ESSAY

In/Subordination: Pseudo/Translation and the Cultural Cold War in Juan Gelman's *The Poems of Sidney West*

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From 1968 to 1969 the major Argentine modernist Juan Gelman translated a book of poems by Sidney West. A contemporary from the United States, West wrote about life in the mid-American small town Melody Spring.[1] This inter-American exchange would seem entirely uncontroversial were it not for the fact that it is all made-up. *Traducciones III: Los poemas de Sidney West* (*Translations III: The Poems of Sidney West*) is a pseudotranslation—a text disguised as a translation that in fact has no corresponding original. As the title indicates, West is not the first invented poet Gelman translated, though he is the only one granted a book-length treatment. He follows the British John Wendell, the ambiguously lusophone Dom Pero Gonçalvez, and the Japanese Yamanokuchi Ando, who appear in sections of Gelman's *Cólera buey* (*Oxen Rage*) titled "Traducciones I" ("Translations I"; 137–78) and "Traducciones II" ("Translations II"; 191–210). "Los traducidos" ("The translated [poets]"; qtd. in Benedetti 229), as Gelman referred to them on several occasions, emerged in reaction to two shifts: Gelman's breaking with the Communist Party in Argentina, which he viewed as conservative, and the poet's growing skepticism concerning the revolutionary value of the kind of poetry he had been writing. He described this poetry as "una poesía intimista; sumado a problemas personales" ("an intimist poetry; [I] was caught up in personal issues"; qtd. in Benedetti 229) and proclaimed the need to "*extrañar[se]* de algo que [le] estaba ocurriendo" ("*estrange [himself]* from something that was happening to [him]"). He clarified,

"[E]xtrañarme lo digo en el sentido brechtiano" ("I say estrange myself in the Brechtian sense"; qtd. in Benedetti 229).

Gelman's venture into pseudotranslation thus arose from a twin motivation to estrange his poetry and to transform it into a tool for revolution. In 1960s Latin America, revolution dominated political and cultural arenas.[2] Artists and intellectuals were mobilized as part of a project aimed at catalyzing large-scale social change and breaking with imperialism in all its manifestations. Gelman's generation, the neo-avant-garde, was particularly driven by this project. They rejected the role of the poet as privileged observer, emphasizing instead poetry's communicative potential and the role of the reader as coparticipant.[3] They questioned, too, the traditional separation of formal innovation and political commitment, transforming the poetic into a space where avant-garde devices re-presented reality and sought to raise critical consciousness. The heightened continentality of the revolutionary undertaking, in tandem with the larger backdrop of the Cold War, meant that writers were acutely conscious of writing beyond the nation. Cultural exchange flourished, and it was harnessed for a range of political interests. Gelman's apocryphal poets mark the defining tendency of his 1960s verse, and they also initiate a lifelong engagement with translation as textual device and thematic thread. Gelman's later translational works include *Comentarios* (*Commentaries*), *Citas* (*Citations*), *Hacia el sur* (*To the South*), *Com/Posiciones* (*Com/Positions*), and *Dibaxu* (a Sephardic term meaning "under"), which feature real and apocryphal collaborations, bilingual works, other invented personae, and poems constructed through direct citation. Translation traverses much of Gelman's oeuvre, but it is imperative to remember that this mode of experimentation first emerges in the late 1960s, as an extreme formal response to an extreme political context.

However, Gelman's recourse to translation in his poetry has been read predominantly as a personal undertaking. Most scholars view the translated poets as heteronyms, a category associated with the Portuguese modernist Fernando Pessoa, who was known for writing under numerous fictitious personalities. While heteronyms, pseudonyms, and apocryphal personae overlap in the sense that they are all invented authorial voices, heteronomy is distinctively invested in the modes through which imaginary personalities revert to their creator: the negotiation and transformation of an inner reality (Infante 23). Gelman's trio of pseudotranslations has been analyzed primarily through this lens. Critics agree that the invented poets fragment and foreignize Gelman's poetic voice, allowing it to be simultaneously "I" and "other."[4] And scholars of Gelman's later translational works similarly reinforce a vision of translation as personal project, viewing it as a formal representation of layered identity (Gelman was the son of Jewish immigrants from Ukraine), exile, or grief. Indeed, most of the poet's experiments with translation were written in the years following the 1976 coup d'état in Argentina, which inaugurated a period of state-sponsored terrorism (1976–83). Gelman's son and pregnant daughter-in-law were among the tens of thousands of people who were disappeared, and, like many leftists, Gelman was forced into a decades-long exile. In general terms, the poet's employment of translation has often been read as a reaction to this trauma, viewed as permanently fracturing the poetic subject. In this sense, most readings may argue that Gelman's experiments with translation respond to a certain type of estrangement: distance from an integral, autobiographical poetic subject.

In this essay I view estrangement differently. As Gelman implies in referring to Bertolt Brecht, I treat estrangement as a political drive to render the familiar unfamiliar in a broad sense. I take as a point of departure that Gelman draws attention to and "makes strange" the original/translation binary so that it becomes newly perceptible to the critical reader. Such recasting invites a broader consideration of the Sidney West experiment that takes into account its status as pseudo/translation—a terminological choice I outline below—and, for the first time, the Cold War environment in which the US poet was invented and translated.[5] This context raises a new and crucial question: What are the implications of a staged inter-American exchange

between an Argentine translator and an apocryphal US poet in the Cold War climate of the late 1960s?

I begin with an in-depth contextualization of inter-American cultural dialogue in the 1960s. My reading highlights translation and literary exchange as spaces in which hemispheric Cold War power was leveraged, negotiated, and often disguised. I base my multipart readings of pseudo/translation on two primary hypotheses: first, that much can be gained from reading the West collection as embedded in and responding to Cold War cultural politics, and second, that translational protocols, because they mediate contact zones, are particularly well equipped for intervening in the soft-power mechanisms of US cultural imperialism. The West experiment evokes an image of friendly literary collaboration, yet I argue that harbored within the in/subordination of pseudo/translation lies a nuanced outlook on inter-American exchange. In this context I propose that pseudo/translation illuminates two revolutionary potentialities: anti-imperialist infiltration wherein the translator wields power over the original as well as inter-American coalition building across peripheries. In this regard I aspire to add to Harris Feinsod's study on *renga* and heteronomy in the Americas during the late 1960s as models of "alternative cosmopolitanism grounded in formal dimensions of poetics" (318) wherein the cosmopolitan ideal may be upheld or parodied.[6] Anchored in anti-imperialism and waged from periphery to center, Gelman's pseudo/translation reveals a set of additional itineraries for the era's translational experiments. In both regards Gelman's project undercuts the perception of translation as neutral mediator, revealing it instead as a space of competing ideological interests. Gelman's strange experiment renders translation's revolutionary potential visible in a new light.

This essay thus seeks to expand existing conversations on Gelman's poetry by spotlighting a political imperative for the poet's engagement of translation that predates Argentina's dirty war. More broadly, what emerges from my analysis is a reassessment of pseudo/translation from geopolitical peripheries as anti-imperialist action—an especially necessary addition to scholarship on inter-American literature in which topics of mutual exchange and open dialogue most often dominate. While I build on contemporary debates concerning translational literature and postcolonial theory, I also propose a new mode of reading. I use the term *pseudo/translation* not only to locate the procedure within a Gelmanean poetics of slash as coexistence and counterexistence (the slash is a constant device in the poet's work, used primarily to construct neologisms) but also to suggest a broader methodological shift in translation studies: the need to approach pseudo/translation both skeptically and earnestly. This bifocal lens, I argue, is needed to tease out the complex treatment of translation and geopolitics in projects that forge cross-cultural contact.[7] In this regard I follow Gideon Toury's foundational work on pseudo-translation, particularly Toury's claim that scholars of pseudotranslations must study the layers of disguise and hoax these translations present (47). I also turn to Karen Emmerich, who, in foregrounding the instability of the original, provides a model for approaching translations that deviates from text-centered discussions of fidelity and equivalence. The terms *fidelity* and *equivalence* have especially informed approaches to fake translations like the West poems. However, as Emmerich demonstrates, these translations, precisely because they lack an original against which they might be compared, "reject models of transfer and equivalence" and require scholars to consider "a different model for what translation can be" (185–86). As both concept and mode of reading, pseudo/translation treats the West poems as both translational hoax and translation proper. The lens allows me to trace both treasonous and restorative translation practices—Gelman's disruption of and collaboration with West—that transform pseudo/translation into a malleable revolutionary tool. My reference to "in/subordination" as stance further highlights the adaptability unique to the camouflage of pseudo/translation. Like Gelman's estranging of original and translation, this essay seeks to critically recast pseudotranslation as pseudo/translation in order to render this intercultural literary form newly observable in literary studies.

Translation and the Cultural Cold War

Beginning most resolutely with Frances Stonor Saunders's *The Cultural Cold War*, scholars have uncovered the inner workings of a robust apparatus of covert cultural programming, most active across the 1950s and 1960s (Barnhisel; Bennett; Cohn; Franco; Iber; Scott-Smith). It was carried out by the US government; managed by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the United States Information Agency, and the State Department's cultural affairs offices; and supported by the Ford, Rockefeller, and Carnegie family philanthropies. The ultimate goal of this apparatus was to win (in keeping with the sexist conventions of the era) the "battle for men's minds," to "inoculate the world against the contagion of Communism and ease the passage of [US] foreign policy interests abroad" (Stonor Saunders 1–2). Mobilizing an array of cultural weapons, the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF) and its peer organizations ran cultural events to promote apolitical aesthetics, published and translated authors who toed the Washington line, and subsidized journals that fostered the spread of values aligned with US interests. These organizations spread criticism of Marxism, communism, and revolution, propagating in turn a rhetoric of individualism, freedom of expression, and democracy. They did so while sidestepping the hypocrisy of the United States' antidemocratic imperialist interventions abroad and systematic enforcement of Jim Crow segregation at home.

While Europe was the primary site of Cold War propaganda in the 1940s and 1950s, the 1959 Cuban Revolution triggered the need to dedicate both military and cultural resources to a multifaceted plan to isolate Cuba. Most urgent for the United States, as Deborah Cohn chronicles, was the need to "mak[e] U.S. culture attractive to" Latin Americans in order to offset the mounting influence of Cuba's Casa de las Américas, which had become *the* center of leftist politics and art in Latin America (27). The organization and its eponymous journal, founded in 1959 and 1961, respectively, sought to extend Fidel Castro's 26th of July movement into the cultural sphere by mobilizing artists and intellectuals as key players "in ushering in change and, in particular, in bringing to all of Spanish America the social justice that was being implemented in Cuba" (25). Cold War cultural policies in the United States similarly acknowledged the influence of artists and intellectuals at this moment of major geopolitical uncertainty and sought to regulate, mold, and channel that influence in order to maintain US dominance in the hemisphere.

Crucial to such a project was the strategic depoliticization of Anglo-American modernism, which would then be exported across the globe. A new apolitical cultural standard based on supposedly objective gold standards of writing sought to move modernism away from social commentary and toward a category defined by artistic techniques.[8] Greg Barnhisel details how CCF-sponsored journals, like *Perspectives* (based in the United States) and *Encounters* (based in the United Kingdom), made the kind of art produced by the US Left safe for official sponsorship (184). The goal, Barnhisel claims, was to direct modernism "away from its radical origins and toward bourgeois individualism," to transform it "from an avant-garde, oppositional movement to a style, common to the fine and applied arts alike, that could be comfortably embraced by diverse spheres of elite culture," and to create "a coalition of elites in the private sector who embraced modernism as [the United States'] high culture" (179). The main tenet of the institutionalized apolitical preference—the dogma of the artist as a purportedly free individual whose art should speak to human particularity rather than collective causes—was intended to clearly distinguish modernism from socialist realism. The CCF's Latin American magazines, *Cuadernos del Congreso por la Libertad de la Cultura* (1953–65) and *Mundo Nuevo* (1965–71), served, to some degree, as echo chambers for this ideal. Their content monitored by the CCF, these venues played a role in furthering the apolitical trend. According to Claudia Gilman, the overarching purpose of these periodicals, particularly *Mundo Nuevo*, "era trabajar por la 'neutralidad' de la cultura y estimular una gradual despolitización del intelectual latinoamericano, sedar a los intelectuales" ("was to work for the 'neutrality' of culture

and to stimulate a gradual depoliticization of Latin American intellectuals, to sedate the intellectuals"; 122).

Inter-American cultural projects like these were part of a wider effort to court Latin American intellectuals and to mold them into ambassadors of "American values"—the phrase's appropriation of the entire hemisphere's name may also reveal the imperialist gesture. The United States sought to surveil and regulate information channels to Latin America, preferring "unidirectional flows of information" that told Latin Americans about the United States to "free exchange between citizens and private organizations" (Barnhisel 14). At the same time, the United States attempted to regulate which ideas from and about Latin America reached its citizens. Key to this aim was the strict enforcement of the McCarran-Walter Act, which legalized the denial of visas based on suspicions of communist affiliation;[9] the State Department's funding of clandestine sociological research on Latin America;[10] and the rise of subsidized translation initiatives, which helped regulate the types of literature that circulated in English.[11] This proposition can be seen in the 1966 application for renewal of the Rockefeller Latin American Translation Program, which financed the translation of eighty-three books into English between 1960 and 1966. It claimed the following: "[T]he value of the program to scholarship and international understanding has been far greater than sales and monetary returns would indicate. . . . If the effort can be continued for another four years, we believe the North American view of Latin American literature can be transformed" (qtd. in Cohn 144).

It may thus be stated that inter-American translation, as both lure for foreign writers and perception-shifting device for readerships, was a space of Cold War power. This reality became increasingly evident in the course of the 1960s, coming to a head in 1966 with the publication of a series of articles in *The New York Times*. The stories uncovered the multilayered campaigns, both cultural and military, that the CIA carried out across the globe under a "cloak of secrecy" and in the name of "national interests" (Wicker et al., "C.I.A. Is Spying" 1).[12] This news—

combined with the Chilean poet Pablo Neruda's controversial decision just a few weeks later to participate in the PEN International Congress, linked to the CIA by way of the CCF—was received with much alarm by leftist circles in Latin America. An open letter to Neruda, printed first in the Cuban newspaper *Granma*, sought to spread awareness of a cultural cold war, declaring "en todo el continente un estado de alerta contra la nueva penetración imperialista en el campo de cultura" ("a state of alert across the continent against the new imperialist penetration into the cultural arena"; "Carta abierta" 131). Naming the CCF, magazines, grant programs, and translation initiatives, the letter aimed to raise awareness of soft-power mechanisms of US imperialism. Dozens of signees claimed that rhetoric of the "nueva izquierda" ("new Left") and "coexistencia literaria" ("literary coexistence") in the hemispheric cultural arena represented "nuevos instrumentos de dominación de nuestros pueblos" ("new instruments for the domination of our peoples"; 133). The letter, and similar writings from the months following it, points to widespread awareness in Latin America by the end of 1966 of US imperialism operating under the guise of cultural diplomacy initiatives.

Situated in this hemispheric context (according to Gelman, the book was composed between 1968 and 1969), *The Poems of Sidney West* urges a new reading. In disguising this text as a translation, Gelman brings to the fore a relationship supposedly based on amicable literary exchange—in line with official US rhetoric of hemispheric programming—to instead reveal it as a heavily contested, manipulative space of competing cultural and political interests. It can begin to be seen why poetic practices that forge or otherwise politicize translation might offer a means to intervene in this Cold War battleground and to defamiliarize translation as a presumably neutral activity. From here I make two claims. First, I propose that pseudo/translation functions as an anti-imperialist tool that enables Gelman to occupy an in/subordinate position in relation to West's original. Through a veil of authenticity and under the subordinate guise of translation, the pseudo/translator destabilizes the US source text and culture, inverting center/periphery Cold War

power dynamics. Second, if casting this work as staging an earnest collaboration, West's poetry can be understood as an expression of solidarity with the socially disenfranchised and as a critique of US capitalism and individualism. I argue that the West pseudo/translation suggests the potential for recovering a peripheral US modernism and returning to it its role of social commentary, thus facilitating anti-imperialist inter-American solidarity.

Pseudo/Translation as Anti-Imperialist Infiltration

The Poems of Sidney West, along with other works by Gelman that make generative use of translation, can be situated in the category of translational writing—texts that engage translations but that are not actual literary translations, blurring the line between original and unoriginal writing. Waïl Hassan's classification of translational literature crucially theorizes such engagements as responding to and producing cross-cultural dynamics:

> In the space between translators and translated, there are texts that straddle two languages, at once foregrounding, performing, and problematizing the act of translation; they participate in the construction of cultural identities from that in-between space and raise many of the questions that preoccupy contemporary translation theory. I call such texts translational literature. While all bilingual and multilingual discourse dramatizes the interaction of languages, *the texts in question lay special emphasis on translation as an essential component of cross-cultural contact.*   ("Agency" 754; my emphasis)

For Hassan, translational writing is motivated by a drive to engage in this cross-cultural zone as mediator while spotlighting abstract issues surrounding the transmission of linguistic, cultural, or literary information. The West experiment belongs to a subcategory within the wider translational umbrella; pseudo/translation displays both tentacles highlighted by Hassan in its careful self-presentation as a product of interlingual translation despite its lack of a corresponding source text.

Scholars of apocryphal translation have pinpointed many possible reasons for an author's

choice to experiment with this type of translation, ranging from homage to subversion (Apter; Mayhew; Gürçağlar; O'Sullivan; Santoyo; Toury; Venuti, *Scandals*; Toremans and Vanacker). The goal of apocryphal translation may be to introduce aesthetic innovations to a target culture, to evade censorship, or to experiment with various poetic forms (rewriting, pastiche, heteroglossia, heteronomy). Recently, Emmerich and Rebecca DeWald have each centered pseudo/translation's unique ability to destabilize the category of the original, thus disrupting coherent notions of authorship and originality across all literature.[13] I find Hassan's model particularly relevant to the West pseudo/translation because it locates the critical value of this type of writing in the performance of cross-cultural contact—a performance, moreover, that calls attention to its status as performance. Therefore, although pseudo/translation foregrounds an intertextual negotiation—the relationship between (fictitious) original and (fictitious) translation, which can be measured by a degree of equivalency—Hassan emphasizes the extratextual relationship also negotiated: between (real) source culture and (real) target culture.

According to Jonathan Mayhew, this dynamic may be more pronounced in translational texts than in actual interlingual translations: "When the original text does not exist at all, then, we get a pure vision of how one culture might imagine another" (xiv). Such a relationship invariably implies a power imbalance. As Toury notes, the disguise of translation "always suggests *an implied act of subordination*, namely to a culture and language which are considered prestigious, important, or dominant in any other way" (50; my emphasis). Sergio Waisman emphasizes, however, that pseudo/translation from the periphery and pseudo/translation from the center represent two fundamentally distinct activities. "Innovation from the periphery," writes Waisman, "is never mere literary technique, just as mistranslation from the periphery is never only playful equivocation. . . . To innovate from the margins—to reread, rewrite, to mistranslate—is to challenge center-periphery dichotomies by remapping accepted cultural and political relationships" (154). The subordinate positioning may thus be strategically feigned. In the

case of the West poems, the Argentine pseudo/translator's in/subordinate engagement of the US original has implications that cannot be separated from the context of Cold War cultural exchange.

The peritext of Gelman's pseudo/translation communicates information about the nature of this relationship. The title and byline, "*Translations III: The Poems of Sidney West* by Juan Gelman," foreground the West-Gelman dynamic, subordinating Gelman's authorial position relative to West's. An epigraph continues the text's effort to present itself as a translation: "Traducción, ¿es traición? / La poesía, ¿es traducción?" ("Translation, is it treason? / Poetry, is it translation?"; *Traducciones*; *Poems*). Attributed to a certain Po I-po, the first interrogation rewrites the Italian adage "tradutorre, traditore" ("translator, traitor"), a staple of early thinking that posits translation across a spectrum of deception, manipulation, loss, or even impossibility. As Hassan articulates, the phrase points to the most worrisome outcome of literary translation: "the original is viewed as sacrosanct . . . while the translation is seen, at best, as imperfect and deficient and, at worst, as an adulteration, a profanation, and a betrayal" ("Translational Literature" 1435). Po I-po evokes the anxiety surrounding translation's unique ability to undetectably morph from faithful replica to internal threat. The reference to treason is noteworthy, especially given the hostility of US–Latin American relations in the late 1960s.

Po I-po's first question suggests that the treasonous actor (Gelman, the translator) turns against the source (West) and state (the United States) of his translation. However, the second interrogation, which posits all poetry as translation, suggests that the poet is always a treasonous subject, a betrayer of all states. It is possible to read the epigraph as responsive to the Cold War cultural policy of the United States, but, for now, I want to highlight the pseudo/translator's choice to foreground the West poems within the realm of treason. At the same time, the rhetorical questions unsettle conventional notions of ownership and origin, complicating the presumably simple relationship between author and translator: West's and Gelman's work becomes indistinguishable, and neat national traditions

(Argentine, US, Chinese, and Italian) are thrown into disarray. It comes, then, as little surprise that Po I-po never wrote these lines; he, like West, exists only in Gelman's imagination. Therefore, while these peritextual markers do seek to convincingly display the project as an actual translation, they punctuate pseudo/translation not as playful equivocation, to reprise Waisman, but as subversive infiltration of the center from the periphery. The epigraph thus activates treason as an expectation against which to read Gelman's role as pseudo/translator, casting subordination as a strategic disguise.

Despite the dubious origin of the epigraph, the poems themselves are squarely situated within the particularities of an imagined North American geolinguistic zone called Melody Spring. The area, whose name conjures a quintessential mid-American small town, is home to thirty-four deceased former residents whose unremarkable lives and deaths are documented by West. The titles of the poems communicate this ethnographic information; all but one are identified as laments, include the name of a Melody Spring inhabitant, and eulogize the recent death of that inhabitant. The names in particular are intended to evoke a distant anglophone culture. Monikers like Mecha Vaugham, Butch Butchanam, Warren S. W. Comororan, and Bigart Sample do point to English-language origin, but they do so in parody, appearing exaggerated or slightly off: "Vaugham" instead of "Vaughn," "Butchanam" as a possible variation of "Buchanan," and so on. Moreover, Gelman curiously opts for Raf, Cab, Sim, and Ost rather than readily known popular alternatives, such as John, the anglophone version of his own name.

In addition to the names of the townspeople, abundant place-names serve as recognizable markers of the text's geographic origin. Beginning with Melody Spring, these indicators signal, on the one hand, an idyllic, pastoral space and, on the other, one that immediately connotes the United States while offering no further specificity—the choice of West for the author's surname reinforces both gazes. Many invented toponyms, like Cochrane Street (Gelman, *Traducciones* 29; Gelman, *Poems* 31), Ginger Street (13; 7), Spoker Hill (18; 13), and Oak

Cemetery (36, 37; 45, 113), are believably Anglo-American, if ambiguous, but references to authentic geographic locations are less convincing, ultimately charting impossible coordinates for Melody Spring. West's rural small town supposedly comprises Alabama (51; 71), Santa Monica (75; 109), several cities in Ohio (14, 41, 73, 80; 9, 53, 107, 119), Dakota (without the necessary qualifier of "North" or "South"; 37; 47), and a Louisiana that borders the Atlantic Ocean (37; 47). To some extent, this ethnographic and geographic information furthers the claim that Melody Spring, West, and the deceased townspeople actually exist, especially for readers who are largely unfamiliar with the United States.[14] Nevertheless, such toponymic inaccuracies and inconsistencies suggest that the geographic markers are less invested in persuasive realism—and thus in bolstering the claim to translation—and more so in conjuring a US space and populace in the intercultural imaginary of Gelman's readership as object of translational intervention.

Translational texts, Hassan maintains, are especially well equipped to intervene in what Mary Louise Pratt has designated a "contact zone" (33), since they are always mediated and contested by translation's border crossings (Hassan, "Agency" 756). This idea responds to a broader postcolonial turn in translation studies that increasingly investigates translation "as a cultural artefact that is deeply entrenched in the historical reality of its production," signaling a "relationship between the cultures it traverses" (Wang 200). For Hassan and others, translation does not simply signal cross-cultural relationships; rather, it produces, challenges, and remaps those relationships. In other words, translation is malleable, "equally capable of maintaining or disrupting" relations of "domination and dependence" (Venuti, Scandals 158). By extension, translational literature intensifies this malleability because of its unique positionality. If "the original and its translation are caught in a dialectic of power and resistance" (Hassan, "Translational Literature" 1435), translational texts occupy neither end of the dialectic but a liminal space between them, negotiating both the conditions and the outcomes of a contact zone.

The subversion of translation lies precisely in its ambivalence, its double existence as passive copy and active agency, an idea that evokes Homi Bhabha's theory of mimicry. *Mimicry*, according to Bhabha, denotes the process by which colonies are reproduced as imperfect copies of the imperial center, as "a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*" (122).[15] Under this dynamic, the colonized are fated to be a translation of the colonizer, always derivative, flawed, inauthentic, and inferior. Bhabha's theory, however, recognizes the power of translation's liminality:[16] a "double vision," a "double articulation" (122), wherein "mimicry is at once resemblance and menace" (123), an idea evocative of the dual existence of pseudo/translation. The cultural and sociohistorical matrices of power that Bhabha locates at the heart of mimicry's mediations were certainly at play in inter-American relations during the Cold War, and they texture the contact zone of the West collection. Therefore, Bhabha's theory is useful in tracing both the verisimilitude and the hoax of the West translation in terms of the unique motivations and effects of peripheral translation practices that engage political and cultural centers. The faked realism of Melody Spring, through personal names and toponyms, exemplifies what Bhabha pinpoints as effective mimicry: the continual production of slippage, excess, and difference from the copied source (122). That a strategy to increase authenticity also manifests an interdiscursive position, one that simultaneously respects and deviates from cultural and linguistic rules, indicates the harboring of noncompliance toward both source text and culture.

The nature of cross-cultural mimicry is also communicated through the appropriation of a genre that implies specific formal and content-based procedures—the lament. "One of the most universal and primordial forms of human utterance" (Nicholson, "Reluctant Troubadour" 176), the lament is most fundamentally an expression of grief and mourning that "reaches back to the beginnings of recorded culture," primarily in the West (Cavitch 781). While the genre's long history avoids neat correlation with any one national tradition, María del Carmen Sillato notes that the

lament's modern resurgence is most often associated with early-twentieth-century poetry from the United States.[17] Melanie Nicholson suggests that the West poems evoke many of the qualities of the Anglo-American modernist lament, mainly by intensifying the poems' "sonorous qualities, in particular anaphora and other forms of repetition, enumerations, and rhetorical questions" ("Reluctant Troubadour" 178).

Indeed, the use of emotive exclamations and expressions of grief anchors the West poems in the genre. That each poem shares the same speaker, presumably West himself, highlights the lament's purpose: namely, "to reinforce social bonds among the living" following great loss (Nicholson, "Reluctant Troubadour" 178). Consider, for instance, "Lamento por Gallagher Bentham" ("Lament for Gallagher Bentham"; Gelman, *Traducciones* 17–18; Gelman, *Poems* 11, 13):

> ¡ah gallagher bentham gran padre!
> pueblos enteros habría fundado nada más con sus hijos
> de haberlos querido tener
> de no haber sido por los versos
> que no piden de comer y es de lo poco que tienen a favor.
> (18)

> oh gallagher bentham great father!
> entire towns he would have founded with nothing
> more than his children
> had he wanted to have them
> had it not been for the verses
> who do not ask to eat and it is the little in their favor.
> (11)

The poem eulogizes Bentham by mourning his lost potential. However, the lament is, quite simply, off. Bentham's unfulfilled potential does not correlate with his desires (the children he could have had but never wanted) or with his social class (the power he could have had if other options had been economically available to him). In fact, the speaker seems not to know the deceased very well at all, rendering the core function of the lament—the expression of grief over the loss of a loved one—difficult to perform. As Kate Jenckes observes, "[T]he subjects cannot be eulogized or witnessed in any

straightforward sense, since the limits of their lives and deaths are difficult to pin down" (162). Each poem mimics this framework: it evokes the formal shell of a lament, but the sincere sense of tragic loss is absent. Moreover, nearly all the laments are directed not at human subjects but at possessions belonging to the deceased, including body parts ("la tripa de helen carmody" ["helen carmody's gut"; Gelman, *Traducciones* 49; Gelman, *Poems* 67]), flora and fauna ("el árbolito de philip" ["philip's tiny tree"; 13; 7]), inanimate objects ("la camisa de sam dale" ["sam dale's shirt"; 55; 75]), and nontangible nouns ("el furor de roy hennigan" ["roy hennigan's rage"; 73; 107]). The poems remove the source of grief from the lament and, in turn, the source text from a coherent literary tradition.

The representation of death marks slippage too. The speaker recounts death matter-of-factly: "como suele ocurrir philip murió" ("as it often happens philip died"; Gelman, *Traducciones* 14; Gelman, *Poems* 9); "de modo que murió nomás" ("and so it happened he just up and died"; 18; 11); "esa noche naturalmente stanley hook se murió" ("that night naturally stanley hook died"; 24; 23). Such affirmations replace the tragic tone of the lament with one of banality, to such a degree that the poems assume an ironic and comical tenor. Rather than being acknowledged with oral and kinetic responses typical of the lament, like "ritualized vocal gestures and symbolic movements such as wailing or breast-beating" (Cavitch 781), deaths in Melody Spring are received with indifference and relative inaction: "no hubo sollozos gritos flores sobre su corazón" ("there were no sobs screams flowers over his heart"; Gelman, *Traducciones* 22; Gelman, *Poems* 15); "y nadie habla de bob chambers" ("and no one speaks of bob chambers"; 46; 61); "ni perro ni hombre ni mujer o gato seguía su cajón" ("not dog not man not woman or cat followed his coffin"; 77; 113). In other poems, neighbors react with anger and malice, cursing the deceased ("ahí va gallagher bentham el desgraciado malparido" ["there goes gallagher bentham that wretched son of a bitch"; 17; 11]) and, later, slicing up his body "para alegría de los chicos" ("to the happiness of the children"; 18; 13). After Butch

Butchanam's death, neighbors kill and eat his most cherished possession, a turtle dove (20; 17).

The pseudo/translation's appropriation of the lament strips the genre of its core content, emptying West's poems of their corresponding emotion and removing them from their literary lineage. But in looking beyond the layer of comedy to contemplate the text's attempts at authenticity (genre, geography, naming conventions), the text's sharp critique of the mid-American culture it documents is evident. Witnesses do not protest or mourn their neighbors' deaths; rather than evoke a sense of community, the Melody Spring laments "signal solitude and isolation, both before and after death" (Nicholson, "Reluctant Troubadour" 178). If translational texts are positioned to "resist the power differentials that influence the work of the translator and reproduce stereotyped cultural identities" (Hassan, "Agency" 754), Gelman's pseudo/translation can be seen to resist existing power imbalances by inverting them and reproducing a US cultural identity that is antagonistically stereotypical. Indeed, the threat posed by Gelman's double articulation, to reprise Bhabha, transcends a reluctance to fit within generic conventions; its true threat lies in its depiction of this mid-American enclave as apathetic, individualist, and dehumanizing.

The abnormalities of these quasi laments thus communicate essential information about the text's attitude toward its source material. Gelman's translation of West does not introduce aesthetic innovations into the target culture by iteratively extending the lament or the cultural values of Melody Spring. Instead, the motion is most akin to parody, which Mayhew defines in relation to apocryphal translation as "the procedure of emptying a particular poetic *form* and its *contents*," often through the replacement of "the serious with the comic while maintaining recognizable formal and stylistic elements" (110). Pseudo/translation, mimicry, and parody thus overlap in their authenticities and deviations. Following Bhabha, translation that is structured around the use of mimicry or parody entails the potential to menace, to morph into an increasingly hostile copy, at the translator's command. Or, as Heather Cleary stresses, highlighting

the agency of this role, whether real or performed, "[T]he translator is both the vehicle that allows for the transfer of information across languages and cultures, and a point of friction within that transfer" (11). Indeed, the Anglo-American society depicted in the West poems—overrun by rugged individualism, amorality, and emotionlessness—counters the image of the United States that circulated across the globe during the Cold War. Importantly, pseudo/translation is a tool that infiltrates, produces friction, and disrupts this potent imagery from within, all under the mask of subordination. Crucially, Gelman constructs a blueprint for an inter-American translation practice that is treasonously anti-US and anti-imperialist.

This reading is nevertheless incomplete. The pseudo/translator's attitude toward West is not only antagonistic but also receptive, and these poems are positioned not only within a global center but also within a national periphery. While these dynamics may appear contradictory, they are crucial for understanding the multifaceted and nuanced politics of Gelman's experiment. In what follows I offer an examination of Gelman's attitude toward West that seriously considers the possibility that the pseudo/translation stages an earnest collaboration.

Pseudo/Translation as Inter-American Coalition Building

Many have suggested that the West poems have a real source text, considering them a rewriting of Edgar Lee Masters's 1915 *Spoon River Anthology*, which Percy Holmes Boynton qualified in 1924 as "altogether the most read and talked-of volume of poetry that had ever been written in [the United States]" (52).[18] The book features 244 free-verse monologues spoken from beyond the grave by residents of a cemetery in Spoon River, a fictitious small town in Illinois. The deceased tell of their lives and, more often than not, their oppression, misfortunes, and miseries. As Martín Espada puts it, *Spoon River* rebuts "the idealized fable of small-town America still packaged and sold today in one political campaign after another. Here there is greed, lust, betrayal, corruption, poverty, addiction, war, rape,

and murder. The rich dominate the poor; men impose their will on women; white people brutalize the few who aren't white" (53). The parallels between the Spoon River poems and the Melody Spring poems are difficult to deny. They both eulogize fictitious inhabitants of apocryphal rural communities in the United States through the lament (though Masters's poems are narrated in the first person, and Gelman's in the third). The characters' lives and deaths, which may seem unusual for a small town, go largely unnoticed and unmourned. Further, "el cementerio de Oak" ("Oak Cemetery"), mentioned across the West poems, would seem to refer to Oak Hill Cemetery. Located in Masters's hometown of Lewistown, Illinois, it is considered the inspiration for *Spoon River*, and many names included in Masters's epitaphs can be traced to actual tombstones in Oak Hill. Moreover, Masters's apocryphal anthology, given that he first published excerpts under the pseudonym Webster Ford, edges up to the line separating original and unoriginal writing.

Although Gelman denied any connection to Masters,[19] evidence suggests that *Spoon River* serves as an intertext for the West poems—the former likely appeared on Gelman's radar by way of its mention in *Introducción a la literatura norteamericana* (*Introduction to North American Literature*), published in 1967 by Gelman's compatriot Jorge Luis Borges (45–46). This intertextual relationship complicates the reading of pseudo/translation and, especially, the political positioning of West and the Melody Spring narratives. In other words, if *Spoon River* offers social commentary, a sharp critique of long-established national values, through modernist formal devices like free verse, narrativity, and the absence of metaphor, it may be said to embody a politically committed avant-garde that stands in solidarity with the periphery and in opposition to hegemonic centers. The West poems, then—in their disruption of the apolitical co-optation of US modernism during the Cold War—may follow in this lineage, harboring a revolutionary message.

Viewed in this light, the decision to invent a Masters-inspired Sidney West writing about a Spoon River–inspired town broadens the motivations for and uses of pseudo/translation in the

inter-American Cold War context. While much of Gelman's project evinces a hostile stance toward its source material, the revolutionary potential of West's work is palpable. Katherine M. Hedeen and Víctor Rodríguez Núñez argue that the largely disregarded nature of the deaths in *The Poems of Sidney West* demonstrates the social marginality of "these thirty-five oppressed and repressed characters" ("Juan Gelman: Translation" xiv). Similarly, Alberto Julián Pérez suggests that the deaths are tied to "la agonía social" ("social agony") and offer "la crítica de la decadencia capitalista" ("a critique of capitalist decadence"; 384).[20] Many of the townspeople dream of a life beyond Melody Spring, but society restricts their potential. Take Johnny Petsum, who "lloraba por las tardes / en el w.c. de la Coronation Inc Corp" ("cried every afternoon / in the w.c. of Coronation Inc Corp") while working on a robotic assembly line that costs him his body and soul (Gelman, *Traducciones* 61; Gelman, *Poems* 83).

Indeed, the townspeople suffer in plain sight, die in plain sight, and are buried in plain sight, and none of this seems alarming to the community. That many return to nature postmortem—flowers grow from David Burnham's corpse (43; 57), Raf Salinger dissolves into the earth (68; 95), two rivers sprout from Sim Simmons's body (64; 89)—renders them both marginal and cyclical even in death. Their lives and deaths are, effectively, part of the natural cycle of the social logic of Melody Spring, which West's (or Gelman's) reader is meant to understand as perverse and dehumanizing. In considering this collection as enacting an earnest literary collaboration, then, West emerges as a politically committed poet who rescues these marginal stories from the oblivion of a capitalist society and records the suffering of this peripheral populace. Gelman's choice to invent West—whom Pérez describes as "un poeta contestatario norteamericano" ("a contestatory North American poet"; 400) —underscores pseudo/translation's potential as a tool for coalition building between inter-American peripheries.

According to Espada, Masters "subscribes to Whitman's decree that the duty of the poet is to 'cheer up slaves and horrify despots,' identifying

with the most marginalized and despised citizens of Spoon River, condemning the powerbrokers" (53). In no other West poem is this potential for revolutionary solidarity more visible than in the opening poem of the collection, "Lamento por la muerte de Parsifal Hoolig" ("Lament for the Death of Parsifal Hoolig"; Gelman, *Traducciones* 9–11; Gelman, *Poems* 3, 5). The poem likely depicts a scene following the Haymarket Riot in Chicago on 4 May 1886, which took place while workers protested as part of a national movement for an eight-hour workday. The riot turned violent, and both police officers and civilians were killed, while many more were injured ("Haymarket Affair"). West portrays Hoolig as one of those murdered civilians, dead with twenty-five cents in his pocket and "las manos abiertamente grises" ("hands openly gray"), presumably from the exploitative physical labor that drove him to protest (Gelman, *Traducciones* 10; Gelman, *Poems* 3). West's role is to record the memory of the man's fate. Indeed, his commitment to documenting Hoolig's death supplements mainstream records; the dead man's obituary did not appear "en el *New York Times* ni el *Chicago Tribune* se ocupó de él" ("in the *New York Times* and the *Chicago Tribune* paid no attention to him"; 10; 5). West's poetry serves as an essential channel for this marginal US history, which the prestigious publications from major metropolitan areas deemed too inconsequential to document.

Also noteworthy is that the poem contains descriptions evocative of magical realism, beginning with the claim, "empezó a llover vacas" ("it began to rain cows"; 9; 3). Before lamenting the death of Hoolig, who was found "muerto varias veces" ("dead several times"; 10; 3), West recounts a strange scene: "a unos se les caía el pecho y la espalda a otros y nada a los demás / a Dios lo encontraron muerto varias veces / y los viejos volaban por el aire agarrados a sus testículos resecos / . . . / y varios perros asentían y brindaban con armenio coñac" ("the chests fell off of some [people] and the backs off others and as for the rest nothing fell off at all / and they found God dead several times / and old men flew through the air holding tightly to their dried testicles /. . . / and various dogs approved and toasted

with Armenian cognac"; 9–10; 3). As Hedeen and Rodríguez Núñez underline ("Juan Gelman: Translation" xiv), strange happenings like these appear throughout the West poems: Cab Cunningham and Tom Steward levitate (Gelman, *Traducciones* 28, 33; Gelman, *Poems* 29, 43); Ost Maloney drinks the entire sea like a shot of whisky (37; 47); Mecha Vaugham lives inside her own uterus (33; 39). In emphasizing the potentially hostile nature of pseudo/translation, such depictions can be read as part of the project of parodying an Anglo-American imperialist worldview, a project that upends a hierarchy grounded in a rhetoric of North as home to a positivist (i.e., an intellectual, rational) way of thinking, which is contrasted with the spirituality (i.e., the emotion and irrationality) of South. However, in viewing this exchange earnestly, as a translation of a socially committed modernist, then the postcolonial resource of magical realism indicates fissures in the US claim to the democracy of capitalist modernization. The text's use of magical realism—which emerged as part of the legacy of coloniality in postcolonial nations, as a means of articulating "difference from the dominant colonial and racial oppressors" and "interrogat[ing] the assumptions of Western, rational, linear narrative" (Ashcroft et al. 148, 149)—locates Melody Spring within a shared space of sociohistorical oppression.

Gelman's choice to translate West—and, more precisely, the peripheral stories of suffering he relates—is therefore more layered than it first appears. Melody Spring represents both a space of quintessential US values and an overlooked periphery that also suffers from the unequal social contracts of capitalism and empire. In this regard, Melody Spring is not necessarily particular to the United States; in fact, Gelman commented that the town mirrors the atmosphere of "un pueblito del sur de la provincial de Buenos Aires" ("a small town in the south of the province of Buenos Aires"; qtd. in Benedetti 229–30) while also remarking that the book reflects "la influencia de la revolución cubana" ("the influence of the Cuban Revolution"; Gelman, "Poesía" 157–58). In this regard, *The Poems of Sidney West* demystifies the

monolithic image of the United States, presenting the possibility of inter-American solidarity outside official programming and on anti-imperialist terms. It is relevant, then, that West emerges as a contemporary of Gelman, writing on a shared hemispheric timeline: a textual reference to 1962 indicates that the original was written not long before Gelman began to translate it in 1968 (Gelman, *Traducciones* 21; Gelman, *Poems* 19). In contrast to Gelman's later translational poetry, which enacts deliberate anachronism and a desire to reroute literary works predominantly from much older traditions, the West translation manifests immediacy, a drive to engage in a contemporary intercultural web. Here, translation is treason, an act against the state, but Gelman rescues West as an anti-imperialist coconspirator. The experiment may thus serve to revive a politically committed avant-garde—one rendered artistically inferior by Cold War literary policy in the United States. Redirected through pseudo/translation, Gelman's project indicates the possibility of returning mid-century US modernism to explicit social commentary in the service of social transformation.

Conclusion; or, "Fe de erratas"

The Poems of Sidney West ultimately foregrounds the power of pseudo/translation as a tool for the politically committed pseudo/translator. Gelman uses pseudo/translation not only to disrupt source text and culture from within, thus reappropriating inter-American Cold War exchange for an anti-imperialist project, but also to rescue the possibility of coalition building between Latin America and oppressed margins of the United States, thereby positioning translation as part of the practice of a continental avant-garde that probes social order and catalyzes change. Moreover, the collection offers essential insight into the Cold War era, embedding within its translational formulation a response to the political and cultural climate of the late 1960s. This reading challenges interpretations that do not sufficiently consider the text's exterior relationality and that understate its politics. The experiment is also essential to understanding Gelman's career-long

commitment to translational poetry. But the West project highlights yet another possible use for pseudo/translation, seen most strikingly in its final poem, "Fe de erratas" ("Erratum"; Gelman, *Traducciones* 84–87; Gelman, *Poems* 129, 131).

The title itself marks a clear break from the preceding thirty-four poems; it refers neither to the lament nor to Melody Spring but to the publishing practice of errata, and the speaker no longer pretends to be West. Following the custom of an erratum, a voice conjuring the pseudo/translator lists the errors in the text: "donde dice 'salió de sí como de un calabozo' (página tal verso cual) / podría decir 'el arbolito creció y creció' o alguna otra equivocación" ("where it says 'he escaped from himself as from a prison cell' (page such and such verse whatever) / it could say 'the tiny tree grew and grew' or some other error"; 85; 129). Not only is the contrast between what is said and what could be said rather extreme, but both variations are actually located in the text, in "Lamento por la gente de Raf Salinger" ("Lament for Raf Salinger's People"; 67–68; 95, 97) and "Lamento por el uteró [sic] de Mecha Vaugham" ("Lament for Mecha Vaugham's Uterus"; 33–34; 39, 41), respectively. Their inclusion in an erratum could imply a totally rogue translator who disregards his contract with the author. But most of all, the variations highlight an unstable original and the absolute interchangeability of signs and signifiers. Any translation can be replaced by any and all others.

The curious listing of errors continues: "donde dice 'que duerma duerma duerma' (página tal verso cual) / debe decir que duerma y más nada" ("where it says 'let him sleep sleep sleep' (page such and such verse whatever) / it should say let him sleep and nothing more"; 86; 131). Once more, the pseudo/translator suggests a distinction between printed version and correction, though in this instance the two options are only negligibly distinct. The quoted verses appear in "Lamento por la camisa de Sam Dale" ("Lament for Sam Dale's Shirt"; 55–57; 75, 77), but they also invoke repeating lines from "The Hill" (1–2), the opening poem of Masters's *Spoon River*: "all, all are sleeping on the hill" and "all, all are sleeping, sleeping, sleeping on the hill" (1).

Gelman's parenthesizing of "página tal verso cual" ("page such and such verse whatever") thus ironically mimics accepted citation and copyright protocol. The phrase suggests the possibility of infinite sources for the citations, muddling the division between original material and copied material and evoking Po I-po's collapsing of that distinction in the epigraph. Through "Fe de erratas," this instability effectively extends to each verse of the preceding collection.

To further complicate the project, the poem transforms midway through into a lament for the death of Sidney West: "¡eh bichitos tábanos fulgores que saludaban en el cementerio de Oak! / allí lo pusieron a sidney west que duerma" ("hey tiny bugs horseflies brilliances greeting in Oak Cemetery! / there they put sidney west let him sleep"; Gelman, *Traducciones* 86; Gelman, *Poems* 131). The appearance of West as a character—and, moreover, one whose death is quasi-lamented in accordance with the style of the preceding poems—blurs the previous distinction between West and the other Melody Spring inhabitants. That he is buried in Oak Cemetery, the inspiration of Masters's pseudoanthology, and eulogized through a voice that resembles the speaker of the Melody Spring epitaphs, categorically confuses the text's authorship. West's death thus marks a culmination and a shift of the pseudo/translation's object of intervention from source culture to literary culture. In this regard, the poem functions in part as an ars poetica, reaching beyond the West poems to comment on artistic creation more broadly. Read in this way, the title "Fe de erratas" (literally, "Faith in Errors") dissolves the Romantic idea of the poet as an omniscient being, renewing a commitment to "faith" in poetry, precisely in its imperfection and unoriginality.[21] Herein lies a third revolutionary possibility for the estrangement of pseudo/translation: the absolute deconstruction of power-affording categories within the literary system.

That "Fe de erratas" closes not only the West poems but also Gelman's trio of apocryphal translations is significant. Indeed, Genevieve Fabry suggests that the poem should be read as "el punto de convergencia de *toda* la escritura de Gelman a finales de los años 60" ("the point of convergence of *all*

of Gelman's writing of the late 1960s"; 107–08). Mario Benedetti (228), Ben Bollig (134), and Jenckes (162) each echo this claim to a certain degree, identifying in the West poems a decisive turning point in Gelman's oeuvre. In other words, the poem would seem to mark a type of resolution to the dilemma Gelman faced before inventing a group of poets to translate. It would seem that he found in pseudo/translation a vehicle for the revolutionary poetry he endeavored to write. Pseudo/translation became an avant-garde experiment for drawing attention to a presumably neutral cross-cultural activity to then render it strange and rewrite its possibilities. This mode of poetic creation would continue to shape his work in the decades following West's death. "Fe de erratas," like *The Poems of Sidney West*, and like the wider *Traducciones* (*Translations*) series, calls on poets and readers to question naturalized norms and hierarchies—metonymically represented through the collapsing of two categories that have long been assumed to hold an absolute distinction: original and translation.

Notes

Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.

1. Juan Gelman (1930–2014), the son of Jewish immigrants from Ukraine, was a poet, a journalist, a translator, and an activist. He published thirty books of poetry, and in 2007, he was awarded the Cervantes Prize, the most significant honor in Hispanic literature. He became a symbol of human rights in Argentina because of his twenty-three-year search for his granddaughter, who was born in captivity and adopted by a family in Uruguay following her parents' kidnapping and murder during the country's military dictatorship (1976–83). For further biographical information, see Boccanera; Hedeen and Rodríguez Núñez, "Juan Gelman; or, 'About a Truth'"; Pérez.

2. For a cultural panorama of 1960s Latin America, see Gilman; Sorensen.

3. On the neo-avant-garde generation of poets, see Benedetti; Lastra.

4. For Sarli Mercado, apocryphal translation represents a "género del yo" ("genre of the I"; 9); for Lisa Rose Bradford, a means to "project a collective I" (5); for Elisa Crites, a "laboratorio de escritura" ("laboratory of writing") that constitutes "en realidad una exploración del interior" ("in reality an inner exploration"; 720); and for Ben Bollig, an experiment that "paradoxically reinforce[s] the figure of Juan Gelman" (131).

5. No scholarly work considers Gelman's invention and pseudotranslation of West in the context of the 1960s Cold War. Critics mostly follow the interior-driven readings outlined above (Bollig; Dalmaroni). Others approach the collection without regard to questions of translation (Jenckes; Nicholson, "Juan Gelman" and "The Reluctant Troubadour"; Pérez; Porrúa, "Juan Gelman" and "*Relaciones*"). Some do examine translation, though they similarly view it as a personal project (Bradford; Sillato; Mercado; Urli).

6. Feinsod considers the multilingual *Renga: A Chain of Poems*, by Octavio Paz and collaborators, and Kenneth Koch's "Some South American Poets," a fake area anthology. *Renga* refers to a genre of Japanese linked poetry written by multiple collaborators; for more, see Horton.

7. When the American Comparative Literature Association chose pseudotranslation as one of the ideas of the decade in its 2014 report, Brigitte Rath called for a different bifocal mode of reading, one that "oscillates between seeing the text as an original and as a translation."

8. See Bennett for a study of how these aesthetic standards shaped a new literary culture in the United States.

9. See Cohn 34–43 and 62–76 for a discussion of the McCarran-Walter Act in relation to Latin American writers.

10. Sociological studies were financed through Project Camelot (established 1964), which sent social scientists to conduct research on numerous countries of interest, especially in Latin America.

11. As Cohn shows, these translation programs often published works antithetical to the apolitical values of the US literary establishment. The most obvious cases are translations of narratives from the Latin American Boom. A combination of New Critical and New Humanist reading practices as well as translation decisions to depoliticize content and form often neutralized the politics of these works for US audiences. Cohn also articulates how several artists and intellectuals used platforms provided by the CCF and its peers subversively; see especially 65–94.

12. The five-part story was published 24–28 April 1966; see Wicker et al., "C.I.A. Is Spying," "C.I.A.: Maker," "C.I.A. Operations," "C.I.A.: Qualities," and "How."

13. No major scholarly work has explicitly linked pseudo/translation to estrangement as theorized by Viktor Shklovsky (*ostranenie*) or Brecht (*Verfremdungseffekt*), though several studies draw implicit connections, arguing that fake translations re-present familiar (or automatized) textual products (original and translation); see Apter; DeWald; Emmerich. More generally, translation as estrangement structures Lawrence Venuti's crucial distinction between "domesticating" and "foreignizing" as ethical effects of translation based on a "performative relation" between texts (*Translator's Invisibility* xiv). See also Berman.

14. Gelman recounted in an interview that at least one reader bought into the hoax, claiming to have read West before and lauding the Argentine's rendering ("Poesía" 157).

15. For Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi, the configuration of colonial control coincides with the invention of the modern idea of originality: "Europe was regarded as the great Original, the starting point, and the colonies were therefore copies, or 'translations' of Europe, which they were supposed to duplicate" (4).

16. The idea of mimicry and translation as agency-filled liminal spaces conjures Fernando Ortiz's concept of "transculturación" ("transculturation") and later rearticulations by Rama and Pratt. Ortiz offers a theory of the simultaneous processes of acculturation and deculturation that views the second halves of binary oppositions as exercising equal agency in social or cultural formation. Bhabha's theory facilitates a reading of original/translation as one such zone of transculturation. For a recent discussion of translation as transculturation, see Guzmán Martínez.

17. Sillato highlights Edgar Lee Masters's *Spoon River Anthology*, which I discuss in detail later.

18. For a comprehensive history of *Spoon River Anthology*, see Stacy.

19. As Gelman noted in an interview, "Cuando escribí este libro había leído solo un poema de Masters. Leí el grueso de su poesía posteriormente" ("When I wrote this book, I had read only one poem by Masters. I read the bulk of his poetry later on"; "Poesía" 155). It seems likely that this statement is part of the apocryphal game; perhaps Gelman had not read *Spoon River*, but West had.

20. Not all critics agree. For Bollig, the Masters intertext represents "anglophone poetry with right-wing political connotations" (138), while Genevieve Fabry suggests that the formal parallels are more significant than those based on content (91–95).

21. On the characteristics of Romantic poetry, see Gasparov and Scott.

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Abstract: From 1968 to 1969 the Argentine modernist Juan Gelman invented and translated into Spanish a contemporary from the United States, named Sidney West, who wrote about small-town mid-American life. *Traducciones III: Los poemas de Sidney West* (*Translations III: The Poems of Sidney West*) is a pseudotranslation—a text disguised as a translation that in fact has no corresponding original. While most critics identify Gelman's recourse to pseudotranslation as a personal undertaking, this essay examines the experiment for the first time within the inter-American Cold War context of the 1960s, locating pseudo/translation as an in/subordinate poetic protocol particularly well equipped for intervening in the soft-power mechanisms of US cultural imperialism—in ways that are both treasonous and collaborative. This essay recovers the anti-imperialist politics of the West poems, expands conversations on translation in Gelman's poetry, and proposes pseudo/translation as a new, bifocal mode of reading for texts that forge cross-cultural contact.