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*THE SECRET HOUSES: A STUDY IN THEATRICAL TRANSLATION FROM
SPANISH TO ENGLISH*

A Capstone Project Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree Bachelor of Arts
with Mahurin Honors College Graduate Distinction
at Western Kentucky University

by

Becca Willenbrink

May 2020

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ABSTRACT

Theatrical works are distinguished from the rest of literature as a result of their unique context and intention. Drama is intended to be experienced live, not simply read, and is unique in that it calls for a specific space in which to be consumed. In the field of literary translation and adaptation, this poses an issue because even if the translated play is linguistically faithful to the original text on the page, this does not necessarily mean it will produce the same experience onstage for the viewing audience, due to inevitable cultural differences in reception. With data collected from immersion in Buenos Aires, Argentina, this study encompasses the process and necessary elements of dramatic translation, from the preliminary research to the actualized production. In this process, *Las casas íntimas* by Buenos Aires-born playwright Eugenia Pérez Tomas evolves into *The Secret Houses*, a contemporary Argentine work translated for an American audience. The findings of this foray into theatrical translation outline the complexity and depth required for the development of translated works and provide a preliminary guide for those in the United States delving into this less-explored area of its theatrical, which proves to become more and more essential as our nation evolves.

DEDICATION

Dedico este tesis a Eugenia Pérez Tomas; si no fuera por sus palabras tan hermosas, este estudio no sería la experiencia maravillosa en la que se ha convertido ahora.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

In the theatrical world, the phrase *de la página al escenario* or *from page to stage* carries significant meaning. A play thrives when it lifts the words off the page and brings them to life onstage, when it brings the story to the audience in the most authentic manner possible. The work of a theatrical translator embodies this practice. It must fulfill the conventional translation of the written text into an engaging performance but must also accomplish a linguistic and cultural translation from one region to another, taking into account all the unique features of each population. For many theatre scholars and translators, this is the greatest challenge of dramatic works. The focus of this study on the translation of an Argentine, Spanish-language work for an English-speaking, American¹ audience uncovers the unique tension and difficulty of adapting works between the two continents of North and South America.

In an article analyzing this phenomenon, North American director and translator Adam Versényi regards theatrical translation between the Americas as an epistemological process, which as an act within itself, aims to break down their fundamental cultural divides and reconfigure them into a new product: a piece of art, viable and enjoyable for all identities at play. Theatre is the perfect medium in which to explore socio-cultural elements involved with artistic expression because it not only actively involves the

¹ I will use the term “American” and “America” throughout the paper to refer to someone or some element being “of the United States” or in reference to the United States itself, respectively. While “American” literally translates to “being of the Americas,” and “America” is a general term which encompasses all the countries and identities contained in North and South America, I will use them here in their colloquial context for reader’s ease.

practitioners, but also the consumers who interpret the work, all in one shared space. After conducting three separate case studies in various instances of translation, Versényi asserts the following: the theatrical translator must understand and build upon the layering of multiple resonances in a performance text” for both associated cultures, the “production choices made by a director and an acting company seeking to universalize the emotive impact of the play” to their local audience and the reality of “what is ultimately untranslatable and what constitutes the real definition of performance in different cultures” (434). Versényi’s concepts are the basis for my experimentation in understanding and carrying out a theatrical translation, which in this present day must address not only the artistic differences, but the larger cultural, socio-political divides between the two nations in question.

One of the most glaring issues in this complex area is the unequal distribution of work between North and South American theatre cultures. While translations of American plays thrive in Buenos Aires on Avenida Corrientes, the “Broadway” of Argentina, it is rare to see any Argentine plays performed onstage anywhere in the United States. The study of American works and artistic movements are hallmarks of any Argentine dramatic training or education, whereas the typical American actor almost solely learns from American school of realism, derived from Stanislavski’s Russian acting system. This disparity is born from the universal overarching impacts of globalization and the tendency to prioritize culture of what is considered “the Western world,” in our present case, the United States of America. The impacts from these larger issues transfer onto international stages creating the dichotomy where American hits such as *Kinky Boots* or *A Doll’s House Part Two* (Todas Noticias) were popular on Avenida

Corrientes in 2019, but the most popular, and almost all, productions on Broadway are all written by American and British playwrights (Rooney), suggesting a lack of impetus among theatrical artists in America to embrace and explore the creative output from outside countries. During my experience in Buenos Aires, I was amazed by the quantity and quality of work I witnessed, the thriving independent theatre scene, and the enthralling Argentine style, curated from the country's rich cultural landscape and ever-evolving with time. I am fortunate to have experienced Argentine theatre firsthand, immersed in the culture itself, but what has allowed me to learn of this world is exactly what has prevented it from being in my consciousness as a theatre artist in America in the first place: language.

The sad fact that underlies the issue in the United States is that most American theatre artists only know English, yet another consequence of "Western"-centered, and frankly, nationalist, mentalities that have run rampant throughout the country since the United States began to dominate the global stage. If the society in place is not designed to value and facilitate global cultural awareness, how can its artists and audience take steps to incorporate resources and texts from other countries into their theatrical consciousness, production seasons, and educational curriculum? And as the modern ethnic and cultural identity of America shifts itself, how do we as theatre artists learn to adapt our own practices in order to represent and engage this new multicultural population? The answer comes from the work of the theatrical translator. In the translation and staging of this project, I hope to bring a glimpse into the rich world of Argentine theatre to an American audience. Furthermore, I hope my findings can illustrate the basic elements that comprise

theatrical translation and be used as a guide for others hoping to use these methods to enrich contemporary American theatre.

The structure of my technique follows a series of steps, based on Versényi's approach, that can be modified to fit any theatrical translation, but here center around the Argentine- American context. The first step encompasses the creative-cultural research necessary before even beginning the translation; on my part, this covered my research in Buenos Aires where I gained general cultural immersion and specific creative-cultural experience in its theatrical world—its works in production, its history, its community offerings, and the theatre artists active in the city. The next step revolves around the words wherein the translator completes the literal-linguistic translation of the text, analyzing the language itself for attributes such as speech patterns, dialectical attributes and unique vocabulary. The third phase features reading rehearsals with a focus in text analysis and a deeper exploration of the language's connection to its performative implications. During this stage, the translator should bring in actor(s) to verbally interpret the working text as it evolves, using insight from their feedback and portrayal to shape the language and distinguish “the layering of multiple resonances” (Versényi 434) in cultures of the piece in focus. After this stage of preliminary reading rehearsals, a final script should be produced for the fourth step of the actual production development in which staging, design elements, and performance style come to the forefront as “production choices...[seek] to universalize the emotive impact of the play” (Versényi 434) for the audience. And the final stage is the production itself, where “what is ultimately untranslatable and what constitutes the real definition of performance...”

(Versényi 434) is put to the test as the audience ultimately decides whether or not the work succeeds.

For a translated work to achieve positive audience reception, many times the process exceeds the usual length for the production of work and therefore requires an in-depth understanding of and passion for the overall subject, as well as the play itself, to truly thrive. Luckily for me, during my time in Buenos Aires, I was able to find such a work on which to test my method. While conducting my research, I found *Las casas íntimas* written by Eugenia Pérez Tomas, a solo-performance piece that follows a house-sitter in Buenos Aires. The sole character, Anís, recounts to the audience the stories of the identities and objects she finds within each strangers' home, each a brick in the construction of her perhaps delusional, but uncannily beautiful reality. While in Buenos Aires, I related to Anís's story because I, too, found myself molding the strangers' identities and belongings around me to construct for myself a temporary, personal reality that appeased the loneliness I felt in a space that was not my own, much like Anís does for each house she inhabits. Anís's language in *Las casas íntimas*, though poetic and complex, evokes this universal relatability in audience/reader interpretation, which made it an exciting subject for experimentation. Not only is her language universal, but Anís also speaks, emotes, and comports herself in a fashion that mirrors the people of Argentina, specifically Buenos Aires—with a flair for the dramatic, a wry sense of humor, a wide emotional range that erupts furiously when impassioned, strong opinions, and a love for arguing about all the spaces in between.

The complex beauty of Anís and her story are all thanks to the genius words of contemporary Argentine playwright and director, Eugenia Pérez Tomas. I actually had

the honor of meeting with Pérez Tomas while in Argentina; we discussed the show, her own process and inspiration, and the integral aspects of the piece, such as theme, style, and production vision. During our conversations, I asked, for her, what was the most important aspect of the show and she responded with the language, in her words, “the value of the voice and the words on the page” (Interview: Pérez Tomas, 31 May 2019). In my inquiries about how to approach her work’s style and genre in general, Pérez Tomas disclosed the lines of reality are never supposed to be defined by the text, but rather by the interpretation of the individual. Our interview came towards the end of my time and research in Buenos Aires and established the structure for the rest of my translation. I began compiling the applicable facets of Argentine theatre from my own research with Pérez Tomas’s insights in mind and entered the first stage of creating *The Secret Houses*.

CREATIVE-CULTURAL RESEARCH

My first step began in the bustling metropolis of Buenos Aires where I sought to capture the essence of Argentine theatre. This, of course, was not a simple task, but the city answered my call with limitless opportunities to uncover its meaning. Buenos Aires is a theatre city, as active and layered as New York or London, but with the bonus of more state-sponsored art initiatives, meaning more accessibility and affordability to a wandering college student such as myself. There were a multitude of classes, workshops and (free) conventions available that provided critical background information for traditions and current trends in Argentine theatre, and a general sense of what was being created past and present, and its connections to contemporary life. Buenos Aires's diverse theatre scene provided opportunities to see a wide range of plays so that I could understand the performance styles, audience tastes, and popular conventions on the Argentine stage. Though the most influential and informative element of my research came from the people I talked to, the local theatre artists who were kind enough to share with me their life and work and extend a welcoming hand into their world. Personal relationships like these are more difficult to build in the fast-paced American environment of its large theatre cities due to the nation's cultivated transactional nature; the Argentine culture, with its more relaxed perception of time and focus on relationships

built on individual connection, was a huge factor in my ability to have access to the actual practitioners of its creative culture.²

All the above practices constitute the creative-cultural research section of this project when the translator builds the structural support and context for their piece by way of obtaining current cultural knowledge, awareness of and familiarization with the active creative environment, and the ability to synthesize where the two intersect. The most ideal mode for this stage would be immersion in the environment itself, however this proves difficult in a busy world where long-distance travel is not always an option. To deal with this reality, the Internet is always a trusty resource. I discovered many online opportunities, such as virtual classes and recordings of performances, and also utilized social media applications, like WhatsApp, to connect to artists in Buenos Aires while I was in the United States. Flexibility and versatility are key in translation; for example, I could not see an actual performance of *Las casas íntimas* while in the city, but I saw multiple productions that were similar in structure and form. With data gathered from these performances in relation to my circumstance, Pérez Tomas and I discussed their production elements that were similar to the style of her work and could be used as a model for the mounded production of my translation. These types of conversations reveal more personal elements of the artistic culture of the origin country which in addition to

² For my work in particular, the connections I built within the city were largely formed through a family member's connection with Betina González, an Argentine author and professor at Universidad de Buenos Aires whose novels include *Juegos de playa* and *Las poseídas*. Gonzalez then gave me the contacts for Mónica Berman and Julián Cnochaert and it was from a selection of plays Cnochaert lent me that I discovered *Las casas íntimas*.

its performances and history, can all be accessed through the vast online resources that exist today.

To acquire deep creative-cultural understanding, one must begin at the origins. To understand contemporary Argentine theatre, I had to know its history, so I utilized my resources and enrolled in an online Latin American Theatre History course through Teatro CELCIT (Centro latinoamericano de creación e investigación teatral) with Cuban theatre scholar and writer Magaly Murgencia. Teatro CELCIT is a wonderful resource for those looking into Latin American theatre with its extensive virtual and in person educational offerings, an online database of Latin American playwrights and a physical theatre in Buenos Aires that focuses on the development of new works. With Murgencia's guidance, I was able to paint a landscape of the theatrical history in Latin America as a creative-cultural backdrop for my detailed study into Argentine tradition and conventions, one of which was particularly useful for this process: the influence of *el grotesco criollo*.

One of the most potent influences on Argentine theatre is *el grotesco criollo*, a specific acting style and mode of production that appeared at the end of the 19th century. *El grotesco criollo* blossomed in early twentieth-century Argentina during a time of heavy immigration of Europeans into the country. As a result, its people and the new population were attempting to make sense of their role in society and Argentine playwrights began "to portray the harsh reality of immigrants living in the new port city" (Camila Mercado 22) onstage. The style derives from *el circo criollo*, the traveling theatrical circus shows popular in the nineteenth century, and *el sainete porteño*, the Buenos Aires equivalent inspired by the Spanish *sainete*, short theatre pieces, brought

over during colonization (Magaly Murgencia, “El actor nacional”). *El grotesco criollo* developed, in addition to its traditionally tragic elements from the Spanish, its own tragicomic identity that presented “popular characters from the middle and lower classes with their languages and characteristic usage” (Mercado 22) dealing with the harshness of life through comedic or absurd situations. This mixture of genres, the “grotesque” of reality through the comical “circus” lens, enriched what was becoming *el teatro nacional* of Argentina in the 1930s and 1940s, very much in contrast with the realism movement taking place in America around the same time.

In order to distinguish its contrast with American theatre, I wanted to view and analyze *el grotesco criollo* in action, so I partook in a workshop, “Como Mirar Teatro” or “How to Watch Theatre,” with El Camarín de las Musas, a local independent theater that offered various classes and workshops for the general population. Once a week, Jazmín Carbonell and Mercedes Méndez, two Argentine journalists and theater critics, led the class through the analysis of a play currently in production in the city; we would focus on context and background of the piece for the first two classes, then view the actual performance, reconvene to discuss the production and its elements, and finish with a guest lecture from an artist involved with the piece. “Como Mirar Teatro” was a first-hand glimpse into what both Argentine audiences and critics look for when they attend the theatre. While in this class, I had access to guest lectures with various well-known theatre professionals, including the director and translators, Javier Dualte, Federico González del Pino and Fernando Masllorens, respectively, of *Después de la casa de muñecas*, the Argentine translation of the Broadway hit, *A Doll’s House Part Two*. I took inspiration from certain elements of their translation process, the lecture being an

interesting counter-perspective which I will unpack later in the linguistic section of this paper. Another important lecture featured the co-writer and performer of *El equilibrista*, Mauricio Dayub. His lecture covering the creation and process of his one-man performance in *El equilibrista* gifted me with the acting perspective of a solo Argentine piece, modes to draw personal connections between actor and text, and overall ideas on staging a performance similar in nature to *Las casas íntimas*.

To supplement my more critical and directorial creative-cultural research, I also attended an acting workshop with the Universidad de Belgrano, where I was a student at the time, facilitated by Cira Caggiano. Her pedagogy included varied exercises in word association and structured improvisation, resembling American practices commonly used in rehearsal and education. Caggiano's teaching built upon the actor's exploration of "their own body, their inner world, their personal creative resources, their own life experiences," (Universidad de Belgrano: Dirección de Cultura, Teatro) which in many ways mirrors aspects of popular American training, a mixture of Konstantin Stanislavski's Russian acting system based in self-reflection and American Lee Strasberg's "method" which centers around recalling emotional memory. Stanislavski's book, *An Actor Prepares*, revolutionized actor training globally with its release in 1936, as one of the first widely-disseminated, structured procedural guidelines for professional actors, and in fact, directly inspired the work of Lee Strasberg, who coined his famous "method" as he trained some of the most influential Hollywood stars (James Dean, Marlon Brando, and many more) who would go on to influence a generation of actors that followed. Stanislavski's and Strasberg's teachings are obviously not Argentine in nature, but with the proliferation of Hollywood movies and growing global American

influence, it is impossible to ignore their impacts on all cultures. The translator can identify points of contact between Argentine training tradition and that of the American school to create a gateway when first attacking a complex translated piece with American actors.

To understand the full complexity of Argentine works, I went to Mónica Berman³ for answers. Berman, is a well-known figure in the Argentine theatrical sphere and for over 20 years has worked as a professor and critic, deciphering and communicating the vast canon of her nation's plays. In her experience with various organizations and universities, she has witnessed the evolution and growth of independent theatre in Buenos Aires and from this, developed a complex and refined perspective on its presentation and conventions. She argues that the most effective drama is drama that falls outside the commercial sphere and utilizes a variety of design elements to include other artforms, such as poetry, song, dance, or puppets (Interview: Mónica Berman, 9 May 2019). Berman views theatre as "an object of desire" and the stage becomes a medium to create a world we have never experienced before and that is the Argentine essence, there are no ties to reality or restrictions of definition (Interview, 9 May 2019). Monica's insights on independent drama in Buenos Aires revealed to me just how active and constantly changing a force it is. To define it exactly would be a disservice, but its devotion to

³ Berman has been working as a theatre critic in Buenos Aires for over twenty years, with resources, such as *Alternativa Teatral*, *Crítica Teatral*, and *La Nación*. She is currently a professor and coordinator in the *Área de Comunicación y Artes Escénicas* at the *Universidad de Buenos Aires*. She is also a founding member of *el Proyecto Archivo* with *Alternativa Teatral*, compiling the history of Argentine works.

experimentation, crossing genres, and theatrical play are key factors in producing an independent theatre piece, such as *Las casas íntimas*.

While I compiled my research, I looked for an opportunity to see all the individual components functioning together in action. Once again, the beautiful city of Buenos Aires brought me what I was searching for, and it came in the form of Julián Cnochaert.⁴ Over the course of multiple interviews and meetings, Cnochaert shared with me his experience as an actor, playwright, and director in the city, what Argentine theatre represents to him, the plays he liked to watch (and definitely those he did not), and more broadly, what it means to be a young theatre artist today. His perspective clued me in to the current climate of Argentina, specifically Buenos Aires, and the young creators' role amidst of daily economic fluctuation, political instability, and the interconnected world now available via the Internet and social media. Cnochaert, with characteristic Argentine flair, prefers to laugh at the uncertainty, to mock it and then dissemble, reconfigure and enhance its most hideous features into a piece that says both nothing and everything about the topic at hand, much unlike the American tendency to literalize every facet of a performance (Interview: Cnochaert, 15 May 2019.) Our differences in culture, fortunately, in this case, did not translate to our views on theatre, and upon hearing the type of shows and styles I liked, Cnochaert invited me to a rehearsal for his play, *Pampa Escarlata*, which he wrote and directed.

⁴ Cnochaert is a Buenos Aires native. He attended la Escuela Metropolitana de Arte Dramático (EMAD), where he received his degree in Acting. Cnochaert is an actor, playwright and director. Other notable work includes *La posibilidad de entender*, *28 SM* with El Teatro Nacional/Teatro Cervantes, and more. *Pampa Escarlata* is the top prize winner of la Convocatoria de Óperas Primas 2020 with el Centro Cultural Rector Ricardo Rojas, UBA which premiered in March 2020.

Pampa Escarlata or literally, Scarlet Plain, is the story of a young woman in Victorian England, struggling with her artistic endeavors, until her maid shares with her a mysterious remedy to her woes, straight from the plains of Argentina, like herself. Cnochaert's writing composes a theatrical world rarely explored on the American stage, one that finds its setting in the historical, realistic world but rises above the strictures of genre as the fantastical and the monstrous descend, hilariously, into place. Approaching *Pampa Escarlata* in the rehearsal space, Cnochaert commenced with text-based movement and vocal exercises as a warm-up, utilizing dance and repetition as inspiration for the actors to "get into" their characters (Rehearsal: Cnochaert, 11 May 2019). *Pampa Escarlata* is a high-energy piece which demands active and physical actors who, with Cnochaert's guidance, punctuate each moment with dramatic flair, thus warm-ups are essential. While Cnochaert's style is distinct and, for those who have the pleasure of knowing him, a strong representation of his personality and humor, he finds his place among the other independent playwrights currently working in Buenos Aires, whose style, in general, veers more towards the fantastical, abstract and surreal, while avoiding dipping too deeply into political or social topics, which lends itself to once again to the influence of *el grotesco criollo* (Interview: Cnochaert, 1 May 2019.) Though *Pampa Escarlata* and *Las casas íntimas* contrast vastly as pieces of theatre, Cnochaert's invitation and the entire experience of the rehearsal itself greatly influenced the environment I hope to build and the practices I hope to draw upon as a director in the rehearsal room, not only for this current project, which specifically explores the connection between cultural practices, but for any piece of theatre I undertake.

As my time in Buenos Aires came to an end, I was once again amazed and humbled by the immense kindness shown to me by the kindred theatre souls I found in its theatre scene. Though cultural immersion cannot be possible for all processes of theatrical translation, it is almost crucial for those beginning with no previous cultural experience in that region, such as myself. To fully grasp what composes a culture, connections must be drawn between the creative, historical context and the experiences and opinions of the population within it. The complexities of culture are contained in the people who practice it, and without exposure to these artists in context (for my case in Argentina,) I would have lost the most important creative-cultural element of Argentine theatre: generosity. This generosity expands past their willingness to help and guide a stranger new to their world and manifests itself in their own artistic creation in which flexibility, liberality of language, and devotion to collective work are key. This crucial element moved and intrigued me so strongly because it can be difficult to find in the present-day American creative-cultural theatre sphere. The lack of generosity ties back into the greater sociocultural divides that inhibit theatrical translation in the first place, and with that in mind, transforms this process from a mere artistic exchange of words and into a creative exchange of culture, designed to enrich the target country.

LITERAL-LINGUISTIC TRANSLATION

With the creative cultural-research in place, the next stage of the process centers solely around the text: it's literal translation with recognition of its specific linguistic attributes. At this point, the words come first in hopes to generate the rough translation and basic structural configuration of the text's language—its literally-translated form. To enrich this stage, the translator must also take into account the sociolinguistic

implications of their text's source language. Buenos Aires is a culturally-rich metropolis, and as a result, its citizens, or *los porteños*, have over time developed their own vernacular, *el habla porteño*, with unique linguistic variations to the region and its people. *El habla porteño* is one variation of rioplatense regional speech of the Río de la Plata river basin which includes northeastern Argentina and Uruguay. Many times, this speech can be confusing or difficult to translate even to other Spanish speakers because of its distinctive grammatical differences and its influence from the vernacular (Lidia Raquel Miranda, et al. 7). This recognition is essential to translating work of any writer hailing from Buenos Aires and for this process, crucial, seeing as Pérez Tomas, whose language is beautifully *porteño*, was born and raised in the city herself. Experiencing this dialect in context, as well as analyzing further its origins and meaning, provided the basic understanding of structure and vocabulary to approach the translation of *Las casas íntimas*.

Rioplatense Spanish is unique for many reasons: its use of “voseo” form in place of the more common “tú” for “you,” el sheísmo of “ll” and “y,” and its European, mainly Italian, intonations (Miranda, et al. 4). Although these are not involved in the literal translation, they all contribute to the specific identity contained in the written language of Argentine authors, whose language carries the same rhythm and musicality as the speech of its citizens. Furthermore in Buenos Aires, los porteños speak with the influence of *lunfardo*, a specific vernacular influenced by European, mainly Italian, immigrants that came to Buenos Aires in the early twentieth century. As John D. Grayson explains, the lunfardo vernacular “coins its own terms by metaphor,” (66); lunfardo also uses *verse* “which is the disguising of a word from the standard language by the displacement of its

syllables,” (66) two literary features very prevalent in Pérez Tomas’s writing. When approaching *Las casas íntimas*, the distinction between the metaphors, symbolism, wordplay and imagery of Pérez Tomas’s *porteño* lyricism (an excerpt of which appears in Appendix A) proved to be the most challenging factor in deciphering the specific linguistic patterns that make *el habla porteño* so complex and nuanced, yet so important in translating a language-centered play such as this.

Taking these elements into account, the first draft was created as a basic translation, solely linguistic and research-based, but next came the oral efficacy of the text. I practiced “sharing the translation orally,” modeling one aspect of Del Pino’s and Maslloren’s procedure for translation, outlined during a workshop at El Camarin de las Musas (Guest Lecture, 13 May 2019). For this pair, it was shared between the translation team themselves; however, in my process, it was performed interpersonally with other theatre artists and colleagues that would offer advice on the effectiveness of interpretation. In addition to oral transmission, I kept in contact with Pérez Tomas and Cnochaert as my drafts developed and they answered any questions or gave suggestions. During this process, grammatical edits and artistic modifications were made to the initial draft, in the development of the work’s more nuanced attributes. The first working draft of *The Secret Houses* included variations on phrases, grammatical areas of consideration, or suggestions on possible translation with a highlighted key for tracking my own progress. This key is located in Appendix B. From this point, the process moved the words off the page and began experimentation with *The Secret Houses* as a living, breathing theatrical piece.

READING REHEARSALS

Drawing inspiration from Versenyi's assertions on translation, the task now became to unpack "the layering of multiple resonances in a performance text" (434) and to distinguish and build connections between the work's original Argentine identity and its newfound American environment. During this stage, actors are introduced for the translator to watch and refine their language based on their American performers' handling of the new text. For *The Secret Houses* project, Hailey Armstrong entered the process during this stage and continued her portrayal of Anís until the final production. Armstrong, another theatre student at Western Kentucky University, was the perfect candidate for this process because she had experience with solo performance and a versatile style. Before delving into the text in reading rehearsals, the translator should share with their actors the key components of their creative-cultural research and personal motivation for their project in order to establish a primary relationship among the original text and culture, the context at hand, and the nature of the specific project. Most American artists are not too familiar with Argentina, much less its theatrical culture, so a preliminary discussion of these essential resonances within the original text creates a space in which the themes and ideas initially explored can develop their own equivalent American resonances in performance (Versenyi 438).

My creative-cultural experience proved not only to be vital in structuring the translation and performance itself, but also to building Hailey's and my shared creative environment, where the developmental nature of the project almost demands the Argentine principles of flexibility and generosity. Once the overview of the translation process is communicated and any questions from the actors are answered, the first verbal

exploration of the text can commence. For the first reading of *The Secret Houses*, we used the working draft produced after the literal-linguistic translation stage; Appendix C contains a sample from this working draft and illustrates the multiple variations on phrasing or word choice within the text itself. Armstrong read this draft in its entirety, alternating delivery for each of its suggestions guided by the text, testing out for her own acting purposes and with my own guidance the specific areas of variation. Following her first reading, the two of us discussed her preliminary reactions to reading the text, both the literal elements of the language and their performative context. Actor feedback during the early stages of work guides the translator to the fundamental divergences in cultural resonances on which to hone focus. Armstrong's reactions and inquiries from our first rehearsal unearthed the core translational challenge of *The Secret Houses* that would impact the rest of the process: the play's genre-bending identity, difficult to capture but essential to transmitting its Argentine origin.

This disparity has proved difficult for many translators when bringing Argentine works to non-Argentine actors and audiences and is quite often the reason productions fail to successfully adapt both sides of the process. Argentine playwright Rafael Spregelburd has noted this tension through personal experience, as he witnessed his translated plays lose their fundamental attributes when brought to an English-speaking audience. American theatre artists, and consequently its translators, tend to focus on realistic world-building for their productions, where a "character's class, background, and accent" (Spregelburd 375) influence their actions in relation to the plot and its real-world context. For playwrights such as Spregelburd and Pérez Tomas, whose writing transmits at the absurd or abstract level, these details serve little to no purpose when interpreted

onstage. Spregelburd contends that in his experience “all plays translated into English become realistic...even though they come from other continents and might bear absurd, abstract, or simply poetic attributes,” (375) as a result of American-British theatrical legacy of realism. American theatre scholar and translator Jean Graham-Jones, who has translated many of Spregelburd works, defines the acting style as a “hybridic balancing act” between genres, hallmark of Argentine performance (138). The need to balance between these two styles will deepen as the process moves towards production, but was potent enough in the early stages to prompt a conference with Pérez Tomas to clarify the actor’s inquiries about Anís’s language, as well as build upon them to construct a more holistic view of our piece and its protagonist.

During this conversation, Pérez Tomas related Anís’s language and wordplay to her relationship with the outside world, what she observes and interprets, as the key to understanding her character. To Armstrong, it seemed as though Anís spoke in riddles due to the abstract and sometimes grotesque nature of the subject matter and the nonchalant manner in which Anís treats it, a signature of *el grotesco criollo*. The playwright explained that Anís “describes the world in terms of how she perceives her own reality,” taking in the harshness of the city around her and transforming it to make sense in her personal journey (Interview: Pérez Tomas, 12 September 2019.) The audience watches Anís paint her world before them—reveling in its surreal, absurd, and grotesque beauty—and her ambiguous symbolism allows them to interpret it as they please; therefore, the necessity grows for the actor to use her language as the primary indication of their character analysis in building an emotional connection with the audience. Ideas from this conversation with Pérez Tomas also planted the concept of Anís

as a writer herself, who enjoys experimenting with her words and finds comfort and belonging in her lonely world through her artistic expression.

As the process continued and we moved forward with Pérez Tomas's guidance, this idea became a persistent force when interpreting the meaning of the show and how to use it to connect to our American audience. Anís's words carry a range of meaning that travel between the literal and the completely open-ended, making the relationship between the words and the actor crucial determinants of the energy of the piece and its viability to reach out to viewers. Armstrong and I placed ourselves in the role of audience as we focused deeply on images and symbols that called to us, those that compelled us and ones that could be potentially confusing. We followed the same format for each rehearsal: Armstrong communicated the actor's perspective and we discussed the effect as a listener, and she performed each subsequent draft with minor or major edits derived from our rehearsal conversations. An excerpt from a draft completed after three rehearsals is located in Appendix D where modifications are derived from these discussions, Armstrong's own natural speech inclinations, and the effectiveness of certain phrases in their spoken context versus the written. For example, Anís says "I drink dog saliva to calm myself," which at first perplexed us, but evolved into a demonstration of the character's playful absurdity, where she shocks and jokes with the audience. Also, note how the word "dots" was changed to "specks" to incorporate a more poetic language and to lift the literal translation of *pintas* to a more descriptive and lyrical interpretation, as is commonly utilized in the Argentine style.

Rehearsals continued in this form, and *The Secret Houses* refined and cultivated its own identity, balancing the Argentine and American style into a piece that had

become more than just the text on the page; it became a living work ready to be shared with an audience. An excerpt of this final reading draft is included in Appendix E, which was used for a staged reading held on the 28th of October in the Gordon Wilson Lab Theater at Western Kentucky University. Students, professors, and faculty members from the Modern Languages and Theatre & Dance Departments at WKU comprised the first American audience to interact with the work of Eugenia Pérez Tomas onstage. Overall, the first public performance of *The Secret Houses* in the context of the United States was successful. In a talk back session after the reading, the audience members responded most strongly to the images and symbols contained in Anís's words and her unique tendency to perceive her world in imaginative terms (Talk Back Session, 28 October 2019). This was the desired effect, but this also prompted questions regarding the ambiguity of the piece's genre and its treatment of reality, which re-confirmed the goal of achieving this emotional balance to relate to our American audience. Members gave suggestions to modify references to Argentine cultural elements that may not translate to a US audience, such as street names or Argentine musical artists that might improve understanding if changed to an equivalent cultural element of the United States (Talk Back Session, 28 October 2019). This preliminary public reading uncovered how an audience relates to the text and character and feedback from this event was importantly useful when crafting the artistic concept for our realized production of *The Secret Houses*. The final edited script of *The Secret Houses* is located in Appendix F.

PRODUCTION DEVELOPMENT

Performability and production vision next became the driving forces of the process where I fully took on the role of director of *The Secret Houses*, produced as part

of the WKU Department of Theatre and Dance's Studio Series. This fourth step, production development, expanded upon Versényi's studies in translation where the goal centralizes in the "production choices made by a director and an acting company seeking to universalize the emotive impact of the play" (434) for the audience. The translator's actions at this stage propel the play past the efficacy of its language, as was proved in the staged reading, and into the realm of its potential success as a performance. As director of *The Secret Houses*, my essential tasks involved generating design concepts for each technical area and complementary acting exercises to encourage deep character analysis to ensure a unified artistic vision for the entire piece. As the translator, I was required to consider each of these elements in relation to their Argentine origin, calling upon each previous step of the process to inform the piece in production. The decision to take on the dual role of playwright (in my case, translator/adapter) and director models the same convention commonly practiced in Argentine theatre and, consequently demonstrates its advantages when tackling a project of this nature. My responsibilities as director were enriched by my translation process, thus enabling me to unify my director's vision with each of its contextual elements from the beginning of production rehearsals.

As discussed earlier, *Las casas íntimas* was not in production during my research in Buenos Aires, but inspiration for its staging for its American production came from the conventions in the productions currently on the city's stages. Two in particular possessed similar elements to the original work that influenced this stage: *El equilibrista* by Patricio Abadi, Mauricio Dayub, Mariano Saba and *¿Me decís de mañana?* by César Brie, with Vera Dalla Paqua and Florencia Michalewicz. The design concepts for *The Secret Houses* mirror the conventional technical elements of these two productions, and their

contemporaries, all prime examples of Argentine style in production design (see fig. 1 and 2). My overall production vision (Appendix G) came to be: realistic props and scenery that represent the contemporary, but lived-in setting of a house, to evoke the age and passage of time in each house Anís visits; lighting that utilizes mainly shadow for dramatic effect; and sparse sound design that corresponds to Anís’s emotional response to the ambient sounds around her. With this unified concept in place, the production could move forward to focus on how the actor interacts with each of these elements throughout the rehearsal and performance.



Figure 1



Figure 2

The Secret Houses, as a solo performance piece, demands specificity in regards to actor interaction with design elements and the audience because Anís is the sole voice onstage, meaning the strength of her character determines the strength of the production. I structured rehearsals during this stage to encourage Armstrong's own character development for Anís, beginning with tactics learned from Caggiano's workshop at la Universidad de Belgrano and incorporating elements of Strasberg's "Method." For our third rehearsal, I guided Armstrong to utilize her "emotional memory" from Strasberg's teachings to construct her interpretation of Anís, rooted in the actor's personal experience, but existing within Anís's literary reality, with the poetic rhythms of *el habla porteño* at their most heightened form. In addition, Cnochaert's repetition exercises and movement-based textual analysis during his rehearsal of *Pampa Escarlata* inspired much

of these preliminary rehearsals. At this stage, elements from each countries' acting training and rehearsal practices were utilized to achieve proper character development during the rehearsal phase, thus promoting a more universally-appealing style of delivery for the American actor performing an Argentine work.

To achieve this stylistic balance in *The Secret Houses*, Armstrong had to find grounding in the poetry of the text, its endless oscillations between the real and the abstract, and their effects on Anís's storytelling. I called upon findings from a virtual meeting with Candelaria Sesín⁵, the Argentine actress who gave the original performance of Anís in the 2014 premiere of *Las casas íntimas* in Buenos Aires. Candelaria's interpretation found its grounding in the written language, in its rhythm and flow between "more tense moments or those with more energy" and the moments of "stillness" that require a strong storytelling voice, rather than a focus on the physicality (Interview, 17 September 2019). Armstrong and I had previously established the idea that Anís is a writer herself who finds comfort in embellishing her reality through words, so we paid special attention to defining these shifts in language and drawing specific objectives for each different action, using elements from Stanislavski's acting system. As the performance grew closer, my primary work with Armstrong focused on maintaining the energy of the piece and the moments where it morphs and evolves to recapture the attention of the audience. This high-energy, genre-bending style is normal Argentine actors, but once again stirs discomfort for the actor and audience born into the lineage of American realism. I continued to structure my work with Armstrong to focus on the

⁵ Sesín is a celebrated Argentine actress who has been actively working onstage and in film for over ten years. She has been recognized by el Instituto Nacional de Teatro and coordinated activities for the theatre, El Silencio de Negras.

nuances of performance between the two cultures at play as we neared the culmination of our process, the final production of *The Secret Houses*.

THE PRODUCTION

The Secret Houses premiered for North American audiences on March 3rd and 4th in the Gordon Wilson Lab Theatre, along with two other student productions, as part of the Western Kentucky University Department of Theatre and Dance's 2020 Studio Series. At the final phase in the process, the success of the project would now depend on the play's efficacy as a performed piece for its intended audience. The two performances would reveal "what is ultimately untranslatable and what constitutes the real definition of performance in different cultures" (Versényi 434) in the developmental translation of an Argentine work for an American audience. Our audiences were made up of mainly Kentucky residents, majority faculty and students of WKU, comprising a typical Southern-Midwest college production audience. *The Secret Houses* was the first performance of the night, followed by *Boise, Idaho*, by Sean Michael Welch (directed by Lily Harvey) and *Don't Fear the Reaper* by Eddie Zipperer (directed by Matthew Kerman.) Informal audience reactions to our production were overall positive and generally featured the same feedback as my fellow student directors, whose responses from a classroom discussion here serve to illustrate a more formal critique of *The Secret Houses*.

In our structured discussion, facilitated by Professor Michelle Dvoskin, Harvey and Kerman provided their directorial and audience critique to assess the holistic success of the production. The overall design concept (see fig. 3 and 4) complemented the nature

of the piece where the lighting's play with shadows and "Armstrong's interaction with the realistic scenery" aided in bringing the audience into the world of the piece (Dvoskin, et. al, 6 March 2020). The audience felt a connection to Anís, engaged by her poetic storytelling, thereby prompting a variety of interpretations and ideas in response to the more abstract themes of the piece. This effect was part of both the playwright's and our concept for the style of the piece; however, there were particular sections where the complexity of "the language was lost in translation and caused confusion for [the audience]" as they followed Anís's shifts in delivery (Dvoskin, et. al, 6 March 2020). Harvey and Dvoskin cited particular moments in the text, House #17 and House #21 (Appendix G), where rapid switches in Anís's language lost their poetic potency in performance as Armstrong moved between grotesque imagery, realistic narration, and symbolism. The audience reaction, exemplified by the critical responses from our directorial discussion, to *The Secret Houses* uncovered the achievements of this translation process, including the Argentine-inspired design elements and universal character development of Anís, and the areas to improve, such as the clarity of language in relation to performance style.



Figure 3



Figure 4

The public's reaction to *The Secret Houses* at its final phase proves that the success of a translated work is multifaceted, and that its very moments lost in translation are the gateway to breaking down those dividing barriers. Argentine theatre generously utilizes a variety of styles and genres to build a theatrical space where the audience is free to interpret and synthesize the rich language onstage; just as the actor playing Anís relates to the audience through an exploration of her curated reality. Adapting to the origin country's theatrical context with its strict genre division and strong tradition of realism posed the biggest challenge to translating this Argentine performance on the American stage. Moving forward, I hope to devote more time to Argentine performance analysis in the rehearsal room to ensure unity between acting style and the translated *porteño* text. Audience reactions like the response to *The Secret Houses* are the spark that ignites conversation about theatrical translation because they prove that viewers are interested and can be inspired to explore the area further for themselves. The feedback and support I received from this project are evidence of its success, the reaching impact just a small touch of Argentine generosity can bring to a theatrical community.

CONCLUSION

My experimentation in theatrical translation with *The Secret Houses* has unearthed the depth of research, analysis, and synthesis needed to achieve a translation that successfully reaches the artistic, sociocultural and political community of its live audience, while preserving the essence of its original language and culture. The theatre space is a medium in which elements of literary study and artistic process mix with the effects of sociocultural influence on artistic taste, making it the perfect site for studies in translation and more broadly, transculturation. As Spregelburd eloquently writes, it calls

for “the deep, unnamable, unexplainable understanding of the community that will come to see it, taking its place in a darkened theatre in order to give life back to the submerged nuances beating in the depth of every text” (377). Translations can bring an entirely new cultural experience to the theatrical community by transforming the naturally flexible theatre medium to emulate the theatrical environment of the performance’s origin country, and consequently, facilitate the growth of cultural awareness among the spectators.

The developmental process of *The Secret Houses* has confirmed the process’s complexity as an artistic-linguistic act, as well as its deeper implications as a tool in confronting cultural divisions and taking steps in broadening the scope of American theatre. The outcomes of each step in my process (creative-cultural research, literal-linguistic translation, reading rehearsals, production development, and finally, the production itself) support Adam Versényi’s assertions on how to produce an authentic translation of a South American work to a North American audience. The positive feedback *The Secret Houses* received exemplifies theatrical translation’s possibilities in bridging the gaps between the two continents’ artistic tradition and culture. When audiences go to the theatre they expect to watch a production, and more often than not, gain some deeper meaning from the performance; in this space, the epistemological nature of a process such as this reveals that “both translation and theatre are also, fundamentally, about how we experience and think about ourselves” (Versényi 447). The beginning theatrical translator can follow the steps of this process in their own work and continue to expand upon its more profound implications in development.

My experience with this project, as well as Armstrong's (who worked with the piece for three out of the five stages of translation), serves as concrete proof of translation's overarching effects on an artist's artistic, cultural, and personal growth. Anís's story she crafts in *The Secret Houses* explores the tender, emotional realm of loneliness which we, as humans, all experience; she was a ghost, a passerby, a stranger, whichever form we felt she manifested for us in that moment. All artistic pieces possess an innate universality because they were created for humans by other humans and intended to be interpreted based on the individual. The generous nature of the Argentine theatre, infused with the poetic beauty of the work of Eugenia Pérez Tomas, provided Armstrong and me with the emotional and personal connection that enriched the entire process until its culmination. Over the course of this project, I have evolved as a holistic artist in undertaking the expansive and rewarding roles of the theatrical translator from the preliminary research of *Las casas íntimas* in Buenos Aires into its premiere as *The Secret Houses* in my home state of Kentucky.

This study is a preliminary descent into the vast realm of theatrical translation and this experience has motivated me even further to pursue these studies in my future academic and professional career. By devoting more space for this study in the theatrical sphere, American theatre can open itself up to a myriad of new styles, genres and production possibilities to share with its audiences. The voices from Central and South America are calling to be heard on the American stage and it becomes the duty of the theatrical translator to answer them. Translation inhabits the spaces we already know as well as the spaces we wish to understand, and the theatre naturally provides a home for the communication between these two areas. At this point in time, the translator's work is

a crucial instrument in deconstructing the invisible divides perpetuated by our chaotic world. This work builds a theatrical space where an audience member can experiment with and learn from the created cultural world illuminated underneath the lights, all without leaving their seats. Every human is as complex and strange as the other and all it takes is one individual choice to shift our personal reality to encompass the expanse of realities existing right beside ours. And who better to illustrate this possibility than our own individual storyteller of *The Secret Houses*, Anís, who delivers the final lines of the piece, triumphant in her creation, the multifaceted masterpiece before her: “De mi casa no salgo, se hace con palabras.”

Appendix A

Estoy lejos de los grupos de gente, esa distancia se incrusta en mis huesos. Estar lejos me pone triste. Para calmarme trago saliva perruna. Hasho me abastece de una manera santa. Lava las heridas que tengo en las piernas. Pintas negras marcan mi cuerpo, parecen marcas del sol, pecas o lunares que dibujan una constelación de letras de personas que no olvido. Hasho es un perro fuerte hasta que se deshidrata y muere.

Appendix B

Subject to change

Suggestions or possibilities for translation

Grammar and vocabulary

Old phrases - maybe keep

Word - deleted and changed

Appendix C

“I’m far away from the crowds of people and I feel it settle it settles in my bones. To be so far away makes me sad. I swallow drink dog saliva to calm myself. Hasho takes care of me provides for me in an almost saintly manner. He washes the wounds on my legs. Black dots cover my body, they’re sunspots, freckles or, moles that construct a constellation of words and phrases messages from the people I don’t can’t forget. Hasho is a strong hearty dog until he dies from dehydration.”

Appendix D

“I’m far away from the crowds of people and I feel it settle in my bones. To be so far away makes me sad. I drink dog saliva to calm myself. Hasho takes care of me in an almost saintly manner. He licks the wounds on my legs until they are clean. Black specks cover my body, they’re sunspots, freckles, moles that construct a constellation of messages from the people I can’t forget. Hasho is a hearty dog until he dies from dehydration.”

Appendix E

“I’m far away from the crowds of people and I feel it settle in my bones. To be so far away makes me sad. I drink dog saliva to calm myself. Hasho cares for me in an almost saintly manner. He licks the wounds on my legs until they are healed. Black specks cover my body, they’re sunspots, freckles, moles that construct a constellation of messages from the people I can’t forget. Hasho is a hearty dog until he dies from dehydration.

Appendix F

Anis moves around the stage, with her a box and a collection of keys that changes as she goes from house to house.

House #16. Anis.

That was our plan, feign interest in the listing so we could spy on the people inside the house: what they ate, who slept in the same room, how they decorated. My mother used to make me go along with her to look at houses for rent. She'd circle listings in red in the newspaper like someone hunting for jobs. This act of spying was my weekly entertainment- to look at the appearances without destroying them. That was before, when I was ten or eleven. Now it's different. I take care of houses that spill out their belongings in cascades that cover me head to toe. I quickly adopt the customs hidden inside these objects and I become another person, leading a borrowed life. There are times when the city seems like a tiny town where everyone is asleep. For example, in this house they sleep during the day and I hardly see them. The last time we ate lunch together, all the lights went out and I exploded. I thought horribly of them, of their words, their routines and their sex. I told them they were sons of bitches. Affectionate and likeable. They're the sweethearts of consumption, the plague has taken them and they don't seem to mind. My mother never lets herself get too close because she likes to stay removed. I watch the house because it's a family home, and it's raining, like it always does in autumn. I say something about the weather, just to make conversation. It's always like that, the world around us. The grandmother, Lia, treats me better than the rest, as if I were special. The prettiest, the best, the smartest. I get embarrassed. She always says what she's thinking, which is usually objective. Uncle Rito calls me an anarchist. All because I don't believe in private property. He's a conservative. We bring our anger to the table with every meal. He thinks I'm wishy-washy, I confess I am. I apologize. Rito obliges every time. We finish lunch with coffee. In grandma Lia's house, they're scared of me, they say I escape like the white rabbit from the stories. Rito and Lia don't like that I live in strangers' houses. I don't care. I don't think what's shared is cheap.

House #17. Anis.

You can see the highway from this house. I read a banner hung across the road, so and so asks whoever something to do with their beauty. It's as reliable as putting your ear to the floor and hearing the movement of the earth, the rise of the ocean, and the cries of dying animals. I need to state: a pure heart is an identity I want to recreate that seems to fall just outside the lines of my materialism and that puts me at risk. My tongue gets excited when

I say the word love. A chunk of flesh has thoughts and desires, it moves on an impulse of stages and weights each minute. At the same time, there is an emptiness that answers me with the swirling depths of what does not exist. What bores me most there is the temperature. What is mine starts to be just that and then it's time for me to leave. I open all the windows. I let whatever I can float into the air. The hour repeats, and between two and five, the houses are all sisters. My voice gets higher, as if I had sucked helium or like I'm whistling my words. It's the mild climate. My voice doesn't prick or puncture. It doesn't sparkle. When I sleep, my feet run two steps aside. I'm better at receiving wounds than killing enemies. I'm just a little thing. I'm thankful, I am a bird shining in the city.

House #18. Anís.

At Murra's house I read aloud for the first time the three books I've written. *Artificial Assumption of the Clouds*, *The Writers that Cry*, and *Fear Shines Perfect*. His bedroom is barely treated with an almost caveman type of care. Murra watches time fall with no expectations. He's a guy with low blood pressure and a mountainous body. He has reserves of strength and embraces me in a cold wave. He covers my feet with his. He's never told me his name, but to me he's Murra. Our routine is to wake up and eat breakfast in bed, coffee with milk and bread. We watch movies until dinner. To fall asleep we touch each other, we travel far past the other side of arousal and we are two animals, looking for our own kind. We touch each other while we do that. At three or four in the morning, I drink cup after cup of water, letting it run down my throat and then I begin to read. *Artificial Assumption of the Clouds* takes us six hours. Murra never closes his eyes, never stops looking at me. *The Writers that Cry* takes us an hour, it's a novella. He cries when I finish, I start again. Two times in a row. This takes another hour. The rest of the time Murra watches TV, Anís in the shadows by the window. The next morning is the coldest one we've had. We cover ourselves in blankets and scarves, only our hands are bare and we warm them with mugs of coffee. We put on music, we have staring contests to see who can last the longest without laughing, we listen to each other's breath in our chests. We have a carnal winter. *Fear Shines Perfect*. I hear him say. *Fear Shines Perfect*. It's on the nightstand nestled on top of a lazy mess of papers. It's the story of these adolescent fisherpeople that spend each sunrise watching the sea, in awe of the sea grass, the waves, and the heavenly clouds. The fierce mist brings mussels to the surface of the sand which they eat raw. The fisherpeople don't fish and instead have sex on the beach. Murra reads: the vastness is relief, love a word, and sex a confrontation. Then Murra said the end and got dressed. He kissed my forehead and took out a little piece of paper tucked into his pants. Anís this is for you. A paper that I preferred to keep intact. I lost myself and Murra left. The polar wave too.

No house. Anís.

There are days when I don't seem to exist

I feel alone

and my house is a garden of dead leaves

roots grow from my fingers

I am a person

a body

a collection of senses

finally I seem like myself.

House #19. Anís.

House #19 is not a house. I could multiply myself into ten Aníses and there would still be enough room for all of them, for the friends of each one. Here I water the garden, I pay special attention to the edible plants. I walk the dog and pet him. I'm far away from the crowds of people and I feel it settle in my bones. To be so far away makes me sad. I drink dog saliva to calm myself. Hasho cares for me in an almost saintly manner. He licks the wounds on my legs until they are healed. Black specks cover my body, they're sunspots, freckles, moles that construct a constellation of messages from the people I can't forget. Hasho is a hearty dog until he dies from dehydration. I feel guilt rushing through my veins, it causes tiny explosions in my blood vessels, my plasma distorts, and there's a melee among the white blood cells, platelets and leukocytes. In the middle of the night, my blood is an astral river that transports oxygen and takes and carries hormones. I am a pixelated shimmer and I bounce off the mirrors of the bars on the street. I live with the palpable vocation of the spirits around me. I present a parallel life. To have likes, boyfriends, necklaces. To accumulate. But, no. I am the pocket that loses change. I can still hear Hasho barking.

House #20. Anís.

In the brick house I don't have to do anything. The power button on the TV is broken. Right in front of me, I have the power to turn it off forever. They plead with me as if they're praying to the miraculous saints, leave it on, please.

House #21. Anis.

It is not necessary for me to be with Emma in order for her to appear; what I say is not that I am in her house but that I take her with me. Anyway, Emma is a girl that nips at my ankles with addiction, like a little puppy. We hardly know each other, but we share the trust of centuries. This is her house. Emma never lets go of her caramel lollipop and always wants more. Being with her is like taking care of the future. She's so young and doesn't care one bit. I ask her if she's my daughter but she never knows or maybe she just doesn't answer. I want to play with her without burning her. I put on a song by Brule and it frightens her. With her little hands, she grabs at my breasts, it's her way of connecting herself to the world. Existence grows from the chest in the form of a bust she tells me quietly. Emma bleeds without end. She runs in circles. She pretends to faint. Before she dies, she sticks the lollipop between her legs. What do birds see? How do they wake up every morning with the strength to sing? What, what do they see? Emma bleeds blood and bleeds God knows what. The little girl told me she killed herself so she could meet the people she misses. But that doesn't happen. Now she's half-alive, half-dead. She's not a ghost, she just knows how camouflage herself completely.

No house. Anís.

I leave with little in my bag
when it's about to rain
the sky gets thick
the rain gathers everything within itself
like a purse turned upside down
the space holds the water
it conceals raindrops
it reveals the dense part of the clouds
that action of the sky is the humidity
I do the opposite of those that are careful
I don't bring anything
I don't know what I need.

House #22. Anis.

In the medical house I discover things without surprise. When faced with the wonderful, I remain calm. The things and the dreams are independent of me, they've existed there long before I laid eyes on them. Everything I see from the window. I'm surrounded by the traces left behind by the patients. It's a doctor's office and the agreement is that I leave at seven before the first comes. I can't. I hide under the couch. My body rests in suspicion. I can lick the wounds of someone else without guilt, it doesn't disgust me. I like to be among humans, even though I am silent, invisible. It's not what they say but how they say it and the gestures of their hands that seduce me. The details of the office are those of a past life. The remnants of tea leaves, something in the bathroom that's marked "staff use only." It's important that you always leave toilet paper ready to unroll.

No house. Anis.

I walk without remorse

the force of the cars doesn't run me over

I possess civilian awareness

the tranquility my heart holds is like that of post-war

the bodies scattered in the street live and watch TV

they have dogs and feed them.

I would repeat Murra's scene

an immeasurable amount of times or better yet I would live forever in that house.

House #23. Anis.

I am in the apartment on Washington street. The day and night run together. The living room is whiter, the wood is redder. From this point on, I will tell a troubling dream. There's a man. From the neck down he looks like a surfer. Neck up, he's Freud. He's using a fluorescent visor and is carrying beach things. He doesn't dodge waves; here he is flying a plane. I'm his copilot, or I serve him coffee, in the dream I don't know how to fly

the vessel, so I provide him conversation. The surfer-Freud wants to land on an island in the Pacific. We get out and there's a neon sign saying, "There's nothing here!" He breaks down, I support myself on a totem pole. I yell at him, "Freud there's no one that can tell our story!" and he slowly returns with, "Anís you are so deaf!" We continue on for a while and we do some type of musical featuring romantic themes. The clouds descend, the totem poles rise, and it rains colors. He implores me not to abandon him. His heart bursts and splatters over all that surrounds us. I wake up. Outside the dream I have two bodies and almost a thousand minds. The neon signs follow me, straining my eyes. Every time the moment lasts less, the speed of the light scrapes against tracks of the coming train, I am blinded by what the dream makes me say. But I have to go.

House #24. Anís.

I sleep on a mattress slept on by a lineage of people. I want to disrupt what occurs. In this house, the shutters open up to a shared courtyard. From outside, a sun beam pushes against the window, it wants to enter. It's hot. My face is heavy. The swollen body of mine, I am a slug in salt. Some strange noise annoys me infernally. I didn't drink today. I'm under no effect. It's four o'clock in the afternoon in a silent neighborhood, I hear a summer carnival. The bells ring in the back of my ear. Inside the eardrum, there's a blue box, or green. My eardrum squeals as if it's a pig dying of hunger in the oceanic container of my body. The friction of the noise torments me. It is sand in the distance that shifts into the shape of a monster. In an instant the green box opens and the crest of the wave takes its own life. The water against the earth soaks the air, douses it. My eardrum bursts. In the chest of days gone by, there is gold and diamonds. I appear alongside the pig of which I just spoke, with thirst and a pitcher of words. Every word I say is a house. The secret houses mix together. There is no possibility of extracting any riches. The courtyard of the condominium is wooded. The children that play there have green hair and arms like twigs. I don't move, it is a tangible sensation. When I'm thirsty, I pour water into a bowl, it's a plastic cup, but I can also call it a bowl. That insignificant fact is close to what I am sure of: water serving itself from my hand that pours it. This movement I am not going to lose, or can I lose feeling in my extremities? My thoughts strain. I use what's left of my senses and I recall memories until the point of starvation. My desire is muscle-reflex. I want to hang a bridge in between the gaps to go back and forth. The trick falls apart. Trapped in an alleyway of time. You must remain alive and accept the fruit. My frozen beating heart melts. I don't leave my house, it constructs itself with words.

Anís in the final house with her body made of earth, grass and moss.

MURRA'S NOTE

cold friend

to kiss

turns to velvet on my lips

I bring myself closer

until trembling

Appendix G

Period: modern day, but tinged with some age; all physical elements (costumes, scenery, props) should reflect the modern era in technology/design, but everything is worn in or used (perhaps from the early 2000s or so)

- **Style:** This is a lyrical show and delivered as a story told to the audience. It is more stylized and almost spoken-word in the interpretation of the actress, but the physical design elements should be realistic. Part of the poetry and style of the acting can be highlighted by lighting, as it will be more dramatic to signify her moving from house to house. I want to show the contrast here between what is real/physical and what is stylized and poetic from Anís's words and the stories she creates for herself from these objects she finds.
- **Ground plan/scenery:** I want to mimic a worn-in living room with a large couch, a big rug, a few chairs, a side table, a coffee table, books stacked on top, perhaps a coat rack. It should feel lived-in.
- **Props:** See note on Period. The script calls for a collection of keys. I want Anís to discover props/costume pieces hidden around the scenery (i.e. a ring in the couch cushion, a paper between the pages of the book) that she keeps and takes with her as the play progresses. A more detailed list will be available once the rehearsal process begins.
- **Lighting:** As stated in Style, the lighting shifts between each house/no house (about twelve transitions in total.) It is used to signify the change in place, but does not have to be dramatic each time; perhaps a spotlight/isolated light for one, a change in tone, a shift of the cyc. A TV is referenced in the script, so perhaps something that mimics the glow of a TV screen.
- **Sound (internal and pre/post show):** If applicable, I have a playlist of songs for pre-show that I like/fit to the tone of the show. Internal cues, there are a few references to weather/nature that I would like to include, such as references to rain and to the flow of waves.
- **Costuming:** See note on Period. For Anís, I was hoping for a simple, comfortable base costume in earth tones and some outerwear like a coat or a flannel since she is on the move. I also wanted to incorporate costumes with the props to mark the transitions between the houses. For example, she finds a pair of gloves, or a scarf and adds them to the things she carries with her. A more detailed list will be available once the rehearsal process begins.

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