

Syracuse University

SURFACE

Syracuse University Honors Program Capstone Projects Syracuse University Honors Program Capstone Projects

Spring 5-1-2009

Pablo Neruda: A Collection of Creative Interpretations

Amy Bonanno

Follow this and additional works at: https://surface.syr.edu/honors_capstone



Part of the [Spanish Linguistics Commons](#), and the [Spanish Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Bonanno, Amy, "Pablo Neruda: A Collection of Creative Interpretations" (2009). *Syracuse University Honors Program Capstone Projects*. 436.

https://surface.syr.edu/honors_capstone/436

This Honors Capstone Project is brought to you for free and open access by the Syracuse University Honors Program Capstone Projects at SURFACE. It has been accepted for inclusion in Syracuse University Honors Program Capstone Projects by an authorized administrator of SURFACE. For more information, please contact surface@syr.edu.

I. *Creative Interpretations of Select Works by Pablo Neruda*

*

The Resting Place

Inspired by *The Light Wraps You*

I give her to the foam of the frothy ocean:
The effervescence of the salt spray, the sprightly tug-boats,
And lichen- rich cliffs.

I give her to the pine,
green in its remorse
for the winter leaves
that fall beneath our unforgiving steps
through a wooded pass.

I give her to the song of birds,
and the rise and fall of a tiny creature's lungs
so sweet in the summer air.

I give her to the beach
with its endless grains of sand.
One for each of us living.
One for each of us gone.
And the purple sky
as the sun retires another day.
I give her to them.

I give her to the skies,
to leave the way she came.
The Lord giveth,
and the Lord taketh away.
I give her
to the Lord.

*

*

Victoria

Inspired by *Don't Go Far Off, Not Even For a Day*

The picture brings me to your memory
but never back to you.
Eighteen years ago
I saw your face for
the first time.
Living in the same cul-de-sac since birth,
it's odd we hadn't met before.

I remember one specific day...
My mom was driving the blue
family station wagon down the edge of our street.
She stopped to look both ways
as though there might be
even the slightest sign of traffic
in our quiet neighborhood.
From my car-seat in the back,
I stared at your house
as mom took the necessary precautions:
Head right,
head left,
glance in the rear view,
all clear,
turn signal on.

My head turned too
as the car barreled onto the highway.
"Who lives there?" I asked,
pointing to your house.
Mom said she didn't know.
She hadn't met the couple
with the two little girls yet.

To a curious toddler,
this kind of response
is never good enough.
Who were you? I had to know.

Just a few weeks later
 there you were
 coming toward me
 up the hill. A sweet child; dimple-cheeked,
 and freckle-nosed. Your nickel-sized irises
 brown like coffee beans.
 Wrapped in a pastel jumpsuit,
 one hand in your mom's
 the other on your sister's stroller.

At three years old,
 I was a chubby child
 with little understanding
 of how you might evolve
 into a courageous young woman
 or what your features already said
 about the gentle nature of the person who possessed them.
 A woman whose very name meant victory.
 A woman who walked with the wind at her back
 And commanded the seas. A modern-day goddess.
 Wonder-woman to me.

I stood there, not caring to talk much.
 I didn't need to.
 I already knew you were my best friend.

Eighteen years later,
 I stand here with so much to say.
 But I don't need to say anything.
 Because I know you know what I'm thinking.
 You always did.

*

Ode to Fruit Salad
Inspired by *Ode to Tomatoes*

The painter and
 his long brush
 select color for a white canvas

as the eater
creates a cornucopia
for his pallet. Thumbing through purples, reds, and
yellows for ripeness, firmness, quality of color.
Most are spherical or ovular
taking the shape of women's reproductive organs.
The first one chosen being
green-skinned with a yellow-orange gut.

Knife and chopping block
to the head
of a slimy and cold victim.
Down the back of one's throat
plopping into the stomach pit
and cooling the belly-core.

Purple pearls
from a western valley.
Stragglers who escaped the feet
of angry peasants and glass bottles,
with their moth-bitten cork tops,
but not the throat of a glutton.
Red, seeded children birthed from bushes
of countless gardens
liquefied
on incisors and molars.

Peristalsis claiming
star slices of orange globes,
and their yellow cousins
down a tunnel of gyration
and gravitational pull.

Back up to the empty
glass serving cup
reflecting back the face
of the partaker
of such fine gifts.

No solace for those
 who lie dead and stewed
 in the belly of the man
 dabbing his face.

*

Ode to Sadness

Inspired by no ode in particular

Like a serpent's tongue
 You are a cunning deceiver
 Talking me into the pit
 From which I find no real escape.
 Just a temporary respite
 In the hug of a loved-one
 Or the kind glance of stranger.
 And soon again, I am
 Alone.

A chimp in
 The iron cage of humanity.
 Stagnant hopelessness
 Envelops the steel bars
 With a silvery gleam
 Reminding me of the sunlight
 That lurks on the other end.

Joy and light;
 A rare extension
 Of the world where I once lived.

*

Always

Inspired by *Always*

I know no other way
 but to stroke your black hair
 gently
 as a mother caresses her child.

When we are on the bed
 the others are forgotten

like the names of places
 we've visited once
 in the leisure of a summer vacation
 when details don't matter
 and heat baffles the brain.
 Right now, just the two of us.

Come to me like a lost child,
 like a hardened criminal,
 like an estranged husband.
 Come to me like a vagabond,
 like a wandering wallower,
 like a weeping willow.
 Come to me as you are.
 I know no other way
 but to stroke your black hair
 gently.

*

Without
Inspired by *You Are the Daughter of the Sea*

The ticking from her watch can still be heard,
 The only source of sound within the room.
 Like TNT exploding in my ears
 Juxtaposed with Tori's silent chest.

I'll never know exactly why she's gone;
 I guess it was the coming of her fate.
 But strange for me to think she'd choose to lie
 Beneath the earth forever in the dark
 And not to spread her dreams to hills and knolls
 And share with them the songs she sang in youth.
 Hopes of the children she would birth. Memories
 Of dancing, swimming, and slumber parties.
 Of baking, story-time, and belly laughs.
 Of building tents in my bedroom with desk chairs
 And bed sheets from my mother's linen closet.

In this lonely time without her, without
 The girl, the teen, the woman I loved,
 I place a watch beside her picture
 Pretending her paper chest will rise
 And fall in rhythm to the steady ticks
 Of the second hand as it nears 12
 And sounds the hour.
 I do it so she stays alive.
 I do it to keep her with me.

*

Remembering Love

Inspired by *I Crave Your Mouth, Your Voice, Your Hair*

I never thought that love would hurt so much
 Since countless poems have been written
 About the pleasantries of holding hands
 Or the heat created by two bodies
 As they synchronize their sweat-laden forms-
 Two dancing shadows on the bedroom shades.

Cautiously, I'd draw the window shades
 Lest our neighbors witness all too much
 Of our glossy, quickly moving forms.
 In tabloids, too much has been written
 About our private lives. Our bodies
 Should be sacred. Our eyes, legs, hands.

Others should never know how I used my hands
 Like black magic behind those shades
 Putting you under my spell. Two bodies
 Never did quite have that much
 Fun. Embarrassing, though true, I had written
 About us and our synergistic forms.

But our bodies have since taken on new forms,
 As you push me away with angry hands
 And erase the words I had written
 In my diary about our secret lives behind the shades.
 I had never loved anything as much
 As I did the union of our bodies.

Nothing as beautiful as our bodies
 Together in the dark. Two forms,
 Two lovers, without much
 Time. Kissing mouths and holding hands
 And casting shadows on the shades.
 Ignoring what might be written

In a voyeur's notepad, what might be written
 By a peeping tom about our bodies
 And our so-called lewd behavior behind the shades.
 I loved the union of our forms,
 The soft and hard grips from your hands.
 Never again shall I love so much.

*

Them
From *The Dictators*

Who are they? The dictators?
 The deliberators?
 The frenzied foes
 who come to rob, steal, and kill?
 It seems the very demons
 the Lord set forth to
 detain.

The cemetery is a field
 of stone
 with the noxious stench
 of death spilling forth
 from soft ground.
 Who are they? The men
 and women in black cars,
 black pants and jackets,
 skirts and blouses?
 The flower girls
 and bible bearers?
 The grave guardians
 and mourning Marys?

The cemetery is a field
of stone
with the noxious stench
of death spilling forth
from soft ground
greeting the cars at the gate.

Who are they? The remnants
Of living water?
Those who've aged
thirsty and dry in their plots;
not even a drop from
the life-giving river
to quench their
yellowing bones.

The cemetery is a field
of stone
with the noxious stench
of death spilling forth.
A meeting ground
for deliberators,
the devastated,
and their dead.

*

In the Blackness
Inspired by *Dead Woman*

In the blackness
of the living room
we sit. Thinking
while shadows in the hallway
echo in the upper atmosphere
off the corner
where the crown molding
meets the tray ceiling
and a chandelier is furrowed in dust.

From the street,
the house is a mansion.
While inside, signs of decaying opulence;
a broken cabinet door,
leaky faucet, and cobwebbed columns.
A scene from Dickens and
a premonition of the vacancy
we've come to know.

In the blackness
of the living room
we sit. Thinking

about the angel who
dwelt in the upper atmosphere
off that room.
About seventeen steps
up the long spiral staircase
behind the white door.

We found her in the bed
with long wooden posts.
A buoy in a sea of leopard print.
The blanket draped on
her cold body.
Skin, purple like the walls.
Hands folded beneath the weight
of her chest.
Already praying for the
people in the living room.

Together
in the blackness.
Wailing together.
Wondering together.
Waiting together
for a call from the coroner
for answers to the questions
we can't even ask.

*

Depends
Inspired by If You Forget Me

My mouth is
a cavernous pit
where beautiful words
that hung like bats
to a stalactite uvula
have long since dispersed.
They were mine, those words,
so carefully crafted,
painstakingly practiced,
and allegorically arranged
into a neat little package
like a long sleeve of cookies
or salted water crackers.
I saw you and I sang
them like an act of God.
You were the gospel of my soul.

If you've forgotten me
my hands are
feeble stubs. Lumps
of flesh with feelers
like the heads of slimy bugs.
Once the magnificent likenesses
of prototype marble men
behind museum glass
fitting lovingly upon the curves of
your body's lower half.

If you've forgotten me
my feet,
creatures that once brought me to you,
are the long sinewy veins
of a rooted shrub implanted within
the very ground upon
which they stand.

If you've forgotten me,
 my brain is a factory
 closed,
 my thoughts have vacated
 like a laid-off workforce,
 and I'm swept into
 a silent shroud of purple
 with nothing but blinking stars
 to mock a vacant stare.

If you've forgotten me
 my tombstone is a sundial
 to the green
 that grows thick around it
 reflecting the rays of overhead sun
 and warming the empty plot.
 My bones lie not here
 but in the shipwreck of our love.
 For if you've forgotten me,
 I never existed at all.

*

Ode to a Lawn Chair
Inspired by *The Light Wraps You*

In the summer
 mom was balling melon
 in the shade of our kitchen
 as you and I inadvertently
 swallowed gnats during high-speed bike chases.

Being younger and less adept,
 it wasn't long before my knees
 resembled the blocks of chopped meat
 mom bought from Tony the butcher.

Resigned to a lawn chair
 with gauze and antibacterial ointment,
 I was the outcast of the cul-de-sac.
 The babe in swaddling clothes,
 in the stable of mom's protection.

No one brought me gifts of frankincense, gold, and myrrh.
Just sideways glances and childlike chuckles.
There were no wise men to enforce injury protocol.
Just a savvy mom
who told me to stay
in the lawn chair lest I faint
from fear of the gushing wounds.

The heat, oh that memorable ball of fire,
moved me
as mom fastened the gabardine.
Dream or delusion, I'll never know.
But the chair was suddenly a chopper
in ascent. I was above you. Above the
cul-de-sac and the scene of the accident
that confined me to this seated position.

In the thick of our garden
the blue patches of ripened berries,
cobalt pearls that folded
nicely into our pancake batter
each Sunday morning,
were nothing but blue eyeballs
staring me back down
to earth.

So I opened my clenched lids
to examine the bandages
which were shining white beneath
the wheat-colored sun,
and sank with comfort
into the chair
that held up against the weight of
a traumatized toddler.

*

*

Lost
Inspired by *Saddest Poem*

I can write the saddest poem of all tonight.

In my mind, with my pen: "Death has come
 With his mighty skeleton hand outreached."

I can write the saddest poem of all tonight.
 I loved her and she loved me.
 How could I not have loved her tiny hands,
 Perfect mouth and glorious smile?

I can write the saddest poem of all tonight.
 My ears without her whistling voice;
 I shall accede to deafness.
 To escape the immense night
 With its thunderous crickets.

I shall accede to blackness, too.
 Becoming blind to the twinkling of the lightning bug
 That still blinks bright
 While she is brown dust.

That's all. Far away, someone screams in childbirth. Far away.
 My soul is lost without her.
 My soul is lost without her.

*

Dead Man
Inspired by *Dead Woman*

Grandpa and I
 sit in front of the window-
 cold, a stranger to our tingly warm bodies.

We sip the hot cocoa with ease,
 the way kings and princes do.

"Be careful not to burn your tongue," I say.
 He winks and the wrinkles in his face
 close like little doors
 guarding the mystery of old age.

Grandpa and I
 have sat here many times before
 stirring the thick marshmallow
 in the blue mugs.

But this time is different.
 This time I make the cocoa.
 This time I wash the mugs.
 Because grandpa is old
 Because grandpa doesn't know
 what cocoa is anymore.

He just sips the hot, syrupy brown
 and smiles,
 toothless as a baby gulping milk.

*

The Son
Inspired by *The Son*

Son, do you know, do you know
 where you come from?

In a remote corner of your father's spleen
 the brainchild of love
 was conceived.
 Ready to surface.
 Ready to pounce.
 If you are interested in your whereabouts,
 or better yet how you've come to be,
 ask the mad hatter
 who lulled me
 into a bed of grass
 upon that hill.

Son, do you know, do you know
 where you come from?

You come from the shade of the hill
 where the sun sinks below
 and only purple remains.

The heat of our bodies
lighting the sky.
We lit the sky.
That night, we lit the sky.

The cold of autumn,
made us mad.
I loved him
but the cold,
the cold, my son,
has brought you here.

*

Bebe Mío
Inspired by *Love*

Bebe mío.
Lo que yo siento
es tan difícil de entender.
Es algo muy bello
y simple.
Al mismo tiempo
es la cosa más complicada
en todo el mundo.

Por eso, muchos muertos.
Por eso, muchas guerras.
Por eso, mucha felicidad.

Decir, “tú eres mi corazón” sería falso.
Porque tú eres todo mi vida;
lo bueno y lo malo.
Eres el trabajo de mi empleo.
Eres el carburador roto de mi coche.
Eres la comida fría que
se me olvidó en la microonda.

Eres el girasol del jardín.
El libro antiguo y sabio.
La nube rosa.

Los momentos amargos,
dulces,
agridulces.
Todos, iguales.

*

Web Words
Inspired by *Enigmas*

I am the spider
in the corner of
the cupboard in your mind.

A cunning creature with legs of
stealth, skill, and sorcery.
I steal the words
from the air around you
to which you've trusted
your most quiet of whispers.

Like Arachne,
I weave your breathy confessions
into something beautiful.
Always something beautiful.

I dare not stop work
even for a decent night's rest.
Your words are my fortress
upon which I hang.

Life in the web.
Silk strands and me.

*

The Drive-by
Inspired by *A Song of Despair*

Driving on the turnpike
I'm reminded of you.

I was young and stupid;
my foot propped heavily on the gas,
my hands jumpy on the wheel

with little time for safety
or the law.

Your steadiness
and fortitude
sustained me through
those long drags of road
like a potent cigarette with
your body so slender and white.

Those hands kneading
my sore neck like pasta flour
till my muscles exhaled,
and hot, fresh blood
soothed a growing migraine.

Driving on the turnpike,
I'm reminded of you.

Reckless and free
my long hair whipping at
your face. Stinging
your newly shaven cheeks.

The rearview showed
a dotted concourse:
telephone polls,
convenience stores,
wooden shanties.
Far from home
the pungent air was
a stranger to our unsuspecting noses.

While pumping gas at the station
I watched you
in the passenger seat.
With my eyes, I traced your body
so slender and white
up to your own. Small beacons
reflecting an honest soul
that I loved.

I might have stopped to tell you
all this but the sun was high
and the migraine still lofted
in my skull.

So I pressed on,
 foot heavy on the gas,
 hands jumpy on the wheel
 until the rearview showed
 a dotted concourse:
 steel bridges,
 high rises,
 smoke stacks.
 Far from home
 the sooty air was
 a stranger to our clean lungs.
 The hour of departure.

Driving from the
 the corner of Eastham and Monroe
 with steel in my stomach,
 I lamented your beacon eyes
 that burn only when I close mine.

I might have stopped to tell you
 all this but the sun was high
 and the migraine still lofted
 in my skull.

*

Ode to Stoli On the Rocks
Inspired by *Ode to Wine*

The first sip is white fire.
 Embers in the esophagus.
 Cinders in the belly.
 Noxious.
 Intoxicating.
 A small steel ball
 below my ribs.
 The sweating glass...
 dripping onto the bar
 inviting neon signs
 to illuminate its floating cubes,
 is begging consumption.

My quivering lips
 ease around the brim

for a second,
third,
fourth sip,
done.
Round two, please.
The bartender slides
one forward.

The second glass is soothing tea;
honey to the esophagus,
food to the belly.
Lukewarm.
Comforting.
A rush of color
to my pallid cheeks.

Assertive and poised;
a lady with a man's drink.
I am fierce
and furrowed in men.

My neck,
bathed in Coco-Chanel,
is sweet and delicate
like the tree
in the Lord's Garden.
I bear the fruit
and line the land
of milk and honey.
Shrinking violet, I am not.

When I imbibe,
I am Russian royalty.
The czaress of the bar.
This is my domain.
This is my ode to
Stoli on the rocks.

*

*

*Ode to My i-Pod***Inspired by no ode in particular**

You are the intestines of my
past and present preferences.
Compressing Gershwin and Counting Crows,
Costello and Kanye,
Coldplay and Madonna
into the villi of
“playlists,” “artists,” “albums,” and “songs.”
80 GBs,
not bad for 200 bucks.

Downloading is easy,
uploading is faster,
and your expedient song recall
knows more about my music history
than I can remember.

Like a child
you are easily molded.
You become an image of me
and I, a reflection of you.

Attached to my hip,
and whispering like a mayfly
in my ear,
you are my new best companion.
My friends are jealous.
They call you my “crack-pod.”
They say I’m addicted.

You are the ocean
and I the bottom-feeder.

Like a harp,
I touch you
and you sing,
the chilling echoes of

Lacrimosa.
Like a top,
I turn you and you spin
ill beats of Wu-Tang and Nas.
This is an ode to my i-Pod.

*

Broken
Inspired by *Clenched Soul*

She mourns what
she cannot fix.

It's quiet
and the rain bites
colder than dead flesh.

Outside, the weeping pine
has browned
and needles scatter the lawn
like little fingers without hands.

She turns everything off
but the lamp on her desk
and lights a cigarette
just to see the tobacco
burn red.

She brands herself-
a scar.
Swollen flesh.
A testament of what
she cannot fix.

*

II. *English Translations of Pablo Neruda's Works*
 (With One Original Unaltered Poem)

*

***The Light Wraps You* by Pablo Neruda¹**
Inspiration for *The Resting Place* and *Ode to a Lawn Chair*

The light wraps you in its mortal flame.
 Abstracted pale mourner, standing that way
 against the old propellers of the twilight
 that revolves around you.

Speechless, my friend,
 alone in the loneliness of this hour of the dead
 and filled with the lives of fire,
 pure heir of the ruined day.

A bough of fruit falls from the sun on your dark garment.
 The great roots of night
 grow suddenly from your soul,
 and the things that hide in you come out again
 so that a blue and palled people
 your newly born, takes nourishment.

Oh magnificent and fecund and magnetic slave
 of the circle that moves in turn through black and gold:
 rise, lead and possess a creation
 so rich in life that its flowers perish
 and it is full of sadness.

*

***I Crave Your Mouth, Your Voice, Your Hair* by Pablo Neruda¹**
Inspiration for "Victoria" and "Remembering Love"

Don't go far off, not even for a day, because --
 because -- I don't know how to say it: a day is long
 and I will be waiting for you, as in an empty station
 when the trains are parked off somewhere else, asleep.

Don't leave me, even for an hour, because
 then the little drops of anguish will all run together,
 the smoke that roams looking for a home will drift
 into me, choking my lost heart.

Oh, may your silhouette never dissolve on the beach;
 may your eyelids never flutter into the empty distance.
 Don't leave me for a second, my dearest,
 because in that moment you'll have gone so far
 I'll wander mazily over all the earth, asking,
 Will you come back? Will you leave me here, dying?

*

Ode to Tomatoes by Pablo Neruda¹
Inspiration for *Ode to Fruit Salad*

The street
 filled with tomatoes,
 midday,
 summer,
 light is
 halved
 like
 a
 tomato,
 its juice
 runs
 through the streets.
 In December,
 unabated,
 the tomato
 invades
 the kitchen,
 it enters at lunchtime,
 takes
 its ease
 on countertops,
 among glasses,
 butter dishes,
 blue saltcellars.
 It sheds
 its own light,
 benign majesty.
 Unfortunately, we must
 murder it:
 the knife
 sinks
 into living flesh,
 red
 viscera
 a cool
 sun,

profound,
inexhaustible,
populates the salads
of Chile,
happily, it is wed
to the clear onion,
and to celebrate the union
we
pour
oil,
essential
child of the olive,
onto its halved hemispheres,
pepper
adds
its fragrance,
salt, its magnetism;
it is the wedding
of the day,
parsley
hoists
its flag,
potatoes
bubble vigorously,
the aroma
of the roast
knocks
at the door,
it's time!
come on!
and, on
the table, at the midpoint
of summer,
the tomato,
star of earth, recurrent
and fertile
star,
displays
its convolutions,
its canals,
its remarkable amplitude
and abundance,
no pit,
no husk,
no leaves or thorns,
the tomato offers

its gift
of fiery color
and cool completeness.

*

Always by Pablo Neruda¹
Inspiration for *Always*

I am not jealous
of what came before me.

Come with a man
on your shoulders,
come with a hundred men in your hair,
come with a thousand men between your breasts and your feet,
come like a river
full of drowned men
which flows down to the wild sea,
to the eternal surf, to Time!

Bring them all
to where I am waiting for you;
we shall always be alone,
we shall always be you and I
alone on earth
to start our life!

*

XXXIV (You Are the Daughter of the Sea) by Pablo Neruda¹
Inspiration for *Without*

You are the daughter of the sea, oregano's first cousin.
Swimmer, your body is pure as the water;
cook, your blood is quick as the soil.
Everything you do is full of flowers, rich with the earth.

Your eyes go out toward the water, and the waves rise;
your hands go out to the earth and the seeds swell;
you know the deep essence of water and the earth,
conjoined in you like a formula for clay.

Naiad: cut your body into turquoise pieces,
they will bloom resurrected in the kitchen.
This is how you become everything that lives.

And so at last, you sleep, in the circle of my arms
that push back the shadows so that you can rest--
vegetables, seaweed, herbs: the foam of your dreams.

*

***The Dictators* by Pablo Neruda¹**
Inspiration for *The Dictators*

An odor has remained among the sugarcane:
 a mixture of blood and body, a penetrating
 petal that brings nausea.
 Between the coconut palms the graves are full
 of ruined bones, of speechless death-rattles.
 The delicate dictator is talking
 with top hats, gold braid, and collars.
 The tiny palace gleams like a watch
 and the rapid laughs with gloves on
 cross the corridors at times
 and join the dead voices
 and the blue mouths freshly buried.
 The weeping cannot be seen, like a plant
 whose seeds fall endlessly on the earth,
 whose large blind leaves grow even without light.
 Hatred has grown scale on scale,
 blow on blow, in the ghastly water of the swamp,
 with a snout full of ooze and silence.

*

***The Dead Woman* by Pablo Neruda¹**
Inspiration for *In the Blackness and Dead Man*

If suddenly you do not exist,
 if suddenly you are not living,
 I shall go on living.

I do not dare,
 I do not dare to write it,
 if you die.

I shall go on living.

Because where a man has no voice,
 there, my voice

Where blacks are beaten,
 I can not be dead.
 When my brothers go to jail
 I shall go with them.

When victory,
 not my victory,
 but the great victory
 arrives,
 even though I am mute I must speak:
 I shall see it come even though I am blind.

No, forgive me,
 if you are not living,
 if you, beloved, my love,
 if you
 have died.

*

If You Forget Me by Pablo Neruda¹
Inspiration for Depends

I want you to know
 one thing.

You know how this is:
 if I look
 at the crystal moon, at the red branch
 of the slow autumn at my window,
 if I touch
 near the fire
 the impalpable ash
 or the wrinkled body of the log,
 everything carries me to you,
 as if everything that exists,
 aromas, light, metals,
 were little boats
 that sail
 toward those isles of yours that wait for me.

Well, now,
 if little by little you stop loving me
 I shall stop loving you little by little.

If suddenly
 you forget me
 do not look for me,
 for I shall already have forgotten you.

If you think it long and mad,
 the wind of banners
 that passes through my life,

and you decide
 to leave me at the shore
 of the heart where I have roots,
 remember
 that on that day,
 at that hour,
 I shall lift my arms
 and my roots will set off
 to seek another land.

But
 if each day,
 each hour,
 you feel that you are destined for me
 with implacable sweetness,
 if each day a flower
 climbs up to your lips to seek me,
 ah my love, ah my own,
 in me all that fire is repeated,
 in me nothing is extinguished or forgotten,
 my love feeds on your love, beloved,
 and as long as you live it will be in your arms
 without leaving mine.

*

Saddest Poem by Pablo Neruda¹
Inspiration for *Lost*

I can write the saddest poem of all tonight.

Write, for instance: "The night is full of stars,
 and the stars, blue, shiver in the distance."

The night wind whirls in the sky and sings.

I can write the saddest poem of all tonight.
 I loved her, and sometimes she loved me too.

On nights like this, I held her in my arms.
 I kissed her so many times under the infinite sky.

She loved me, sometimes I loved her.
 How could I not have loved her large, still eyes?

I can write the saddest poem of all tonight.
 To think I don't have her. To feel that I've lost her.

To hear the immense night, more immense without her.
And the poem falls to the soul as dew to grass.

What does it matter that my love couldn't keep her.
The night is full of stars and she is not with me.

That's all. Far away, someone sings. Far away.
My soul is lost without her.

As if to bring her near, my eyes search for her.
My heart searches for her and she is not with me.

The same night that whitens the same trees.
We, we who were, we are the same no longer.

I no longer love her, true, but how much I loved her.
My voice searched the wind to touch her ear.

Someone else's. She will be someone else's. As she once
belonged to my kisses.
Her voice, her light body. Her infinite eyes.

I no longer love her, true, but perhaps I love her.
Love is so short and oblivion so long.

Because on nights like this I held her in my arms,
my soul is lost without her.
Although this may be the last pain she causes me,
and this may be the last poem I write for her.

*

Love by Pablo Neruda¹
Inspiration for Bebe Mío

What's wrong with you, with us,
what's happening to us?
Ah our love is a harsh cord
that binds us wounding us
and if we want
to leave our wound,
to separate,
it makes a new knot for us and condemns us
to drain our blood and burn together.

What's wrong with you? I look at you
 and I find nothing in you but two eyes
 like all eyes, a mouth
 lost among a thousand mouths that I have kissed, more beautiful,
 a body just like those that have slipped
 beneath my body without leaving any memory.

And how empty you went through the world
 like a wheat-colored jar
 without air, without sound, without substance!
 I vainly sought in you
 depth for my arms
 that dig, without cease, beneath the earth:
 beneath your skin, beneath your eyes,
 nothing,
 beneath your double breast scarcely
 raised
 a current of crystalline order
 that does not know why it flows singing.
 Why, why, why,
 my love, why?

*

Enigmas by Pablo Neruda¹
Inspiration for Web Words

You've asked me what the lobster is weaving there with
 his golden feet?
 I reply, the ocean knows this.
 You say, what is the ascidia waiting for in its transparent
 bell? What is it waiting for?
 I tell you it is waiting for time, like you.
 You ask me whom the *Macrocystis* alga hugs in its arms?
 Study, study it, at a certain hour, in a certain sea I know.
 You question me about the wicked tusk of the narwhal,
 and I reply by describing
 how the sea unicorn with the harpoon in it dies.
 You enquire about the kingfisher's feathers,
 which tremble in the pure springs of the southern tides?
 Or you've found in the cards a new question touching on
 the crystal architecture
 of the sea anemone, and you'll deal that to me now?
 You want to understand the electric nature of the ocean
 spines?
 The armored stalactite that breaks as it walks?
 The hook of the angler fish, the music stretched out
 in the deep places like a thread in the water?

I want to tell you the ocean knows this, that life in its
 jewel boxes
 is endless as the sand, impossible to count, pure,
 and among the blood-colored grapes time has made the
 petal
 hard and shiny, made the jellyfish full of light
 and untied its knot, letting its musical threads fall
 from a horn of plenty made of infinite mother-of-pearl.

I am nothing but the empty net which has gone on ahead
 of human eyes, dead in those darkneses,
 of fingers accustomed to the triangle, longitudes
 on the timid globe of an orange.

I walked around as you do, investigating
 the endless star,
 and in my net, during the night, I woke up naked,
 the only thing caught, a fish trapped inside the wind.

*

***A Song Of Despair by Pablo Neruda*¹**
Inspiration for "The Drive-by"

The memory of you emerges from the night around me.
 The river mingles its stubborn lament with the sea.

Deserted like the dwarves at dawn.
 It is the hour of departure, oh deserted one!

Cold flower heads are raining over my heart.
 Oh pit of debris, fierce cave of the shipwrecked.

In you the wars and the flights accumulated.
 From you the wings of the song birds rose.

You swallowed everything, like distance.
 Like the sea, like time. In you everything sank!

It was the happy hour of assault and the kiss.
 The hour of the spell that blazed like a lighthouse.

Pilot's dread, fury of blind driver,
 turbulent drunkenness of love, in you everything sank!

In the childhood of mist my soul, winged and wounded.
 Lost discoverer, in you everything sank!

You girdled sorrow, you clung to desire,
sadness stunned you, in you everything sank!

I made the wall of shadow draw back,
beyond desire and act, I walked on.

Oh flesh, my own flesh, woman whom I loved and lost,
I summon you in the moist hour, I raise my song to you.

Like a jar you housed infinite tenderness.
and the infinite oblivion shattered you like a jar.

There was the black solitude of the islands,
and there, woman of love, your arms took me in.

There was thirst and hunger, and you were the fruit.
There were grief and ruins, and you were the miracle.

Ah woman, I do not know how you could contain me
in the earth of your soul, in the cross of your arms!

How terrible and brief my desire was to you!
How difficult and drunken, how tensed and avid.

Cemetery of kisses, there is still fire in your tombs,
still the fruited boughs burn, pecked at by birds.

Oh the bitten mouth, oh the kissed limbs,
oh the hungering teeth, oh the entwined bodies.

Oh the mad coupling of hope and force
in which we merged and despaired.

And the tenderness, light as water and as flour.
And the word scarcely begun on the lips.

This was my destiny and in it was my voyage of my longing,
and in it my longing fell, in you everything sank!

Oh pit of debris, everything fell into you,
what sorrow did you not express, in what sorrow are you not drowned!

From billow to billow you still called and sang.
Standing like a sailor in the prow of a vessel.

You still flowered in songs, you still brike the currents.
Oh pit of debris, open and bitter well.

Pale blind diver, luckless slinger,
lost discoverer, in you everything sank!

It is the hour of departure, the hard cold hour
which the night fastens to all the timetables.

The rustling belt of the sea girdles the shore.
Cold stars heave up, black birds migrate.

Deserted like the wharves at dawn.
Only tremulous shadow twists in my hands.

Oh farther than everything. Oh farther than everything.

It is the hour of departure. Oh abandoned one!

*

***Ode to Wine* by Pablo Neruda¹**
Inspiration for *Ode to Stoli On the Rocks*

Day-colored wine,
night-colored wine,
wine with purple feet
or wine with topaz blood,
wine,
starry child
of earth,
wine, smooth
as a golden sword,
soft
as lascivious velvet,
wine, spiral-seashelled
and full of wonder,
amorous,
marine;
never has one goblet contained you,
one song, one man,
you are choral, gregarious,
at the least, you must be shared.
At times
you feed on mortal
memories;
your wave carries us
from tomb to tomb,

stonecutter of icy sepulchers,
and we weep
transitory tears;
your
glorious
spring dress
is different,
blood rises through the shoots,
wind incites the day,
nothing is left
of your immutable soul.

Wine
stirs the spring, happiness
bursts through the earth like a plant,
walls crumble,
and rocky cliffs,
chasms close,
as song is born.
A jug of wine, and thou beside me
in the wilderness,
sang the ancient poet.
Let the wine pitcher
add to the kiss of love its own.

My darling, suddenly
the line of your hip
becomes the brimming curve
of the wine goblet,
your breast is the grape cluster,
your nipples are the grapes,
the gleam of spirits lights your hair,
and your navel is a chaste seal
stamped on the vessel of your belly,
your love an inexhaustible
cascade of wine,
light that illuminates my senses,
the earthly splendor of life.

But you are more than love,
the fiery kiss,
the heat of fire,
more than the wine of life;
you are
the community of man,
translucency,
chorus of discipline,

abundance of flowers.
 I like on the table,
 when we're speaking,
 the light of a bottle
 of intelligent wine.
 Drink it,
 and remember in every
 drop of gold,
 in every topaz glass,
 in every purple ladle,
 that autumn labored
 to fill the vessel with wine;
 and in the ritual of his office,
 let the simple man remember
 to think of the soil and of his duty,
 to propagate the canticle of the wine.

*

Clenched Soul by Pablo Neruda¹
Inspiration for Broken

We have lost even this twilight.
 No one saw us this evening hand in hand
 while the blue night dropped on the world.

I have seen from my window
 the fiesta of sunset in the distant mountain tops.

Sometimes a piece of sun
 burned like a coin in my hand.

I remembered you with my soul clenched
 in that sadness of mine that you know.

Where were you then?
 Who else was there?
 Saying what?
 Why will the whole of love come on me suddenly
 when I am sad and feel you are far away?

The book fell that always closed at twilight
 and my blue sweater rolled like a hurt dog at my feet.

Always, always you recede through the evenings
 toward the twilight erasing statues.

*

*

The Son by Pablo Neruda²
Inspiration for *The Son*

Ay hijo, sabes, sabes
de dónde vienes?

De un lago con gaviotas
blancas y hambrientas.

Junto al agua de invierno
ella y yo levantamos
una fogata roja
gastándonos los labios
de besarnos el alma,
echando al fuego todo,
quemándonos la vida.

Así llegaste al mundo.

Pero ella para verme
y para verte un día
atravesó los mares
y yo para abrazar
su pequeña cintura
toda la tierra anduve,
con guerras y montañas,
con arenas y espinas.
Así llegaste al mundo.

De tantos sitios vienes,
del agua y de la tierra,
del fuego y de la nieve,
de tan lejos caminas
hacia nosotros dos,
desde el amor terrible
que nos ha encadenado,
que queremos saber
cómo eres, qué nos dices,
porque tú sabes más
del mundo que te dimos.

Como una gran tormenta
sacudimos nosotros
el árbol de la vida
hasta las más ocultas

fibras de las raíces
y apareces ahora
cantando en el follaje,
en la más alta rama
que contigo alcanzamos.

*

III. Reflective Essay

a. The Essence of Creative Interpretation

In the words of the great Elizabeth Bishop, “the art of losing isn’t hard to master.”³ Whether it’s a physical object like keys or a wallet or perhaps a more abstract entity like a memory, we lose something every day. Something we must never lose, however, is the ability to communicate effectively.

To me, the most creative form of expression is poetry. Poets are the conjurers of our souls. They see the dead in us and bring it to life. Even the rawest emotions are exposed in a more ephemeral fashion. I am not suggesting that fiction novels don’t both comfort and electrify us nor that we cannot relate to the great Bronte sisters or Dickens, Hemingway or Fitzgerald. I am not implying that journalists like Cronkite and Schieffer do not awaken our conscious. Certainly, these men and women are the chroniclers of our time, raising our awareness of issues like international relations, environmental health and preservation, and other societal concerns. But there is something unique about the poet, the person who can demolish the fortress of his own self-consciousness for the sake of demonstrating how each individual fits into the larger context of human existence. The poet best describes how the physical structure of our body is an anatomical and physiological phenomenon with built-in abstract components otherwise known as emotions.

What I present here are creative interpretations of 20 poems composed by one of the most prolific writers of the 20th century, Pablo Neruda. Interpretation is challenging because it requires the interpreter to modify a work and make it his

own. When working with poets such as Neruda, adjusting what appears to be a perfectly crafted text seems unnecessary. Why alter an already flawless work? The answer is a complex one I have come to understand throughout this entire project. What I know about the world in which Neruda dwelt is limited to history textbooks and a historian's word. Similarly, what I know about Neruda's thought process while he was composing his poems is minimal. But my personal reaction to his works, how they make *me* feel and move through me, is very real. Our emotional connection to an author cannot be argued. It cannot be censured.

For me, the interpretation *is* fact; it is a natural reflex to the most compelling impetus. Interpretation allows me to take a work at face value and dissect it; taste its juices, touch its smooth skin, breathe its scent. I can rearrange the old components and watch them work. Or I can wholly preserve some pieces and utterly demolish others. Interpretation allows me to semi-control the original by extrapolating one specific idea and expanding upon it in a way that perpetuates a basic concept while simultaneously creating a new one.

It always amazes me how resistant human beings are to change. You don't have to gather statistics or conduct extensive studies to prove the statement. It's evidenced in little things. Have you ever noticed that people gravitate toward the same seat in class, prefer to wear a worn-out, comfortable t-shirt instead of a starched new one, and often take the exact same route to work in the morning despite the five different possible ways of arriving at the same destination? This is not to say we're not adventurous, that we *never* try new things. But for the most part, we are creatures of habit.

And this isn't a bad thing either. It doesn't make us archaic, pigheaded, or stubborn. In fact, it seems as if we were purposely hard-wired this way and it's actually helped us evolve over time. If the first humans did not follow established patterns of hunting and gathering, they would have starved. In the same vein, if they never migrated, they would have stayed put and perhaps frozen to death during brutal winters, or simply run out of natural resources. Therefore, continuity and change are important parts of human growth.

Renowned sociologist C. Wright Mills wrote about the human's "sociological imagination" or ability to look past his personal circumstance and evaluate his existence on a grand scale. This so-called imagination "enables its possessor to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals."⁴ More specifically, it is

"the idea that the individual can understand his own experience and gauge his own fate only by locating himself within his period... [that] his living contributes to the shaping of society [and] grasps history and biography and the relations between the two within society."

b. The Essence of Translation

Translation is a separate beast. It not only requires complete fluency in both the original and target languages of the text, but also an understanding and appreciation of the poet's mindset and the time period in which he lived. Such contextual clues can assist in capturing the essence of the work. Though translation requires a certain degree of creativity, a translator is largely bound by decisions the poet has already made.

In many ways, poetry is the collection of unspoken emotions. Conversely, the *written* word struggles to form an incantation by the soul as the poet strives to quantify and express his innermost being. To a poet, syntax is more than the harmony of words. In fact, it is about the mastery of language and the ability to break arbitrary linguistic rules. Language is defined as a “socially shared code or conventional system for representing concepts through the use of arbitrary symbols and rule-governed combinations of those symbols.”⁵ Language does not have to be spoken; it may be also be written or gestured as in sign language. Nevertheless, it is the strategic placement of carefully selected words that creates poetic language.

c. The Literal Art of Poetry

I recently attended an exhibition at the Point of Contact Gallery in downtown Syracuse. Though I enjoy yearly visits to art museums in New York City, I had never experienced the intimacy of a smaller art gallery. The opportunity to speak with the artists was both different and exciting since I am accustomed to observing rather than interacting with art.

The exhibit was entitled *The Golem*, a title borrowed from Jorge Luis Borges’ famous poem and the seven artists were eager to personally present their works.

For me, one of the most interesting pieces was an installation by Argentinean artist, Leandro Katz. He took Borges’ poem, separated the individual words, and reordered and scattered them along durable string-like material to form entirely

new phrasal sequences. In doing so, Katz changed the meaning of the original poem but also created a personal interpretation.

As stated by the great American modernist poet Wallace Stevens, “poetry is the statement of a relation between a man and the world.”⁶ In this way, Katz’s interpretation is significant not only because of its creative interpretation of a famous poem but also because of its ability to demonstrate his outlook on the issues presented in *The Golem*. For example, Katz writes

*“I often find myself reading Borges as if I were reading a sacred text, searching for solace and inspiration. But in forcing myself to read **The Golem**, a Borges poem that I had neglected out of my natural aversion to the compromise with rhyme, I had the impression I had entered an undecipherable puzzle, a labyrinth inside which both the author and the reader, his translators too, get caught and barely escape with their lives.”⁷*

And perhaps even more significant is Katz’s opinion of the structure and composition of poetry.

“With careful rhyme, searching for symmetry and correspondence in the sound of each line, the poem moves precisely through the ritual of making a golem, an esperpento resulting from a linguistic incantation. This golem—his poem—belongs to the Borges universe of objects whose mystery its creator must eventually disavow and destroy.”

Drawing from the aforementioned statements, one understands that poetic techniques are an integral part of how the work is received by readers. The “undecipherable puzzle” Katz speaks of is the challenge of interpretation. Writers of prose tend to be more straightforward and deliberate in language usage. Poets, however, exercise subtlety, thus creating a “labyrinth” for their readers. Clearly, even accomplished poets such as Katz work to extract meaning from and decipher

the work of other artists. The idea of representing his struggle as tangible artwork is both creative and noteworthy.

d. *The Etymology of Poetry and the Significance of Artistic Choices*

The word poetry derives from the Greek word *poiesis* “to make.”⁸ Upon researching this term, I discovered that poiesis is a school of thought proposed by Aristotle. According to *The Encyclopedia of Informal Education*, “the making action is not simply mechanical...It always results from the idea, image or pattern of what the artisan wants to make. In other words the person has a guiding plan or idea”⁹ The classic example is the potter who conceives his idea before producing an article. While working, he makes alterations accordingly. However, the original plan is largely inflexible.

Because poetry is such an exploratory art, executing a final product is a difficult task. It is perhaps true that a poem is never complete, for how do we terminate a feeling? How do we curtail a mood? How can we thoroughly exhaust the essence of the ordinary object and the extraordinary circumstance?

For a poet, the answer lies within word choice and order. Semantic choices preserve the integrity of a particular mood, whereas syntactical decisions are primarily based upon meter. The poet, once he finds his impetus, is ultimately overcome by poiesis. Though seemingly effortless, his expediency is the result of *subconscious* deliberate expression. The poet does not realize he is committing a deliberate action. He has no way of connecting with a greater sense of reason

once overcome by his muse. However, it is important to recognize that the subtle details brought forth by the muse form the true essence of poetic genius.

In this vein, even punctuation is pivotal. A comma, which temporarily stops our airflow causing a brief pause, is often the arbiter of the poem's core meaning. It provides the opportunity to self-reflect and draws parallels to our own existences.

Undoubtedly, we need each other, and more importantly, each other's words. Like verbal language, its written counterpart is an integral part of socialization. Unlike spoken language, text surpasses boundaries such as distance and time.

Prior to beginning my first draft of this project, a collection of translations and studies of the evolution, structural archetypes, and overall essence of Hispanic poetry, I had very little knowledge of what a formal translation actually entails. Over the years, I have studied many forms of the creative medium including free verse, sonnet, limerick, lyrical, verse, epic, allegorical, etc. Undoubtedly, strong familiarity with the "rules" of each form is essential to building an understanding of the poem's meaning and contextual value as well as the poet's intended impact on the reader. For example, Shakespeare established a style detectable throughout his works. From Sonnet #18, "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?/ Thou art more lovely and more temperate;"¹⁰ in context, the reader recognizes the use of iambic pentameter and a specific rhyme scheme of ABAB, CDCD, EFEF, GG. These factors as well as a 14 line requirement establish continuity among the Shakespearean sonnets and allow readers to predict and understand a poem's

structure and meaning. Readers can consistently expect the presentation of a specific problem throughout the first eight lines, a discussion of plausible solutions through line 12, and finally a resolution within the last rhyming couplet. Knowing the formulaic structure beforehand does not detract from the suspense of a poem but rather allows the reader to appreciate other qualities such as diction and syntax.

As written by Dudley Fitts, in the book *On Translation*,

*“a poem is a total complex. There are details of it that can be represented adequately in another language...but no one will mistake the details for the whole, and consequently a translation must fail to the extent that it leaves unaccounted for whatever aspects of the original it is unable to handle.”*¹¹

I view all poems as diamonds; multifaceted. Literary jewels in their own right, poems have many qualities worthy of the aforementioned title. They can be examined and analyzed for both literal meaning and stylistic factors, of which there are many.

Returning to Fitts’s analysis,

“...Everyone knows what these aspects are: nuances of diction, of sound, of tone, that make any good poem a discrete experience, an entity somehow different from any other good poem ever written.”

Subtle language is the essence of good poetry. Because human emotions are so complex, the language used to express them must be equally cryptic.

Therefore, poetry should not be solely read for literal meaning. More specifically, there may be multiple connotations assigned to any given word. A solid understanding of the terminology associated with extrapolating a poet’s

intended effect is essential to translation. *Thinking Spanish Translation* discusses “affective meaning” and defines it as “emotive effect worked on the addressee by the choice of a particular linguistic expression, in contrast with others that might have been used to express the same literal message.”¹² Furthermore, affective meaning is a division of the blanket term

“connotative meaning” or “the implicit overtones and nuances that linguistic expressions tend to carry over and above their literal meanings. (NB The overall meaning of an expression in context is compounded of the literal meaning of the expression plus its contextually relevant connotative overtones.)”

Since poetically conceived language is far from *consciously* deliberate, how must one attempt to understand it? This very idea was the impetus for what I present here: the creative interpretation.

e. Procedural Steps and Personal Significance

This project is largely a personal journey. Though I had some idea of how the interpretations might be executed, I had no way of knowing *exactly* how they would develop. Would I take the literal route and simply paraphrase Neruda? Or would I recreate my own renditions? Answering these types of questions became an immediate priority.

As previously noted, my approach toward each poem was quite different. However, the collection as a whole is actually held together by this apparent lack of cohesion. This seems contradictory, but in fact, it is the essence of creativity. Stream-of-consciousness is the poet’s strongest ally.

Nevertheless, the one element that did remain constant was the painstaking process of reading and exhausting meaning from the original works. I would initially read the poem in Spanish, then find an English translation, and return back to the original. After several readings in both languages, I'd begin the process of recreation.

To assist in the reader's overall comprehension of my interpretations, I have included the English translations of Neruda's original poems. Please note that one of my interpretations is written in Spanish as I was eager to attempt writing in Neruda's native tongue. Additionally, one of Neruda's poems *The Son* appears in Spanish as I did not seek an English translation to help me while producing my own rendition.

Nevertheless, the writing process would often begin with selecting one word or concept from the original poem. For example, my version of *Dead Woman*, conveniently titled *Dead Man*, was solely inspired by Neruda's title. Indisputably, the word "dead" holds many meanings. The most obvious may be the literal definition but one must also consider its poetic significance: vacancy and barrenness.

More specifically, my grandfather suffers from Alzheimer's. In many ways, this disease represents the death of the mind and the deterioration of normalcy. My goal was to create a discourse, or language, for talking about this devastating and emotionally-trying disease. According to the *Alzheimer's Association*, the disease "destroys brain cells, causing problems with memory, thinking and behavior severe enough to affect work, lifelong hobbies or social life."¹³ It is

caused by decreased blood flow to the brain and is the most common form of dementia. There is no prevention or cure for Alzheimer's, and it is ultimately fatal.

Because of its unpredictability and subsequent aggressiveness, victims and their families feel powerless against it. This sense of helplessness is quite evident throughout my poem as words like "cold," "stranger," "old," and "toothless," emphasize my grandfather's paralyzed mind and ailing body. Like Neruda, I am targeting the readers' emotions and the poem is focused on the struggle to cope with my grandfather's illness. As the title suggests, it's a battle between man and nature.

Undoubtedly, the poem is an intimate reflection on my life. Poetry is therapeutic and enables me to speak of particular events or states of emotion that I would otherwise keep secret. Poetry allows me to encapsulate my feelings and present them to an audience with a clear and concentrated focus. For this reason, poetry is the personal incantation of the soul.

f. Intended Impact

It is my ultimate goal that each person who reads this collection will have developed a new appreciation for interpretation. I hope that my readers will not be intimidated by the works of great artists like Neruda but inspired to carry forth the great gifts of creativity and the personal touch that we all possess.

Using interpretation as a vehicle, I wish that people would become more in-tune with their emotions, more inclined to advocate for their passions, and more willing to share their experiences with others.

g. Special Thanks

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who made this project possible. First, a special thanks to Professor Harold Jones, my primary advisor. Thank you for tirelessly supporting my efforts to create something “new” and providing the resources and advice necessary to successfully complete this project.

Thank you to Professor Catherine Nock, my primary reader and editor, for providing insightful feedback and encouraging my love for writing and Spanish culture over the years.

Thank you to Eric Holzwarth of the Renée Crowne Honors Program for his patience and support throughout this entire process. And thank you to the entire Honors Program for your kindness and professionalism over the past four years.

Lastly, thank you to my muse, Pablo Neruda. Your work has inspired in me a great love for poetry and the arts. For this, I am eternally indebted to you.

IV. *Summary of Capstone Project*

A wise man once wrote that “art is a deliberate recreation of a new and special reality that grows from your response to life. It cannot be copied; it must be created.”⁶ The author of this statement remains anonymous but his words speak powerfully about how we strive to understand the world beyond the scientific and literal routes.

This project is the result of much deliberation and the reader should know how the scaffolding of thought collapsed before the building was erected. I initially planned to translate at least one Hispanic poem from each of the past ten centuries. It was to be a collection of re-mastered texts that captured the essence of the respective originals. Each work was carefully selected using the following litmus test that my thesis advisor, Professor Harold Jones, and I mutually devised: (1) How closely does the text represent the century in which it was written? Naturally, this includes characteristics such as theme, mood, and literary techniques. (2) Historical context: What events, such as war, might have affected the poet’s perspective? Does his work reflect that of his contemporaries? Does he embody the “spirit” of his respective century? (3) A discussion of any language discrepancies/differences from present-day vocabulary. For example, does the poem contain words that are no longer relevant to modern speech? This especially applied to the *jarcha*, the most ancient form of Spanish poetry on record.

A true lover of poetry, I imagined the challenge of translation to be difficult yet rewarding. I had already studied and re-crafted about fourteen poems when my advisor and I decided to redirect my focus. The decision was quite deliberate.

What I now present are the creative interpretations of over twenty works by Chilean writer and politician, Pablo Neruda.

Throughout the entire process, I had struggled immensely with understanding the selected texts, which greatly impeded my ability to produce successful translations. I attribute this to my intermediate proficiency level in Spanish, since I generally do not struggle with understanding poetic devices. Nevertheless, the decision proved wise and I am pleased with my interpretive work.

You might ask yourself what constitutes a “creative interpretation.” To my knowledge, I am pioneering something fresh. This is new territory. Translation is an age-old practice involving painstaking deliberation over particular word choice and context, but interpretation is far more liberal. It allows the interpreter to react to the text as opposed to merely deciphering it.

Specifically, I have taken Neruda’s works and readjusted or modernized them. In some cases, I have chosen particular lines that interest me and molded that one idea into an entirely new poem. In other cases, I have simply reworked the essence or the overall meaning of the original. And lastly, in other instances, I have taken a more emotive approach asking myself what Neruda might have been feeling and why. However, the final products inevitably echo my Chilean muse in some form or another.

Undoubtedly, Neruda had a distinct voice. Like the man who composed them, his works are complex and rich in thought. He has a broad range of themes spanning from erotic love and tragic loss to surreal observations and tributes to inanimate objects. These four themes became the primary focus of my study.

Most apparent is the thread of love and loss in Neruda's writing. In fact, he published *Twenty Poems of Love, and One Desperate Song* at the young age of 21. This collection has been widely critiqued for its eroticism. Neruda was certainly lovesick in his youth and this is reflected in his writing. It is therefore important to note John Donne's famous words: no man is an island.⁶ That is to say, one's present circumstances affect his general outlook on life and consequently anything he may create.

I have recently experienced the loss of a loved one, my best friend Victoria. Therefore, while familiarizing myself with Neruda's works, I would often extract the theme of death even if his intended purpose was an erotic call to his lover. This was not intentional but rather subconscious. As previously mentioned, we are all influenced by that which is transpiring in our lives. Nevertheless, as an interpreter, I am permitted to creatively alter the original in a way in which the final product becomes something entirely different. Interpretation is about how the work makes you feel. For Neruda, his expressed yearning was of a physical and sexual nature; for me, it was a tribute to my beloved friend.

Translation is like a closed room devoid of windows whereas interpretation is an opened door, the passageway to a new and more personal idea. Throughout this project, I have been greatly influenced by Neruda's literary style and attention to detail. He is my muse, or perhaps I am his, for I have ensured that his sentiments endure in a new way. The predecessor always gives to future generations. In turn, we modernize and alter the works' fundamental assets to

produce something new. It is part of a cyclical process in which I have become highly engaged and hope you will as well.

REFERENCES

1. "Pablo Neruda Poems." Famous Poets and Poems. 19 Apr. 2009
<http://famouspoetsandpoems.com/poets/pablo_neruda/poems>.
2. Pablo, Neruda. "El Hijo." Poemas De. 19 Apr. 2009
<<http://www.poemasde.net/el-hijo-pablo-neruda/>>.
3. Bishop, Elizabeth. "One Art." Poetry Connection. 19 Apr. 2009
<http://www.poetryconnection.net/poets/Elizabeth_Bishop/57>.
4. Mills, C. Wright. "The Promise." Mapping The Social Landscape. By Susan J. Ferguson. New York: McGraw Hill, 2008. 1-7.
5. Owens, R, Jr. (1996.) Language Development/ an Introduction. 4th ed. Needham
6. Quoteland. 31 Mar. 2009 <<http://quoteland.com>>.
7. The Point of Contact Gallery. The Golem: Visual Visitations. Syracuse: n.p., 2009.
8. Whitehead, Derek H. Poiesis and Art-Making: A Way of Letting-Be. Contemporary Aesthetics.
9. Grundy, S. (1987) *Curriculum: Product or Praxis*, Lewes: Falmer. 209 + ix pages
10. Shakespeare, William. "Sonnet 18." Shakespeare Online. 19 Apr. 2009
<<http://www.shakespeare-online.com/sonnets/18.html>>.
11. Fitts, Dudley. "The Poetic Nuance." On Translation. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959. 32-47.
12. Hervey, Sandor, Ian Higgins, and Louise M. Haywood. Thinking Spanish Translation. 1995. New York: Routledge Inc., 1999.
13. Alzheimer's Association. "What is Alzheimer's?" Alzheimer's Association. 23 Mar. 2009. 31 Mar. 2009
<http://www.alz.org/alzheimers_disease_what_is_alzheimers.asp>.