“His Panic”: Latin-American Poetry in Translation
By: Daniel Ruiz
Supervising Professors:
Dr. David Kirby and Dr. James Kimbrell
Background: Who am I?

- Born in Bayamon, Puerto Rico and raised in Orlando.
- Junior at Florida State (GO NOLES!)
- Major: Creative Writing (taking classes primarily in poetry)
- Poetry editor of *The Kudzu Review*
- Barista at the Barnes & Noble Café
- Winner of the 2012 Literati Poetry Award
- Recipient of the 2013 Michael J. Shaara Undergraduate Research Award
The Task of the Translator

“
It is the task of the translator to release in his own language that pure language that is under the spell of another, to liberate the language imprisoned in a work in his recreation of that work.”

–Walter Benjamin, “The Task of the Translator”

“Pure language: reduction of language to its essence, language without borders”

“My job is making windows where there were once walls.”

–Michel Foucault
Why would I study that?

- Reconnect with my culture and relearn Spanish
- Personal influence of Latin-American poets (Neruda, Paz, Lorca, Borges, Mistral, etc.).
- Kenneth Koch: “double or triple quality of words”
- Many fantastic writers studied multiple languages (Joyce, Nabokov, the New York School of Poetry, etc.).
Methodology

Twelve Week Project:

First six weeks: READ, READ, READ!

Second six weeks: READ, WRITE, TRAVEL, WRITE!

Results: Translated one poem a week for six weeks
The Trip

✦ Uruguay: 6 Days
  (7/5/2013-7/9/13; 7/15/13)
✦ Argentina: Five Days
  (7/10/13-7/14/13)
✦ Nic Schutz
  ▪ Born in Montevideo, Uruguay
  ▪ Fluent Spanish speaker
  ▪ Best friend
Spanish is Many Languages

- Spanish, as a language, is diverse.
- There are countless dialects of Spanish spoken in different regions all over the world.
Spanish is Many Languages

**Puerto Rican**
- Fast and choppy
- Cut the letters off the ends of our words
- Change phrases like "¿Como estas usted?" and say, "¿Como tu ‘sta?"

**Uruguayan/Argentinian**
- European influenced (immigration of Spaniards and Italians to Uruguay and Argentina)
- Pronounce the LL (yeh) as SH (sheh)
Morsilla
Surviving with the Wrong Spanish
The Double and Triple Quality of Words

♦ Sample Word: LLAMA
♦ English: (lah-mah)
♦ Puerto Rican Spanish: (yah-mah)
♦ Uruguayan/Argentinian Spanish: (shah-mah)
Vuelta de Paseo

By: Federico García Lorca

Asesinado por el cielo, entre las formas que van hacia la sierpe y las formas que buscan el cristal, dejaré crecer mis cabellos.

Con el árbol de muñones que no canta y el niño con el blanco rostro de huevo.

Con los animalitos de cabeza rota y el agua harapienta de los pies secos.

Con todo lo que tiene cansancio sordomudo y mariposa ahogada en el tintero.

Tropezando con mi rostro distinto de cada día. ¡Asesinado por el cielo!
Returning from Walking
By: Daniel Ruiz

Murdered by the sky.
Between the ghosts approaching the serpent
and the ghosts searching for the crystal,
I’ll let my hair grow.

With the never-singing tree of stumps
and the boy with the blank face of an egg.

With the small animals with broken heads
and the ragged water of dry feet.

With all that is tired and deaf and mute
and the drowned butterfly in the inkwell.

Stumbling over my face that changes daily.
Murdered by the sky!
After a Walk

Cut down by the sky.
Between shapes moving toward the serpent and crystal-craving shapes,
I’ll let my hair grow.

With the amputated tree that doesn’t sing and the child with the blank face of an egg.

With the little animals whose skulls are cracked and the water, dressed in rags but with dry feet.

With all the bone-tired, deaf-and-dumb things and a butterfly drowned in the inkwell.

Bumping into my own face, different each day. Cut down by the sky!

Returning from Walking

Murdered by the sky.
Between the ghosts approaching the serpent and the ghosts searching for the crystal, I’ll let my hair grow.

With the never-singing tree of stumps and the boy with the blank face of an egg.

With the small animals with broken heads and the ragged water of dry feet.

With all that is tired and deaf and mute and the drowned butterfly in the inkwell.

Stumbling over my face that changes daily. Murdered by the sky!
Broader Implications of Translating Poems

- Translation parallels communication.

- “Translation . . . serves the purpose of expressing the central reciprocal relationship between languages.” –Walter Benjamin, “The Task of the Translator”

- Translation reinforces individualism and collaboration.
What’s Next?

Ο These translations will be included in my honors thesis, a book-length collection of my own poems and translations, called *Reasons for the Dark to Be Afraid*. 
Acknowledgements
Questions