



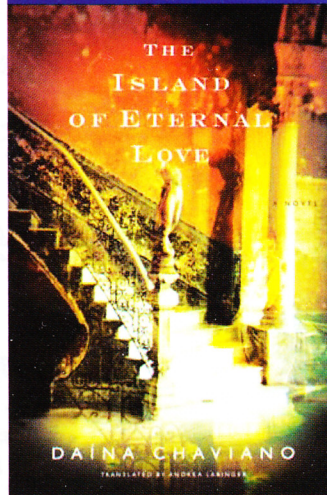
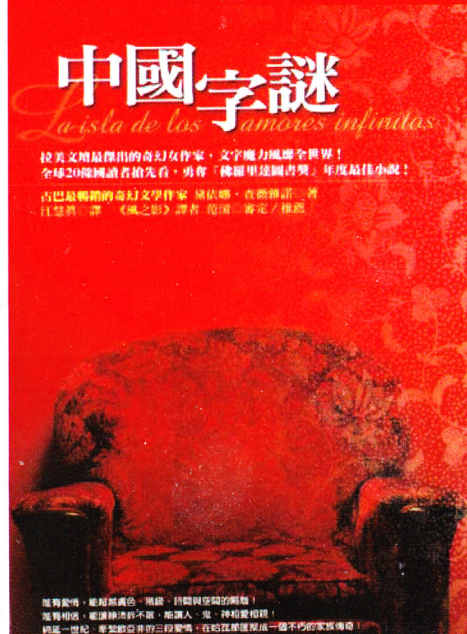
Found in

SPANISH
Written by Daina
Chaviano

CHINESE
Translated by
Huichen Chiang

ENGLISH
Translated by
Andrea Labinger

GERMAN
Translated by
Silke Kleemann



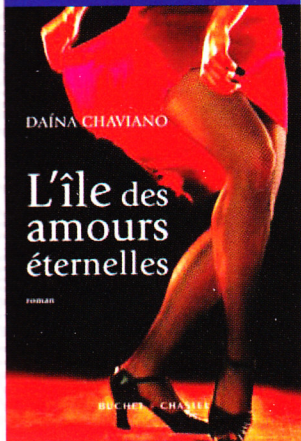


By Daina Chaviano (Translated by Juan Carlos Pérez-Duthie)

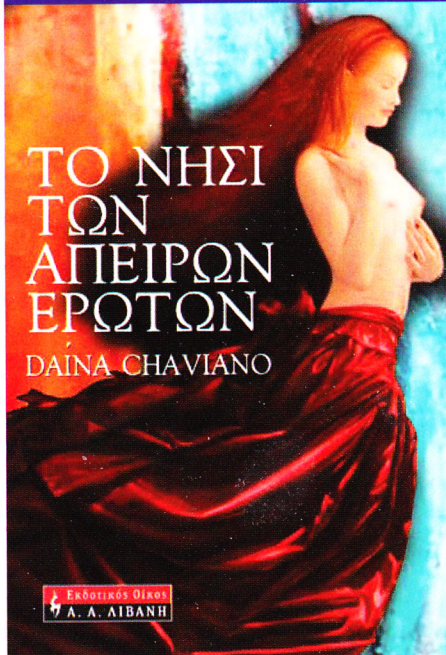
Translation

ONE AUTHOR'S JOURNEY TO GIVE CULTURAL CONTEXT UNIVERSAL MEANING

FRENCH
Translated by
Caroline Lepage



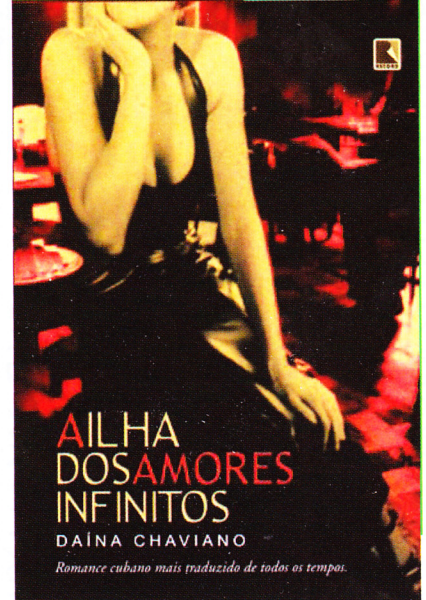
GREEK
Translated by
Crisa Banja



JAPANESE
Translated by
Takako Shirakawa



PORTUGUESE/BRAZILIAN
Translated by
Maria Alzira





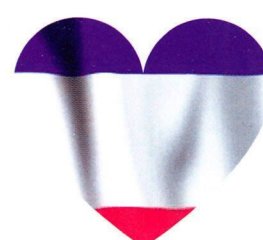
amor



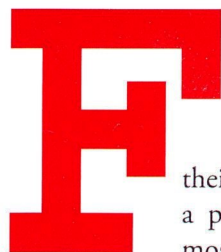
愛



αγάπη



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For many writers, their job is done when they hand in their book to an agent or a publishing house. Even most authors who are about to be translated are not concerned about the fate of their texts. That is not my case. I imagine the anguish one must feel when looking for a word or a concept that does not appear in any dictionary and for which there is no reference. When that happens, the translator has no other choice but to make up or interpret the text his way.

Personally, I don't like that to happen to my novels. I can spend weeks trying to decide what to do with an adjective or a comma, and in no way do I want that effort to be wasted. I always try to collaborate with my translators, but it has been difficult because publishing houses are not used to having a writer getting involved in the translation of his or her own book.

Some years ago, when my novel *El hombre, la hembra y el hambre* was translated into the Czech language, I tried in every way to get in touch with the translator. It is a novel that is filled with specific cultural references, impossible to understand if one is not Cuban. I was never able to communicate with her. The result was that, when the Czech edition came into my hands, I quickly discovered the translation had problems.

The first word I found in the first paragraph was "kamaráde" (comrade, associate). In Spanish, the novel began with the word "compadre" (buddy, dude). The translation of this simple word changed, from the beginning, the relationship between the two masculine protagonists. If the translator had been in touch with me, I would have been able to explain to her the word's meaning, which she most likely was not able to find in any Spanish-Czech dictionary.

The German translation of that same novel was almost left in the hands of fate. A week before the translator was due to hand it in, she was given my e-mail address. She sent me a list of questions, but she made it clear that these were not all. I answered them at once, but I suspect that a lot of gaps remained in her translation.

From then on, I asked my agent to include a clause in the contracts, requesting that I be put in touch with the translator. But I always have to remind the editors of this clause, since they seem to skip it.

In the case of *La isla de los amores infinitos*, my collaboration with the translators has been a months-long affair, almost as if I had been writing another novel. As I write these lines, the novel has been translated into 23 languages. The contracts for the first 16 languages came like in a series, one after another, throughout a three-month period. I realized that my life was going

to become insane. How would I be able to answer the questions that would be sent by so many translators? That's when I came up with the idea of preparing a general document that would be of use to all of them.

I had to put together a list of words, phrases and concepts that they would obviously not be able to find in the dictionaries. Some things were very difficult to explain with words. But since I would be sending the documents by e-mail, it occurred to me to use images, and thus I utilized Google. I also included many links to Wikipedia, which was especially useful for subjects related to flora and fauna. Usually, I searched for the name of the tree or the plant in Spanish. On the left-hand side of any Wikipedia page, however, there's always a list of the languages in which one can find the translation of a particular term.

That's how I solved the problem. I would simply put the pertaining link to the Wikipedia page in Spanish and, from that page, each translator could then look in his or her own language. If a page in a translator's language did not exist, it would generally be available in English (a language most of them handle) or in another one known to them, since translators usually know more than one language. There hasn't been a single translator who has not benefited from this system.

When sending these documents I have always made it clear to the translators that if they have any doubts, they should consult me. They all have had their own questions, generally few, but interesting. The Swedish translator, for example, wanted to know if a grandmother I had mentioned was on the mother's side or on the father's. In Swedish, two different words meaning "grandmother" are used, according to whether she is from a maternal or a paternal line of the family.

With the Japanese translator, I learned that there are three ways of writing in Japanese: kanji, hiragana and katakana. Foreign names are always used in the katakana fashion. That's how I found out that my name would appear in the katakana way on the Japanese edition's book cover.

The Hebrew translator needed to be sure if, at a moment when I referred to the "partner" of a woman, I was referring to a same-sex partner or not because, as she explained to me, in Hebrew it is necessary to be specific about that. Had I not been available to answer that question, she would've altered the original meaning.

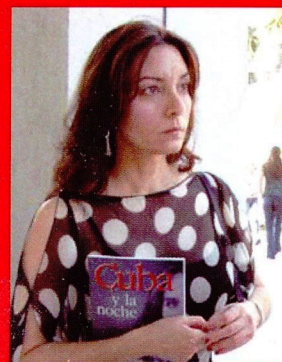
With Huichen, my Chinese translator, the problem was the transcription of the Cantonese words that I had used in the novel. The Chinese who speak the language pronounce the

same characters in different ways, depending on the region in which they live. The problem is compounded when two languages like Mandarin and Cantonese confront each other.

Luckily, I had the help of a Cuban-Chinese friend, a descendant of Cantonese speakers, who had been my advisor on the Chinese part of the novel and who helped me explain to Huichen (who translated into complex Chinese) that the transcription of those words in Cantonese spoken by Cuban-Chinese was correct.

For her part, the German translator was very impressed with these documents and with my way of organizing them (which, coming from a German, I took as a great compliment). She was so enthusiastic with my method that she asked me to support a campaign that her country's Union of Literary Translators was carrying out.

For the most part, it has been an interesting process, although I confess, somewhat crazy. To participate in the translation of my own work into languages whose alphabets I cannot even read is not precisely the experience I was looking for as an author. But I hope that the results benefit the readers who, definitely, are the objective of any act of literary creation. And translating, no doubt, is one. >MBFI



Daína Chaviano was born in Havana (Cuba) and has lived in Miami since 1991. In her native country, she published several science fiction and fantasy books, becoming the most renowned and best-selling author in those genres in Cuban literature. She has been equally successful as a writer of fantasy/SF and in mainstream literature, winning various awards in both fields.

Her most recent novel, *The Island of Eternal Love* has been translated to 23 languages, becoming the most translated Cuban novel of all time. This work, originally published in Spain, was awarded the Gold Medal in the category of Best Spanish Language Book during the Florida Book Awards 2006. The English version (June 2008, Riverhead Books-Penguin Group) will be presented at the 25th Miami Book Fair International.



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