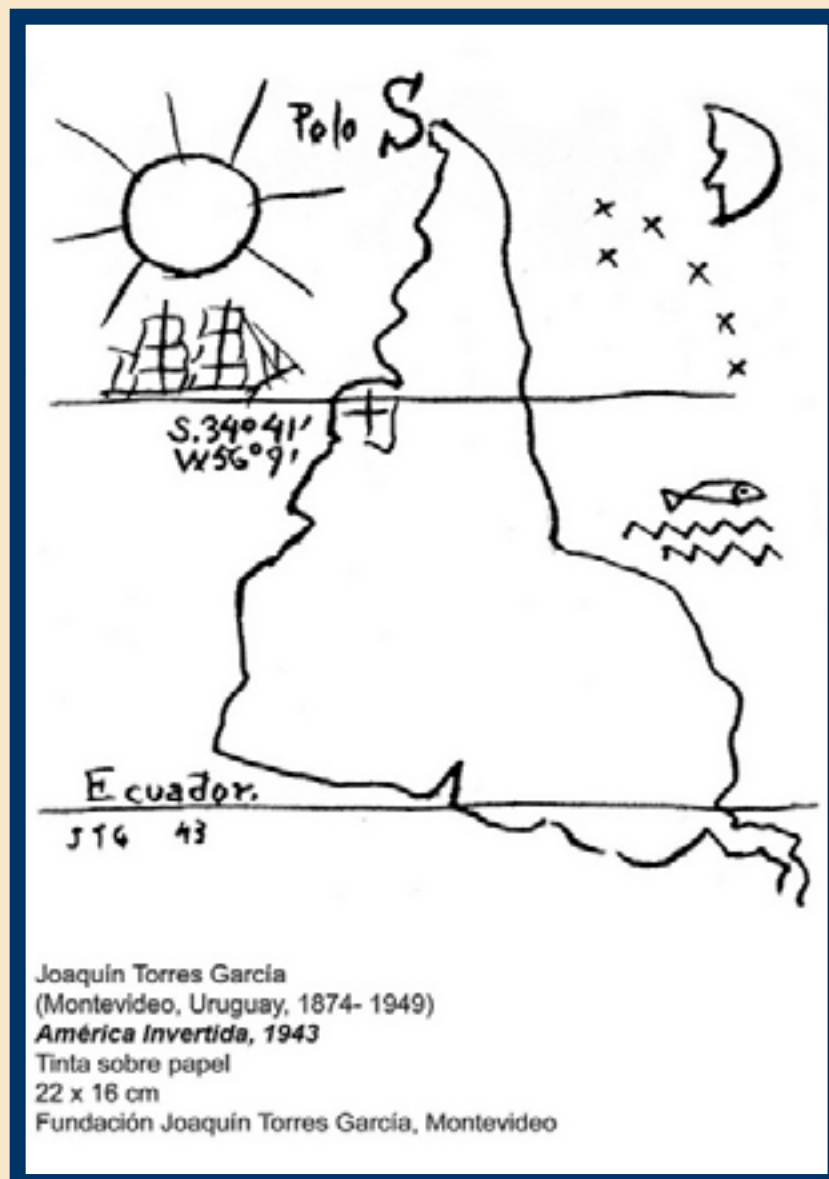


A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION  
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NO. 62

FALL 2014

## LATIN AMERICAN WRITERS AND THEIR TRANSLATORS: PART II



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BTW Cartoons by Tony Beckwith

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# FROM THE EDITORS



**Michele Aynesworth**  
Editor-in-Chief



**Tony Beckwith**  
Associate Editor



**Patrick Saari**  
Chief Copy Editor



**Julie Winter**  
Views Editor

The death of literary legend Gabriel García Márquez earlier this year led to a focus on twentieth-century Latin American literature in the previous issue of *Source*. Our current issue, also curated by Tony Beckwith, now takes a broader look at that theme and brings us to the dawn of the twenty-first century in the world of Latin American letters.

In her Letter from the Literary Division Administrator, Mercedes Guhl presents highlights from the recent ATA Conference in Chicago. She offers a recap of the various meetings and events including the Leadership Council's training sessions and plans for next year, plus a snapshot review of the ever-popular After Hours Café.

Views Editor Julie Winter profiles Andrew Hurley, who has translated the works of Jorge Luis Borges, Reynaldo Arenas, and many other Latin American writers. This interview shares insights into the process and challenges of translating authors of such range and stature, and compares literary translation to method acting.

Our previous issue focused entirely on literature written in Spanish, so this time there is a greater emphasis on Brazil. Alexis Levitin has spent a lifetime translating Brazilian poetry, and here he talks about working "mano-a-mano" with Salgado Maranhão, "one of the most original, authentic voices in contemporary Brazilian poetry."

Ramiro Arango and Mercedes Guhl have collaborated on a most interesting project that they describe as a sampler of contemporary Brazilian literature. The material consists of very brief profiles of writers and their work that Arango and Guhl translated from Portuguese into Spanish for the Guadalajara International Book Fair catalogue. They conclude that "Brazil is like a literary ocean, a fluid medium inhabited by life and diversity."

The best-known event in twentieth-century Latin American literature was the "Boom" that catapulted the genre to international fame. But what happened next? Lisa Carter explains the origin of the "McOndo" movement, weaving that history into her own personal experience to introduce a new phase in the ongoing saga of life and literature in Latin America.

In his regular "By The Way" column, Tony Beckwith wraps up this two-part series with a brief overview of Latin American literature in the twentieth century.

## ABOUT THE EDITORS

**Michele Aynesworth** specializes in translating Argentine and French authors. E-mail: [michele@mckayaynesworth.com](mailto: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.

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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.

Endnotes please, not footnotes.

Please include a bio and photograph.

Contributor bios should be brief and stick to concrete achievements. Illustrations and links, etc., are encouraged.

Submissions may be edited.

We encourage submissions from previously unpublished translators as well as from Asia, Africa, and all other cultures less frequently represented.

General submissions go to [michele@mckayaynesworth.com](mailto:michele@mckayaynesworth.com)

Submit reviews or profiles to

Julie Winter: [juliemwinter6@gmail.com](mailto:juliemwinter6@gmail.com).

*Submissions deadline for the next issue: Feb. 1.*

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# LETTER FROM THE LD ADMINISTRATOR

Dear LD members,

Chicago's conference has just ended and this letter presents a string of highlights of what took place. On the pre-conference day we had two seminars focusing on specific linguistic and cultural problems in literary translation. Both of them were well attended and had good reviews.

In the afternoon, the ATA held a training session for division officers and volunteers, where we shared ideas about division activities and looked for ways to better serve our members.

In the evening, after the Welcome Reception, the Division Open House was held in a huge room with tables for each division. There we distributed the identifying LD stickers we had designed. Although we never managed to gather more than six people around our

table, it turned out to be a good opportunity to educate fellow translators about what literary translators do. We hope they left with a better idea of our field of work and the purpose of our division.

As for the rest of the sessions on the literary track, five of them in all, our next issue of *Source* will be providing you with a detailed review. But right now I am pleased to tell you that I saw people bright-eyed and interested coming out of the rooms with the assurance of having discovered something new about our field or the satisfaction of having shared their points of view on a certain translation problem. Our Division Distinguished Speaker Ioram Melcer enriched the discussions with his experienced multilingual approach.

The Leadership Council met for breakfast on the first day and talked face-



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

**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.

to-face (and not email-to-email) about projects for next year. At the end of that day, we held our annual division meeting. The minutes will be uploaded to our webpage in case you are interested in knowing in detail what went on. I am happy to report that we had a small crowd there. We launched the new webpage ([www.ata-ld.org](http://www.ata-ld.org)), reviewed the progress of this year's projects, and heard suggestions and proposals for future ones. Webinars about literary translation and related topics may be coming! Also, the Nominating Committee, in charge of choosing the candidates for new administrator and assistant administrator for the 2015 LD elections, was constituted. The meeting ended with a short presentation on copyright by Lisa Carter. We expect to have more on this topic which concerns us all.

In the late evening of the conference's second

day, we had the After Hours Café in a beautiful room overlooking the Chicago River. Some seventy people attended the readings of texts ranging from novel excerpts to poems, and we even had songs! But not all were lucky enough to read. So one of our missions for next year is to draw up new rules for the event, as over the years it has become a must-attend for many people at the conference. These new rules are meant to make room for more readers and ensure well-chosen texts for the reading.

And now it is time to start preparing for Miami's conference in 2015. If you have any ideas for a presentation, we can help you develop them into a proposal. If there is a topic you would like to have covered, let us know and we will try to find a speaker. You can contact me at [mercedesguhl@gmail.com](mailto:mercedesguhl@gmail.com). Your contribution to a

more enriching and relevant conference in our field is important.

For all these projects — new webpage, 2015 conference in general and After Hours Café — we need volunteers. If you are willing to help, contact me. Our division can benefit a lot from your ideas and the time you can give.

Sincerely,  
Mercedes Guhl

Literary Division  
Administrator:  
**Mercedes Guhl**  
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## READERS' CORNER UPDATES

*PRODIGIOS*, a novel by Angélica Gorodischer, translated from Spanish into English by **Sue Burke**, to be published in August 2015 by Small Beer Press with the title *PRODIGIES*.

*MINDGATE*, a movie script by Juan Miguel Aguilera and Javier Negrete, translated from Spanish into English by **Sue Burke**. Production is scheduled to begin in May 2015 by Rebel Films with Rachael Leigh Cook in the starring role.



Sue Burke



Natalia Solzhenitsyn reading the citation to Marian Schwartz

At the International Congress of Literary Translators, held in Moscow in September, the *Read Russia Prize* for Contemporary Russian Literature was awarded to **Marian Schwartz** for her translation of Leonid Yuzefovich's *HARLEQUIN'S COSTUME* (Glagoslav 2013). The prize is awarded biennially to translations from Russian into any language.

Leo Tolstoy  
*ANNA KARENINA*  
(Yale UP, 2014)  
Translation  
by Marian Schwartz



## READERS' CORNER continued



Anne Milano Appel

**Anne Milano Appel's** recent book translations:

Paolo Giordano, *The Human Body*. Pamela Dorman Books/Viking/Penguin, October 2014.

Andrea Canobbio, *Three Light-Years*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, July 2014.

And a couple of articles:

**"Translating Paolo Giordano's *The Human Body*,"** NdT, *La Nota del Traduttore*, Dori Agrosi, ed. <http://tinyurl.com/k4wwpvm>

**"Translating Andrea Canobbio's *Three Light-Years*,"** NdT, *La Nota del Traduttore*, Dori Agrosi, ed. <http://tinyurl.com/ngthvoq>

**Shelley Fairweather-Vega's** translation from the Uzbek of a short story called **"The Stone Guest"** by Hamid Ismailov has been published in *Words Without Borders*. Click on the following links to find her story and commentary.

<http://tinyurl.com/kpxo2uy>

<http://tinyurl.com/kakudgp>



Shelley Fairweather-Vega



# 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.

## AN INTERVIEW WITH ANDREW HURLEY

**A**ndrew Hurley is a prolific and renowned translator from Spanish to English. He holds a PhD from Rice University and is currently Professor Emeritus in the Department of English and Graduate Translation Studies at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras. Although he specializes in translating fiction, he also translates academic texts and other types of writing. He has published more than thirty book-length translations from a variety of fields and numerous shorter works. Jorge Luis Borges, Rubén Darío, and Reinaldo Arenas are among the many authors he has translated.



**Looking at your CV, I'm struck by the fact that you've translated so many different genres. How did that come about?**

I started as translator of novels, short stories and other prose forms, but because I'm an academic, it was natural that I should start doing

other things, and because of my contacts with colleagues I started doing history and archeology and architecture, for example. The memoirs and biographies stemmed from my literary work.

So it all just came about naturally. None of my career has been calculated. I just kind of followed my nose.

### **For you, is translating fiction different from translating nonfiction?**

Yes and no. Let me tell you about my background, because that seems to be the key to my particular career. I have a doctorate in English, in nineteenth century American literature and the theory of the novel, and my dissertation was about narrative, narrative voices to be specific. I came to Puerto Rico and met this wonderful and intriguing new culture and realized how much interest I had in it.

I wasn't able to do the kind of research I had intended to do here for lots of reasons—there weren't good libraries, and my students were not giving me the kind of feedback I needed to keep up my enthusiasm for that purely academic pursuit—can't blame them, and I don't; Emerson and Melville were very foreign to them! But I was still interested in narrative and how narrative voices work. In every piece of fiction, and in poetry, there is a distinct narrative voice. When I started doing literary translation, that is what I concentrated on. And I was very lucky at the beginning to get these very stylized stylists—if you'll excuse the redundancy. For example, I got to do Borges and Reinaldo Arenas very early on, and I just loved it.

Because of my training in literary criticism, I was an “analyst” of style. I was trained in close reading of the New Criticism kind; you take things apart and put them back together again. Your aesthetic response depends on an understanding of the way the fiction or poem is constructed. It's both intellectual and emotional. It's not a response to storytelling, to the emotional pull alone, but a response to the artistry, including the nuts and bolts. My first approach, then, is to take things apart and intellectually analyze them. So that's what I do when I translate literature; I analyze the piece, figure out what makes the style this style—the images take care of themselves, but to get this particular author right, you have to get the style right.

So then I internalize this intellectual thing, and at that point, translation becomes performance. It's like method acting. You get to know everything about your character and you become that character. You internalize the style and you start translating.

In academic translation, it's important to present the ideas as clearly as possible. The author's style is still important, but not to the same degree as in works of fiction. And academic translation is seldom performative. Of course, there's the element of intellectual analysis, and often lots of research.

### **Which do you prefer translating, fiction or nonfiction?**

I like to translate both—whatever I'm working on is what I enjoy. I call myself a serial specialist because you really do have to specialize in your author's subject, to do it justice. So I do lots of research on whatever I'm translating, and I like that I get to learn so much. Translation has enriched my life in so many ways.

### **Our previous issue of *Source* focuses on the Latin American literary boom. How does Borges fit into this movement?**

Borges preceded and started the boom, but he's of an earlier generation. He's actually a one-man boom—a bomb really—thrown into the Anglo-American literary culture. Once he was “discovered,” first in France and England, and then in the United States, there was no other Spanish language writer in the pantheon. It went on like that for a bit, until people realized that there must be other writers. That's when these incredible authors were, again, discovered, like García Márquez and lots of others. They tended to get lumped together under the rubric of magical realism, of course, which was so unfair. Nevertheless, there was a wonderful boom.

### **Was Borges well known when you started translating him?**

Borges had been translated before by Norman Thomas di Giovanni, who worked closely with him over a five-year period. There were also other translations by lots of other translators, some very good indeed.

When Borges died, his widow took his corpus of work and put it up for auction. It was bought by Penguin USA. I had had a long relationship with Penguin because of my other translations. I re-translated all of Borges' fictions. And other people re-translated his poetry, some of his essays, and so on. So my translation was after he died, and it was intended to commemorate the centennial of his birth. So far, I'm the last of the translators of his fictions, but I hope I'm not the last. We can always find something new in an author. I don't think authors are exhaustible.

### **How does Borges' writing compare to that of the writers of the boom?**

There's a lot of fantasy in Borges, but it's not the same kind at all as that of the magic realists. He is much less lyrical and sensual, and he writes more out of a world culture. And there are lots of different genres in Borges—the detective story, the history story, the fantasy story, the metaphysical story. . .

### **Did Borges influence later writers?**

It's hard to say. Borges trims down Spanish, which had been a florid sort of language. He's very tight, and very, very controlled. This was new for Spanish. But you can't really say that a lot of writers followed that style. No one that I know of at that time took it to the extreme or really kept at it the way Borges did. The Borgesian effect is laconic, mandarin, and cool.

On the other hand, you have Rubén Darío, a contemporary of Borges, who takes Spanish in another direction. He gallicizes Spanish. It's called *modernismo*, but it's not English modernism, thinking of Joyce, Pound and Eliot. It's actually decadent, late romanticism, sexy, verbose, very French, very Huysmans. It's the decadence of the *fin de siècle*.

The Chilean poet Pablo Neruda wrote about the influence of Darío: "We spend half our lives denying it, only to realize later that without him we would not speak our own language. Without him we would speak a stiff, stilted, insipid tongue."

Borges can't be copied. But Darío could be copied and was. Both writers had tremendous effects on the Spanish language, and more than the literary language. Spanish had apparently been stuck and was considered stagnated and stiff. It apparently needed some shaking up, and these writers shook it up.

### **Did you know Spanish when you moved to Puerto Rico?**

I knew tacos and enchiladas. I was from Texas, but the northern part, so there wasn't a lot of Mexican influence at the time, so I had no "ear" for it. In school I had studied Latin, French and some German. But I became immersed in Spanish here and was able to learn it pretty well.

### **What do you think about "loss" in translation?**

I agree with Edie Grossman—if I knew what I had lost, I would try to find it. This phrase grates on literary translators everywhere. It's actually a truncation. Robert Frost famously said, "Poetry is what's lost in translation." It was a clever way to dodge the question of what poetry is. When we understand the context of this phrase, some of the negativity of it is assuaged.

On the other hand, I must say that I have translated one particular author, Ana Lydia Vega, whose style is somehow so organic to Spanish that I still feel that my translation loses something. That's one of the few times I've recognized that I lost something. There are writers that people say are untranslatable, like Rilke. There is something about the organic quality of the writing, the culture, the language, which is just not possible to convey.

### **You are now a professor emeritus, but it looks like you've been very busy translating in retirement.**

I've been incredibly lucky. I feel like I'm learning something all the time, and I love that.

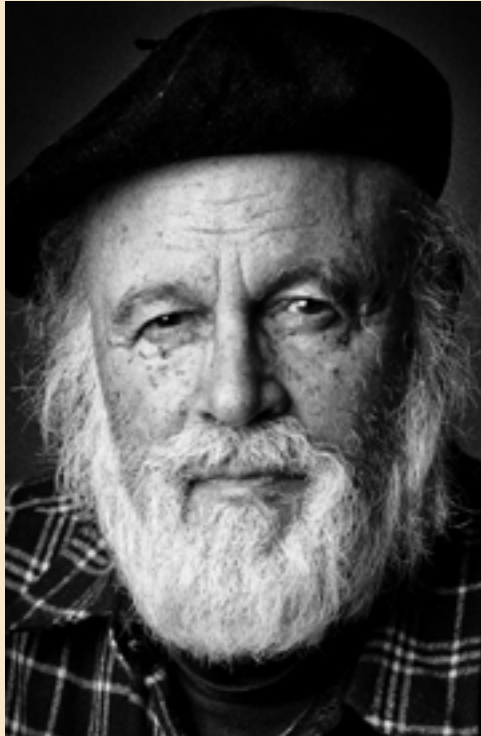


*"I love it when English Only zealots  
order enchiladas and say 'bon appétit!'"*

# POET AND TRANSLATOR AT WORK: BROTHERS IN ARMS

BY ALEXIS LEVITIN

*Alexis Levitin's thirty-four books of translation include Clarice Lispector's **Soulstorm** and Eugenio de Andrade's **Forbidden Words**, both from *New Directions*. In 2010, he edited **Brazil: A Traveler's Literary Companion** (Whereabouts Press). His most recent books are **Blood of the Sun** by Brazil's Salgado Maranhão (Milkweed Editions, 2012), **The Art of Patience** by Portugal's Eugenio de Andrade (Red Dragonfly Press, 2013), and **Tobacco Dogs** by Ecuador's Ana Minga (The Bitter Oleander Press, 2013). His forthcoming books include: Santiago Vizcaino's **Destruction in the Afternoon** (Dialogos Books, 2015), Salgado Maranhão's **Tiger Fur** (White Pine Press, 2015) and Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen's **Exemplary Tales** (Tagus Press, 2015). He has been the recipient of two National Endowment for the Arts Translation Fellowships and has held translation residencies at Banff, Canada, Straelen, Germany, and the Rockefeller Foundation Study Center in Bellagio, Italy. He was sole judge for the American PEN Poetry in Translation Prize for the year 2000. He is about to teach Shakespeare and 20th Century American Poetry in Guayaquil, Ecuador, under the aegis of the Fulbright International Specialist Program.*



Consanguinity helps. “Mano” is Brazilian slang for brother. When Salgado Maranhão and I address each other as “meu mano,” we mean it.

We came together thanks to the efforts of Luiz Fernando Valente, Chairman at the time of the Department of Portuguese and Brazilian Studies at Brown University. Luiz was convinced that Salgado was one of the most original, authentic voices in contemporary Brazilian poetry. In the Spring of 2007, he invited Salgado to an international conference at Brown called “A Moveable Feast: Poetry from the Portuguese Speaking World.” He invited me, as well, believing, as he has just this moment protested once again on the telephone, that I was the only person who could possibly translate this highly idiosyncratic and iconoclastic writer. In fact, had it not been for Luiz, the rich collaboration that has developed between the poet and me would never have occurred. For I found the poetry so original, so unusual, so filled with unexpected linguistic and syntactic ploys, that, on my own I would have beaten a hasty retreat. However, bolstered by Luiz’s solid confidence in the richness of Salgado’s poetic vision and his equally solid (if perhaps overly sanguine) confidence in my capacities as a translator, and propelled as well by an instant sympathy for the poet himself, I accepted the challenge. Salgado and I have been working together ever since.

We both have linguistic limitations that we struggle, together, to overcome.

For example, Salgado has minimal English. However, he is extremely musical. As we have worked together these past five or six years, we have gotten into a routine that goes far beyond questions of lexical fidelity. We have agreed that the most profound fidelity to the original is in the music of the language. And that involves not just consonants and vowels, but questions of velocity, abruptness, gentleness, acuteness, in a word, the very movement of the language.



*Salgado Maranhão is an award-winning Brazilian poet whose poetry has appeared in over thirty literary magazines. In addition to his nine collections of poetry, he has written song lyrics and made recordings with some of Brazil’s leading jazz and pop musicians. In the United States, he has published **Blood of the Sun** (Milkweed Editions, 2012) and will soon publish **Tiger Fur** (White Pine Press, 2015).*



And so, this past summer, as we worked on his most recent book, *Mapping the Tribe*, and an earlier collection called *Palávora*, reading aloud was essential to our endeavor. Once I had an advanced translation in place, we would both read aloud, first he in Portuguese, then I in English. No translation ever reached its final form without my reading it aloud, usually several times, to Salgado, who would lie draped over a couch, legs dangling off the end, a breeze passing through our apartment high above Teresina, making life tolerable in the steamy provincial capital of Piauí, just south of the equator. Salgado would lie there and listen and then await any minor changes, always with an astonishing patience. Any time either one of us was disturbed or uneasy about the sound of a passage in English, I would seek other solutions and he would wait. His patience was the kindest compliment of all. As if, for the moment at least, finding *le mot juste* was the most important task in the universe.

Salgado is both an attentive and flexible guardian of the original. Let us consider our maneuverings just over the titles of two of his books. The first one, published in 2012 by Milkweed Editions, is called in Portuguese *Sol Sangüíneo*. Here are some alternatives that we discussed. *Sanguinary Sun*. I explained that sanguinary means bloody minded, like Macbeth, for example, and he agreed that was leaning much too far towards violence. *Sanguine Sun*. I explained that sanguine means cheerful and hopeful and it was clear that such a title leaned much too much in the opposite direction. *Bloody Sun*. I explained that “bloody” sounds like a British expletive, so we couldn’t really go with that. *Blood Red Sun*. We both felt that might work, but we also found it a bit tame. Moving in the other direction, I suggested *Throbbing Sun*. Salgado found that exciting. I found it exciting. Our publisher found it disturbing. He politely suggested that such a title seemed to conjure forth a phallic image and we, after consulting various friends, chastened by the consensus, concurred and demurred. Finally I suggested *Blood of the Sun*. We discussed this at length. In the end, Salgado was won over by the polysemic possibilities. The idea that the neutral formulation of the title could suggest both threat and promise, death and life, was much to his liking. This was after all the sun of his hard rural upbringing, living for almost fifteen years in a hut made of mud and thin branches, far

from electricity, far even from the nearest road, out in the fields for survival, with the sun beating down on the laborer, while at the same time enabling the crops to grow. A sun that both gave and took away. He liked it. I liked it. And there it is, on the cover of the book, with a crimson sun and a drop of blood beginning its journey earthward.

*Palávora* is an invented word. It looks much like “palavra” which means word. It also seems to contain something like “arvore,” which means tree. It also seems to suggest “lavoura” which means field work, plowing, toiling with the soil. So, down in Brazil, I gave the book the rather staid, rather explanatory title *Tree of Words*. Neither Salgado nor I were enthusiastic, but I didn’t see a way out. Several months later, fiddling discontentedly with the original title, I came up with *Whorled Worked Words*. The tree is present through synecdoche in “whorled,” the toil and labor are present in “worked,” and the word is simply itself, though now in the more logical plural. Salgado was delighted with the new version because of the spondaic and alliterative effects. And that is where we stand, at least for the time being.

Much of Salgado’s verse is very free, seemingly far from traditional forms and their constraints. Nonetheless, quite often he chooses to write formal verse, including sonnets and rhymed couplets. In the translation of such highly formal verse, he and I agree that retaining the formal structure is essential. Many translators eschew such a practice, feeling that an adherence to the formal demands will distort their English and rob the translation of a natural, idiomatic life of its own. But for us, the life of the form is central. And so, I strive for a rhymed version in English that sounds natural, that sounds like a poetic creature unto itself. However, in order to achieve such a result, I clearly must stray at times away from the lexical meaning of the original. In those cases, what Salgado and I do is discuss the changes and try to determine if, despite the errantry, the translation still carries the emotional truth of the original.

Here is one example of a recent poem about an ancestry of pain, consisting of traditionally rhymed quatrains. This poem about the poet’s past (he is descended from slaves on his mother’s side) is deliberately formal, as if it were a poem of the people. Here are the two versions. For those of you who can read Portuguese, feel free to improve upon my efforts:

## Origins

Redeemed by the lash and the boot,  
my ancestors came from the sea,  
and I am the salt of their waves,  
facing what was and will be.

White-washed a mixture of colors,  
through time melted down to one,  
something of beans and of bacon,  
of coffee with a brown sugar bun.

As if it were the wind,  
the earth slips by my feet,  
giving a mask to bitterness,  
placing hemlock in what is sweet.

Between the verandah and cook stove  
many give me praise,  
embrace me, hand on holster,  
and kiss with averted gaze.

## Origem

Do mar vêm os meus ancestres  
remidos pelo tacão,  
sou do sal dessas marés  
ante o que houve e o que hão.

Das cores que me caiaram  
já não distingo a mistura,  
se de feijão com terresmo  
ou café com rapadura.

A terra solta em meus pés  
como se de vento fosse:  
guarda um disfarce no amargo  
e uma cicuta no doce.

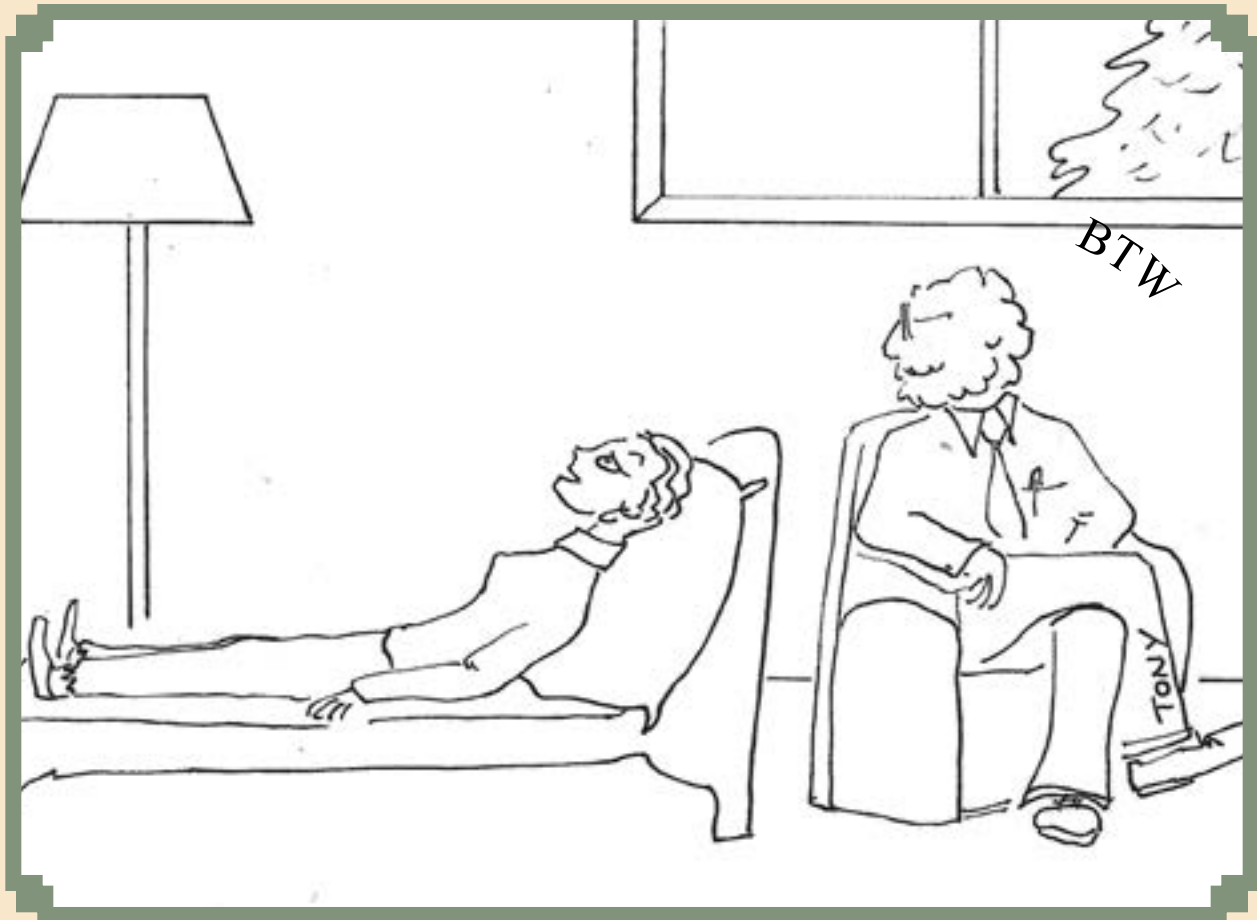
Muitos me deitam louvores  
entre a varanda e o fogão,  
me abraçam com a mão no coldre,  
me beijam como se não.

Salgado and I share a love of poetry and music. We work well together and we travel well together. In 2012 we presented his poetry at fifty-two colleges and universities during a reading tour of the United States. We went as far west as Lubbock, Texas, as far south as Milledgeville, Georgia. During our ninety days together there was not one unfortunate incident, not one upsurge of disharmony. This is more to his credit than my own. This is a man who survived fifteen years of extreme suffering, a man who was illiterate until the age of fifteen, a man who in 2011 was awarded first prize for the best book of poetry in Brazil by the Brazilian Academy of Letters. I think he and I agree that along with nature, the word has given us both a kind of salvation and we remain enthralled by its endless rewards in both our languages.



*Salgado Maranhão's approach to language is bold, idiosyncratic, iconoclastic, and very exciting. For me, as a translator, the task of trying to turn his vibrantly strange Portuguese into English would have proven overwhelming without his presence at my side. What the two of us, poet and translator, discovered, as we worked together, was that we were united, not just by our shared joie de vivre (and that is an important thing in itself) but by our love of music and our belief in the centrality of music to the living, quivering, sensual experience of poetry itself. In the end, it seems to me that **Sol Sangüíneo**,*

***Blood of the Sun**, is dominated not just by ideas, visions, and images, but by the rhythm of its language. And so that is what I hope to have achieved with my translations: a blood pulsing in English in rhythm with the blood of the original.*



***“I’m a grammar teacher, so I refer to my ex as my Past Imperfect.”***

# DESTINAÇÃO BRASIL 2012-2014: A TASTING MENU OF CONTEMPORARY BRAZILIAN LITERATURE

BY RAMIRO ARANGO  
AND MERCEDES GUHL



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This article provides an overview of contemporary Brazilian literature from the vantage point of two translators working since 2012 on a special project for the Guadalajara International Book Fair (Feria Internacional del Libro de Guadalajara – FIL). The project is an annual catalogue of Brazilian authors visiting the Book Fair each year (sponsored by the National Library of Brazil and FIL). The catalogue serves as a bridge between literary texts produced and published in Brazil and professionals of the book industry attending FIL.

The catalogue's general purpose is to introduce authors to literary agents, publishers and scouts so that they can decide if

any of the authors is interesting enough to contact them to buy their rights and translate and publish their work. Our task is to translate the catalogue from Portuguese into Spanish. Every author contributes two texts: a passage of one of his/her works (no more than 1,000 words) and a short narrative biography (360 words) to acquaint readers with the author and his/her work. As we write this article, the last texts are being finished. Since 2012, on our desks and computers we have scrutinized more than 30 writers and their work. In short, what we produce is the authors' face and image to potential publishers who might be inspired by a sample in the catalogue to ask for the whole work for translation, publication and circulation in another culture.

Translators must always thread their way along an already beaten path. An author produces the original and we retrace it when we translate it. In this project we translate an already constructed tasting menu of Brazilian literature. We follow the steps of the authors but also track the selection made by FIL, with the help of publishers, literary critics, award reviews and anthologies, such as the *Granta* issue devoted to new and young Brazilian writers. For the overview below, our conclusions are based on the three consecutive catalogues and therefore anything outside of them has been left out.

With information gleaned from the biographical pieces and research conducted for the translation, we were able to discern patterns and tendencies that were common to the group as a whole. There were several authors, however, who decided not to say too much in their biography, perhaps because they felt their work should speak for itself, but there was enough material to arrange the rest of the writers into different categories and groups.

A plausible starting point was drawing a literary map of the country: the literary capital of this literary Brazil is, of course, São Paulo, where most of the writers have been born and where many of the others have settled. Milton Hatoum, the only Amazon-born of all of them, defines the city as "the sprawling metropolis, whose chaos is a stimulus for various forms of narrative." And the

enormous town provides other incentives to creation: local literary awards, but also a breeding ground around the newspaper *Folha de São Paulo*, to which many of the 35 writers have contributed columns, articles and other journalism. The other big writer-producing regions are the southern states of Rio Grande do Sul and Santa Catarina, and Rio de Janeiro. A handful come from Pernambuco and Ceará, in the Northeast; a few from Minas Gerais; and none from Brasília, the current capital. On the basis of this map, therefore, it is not at all strange that their literary motifs are mostly urban, although there are a few strong novels staged in rural places (*Os Malaquias* by Andrea del Fuego, *História Natural da Visita* by José Luiz Passos, for example).

The writers cover a time span from the 1950s to the early 1990s, and all of them are still creating and publishing. In terms of their backgrounds, there are clear patterns that, from abroad, may seem very peculiar. Many of them have been working in journalism, writing a wide range of pieces from news reports to special features. Others are or have been university lecturers and professors, and hold PhDs, mostly in literature. A small number started working in publishing houses, from where they themselves jumped into the creative field. Most of them started writing at a young age or at least showed the will to become writers early in life, but there are also a few late-bloomers, who either wrote for themselves for decades and in the end decided to turn their scribblings into books or simply started late, after a turning point in their lives (Ivanna Arruda, Cíntia Moscovich, Veronica Stigger).

Many of them were affected by military dictatorships in some way or another. Either the children of Chilean and Argentinean exiles who grew up in Brazil and took up Portuguese as their literary language (Carola Saavedra, Julián Fuks, Lucrecia Zappi, Paloma Vidal) or Brazilians under their own dictatorship, struggling to find a gateway to the promised land of literature (Edney Silvestre, Fernando Bonassi) even leaving their home country when necessary (Milton Hatoum).

Women account for about a third of all the writers and, among the older generation of women, the feminist approach is essential.



For some of these women, their texts are an opportunity to call for gender equity (Margarida Patriota), and for others, irony and humor are deployed to present a woman's side of reality (Cíntia Moscovich, Ivanna Arruda, Carol Bensimon).

Although most of the excerpts in the catalogue follow classical standards of story-telling, there seems to be a more playful side to the more recent ones: some formal experimentation with style, syntax, punctuation and dialogue (Marcelino Freire, Adriana Lisboa, Ferréz, Joao Carrascoza, Daniel Galera, Verónica Stigger, Paloma Vidal), and the search for uncharted territories in terms of literary motifs (Ana Paula Maia and her "saga of the beasts") or cross-genre experimentation.

In this catalogue, the variety of literary genres is amazing, but it is not because the group is large that there is a wide variety, but because most of them have tackled at least two genres. The most frequent combination is quite uncommon in other countries: in Brazil there are many authors who do both adult and children's fiction, and some of them have been awarded prizes in one or both of these genres. Critics and publishers tend to think that a writer either focuses on adult readers or on children, but it seems that in Brazil, children's literature is not a minor genre (Ronaldo Correia de Brito, Andrea del Fuego, Adriana Lisboa, Sergio Caparelli). Two Brazilian authors, Lydia Bojunga Nunes and Ana Maria Machado, have already won the Hans Christian Andersen Award (which is deemed to be the Nobel Prize for Children's Literature) and it may be that the rich heritage of Monteiro Lobato's popular books for children has much to do with this success.

Journalists covering the crime section in the press (Michel Laub, Marçal Aquino, Marcelo Ferroni) have turned the thriller genre into major literature, possibly because of the looming influence of Rubem Fonseca, who, as Raymond Chandler and Georges Simenon had done, created a character—Inspector Mattos—to portray reality from his perspective. Obviously, there are a handful of poet-novelists (Sergio Caparelli, Luiz Ruffato, Altair Martins). Playwrights and actors doubling as novelists are another usual combination (Lourenço

Mutarelli, Cristovão Tezza, Rodrigo Lacerda). And we also find writers making inroads into newer genres that can (or cannot) be considered literary: comic books, graphic novels, scripts for TV and films (Emilio Fraia, Mutarelli, Marçal Aquino, Fernando Bonassi, João Paulo Cuenca) and even hip-hop (Férrez). All of that certainly seeps into their work, blurring the boundaries between genres and enriching dialogue, plot rhythm and visual images in novels and short stories.

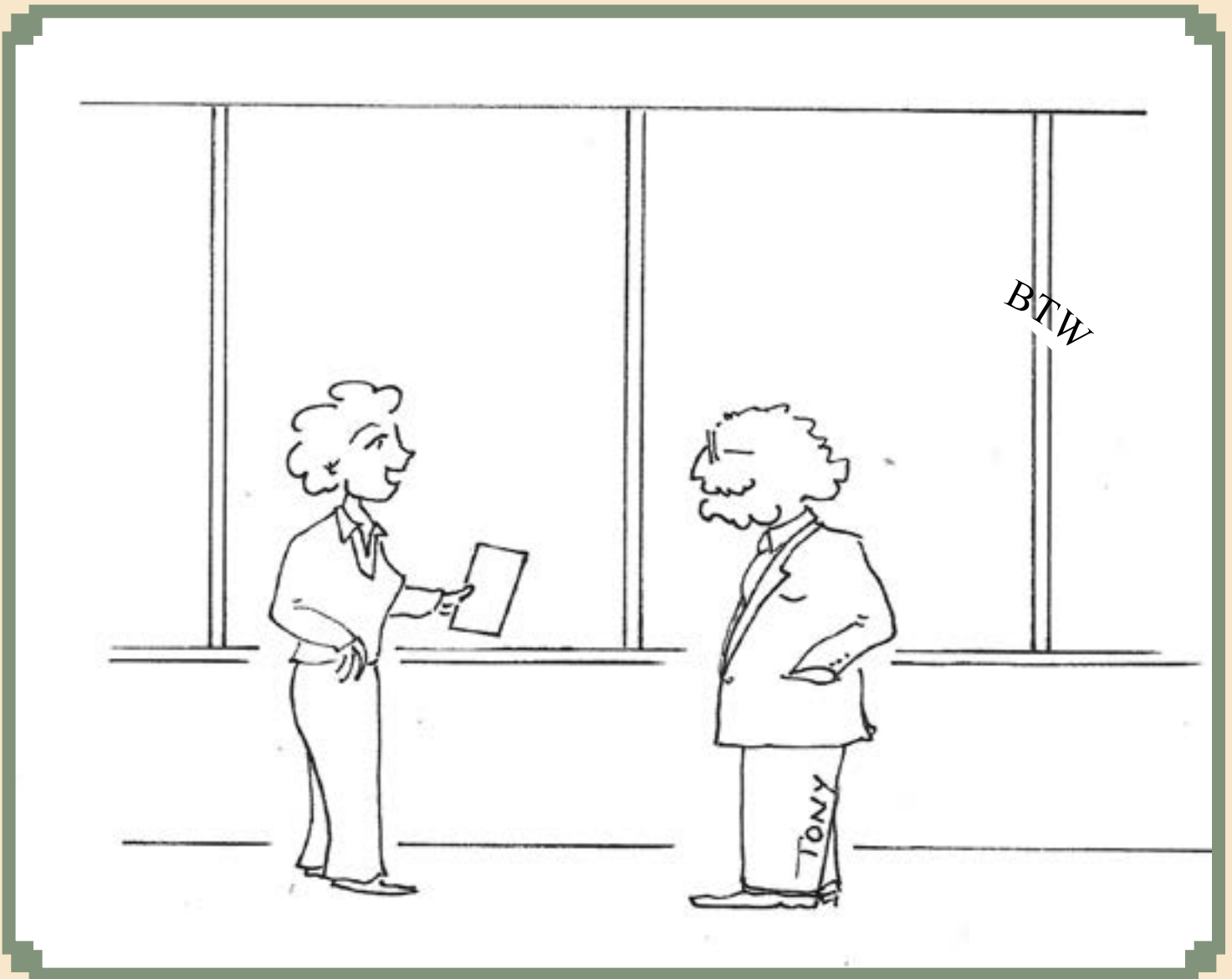
In terms of literary motifs, love, family and human relationships take up a huge part (João Carrascoza, Cíntia Moscovich, Carol Bensimon, Ricardo Lísias, Emilio Fraia, João Gilberto Noll, Tércia Montenegro, Ronaldo Correia de Brito, José Luiz Passos, Marcelo Ferroni). The exploration of places and atmospheres disconnected from reality, like those of Kafka and other more modern dystopias, appears with a touch of humor (Luiz Bras, Luiz Ruffato, Lourenço Mutarelli). But there is also probing into the past, both in historical novels (Tatiana Salem Levy, Deonísio da Silva) and in personal histories, as descendants of émigrés long ago, and not so long ago, settled in Brazil (Bernardo Ajzenberg, Cíntia Moscovich), or in the apparently different periods of urban and rural life (Altair Martins).

The social element is present too, in passages that highlight the deep gap between the rich and the poor in Brazil and the stereotypes derived from that gap and from ethnic differences (Férrez, Paula Parisot, Marcelino Freire, Julián Fuks). A few of them dive into sheer imagination, with games and coincidences, distortions of time and perception (Bernardo Carvalho, João Paulo Cuenca). And, as this is Brazil, soccer has also been included as the driving motif for at least one author, in two different projects (Sérgio Rodrigues). In other words, a very wide range of themes and perspectives, showing on which side of the dichotomy proposed by one of the youngest ones, Santiago Nazarian, these authors stand: "In Brazil, you're either a good writer or a bad one."

A few lines concerning the translation: unlike any other literary translation commission, where one works on a text from beginning to end and can really take it apart to find out how it works, and do research for references and cultural bumps to the point of being able

to see and feel the text's context, in this catalogue we had nothing more than fragments and biographies, and little chance of asking the authors or having the entire book for guidance. In some cases, a passage could include an allusion or hint to something we could not understand completely, as we did not have anything but the passage. Authors' websites and literary reviews of the texts helped a lot, but it was like forensic reconstruction from bits and pieces. Obscure references required consultation with native Brazilians, and the easygoing flow of the biographical pieces had to be slowed down sometimes, as acronyms and local references required clarification or adaptation for non-Brazilian readers. Yes, we were bold and added and explained parts of the biographical texts, and also discussed over and over certain phrases in the passages that left us clueless and made it difficult for us to reach the world beyond the words. But the purpose of the catalogues justified this manipulation of the texts, as they were aimed at making the writers known outside Brazil. Bridging the gap between author and reader prevailed over our commitment to literal fidelity, especially because each of these texts was not intended as a literary work in itself but was a small bite for readers to pick from, a tasting menu to check out the creativity and resources of the literary chefs.

After working on this catalogue series for three years, we can confidently say that Brazil is like a literary ocean, a fluid medium inhabited by life and diversity. It's not easy to find such a diverse menu of quality fiction in another country. If you are curious about it, you can take a first dip on the Internet, either by browsing the *Destinação Brasil* catalogue (versions in Portuguese, Spanish and English at [www.fil.com.mx](http://www.fil.com.mx)) or by searching for the blogs and e-texts of many of these writers who are actively posting and publishing material on the web. And there are some of them whose works have already been translated into English and published. The *Granta* issue on "The Best Young Brazilian Novelists" has compiled a smaller number of authors but displays longer excerpts than the catalogues. Now, take the plunge and see what Brazilian writers have in store for you: as the introductory text of the *Destinação Brasil* states: "Reading a country is learning about it."



*“Apparently, Skype is hugely popular with all demographics except freelance translators who work at home in their pajamas.”*

# FROM MACONDO TO MCONDO

BY LISA CARTER



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It was 2001, and I was at a Border's bookstore in California, stocking up on Spanish-language books to take back with me to Canada. One of the first titles I saw was *Amores Imperfectos* by Edmundo Paz Soldán. The white cover with a border of red rose petals, the figures of a man and a woman, sitting apart, each with knees bent and head down, caught my attention. I opened the book at random and read one of the most striking micro-fictions I have ever had the pleasure to read.

Over the next several days I was captivated by one story after another. Each one left me aghast at how much could be conveyed in so few words, while keeping impeccably true to our complex human psychology. At the time, I found it hard to express exactly what it was about these harsh, gritty, often dark stories that resonated with me; I simply knew I wanted to share them with non-Spanish-speaking friends and family. This was the impetus I needed to go from wanting to translate literature to actually translating it. Within weeks of buying that book, I had approached the author about working together.

When I began to research Paz Soldán, his @cornell.edu address was a bit daunting, so I was determined to learn more about him.

The more I researched, the smaller I felt: already a well-known writer, Paz Soldán was about to receive his Ph.D. from Berkley, and he was a professor at Cornell and a leader of the McOndo literary movement. I was still just an aspiring literary translator.

I had just returned to North America after seven years in Peru and a year in Mexico. Books in Latin America were very expensive. As a result, despite being an avid reader, I was out of touch with the latest literary trends. I had never heard of McOndo—and I even wondered if it was typo. I knew Macondo, of course, the fictional setting of Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. I loved magical realism and when I was a teenager I had read many of Gabo's works and all of Isabel Allende's. But this unique approach to writing, it seemed, was the opposite: a new generation of authors had deliberately bastardized Macondo to create McOndo.

In the early 1990s, two Chilean authors, Alberto Fuguet and Sergio Gómez, compiled a book of short stories they called *McOndo*. Edmundo Paz Soldán was one of the contributors. These writers had turned away from magical realism to portray a more up-to-date view of countries like Bolivia and Chile. Their stories were filled with McDonalds and condos, cell phones and computers, hardship and poverty, corruption and inequality.

As Edmundo expressed it to his English-language publisher some years later:

It was a generational thing meaning no disrespect to Gabo or anyone else, but different realities, different sensibilities... We started publishing in the early nineties, when it seemed that the only thing readers wanted was more magical realism. And we felt that magical realism was starting to exoticize Latin America, 'the continent where the extraordinary is part of daily life.' We did not want to contribute to that. We are more urban and are interested in the relationship between literature, popular culture, and mass media. We don't want to deny the importance of magical realism; rather, we just want to say that fortunately Latin American literature encompasses diverse registers. There

is a place for magical realism, and there should be a place for McOndo.<sup>1</sup>

The aim of these young new writers was to take the best of the Latin American literary tradition yet break away from it to create something distinctly their own. Their writing style was greatly influenced by their predecessors, but they were “combining seemingly disparate elements, reflecting on the impact of new technologies—digital photography, computers—within the context of a realist, traditional, socio-political novel set in one of the least developed countries in the world.”<sup>2</sup>

This viewpoint, this style, was precisely what I related to in Paz Soldán’s work. My own experience of Latin America mirrored what these literary figures had lived, in large part because we are of the same generation.

When I moved to Peru in 1993, I half expected to find ghostly grandmothers and nature personified, as I’d read in books by Gabo and Allende. Indeed, the country did not disappoint. Andean women in market stalls sat with bowler hats perched on their heads, an array of herbs before them to ward off magic spells, speaking Quecha, a language that sounded to me like incantations. *Emoliente* vendors poured viscous, steaming hot fluids from one glass to another in the early morning, concocting the precise remedy for your ailment: cold in your kidneys, liver in need of cleansing. When my then boyfriend’s mother whispered in a conversation with her deceased father on All Souls Day, I realized just how deeply the semi-real world of Macondo had influenced my perception of Latin America.

In hindsight, it’s clear that the charm of experiencing an entirely new culture made everything exotic and mystical. As the years passed by and the spell of novelty wore off, it grew harder to see the fantastical all around me. Reality was harsh. My meager teaching salary was often delayed and freelance translation customers would disappear without paying, leaving me only enough for meals of rice and eggs. What news we read in the papers or heard on television rang hollow, veiled

by propaganda under the autocratic thumb of President Alberto Fujimori. Every time I turned on the electric shower, seeking warmth in the frigid Andean winter, and the fuse blew, all visions of lush foliage and magic disappeared in that same puff of smoke.

The longer I had been gone from Latin America, the more clearly I could view it through the lens of my experience. And the more I understood the McOndo movement, the more I could relate to what writers like Edmundo Paz Soldán were saying. This connection allowed me, as a mere newcomer to literary translation, to overcome my fear of Edmundo's looming shadow, reach out to him and offer my services. To my great delight and surprise, he responded with interest. We soon began collaborating, and I went on to publish a few of his short stories and two of his books in English.

Not everything in Paz Soldán's novels—or those by any McOndo writer—is real. They are fiction, after all, and contain what Mario Vargas Llosa called “the added element, the reordering of the real, that makes a novelistic world autonomous and allows it to compete with the real world from a critical point of view.”<sup>3</sup> This, perhaps, is what makes all fiction so compelling; the dose is just a little stronger in Macondo than it is in McOndo.

#### ENDNOTES

- 1 <http://tinyurl.com/q22z4e4>
- 2 [http://www.barcelonareview.com/42/s\\_eps.htm](http://www.barcelonareview.com/42/s_eps.htm) [translation mine]
- 3 [www.complete-review.com/reviews/flaubert/mbovary2.htm](http://www.complete-review.com/reviews/flaubert/mbovary2.htm)





# ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF LITERATURE: A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF LATIN AMERICAN LITERATURE IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

BY TONY BECKWITH



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*"I have always imagined that paradise will be a kind of library."  
—Jorge Luis Borges (1899–1986)*

In the heavenly library imagined by Borges, there will of course be a Latin American Literature wing, with a large section devoted to the twentieth century. It was a modern century that ushered in a complex set of circumstances that affected Latin America in many different ways. As always, writers, poets, and artists were on hand to record what they saw and heard, and to interpret what it all meant to their countries and to their people. The art and literature they produced explored new facets of the Latin American experience and stunned the world with its originality and its brilliance.

By the end of the nineteenth century virtually all Latin American countries were autonomous, having emerged victorious from the wars of independence that had riven the continent many years earlier. Despite ambitious plans for continental unity proposed by Simón Bolívar—*El Libertador*—the vast territory that had long been a Spanish

colony remained fragmented, each region going its own way to become the individual countries we know today. Brazil had also won its independence from Portugal but kept its colonizer's language, making it one of the few Latin American nations that don't speak Spanish.

The power vacuum left by the overthrow of the Iberian colonizers was swiftly filled by the local elite, who developed *caudillo* (strongman) systems to keep them in power and make sure that they and their inner circle lived very comfortably while the rest of the population, especially the peasants and indigenous peoples, fared just as badly as they had under the Spanish and the Portuguese. This was the original template for the ugly stereotype of the Latin American dictatorship and the sad stereotype of the banana republic. Writers at that time, while still influenced by European traditions and ideas, were interested in the more local questions of national identity and pre-Columbian cultures and how the two were intertwined. As education became more widely available, women writers emerged as a potent artistic and intellectual force, as did members of the burgeoning mestizo population, to take their place in the new hierarchies being created in the melting pot of the Americas. The *criollismo* (also known as *costumbrismo*) movement and the Naturalist and Romantic traditions of the late nineteenth century gradually gave way to the *modernistas* who believed in art for art's sake, and wrote about exotic subjects in new, experimental styles inspired by the Parnassians and the Symbolists. The Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío's book *Azul...*, published in 1888, is credited with launching *modernismo* throughout Latin America and beyond, and setting the stage for the modernist literature of the new century.

Given their long colonial affiliations, it was inevitable that Latin American writers would be influenced by the European literary canon. But they were also influenced by writers in North America, such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman. Artists and intellectuals from Mexico to Argentina were impressed with the American Revolution, the Declaration of Independence, and the birth of democracy in the United States. By the beginning of the twentieth century, however, they were more wary than impressed. The Mexican-American War, the concept of Manifest Destiny, the Spanish-American War, and President Theodore Roosevelt's cavalier interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine all created serious concerns about the long-term territorial ambitions

of the Colossus of the North. The feared invasions did not materialize (although the fruit and sugar plantations in Central America were a thinly disguised alternative), but the Coca-Cola imperialism that followed introduced Latin Americans to the USA's consumer society lifestyle. This was welcomed by some and condemned by others as a pernicious influence that would undermine local traditions and dilute cultural identities. This ambivalence reflected some of the deep divisions that simmered in the region and would eventually erupt into the revolutions and dirty wars that defined life in Latin America later in the century. Among those who were concerned about the negative effects of a materialistic culture was the Uruguayan writer José Enrique Rodó, whose essay *Ariel*, published in 1900, was a rational appeal for a balanced relationship with the United States—the new flagship of western culture—and has been an influential classic in Latin America ever since.

The Mexican Revolution began in 1910, seven years before the Russian Revolution. Both conflicts, each in its own way, had a profound effect on Latin American politics and life in general. In Mexico, the hostilities helped to introduce land reform that set an example for many countries to the south. The Russian upheaval brought the proletariat to power and bred a fierce opponent to western values, sparking an ideological struggle that eventually turned Latin America into a proxy battleground for opposing political and social systems. In the short term, both events focused attention on the urgent social issues that had been festering for years, and fostered the rise of *indigenismo*, a movement started by writers who sought to expose the injustices being endured by indigenous populations and other minorities.

The early years of the century were thus a time when writers were finding their "Latin American" voice and speaking out on social issues and the ever-elusive theme of national identity, critiquing governments for failing their people and perpetuating long-standing inequalities. Like their European counterparts, most Latin American writers, artists, and intellectuals were leftists at the time, seeing communism as a preferable alternative to the capitalist system that, they believed, was merely a modern version of the feudalism that had favored the *haves*

at the expense of the *have-nots* since the arrival of the Europeans four centuries earlier. But not all were obsessed with expressing the social realism of, for example, Diego Rivera's Mexican muralism. A young Chilean poet, Pablo Neruda, a committed communist, was writing love poems that made him a celebrity in the Spanish-speaking world and, when his work was translated into English, brought him instant fame in the United States. According to Gabriel García Márquez, Neruda was "the greatest poet of the 20th century, in any language."<sup>1</sup> He was also one of the handful of Latin American writers who have been awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.<sup>2</sup> Neruda's early mentor and fellow Chilean poet, Gabriela Mistral, was also a Nobel laureate.

The Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges (who was not a leftist) created something entirely original in his short pieces that writers the world over have admired and emulated ever since. These were philosophical explorations of reality and the nature of time that laid the foundations for the style that was later known as "magical realism." The literary critic Harold Bloom said, "Of all Latin American authors in this century, he is the most universal.... If you read Borges frequently and closely, you become something of a Borgesian, because to read him is to activate an awareness of literature in which he has gone farther than anybody else."<sup>3</sup> Borges was also a poet and a translator and is, to this day, a key figure in Latin American literature. There will unquestionably be a bust of Borges in the celestial library mentioned above.

Discussions on Latin American literature frequently focus so intently on works written in Spanish that Brazilian literature is sometimes overlooked. This, despite the fact that Brazil can hardly be missed when looking at a map of the continent. Brazilian culture reflects the influence of its African population—a result of the slave trade of earlier centuries—as well as the indigenous people who were there before the Portuguese arrived. Brazilian writers, of course, have also explored their country's social problems and economic inequalities, and have pondered the question of what it means to be Brazilian. Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis, the grand old man of Brazilian letters, is widely considered to be the country's greatest writer, and one of the finest novelists and short story writers in the world. He was one of the founders of the Brazilian

Academy of Letters and was its president at the time of his death in 1908. The most prestigious Brazilian literary prize is named in his honor. The poet Oswald de Andrade was one of the founders of Brazilian modernism; his *Anthropophagous Manifesto's* ideas about “cultural cannibalism” — a metaphorical construct that would neither imitate nor reject European culture but “devour” it — were influential in art and literary circles when it was published in 1928.

Jorge Amado, another acclaimed Brazilian writer, started publishing his work in the 1930s and was elected to the Academy of Letters in 1961. His early writing was distinguished by a strong social realist streak, but in his later years he became less political and is best known for the modernist style of his novels that are set against the voluptuous, colorful background of Bahia's coastal region. Clarice Lispector was born in the Ukraine in 1920 and brought to Brazil by her parents a few months later. She grew up to be a writer whose innovative Kafkaesque novels and short stories helped to introduce European modernism to Brazilian literature. The American poet Elizabeth Bishop went out on a limb and described Lispector as “better than J. L. Borges.”<sup>4</sup>

Immigration has always been a factor in Latin American life. The waves of Europeans who arrived in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, largely from Spain and Italy, swelled local populations and introduced customs and new ideas that significantly influenced the culture of their new homelands, as in the case of Argentina and Uruguay. The two world wars and the Spanish Civil War also contributed to the flow of migrants looking for a home in the New World. Some of these new arrivals became writers who would make a name for themselves regionally and farther afield, expressing universal themes in local literary styles colored by the environments they now inhabited. The plays, newspaper columns, and novels of Argentine writer Roberto Arlt, for example, a self-taught son of immigrants, reflect the tragicomic efforts of down-and-outs to “be somebody.” Elena Poniatowska was born in France but came to Mexico when she was ten years old to escape the Second World War. She started her career as a journalist and is considered one of Mexico's foremost women writers.

Exile was also a factor for Latin American writers whose outspoken political views were not welcome in their own country. Some chose,

or were forced to move elsewhere, a process that gradually created a Diaspora of Latin American intellectuals who now wrote about their countries through a nostalgic prism from Madrid, Paris, or New York. Claribel Alegría is a Nicaraguan poet, essayist, and journalist who grew up in El Salvador after her family was forced into exile. Her works reflect the principles of the *generación comprometida* [committed generation], the literary movement that was organized in Central America in the 1950s and 1960s to demand social and political justice for the country's disenfranchised populations.

Post-revolutionary Mexican governments showed a great deal of tolerance for such exiles, and Mexico City became a haven for displaced intelligentsia of all political stripes. It was also fertile ground for local writers, such as Carlos Fuentes, who was that quintessential Latin American figure—the public intellectual. One of his close friends was Emir Rodríguez Monegal, the Uruguayan scholar and literary critic. Monegal founded the literary magazine *Mundo Nuevo* that was published in Spanish in Paris and contributed to the “Boom” in Latin American literature by introducing unknown writers to a wider audience. In 1966, for example, the magazine published a chapter of *Cien Años de Soledad* [One Hundred Years of Solitude], the now legendary novel by Gabriel García Márquez. Fuentes and Monegal were important figures in twentieth-century Latin American literature because they facilitated a literary dialogue between North and South America at a very difficult time in the aftermath of the Cuban Revolution, an event that brought long-seething tensions into the open throughout the Americas at both a political and an intellectual level. Literature and politics—always closely intertwined—were uneasy partners in a complicated relationship, and initiatives such as *Mundo Nuevo* provided a channel for dialogue.

Some suggest that the Boom was the Big Bang of Latin American literature but, as we've seen here, that was not the case. Carlos Fuentes said: “The so-called Boom, in reality, is the result of four centuries that, literally, reached a moment of urgency in which fiction became the way to organize lessons from the past.”<sup>5</sup> It was certainly, however, what brought Latin American writers and their works to the attention of the rest of the world, and made superstars of several of them, including some—like the

Chilean-American author Isabel Allende— who came later but were still influenced by the “magical realist” style of the mid-twentieth century. Many writers were involved in the Boom, and several are credited with contributing to its creation, including Julio Cortázar (Argentina), Alejo Carpentier (Cuba), who coined the term “marvelous realism,” Juan Rulfo (Mexico), Augusto Roa Bastos (Paraguay), Mario Vargas Llosa (Peru), Fuentes, and of course, Gabriel García Márquez. Of all the books written by these and other writers, it is *Cien Años de Soledad* by García Márquez that remains the most iconic, described by Borges as “the *Don Quixote* of Latin America.”<sup>6</sup> Its nonlinear approach to time and its effortless segues from everyday life to fantastic situations captured the imagination of readers in every language and made “magical realism” a household word.

But, ironically, its portrayal of life in the exotic tropical setting described by García Márquez ultimately became a caricature that had nothing to do with the reality of life in the 1970s and beyond. Most Latin Americans now lived in cities, where life was anything but sleepy and picturesque. The backdrop of traditional paternalistic *caudillo* politics had given way to a far grittier experience as revolutionaries and military juntas battled each other to the death and civilians got caught in the crossfire. The Latin America that the rest of the world saw in *Cien Años de Soledad* became just another stereotype, embodied in the word *Macondo*, the name of the fictional town in the book. To paraphrase Newton’s third law, for every literary movement there is a subsequent and opposite movement and so, in time, the *McOndo* movement was born, taking its sarcastic name from the title of an anthology of short stories published by two Chilean writers, Alberto Fuguet and Sergio Gómez, in 1996. This new movement sought to portray the modern, urban reality of Latin America’s consumer society and its evolution as part of the new, globalized “McDonald’s” world.

The post-Boom generation of writers presented the world with a distinctly different view of Latin America than their predecessors had done. Authors like Roberto Bolaño (Chile) wrote dark novels that satirize and critique the political structures that emerged from the revolutionary years, describing a modern realism that bears no

resemblance to its magical forerunner. Meanwhile, Mario Vargas Llosa, the surviving grand old man of the Boom generation, rounded out the century with a dictator novel, the classical genre that emerged in the mid-nineteenth century and has been a consistent thread in Latin American literature ever since.

In just one hundred years, Latin American writers emerged from relative obscurity and now enjoy international recognition. There were a great many of them—men and women who wrote memorable works in a prodigious variety of styles—and there is not enough room to list them all here. Those whose names appear above are the main ones who introduced new ideas, started new movements, and wrote works that dazzled readers and critics far beyond their national boundaries. But everyone's books will be on the shelves of the library that Borges imagined, where presumably there will be time enough to read them all.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 Plinio Apuleyo Mendoza (1 March 1983). *The Fragrance of Guava: Conversations with Gabriel García Márquez*. Verso. Page 49. [<http://tinyurl.com/n5zqo>]
- 2 The full list: Gabriela Mistral, Chile (1945); Miguel Ángel Asturias, Guatemala (1967); Pablo Neruda, Chile (1971); Gabriel García Márquez, Colombia (1982); Octavio Paz, Mexico (1990); Mario Vargas Llosa, Peru (2010).
- 3 Harold Bloom. *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994. Page 439.
- 4 Fernanda Eberstadt. *The New York Times Sunday Book Review*. August 19, 2009.
- 5 Frederick M. Nunn. *Collisions with History: Latin American Fiction and Social Science from El Boom to the New World Order*. Athens: Ohio UP, 2001. Page 122.
- 6 *Jorge Luis Borges: Conversations*. Ed. Richard Burgin. Jackson: University Press of Miss., 1998.



# CREDITS

## **The Cover**

*For the cover illustration of this issue we have chosen the famous ink-on-paper Upside-down Map drawn in 1943 by the Uruguayan modernist artist Joaquín Torres-García (1874–1949). This map was an expression of the political and cultural discourse of the period, a visual affirmation of Latin America’s challenge to the status quo and its desire to claim a more central –and independent– role in the world. Torres-García said, “In reality, our north is the South. There must not be a north, for us, except in opposition to our South. Therefore we now turn the map upside down, and then we have a true idea of our position, and not as the rest of the world wishes.”* Image Source: Wikimedia Commons

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