

Annotated Translation

This short story by Nisa Arce is part of a (now defunct) blog called *Cuentos y Cuentos* which was an online anthology of short stories. Nisa Arce is a Spanish writer from the Canary Islands. Author's blog: <http://nisa-arce.net/blog/>

This short story, about a man, his routines, and his daydreams was the most interesting of the several I'd read on the *Cuentos y Cuentos* blog. I think all of us can identify, at least in some small way, with the man in the following story.

<p>Sigue soñando / Nisa Arce</p> <p>Cada mañana, al regresar del trabajo tras su agotadora jornada nocturna, pasaba delante de los mismos lugares y veía a las mismas personas; primero, en la parada del bus, los viajeros se arremolinaban en busca de un poco de espacio, ya lloviese, nevase o hiciera un frío atroz. Luego, los barrenderos, los estudiantes, los guardias que dirigían el tráfico...</p> <p>En resumidas cuentas, la ciudad ensayaba indefinidamente una coreografía con vistas a un espectáculo que nunca se celebraba. Un baile que, aunque frenético y caótico, tenía cierto encanto.</p>	<p>Keep Dreaming / Nisa Arce</p> <p>Every morning, returning from work after his exhausting night's work, he passed by the same places and saw the same people; First, at the bus stop, travelers swarmed in search of some space, whether it rained, snowed, or was atrocious cold. Then the sweepers, the students, the cops who directed the traffic...</p> <p>In short, the city indefinitely choreographed moves for a spectacle no one would celebrate. A dance that, although frenetic and chaotic, had a certain charm.</p>	<p><i>jornada</i> gave me some trouble here. What made sense in Spanish required some tweaking in English. I ended up with <i>work</i>, which isn't a direct translation, but captures the feel of the sentence.</p> <p>I loved the poetry of this paragraph in Spanish, but it turned out so clunky in English! The idea of a city as choreographer is beautiful to me.</p> <p>Again, this paragraph was very descriptive in Spanish, and I struggled to capture the same sense in English. The third</p>
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<p>Y como cada mañana, al pasar delante de los contenedores de basura, veía el mismo par de botas abandonadas en un rincón. No eran unas botas fuera de lo común. De hecho, la piel gastada en la que estaban confeccionadas, los cordones raídos y las suelas agrietadas le daban un aspecto lo que se decía humilde.</p> <p>Su casa no quedaba lejos y a esas horas acusaba el cansancio, pero cada vez que pasaba delante de las botas, dedicaba unos instantes a preguntarse cómo habrían acabado ahí y de quién serían los pies que las habían lucido. ¿Qué parajes habrían recorrido, qué pecados cometido para merecer quedarse allí, ajenas al interés y el conocimiento de los demás?</p> <p>Imaginó que habían pertenecido a un montañero que, cansado de la rutina, se dispuso a recorrer las grandes cumbres del planeta sin nada más que una</p>	<p>And like every morning, passing the garbage cans, he saw the same pair of abandoned boots in a corner. They were not unusual boots. In fact, the worn-out leather they were made from, the frayed laces and the cracked soles gave them a look that said humble.</p> <p>His house was not far away and by that time he was tired, but every time he walked past the boots, he spent a few moments wondering how they would have ended up there and whose feet had they covered. What places could they have traveled to, what sins committed to deserve to remain there, beyond the interest and knowledge of others?</p> <p>He imagined that they had belonged to a mountaineer who, weary of routine, set out to traverse the great summits of the planet with nothing more than a backpack on his back and his inseparable pair of</p>	<p>sentence is less of literal translation and more of an attempt to capture the meaning of the TO.</p> <p><i>Acusaba el cansancio</i> is so much more evocative than <i>he was tired</i>, but in the end, it felt like a better choice. The meat of this paragraph is about his thoughts on the boots, the fact that he is tired is merely incidental.</p> <p>I chose this story because I too am guilty of this sort of rumination. When I see an abandoned house, I stop to wonder for a moment about what lives were lived within its walls. The man in this story and I are kindred spirits, and I find his explanation of the boots' history not only logical, but satisfying. Also, I learned a new word for this paragraph: <i>trotamundos</i>.</p>
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<p>mochila a la espalda y su inseparable par de botas. Tras haber observado el mundo desde su cima decidió regresar al hogar, en el que sus botas trotamundos ya no tenían sentido, y allí se habían quedado, tristes y solitarias, contando su historia a todo aquel que tuviese un poco de tiempo que dedicar a la nada.</p> <p>Idear un motivo con el que explicar el misterio era su ritual, su manera de otorgar descanso a la mente e ir con ilusión a la cama, en la que reponía fuerzas para enfrentarse al ciclo que, con la caída del sol, se repetiría.</p> <p>Pero aquella mañana, dicho ciclo se rompió. Se sobresaltó cuando escuchó un fuerte ruido a su derecha. Uno de los encargados del servicio de limpieza del ayuntamiento le miraba con el ceño fruncido, como queriendo pedir en silencio que se apartara. Dio un paso hacia atrás y dejó que hiciera su trabajo, sin protestar</p>	<p>boots. After observing the world from its summit, he decided to return home, where his globetrotting boots no longer had a place, and there they had remained, sad and solitary, telling their history to all that had a little time to dedicate to nothing.</p> <p>To devise a motive with which to explain the mystery was his ritual, his way of granting rest to his mind and with that illusion head to bed, to replenish his strength to face the cycle that, with the setting of the sun, would be repeated.</p> <p>But this morning, that cycle broke. He was startled when he heard a loud noise on his right. One of the men in charge of the cleaning service at the town hall looked at him with a scowl, as if silently asking him to leave. He stepped back and let him do his job, not protesting when the man took the pair of boots and threw them in the back of the truck.</p>	<p>I struggled with this paragraph, I tried several variations of the beginning (To devise a motive with...) but nothing sounded as good in English as it did in Spanish. Overall, this is the paragraph I am least happy with.</p> <p>Originally I just translated the second man's description to <i>street cleaner</i> but, the author took pains to describe this man's exact job despite her limited wordcount, so I re-translated it to be more true to the original.</p> <p>This was another difficult one to translate. <i>Ponerse en marcha</i> has so many possible iterations, and none of them seemed to fit exactly. I tried.</p> <p>This paragraph was hard to translate, not</p>
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<p>cuando el hombre tomó el par de botas y las arrojó en el interior del camión.</p> <p>Clavó la mirada en la del hombre y no la desvió hasta que el camión, tras ponerse en marcha, se alejó y dobló en la siguiente esquina para continuar su ruta.</p> <p>La ciudad, la gente que esperaba en la parada del autobús, los guardias, los tenderos de las panaderías y los estudiantes seguían siendo los mismos. Pero le habían arrebatado su breve instante de distracción.</p> <p>Sacó las llaves, abrió la puerta de casa y se tiró en la cama.</p> <p>Lo único que le quedaba ahora, era seguir soñando.</p>	<p>He stared at the man and did not turn away until the truck, after getting underway, went along and turned at the next corner to continue its route.</p> <p>The city, the people waiting at the bus stop, the cops, the bakers in their bakeries and the students remained the same. But they had taken away his brief moment of distraction.</p> <p>He took out his keys, opened the door of his house and threw himself on the bed.</p> <p>All he had left now was to continue dreaming.</p>	<p>technically, but emotionally. I really felt for the man. I wanted to rewrite the story to give him a happier ending.</p> <p>It seems like a lot of what I end up doing when translating into English is translating “the” into the correct pronoun for the situation (e.g. the keys – his keys).</p>
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