

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION
OF THE ATA'S LITERARY DIVISION

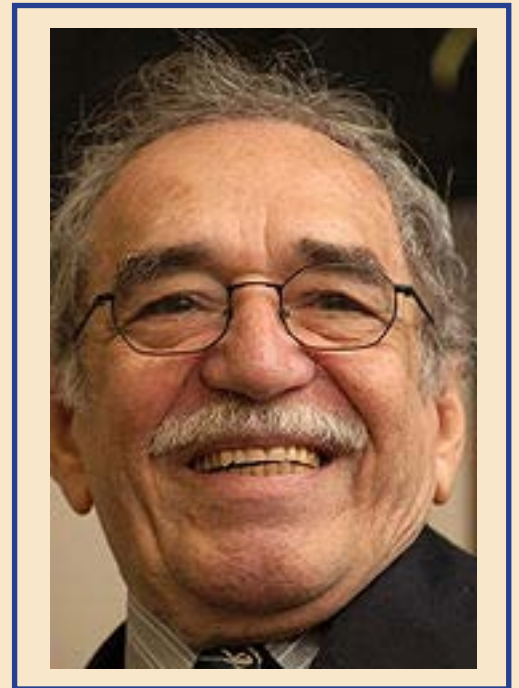
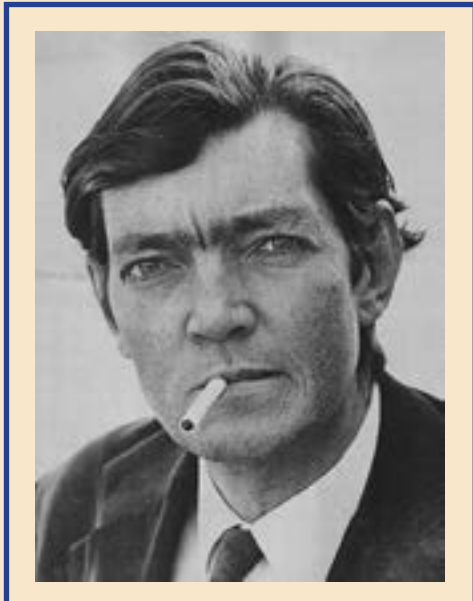
NO. 61

SUMMER 2014

LATIN AMERICAN LITERARY GIANTS AND THEIR TRANSLATORS: PART I

REMEMBERING GABRIEL GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ

When he died in April, Colombia's Nobel Laureate was described by President Juan Manuel Santos as "the greatest Colombian who ever lived." While he is known primarily for his magical realist fiction, he devoted much of the last half of his life to training and providing resources to Latin American journalists via his *Fundación para el Nuevo Periodismo Iberoamericano* (Foundation for New Ibero-American Journalism).



100 YEARS OF JULIO CORTÁZAR (1914-2014)

2014 is the "AÑO CORTÁZAR" in Argentina, where Julio Cortázar grew up and became a professor, translator, and writer. In 1951 he moved to Paris for political reasons. Like García Márquez, Cortázar played a major role in the Latin American Literary Boom. Cortázar is most famous for his anti-novel *Rayuela*, known in English as *Hopscotch*.

IN THIS ISSUE

FROM THE EDITORS.....	3
SUBMISSION GUIDELINES.....	4
LETTER FROM THE LD ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR.....	5
REAL MAGIC: A TRIBUTE TO DON GABRIEL.....	7
By Esther Allen	
FAME IN THE TIME OF GABRIEL GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ.....	14
By Mercedes Guhl	
PROFILE: EDITH GROSSMAN.....	18
By Julie Winter	
HOPSCOTCHING UP MOUNT EVEREST.....	26
By Ioram Melcer	
BY THE WAY.....	33
Unique Voices and Tricky Choices	
By Tony Beckwith	
CREDITS.....	38

BTW Cartoons by Tony Beckwith

© Copyright 2014 ATA except as noted.

FROM THE EDITORS



Michele Aynesworth
Editor-in-Chief



Tony Beckwith
Associate Editor



Patrick Saari
Chief Copy Editor



Julie Winter
Views Editor

When major events happen in the literary world, the world of literary translation takes notice. Thus it was when Gabriel García Márquez died earlier this year. This giant of Latin American letters, who enjoyed worldwide fame and was read in many languages, wrote some of the most important books in the history of Spanish literature. In our Summer issue of *Source*, curated by Tony Beckwith, the focus is on Latin American literature in translation, with a unifying theme of García Márquez approached from different angles by our contributors. Part II of Latin American Literary Giants and Their Translators will appear in the Fall.

2014 is also the 100th anniversary of the birth of another giant of Latin American Literature: the Argentine novelist Julio Cortázar. In his essay “Hopscotching Up Mount Everest,” Ioram Melcer discusses the multiple challenges of translating *Rayuela* [*Hopscotch*]—Cortázar’s classic novel—into Hebrew.

Julie Winter’s profile examines Edith Grossman’s role as Garcia Marquez’s translator and the broader subject of Latin American literature in translation, linking Cervantes to Faulkner to the Latin American “boom” writers who in turn influenced modern English-language writers, thus illustrating Grossman’s underlying message about why translation matters.

Esther Allen writes in intimate detail about her 2003 role organizing a tribute to García Márquez in New York and her subsequent meeting with the writer on a magical afternoon in a bookstore in Mexico City.

Mercedes Guhl takes us on a backstage tour of the Spanish language publishing world, shedding light on how the “boom” in Latin American literature in the mid-twentieth century caught the attention of international publishers and introduced a long list of Latin American writers to a global audience.

In his regular “By the Way” column, Tony Beckwith takes a look at one of García Márquez’s grammatical taboos and muses on how a translator conveys a writer’s unique tone and texture in the target language.

And, in her Letter from the LD Assistant Administrator, Josefina Iannello gives a tantalizing preview of the many seminars and sessions that the Literary Division will be presenting at ATA’s 55th Annual Conference in Chicago in November. We hope to see you there!

ABOUT THE EDITORS

Michele Aynesworth specializes in translating Argentine and French authors. E-mail: michele@mckayaynesworth.com.

Tony Beckwith, a native of South America’s Southern Cone, resides in Austin, where he works as a writer, translator, poet, and cartoonist.

E-mail: tony@tonybeckwith.com.

Patrick Saari writes, translates, edits and interprets in English, French and Spanish. E-mail: patricksaari@netlife.ec.

Julie Winter translates from German to English and lives in Spokane, Washington. E-mail: juliemwinter6@gmail.com.

Special thanks to **Jamie Padula** for proofreading and to Literary Division Administrators **Mercedes Guhl** and **Josefina Iannello** for their support.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Submit articles up to 1600 words.

Word or text file, single-spaced.

Palatino Linotype size 14 with indented paragraphs (1 tab), no line breaks between paragraphs and no word breaks. Unjustified righthand margin.

Include a brief two-sentence bio and a photograph.

Illustrations and links, etc., are encouraged.

Submissions may be edited.

We encourage submissions from Asia, Africa, and all other cultures less frequently represented in these pages.

Submissions for our series Latin American Literary Giants and Their Translators go to Tony Beckwith: tony@tonybeckwith.com.

Submit reviews or profiles to Julie Winter: juliemwinter6@gmail.com.

Submissions deadline for the next issue: Nov. 15.

Source is published by ATA's Literary Division.

American Translators Association

225 Reinekers Lane, Suite 590

Alexandria, VA 22314

All previously unpublished material copyright © the respective authors.

LETTER FROM THE LITERARY DIVISION ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR

Dear LD members,
With ATA's 55th Annual Conference fast approaching, we would like to share with you some of the amazing seminars and sessions that our division will be offering this year. Granted, we still have to wait a few more months to pack and head out to the Windy City. But this little glimpse of the literary treats we have in store for you will have you scribbling away in your agenda.

One of the main reasons for our enthusiasm this year will be our two exceptional preconference seminars, featuring prize-winning writer and translator Lisa Carter and Division Distinguished Speaker Ioram Melcer. In her workshop, *The Other in Literary Translation*, industry leader Lisa Carter will focus on a Spanish literary text and delve into the challenges of identifying and translating cultural elements

into English. As for Ioram Melcer, he will draw on his vast experience in translating from Spanish, Arabic, French, Catalan, Portuguese and English in his seminar, *Pushing the Envelope: Translating Invented Languages, Mock Words, Puns, and Wordplay*. A renowned writer, journalist and critic from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Melcer has an impressive track record as translator that includes works by Cortázar, Vargas Llosa, Pessoa, Kipling, and Rushdie.

Those who miss out on these outstanding seminars, however, will have reason to rejoice in our program of literary sessions. We are proud to invite all members to discuss the difficulties of name translation in our special panel, *What's in a Name? On Translating (or Not) Titles, Character Names, Place Names,*



Mercedes Guhl
LD Administrator

Mercedes Guhl is a freelance English into Spanish translator. She has over twenty years' experience translating for the book industry in Latin America, mainly translating books for young readers and academic research in humanities.



Josefina Iannello
LD Assistant Administrator

Josefina Iannello is a translator from Buenos Aires, Argentina. Her working languages are English, French, and Spanish. She currently lives in Los Angeles, where she focuses mostly on subtitling.

and Cultural Referents in Literary Texts. The debate will be led by four figures with extremely diverse backgrounds: Mercedes Guhl, Literary Division Administrator, head of the Mexican Translators Organization, and English-Spanish translator; Paula Gordon, member of ATA's Mentoring Program Committee, Chair of the ATA Business Practices Education Committee, and translator of Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin and Serbian into English; Faiza Sultan, member of ATA's Board of Directors, Arabic Language Division Administrator, and Arabic and Kurdish translator; and Abe Haak, Adjunct Instructor at NYU's Translation Certificate Program and translator from Arabic, French, and German.

As if this were not enough to pique your literary interest, we have four more sessions packed with tips and infor-

mation. Distinguished speaker Ioram Melcer will once again share his expertise, this time on the role of translators in the establishment of Modern Hebrew culture, in *Literary Translation as a Tool for Nation-building: The Case of Modern Hebrew*. Russian eminence Lydia Razran Stone will enlighten us on poetry and creative cooperation in *Odd Couple Collaboration in Poetic Translation*. Business-savvy Rafa Lombardino will show us how to become literary entrepreneurs in *How to Self-Publish Your Translations*, and scholar Alice Whitmore will look into the layers of literary representation in *Ethics of Cultural Translation: Homi K. Bhabha, Third Space, and Fictional Representations of Mexico City*.

As you can see, we have reason to look forward to November,

and we hope that you will join us to make the most of this grand gathering. Keep an eye on our Listserv and LinkedIn group to learn all about the special activities we are planning for our members, and feel free to pitch in with your comments and suggestions. In the next few months leading up to the conference, let's work together to turn Chicago into a veritable literary feast.

Sincerely,
Josefina Iannello

Literary Division
Administrator:
Mercedes Guhl
mercedesguhl@gmail.com
Assistant Administrator:
Josefina Iannello
josefina.iannello@gmail.com

REAL MAGIC: A TRIBUTE TO DON GABRIEL BY ESTHER ALLEN



Esther Allen teaches at Baruch College, City University of New York. She has translated works by Jorge Luis Borges, José Martí, Rosario Castellanos, Javier Marías, Felisberto Hernández, José Manuel Prieto and many others — but alas, never anything by Gabriel García Márquez.

By the time Bill Clinton said yes, we already had Jon Lee Anderson, Paul Auster, Edwige Danticat, Francisco Goldman, Edith Grossman, William Kennedy, José Manuel Prieto, Salman Rushdie, and Rose Styron. Even so, we were pleased indeed when Clinton agreed to participate in the tribute to Gabriel García Márquez that I curated with PEN American Center at midtown Manhattan’s storied Town Hall in the fall of 2003.

The key figure who would not be taking part was García Márquez himself. Thirty years after receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature, Don Gabriel—as the adoring assistant who was my liaison with him always called him—was the most celebrated writer on the planet. If he travelled to every tribute, he would do nothing but that. Therefore, we were told, he did not attend events organized in his honor. Many people who were close to him did come: his sons, Rodrigo and Gonzalo; his old and dear friend Patricia Cepeda, who from a very young age had often served as his personal interpreter; and the extraordinary Jaime Abello, director of the *Fundación para el Nuevo Periodismo*

Iberoamericano, the organization Don Gabriel founded with his Nobel winnings.

Clinton, as it turned out, could not be there in person either, but would send a video clip to be screened during the program. Like everyone else, I knew Clinton's favorite book was *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, and I'd read accounts of the famous dinner at William and Rose Styron's house on Martha's Vineyard where Clinton met García Márquez. My expertise in the Clinton-GGM connection ended there. When Clinton's people asked for a script, I worked with PEN staffer Peter G. Meyer to prepare a list of topics we thought he might want to touch upon. The Clinton people rejected it immediately; they needed *a script*. All right, then: I wrote up a couple of pages' worth of things I imagined Bill Clinton might want to say about the writer he admired, figuring he would use it as a starting point for his own reminiscences. I was curating the program in my capacity as chair of the PEN Translation Committee and the first lesson about reality, magic, and translation I learned from it was just how different my words sounded when spoken with sincerity and authority by a former President of the United States. I could hardly believe that I had written them.

Of course we also invited Gregory Rabassa—then 81 years old, and now a sparkling 93!¹ He declined to speak but very much wanted to be part of the audience. Edith Grossman would speak on behalf of García Márquez's English translators.

As it turned out, we were staging a rock concert. I arrived at Town Hall on November 5, 2003, two hours before the program was to begin, to find dense lines of people stretching around the block. New York's Colombian community was out in full force with everyone from toddlers to grandparents along for the party and so, it seemed, was every other literary community in the city, from Upper West Side book group matrons to the hollow-eyed Brooklyn hipster literati. Everyone loved Gabo; everyone was there to celebrate. And we were filming it all, so that he could watch it at his home in Mexico City.

1 See, for example, Rabassa's wonderful interview with Susan Bernofsky, published on *The Rumpus Last Year*.

<http://therumpus.net/2013/09/the-rumpus-interview-with-gregory-rabassa/>

It was a wild and uproarious evening, as was to be expected, and we all learned a lot. William Kennedy — whose influential 1970 review of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* in the *National Observer* called it “the first piece of literature since the Book of Genesis that should be required reading for the entire human race” — confessed to having described the book’s author as “an Argentine of incredibly magical imagination.” Kennedy explained: the book jacket and publicity materials had contained no biographical information but stated only that the book had been written in Latin America. In retrospect, he “realized that the publishers were trying to pass Gabo off as an American (and a U.S. publisher connected to the book’s publication has since confirmed to me that I was correct...).”² No fool he, Kennedy had checked the book’s copyright page and noted that it was originally published in Buenos Aires: thus did Gabriel García Márquez become an Argentine. At that point, it was news to most people in the United States that Latin America *had* a literature.

Some people hadn’t caught on, even a decade later. Rose Styron recalled an afternoon in 1984 when she interviewed Gabo in downtown New York for Voice of America. Since the Miramax offices were just around the corner, she grabbed Gabo’s arm afterwards and said “Let’s go see Harvey.” That would be Harvey Weinstein, Miramax’s founder, who’d launched the company with *Erendira*, a film based on a García Márquez novella. When a haughty receptionist informed Styron and her companion that “Mr. Weinstein was taking a meeting and... certainly could not see a Mr. Gabriel García Márquez,” Styron urged her to go upstairs and ask anyway. Ms. Haughty came back down in a huff: “Why didn’t you tell me he was Andy García’s brother?” Whereupon Gabo, Styron, Weinstein and Andy García, who just happened to be at Miramax that afternoon, all had a pretty good laugh.

The evening was too rich and replete to be related in much detail here. A number of those who spoke, including Salman Rushdie and Edwige Danticat, revisited their remarks when

2 *Pen America*, Volume 3, Issue 6 (2005), p. 51. The whole collection of talks is pp. 36-53.

García Márquez died in April, and their tributes can be read online.³ The two moments that remain most clearly etched in my memory were these:

Edith Grossman, in a talk that seems in retrospect to be a nucleus or seedbed for the ideas she explored in greater detail in her masterful 2010 *Why Translation Matters*, paused for a second to pay tribute to Gregory Rabassa. A spotlight picked him out of the crowd, and he stood up with his wife Clementine at his side; for endless moments a thunderous wave of applause surged and surged around the two of them, as they beamed.⁴

And José Manuel Prieto, a Cuban writer I translate, who lived in Russia for many years, shared this memory—his own lived experience of the famous first line of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*:

In 1981, when I went to Siberia... I was nineteen years old. I traveled for twenty-seven days, by boat and train, from Havana to the city of Novosibirsk, in a time zone twelve hours different from my home. Many months later... I went out one winter day for a walk in the snow. My stroll took me to a square at the center of the city where I came headlong upon a vision that assaulted me and left me riveted. It was a vast Kremlin or walled citadel built from great blocks of ice: high walls of ice, battlements of ice, towers of ice. Deep in my astonishment, and without taking my ecstatic eyes from this wonder, I walked toward the dazzling castle and put my hand on its white masonry, exclaiming under my breath: "It's the largest diamond in the world."

José, who was living in Mexico City at the time, had made a special visit to New York for the occasion. A few months later, I

3 Salman Rushdie, "Magic in Service of Truth," *New York Times*, April 21, 2014 <www.nytimes.com/2014/04/21/books/review/gabriel-garcia-marquez-work-was-rooted-in-the-real.html?_r=0>.

Edwige Danticat, "Gabriel García Márquez: An Appreciation," *New Yorker Blog*, April 18, 2014. <<http://tinyurl.com/q438ufk>>

4 Grossman's talk can be read in its entirety on *The Modern Word*. <http://www.themodernword.com/gabo/gabo_PEN_grossman.html>

happened to visit Mexico City for a week, and Don Gabriel, who'd been in touch throughout the process of organizing the tribute, said he would like to meet José and me on a certain afternoon, in a bookstore-café called El Péndulo in the shabby-genteel neighborhood of La Condesa.

We arrived on time, scoped out the books for a while, then sat down at a table. When Gabriel García Márquez walked in the door, a very powerful, very real magic came into the room and changed everything. Writers in Latin America mean something in their society, even to those who are illiterate or barely literate, that even the most revered writer in the United States can barely imagine. Or perhaps it's literature itself that means something. In any case, it was as if every person in that bookstore had begun to quietly levitate about six inches off the ground. Everyone there was going to mention this entirely unexpected and unbelievable moment to his or her children, his or her grandchildren. No one there was ever going to forget it. There was no crowding around, no commotion or hubbub, but everyone was aware, watching out of the corner of their eyes as he sat down at the table with us and began to talk.

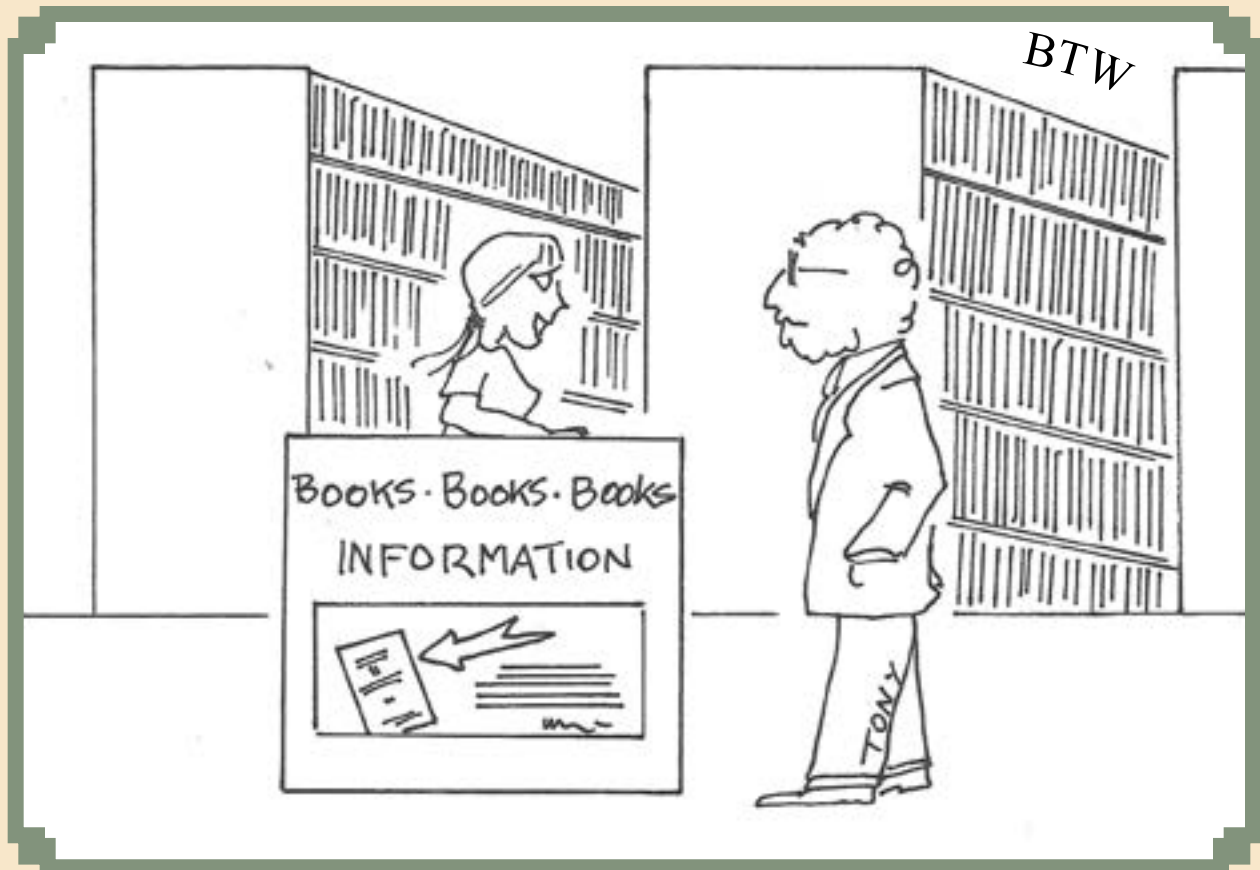
It was around 4:00 in the afternoon, and he wanted us all to have a drink. The café, however, served no alcohol. He gazed at our *mesero*, and asked again, with an air of complicity: really? there was nothing to be had? Not even from anyone's private stock? He was used to being an exception to rules. For some reason this time it didn't work: perhaps there really wasn't any strong drink on the premises and the *meseros* were too mesmerized by his presence to tear themselves away and fetch some. He desisted; we made do with coffee and *limonada*.

We talked about the tribute and how well it had gone, what a good time everyone had had. We talked about our beloved mutual friend Francisco Goldman, about José's work and mine. And gradually the conversation expanded to include everyone in the room. People began coming over, one by one, with a book for him to sign, or a quick story to tell, or just to clutch his hand for a moment and thank him for what he'd given them, eyes brimming with emotion. A young man asked him what work of his he most recommended for a would-be writer. Don Gabriel recommended

his journalism, the *Obra periodística* that had been published by Mondadori in five volumes over the preceding decade as part of its Biblioteca García Márquez series. The bookstore didn't have several of the volumes in stock (by the end of that afternoon, their entire Gabriel García Márquez shelf was bare), so Don Gabriel pulled out his cell phone—the thinnest, sharpest cell phone I'd ever seen: I know it sounds impossible, but in my memory it's no bigger than a credit card—and summoned his chauffeur, who took down the man's name and address so that he could send him the remaining volumes later. I presented a copy of *Cien años de soledad*, which he signed simply "Para Esther, para siempre" —and yes, Don Gabriel, I will always have it.

A lovely young woman of about nineteen or twenty approached with a copy of *El amor en los tiempos de cólera*. He was thrilled. What excellent taste she had! This was the only book he'd succeeded in writing exactly as he had wanted to write it, his best book by far. And what was her name? Jazmín? What an enchanting name! Everyone watched as he drew curlicues and flowers for Jazmín all across the two open pages of the book, chatting with her all the while. When he was finished, 77-year-old Don Gabriel jotted a number under his signature—his cell phone number, to be precise. He asked Jazmín to call him when she'd finished reading the book, so she could tell him how it made her feel. Do they call? I asked as she walked away, and he laughed at me and said yes, of course, they always call.

I don't know how long we were there—was it 45 minutes? Three hours? Finally, it was time to go, and Don Gabriel, who was heading that way, offered me a lift back to my hotel. In the car, he made a light, passing comment about something I'd written, and every once in a while I allow myself to indulge in the unseemly pleasure of remembering what he said. It was only a few days later that José and I realized we'd never even thought of taking a photo with him. To this day it irks us: imagine if we had a photo of ourselves with Gabriel García Márquez! But when he walked into that bookstore, time came to a halt. There was no remembering the past or imagining the future: there was only being there with him in that place at that moment.



*“Saucy French novellas? Yes, aisle 7.
We classify them as ‘Lust in Translation’.”*

FAME IN THE TIME OF GABRIEL GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ

BY MERCEDES GUHL



Mercedes Guhl, LD Administrator,
*translates English into Spanish, mainly
books for young readers and academic
research in the humanities.*

Gabriel García Márquez (GGM) published his masterpiece, *One Hundred Years of Solitude (OHYS)*, in 1967, and the first edition sold out rapidly. In the following five years, this novel and his earlier fiction were translated into French, Italian, English, German, Czech, Hebrew, Hungarian, Serbian, and Slovenian. His works of the early 1970s were soon translated too, and within 15 years he was awarded the Nobel Prize. How was it possible for this author from a small and relatively unknown country to knock at the doors of the Swedish Academy and get the Prize?

The reason for the sudden attractiveness and fast circulation of *OHYS* was not only its literary qualities and the Latin American Boom, but also the very particular layout of the Spanish-language publishing industry at that time.

We could describe *el Boom* as an explosion of creativity that attracted the attention of European and North American publishers

and readers to the literature being written in Latin America since the late 1950s. Among those authors there were three Nobel Prizes (Miguel Angel Asturias, García Márquez and Mario Vargas Llosa), as well as Alejo Carpentier, Carlos Fuentes, Julio Cortázar, Juan Carlos Onetti, Juan Rulfo, without forgetting Jorge Luis Borges, a kind of predecessor, especially because of the Pantagruelian voracity of his readings, which had paved the way for a new approach to foreign literature. Thanks to Borges, Latin American readers felt free to approach literary works from other cultures, both canonical and less-known pieces, without bending their heads in submission as if they were still second-rate colonial subjects of the Western world, but rather as fully fledged readers, eager for all kinds of stories, retellings, constructions and theories.

Along with Borges, there were readers, editors and publishers sharing this point of view. This and the Spanish Civil War required the publishing industry in Spanish to draw up a new map for its activities. Republicans who fled Spain in 1939 and had connections with the book world were welcomed mostly in Mexico and Argentina. There was a well-established readership and an active book trade in both countries. Publishers who were formerly based in Spain set up their businesses in Argentina and Mexico, while staying closely in touch with their home country and consolidating ties amongst each other. If we could go back in time, any personal library in Latin America between 1940 and 1980 would have shown a sizeable sampling of the output of several international publishing houses with branches in certain cities, the publishing hubs of the Spanish-speaking world: Madrid, Barcelona, Mexico City, and Buenos Aires. Therefore, a seemingly local author could turn out to be at least of regional interest. And if the gaze of foreign scouts or editors of literary magazines and journals or literary scholars fell upon these authors, the leap from local to regional to global was complete. That's what happened with *el Boom*: local authors, coming from Third World countries, ended up by becoming of global interest.

The dissemination of *OHYS* was the work of globalization, before localization was all the rage. Had GGM written his novel right now, it would not have spread so easily and widely. Colombian born and living in Mexico, GGM had caught the eye of a Chilean journalist, Luis Harss, and it was he who convinced Sudamericana's editor Francisco Porrúa to get in touch with GGM to publish one of his books. As a result, a manuscript written in Mexico ended up as a book printed in Buenos Aires, on the other side of the world. GGM's local *costeño* stories, from Colombia's rich Caribbean culture, had made the leap into the entire Latin American region, from Mexico to Patagonia.

After that, critics, scholars and editors with ties to Latin America got news of the novel, and in the following years it was translated and translated and translated. The French translators, Claude and Carmen Durand, husband and wife, worked together on the first version, published in 1968, and continued working in tandem on more of GGM's works. Gregory Rabassa, translator into English, eventually tackled *OHYS* after Cortázar's *Hopscotch* and Vargas Llosa's *The Green House*. Unlike the other books he had translated, however, Rabassa had already read the novel and was teaching it at Columbia, but had no intention of translating it. The Hungarian translator, Vera Székács, spent more than two years doing her carefully researched and highly acclaimed translation: that was the enviable rhythm of the publishing industry in her country. The Polish version was another work in tandem by two translators, Grażyna Grudzińska and Kalina Wojciechowska. Curiously enough, one of them is also the translator of the works of Faulkner, who was one of GGM's biggest literary influences. Ilide Carmignani, the translator of the Italian version, second or third one to be published, became the official translator of all of GGM's works into Italian, just as it was with most of his translators into other languages.

If this had happened more recently, would the novel's fame have spread differently? Definitely. Globalization has met localization, and they work together now. The multi-hubbed publishing paradise has turned into a centralized giant, with national enclosed circles.

Back then, readers all over the region had access to the same books. An author published by one of these transnational publishers in Mexico City or Buenos Aires could be read in Bogotá, Madrid, Lima or Santiago. In our current globalized world, that is impossible.

Big publishing groups extend their scope over wider regions, even crossing language borders, but they can hardly be considered global in their trade. They specialize in local markets and hesitate to take a book beyond national borders. Despite its claims of globalness, the Spanish-language publishing industry is highly localized: compared to those of the 1960s and 1970s, book markets shrink within national borders and as a result there are few opportunities for translation. GGM's books today would have remained in Colombia, until he had sold so many copies or appeared so often on TV and in the media or had so many followers on Twitter and likes on Facebook that eventually an agent would have wanted to represent him and sell rights to his works at international book fairs.

Fortunately, this grim picture of the publishing industry is different in other countries, and there is more room for risk (and translation) in languages with fewer speakers. And paradoxically, what lies ahead in the book industry can become a new world of adventure for both authors and translators. Had GGM been starting his career today, he would have chosen to write not only in a newspaper but in a blog too and perhaps to self-publish his first books (in e-book format, presumably?). Thus, he would have reached a wide readership and reaped the low-cost production benefits of e-books. Whether we like the electronic format or prefer the traditional printed one, the e-book and its possibilities can be our future.

PROFILE

BY JULIE WINTER



Julie Winter translates from German. Her publications include *Freya von Moltke's Memories of Kreisau* (University of Nebraska Press, 2003), as well as numerous memoirs, poems and essays.

EDITH GROSSMAN ON TRANSLATING GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ

Edith Grossman has an impressive range of literary translations to her credit—her authors include Miguel de Cervantes, Gabriel García Márquez, Mario Vargas Llosa, Mayra Montero, Julián Ríos, Carmen LaForet, Alvaro Mutis, Carlos Fuentes, and many others. But this rock star of literary translation did not plan to become a translator. She loved learning languages and was inspired by her high school Spanish teacher to study Spanish in college.

Having decided on a career as a literary critic and scholar, Grossman attended graduate school at the University of Pennsylvania, UC Berkeley and then at New York University, where she earned her PhD. In graduate school she focused on medieval and baroque peninsular verse, which eventually led her to contemporary Latin American poetry. It was specifically the poetry of Pablo Neruda that changed her life, not only consolidating her interest



in contemporary poetry but also showing her that Latin American literature held a central position in world literature. Although she had not yet begun to translate, this change in direction eventually led her to become one of the foremost translators of Latin American literature.

While teaching and working on her dissertation, Grossman was asked by a friend and editor, Ronald Christ, to translate a story by Macedonio Fernández, an Argentine author of the generation before Jorge Luis Borges. At first reluctant to accept, she decided to undertake the translation, mainly because she was curious about how it would be to translate the work of this eccentric writer. She found that she enjoyed the process very much. Grossman's translation of Macedonio's "The Surgery of Psychic Removal" was published in 1973 by *Review*.

Grossman continued to publish her translations of fiction and poetry while working as a college instructor. In 1990 she decided to devote herself to translating full time, although she has continued to teach on occasion as well.

In several interviews from the last few years and in her book on the importance of literary translation, Grossman describes her experiences as a literary translator and tells us what she thinks about the value of translated literature in the literary world today.

Translating García Márquez

Just how did it happen that Edith Grossman began translating García Márquez? Adriana V. López interviewed Grossman in 2008 in her Upper West Side New York home for *Bookforum* and asked her to talk about how she got the job to translate her first work by García Márquez, *Love in the Time of Cholera*:

She recalls that an agent who lived in her building called her and flat out asked, "Edie, you interested in translating García Márquez?" Grossman rolls her eyes and puffs her mouth out reliving the day and says she replied, "What? Of course I'm interested." Grossman submitted a twenty-page sample translation of *Love in the Time of Cholera* to Knopf and was

chosen. "I knew this Colombian writer was eccentric when he wrote me saying that he doesn't use adverbs ending with -mente in Spanish and would like to avoid adverbs ending in -ly in English." She remembers thinking, what do you say in English except slowly? "Well, I came up with all types of things, like without haste."

Grossman went on to translate many more novels by García Márquez and his autobiography as well. In an e-mail exchange, she answered several of our questions at *Source* about what it was like to translate García Márquez:

Did García Márquez really say that he preferred to read his works in the English translations (yours and Gregory Rabassa's) or is that an urban myth? For the record, how fluent was his English?

Edith Grossman: I don't know whether he ever said it, but the remark has been repeated so many times that it takes on a reality of its own, for which I'm certainly grateful. I believe he knew more English than he confessed to—he could read it, but I think he was reluctant to speak a foreign language in public.

In a recent Washington Post (April 18, 2014) interview, you said that everything García Márquez wrote was gold. Could you elaborate on that statement for us?

EG: Someone once said that Ray Charles never sang a wrong note, and to my mind, Gabriel García Márquez never wrote a wrong word. His writing seems perfect, and in that sense it's poetic: each element is very precisely chosen, and his attention to the rhythmic structure of his sentences is meticulous.

As a translator, you have been closely involved with the Spanish written by Cervantes in Spain in the very early 1600s, and with the Spanish written by García Márquez in Colombia about 350 years later. Could you describe an arc of some kind between the Castellano of Don Quixote and the Colombiano of Cien años de soledad?

EG: I'm sorry to disagree with you, but García Márquez certainly wrote castellano, and wrote it magnificently, though he called it his "Caribbean dialect," with the same anti-imperial intention as William Carlos Williams when he insisted that he didn't write English but American. The arc between Cervantes and García Márquez is the fundamental and inescapable influence that both men have had on all subsequent writing in Spanish, though the impact of their artistry extends far beyond the limits of the Hispanic world.

Why Translation Matters

Grossman contends that literary cross-breeding from one language and culture to another is widespread. Earlier novelists writing in English greatly impacted Latin American novelists, who in turn influenced modern English-language writers. It is translation that has made this arc of influence possible. She explains in her 2010 book *Why Translation Matters* (Yale University Press) that William Faulkner exerted a tremendous hold on writers in Latin America, and that García Márquez, Vargas Llosa, Carlos Fuentes and many other authors of the Latin American literary boom were all captivated by his style, a style that showed the unmistakable imprint of Cervantes:

There is no question that in the mid-twentieth century, Faulkner was the most important contemporary English-language writer in Latin America. His sonorous, eloquent, baroque style with its Cervantean resonances felt familiar to Spanish-speaking readers, but I believe that even more decisive for his profound importance to the development of the Latin American novel...was Faulkner's mythic, megahistorical, multigenerational vision of the land and the people who live on it....None of this rich literary cross-fertilization could have happened if Cervantes, Faulkner, and so many others had never been translated.

The arc has curved back northward as writers from the Latin American literary boom have cast their spell on many modern English-

language authors, including Toni Morrison, Salman Rushdie, Don DeLillo, Michael Chabon, and many more:

It is wonderful to contemplate, isn't it: the freedom García Márquez discovered in Joyce, and the structural and technical lessons he learned from him and from Faulkner, have been passed on to a younger generation of English-language fiction writers through the translated impact of the Colombian's writing. The innovative process of discovery that has allowed major writers to flex authorial muscles beyond the limitation of a single language and a single literary tradition would not have been possible without access to translated books.

Grossman's book on why translation matters is a must-read for anyone interested in world literature. Her observations help us understand that translating literature is powerful and necessary, that it gives us an insight into human thought and culture that would not have otherwise been possible.

More Thoughts on Translation

Grossman extensively addresses several additional translation issues in her book and more briefly in an interview with Maria Cecilia Salisbury published online at UT Dallas's *Center for Translation Studies* Web page. For example, she answered Salisbury's question about what makes a book translatable as follows:

I'd like to rephrase that question. I can't say what makes a book translatable, but I do think that all texts can be translated. The question of whether or not a work is "translatable" stems from a mistaken and widely held notion that a translation is really a one-for-one set of equivalences with the original—a straightforward lexical problem—when in fact it is a rewriting of the first text. Some, of course, are immensely difficult (they're usually just as difficult in the original) and challenge the translator's sensitivity to nuance, levels of meaning, and artistic impact in both languages. I see my work as translating meaning, not words.

Salisbury also asked Grossman to talk about where literary translation stands with respect to creative writing and criticism:

It seems to me that literary translation is both an act of criticism and an act of creative writing. In many ways the translator penetrates the text more deeply than most critics and is constantly engaged in interpreting both the text and its subtexts. This is an integral part of the translator's obligation to recreate, in another language, the tone, sense, and impact of the original. In order to fulfill that obligation, literary translators must be sensitive writers in English—otherwise they run the risk of writing in “translatorese,” the kind of misbegotten idiom that has no reality in any language.

And she asked Grossman whether she believed translation was fairly recognized, an issue dear to literary translators:

I believe that literary translation is grossly undervalued, both commercially and critically. For the most part, publishers do their best to pay translators as little as possible, although the book they actually publish depends on the translator's work. And most critics assiduously ignore the fact that they are reviewing a translation. If they do refer to the translation, they usually dismiss it with a phrase like “ably translated by...”

In spite of this somewhat bleak situation, Grossman is steadfast in her refusal to view literary translation in any kind of negative light. For example, in our e-mail interview, when pressed to say what might be lost when readers cannot read a work in the original language, she stood her ground and reiterated that she prefers not to see translation in terms of loss:

In previous interviews you've said that you prefer not to think about what might be lost in translation but what is gained. However, when you DO think about it, what sorts of things do you think are most commonly lost in the process of translation?

EG: I really do prefer to think about what's gained, which is the enrichment and expansion of the language you translate into. In fact, as a translator, if I knew what was lost I wouldn't lose it.

Literary translators can find inspiration in words like these. Thank you, Edith Grossman.

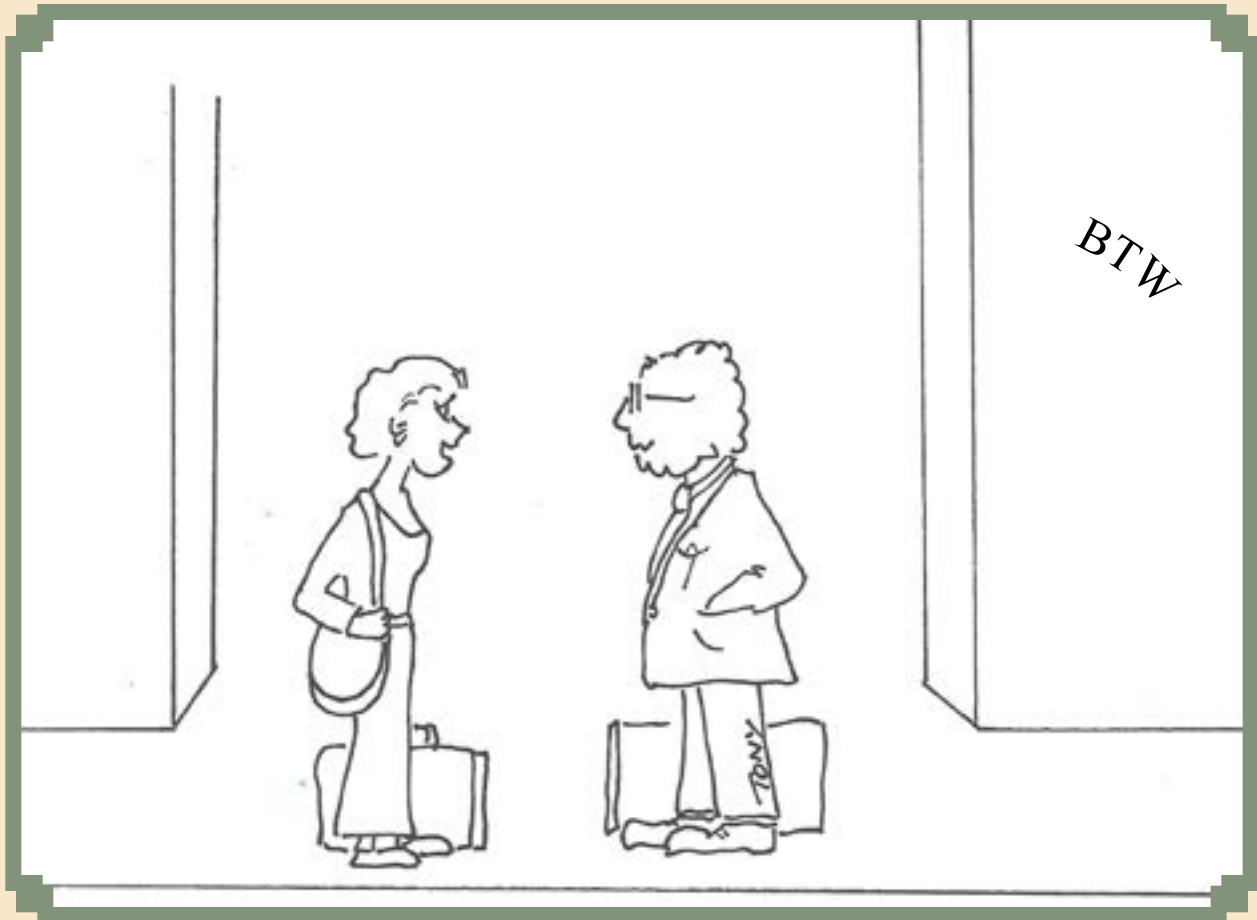
Sources

Grossman, Edith. *Why Translation Matters*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010. Print.

López, Adriana V. "Sketches of Spanish." *Bookforum*: n. pag. Web. 8 June 2014. <http://www.bookforum.com/inprint/014_05/2053>.

Lozada, Carlos. "'Everything He Wrote Was Gold': An Interview with Gabriel García Márquez's Translator." *The Washington Post*, 18 Apr. 2014: n. pag. Web. 8 June 2014. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/everything-he-wrote-was-gold-an-interview-with-gabriel-garcia-marquezs-translator/2014/04/18/b52d674a-c700-11e3-bf7a-be01a9b69cf1_story.html>.

Salisbury, Maria Cecilia. "The Making of a Translator: An Interview with Edith Grossman." *UT Dallas Center for Translation Studies*: n. pag. Web. 8 June 2014. <http://translation.utdallas.edu/Interviews/EdithGrossmanTR_41.html>.



“Travelling abroad is like going to a translation gym for a workout.”

HOPSCOTCHING UP MOUNT EVEREST

BY IORAM MELCER

Ioram Melcer (1963) is a writer and translator. He has translated about 90 literary works from Spanish, Portuguese, French, Italian, English and Catalan, into Hebrew. Among his publications are a novel, a volume of essays, a collection of stories and more, and about 1000 press articles in Hebrew and Spanish.



Sometime at the beginning of the decade, I was asked to translate Julio Cortázar's *Rayuela* (*Hopscotch*) into Hebrew, or was it at the end of the previous decade? I can't remember anymore. The translation was published in February 2013, that much I know. But when asked how long it took to translate the novel, I bat my eyelashes like a damsel in a medieval legend and refuse to be specific. Who can tell how long it took? In such situations, rare and extreme, it is better to arm yourself with a good metaphor. The choice was clear: translating *Rayuela* into Hebrew was like climbing Mount Everest. How did you do it? How long did it take? It doesn't matter, but I was able to answer, I got to the peak. Still, questions persisted: What did you feel on the way? Was there a point when you thought you'd give up? How did you manage the obstacles?

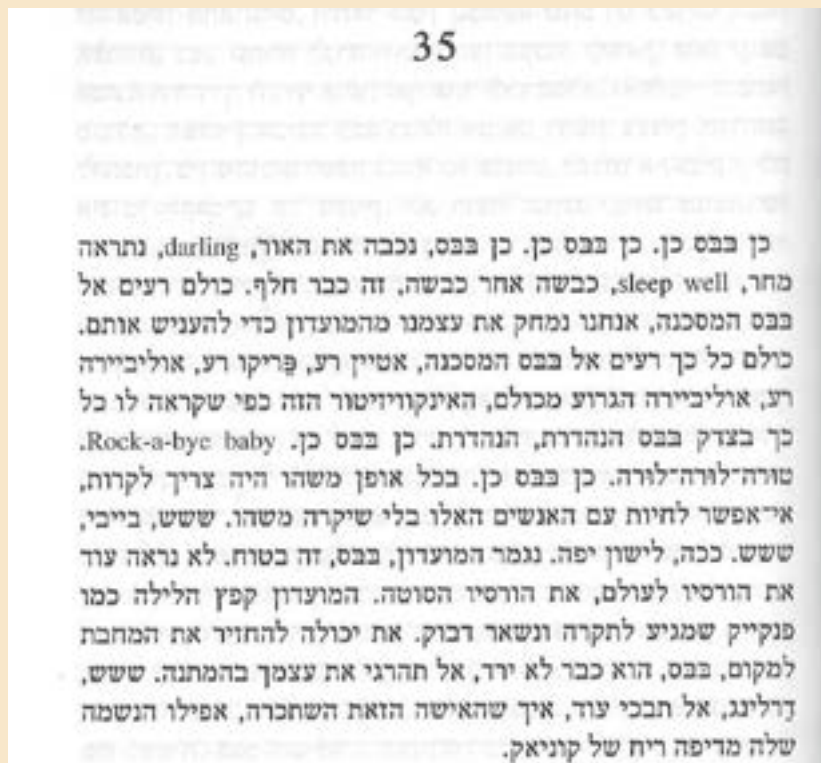
For those readers who don't know the novel, the 1963 classic by the Argentinian genius, the novel to out-novel the very concept of a novel, a few explanations are due. It is a tour de force of form and content. A book which invites readers to choose their own path through the chapters: either you can read the book from beginning to end, sequentially, up to the three asterisks marking the end, and omit the rest of the tome because Cortázar "ends" *that* book on chapter 56 out of 155; or you can read according to a table given by Cortázar, which takes you to the beginning in chapter 73, on to chapter 1, then 2, then 116 and so on; of course, you can bulldoze your way from the first page to the last; or you can read randomly. Each path yields a different book, each journey a different experience. The author clearly wants to be in command, but in a magical paradoxical way he also relinquishes some of his sovereignty to the reader, thus also defining the reader, creating a reader out of the unique encounter between the reader and the text(s).

Still, this brief description of the multi-option text does not mean that the text *itself* is necessarily more of a challenge to a translator. Well, think again. One chapter is written so that the reader eventually has to discover that the odd lines belong to one text and the even ones to another. The lines, not the sentences (think of the poor typesetters!). Other chapters emulate the effect of jazz music, phrases unfolding into others, phrases repeating themselves, leading to variations, creating the suggestive magic of jazz, sometimes while discussing jazz pieces and musicians. *Rayuela's* author wants to speak about language, its use, its limitations, its futility. Immersed in de Saussure and French intellectual currents of the 1940s and 1950s, Cortázar sets out to deal with the sign, breaking up the classical pair of *signifiant* and *signifié*: words are used, but when Cortázar wants to *discuss* them, instead of using them, he marks them by inserting an *h* in the middle of each, like a lepidopterist taking a live butterfly and, in order to discuss it, sticking a pin right into its thorax, between the colorful wings. Cortázar meshes styles, registers and dialects, slips into French and sprinkles expressions in several other languages. He is as much at home in the slang of Argentinian boxers from the

A Sample Paragraph from Rayuela translated into Hebrew

35.

Sí Babs, sí. Sí Babs, sí. Sí Babs, apaguemos la luz, darling, hasta mañana, sleep well, corderito atrás de otro, ya pasó, nena, ya pasó. Todos tan malos con la pobre Babs, nos vamos a borrar del Club para castigarlos. Todos tan malos con la pobrecita Babs, Etienne malo, Perico malo, Oliveira malo, Oliveira el peor de todos, ese inquisidor como le había dicho tan bien la preciosa, preciosa Babs. Sí Babs sí. Rock-a-bye baby. Tura-lura-lura. Sí Babs sí. De todas maneras algo tenía que pasar, no se puede vivir con esa gente y que no pase nada. Sh, baby, sh. Así, bien dormida. Se acabó el Club, Babs, es seguro. No veremos más a Horacio, al perverso Horacio. El Club ha saltado esta noche como un panqueque que llega al techo y se queda pegado. Podés guardar la sartén, Babs, no va a bajar más, no te matés esperando. Sh, darling, no llores más, qué borrachera tiene esta mujer, hasta el alma le huele a coñac.



1940s as he is in the highest formal Spanish. Word games fascinate him, as when he has his protagonists play “Cemetery”, a game which requires opening the dictionary, taking a sequence of entries and building a sentence comprised of the items in the sequence. The name of the game conveys the idea that a dictionary, as a mere list of words, is a cemetery, made up of rows and columns of buried bodies. And then there’s chapter 68. You read it and find out that you don’t know most of the words. No wonder: Cortázar made them up. Welcome to *Glígligo* (Gliglish in English), Cortázar’s invented language, some of whose words are to be found in other passages of the novel. You read Chapter 68, you understand what’s being described, but the words are all made up: magic at work.

So let’s take a deep breath and imagine ourselves at the bottom of Mount Everest. Base camp, just before we begin the ascent. How do we go about it? Well, to be true to the metaphor, the translator/climber has to come prepared. In this case, I can at least attest to some previous experience, having translated into Hebrew two short story collections by Cortázar: *Octaedro* (*Octahedron*) and *Final del Juego* (*End of the Game*) over the course of almost two decades, during which I read and reread most of his prose, and translated a number of additional stories as well as some of his poetry. And then there’s love: you have to love the author’s work in order to translate it, especially when you’re faced with a genius, a master of masters. You don’t attempt the Everest without any experience or if you don’t like mountaineering. And then you go step by step, relishing the challenges, using your tools, tackling the surprises, never looking too much at the peak, which most of the time is engulfed in clouds anyway, but also avoiding too many looks back. You forget Time, you forget yourself, and you take it one chapter, one paragraph, one sentence, one obstacle at a time.

When you talk about translating *Rayuela* into Hebrew, there is also the matter of those who didn’t make it. The novel was far from unknown among publishers and editors in Israel. Collections of Cortázar’s stories were translated into Hebrew in the 1980s (mostly badly, from the French translations, though purportedly from

Spanish). Then there was persistent talk of two failed attempts. One producing an unusable Hebrew version, the other not going beyond a few chapters. So why attempt it? Well, precisely. At the risk of overstating the metaphor: the novel was there.

Still, you could contend: a 50-year-old novel about Argentinians in Paris in the 1950s, full of references to French intellectuals, philosophy journals, jazz and language? Could that work in Hebrew today? Well, if *Ulysses* has recently been translated into Hebrew, finally, completely, why not *Rayuela*? The challenge seemed well worth the effort. Moreover, Israelis read far more English than they do Spanish. As Cortázar's masterpiece is truly one of the greatest novels ever and surely one of the top novels in the Spanish language, it was urgent to fill the gap (and gone is the Everest metaphor!). Hebrew has what it takes, and this was an opportunity to show it, to make every muscle and sinew in Hebrew work for the cause. Yes, even *Glíglico* would be rendered into Hebrew words, or Hebrew-like, for that matter.

The giant puzzle of a novel became my obsession for long days, weeks and months. Playing with registers, modulating styles, creating the tone, looking up references, making up games to reflect the sparkles from Cortázar's creative imagination, digging everywhere to find the meaning of a word denoting an item of clothing from the 1940s, or a word in *porteño*, the Buenos Aires variant of Spanish, as it was in the 1950s, tracing the French references and rendering them in Hebrew in a way that would set them apart from the Spanish expressions. And all the time, telling the story, having immense fun saying it all in Hebrew while hearing the Master's voice, sometimes almost acoustically. Hebrew has its wonderful tools, morphological, lexical, syntactical, and translating the novel was an exercise in exploring the farthest reaches of Hebrew.

Well, one more use of the Everest metaphor, if I may. You reach the peak, breathless, every muscle in your body burning, and then you realize you've only finished half the task. Translating the text was one thing, but then came months, many months, of dealing with the questions, doubts and suggestions by the publisher's team

of editors and copy editors. Hundreds of questions, each requiring an answer. Could it really be that the author said this? Are you sure this is what he meant? What about all these sentences in French? Why not just give their translation into Hebrew? And the ultimate argument: wouldn't it be better to add (at least a few / a few dozen / several hundred) footnotes? Files went back and forth, sometimes full of colored or highlighted bits, calling for a response. Above all there was the matter of the French passages and the quandary regarding footnotes.

My position was that, since the original text had no footnotes and since the French was... well, excused and not explained, the Hebrew version should follow suit. Long arguments ensued. 21st-century Israelis do not study French at school. The novel is from 1963, by an Argentinian. In the end, a compromise was reached: the French would stay, but translations would be provided at the end of the book. And no footnotes, except the very few which seemed absolutely necessary. And no, none of Cortázar's tricks would be explained. *Rayuela*, his kaleidoscopic cornucopia of literary genius is not for the faint of heart. It's a wide open invitation to explore and be amazed, and as such it requires surrender, complicity and openness. No outlet stores are open for business on Mount Everest.

The book was well received in Israel. It's selling steadily and making a name for itself among the best of readers, those who accept the Master's invitation to leave everything aside and step in to play the great game of *Rayuela*, Hopscotch, in Hebrew.



“Well, I haven’t heard from him since I said he needn’t worry because if he got infected with a brain-eating bacteria it would starve to death.”

UNIQUE VOICES AND TRICKY CHOICES

BY TONY BECKWITH



A writer, translator, interpreter, poet, and cartoonist, Tony Beckwith is a regular contributor to Source.

Gabriel García Márquez died on April 17, 2014 and the world of Spanish letters was instantly plunged into mourning. The sadness and sense of loss spread even farther afield, however, for his writing had made him famous everywhere. “Each new work of his is received by expectant critics and readers as an event of world importance,” said the Swedish Academy of Letters when it awarded him the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1982.

In the days after his death, translation sites on the Internet were abuzz with conversations about the legendary Colombian writer. This was as it should be because in his own way Gabo—as he was widely known—made an unprecedented contribution to the art of translation in 1970 when his extraordinary book, *Cien años de soledad*, was translated by Gregory Rabassa and published in the United States as *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. A generation of American readers was thus introduced to Latin American literature in particular, and to literature in translation in general. The book’s phenomenal success was not lost on the publishing industry, which began to take a greater

interest in authors writing in Spanish and other languages, and it was a good time for literary translators in this country.

Inevitably, the focus of the chatter on these sites soon shifted from the big picture of García Márquez's passing and what that meant in a variety of contexts, to the rubber-meets-the-road aspect of translating the work of a writer of his stature. Stories and rumors bounced back and forth, generously seasoned with gossip and speculation, and then a particular thread caught my attention. The subject of the conversation was Gabo's apparent aversion to the use of adverbs in his writing. I confess I had never heard about this fetish (if that is the right term) and was intrigued. The chatter went on to claim that he was not alone in this particular area. The writer Stephen King, for one, has very definite ideas about the subject. In his book *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft*, King cautions that "The adverb is not your friend," and goes on to say: "I believe the road to hell is paved with adverbs." Well!

I searched my mental hard drive for similar literary examples of adverb aversion syndrome and recalled that, in one of his greatest poems, the Welsh poet Dylan Thomas wrote: "Do not go gentle into that good night." Did he consciously choose to say "gentle" rather than "gently" because he disliked adverbs? Would it have made any difference? I also remembered *Truly Madly Deeply*, the 1990 movie directed by Anthony Minghella. Gabo might have thought, "Three strikes, you're out," but I loved the movie and thought the title was terrific, even if it was nothing but adverbs.

But there is more than one kind of adverb, so which kind did García Márquez prefer not to use? In a *Washington Post* interview,¹ Carlos Lozada asked Edith Grossman, who has translated several of Gabo's books, about his rules. Grossman said: "He did not like adverbs that ended in -mente (in Spanish; the English equivalent is -ly). I sometimes felt like a contortionist as I searched out

1 Lozada, Carlos. "'Everything He Wrote Was Gold': An Interview with Gabriel García Márquez's Translator." *The Washington Post*, 18 Apr. 2014: n. pag. Web. 8 June 2014. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/everything-he-wrote-was-gold-an-interview-with-gabriel-garcia-marquezs-translator/2014/04/18/b52d674a-c700-11e3-bf7a-be01a9b69cf1_story.html>

alternatives." One can sympathize. Adverbs, after all, are here for a reason. I shudder to think that Minghella's movie might have been titled: *In a True Way, a Mad Way, a Deep Way*.

There have, of course, always been writers with fixations and suggestions. Mark Twain made lists of rules, and urged writers to: "Use the right word, not its second cousin; avoid slovenliness of form; and employ a simple and straightforward style." Hard to argue with any of that, or with Isabel Allende, who encourages us to: "Just use one good noun instead of three adjectives."² As a more extreme example, in 1939, one Ernest Vincent Wright wrote a novel, *Gadsby*, that managed to rattle on for over 50,000 words without using a single letter *e*. The novel was written as a lipogram (ancient Greek for "leaving out a letter"), which is a form of constrained writing, a literary technique that prohibits certain things or imposes a pattern of some kind. One can only imagine the challenges facing a conscientious translator of a book like that.

From a translator's point of view, of course, one of the essential challenges is always to capture the writer's voice, the *sound* of the work. To achieve that we must zoom in on each word and sentence to grasp not just the meaning but the rhythm, the tone, and the structure of the original. If the writer prefers to avoid a particular figure of speech or grammatical construct, then that decision is something we must respect and come to terms with.

But I am far more interested in the words a writer does use than the ones he or she does not. Those words are, after all, the essential building blocks of the story or poem I would like to translate. They have particular meanings, certainly, but they also have particular sounds and connotations that I must take into account and attempt to replicate. If I were translating the Irish poet Seamus Heaney³, for example, I would have to keep in mind that he used ordinary Anglo-Saxon words like "sod" and "drain" and "rot" to make his poems sing. He said he wanted to write with "a musically satisfying order

2 Meredith Maran, Ed. *Why We Write: 20 Acclaimed Authors on How and Why They Do What They Do*. Plume, 2013.

3 Seamus Heaney, Nobel Prize in Literature 1995.

of sounds,” so that is what a translation of his work should aim for. The target language should somehow convey “the squelch and slap of the soggy peat.”⁴

If, on the other hand, I wanted to translate the work of Billy Collins—Poet Laureate of the United States from 2001 to 2003—I would have to remember that he said, “My poetry is suburban, it’s domestic, it’s middle class, and it’s sort of unashamedly that, but I hope there’s enough imaginative play in there that it’s not simply poems about barbecuing.” His poems are conversational, whimsical, and witty with a deceptive simplicity that beguiles the reader and could easily trip up the unwary translator. “I closed my eyes and thought / about the alphabet, / the letters filling out the halls of kindergarten / to become literature. / If the British call *z* zed, / I wondered, why not call *b* bed and *d* dead?”⁵

Speaking of deceptively simple poems, I would love to translate Wislawa Szymborska but I don’t speak a word of Polish. Instead I read what sound like exquisite versions by Claire Cavanagh and Stanisław Barańczak: “No day copies yesterday / no two nights will teach what bliss is / in precisely the same way / with exactly the same kisses.”⁶ In a review of *Here*, the collection of Szymborska’s poems translated by the same team and published in 2010, Hanna Gil, writing for the Polish Book Club in Seattle, says: “Her poetic images are universal, and for that reason her poems might seem easy to translate. However, it appears the opposite is true; because their language is so simple, they are very difficult. Poetry needs to be effortlessly transformed in English, not by simple words but by something difficult to grasp, by the poem’s mood.”

On the subject of translation as transformation, Edith Grossman discusses this idea with Maria Cecilia Salisbury in her interview for the *UT Dallas Center for Translation Studies* (see Julie Winter’s profile, pages 18-24 in this issue of *Source*) and refers to: “...the translator’s obligation to recreate, in another language, the tone, sense, and impact of the original.

4 “Digging,” from *Death of a Naturalist*, 1966.

5 “The Long Day,” from *The Trouble with Poetry and other Poems*, by Billy Collins. NY: Random House, 2005.

6 “Nothing Twice,” from *View With a Grain of Salt*, by Wislawa Szymborska, winner of the 1996 Nobel Prize in Literature “for poetry that with ironic precision allows the historical and biological context to come to light in fragments of human reality.”

In order to fulfill that obligation, literary translators must be sensitive writers in English....” In the *Washington Post* interview mentioned above, Grossman says: “Translating means expressing an idea or a concept in a way that’s entirely different from the original, since each language is a separate system. And so, in fact, when I translate a book written in Spanish, I’m actually writing another book in English.”

When contemplating certain projects, then, instead of wondering “How good a translator am I?” perhaps we should be asking “How good a writer am I?” How sensitive are we to the nuances of the source text and how well can we express them in the translation? For example, if we are translating the work of a poet like Billy Collins, can we recreate in another language the essentially American feeling conveyed by, say, a Norman Rockwell painting? How do we do that? In her book, *Why Translation Matters*, Edith Grossman talks about the daunting challenge of working on the opening words in Cervantes’ *Don Quixote*, arguably the most famous phrase in Spanish literature: “En un lugar de la Mancha, de cuyo nombre no quiero acordarme.” She recited those words to herself “as if they were a mantra,” searching for an English phrase with comparable rhythm, “that echoed some of the sound of the original,” trying to recapture how readers might have experienced it centuries ago. The words came to her, and she wrote: “Somewhere in La Mancha, in a place whose name I do not care to remember.” The resulting “rush of euphoric satisfaction” that she felt is the *translator’s high* we can all recognize and relate to. Over and above the fee we may earn and the applause we may enjoy, that euphoria is our most intimate reward for immersing ourselves in the words and ideas of a writer whose work we want to carry into another language.

Once I have finished a translation and the euphoria has died down, I am usually ready to dive into the next one. But apparently not everyone feels that way. “When I finished one book, I wouldn’t write for a while,” García Márquez once said. “Then I had to learn how to do it all over again. The arm goes cold; there’s a learning process you have to go through again before you rediscover the warmth that comes over you when you are writing.” I imagine we can all understand what Gabo means, since we must all be familiar with the warmth that comes over us when we are translating.

CREDITS

Cover photo of Gabriel García Márquez by Jose Lara,
Wikimedia Commons.

Cover photo of Julio Cortázar is in the Public Domain.

P. 7 Photo of Esther Allen by Caroline White.

P. 18 Photo of Edith Grossman is in the Public Domain.

P. 26 Photo of Ioram Melcer by Nourit Melcer-Padon,
Wikimedia Commons.