which helped to sustain the poet during his late-career renaissance. The translations they made together, it must also be emphasized, further demonstrate the centrality of the Spanish literary tradition to Williams.<sup>8</sup>

Looking back on Williams's contribution to Latin American poetry in translation, from the height of the first decade of the *Boom Latinoamericano*, in 1967, Vázquez-Amaral observed:

“It is to him that Pablo Neruda and other Latin American poets are indebted for their best presentation to the English-speaking world” (“Williams’ Poem” 23). Williams’s translations made with Vázquez-Amaral certainly contributed a good measure to the influence that the image-driven language of these poets was having on North American poetry during the Boom years.<sup>9</sup> Now, through of the lens of the translation process, they offer a new way to appreciate his poetic aspirations and achievement.

## Notes

1. Vázquez-Amaral would eventually become the founding chairman of the Spanish and Portuguese Department at Rutgers, only after his long struggle at the university to gain greater respect for Spanish, which until 1971 existed as the orphan of French and Italian in the Romance Languages Department. He headed the Spanish and Portuguese Department until 1982 when he retired. He also translated Williams into Spanish, as well as Walt Whitman and Henry David Thoreau, among several other North American writers. His famous translation of Pound's *Cantos*, titled *Cantares completos, I–CXX*, was published in 1975. This publication was preceded by earlier translations of selected cantos, and his translation of essays by Pound, titled *El arte de la poesía* (1970; "The Art of Poetry"). Among his other books of importance are *México: Datos para su biografía* (1945; "Mexico: Facts for Its Biography"), *Los gringos* (1969), and *The Contemporary Latin American Narrative* (1970). (Grateful acknowledgment is made to Pedro Amaral, the son of Vázquez-Amaral, for information about his father.)

2. *New World Writing* was a very significant paperback magazine that, as a literary anthology, showcased original and first appearance of stories, poems, essays, etc. of leading writers from around the world. It was published from 1951 until 1964.

3. Also during the spring of 1958, as part of Vázquez-Amaral's translation project, he asked Williams to make some translations of Mexican poetry for Barney Rosset and Donald Allen's *Evergreen Review*. They were preparing an issue that would feature work by writers and artists in a selective cross-section, to be called "The Eye of Mexico." This issue, planned for the fall of that year, finally came out in early 1959. It included Williams's translations of two poems by Alf Chumacero. Allen had hoped to include his translation of Octavio Paz's "Himno entre ruinas"

(“Hymn Among the Ruins”), and asked him to make it, sending him a published literal prose rendering on which to base the verse translation (i.e., J. M. Cohen’s translation in his 1956 anthology, *The Penguin Book of Spanish Verse*). Paz himself was delighted by the prospect of Williams translating his poem. But the publication of Williams’s translation of the poem did not take place in that magazine. It happened a decade-plus later, when *New Directions* published it in Paz’s book of early poems.

Additionally, Vázquez-Amaral provided Williams with the literal translations of three centuries-old “poems”—songs—that had been translated into Spanish from Nahuatl (Aztec). The Williams-Amaral translations were intended for publication in the Mexican issue of *Evergreen Review*, but ultimately were not included there, perhaps because the focus was on contemporary literature. They were, however, published in *The Muse in Mexico: A Mid-Century Miscellany* (1959; 90–91) under the title of “Three Náhuatl Poems” and, subsequently, in *Pictures from Brueghel* (59–60) under the title of “Three Nahuatl Poems” (minus accented vowel). Apparently, the literal translations are no longer extant.

Finally, in 1959, Vázquez-Amaral provided Williams with the literal translation of a poem written by Costa Rican poet Eunice Odio (*By Word of Mouth* 160–62), who Vázquez-Amaral had taken to Williams’s home in September of that year to introduce her to the poet. Following her visit, she wrote an homage to him titled “Al poeta William Carlos Williams” (literally, “To the Poet William Carlos Williams”) that Williams translated as “To W.C.W.” He himself didn’t publish this translation, which, unlike most of his translations, is more inclined toward imitation. It was published in *By Word of Mouth*, after its initial periodical publication in *The New Yorker* (4 Oct. 2010; 80–81).

4. Francisco Aguilera was a specialist in Hispanic culture at the Library of Congress.

5. The editors of *And Spain Sings*, to which Williams contributed three translations (including the first English translation of Miguel Hernández), used the very same strategy to attract attention to the Spanish poets presented in their book, which was published in 1937. The book through its translations aimed to gain public support for the Loyalists fighting General Francisco Franco.

6. Commenting on Williams's "Tribute to Neruda the Poet Collector of Seashells" that he composed in the spring of 1960, Vázquez-Amaral says it "is an anthological poem not only because it is a mighty exemplar of what [Williams] called the 'American grain' but also for its deep understanding and fraternal feeling for another great poet of the New World" ("Williams' Poem" 23). Williams gave the signed poem (typescript) to Vázquez-Amaral to give to Neruda, whom the poet called his "Chilean sidekick" (23). Vázquez-Amaral, in turn, gave the poem to Roderick Townley in 1972, charging him with the task of delivering the poem to Neruda at his April reading that year at the 92nd Street Y in New York. At the time, Townley was a doctoral student at Rutgers; his 1972 dissertation, "Form and Instinct in the Early Poetry of William Carlos Williams," was published three years later as *The Early Poetry of William Carlos Williams*.

7. The following translations made by Williams with Vázquez-Amaral appeared in *New World Writing* 14 (Dec. 1958): "Green Eyes" by Chumacero; "Naked" by Álvaro Figueredo; "Piano Solo" by Nicanor Parra; "The Infinite Horses" by Silvina Ocampo; and "Ode to Laziness" by Pablo Neruda. The other four translations they made together for *New World Writing* remained in manuscript until their publication in *By Word of Mouth*: "Ode to My Socks" by Neruda; "Vigils" by Ernesto Mejía Sánchez; "Dictated by the Water" by Jorge Carrera Andrade; and "Conversation with My Father" by Eugenio Florit.

8. For the most in-depth analysis to date of the centrality of the Spanish literary tradition to Williams, see Julio Marzán's *The Spanish American Roots of William Carlos Williams* (1994).

9. Commenting on new trends in contemporary U.S. poetry in the 1970s, William Meredith observed that Latin American poets were exerting a profound influence. He said "many [U.S.] poets . . . believe that major directions for poetry in our country will derive from the aesthetic innovations of . . . Latin American poets" (Meredith 15). Anne Sexton emphasized this point earlier that decade in an interview in 1970: "We [U.S. poets] are being influenced now by South American poets, Spanish poets, French poets. We are much more image-driven as a result. . . . Neruda is the great image-maker. The greatest colorist. . . . That's why I say you have to start with Neruda" (Sexton 11–12). Williams was nothing less than prophetic when, at the First Inter-American Writers' Conference held in Puerto Rico in 1941, he observed in his talk that Spanish-language poetry had much to offer U.S. poets, who urgently needed to find new ways to use our language, and he said, "It looks as though our salvation may come not from within ourselves but from the outside" ("Informal Discussion" 44).

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