
Translator's Note

This translation first started as an effort to understand the many Nahuatl terms and historical references in *The War of the Fatties*. Consequently, producing the glossary has been of primary importance, and I hope it will be as valuable to both English- and Spanish-speaking readers as it was for me while preparing it, while at the same time saving readers the chore of combing through cumbersome dictionaries in 6-point type, with no guide words, and entries run into each other on the same line.

I worry that more than a few readers will be scared off by the long Nahuatl names and their many variations. It is worth mentioning, however, that even the longest, Tlahuizcalpantecuhtli, is no longer than Franklin Delano Roosevelt—one syllable shorter, in fact, depending on how you pronounce the president's surname—and that by removing the *-tecuhkli* suffix, which means “prince” and is a title given to exceptional warriors, the word is almost as manageable as the phrase “Jack be nimble.” Additionally, a pronunciation guide has been provided in the glossary along with a note for Spanish-speakers. Also included are the meanings of many proper names, since, as is often the case with agglutinative languages like Nahuatl, their length is due to the fact that they are actually compound words.

The many variations of characters' names, as annoying here as they are in Russian novels, are often due to the simple addition of a suffix, usually *-tzin*, which means “noble” or “cherished”; *-tecuhkli* or *-tli*, mentioned above; or to spelling inconsistencies due to problems the mostly uneducated Spanish conquerors had in transcribing Nahuatl words whose pronunciation was certainly foreign to them and likely varied from town to town.

One issue worth mentioning with respect to the translation is the writing style of the many historians Novo quotes. Some, like Fernando

Alvarado Tezozómoç, were not native Spanish speakers, and the resulting accounts often have a sort of naïve quality about them which I have tried to preserve. Others, like Sahagún, translated from Nahuatl texts without the help of dictionaries or grammars. Not one, of course, was familiar with contemporary rules of punctuation and style, and several were quite long-winded, as the quotations included in “Ahuítzotl and the Magic Water” demonstrate. Many of the abnormalities in the text are due to these factors, and though I have intentionally tried to preserve them in English as part of the “flavor” of the text, I hope I have not made them any worse than they already are.

In Ticitézcatl, like many an opera libretto and many an epic poem, has been translated into prose because of the near impossibility of rendering the sometimes very short rhymed verses into like form in English without drastically altering the content. It is, I fear, in places rather “unbeautiful,” to recall a word Gore Vidal once used in describing his own translation. Nevertheless, opera, as I’m sure Novo would have snootily agreed, should always be performed in the original.

The texts brought together here, which take readers chronologically from the fall of Tlatelolco in 1473 to shortly after the Spanish victory in Tenochtitlan in 1521, with a detour through the Reform and the timeless world of the gods, include all of Novo’s Aztec-related prose, with the exception of passages in a few other essays, his speech “Huehuetlatoalli,” written in homage to Cuauhtémoc, and the texts for his later *Luz y sonido* productions which are not available.

“Mexicans Like ’em Fat” (Appendix A) is an attempt to avoid criticism by fat libbers (who have recently and inexplicably joined the growing tide of book censors by demanding that Judy Blume’s *Blubber* be removed from the shelves of school libraries in my hometown). It also shows Novo’s understanding of one aspect of sexism and his perspective on fatness.

Finally, I cannot overemphasize how much richer the texts become in light of the information provided by the glossary, which includes entries for all proper names, all non-English words, and many English words marked in the body of the text with an asterisk. Entries of particular interest to those unfamiliar with Aztec culture might include *causeway*, *Triple Alliance*, and *century*. A genealogical chart (Appendix B) is included to help sort out the relationships between the kings and queens who figure as characters in these works. The map of Anáhuac (Appendix C) will help to visualize the layout of Tenochtitlan on Lake Texcoco and to locate the territories of the kingdoms that made up the powerful Triple Alliance, mentioned so often here.