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"Milton" in Translation: Analyzing Intercultural Relations through Language

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Hermenegildo Giner de los Ríos's 19th-century Spanish verse-drama "Milton" triangulates 3 major nations—Spain, Britain, and the United States—and compresses their cultural energies and political circumstances at that time. Translating this little-known play will help shed light on the nature of the relationships among these nations and advance understanding of British icon John Milton and his work in an international context. In doing so, the translation can advance understandings of the political function of some literary works. We set out to successfully transfer poetic effects of the original piece into English for the benefit of Anglophone readers interested in an intercultural perspective and also to preserve culturally and historically bound nuances where applicable. Methodology in literary translation involves a host of considerations that require critical thinking as well as acute attention to detail and context: Is this passage literal or figurative? Does our translation sound natural in English yet maintain the intended meaning? Have we preserved tone, the appropriate register, orthographical errors, and ambiguities? Have we considered the subtle yet important differences between Spanish and English morphology, sentence structure, forms of address, and other aspects? Has the meaning of a particular word or phrase evolved significantly in Spanish since the 1800s? Due to these complicated components, this project is ongoing and will undergo further refinement after the initial translation. The final result will be a coauthored publication of the translation along with a short introduction in a major comparative literature journal.

Research advisor Angelica Duran writes, "My experience with Megan Cadwallader is one of my top two experiences with the numerous internships I have sponsored. She possesses the high multilingual skills required for the project, and, equally important, the research ability, interpersonal communication skills, responsibility, and maturity that make the process an efficient collaboration."

John Milton is depicted in an 1877 study by Hungarian painter Mihaly Munkácsy.

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