

**Tasting Other Tongues:
The Translation of Guillermo Fadanelli's
*¿Te veré en el desayuno?***

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ABSTRACT

The present thesis consists of two parts: part one comprises a critical component; part two is a Spanish to English translation of the novel *¿Te veré en el desayuno?* [*See You at Breakfast?*] by Mexico City author Guillermo Fadanelli. *¿Te veré en el desayuno?* was first published in 1999 by Plaza y Janés and re-issued in 2009 by Editorial Almadía. My translation, published in Australia by Giramondo in March 2016, is the first of Fadanelli's novels to be brought into English.

Part One proposes three key arguments, each contributing to the formulation of what will be referred to throughout as an *alienating* ethics of translation. The first, serving as something of a critical point of departure, is the argument that translation stands at the forefront of literary ethics. All literature, but particularly literary fiction, is intrinsically ethical in its capacity to reassign meanings and disrupt perspectives. The role of translation, I argue, is to facilitate and intensify the many (re)interpretations already inherent in the act of reading, both drawing the Other close and making patent the unease of their proximity. The second (and central) argument holds that a sound ethics of translation should encourage 'violent' and generative literary practices. This involves intervention at both ends of the translation process: first, in selecting challenging texts and authors for translation and acknowledging the role of such practices in the source text; and second, in implementing such practices in the production of the target text. The dual nature of this intervention presupposes a careful collaboration of forethought and practice, yielding a third key argument: *theoria* and *praxis* in translation are inextricably wedded, with the one inevitably informing and circumscribing the other, and the tension implied by this (never wholly felicitous) marriage permanently underlies the structures and processes of translation. The practice of translation itself, in other words, forms a kind of unsettled and unsettling substratum, at once bearing and grounding the alienating ethics proposed here.

The key arguments of this thesis are developed across three chapters. Chapter 1.1 serves as an introduction to Guillermo Fadanelli and to the translation project itself, elaborating on the choice of novel and the fundamental aspects of my alienating translation approach. Chapter 1.2 explores the role and significance of translated literature, embarking from some of Fadanelli's own reflections on the place of fiction in contemporary society and the indispensable human function that it fulfils. This discussion frames and fuels the ethics of translation elaborated in subsequent chapters.

Chapter 2.1 frames Fadanelli as one of the most challenging and 'insolent' writers in contemporary Mexican literature, outlining the many ways in which his work refuses to sit within the boundaries of a single genre. It considers his uneasy position within the Latin American literary scene, analysing in particular the influence of two closely aligned literary movements that emerged in the late twentieth century: US dirty realism and Spanish *realismo*

sucio. Chapter 2.2 examines Fadanelli's departure from and apparent rejection of these established contextual frameworks, arguing that the violent and generative qualities of Fadanelli's literature are entwined in his self-proclaimed association with 'trash' culture. A detailed review of the concept of 'la literatura basura' [trash literature] is framed by a discussion of the movement's context – namely, contemporary urban counterculture in North and Ibero America – examining cultural parallels in visual art, cinema and music. Chapter 2.3 shifts the focus to the target culture, mapping the intersections and divergences between Fadanelli's readerships (actual and prospective) in Mexico and in Australia.

Chapter 3.1 frames the act of translation as a method of cultural re-articulation and generation, approaching the concept of contemporary urban space via several key translation and cultural studies theories. Mexico City in particular, due to its ubiquitous and powerful presence in Fadanelli's fiction, is analysed as an ambivalent site of unease and production, brimming with tension, cultural mutation and polyglossia. The act and concept of translation – both literary and 'cultural' (after Bhabha) – is considered within the framework of this constantly re-interpreted urban dynamic. Notions of 'third space' (Bhabha), 'hybridity' (García Canclini) and innovation are also examined. Chapter 3.2 develops this argument into the formulation of a translation ethics based on alienation, 'violence' and creative potential. Using the theories of Gayatri Spivak, Antoine Berman, Viktor Shklovsky and Slavoj Žižek as a point of engagement and departure, it calls for a translation approach that actively preserves the power and originality of the source text and culture. Translation, it argues, is both a product and producer of the liminal, inhabiting but also designing the dynamic verges of culture. It is through violence and estrangement – both natural states of language – that this ethical approach to literature is achieved. Chapter 3.3, the final section of the critical component, maps the practical application of the notions and methodologies developed throughout the thesis. It offers a narrative of translational praxis rooted in the translation of the novel itself, illustrating in concrete terms the vital tension caused by the constant push-and-pull of language in transformation.

Part Two comprises the full manuscript of *See You at Breakfast?*. All changes made to the published manuscript, causing it to differ from the one included herein, are discussed in Chapter 3.3. The Spanish source text appears as an Appendix courtesy of Guillermo Quijas and Vania Reséndiz Cerna at Editorial Almadía.

KEYWORDS: Translation Studies, literary translation, ethics of translation, alienation, Mexico City, Guillermo Fadanelli, *realismo sucio*, *literatura basura*, trash literature.

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