The Dichotomy of Puerto Rico: A Comparison of Rosario Ferré's *Maldito amor* and her Self-translation *Sweet Diamond Dust*

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Abstract

In Rosario Ferré's English self-translation of her novel Maldito amor*, published as* Sweet Diamond Dust*, she significantly alters the content of the source text to fit an English-speaking readership. I describe and examine the dichotomous elements of Ferré's Puerto Rican social identity—and, by extension, of the Puerto Rican collective identity—through an analysis of the disparities between the source text and her translation, against the context of the island's cultural and political history as well as its colonial and neocolonial relationship with the United States.*

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Introduction

In her memoir, Rosario Ferré (1938-2016), a prolific author from Puerto Rico, writes: "Literature does not have anything to do with life and yet it has everything to do with it" (79). Until 1988, Ferré wrote in Spanish and delegated translation rights to professional, commercial translators. Discontented with the result, she debuted her self-translation career with *Sweet Diamond Dust* (1988), her English rendition of *Maldito amor* (1986). Her unique perspective on her own work is shown through her substantive changes, additions, and omissions through the process. Writing and publishing in Spanish and English, she occupies an intercultural position, making deliberate textual choices that coincide with the political and cultural situation at the time in Puerto Rico and in the diasporic communities on the American mainland. Using her commentaries in the novels' preface, her memoir, and her essays, I examine the source text and the translation from a feminist and postcolonial theoretical perspective in an effort to explore the autobiographical elements that Ferré incorporates into her work, whether intentionally or not. Her self-translation sheds light on her concerns for how identity is conveyed, particularly Puerto Rican identity, and it demonstrates the inherent duality of a people who is geographically, linguistically, and politically divided.

The act of translation has been recognized as a cultural process by theorists such as Friedrich Schleiermacher. Translation is a cultural process that situates the translator as the mediator between the former and the new target audience (Martín 2). Although prominent professionals like Gregory Rabassa have translated Ferré's novels, she has chosen to take it upon herself to translate or re-translate many of her own pieces. In so doing, she intentionally radically alters the new version to fit the target readership

and context.[9] Perhaps she feels that without making her works available in both languages and if not translated properly, those that no longer have a command of Spanish—particularly individuals of Puerto Rican descent—would miss the sense of community found in identifying with the works and expressed culture. Furthermore, self-translating provides a writer with the opportunity to offer a fresh perspective and reinterpretation of the work and to correct what they are unsatisfied with in the original version. In Ferré's case, the updated translations she produces in English or Spanish vary greatly from the source text. Even if she did not make substantive changes when translating, an attempt at identical renditions would result in a profoundly different translated text nonetheless, as it would be received in a different time and by a different readership.

Taking control of translating her own works, Ferré has the liberty to divert from the original published literature, unlike a commercial translator whose job it is to remain true to the source text while considering the syntactical, idiomatic, and cultural differences of the readers, since it is a "generally accepted fact that literal translations cannot be successful with literary works" (*The Craft of Translation* xi). Ferré goes beyond the translator's role as cultural mediator and accommodates the competing versions of the stories to two different targeted reader groups. She admits in her collection of essays, *El coloquio de las perras,* that her intended audiences are Spanish-speaking Puerto Ricans or

[9] The books were published approximately two years apart (1986 and 1988); therefore, her changes could not be motivated by an aging readership. Jennifer Beatson posits that "the textual differences between the two works are designed so that their respective audiences take away a [*sic*] altered interpretations from each text" (1). I further this thesis by also examining what the textual differences reveal about Ferré's social identity.

English-speaking Puerto Ricans on the mainland, translating into English to "save them from cultural suicide" (Quoted by Jaffe 73). The result of her translation of *Maldito amor,* however, is a politically diluted and historically focused iteration of *Sweet Diamond Dust*. I postulate that these political and historical changes are not coincidental or ignorant. Instead, they illustrate the influence of the United States' hegemony in the sense that Ferré knowingly caters her literature not only to the English-language privilege in the U.S., but also to American sensitivities and prejudices.

About the author

Rosario Ferré's contributions as a writer and political activist began long before she published *Maldito amor*. She was born in Ponce, Puerto Rico, to a politically active father who successfully ran for governor of the island for the Partido Nuevo Progresista [New Progressive Party][10] in 1968. Her mother became ill and passed shortly after in 1971 (Ferré, *Memoir* 2). Ferré first learned English as her second language because she wanted to read comic books that were unavailable in Spanish, which embedded her in the two cultures at a young age (Martín 5). She majored in English and French literature at Manhattanville College and received a Master's of Spanish Literature from the University of Puerto Rico, studying under world-renowned professors and authors such as Mario Vargas Llosa (Ferré, *Memoir* 81). Her career as a writer gained momentum in 1970 when she started a literary journal entitled *Zona*, *Carga y descarga* with a group of writers (81). Through this experience, she deepened her political beliefs, particularly on the matter of

[10] My translations are indicated throughout this article with square brackets.

statehood versus independence for Puerto Rico (83). While living in Mexico, she wrote a book of feminist essays, *Sitio a Eros* [Place for Eros], and she translated two books by Lillian Hellman into Spanish (88). In 1982 she published a book of poetry that considered the female condition as its principal subject. It took her four years and approximately eighteen drafts to write *Maldito Amor* (92).

Brief history of Puerto Rico

The dichotomy between Ferré's English and Spanish productions parallels the division of Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico has a history of colonialism both from Spain and the U.S. and has been heavily affected by the imperial powers. Spain began colonizing the island in the late 15th century with the arrival of Christopher Columbus followed by Juan Ponce de León. They were particularly interested in the fertile land along the beach, the well-protected bay—now the San Juan port[11]—that could serve to harbour sailing vessels, and the gold found in the rivers that cross the island (Abbad y Lasierra 19-25). The Taíno, who was the principal Indigenous people on the island, revered the Spanish for a time as their protectors until the population began to decline because of European diseases and maltreatment. After the gold industry slowed down, most Europeans migrated elsewhere but several colonizers remained and established sugarcane plantations (Mathews et al.). Other than two short periods of political freedom, Spain maintained absolutist control over the island for centuries. In the mid-19th century, there was a division of the population between those seeking assimilation under the Spanish government, those who

[11] The beach was called "Guadilla," which meant "garden" in the Indigenous language of the Taíno people (Abbad y Lasierra 19).

wanted to continue as a commonwealth, and those who favoured complete independence (Mathews et al.). During the Spanish-Cuban-American war in 1898, however, U.S. troops invaded Puerto Rico and stifled hopes of political nationalism. In 1951, there was an overwhelming approval of the autonomy of commonwealth status, yet dissatisfaction continued (Ayala et al. 168).

There have been large waves of migration leaving Puerto Rico for the U.S., which has created diasporic communities largely in the Northeast of the mainland (Cohn et al.). Emigrations of mass proportions from the island occurred between 1945 and 1965, and again in the 1980s and in the 1990s (Cohn et al.). In 2012, a census revealed that, demographically, the number of people of Puerto Rican origin residing on the U.S. mainland outnumbered the Puerto Ricans on the island (Cohn et al.). Several plebiscites[12] were held on Puerto Rico's political status in 1967, 1993, and 1998 (Mathews et al.). In 1998, as stated in the U.S. congressional report entitled *The Results of the 1998 Puerto Rico Plebiscite,* led by Chairman Don Young, the Government of Puerto Rico "conducted a political status plebiscite under local election laws" (5). The result was inconclusive because 50.2% of Puerto Ricans voted: "None of the above" (41). On a national level, Washington policymakers have highlighted Puerto Rico's "inability to reach consensus on political status" (Mathews et al.).

[12] Plebiscite: "a direct vote by the people of a country or region in which they say whether they agree or disagree with a particular policy, for example whether a region should become an independent state" (Collins English Dictionary). For example, the 1998 plebiscite in Puerto Rico provided five options: statehood, commonwealth, independence, free association or "None of the above" (Young 41).

Similar to the independence movement of Quebec in Canada as a form of decolonization, the fear of assimilation is a key motivator propelling those striving for independence as a separate nation (Jedwab 40). Senator Rubén Berríos Martínez, current president of the Puerto Rican Independence Party, stated in 1995 before the Subcommittee on Native American and Insular Affairs, "as long as Puerto Ricans are Puerto Ricans, with their distinct identity and language, Congress as a body cannot seriously consider statehood" (Young 33). As a Puerto Rican, he recognizes that language is a crucial topic in Puerto Rico's political debate, and he believes that integration as a state could result in a "conflict of nationalities" (29). Puerto Rico was and remains sharply divided between those who believe they require independence to preserve their cultural identity and language, and those who dismiss the idea of "the nation" as a totalitarian and homogenizing fiction (Duany 13). Neither perspective in this debate considers the Puerto Rican diaspora in its concept of Puerto Rico as a nation. Diasporic communities "often depart from the dominant nationalist canon by stressing their cultural and affective ties to an ancestral homeland, rather than their linguistic and territorial borders" (284). Through her novels, Ferré creates a dialogue engaging the controversies surrounding Puerto Rico's independence, statehood, or continued commonwealth status, which speak to the question of national identity.

Differences in the self-translation

Maldito amor tells the story of three generations of the De la Valle family, who own a sugar plantation in Puerto Rico. The novel, comprised of four short stories, is recognized for its wit and treatment of prevalent issues of independence, religion, and race. It raises issues of

oppression of women, people of colour, and biracial people, showing how these characters increasingly defy social codes in a patriarchal society of injustice and inequality (Jaffe 75). In *El coloquio de las perras,* in reference to *Maldito amor,* Ferré emphasizes the relationship between colonialism and the island as well as colonialism and women, who live a broken life dependent on the patriarchal order (quoted by Jaffe 67). The stories told in *Maldito amor* do not paint a positive future for the island outside of colonialism, nor do they represent the U.S. from a favourable perspective.

In *Sweet Diamond Dust*, Ferré diminishes her accusatory tone regarding U.S. occupation of the island. Although she does not alter the plot, certain passages go from critical to nuanced or neutral regarding the American legacy and influence in Puerto Rico (Jaffe 77).[13] The tone concerning U.S. imperialism and the vision of the island's future is therefore more positive than in the source text. The first and most notable change occurs in the title, which is reimagined absent the notion of doom for the country or damned love between a man and a woman implied by the word *maldito* in Spanish (Ferré, Memoir 94). The lexical difference of the two titles immediately demonstrates the author's careful consideration of the alterity of the two languages. The title in Spanish, *Maldito amor*, not only evokes a form of swearing but is also the title of a famous *danza* written by a Puerto Rican named

[13] In *Maldito amor,* Ferré describes the town's citizens feeling more comfortable surrounded by screams and beggars, far away from the parts of town that have gotten cleaner and more orderly since the arrival of the foreigners (80). By contrast, in *Sweet Diamond Dust,* she writes that the noise, heat, and dirt make them feel at home, away from the cleanliness and orderliness that "had come lately over most of the town," removing the critical reference to the influence of foreigners, presumably Americans (57).

Juan Morell Campos. In the preface of *Sweet Diamond Dust*, Ferré references the *danza* and writes that it "exemplifies better than any work I know the seigniorial paradise of the sugarcane planters, without ever mentioning that the greater part of the islanders lived in Hell" (viii). Since the title in Spanish holds cultural significance and she considers it "untranslatable", she opts for a different title altogether in English (Ferré, Memoir 95-96). Similarly, she does not translate the name of the sugar mill *Central Justicia* literally as "Justice Mill" because it would not exactly convey the idea nuanced in Spanish of keeping the mill "justly" out of American control. Instead, she names it "Diamond Dust Sugar Mill," which ends up being prophetic in nature because Puerto Rico has become one of the major ports of drug entry into the U.S., as Ferré herself notes in the English preface (ix).

In the first chapter of *Maldito amor*, which is set in the town of Guamaní, there is evidence of negative sentiment toward American capitalism. Ferré writes: "Lejos de ser un paraíso, nuestro pueblo se ha convertido en un enorme embudo por el cual se vierte noche y día hacia Norteamérica el aterrador remolino de azúcar que vomita la Central Ejemplo" [Far from being a paradise, our town has become an enormous funnel through which the terrifying swirl of sugar vomited up by the 'Central Ejemplo' is poured night and day into North America] (26). Her choice of words in this sentence negatively evokes American capitalism (la Central Ejemplo, the U.S. sugar mill), associating it with the distinct imagery of vomiting. In contrast, Ferré translates the passage as follows: "Far from being a paradise, Guamaní has become a hell, a monstrous whirlpool from which the terrifying funnel of Snow White Sugar Mills spews out sugar night and day toward the north" (7). The English version

transmits a less accusatory tone and is therefore less critical of American legacy on the island than the Spanish original. Word choice in the passage is deliberate, considering she could have used equivalent terms for the words, "vomit" and "North America," but opted for more conciliatory terms. Moreover, as Angela F. Martín notes, Ferré's translation of the word *embudo* to "funnel" does not quite capture the underlying meaning, which is to lure or to trap someone (34).

Ferré incorporates more of Puerto Rico's history in *Sweet Diamond Dust* than in the Spanish source text. In her essay, "On Destiny, Language, and Translation; or Ophelia Adrift in the C. & O. Canal," she writes that "translation is not only a literary but also a historical task; it includes an interpretation of internal history, of the changing proceedings of consciousness in a civilization" (90). By amplifying the history in her translated editions, the author is aiding in the preservation of the collective memory of Puerto Rico's regional history. In Jonathan Culler's book on literary theory, he corroborates that post-colonial theory can function as an attempt to intervene in the construction of knowledge and, "for intellectuals who come from post-colonial societies, [an attempt] to write their way back into a history others have written" (131). When publishing for an English-speaking audience, Ferré uses her voice to tell the stories of Puerto Rico, a post-colonial nation-state. She may also consider that the readership living on the mainland could be less familiar with the island's colonial past. Furthermore, as Janice Jaffe notes in her critical essay, Ferré takes advantage of her freedom as the translator of her own work to "correct chronological inconsistencies, as she renders paradoxes and intricacies of Puerto Rican history more vividly for readers" (76). For instance, in the first

chapter of *Sweet Diamond Dust* entitled "Guamaní," Ferré adds an extensive section detailing the history of the town and the Taíno people (4). In the fifth chapter, she also introduces a section where Arístides explains the history of his paternal and maternal grandfathers' involvement in the U.S. invasion (39). This section signals the division of the island that exists even within families (Martín 46), and it infuses a layer of history into the fiction for the benefit of the non-local English-speaking readers.

The four lengthy additions present only in the English version reveal how Ferré occasionally modifies her "anti-Yankee tone." For instance, in the chapter entitled in Spanish *El desengaño* [The disappointment], Don Robaldo Ramírez comments, "Aquí, aunque los puertorriqueños gobiernen, los norteamericanos mandan, y yo ya estoy demasiado viejo para dejarme hacer gringo a la fuerza" [Here, even though Puerto Ricans govern, North Americans rule, and I am already too old to be forced to become gringo] (51). By contrast in English, Ferré omits the word "gringo", presumably because it is commonly used as an insult toward foreigners, particularly toward Americans (Martín 24). Another prominent example of the softening of her sentiments toward the U.S. is in the section entitled *El Rescate*, "The Rescue," where Don Hermenegildo talks about the sugar plantation being saved from North American investors. In Spanish he describes "el día en que rescató la Central Justicia de las garras de la Central Ejemplo" [the day when he rescued the 'Central Justicia' from the claws of the 'Central Ejemplo'] (77). However, in English he says that the plantation is saved "from being blown away by the wind" (52). This change clearly illustrates her use of self-censure for a targeted audience and how she omits the original's accusatory tone. Jaffe posits that Ferré's translation

succumbs to the colonizing power of the States, since she frequently adapts and softens her tone to appeal to an American capitalist market (73).

The character Gloria is significant in both versions of the novel, though in slightly different roles. On the one hand, *Maldito amor* casts a negative light on prostitution. The idea of Gloria being a prostitute is insinuated by men in the town and is used in attempts to deny her legitimacy or her rights to the plantation by discrediting the profession (41).[14] The plot surrounding Gloria in *Maldito amor* centres on her identity as a biracial woman. On the other hand, Ferré emphasizes Gloria's identity as a prostitute in *Sweet Diamond Dust* as the central reason for why Doña Laura gives her control of the sugar plantation. In a passage added in English, Doña Laura explains that she is aware that Gloria has become a "legendary prostitute" and sees her and Nicolás as the port between South and North America (76). Gloria is associated instead in the English version with the idea of a future of change for the island given that her prostitution is portrayed positively in the eyes of Doña Laura. Gloria is "figured as the literal port or 'puerto' through which cross-cultural intimacy and communication are achieved" (Esplin 25). Ferré gives her female characters prominent roles in the story despite demonstrating the realistic problems of hierarchy.

Gloria's character is a symbol for language, which is a significant element of Ferré's concern for Puerto Rican

[14] In *Maldito amor,* Ferré writes: "Las malas lenguas la tienen pelada, y dicen que hasta que está loca, y que es y que correntona con los hombres...Pero en este pueblo perder la reputación quiere decir perder el crédito" [The malicious gossip has her bare, and they say that she is crazy and runs with men… But in this town, losing your reputation means losing your credit] (41). Such exact passages are absent in the English version.

identity and its duality. In the passage discussing Gloria's prostitution in *Sweet Diamond Dust*, Doña Laura says, "In her body, or if you prefer in her cunt, both races, both languages, English and Spanish, grew into one soul, one wordweed of love" (76). Gloria's body is positioned as the meeting place for a blend of race and language, an example of hybridity,[15] dissolving "cultural and linguistic boundaries" between Puerto Ricans, North and South Americans (Jaffe 68). Through candid imagery of prostitution, Ferré alludes to her own role as a translator passing back and forth linguistically and culturally between English and Spanish. Doña Laura goes on to explain that through this connection or port, the divided North and South will "finally understand each other" (76). Her words further the relationship established between Gloria and the author, who is serving as a cultural mediator between the island and the mainland through the act of self-translation.

Puerto Rican identity

Ferré's own hybrid identity surfaces in the act of writing and translating. She has admitted that she feels like a different person when writing in English. In an address to Florida State University in 1997, she said, "to be a bilingual writer is really to be two different writers, to write in two different styles and, most important of all, to be able to look at the world through two different sets of glasses" (Quoted

[15] Hybrid: "a person whose background is a blend of two diverse cultures or traditions" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). The heterogeneity of Puerto Ricans is an example of hybridity, since the background of an individual of Puerto Rican origin from an island that was colonized and settled by the descendants of diverse cultures from Spain and America as well as the legacy of Indigenous peoples who also have distinct cultures and traditions.

by Martín 6). This passage illustrates the dichotomy of her bilingual identity. Like Gloria's body, the author's mind is the meeting place of two distinct languages and cultures. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, first advanced by Edward Sapir in 1929, suggests that language influences thought to the extent that people speaking different languages perceive the world differently (Skerrett 331). This theory is evidenced in Ferré's experience, admitting in the aforementioned university address to seeing the world differently when writing in either language.

Ferré has said that she feels a psychological distance when writing in English, since she must consider her words more carefully than she would do in her native Spanish tongue, and this allows her to concentrate more efficiently on the plot (Navarro, 1998). Her bilingualism gives her insight into both cultures and adds a new dimension to the reader's understanding of the author and her relationship with her neighborhood. Ferré admits that there is a risk of madness in translating her own work or of fatal loss of personal identity, yet she chooses to do so regardless (Jaffe 72). In both *Maldito amor* and *Sweet Diamond Dust,* she denounces the colonial efforts to impose English on the island (77). The imposition or adoption of a colonial language constitutes assimilation; the U.S. has gained the reputation of the "graveyard" of foreign languages, and the fear of assimilation is a common motivation among Puerto Ricans seeking independence (Tran, "Language and Culture"). Nevertheless, it seems that Ferré's fear of losing her personal identity does not stand to reason because, as I have elaborated, her social identity includes the dichotomy of the two languages and cultures. Emboldened, she undertook to publish her next novel, *The House on the Lagoon*, in English first instead of in Spanish. A comparison

of her translated works reveals that her authorial identity shifted according to her target readership. By juxtaposing her source text in Spanish to her translation in English, we can trace Ferré's personal transformation relative to Puerto Rican identity.

The self-translation of *Maldito amor* could be considered a concession to U.S. hegemony or, more positively, a representation of Ferré's identity and the collective Puerto Rican hybrid identity. Ferré has argued that adaptation was necessary to reach the Puerto Ricans on the mainland "to save them from cultural suicide" (Jaffe 73). The less dichotomous "us" versus "them" representation of Puerto Rican identity "may be seen more constructively as transcending binarism in the passage toward a new understanding of what Puerto Rican identity means at the close of the twentieth century" (76). As mentioned, Ferré can be compared to Gloria since she serves as the meeting place of the North and the South by writing in Spanish and English, and she conforms her own identity in accordance with the target readership. When writing for Spanish-speaking Puerto Ricans, she sympathizes with the survivors of imperial atrocities and comments on the discrimination diaspora Puerto Ricans experience in the U.S., which contributes to the interpretation of English as constituting a threat to their identity. In contrast, when writing for the English-speaking Puerto Ricans, "she seems to become an assimilationist, silencing both her native language and the non-technological vision of the world that Spanish represents for her" (Jaffe 74). In an op-ed article in the *New York Times* in 1998, Ferré states, "As a Puerto Rican and an American, I believe our future as a community is inseparable from our culture and language, but I'm also passionately committed to the modern world. That's why I'm going to

support statehood in the next plebiscite." This statement surprised and angered intellectuals and some among her admirers because, until then, she was an avid supporter of independence. Prominent figures, like Puerto Rican author Lydia Vega, publicly accused her of being an assimilationist (Navarro, 1998). Ferré states in an interview that language "is like your skin" (Navarro, 1998). Just as people shed old skin to make room for new growth, people will also unavoidably make room for personal growth by changing their principles, characteristics, and beliefs as their experiences and encounters affect them. Ferré's hybrid identity does not only allow her to write in both Spanish and English with insight into both cultures, but she has also thereby grown into new authorial "skin" and further unravelled her hybrid identity.

The distance Ferré feels when writing in English and her expression of a hybrid identity echoes the sentiments of many Puerto Ricans who spend their lives divided between their homeland and the U.S. and between English and Spanish. In post-colonial studies, identity is a primary focus because of issues posed by colonialism and its aftermath (Culler 130). For instance, colonialism has been demonstrated to cause a mutual feeling of inferiority or of being subordinate among the colonized peoples (118). Culler explains that there is a growing corpus that debates the idea of post-colonial subjects as hybrid, "emerging from the superimposition of conflicting languages and cultures" (130). The dichotomy that is a result of a history of division between the U.S. and Puerto Rico contributes to the construction of Puerto Rican self-consciousness relative to its colonial heritage.

The word "identity" comes from the Latin word *identidem*, an adverb that means "repeatedly", again and

again (Craft 149). Therefore, the essence of the word in English implies the idea that repetition forms identity (149). For centuries, Puerto Rico has experienced strong influence from Spanish colonialism, and later from U.S. occupation on the island, in addition to the hybridization of these cultures and languages. The repetition in the Puerto Rican context lies in this duality. In the op-ed published in the *New York Times* in 1998, Ferré articulates, "To be Puerto Rican is to be a hybrid. Our two halves are inseparable; we cannot give up either without feeling maimed. For many years, my concern was to keep my Hispanic self from being stifled. Now I discover it's my American self that's being threatened." She expresses that this sentiment of heterogeneity is inherent to being Puerto Rican, and her use of "we" indicates that she sees it as a shared sentiment. Furthermore, she evokes the diasporic communities and the power in the Spanish language to "threaten" American culture and society. Ilan Stavans, a Mexican-American essayist, contends that it is the transformation of the U.S., "the Hispanization" and the "Anglocization of Hispanics," that has produced the Latino hybrid (Quoted by Martín 7). Ferré's expression of her hybrid identity and the bilingual versions she produces establish her work in a manner relatable for Puerto Ricans on the island and in the diaspora alike.

The construction of identity often pertains to the concept of home or the place of origin. Consequently, the construction of Puerto Rican national identity is largely centred on the notion of the island—that is to say, it is territorially grounded—especially within diasporic communities (Lamba-Nieves 309). Nevertheless, Ferré considers the dream of the paradisiacal "homeland" an idealization. Ferré states in the preface of *Maldito amor* that

those "que sufren en el insilio sueñan muchas veces con una isla que no existe más que en su imaginación…" [who suffer in insularity often dream of an island that exists only in their imagination] (13). This illustrates a romanticizing of the absent place, through which everything is compared to an idyllic homeland that exists in the imagination. Ferré goes on to say that it is "una idealización de la vida romántica de la hacienda y sus dueños que permanece como paradigma o ejemplo en la mente de las capas populares por mucho tiempo" [an idealization of the romantic life of the *hacienda*[16] and its owners that remains a paradigm or example in the minds of the popular classes for a long time] (14). In the English preface, she writes, "The myth of paradise confounds but consoles us" (x). She emphasizes the concept in both novels of a longing for the island or *hacienda* lifestyle when, in reality, "the mythical place in the country [they] always dream about never existed except for a privileged few" (*Sweet Diamond Dust* viii).

Ferré explains in the preface of *Sweet Diamond Dust* that immigration strengthens the Puerto Rican personality trait of a "splintered national conscience" (ix). She notes that the island has welcomed numerous legal and illegal immigrants from the neighbouring countries, such as the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Cuba (ix). Furthermore, Ferré believes that Puerto Rican identity is "intimately related to escape and to change, where survival is dangerously precarious", and she compares it metaphorically to the significance of the San Juan port (viii). As illustrated with this image of a port, it is common for Puerto Ricans to spend a great deal of time throughout their life going between the island and mainland. For this reason,

[16] Hacienda: "in Spanish America, a large landed estate, one of the traditional institutions of rural life" (Encyclopaedia Britannica).

Gloria's aforesaid role as the "port" between cultures holds significance in the formation of Puerto Rico's national identity and I argue that immigration has therefore played a large role in the construction of Puerto Rican identity.

Consistencies between novels

It is worth noting the elements that Ferré chooses to keep in both versions, as it further reveals who she is and what is shared between the two target audiences. An element of the story that Ferré does not dilute or change is her description of the feminist condition and struggle. She creates opportunities to question gender politics between the versions of her novel and questions women's marginal position in society. Culler posits that feminist theory is concerned with "the impact of socially constructed gender roles on making the subject what he or she is" (109). He also references Judith Butler's *Gender Politics,* which presents the idea that gender is performative (Culler 103). Butler's theory holds that feminine identity is not contingent on female features but that it is a cultural and social fabrication based on habituation. As noted above, the etymology of the word "identity" supports its inherent link to repetition.

Although Ferré develops female characters who fit the typical role society has constructed for them, she also gives them agency and an empowered voice. According to Martín, the female characters' narratives in the novels subvert the male discourse and denounce the island's issues of identity, race, and women's marginality (13). In the chapter entitled *Las bodas de doña Elvira*, "The Marriage of Doña Elvira," Doña Elvira De la Valle is physically abused by her husband after interceding on behalf of a worker, and he then commands her not to speak. Ferré thereby confronts the reader with the conventional, marginal position of women in

the household. In the first chapter of *Sweet Diamond Dust*, Ferré outlines some of the activities each gender performs in the town, such as the men going to a casino and the women doing charity work (6). This is not present in the source text, but it blatantly divides the activities of men from those of the women and develops the image of the patriarchal society. More than most female characters, Gloria is given a significant role and voice. She manifests the violence of alterity—the frustration of feeling different—when she burns the De la Valle family home with people still inside (85). When Gloria sings her version of the *danza* "Maldito amor" as she burns down the house, she expresses that she is no longer "songless" and has found her voice (85). Despite the violence of the action, it is an empowering moment for Gloria and for women reading the book because she becomes an agent, moving into action, as opposed to the conventionally accepted passive female character.

The concept of hybridity has often been perceived in a negative light, dating back centuries to the European obsession with *pureza de sangre*, 'purity of blood'. This racial preoccupation is represented in the novels through the character of Gloria, a woman of mixed race, and through Titina, a person of colour who works as a servant for the family. Titina is a silent observer throughout the story. She represents African slaves in Puerto Rico who have been consistently silenced and abused throughout the island's history (Martín 15). Furthermore, Martín considers the climax of the story to be the shock that the founder of the De la Valle family was a biracial person (15). Ferré is thus representing deep-rooted racial prejudices of the inhabitants of the island, which are "ignored or silenced" (Martín 15). I posit that she reveals the irrational nature of the racism of the characters by demonstrating that the racial background of the

founder did not have any impact while they remained ignorant. Moreover, Ferré preserves the word, *criollo* (a person of pure Spanish descent) in *Sweet Diamond Dust* without translating it or including a footnote. These examples make clear that her decisions are deliberate, and they carefully cater to the target readership.

It is worth noting that in Ferré's Spanish self-translation of her next novel, *The House on the Lagoon*, she alters the text to fit a Spanish-speaking audience, shedding light on "her divided national and linguistic loyalties" (Esplin 23). For instance, in the original English version, the character Quintin emphasizes the advantages of the protagonist writing her manuscript in English and says, "Would she have written her manuscript in English if she didn't think English was important? If she had written her novel in Spanish and published in Puerto Rico, why, only a handful of people would read it! But if she published in the United States, thousands would read it" (150-151). This passage exposes one of Ferré's motives for writing *The House on the Lagoon* in English first. However, this passage is omitted from the Spanish translation. Esplin corroborates that through "the dissonances between the English and Spanish versions of her text on this point, she reveals a tendency to tiptoe around the perceived sensitivities of her different audiences when writing" (34). This demonstrates that Ferré does not only cater to an English-speaking audience when self-translating, she also mitigates her content for a Spanish-speaking audience.

Conclusion

As a result of Ferré's having created functionally varied versions of *Maldito amor* adapted to its readers, a study of its translation elucidates the multilayered

dichotomy of Puerto Rican identity, which affects individual and collective experiences. Puerto Rico's future is undecided on the political issue of statehood, autonomy or independence, and the island remains divided between English and Spanish. However, this dichotomy has become an inherent part of the identity of the nation, since identity is a fluid concept shaped by adaptation and repetition. Ferré is a leader in self-translation because of her boldness as a cultural mediator who embraces hybridity. Her multilingualism enables her to make deliberate changes when translating in order to reach and inform different audiences. She is a model for multilingual authors working in periphery post-colonial nations, showing that linguistic hybridity is an advantage to producing world literature. Her novels highlight important issues of race, gender politics, and oppression, and demonstrate that individuals have liberty to change their beliefs and perspectives. Both *Maldito amor* and *Sweet Diamond Dust* illustrate in their own way Puerto Rico's rich history as a unique people whose culture and language are worth cherishing.

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