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Victoria Livingstone

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# TRANSLATING THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION: *EL ÁGUILA Y LA SERPIENTE* IN THE UNITED STATES

*Victoria Livingstone*

New Jersey Institute of Technology

IN 1928, Martín Luis Guzmán published *El águila y la serpiente*, a semi-fictional memoir narrating his experience as a young intellectual and follower of Francisco “Pancho” Villa during the Mexican Revolution. Guzmán, whose later works included *La sombra del caudillo* (1929) and the five-volume *Memorias de Pancho Villa* (first volume published in 1938), was one of the most talented writers to document and critique Mexico’s Revolutionary period. He also wielded influence as a journalist, ran a publishing house, and later served as senator.<sup>1</sup> In its complete, original form, *El águila y la serpiente* functions as a reflection on the role of intellectuals during the Revolution. Guzmán was part of a group that felt disenfranchised by a war that had strayed from its ideological roots and ended in battles between power-hungry *caudillos*. The book is also a justification of Guzmán’s desertion of Villa and a critique of Mexican politics of the 1920s.

Two years after its release in Spain, the book was abridged and translated into English by Harriet de Onís as *The Eagle and the Serpent* (published by Alfred A. Knopf in 1930). It was her first book translation, but de Onís would go on to translate close to forty books from Spanish and Portuguese into English and advise publishing houses, particularly Alfred A. Knopf, on what translations to publish.

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<sup>1</sup> Guzmán’s work has received little critical attention until recently, perhaps because he found himself on the wrong side of history late in his career. In 1968, by then a statesman, he aligned himself with the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) during the massacre of students in Tlatelolco. However, the past decade has seen a surge of critical work on Guzmán, including Nicholas Cifuentes-Goodbody’s *The Man Who Wrote Pancho Villa* (2016), Tanya Huntington’s *Martín Luis Guzmán: Entre el águila y la serpiente* (2015), and Susana Quintanilla’s *A salto de mata: Martín Luis Guzmán en la Revolución Mexicana* (2009).

She became a highly influential figure in introducing Latin American authors to U.S. readers from 1930 until her death in 1969.<sup>2</sup> In her assessment of this pioneering translator, Deborah Cohn writes that de Onís was “in effect an extremely powerful gatekeeper: in José Donoso’s words, ‘she controlled the sluices of the circulation of Latin American literature in the United States and by means of the United States throughout the whole world’” (12).<sup>3</sup>

The study that follows examines how de Onís and her publisher Alfred A. Knopf reshaped *El águila y la serpiente* for the U.S. market. The first section traces the publication history of Guzmán’s memoir in its original form and situates the 1930 translation within the context of heightened U.S. interest in Mexican culture. The second and third sections examine the structural changes in the translation, particularly the abridgement, and de Onís’s stylistic choices. By analyzing the differences between the original version of *El águila y la serpiente* and the English translation, this paper aims to show that de Onís and Knopf reduced Guzmán’s broad political critique and transformed the text into a more linear narrative focused on Villa, who, for U.S. readers, was then one of the most recognizable figures of the Mexican Revolution. The ways in which this political text was altered for the U.S. market is reflective of broader trends in translation during the mid-twentieth century. The translation also serves as an example of how historical and cultural contexts have shaped the translation of Latin American literature.<sup>4</sup>

#### THE ORIGINAL PUBLICATION AND TRANSLATION OF *EL ÁGUILA Y LA SERPIENTE*

*El águila y la serpiente* narrates the period between the assassination of Francisco I. Madero (1913) and Guzmán’s voluntary exile to New York in 1915 after he deserted Villa.<sup>5</sup> The book was published by Manuel Aguilar in Madrid in June of 1928 during Guzmán’s second exile in Spain. Guzmán had left Mexico after the failed *delahuertista* rebellion against Álvaro Obregón and presidential candidate Plutarco Elías Calles.<sup>6</sup> During this period, Guzmán was openly critical of Calles.

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<sup>2</sup> For more on de Onís, see my article “A Glutton for Books,” which draws on archival research conducted at the Harry Ransom Center at UT Austin.

<sup>3</sup> From Donoso’s *Historia personal del Boom*.

<sup>4</sup> *El águila y la serpiente* was not the only historical text altered in English translation during this period. Fernando Ortiz’s *Contrapunteo Cubano* (1940) and Gilberto Freyre’s *Casa grande e senzala* (1933) also appeared in abridged form. Both texts were translated by de Onís and published by Knopf with the translated titles *Cuban Counterpoint* (1947) and *The Mansions and the Shanties: The Making of Modern Brazil* (1963).

<sup>5</sup> For more on the historical context of *El águila y la serpiente*, see Tanya Huntington’s *Martín Luis Guzmán: entre el águila y la serpiente* (2015), Susana Quintanilla’s *A salto de mata* (2009) and Max Parra’s *Writing Pancho Villa’s Revolution* (2005), especially pp. 80–81, which gives an overview of the years and events covered by the book.

<sup>6</sup> Guzmán, who owned and directed the newspaper *El Mundo*, had supported Gen. Adolfo de la Huerta against Gen. Plutarco Elías Calles. De la Huerta rebelled, and Guzmán was forced into exile in December 1923. He lived in the U.S. for a short period, and then moved to Spain (Parra 78).

Critics such as Max Parra and Adela Pineda Franco have suggested that Guzmán wrote *El águila* partly as a way of influencing or criticizing Mexican politics of the 1920s and as a way of defending the role of intellectuals who felt disenfranchised by the Revolution. Parra notes that Calles had “declared that the de la Huerta revolt had had the social benefit of separating ‘the false and the genuine revolutionaries’” and that Guzmán wrote *El águila* in part to respond to Calles and defend his own role as a true Revolutionary (79).

Although *El águila y la serpiente* was not published in book form until 1928, many sections had appeared in the previous two years in *La Prensa* and *La Opinión*, newspapers for the Mexican diaspora in the U.S. published in San Antonio and Los Angeles, respectively (“En la hora” 79).<sup>7</sup> Pineda notes that Guzmán’s position as an exile allowed him to criticize Mexican society and that the author’s criticisms of the Obregón and Calles governments fit well into *La Prensa*, a newspaper critical of the Mexican government at the time (35). Given this publication context, Pineda argues that Guzmán’s description of the Revolution in *El águila* was influenced by his experience of the 1922-23 elections (41). Like Pineda and Parra, Nicholas Cifuentes-Goodbody examines the ideological and political motivations behind Guzmán’s work. In his recently published study of Guzmán and life writing, *The Man Who Wrote Pancho Villa*, Cifuentes-Goodbody presents the ways in which the author sought to control his work and shape his legacy. These critics—Cifuentes-Goodbody, Pineda, and Parra, among others—do an excellent job of interpreting Guzmán’s writing in relation to the shifting political landscape of twentieth-century Mexico, but do not focus on how the author’s work was transformed when it crossed linguistic borders. The following study will reveal the ways in which Guzmán’s legacy was shaped by the U.S. publishing market, which sought to capitalize on heightened interest in the figure of Villa.

Villa is a central character in *El águila y la serpiente*, which the author had originally called *A la hora de Pancho Villa*, a title his editor in Spain rejected, considering it potentially problematic in political terms and less marketable than Guzmán’s other suggestions (Carballo 73). Of the other titles Guzmán suggested, Aguilar preferred *El águila y la serpiente*, a reference to Mexico’s coat of arms, and, according to Susana Quintanilla, a metaphor for the brutal coexistence of two opposing forces (“En la hora” 79). The title was also a reference to the work of Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, who had referred to Mexico as “el país del águila y la serpiente” and whose work had helped establish the canon of war literature (“En la hora” 79). However, the Spanish editions of the text include many sections that focus on other figures from the Revolution that were omitted in the 1930 translation.

In Spanish, the book was a commercial and critical success. According to Parra, it was “enthusiastically received first in intellectual circles in Spain, where the first edition sold out in one month, and later in Mexico City” (78). After the Aguilar edition sold out, Guzmán took his manuscript to a larger publisher with international ambitions, the Compañía Iberoamericana de Publicaciones (C.I.A.P.). C.I.A.P. pub-

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<sup>7</sup> See Pineda Franco for a table with publication information for the sections of *El águila y la serpiente* that were published in *La Prensa*.

lished the second edition in December, just six months after the M. Aguilar edition. According to Guzmán, the Aguilar edition contained errors and the author asked that de Onís use the C.I.A.P. edition for her translation (Letter to Federico de Onís).

The context of the text's publication suggests that Guzmán was more interested in critiquing Mexican politics than he was in simply describing Villa's role in the Revolution. In a 1963 interview with Emmanuel Carballo, Guzmán affirmed that literature for him was a way of evaluating historical events: "mi propósito no es describirme, sino interpretar la vida de mi país" (98). Although Guzmán defended his work as "rigurosamente histórico"<sup>8</sup> and the first edition of the book was labeled "memoria," Guzmán later maintained that *El águila* is a novel ("Heme aquí" 478). In a 1958 interview with Carballo, Guzmán said of *El águila*: "Yo la considero una novela, la novela de un joven que pasa de las aulas universitarias a pleno movimiento armado. Cuenta lo que vio en la Revolución tal cual lo vio, con los ojos de un joven universitario. No es una obra histórica como algunos afirman; es, repito, una novela" (73). Guzmán's description of the text emphasizes his own role as a protagonist in the story, a young intellectual trying to interpret the Revolution. He does not present the book as a history of Villa. The abridged 1930 translation, however, shifted the focus almost exclusively to Villa.

According to records in the Knopf archive, either Mexican artist Adolfo Best Maugard or American writer Carleton Beals encouraged Knopf to publish *El águila y la serpiente* in translation (AK284.9). However, de Onís had already planned to translate the book before the publisher contacted her. She later recalled,

I had read the book in Spanish, thought it was very good, and was considering submitting it to some American publisher. But, oddly enough, before I could get around to carrying out my plan, one of the members of the editorial staff at Knopf, a fellow alumna of Barnard, who probably knew about my interest in Hispanic literature from my work as editor of the magazine *World Fiction*, called me to ask if I would be interested in translating this book, to which Knopf had acquired the rights. (201-02)

The translator was married to the exiled Spanish critic Federico de Onís and it appears that he may have been the first to advocate for an English translation of *El águila y la serpiente*. On July 31, 1928, Federico de Onís wrote to Guzmán praising the book and offering to help him find a translator and publisher:

A pesar del carácter episódico de sus memorias, a través de ellas la revolución de Méjico se me hace inteligible. Muchas veces había yo pensado como era posible que la literatura de Méjico flotase exquisita sobre la trágica realidad del país y ajena de ella . . . Su manera de dar las sensaciones de paisajes y personas delatan en Ud. un gran artista de la narración . . .

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<sup>8</sup> In a letter published in *La Prensa* after one of the episodes from the book was published in a plagiarized version. Guzmán writes, "No es un 'cuento mexicano,' como pretende el falso autor, sino un episodio tan rigurosamente histórico como los demás que he incluido en mi pintura de la revolución de 1913 a 1914" (5 Nov. 1928, p. 3).

Ha pensando Ud. En la traducción de la obra al inglés? Si no ha hecho Ud. nada, quizá puedo yo ayudarle a encontrar una buena casa editorial y un buen traductor. (de Onís O-MS/C-76.18)

While much of the sensory detail in the text may have appealed to Federico de Onís, the omissions in the 1930 translation disconnect the descriptive language from its ideological function, reshaping the text as a portrait of Villa rather than the journey of an intellectual trying to understand a revolution that had degenerated into warring caudillos. The increased focus on Villa in the abridged, translated edition reflects U.S. interest in Mexico during this period.

The publication of *The Eagle and the Serpent* coincided with a surge of interest in Mexican cultural production. In her book on the history of U.S.-Mexico cultural exchange during this period, Helen Delpar explains that the taste for Mexican culture in the U.S. was a result of multiple factors, including fellowships such as Guggenheim grants for Latin America, privately funded programs of exchange, the efforts of Ambassador Dwight Morrow, and the travels of artists and intellectuals between Mexico and the U.S. In this context, U.S. publishers began showing interest in translations of Mexican literature, including texts that dealt with the Revolution. In New York in 1929, Brentano's published *The Underdogs*, Enrique Munguía's translation of Mariano Azuela's *Los de abajo*. The following year Alfred A. Knopf published *The Eagle and the Serpent*.

Villa was of particular interest to U.S. readers, in part due to his shifting, complex relationship with the U.S. According to historian Friedrich Katz, Villa first won the support of diverse groups in the U.S., including the Wilson administration, business leaders, and intellectuals, after his victory in Torreón in 1913. Business interests, particularly oil companies, had hoped to use Villa to overthrow Carranza because they didn't like Carranza's nationalistic policies regarding oil (Katz 666). Shortly after the victory, in 1914, Villa signed a contract with Hollywood Mutual Film to film his battles, which helped fund his expeditions and bolster his image in the U.S. (324). Villa enjoyed great popularity in the U.S. until he raided Columbus, New Mexico in 1916 and public sentiment turned against him. Although it turned him into a criminal in the eyes of the U.S. public, the Columbus raid ensured that Villa continued to be a familiar figure.

Films produced in the U.S. the year of the Columbus raid, *Villa Dead or Alive* (1916) and *Following the Flag in Mexico* (1916), portrayed Villa in a negative light (Katz 326). Yet years later, opinions of Villa in the U.S. were surprisingly mixed and representations of him in text and film reflected this ambiguity. Later Hollywood productions such as *Viva Villa!* (1934) presented him once again as a sympathetic character (792). Given the complexity of Villa's image during these years, it is not surprising that he was a figure that fascinated the U.S. public. At least two books on the subject were published in the U.S. in 1930: Louis Stevens's *Here Comes Pancho Villa: The Anecdotal History of a Genial Killer* and Guzmán's *The Eagle and the Serpent*. Guzmán's text was received as the best portrayal of Villa. In an anonymous review of the former, one critic wrote, "Nowhere does Mr. Stevens manage to make Villa come alive as successfully as Martin Luis Guzmán has recently done in *The Eagle and the Serpent*" (BR16).

## ABRIDGEMENT AND OTHER STRUCTURAL CHANGES IN THE TRANSLATION

Although the text was cut to satisfy Knopf, it was primarily de Onís who made specific choices as to which sections to omit. Decades after completing the translation, de Onís tried to recall why the cuts were made. She told Knopf, “*The Eagle and the Serpent* goes back to my almost prehistoric translating days. It is hard for me to reconstruct the reasons for the cuts that were made—the decision came from your office—but I think it was said that many of the less important revolutionary episodes were gone into in too much detail, and tended to hold up the pace of the book” (de Onís AK284.9). The translator’s comment about the pace of the book reveals that she and her publisher were in fact more interested in presenting the book as an exciting novel following the trajectory of Villa rather than a more nuanced political commentary.

Of the U.S. editions of the text, it was not only Knopf that suppressed sections of the text. Juan Bruce-Novoa notes that, as with de Onís’s 1930 translation, the editors of the 1943 scholastic version later published by W.W. Norton (in Spanish for the U.S. market) cut everything except those parts of the text that dealt with the most recognizable historical figures (18). A 1944 review claimed that the Norton edition reduced “a very long discussion of the first three years of the Mexican Revolution to less than two hundred pages of text without omitting any essential material” (Swain 218). Knopf and de Onís, like the editors at Norton, must have determined that much of *El águila y la serpiente* was not essential.

The sections cut in the 1930 translation tended to be those that did not directly deal with Villa. De Onís edited out, for example, a chapter focusing on Ramón Iturbe, commander of the forces in Sinaloa. For Bruce-Novoa, the omission of this chapter erases a point of contrast. The critic writes, of all the “figuras menores, que de algún modo formaban la corte alrededor de los más destacados protagonistas revolucionarios . . . Ramón F. Iturbe es el más significante porque Guzmán le atribuye cualidades superiores a todos, convirtiéndolo en un modelo que nos sirve de punto de contraste para evaluar a los demás” (18–19). Indeed, according to Guzmán, Iturbe was different from most of the other revolutionaries described in *El águila y la serpiente*: “Iturbe era uno de los poquísimos revolucionarios que habían pensado por su cuenta el problema moral de la Revolución y que habían venido a esta con la conciencia limpia” (87).<sup>9</sup> Bruce-Novoa argues that the abridgment in the English translation interfered with the literary value of the work, leading it to be largely ignored in the U.S. The critic does not, however, examine possible ideological motivations for the ways in which de Onís and Knopf altered the novel in English.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> All citations from the second (1928) edition of *El águila y la serpiente*, published by C.I.A.P., which would have been the edition de Onís used to translate.

<sup>10</sup> A more recent article by Gabriel Rosenzweig also sketches the translation history of *El águila y la serpiente*, but within the broader context of Mexican novels translated between 1928 and 1947. Rosenzweig does not analyze the translator’s choices nor does he specifically focus on Guzmán, but his study offers a useful overview of the history of translations of Mexican novels into various languages.

*El águila y la serpiente*, both in its original version and in the English translation, presents a somewhat conflicted but generally sympathetic portrait of Villa. The complex, ambivalent terms in which Guzmán portrays Villa in the original text is an essential part of the author's justification for having deserted Villa. The translation omits sections that present Villa as irrational, violent, and impulsive, shifting the portrayal of the revolutionary to slightly more positive terms. De Onís did not translate, for example, a chapter on David Berlanga, a revolutionary who was executed by Villa's forces. Alina Peña Iguarán argues that the chapter on Berlanga portrays a certain savagery associated with Villa (100). Based on the correspondence between de Onís and Guzmán, the translator had also planned to edit out "Un juicio sumarísimo,"<sup>11</sup> a chapter in which Villa has men who have printed counterfeit money assassinated—against the wishes of Guzmán and despite the pleas of desperate family members. Guzmán feels powerless to stop the crime of assassination, a crime to which he feels he is an accomplice: "Se apoderó de mí, durante unos instantes, la noción estúpida de que yo era un encubridor, un cómplice, un coautor del crimen que iba a perpetrarse . . . Parecía que por un momento se personificaba en mí la conciencia de la Revolución, con todas sus incoherencias y sus excesos" (332). In the end, however, de Onís—perhaps at Guzmán's insistence—decided to include this chapter. It appears in the translation as "Military Justice," a title which removes the idea of rushed judgement from the original chapter title.

De Onís had also originally planned to omit "González Garza, president" and "El telegrama de Irapuato," chapters which also provide necessary context for understanding Guzmán's eventual desertion of Villa. In the first of these chapters, González Garza—who has just assumed the presidency—offers Guzmán a high-level position as "Secretary of War and the Navy" in order to "keep the government going" (336).<sup>12</sup> Guzmán pretends to accept the offer, despite the fact that he is more loyal to Gutiérrez than to Villa, an allegiance which helps explain why he deserts Villa at the end of the book. In addition to giving Guzmán a more active role, the chapter also contributes to expressing the degree of political instability during these years, uncertainty which contributes to explaining Guzmán's voluntary exile and desertion of Villa. In less than two years, there had been five governments in Mexico City (Huntington 67). In "El telegrama de Irapuato," González Garza sends Villa orders to have Guzmán shot. In response to de Onís's suggestion that these chapters be omitted, Guzmán argued that they should appear in the translation because "'González Garza, presidente' y 'El telegrama de Irapuato,' son antecedentes obligados de 'A merced de Pancho Villa,' pues este, sin ellos, perdería casi toda su fuerza." These chapters did appear in the translation, with the titles "González Garza, President" and "From Frying-pan to Fire"—a title which emphasizes the element of suspense far more than the original title "El telegrama de Irapuato." Guzmán also asked de Onís not to cut "Pos 'malgré tout,' licenciado," a chapter focusing on Eulalio

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<sup>11</sup> As evidenced by a letter from Guzmán to de Onís (O-MS/C-76.13). The following discussion of de Onís's editing decisions comes from this long letter, which includes a list of chapter titles and Guzmán's notes for de Onís.

<sup>12</sup> All translations from de Onís's 1930 translation, unless otherwise indicated.

Gutiérrez, “primeramente, porque de allí arranca el final del libro, y más aún . . . porque la presidencia de Gutiérrez es el fondo sobre el cual la figura de Villa se redondea en toda su integridad.” De Onís agreed and translated the chapter as “The President Shows his French.” Although these chapters were included in the translation, de Onís’s initial inclination to omit them suggests that she was less interested in conveying political nuance than in translating a narrative about Villa.

In addition, one of the most heavily symbolic chapters—and one in which builds the light/dark contrast that runs throughout the book—was cut in the first English translation against the author’s wishes. On October 28, 1929, Guzmán asked de Onís not to omit “La carrera en las sombras,”<sup>13</sup> saying that this chapter “tiene para mí un valor especial, me parece lo más original de la obra.” According to Jorge Aguilar Mora, Guzmán uses sensorial language and metaphor to reveal the truth of the Revolution. Rather than establishing relationships of cause and effect, the author employs what Mora calls a reverse process in which he sees his ideology reflected in the events he describes. “La carrera en las sombras” offers an excellent example of the ways in which Guzmán’s highly descriptive language serves an ideological, political function. In this chapter, Guzmán travels through the Mexican countryside in a motorized handcar over train tracks in almost complete darkness. The journey—blindly speeding through darkness—is a reflection on the Revolution. The narrator, “surrounded by darkness” (138),<sup>14</sup> describes a “wild flight, without purpose or objective” and a motor that “grew by what it fed on” (138). The “mad journey” (138)—like the Revolution—seems “so absurd, so unpredictable and inexplicable in its curves and rise and fall that at times it seemed like a journey in infinity, without beginning or end” (139).

Parra links Guzmán’s highly descriptive language—in particular his use of light/dark and his description of rural/urban spaces—to Arielismo, which sought to connect ethics and aesthetics (85). The critic points to Guzmán’s involvement in El Ateneo de la Juventud<sup>15</sup>—a group of young intellectuals who met to discuss humanism and philosophy—as evidence of the importance of aesthetic values in the author’s work (84). *El águila y la serpiente* is, in part, a story of these intellectuals, whose humanist training did not prepare them to interpret the events of the Revolution once it became clear that the battles centered on power and personalities rather than ideas. The certainty associated with the positivism of an earlier period had been lost and the intellectuals of Guzmán’s generation struggled to define their roles, just as the narrator in “La carrera en sombras” is shuttled blindly, with no light to guide him, through the Mexican countryside. Guzmán’s descriptive and heavily symbolic language is partly what set *El águila y la serpiente* apart from other novels of the Revolution. Carballo writes that although it was not the first text to deal with the Mexican Revolution, *El águila y la serpiente* was a *sui generis* work because of its structure, style, and characteristics (94). By eliminating “La carrera

<sup>13</sup> In the 1965 translation, de Onís translated this chapter as “Night Flight.”

<sup>14</sup> Translations from this chapter are from de Onís’s 1965 translation.

<sup>15</sup> For more on Guzmán’s participation in el Ateneo, see Horacio Legrás “El Ateneo.”

en las sombras,” a clear metaphor for the intellectual’s journey, the English translation erases a key element of Guzmán’s exploration of the Revolution.

In addition to eliminating and condensing sections, the abridged translation also erases the section titles that group the chapters in the editions in Spanish —titles which include “Hacia la revolución,” “Andanzas de un rebelde,” and “Iniciación de un villista.” The omission of these section titles also reduces the context that allows the reader to understand the text as the memoir of an intellectual. The division of the work into two parts, “Esperanzas revolucionarias” and “En la hora del triunfo,” are also eliminated. The omissions destroy the cohesion of the editions in Spanish. Although many of the episodes of the text in Spanish were originally published separately, both Bruce-Novoa and Pineda note that the order of the chapters basically corresponds to the order of publication of the episodes in newspapers (18, 41). Bruce-Nova writes that this fact “no deja lugar para dudar de la estructura cuidadosamente pensada que él le impuso: Todo tiene su función y lugar” (18).

In the C.I.A.P. edition, *El águila y la serpiente* begins with Guzmán’s voyage out of Mexico into Texas. The first sentences of the Spanish original are:

Al apearme del tren en Veracruz, recordé que la casa de Isidro Fabela —o más exactamente: la casa de sus padres— había sido ya momentáneo refugio de revolucionarios que pasaban por el puerto en fuga hacia los campos de batalla del Norte. Aquéllos eran luchadores experimentados, combatientes hechos en la revolución maderista, cuyo ejemplo podían y aun debían seguir los rebeldes primerizos. Quise, pues, acogerme yo también a la casa que tan bondadosamente se me brindaba, y me oculté en ella, durante todo el día, rodeado de una hospitalidad solícita y amable. (7)

In these opening lines, Guzmán positions himself as an intellectual reflecting on the ideological roots of the Revolution and moving in spaces of exile and diplomacy, in connection to influential political figures such as Isidro Fabela.

The opening is also deliberately urban. Parra notes that Guzmán tends to divide national space into rural zones, which he associates with barbarism, and urban spaces, marked by modernity that the author connects to morality and his Arielista values (85). In his review of *El águila*, Ramiro Matas also notes the importance of rural and urban spaces for Guzmán: “la atmósfera del conjunto, que viene marcada por el tono y por la presencia del narrador que piensa que el cambio provendrá de la cultura y de la instrucción, pero que a la vez se siente fascinado por lo más contrario, la bárbara hombría de los soldados” (177-78). The third paragraph of the original text in Spanish places the narrator Guzmán in an urban setting, where he admires the busy space of transit in Veracruz:

En las calles próximas a la Aduana me envolvió el olor de fardos, de cajas, de mercancías recién desembarcadas: lo aspiré con deleite. Más lejos, el espacio precursor de los malecones me trajo la atmósfera del mar: se vislumbraban en el fondo vagas formas de navíos, perforadas algunas por puntos luminosos; corrían hacia mí brillos de agua; descansaban, abiertas de brazos, las grandes máquinas del trajín porteño . . . (7-8)

This opening scene in Spanish situates the narrator in movement between the countryside, city, and sea. The space in which he moves is transnational, as he is traveling from Mexico to the U.S. via Cuba, an important base for spies and exiles during the Revolution. In these beginning chapters, Guzmán and his comrades board the ship the *Morro Castle*, where they deduce that one of the other passengers—a beautiful young woman from the U.S.—is a spy working for the Mexican police. Upon discovering that she is working against them, Guzmán and a character named Dr. Dussart manage to outwit her. Dussart, pretending to be rich, tells her that he will marry and stay in Cuba with her rather than continuing on to New York. He plans to sneak back to the ship before it leaves, abandoning her in Havana. The spy discovers the plot, but Guzmán intervenes. In a seemingly casual conversation with the spy, he insinuates that Dussart is a dangerous character who has murdered those who have crossed his path. The spy gets off at the following port, not to be seen again. Bruce-Novoa notes that the role Guzmán the narrator plays in this opening section establishes his function in the rest of the story as a moral and objective observer (18). Drawing on Bruce-Novoa's work, Cifuentes-Goodbody argues that Guzmán uses this opening to position himself intellectually above the other characters ("Los tres Guzmán" 14).

This initial section was omitted in the 1930 translation, despite the author's protests. On Oct 28, 1929, Guzmán wrote de Onís, saying:

El libro primero inicia el relato en una forma suave, en una forma que, a mi modo de ver, invita a seguir leyendo; tiene intriga; tiene un personaje ameno e interesante, el doctor Dussart, y creo que estas circunstancias son muy atendibles cuando se trata de conquistar lectores. (O-MS/C-76.13)

Bruce-Novoa argues that cutting the first chapters takes something away from the "transfondo y escenario estético" that orients the reader and that the omission of this first section "comprueba una falta total de sensibilidad literaria" (18). The original version begins and ends with a journey and the omission of this first section, along with the elimination of section titles that divide the book into two parts, destroys this symmetry. In addition, the opening of the book in Spanish positions Guzmán, not Villa, as the protagonist. This movement between Mexico, Cuba, and the U.S. and the interaction with diplomats is the trajectory of an intellectual during the Revolution, not a soldier.

Whereas the opening chapters of the original establish transnational connections between diplomats and intellectuals, the translation shifts the opening scene of the novel to the Mexican-U.S. border:

To go from El Paso, Texas, to Ciudad Juárez in Chihuahua was, to quote Neftalí Amador, one of the greatest sacrifices, not to say humiliations, that human geography had imposed on the sons of Mexico on that part of the border . . . Ciudad Juárez is a sad sight; sad in itself, and still sadder when compared with the bright orderliness of that opposite river-bank, close but foreign. Yet if our faces burned with shame to look at it, nevertheless, or perhaps for that very reason, it made our hearts dance as we felt the roots of our being sink into something we had known, possessed, and loved for

centuries, in all its brutishness, in all the filth of body and soul that pervades its stresses. Not for nothing were we Mexicans. Even the sinister gleam of the occasional street-lights seemed to wrap us round in a pulsation of comforting warmth. (3–4)

The reference to this humiliation, which de Onís translates as a declaration, appears as a question in the original text: “¿Por qué no también una de las mayores humillaciones?” (40). The translation shifts the opening of the book from a modern setting the narrator admires to the underdeveloped Ciudad Juárez. More significantly, the opening of the translation establishes the Mexican-U.S. border, which Villa crossed, as a limit rather than emphasizing the transnational space of the Revolution.

In addition to the omission of “La Bella Espía,” the translation omits the two chapters that follow this narrative: “La segunda salida,” and “En San Antonio Texas.” These chapters, like other omitted sections, emphasize Guzmán’s role as an intellectual and place the Revolution in a history of ideological battles, beginning with his connection to supporters of Madero. In “La segunda salida,” Guzmán refers to Madero supporters before explaining how he and Alberto Pani —“sin armas, se entiende, mas no sin pluma”— distribute subversive propaganda (29). And “En San Antonio Texas” begins with a description of the intellectual life of Guzmán’s fellow *ateneísta* José Vasconcelos:

José Vasconcelos empapaba ya su espíritu en las concepciones neoplatónica y budista del Universo y tenía jurada guerra sin cuartel —aunque no sin debilidades— a la mala bestia en cuyo cuerpo nuestras pobres almas sufren el castigo de existir y encarnarse. Era, sin embargo, demasiado generoso para detenerse en una mera aspiración interior, así fuese honda. (35)

It is in this conflict between ideology and the reality of the Revolution, therefore, that Vasconcelos decides to support Villa. Guzmán, too, defends his support of the Revolution, maintaining that he approached the political scene motivated by ideas, without prejudice regarding personalities: “llegaba a la Revolución libre de prejuicios en cuanto a personas” (35). In addition, like the preceding chapters, “San Antonio Texas,” emphasizes the transnational space in which intellectuals moved during the Revolution; “el personaje revolucionario por antonomasia entre todos los sanantonenses lo era en aquellos días Samuel Belden,” who meets with an international group of clients in an office that was half Mexican, half North American, and speaks in Spanish with “sintaxis anglicizante” (38). Eliminating these initial chapters, therefore, deemphasizes the international context of the Revolution and the connections of intellectuals such as Vasconcelos and Guzmán with *ateneísmo* and the legacy of Madero.

The 1930 translation begins with the narrator’s first encounter with Villa. The chapter is titled, “My First Glimpse of Pancho Villa.” Whereas the original text contextualizes events of the Revolution in intellectual history, the abridged translation begins with a portrait of Villa without this context. The translation begins with a foreword that positions Villa as a protagonist and sets up the text to be read as a suspenseful novel. The final paragraph of the foreword reads,

By the beginning of 1915 the Revolution had degenerated into a veritable state of anarchy, into a simple struggle between rivals for power. This went on until 1916, when Obregón and Carranza, in great part with the help of the United States, managed to reduce Villa to a position in which he could do nothing, without ever conquering him. As a guerrilla leader Villa was invincible. In May 1920 he was still lording it in the stronghold of the sierras. His energy and his daring were unrivalled. Even General Pershing's famous expedition—the ten thousand men that Wilson sent to Mexico, with Carranza and Obregón's approval, 'to get Villa dead or alive'—had to relinquish this undertaking. (ix)

Because it makes no mention of Villa's death in 1923, orchestrated by Calles and Obregón,<sup>16</sup> this introduction, which appears only in the translation, creates suspense and is a direct appeal to the image of Villa as cunning outlaw rather than as a true enemy of the U.S. The author sets up the text to be read with sympathy for Villa and with bias against figures like Carranza. Rather than being an objective summary of the events of the Revolution, the forward reinforces the ideas Guzmán expresses throughout the text. For example, he writes "Carranza . . . was devoid of ideals and eager only for power" (viii). The prologue also obscures the fact that Guzmán later deserted Villa.

#### STYLISTIC ASPECTS OF THE TRANSLATION

As with the prologue, many of de Onís's stylistic choices in the translation function to position Villa as a protagonist, in part by reducing the reflective tone of the original. For example, de Onís occasionally eliminates ellipses, as she does in the following example: Guzmán describes a mass of people as "el alma de un reptil monstruoso con cientos de cabezas, con millares de pies, que se arrastraba, alcoholíco y torpe, entre las paredes de una calle lóbrega en una ciudad sin habitantes . . ." (97). De Onís cuts out the ellipses at the end of the passage, translating it as "the soul of a huge reptile with hundreds of heads, thousands of feet, which crawled, drunk and sluggish, along the walls of a cavernous, dark street in a deserted city" (60). In this case and in others,<sup>17</sup> these types of changes deemphasize the fact that the narrator is constantly questioning events and his own interpretations of them. In his analysis of Guzmán's work, Mark Millington writes, "it is a crucial feature of the intellectual mind at this more advanced level that it is capable of self-reflexivity and self-questioning" (36).

<sup>16</sup> Although some studies contradict these findings, Katz notes that "other evidence that Mexican researchers gathered . . . strongly implicates both Obregón and Calles in Villa's assassination" (774).

<sup>17</sup> Another example is her translation of "Claro que nos quedan, por lo menos, las armas . . . Tampoco, porque las destruimos, y, peor aún, nos destruimos con ellas . . ." (Guzmán 41). She eliminates all ellipses: "Still, we have the arms. But we don't have them either, for we destroy them. And, what's worse, we destroy each other with them" (5).

Generally, readers of the translation should be able to note the contrast Guzmán establishes between himself and other characters. An anonymous reviewer of the 1930 translation wrote, “We see Guzmán, the scholar rather than the man of action sharing the bivouac lives of the revolutionists and yet keeping about himself an air of the classical library” (BR4). However, although Guzmán’s role as an intellectual comes through in the translation, the distance he creates between himself and other Revolutionary figures is significantly reduced in the English. Cifuentes-Goodbody notes that in sections of the original text Guzmán the narrator interacts with other characters in a way that reveals his intellectual superiority (“Los tres Guzmán” 14). The differences between the narrator—and the intellectual class to which he belongs—and other Revolutionaries are marked in the dialogue in the text and reduced in the translation, which eliminates regionalisms and accents that mark some characters as less educated. In “Mi primer vislumbre de Pancho Villa,” Guzmán walks into a room with Neftalí Amador and one of Villa’s men ask them “¿pá dónde jalan pues?” (43). De Onís translates this as “Say, where are you headed for?” (9). In the original version, the following conversation ensues:

- Conque el licenciado Amador y dos ministros . . .
- Justamente. El subsecretario de Instrucción Pública en el gabinete del Presidente Madero y director general . . .
- ¿Onde le digo yo todo eso!
- Bueno, pues sólo lo otro: el licenciado Amador y un ministro del señor Madero.
- ¿Un ministro o dos ministros?
- Es igual: uno o dos . . . (43–44)

The English version eliminates the references to accents, normalizes the spelling of “minister” and omits the title “licenciado”:

- ‘Then it’s Mr. Amador and two ministers . . .?’
- ‘That’s right. The Under-secretary of Public Instruction in President Madero’s Cabinet and the director general . . .’
- ‘Say, how do you expect me to say all that?’
- ‘Well, then, just Mr. Amador and a minister of President Madero.’
- ‘One minister or two ministers?’
- ‘It doesn’t matter, one or two . . .’ (9)

The translation, therefore, reduces the distance between Guzmán and Villa’s men.

In addition to using dialogue to set himself and other intellectuals apart from other Revolutionaries, Guzmán relies on series of questions in order to show the ways in which the narrator attempts to interpret events of the Revolution. In some cases, de Onís rewrites these as statements. For example, “¿Cómo o por qué había de acabarse Carranza si no se iba? Eso no nos dijo” becomes “How or why Carranza was done for if he did not retire was not explained” (Guzmán 280; de Onís 234). After a description of Felipe Ángeles, the narrator asks himself, “¿No abundaron por ventura los que se apasionaban en su contra—movidos sólo por la envidia—y

aun lo calumniaban por escrito?” (56). In the translation, this becomes a statement: “Their name was legion who were furiously opposed to him—with envy as their only motive—and who publicly maligned him” (26). The shift in meaning is slight, but these questions form part of Guzmán’s positioning of himself in relation to other characters and create the illusion that he questions aspects of the Revolution in the moment of the events and not just retrospectively. Guzmán’s constant questioning stands in contrast to *caudillos* such as Carranza, who is portrayed as motivated by personal interest rather than a particular political ideology: “Carranza sólo se preocupa y sólo sabe de acabar con cuantos no acatan sumisos su dictadura . . . Con Carranza, el país y la Revolución van a un despeñadero, van a la lucha personalista tras el disfraz de los postulados revolucionarios” (239). In another case, regarding his participation in the Revolution, Guzmán asks himself, “Yo . . . ¿hice bien yo? ¿Hice mal?” (58). In English, these questions become “I do not know whether I did right or not” (27), which repositions the moment of doubt to the time of the narration, making it seem that the narrator is reflecting years after the Revolution rather than questioning the events—and his own role—during the war.

Despite her tendency to alter sentence structures, de Onís was often very careful when it came to the literal translation of particular terms. As she later did with other authors whose work she translated, de Onís sent Guzmán lists of words with which she was unfamiliar. In response to one of her queries, Guzmán explained that “mitigüeson” is a “corrupción, entre los soldados revolucionarios mexicanos, de Smith & Wesson, una marca de pistolas” (Letter to de Onís O-MS/C-76.13). However, while de Onís was accurate with specific terms, she generally did not try to recreate an author’s style in terms of syntax, regional language, and other aspects. Her stylistic choices in *The Eagle and the Serpent*—translating regional dialogue into neutral English, rewriting questions as statements, changing paragraph breaks, and breaking up sentences—streamline the narrative and focus it more on Villa.

Despite Villa’s visibility in the U.S., the 1930 translation of *El águila y la serpiente* did not sell well. According to Bruce-Novoa, Knopf printed 2,520 copies of the 1930 translation, fewer than half of which sold before Knopf started selling the translation at a discounted price (17). Decades later, Guzmán blamed the failure of the 1930 translation on the abridgement and wrote to Knopf seeking a complete version of his book in English (Letter to Knopf AK284.9). At the author’s urging, de Onís translated the previously omitted sections and Doubleday published a complete translation of *The Eagle and the Serpent* in 1965.<sup>18</sup>

#### GUZMÁN’S LEGACY IN ENGLISH TRANSLATION

By the time Guzmán contacted Knopf in 1960 to pursue a complete translation, the Mexican Revolution was no longer at the forefront of readers’ minds—neither

<sup>18</sup> Knopf returned the translation rights to Guzmán after the author insisted on retaining control over the final editing decisions (9 Nov. 1960, AK248.9).

in Mexico nor in the U.S. In Mexico, Guzmán had become a privileged public figure and his work had become canonical,<sup>19</sup> but the initial idealism of the Revolution, as well as the nationalist push to revive the myth of the Revolution in the 20s, had faded. In the U.S., the public was less interested in the specifics of the Mexican Revolution and, in the wake of the Cuban Revolution, more interested in revolution in Latin America in a broader sense. Knopf and de Onís considered the book in this new context. On August 17, 1960, de Onís wrote to Knopf arguing for republishing the book, saying “what I think really matters is getting the book back into print, adding the missing material, for, as I told you, it is the best thing that I have seen on the Mexican Revolution, and I think it would have an oblique timeliness in the light of what is happening in Cuba” (AK284.9).

Like the 1930 translation, the complete version of *The Eagle and the Serpent* did not fare well. Doubleday later sold the translation to Peter Smith, who republished it at a high cost that limited the sales of the work (Bruce-Novoa 17). Guzmán’s writing did not become a lasting part of the canon of translated Latin American literature. The author’s relative obscurity is in part the result of his support of the Mexican government’s violent repression of student protests in 1968, just three years after the publication of de Onís’s complete translation of *The Eagle and the Serpent*. However, even if Guzmán had not ended up on the wrong side of history, he probably would not have been successful in the global market. The English translation appealed primarily to historians and was limited to serving a specific scholarly function.

The fate of the 1965 translation suggests that the omissions in the first version were not to blame for the text’s commercial failure in 1930, as Guzmán had argued. The abridgement and de Onís’s stylistic decisions do, however, reveal the ways in which translated texts are transformed by the target market. David Damrosch argues that translations have the potential to challenge readers’ preconceptions (513). Rather than challenging assumptions about the Mexican Revolution, however, the abridged 1930 translation of *El águila y la serpiente* reshaped the text to conform to readers’ expectations. That is, the translation aligned with market forces in the U.S. by attempting to capitalize on Villa as a recognizable figure rather than presenting the text as a reflection on the role of intellectuals during the Revolution.

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<sup>19</sup> During this period, Guzmán exercised a high degree of editorial control over his work in Mexico, partly a result of his privileged political position. For an excellent analysis on the ways in which Guzmán sought to shape his legacy and promote his work see Cifuentes-Goodbody’s *The Man Who Wrote Pancho Villa*.

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