

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION
OF THE ATA'S LITERARY DIVISION

NO. 67

SPRING 2016

SHAKESPEARE AND CERVANTES: 400 YEARS

Shakespeare in Africa
The Truth about Sancho Panza



Miguel de Cervantes (copy)
Oil painting, ca. 1877 by
Balaca y Orejas Canseco



The Cobbe Portrait of
William Shakespeare,
ca. 1610

Plus an interview with Erik Camayd-Freixas
and a poem that translates a painting

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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 Copyeditor

Miguel de Cervantes died April 22, 1616, in Madrid. William Shakespeare died just a day later, on April 23, 1616, in Stratford-upon-Avon. In a previous issue of *Source* and this one, we have been commemorating the impact, for over four centuries, of these two literary giants whose work continues to be read, quoted, illustrated, performed, interpreted, and translated.

We're pleased to offer a couple of unusual essays to prove it: one, by South African scholar Chris Thurman, ponders the question "Should Shakespeare Be Taught in Africa's Classrooms?"; the other, by Patrick Saari, picks up from a two-sentence parable by Franz Kafka on "The truth about Sancho Panza."

In addition to contributing her first Letter as the LD Administrator, Jesse Tomlinson has brought us a really magical interview with Erik Camayd-Freixas. In Part I of the interview, Dr. Camayd-Freixas, an expert on this subject among many others, offers his views on magical realism. In Part II, which will appear in our Summer issue, he answers questions about literary translation and academic life.

On the lighter side, frequent *Source* contributor Ames Dee's poem "You, Matisse" is a translation of sorts, inspired by Matisse's painting *Goldfish (Les Poissons rouges)* as well as by Billy Collins's poem "You, Reader." And Tony Beckwith offers comic relief with his usual assortment of toons.

Tony brings this issue to a close with a fascinating look back at the Rosetta Stone, the translation of which in 1822 was an "aha" moment in the history of our art.

Upcoming Issues

We look forward to your contributions to our Summer and Fall issues. The Summer issue will focus on "Untranslatability." See page 4 for Submission Guidelines.

ABOUT THE EDITORS

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

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Special thanks to **Jamie Padula** for proofreading and especially to Literary Division Administrators **Jesse Tomlinson** and **Paula Arturo** for their support.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Coming Next: Untranslatability

*Our Summer issue will focus on the theme of **Untranslatability**: How to translate the untranslatable, or when not to translate at all. It will be an opportunity to compare languages, meditate upon their differences, provide experiences and insights, and suggest approaches to the untranslatable.*

*As the journal of the ATA's Literary Division, **Source** is both a forum for the discussion of literary translation and a vehicle for LD members and guest contributors to publish their work. Novice translators, as well as those with more experience, are encouraged to submit translations of poetry and prose together with their meditations on the process. We are also constantly on the lookout for submissions from Asia, Africa, and all other less frequently represented cultures.*

FORMAT: 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 brief, factual bio and photograph. Links and illustrations, etc., are encouraged. Submissions may be edited.

Submissions go to michele@mckayaynesworth.com
Submissions deadline for the Summer issue: May 21.

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LETTER FROM THE LD ADMINISTRATOR

Dear LD members,

I'm Jesse Tomlinson, the new administrator for the literary division. The division is already looking forward to the ATA conference in San Francisco this November and I hope to see many of you there!

Thanks to Lisa Carter, Mercedes Guhl, and Andrea Nemeth-Newhauser, we have good things brewing in the Guest Speaker and Gaddis Rose Lecturer departments. We'll certainly let you know about what's confirmed in the next issue of *Source*.

Our webmaster, Salvador Virgen, has done a great job of moving our website to its new address at www.ata-divisions.org/LD, so check it out and let us know what you think.

Please send your publications for the Wall of Fame (which you can find under "Publications by Members" on the new website) to our webmaster Salvador Virgen (salvador@techtranslation.org) so that you can showcase your accomplishments!

Jesse Tomlinson



Jesse Tomlinson is an interpreter, translator, editor, and voice talent. Originally hailing from Canada, she now lives in Mexico and translates from Spanish into English and interprets in both languages. Her special interest lies in Mexican culture, the tequila industry, and literature. Recent publications include From Jubilation to Passion, the art of Mexican surrealist painter Maximino Javier, published by Black Coffee Gallery.

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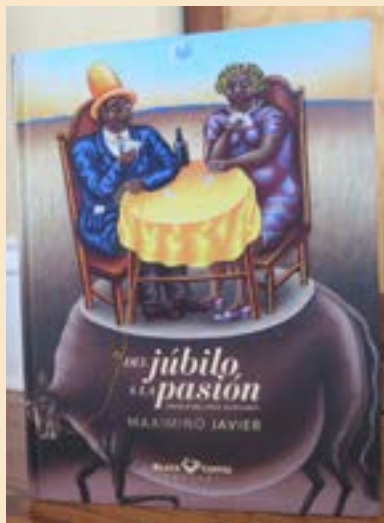
READERS' CORNER

Nanette McGuinness, is the translator for the children's series Geronimo Stilton Graphic Novels, Thea Stilton Graphic Novels, and Dinosaur Graphic Novels, with Papercutz. The most recent releases came out in 2015: *Lights, Camera, Stilton!* (#16); *All for Stilton, Stilton for All!* (#15); *The Secret of the Waterfall in the Woods* (#5); and *A Game of Bones* (#4). She also translated the third and fourth volumes in the children's novels from the Sherlock, Lupin, & Me and The Enchanted Emporium series—*The Mystery of the Scarlet Rose*, *The Cathedral of Fear*, *The Map of the Passages*, and *The Thief of Mirrors*—all of which were released in 2015 by Capstone.



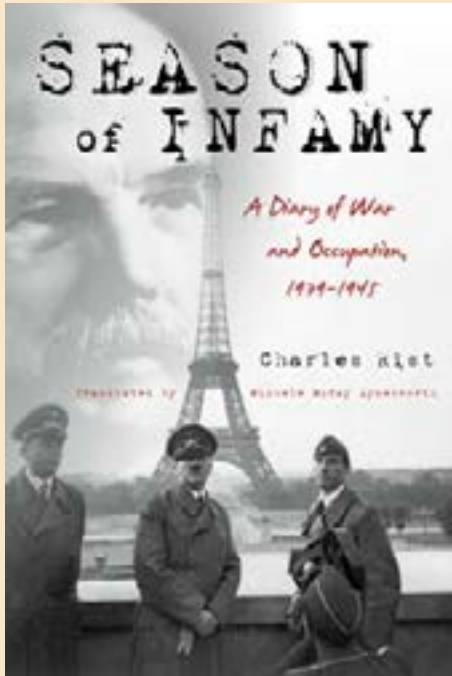
In 2016, she will have four more children's graphic novel translations published with Papercutz—*The Sisters* (#1): *Just Like Family*; *The Thea Sisters* and *The Mystery at Sea* (#6); *The Mystery of the Pirate Ship* (# 17); and Disney Graphic Novels #4 *Great Parodies: Mickey's Inferno*. In 2017, her translation of a graphic novel for adults, *California Dreamin'*, will come out with First Second Books.

These books were variously translated from French and Italian.



Jesse Tomlinson announces publication of her translation *From Jubilation to Passion*, a book by Mexican surrealist painter Maximino Javier (Black Coffee Gallery).

READERS' CORNER continued



Michele Aynesworth's translation of French economist Charles Rist's World War II diary, *Season of Infamy*, is scheduled for publication May 23 by Indiana UP. The translation was funded by grants from the NEA and the Kittredge Foundation.

Anne Milano Appel announces her two-part interview on Cristina Vezzano's "Authors & Translators" blog: "Anne Milano Appel and a few of her authors – Claudio Magris, Paolo Giordano & Giuseppe Catozzella."

PART ONE 2/18/2016: <http://bit.ly/1SUBC0g>

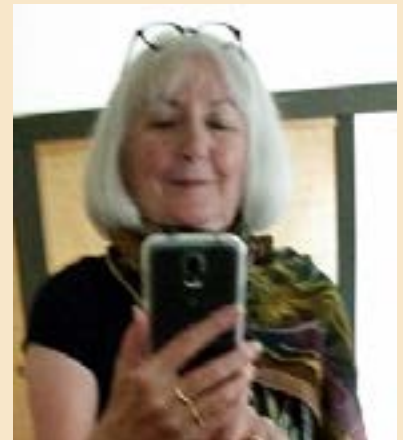
PART TWO 2/25/2016: <http://bit.ly/1Q4BnvT>

from PART ONE: "I often consider how unfair it is to be the author: I get to climb inside their heads. . . . It is a very intimate rapport, though largely one-way since the author never has the opportunity to see inside my head, to know me in quite the same way."

— Anne Milano Appel

from PART TWO: "I have found in my translators the most meticulous, rigorous and perceptive readers by far. Oftentimes the translation process turned into a further editing of the book."

— Paolo Giordano



SHOULD SHAKESPEARE BE TAUGHT IN AFRICA'S CLASSROOMS?

BY CHRIS THURMAN



Chris Thurman is associate professor at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa. He is the editor of *South African Essays on 'Universal' Shakespeare* (Ashgate, 2014) and *Sport versus Art: A South African Contest* (Wits University Press, 2010). His other books are the monograph *Guy Butler: Reassessing a South African Literary Life* (University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2010); *Text Bites, a literary anthology for high schools* (Oxford University Press, 2009); and *At Large: Reviewing the Arts in South Africa, a collection of his arts journalism* (Common Ground, 2012), with a follow-up collection, *Still at Large: Dispatches from South Africa's Frontiers of Politics and Art*, coming out with Unisa Press in 2016. He also edits the journal *Shakespeare in Southern Africa*. Christopher.Thurman@wits.ac.za

Should William Shakespeare be taught in Africa's schools and universities? It's a question that emerges, sometimes flippantly and sometimes in earnest, when conversations about post-coloniality and decolonisation turn to literature and culture.

It's a useful and necessary question that I—as a scholar who teaches and writes about Shakespeare in a South African context—am often asked. Indeed, it's one that I ask myself frequently.

But it is also a clumsy question and it needs rephrasing—or, at least, the terms in which it is couched need further investigation if we are to attempt a nuanced, coherent answer.

Africa is not a country

The first problem is in generalising about the African continent. Education systems and their infrastructural or economic contexts are vastly different. This is not only true from country to country and region to region, but also within each country and region.

It's impossible to speak accurately about "Shakespeare in Asia" without accommodating the fact that his place in India—with its colonial history and linguistic environment—is a phenomenon that's almost incomparable to Shakespeare in China or in Japan.

In Europe, national distinctions are equally severe. The history of Shakespeare's reception in France is completely unlike that in Germany.

Likewise, there's no singular "Shakespeare in Africa".

An obvious division could be made between Francophone and Anglophone countries, but even these categories falter. The engagement of writers such as Frantz Fanon and Aimé Césaire with Shakespeare's "colonial" play *The Tempest* influenced the Negritude movement associated with Léopold Senghor and, through him, with Senegal. Césaire's *Une Tempête* was first performed in Tunisia. But this has no purchase in other Francophone African countries like Gabon or Niger.

In Zimbabwe, despite occasional posturing, Shakespeare is a common and largely unproblematic reference point in political speeches, newspaper articles and daily conversation.

This is not the case in neighbouring South Africa, where there are again many different Shakespeares. He was one of Nelson Mandela's favourites and a copy of the *Collected Works* was circulated among prisoners on Robben Island. Author, journalist and political icon Sol Plaatje translated several of Shakespeare's works into Setswana.

But there is also the Shakespeare of "white English liberals", and the Shakespeare invoked by the apartheid state as an example of exclusively European "high culture". Then there is the Shakespeare associated with former president Thabo Mbeki, who was seen as something of an intellectual elitist and was ultimately recalled by the governing African National Congress.

These examples make it clear that Shakespeare can't be viewed or read—and therefore can't be taught—in an ahistorical or apolitical vacuum. If we are to teach Shakespeare in Africa, we cannot teach the text alone.

We owe it to students to acknowledge, indeed to emphasise, and then to analyse the baggage that Shakespeare brings with him.

Where does Shakespeare “fit”?

Shakespeare traditionally goes hand in hand with “English”. In secondary schools, this implies that his work will be studied as a literary text. “English” at high school is also about the acquisition of the English language, particularly for learners who have English as a second or additional language.

Is the difficulty—sometimes the downright opacity—of Shakespeare’s Early Modern English helpful to these learners? Probably not. Arguably, without a very skillful and enthusiastic teacher, Shakespeare’s language remains obscure even to teenagers with “mother tongue” or “first language” English competence (this includes many bilingual learners).

Here a case may be made for translation as a vital aspect of teaching and learning Shakespeare. Why can’t extracts from Shakespeare, or even entire plays, be studied in translation into Gikuyu or isiZulu? From these languages the work could be translated once again, into contemporary English—a much more interesting process of “modernising” Shakespeare.

Teachers could then draw on the resource of a polyglot classroom, affirming rather than undermining their learners’ multilingual confidence. At the same time, Shakespeare could be placed in dialogue with African writers like Ngugi wa Thiong’o or Mazisi Kunene.

All of this hinges, however, on the awkwardness of “should”. Making something compulsory usually has the effect of making it resented—and that’s anecdotally the case for most learners who’ve sweated over Shakespeare’s plays and sonnets.

In the final school year, or the senior years, continuity and consistency across a provincial or state schooling system requires a syllabus that offers individual schools and teachers limited choice. But where possible, it is preferable for curriculum guidelines to present Shakespeare simply as an option: a writer among many other writers.

Learners could encounter Shakespeare productively outside of the classroom environment: on stage, on screen, modernised, translated, without the stigma of being a canonical author. Some might

arrive at university without having studied him at all. Would this be a bad thing? Imagine discovering Shakespeare in a political science class, or a philosophy course—or through art history, economics or media studies.

Ultimately, the discipline in which Shakespeare really “belongs” is drama. Sometimes that’s in the context of theatre and performance; it may also be in a field like film study.

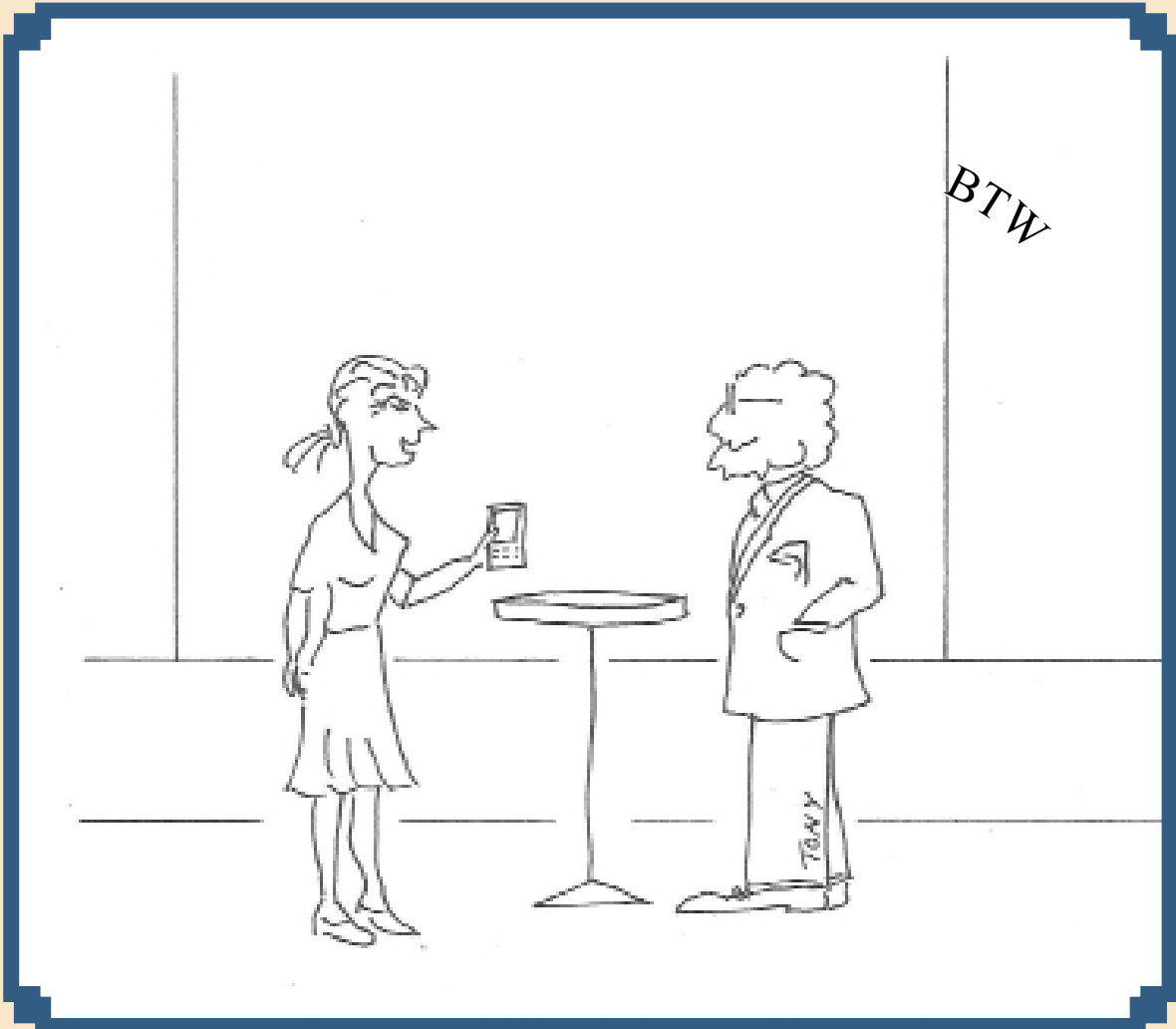
Perhaps, then, to return to the clumsy question that got us started, there’s only one “should” when it comes to teaching Shakespeare. Whether it’s at secondary or tertiary level, as part of a formal curriculum or extra-curricular activity, in Africa or elsewhere in the world, the magic of performance should remain at the core of any assignation with Shakespeare.



Student production of Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, directed by Sarah Roberts for The Julius Caesar Project and performed at Wits Theatre, Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2012. Photographer: Sally Gaule.

With permission from Christopher Thurman and The Conversation Africa. This article was first published in the independent, not-for-profit online media outlet The Conversation on August 6, 2015. Available at: <http://theconversation.com/should-shakespeare-be-taught-in-africas-classrooms-44381>.

Christopher Thurman receives funding from the National Research Foundation of South Africa and the Humboldt Foundation. The University of the Witwatersrand provides support as a hosting partner for The Conversation Africa.



“... but my spellcheck took over and apparently I complimented him on his impotent wok.”

SANCHO PANZA AND FRANZ KAFKA

BY PATRICK SAARI

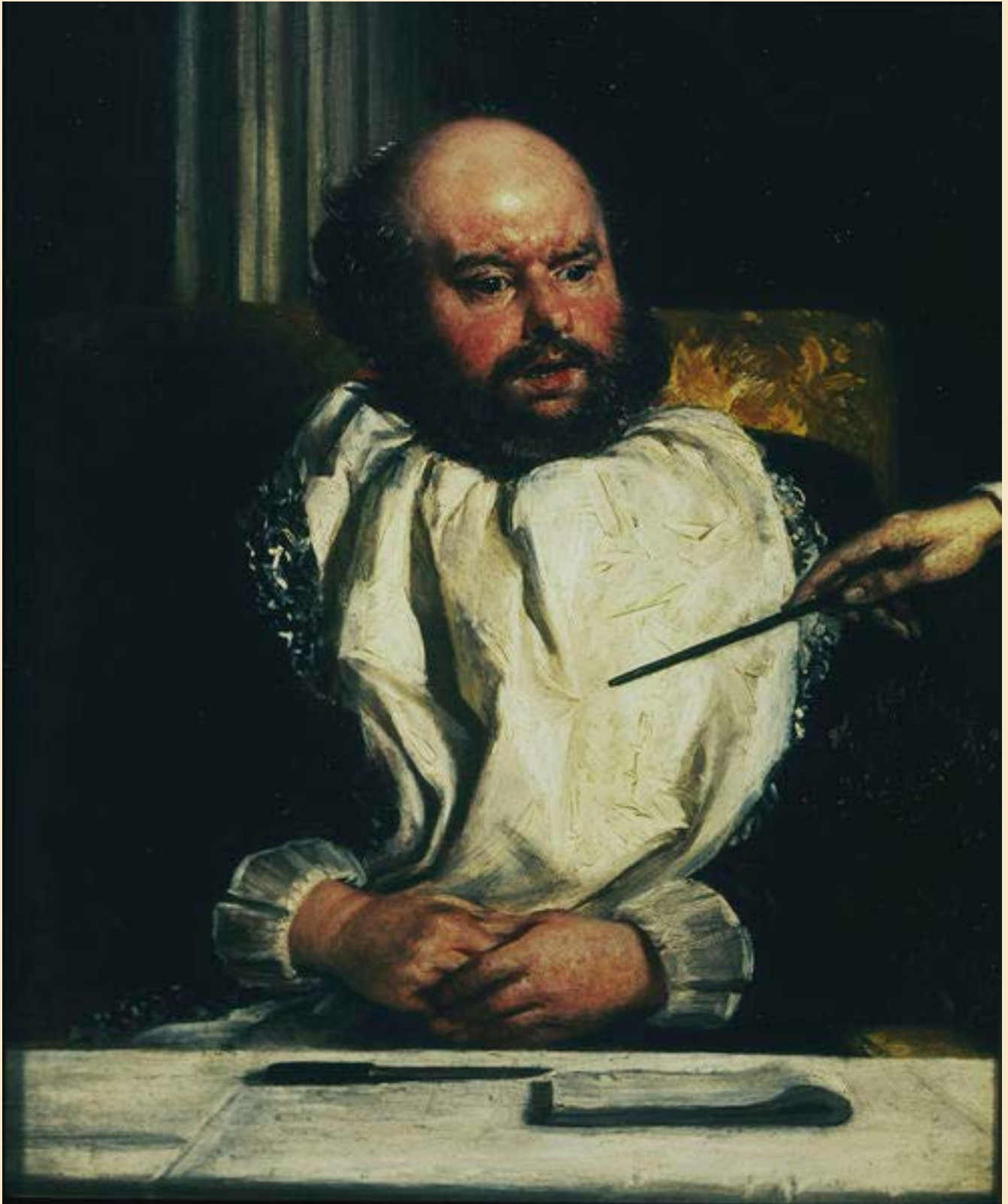


Franz Kafka at 23 (1906),
photo by Sigismundi Jacobi
(1860-1935)

Franz Kafka (1883-1924), in a two-sentence parable “The Truth About Sancho Panza,” first published in German in 1931 as part of his posthumous writings and abandoned fragments,¹ had this to say about *Don Quixote*:

Without making any boast of it Sancho Panza succeeded in the course of years, by feeding him a great number of romances of chivalry and adventure in the evening and night hours, in so diverting from himself his demon, whom he later called Don Quixote, that this demon thereupon set out, uninhibited, on the maddest exploits, which, however, for the lack of a preordained object, which should have been Sancho Panza himself, harmed nobody. A free man, Sancho Panza philosophically followed Don Quixote on his crusades, perhaps out of a sense of responsibility, and had of them a great and edifying entertainment to the end of his days.²

Sancho is haunted and tormented by his demons, but he chooses a circuitous path to tackle them: he reproduces them on his own invented



Sancho Panza, 1839 oil painting by Charles Robert Leslie

stage, unleashing them upon a fictional character, Quixote, and thus unburdens all that ails him, the poor bedeviled underdog Sancho. So successful is Sancho that his fabrication ends up taking on a life of its own, propelled by Sancho's demons, which have also been released to do as they please. And the lovable, wise, and wily Sancho is set free, psychologically and spiritually. The Florentine writer Roberto Calasso (1941), in his book on Kafka (2002), aptly entitled *K.* and translated from the Italian by Geoffrey Brock, beautifully sums up Kafka's enigmatic nano-tale:

Don Quixote is only a puppet, charged with enduring Sancho Panza's phantasms, who furiously attack and batter him. Sancho Panza sits quietly and reflects. He gazes tenderly on that shaky, feverish creature, who he's thrown into the world and into literature simply so that he himself—Sancho Panza—can stand back and catch his breath. Don Quixote can speak with impunity about theology—or chivalry—and can let himself be devoured by them. Sancho Panza observes it all quietly. And he “never boasted about it.” According to some, all he made of it was a novel.³

Roly-poly Sancho Panza has a wide round belly (*panza ancha*) like the Fat Laughing Buddha (Budai, the Chinese folk deity), not so much because he is happy or at peace, which of course he may be, but because he uses his frontal cortex



to the fullest, to sit back and look at things from a distance, get away from his demons and the suffering they entail, put them in a book so he can watch them instead of suffer them. This is a transformative act, the first step to nirvana for Buddhists, but for the medieval mind it is spiritual alchemy, the transformation of the raw material of experience into the golden fabric of memory, self-understanding, and story. David Lynch, the director, screenwriter, and artist, made the following remarks about making movies, as if he were Kafka's Sancho Panza: "Those characters, let them do the suffering. But the artist, the filmmaker, doesn't have to be suffering."⁴ "The artist doesn't have to suffer to show suffering. You don't have to die to do a death scene."⁵

This dovetails perfectly not only with what we know of human evolution, but also with the work of the French neurologist, psychiatrist, psychoanalyst, and ethologist Boris Cyrulnik who underscores the need for narrative, the construction of one's personal story, to overcome trauma and survive, which is the groundwork for what he refers to as "resilience," whether through art like the fairy tales of Hans Christian Andersen and the huge colorful sculptures of Niki de St. Phalle (both victims of childhood traumas) or the simple stories one assembles of one's own life, however quiet and uneventful.⁶ Storytelling is not merely entertaining, it is the "translation" of the dross of life into something "true" and decipherable, even if it will never hold up in a court of law. It is the bedrock of human stability. The more stories you pack into a narrative the closer you come to the "human condition."

And taking Kafka's cue, there is a case to be made that Sancho Panza is not consubstantial with, or the perfect foil to, Quixote, but rather that he is the book's protagonist and driving force, not Quixote the wannabe knight errant. He is, after all, the book's main source for the proverbs and adages that have become part and parcel of Spanish-speaking culture, the epitome of folk culture and ancestral wisdom, what in first-nation civilizations would be identified as the shaman, spiritual healer, and visionary, or in Antiquity and countless other cultures as the soothsayer, oracle, and prophet.

Sancho is patient, compassionate, and down-to-earth, giving of himself, what we might now call an “empath” (otherwise known as a “pushover” by the less enlightened), very different from Quixote, who is disconnected, selfish, domineering, proud, and petulant. Quixote is also stubborn and unpleasant, abusive and dry, “entitled” with never a thought for others. Because what is madness if not egoism brought to extremes? To use current terminology, Quixote is a “narcissistic pervert” with zero degree of empathy, his books having eroded instead of heightened his empathy.⁷ His florid language of flattery hides his cruel manipulation of others and reality to fit his monstrous mind.

The Ingenious Hidalgo Don Quixote de La Mancha, the Knight of the Rueful Countenance with the pompous title, is also an apt description of the royalty, aristocracy, and religious hierarchy of his time, the tyrants and dictators of all times, the powers that Kafka saw ready to destroy Europe and the world with it in 1914-1918, and current corporate, media, and government celebrities, obsessed with their image, seeing and listening to themselves, and narcissistically “being” the image they wish to project, all the while claiming they will save the world, end poverty, do away with disease, bring peace, albeit by force. The ills of the world are but an incidental backdrop to their carefully crafted charisma, a stage they can easily dominate, eclipse, and overshadow, like the shepherds and flocks of sheep Quixote insists are glorious armies that he must gratuitously do battle against. But in both the novel and Kafka’s explanatory gloss, although Quixote is similarly driven by his delusions and hunger for fame, he never wreaks any real havoc or brings harm to anyone (although he does slaughter a few sheep with his lance in the above-mentioned incident), because Sancho is there to prevent it, to protect him, to make the peace, as Kafka rightly points out, however bumbling and undignified that activity might seem to be.

Sancho Panza is the exemplary storyteller, the model parent of his creation, as he launches his character and gives him the freedom to tell his own tale, all the while watching over him and being delighted by his crazy exploits (religions around the world might well take note of this exceptional notion of what being a creator should entail). Roberto

Calasso commends Sancho Panza's perspicacity in conjoining moral responsibility with "useful" entertainment for the practical therapeutic purpose of securing both personal and social stability and harmony:

Better then, for Sancho Panza, to redirect the actions of his demons onto another being. He could then resume his own life of modest interest while still following Don Quixote on his expeditions, mainly because he felt a certain "sense of responsibility," since, after all, the knight was his creature. But also because Don Quixote was forever dealing with demons, and Sancho Panza recognized at once that such a situation would provide him "great and useful entertainment." Thus Sancho Panza survived and, among other things, told us the story of Don Quixote.⁸

How inspiring to think that Quixote is in fact the embodiment of everything that is wrong with the world, the mental disorders that are now on the outer frontier of medicine, the demons besetting the humble peasant Sancho, and that our sentimental affection for Quixote and his "madness" (possibly just a business-as-usual indifference and selfishness) is a sign of how we masochistically love what is worst in ourselves. Instead of seeing the parody so evidently depicted for us by Cervantes, we misread everything and cloak Quixote in romantic grandiloquence, our voices become moist, tremulous, and resonant, we mount a successful musical comedy of the fellow singing "The Impossible Dream," and Cervantes spins despairingly in his grave and cries out: "What have I done?"

Jorge Luis Borges dreamed that Cervantes had dreamt of a country squire called Quixano who in turn had dreamt of a knight errant called Quixote. Towards the end of his life, Borges intimated that the dreams, the dreamers, and those "dreamt of" were all but one. Probably because his background was cosmopolitan and aristocratic, Borges did not mention Sancho Panza (the bumpkin, the attendant, the lackey, the valet). Kafka, however, identified peasant Panza as the key figure, the protagonist, the narrator, the producer and creator of the tale. This makes allegorical sense as Panza was a tiller of the land, a sower of seeds, and

a harvester of crops, one who would indeed “reap what he sowed.” But then Kafka omits Cervantes and Quixano, as if they were incidental, superfluous.

A more prosaic, if not dreary, positivist *Psychology Today* approach might claim that Panza is merely Cervantes, now an older, more grounded man, writing his book, looking back on his absurd and ingenuous ambitions to be a famous warrior, courtier, and poet, and how that played out for him. Cervantes views his former self as a seedy, rundown, hyperactive, disturbed Don Quixote, and if Cervantes is to survive he must now learn how to deal with his “feverish daydreams” and “destructive rage” more intelligently, that is, he must write a book.⁹

In any case, this archetypal odd couple (trio if the real authors are to be included among their fictional projections) appears repeatedly over the centuries: the German Benedictine novice Adso of Melk and the English Franciscan friar William of Baskerville in Umberto Eco’s *The Name of the Rose*, Alma (Bibi Andersson) and Elizabet (Liv Ullmann) in Ingmar Bergman’s *Persona*, Vladimir and Estragon in Samuel Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot*, Stephen Dedalus and Leopold Bloom in Joyce’s *Ulysses*, Dr. Watson and Sherlock Holmes in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s detective stories, Flaubert’s *Bouvard et Pécuchet*, Elinor and Marianne in Jane Austen’s *Sense and Sensibility*, and of course Laurel and Hardy.

Afterthought

Kafka’s nano-tale is an odd blend of imagination, whimsy, ethical admonition, and common sense, a tiny paragraph mouse of a story about a large thousand-page elephant of a novel, with Kafka dressed in the trappings of a Talmudical hermeneutics scholar or medieval exegete or, why not, yet another translator. Was it the German translation of *Quixote* that Kafka read that surreptitiously led him to entertain these speculations of Cervantes’ true intentions? Was the German translator a pacifist, a Quietist, a Rhineland mystic, a dabbler in Gnosticism and Hermeticism, a learned man of peasant stock and large girth who identified more closely with Sancho than with Quixote? Or was it a Czech or Yiddish translation that Kafka read? Or was Kafka so

far removed from Spanish culture and language that he could see Quixote and Sancho Panza for what they truly were, stripped of their seventeenth-century Iberian paraphernalia?

Endnotes

1 This original publication *Beim Bau der Chinesischen Mauer*, edited by Kafka's friend Max Brod, was first translated into English, somewhat awkwardly, by the English poet Edwin Muir and his wife Willa two years later in the collection *The Great Wall of China* (London: Martin Seck, 1933), republished later as *The Great Wall of China. Stories and Reflections* (New York: Schocken Books, 1946).

2 Franz Kafka. "The Truth about Sancho Panza," *The Complete Stories*, trans. Edwin and Willa Muir and others (London: Schocken Books, 1971), available at: http://cliffordglee.com/Site/EXSupplementalReadings_files/Franz%20Kafka%20-%20The%20Complete%20Stories.pdf

3 Roberto Calasso, *K.*, trans. Geoffrey Bock (New York: Vintage International, 2003), 112-113. See also pages 109-110.

4 David Lynch on *Consciousness, Creativity and the Brain*, November 8, 2005, University of Oregon, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vtgtkuK-s8HQ>

5 Documentary on David Lynch, *The Artists and the Scientists*, available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f969H8_DleQ

6 Boris Cyrulnik, *Les vilains petits canards* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2001).

7 See Simon Baron-Cohen, "Zero Degree of Empathy," video of the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce: <http://www.thersa.org/events/video/archive/simon-baron-cohen>

8 Roberto Calasso, *K.*, 110.

9 *Ibid.*, 109.

POEM: YOU, MATISSE

BY AMES DEE



Ames Dee is a writer, poet, and dabbler in languages in the Pacific Northwest. Since 2007 her contributions vis-à-vis Spanish, French, Sanskrit, Hebrew, and Greek have been published by the American Translators Association in Beacons X and Source.

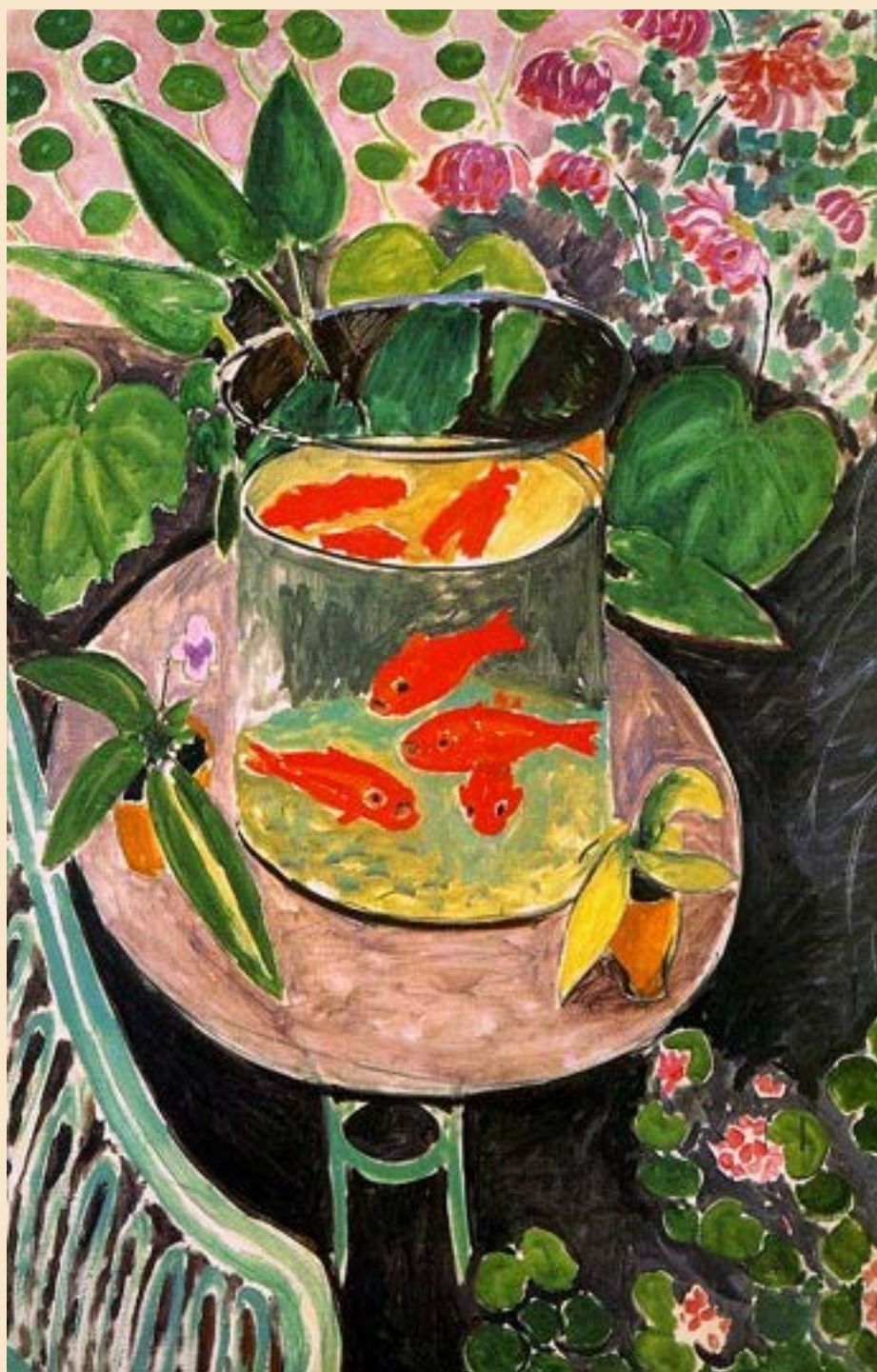
This tribute to a well-loved poet and a well-loved artist was written as an exercise in homage. But you know, just maybe, it might be considered a kind of translation.

The line “and a goldfish circling in its bowl” in the poem “You, Reader” by Billy Collins brought the painting to mind.

Goldfish, painted in 1911 by Henri Matisse, was on loan from the Pushkin Museum in Moscow for the magnificent 1992-93 Matisse retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, where I stood entranced by the goldfish until my feet hurt.

I began my poem as Billy Collins began his: “I wonder how you are going to feel / when you find out...”

To hear Billy Collins reading his poem “You, Reader”:
<http://www.poetryarchive.org/poem/you-reader>



Henri Matisse: *Goldfish (Les Poissons rouges)*, 1911
Oil on canvas
Pushkin Museum of Art, Moscow

You, Matisse

by Ames Dee
(after Billy Collins)

I wonder how you are going to feel
when you find out
that I stood for an hour

in the stuffy air of the museum
with its humming climate control
and artificial lights

on aching feet
that kept reminding me
of the cafe downstairs

and how I couldn't move
because the goldfish you had painted
a century before

were still swimming
under the green philodendron
in circles of turquoise delight.



*"I've always said my kitchen was 'spic and span,'
but my attorney thinks it could be construed as an ethnic slur."*

AN INTERVIEW WITH ERIK CAMAYD-FREIXAS PART I: MAGICAL REALISM

BY JESSE TOMLINSON
(SEE PAGE 5 FOR HER BIO AND PHOTO)



Dr. Camayd-Freixas

Dr. Camayd-Freixas is a professor of Spanish and Director of the Translation and Interpretation Program at Florida International University. A Harvard-trained communications analyst, social theorist, and expert linguist at federal and state courts, he has testified before Congress, contributed as amicus curiae to the U.S. Supreme Court, and received human rights awards from the American Immigration Lawyers Association, the Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center, the Guatemalan Foreign Ministry, and the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers. He has interpreted for ten heads of state, including President Obama and Pope Benedict XVI.

Dr. Camayd-Freixas has lectured on linguistic, literary, and cultural studies, immigration, labor, ethics, and human rights in law schools, bar associations, and professional organizations nationally and internationally. Dr. Camayd-Freixas specializes in cultural studies, literature, and historiography of the colonial and contemporary periods of Latin America and the Caribbean and has a number of very interesting articles available online.¹

Could you tell me a little about the history of your name and its meaning?

Camayd is Lebanese and Freixas (my mother's maiden name) is Catalan. Camayd appears to have been derived from the French *camail* (the mesh covering head, neck, and shoulders under medieval armor), although some native Lebanese insist that it is simply a bad transcription of Gemaliel (which some pronounce *Ishmáel*). My Arabic grandfather, Najib, changed his name to Emilio when he arrived in Cuba in 1907, speaking no Spanish. Whatever he said his last name was, the Cuban immigration officer wrote down "Camayd" and it stuck. Freixas (which also exists in Portuguese) appears to derive from "strawberries" (*fresas*) and/or "ash trees" (*fresnos*). My four grandparents migrated to Cuba in the early 1900s, and both my parents were born in Cuba, as was I. My grandparents always kept a strong accent, Arabic or Peninsular Spanish, even after decades of living in Cuba. My mother died shortly after childbirth, and my father and I left for Puerto Rico when I was 8 years old. I finished high school in Puerto Rico, and came to the United States for college. I did most of my studies in Boston (Tufts and Harvard), went to Paris (Sorbonne Nouvelle) on study abroad, taught at Marquette, and finally at FIU.

You wrote a piece in the *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*¹ on the book of essays, *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community* that discussed magical realism and the history of this concept/idea/semantic field, among other things. What is your short-form definition of magical realism?

Yes, at the time (1996) I had just finished my PhD dissertation on Magical Realism in Latin America, written in Spanish. It came out too late to be part of the edited volume, *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community* (1995), but I was invited to write a review article on it. I became good friends with the authors and editors of that collection and collaborated with them in other book projects.

My own book, *Realismo mágico y primitivismo*, first appeared in 1998 and was reprinted in 2000. It has been out of print for a few years, but recently I made it freely available online and now it receives an average of 30 views per day from all over the world, even though it is only available in Spanish. The time is ripe for an updated English translation or edition, so it can become available to more researchers and a wider readership. I have also published in English the chapters, “Narrative Primitivism” and “Theories of Magical Realism,” in recent academic volumes.

My theory of Magical Realism in Latin American literature is based on three principles: 1) the “primitive” perspective feigned by the narrator, which makes common events seem magical and vice versa; 2) the construction of a “historical allegory” by having the supernatural events of the story parody Latin American history; and 3) the dual role that the reader is called upon to play in interpreting the story, thus producing a sort of double reading that oscillates between the literal and the allegorical.

What do you see as the challenges that magical realism (in its Latin American sense) presents for translators?

I think that there are two big challenges: first, the richness of cultural and historical references; and second, understanding the literary theory behind magical realism. Both require some preliminary research. I think it is absolutely essential for translators to read literary criticism of the works they translate.

For example, Alejo Carpentier’s *The Kingdom of this World* (1949) introduces and illustrates his concept of the *marvelous real*, which later evolved into Latin American magical realism. The concept grew out of Carpentier’s critique of Surrealism as evoking the marvelous through cheap tricks and artificial means, such as free association, automatic writing, and the chance encounter of disparate realities; whereas in the New World—he claimed—the marvelous occurred in its natural state, by virtue of the chance encounter and clash of disparate cultures, Amerindian, European, and African. To illustrate his point, he sets

his novel in colonial Haiti, where the slave boy Ti Noel is amused to see a butcher shop next to a men's wig shop at a downtown street. One window exhibits the heads of cows and pigs, while the one next door shows wax heads with grey-haired wigs. Ti Noel then has the funny vision of the wigged heads of the French masters served on silver platters along a banquet table. The Spanish original calls this vision an abominable *convite*—which connotes the chance encounter of Surrealism. The English translation reads instead abominable “feast”—which totally misses the point. *Convite* translates as *convivium*, Latin for a gathering or encounter (convivial gathering = banquet). In Cuban Spanish, the verb *convidar* is very common. It simply means to invite, but also has the connotation of companionship: *con* (with) *vida* (life)—that is, to invite to share a slice of life together. It is quite beautiful. Ever since, when I write literary criticism in English, I always have to come up with my own translations, in order for my analysis to make sense.

Aside from this, it should be noted that, as magical realism waned in Latin America at the end of the twentieth century, it has surged with a somewhat broader meaning in postmodern literature around the world. This means that translators should also be mindful of issues and trends in comparative literature.

Translating magical realism is a bit like, well, translating magic. How do you translate that cultural element and make it believable?

Gabriel García Márquez used to say that the trick was to narrate even the most outlandish things with a straight face. Translators must do the same. The real issue in literature is not believability but verisimilitude—the appearance of figurative or poetic truth, rather than factual truth itself. Magicians must project an absolute belief in magic, while performing a technical trick. So must translators in their tone and choice of words. Archaic, authoritative, and absolute-sounding expressions may be preferred to those which are more familiar and closer to reader's everyday experience and idiolect. This reinforces the straight-faced account of literary fibs.

“My own thinking suggests that magical realism is as much formal as thematic.”² Could you expand on how magical realism is formal? How is it thematic?

For decades, critics were divided. Initially some thought that magical realism was purely a matter of theme, topic, or content, as opposed to form. Any work dealing with pre-industrial or “pre-scientific” culture—whether it was old European, indigenous, Afro-American, or otherwise—tended to be shoved inside this big and shapeless bag they called “magical realism.”

But then came Todorov’s classic work of literary theory, *The Fantastic* (1970), a formalist approach to non-realist fiction. The key was *how* the story was told, the form, rather than the content. In the fantastic, the narrator is a scientific skeptic or investigator who questions the uncanny events, while the reader is kept in doubt as to whether the rational laws of nature have truly been violated. Edgar Allan Poe and Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* are prime examples.

After Todorov’s success, many critics attempted, unsuccessfully, to define magical realism strictly in terms of technique or how the story was told. For example, its narrator is a believer rather than a skeptic, and the characters are not surprised or bewildered by the supernatural events. But in reality, form and content cannot be separated. In order to be believable a story must be placed in an amenable cultural context—like Macondo, a backward, isolated village of the Latin American hinterland. That is why magical realism is as much formal as it is thematic. Conversely, in Isabel Allende’s *The House of the Spirits*, which takes place in modern Santiago de Chile, the “magical” aspect, based on a child’s point of view, is not sustainable for more than a few chapters, and the novel turns more and more realistic in the end.

Could Grimm’s fairy tales be classified as magical realism?

No, but they are precursors. The early Romantics, especially in Germany, collected medieval stories, legends, and folktales, which were thought to embody the authentic and unique national spirit. They

went back to the isolation of the Middle Ages to find their “national soul,” before the Renaissance turned Europe into a cultural melting pot. Some writers went beyond collecting, to actually creating their own stories based on the old fairy tales and folktales. At this point, the onset of industrial modernity, after the Enlightenment and the Age of Reason, produced a fork in literary history, marked by a new, competing tendency: the rise of Realism. Some works remained anchored in the *marvelous*: children’s stories, folktales, legends, fairy tales, and even horror stories, all of which require the reader’s suspension of disbelief. Yet, later works—sometimes by the same authors—intuited the growing incredulity and pragmatism of the modern bourgeois reader, and turned to the questioning genre of the *fantastic*, which dramatized the battle between rationalism and the supernatural, paving the way for science fiction.

Now, magical realism arises a century later, as a sort of synthesis of both the *marvelous* and the *fantastic*. That is why I hold that the magical realist text forces the reader into a dual role, as believer and skeptic. Like in a fairy tale, the reader must pretend to believe, in order to enjoy the story. But at the same time, in the back of her mind, the reader doubts and looks for an explanation to naturalize the uncanny events in the narrative. Since a literal explanation is not plausible, the reader looks for an allegorical meaning, and finds it, because the magical realist text encodes within its pages, characters, and events a social allegory of the nation, a reinterpretation of history from the point of view of the people, and against the official version of history, often based on racism, colonialism, and a twisted notion of “progress,” imposed by the oppressive elites and the traditional structures of power.

Homer claimed he was sitting on a hill, when the muses came to him, inspired him, and told him the Greek myths. Are some of the roots of magical realism found in the Greek myths? Do you see ties between the Greek myths and magical realism?

Absolutely. But the modern reader no longer believes in the old literary device of “inspiration by the muses.” Rather, the history of literature follows the history of reading, the slow and progressive erosion of the reader’s gullibility, down to the hypercritical and almost cynical attitude of today’s postmodern reader. We can therefore posit a sort of evolution of narrative fantasy, where ancient myths, which were once believed in with religious fervor, become diluted into legends; the legends into folktales; then into fairy tales and children’s stories; then into fantastic stories and mystery plots; more recently into magical realism; and finally into postmodern parody. Ultimately, all literature must seduce the reader into accepting to play along. And today, the advent of mass media and the Internet has made the reader more distrustful and harder to crack than ever. That is why Homer’s muses had to be replaced with ever more sophisticated narrative techniques. The legendary Homer, if he did exist, was a true primitive, a true naïf, as was his audience; whereas magical realism, underneath its naïve pretensions, is intensely technical and sophisticated.

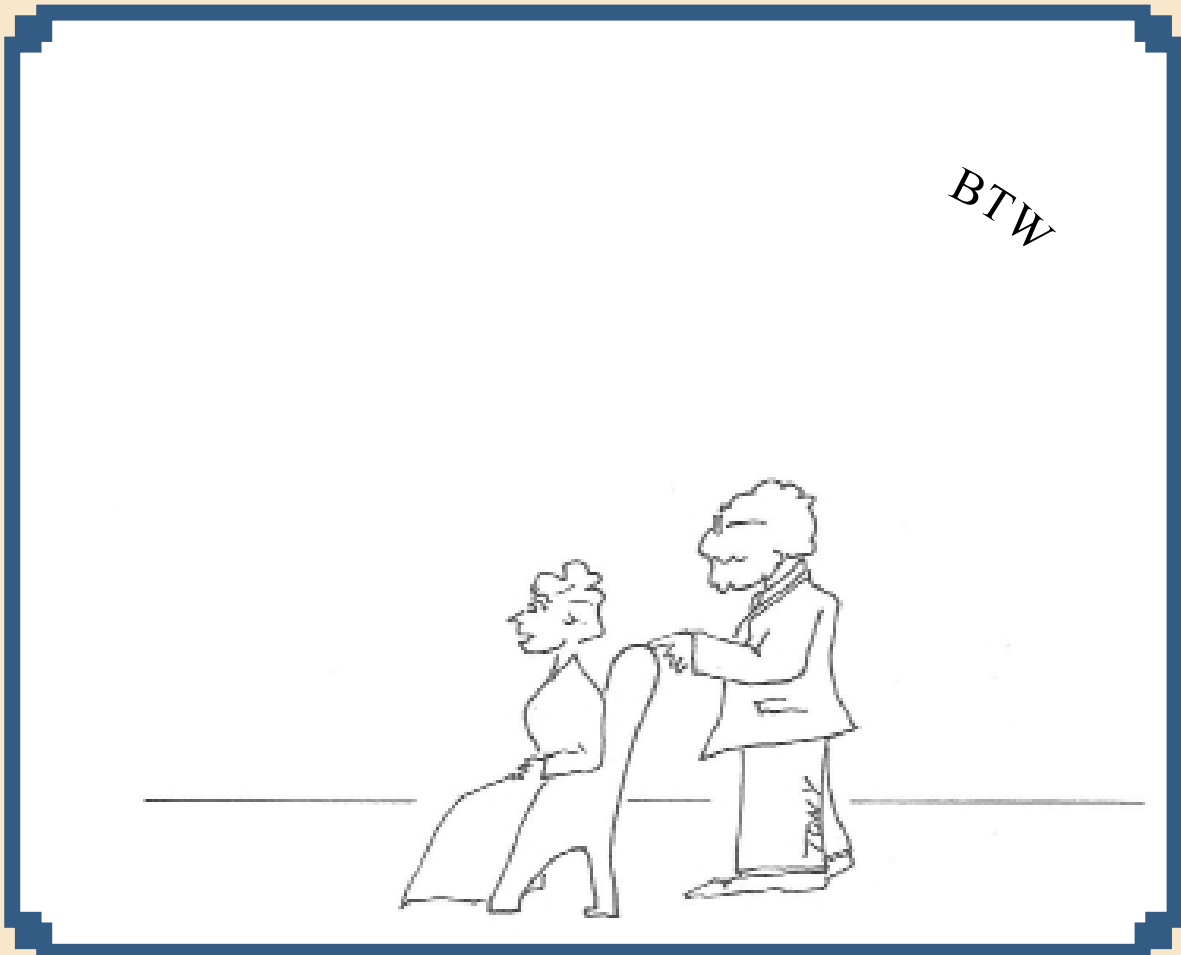
What authors writing in this style today do you appreciate?

Sadly for me, I do not “appreciate” any author. As a critic, I derive a morbid pleasure from dissecting them like a corpse. As a “professional reader,” I have not read for pleasure in decades, I no longer remember what it’s like, and have absolutely no interest in it. Well, I guess somebody has to. But the last time I attempted to read for pleasure was when I took up Herman Hesse in high school, and I found him so fascinatingly troubling that all my readings since then have been marred by a morbid muse.

Endnote

- 1 See <http://dll.fiu.edu/people/faculty/erik-camayd-freixas/>.

See Part II of this interview, Literary Translation and University Life, in our Summer issue.



“Once a myth has been debunked, can it ever be re-bunked?”

THE ROSETTA STONE

BY TONY BECKWITH



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

When you stand on the steps of the British Museum you are literally on the threshold of history. This venerable institution houses a vast collection of the world's art and cultural artifacts, assembled and displayed here since the Museum was founded in 1753. The building's impressive façade dates back to the 1820s, when the English architect Sir Robert Smirke (1780–1867) was commissioned to redesign the original edifice, and contributed the colonnade of forty-four Greek Ionic columns that still stand today.



On my most recent visit I was primarily interested in visiting the Egyptian Sculpture Gallery, one of the building's most notable rooms, also designed by Smirke. Egyptian antiquities have been part of the Museum's permanent collection ever since it opened its doors. Some years later, after the British navy defeated Napoleon's expeditionary force at the Battle of the Nile in 1801, certain Egyptian artifacts held by the French were deemed to be the property of the British Crown under the terms of the Capitulation of Alexandria. The French disputed the claim and refused to yield the items in question. In these tense and testy circumstances, laced with a measure of intrigue, the artifacts nonetheless found their way into British hands, and were brought to London where



they were presented to the Museum. Among those pieces was the Rosetta Stone, which has been on public display since 1802, and which was specifically what I had come to see.

Why the interest in the Rosetta Stone? Because it is one of the most iconic examples of a translator's work in Western history. The stone is a symbol of the art and the practice of translation going back nearly two thousand years, giving the craft a legitimacy that warms the heart. Humans have been talking to each other for tens of thousands of years, ever since we evolved beyond grunting, and it's no stretch to claim that at some point we developed a need for interpreting—translation's older sister.

Then we learned to write circa 3,000 BC, but the archaeological record suggests that the earliest written documents were things like inventories, invoices, and local administrative proclamations and decrees. There was probably not much call for translation in those early days.

By the final century BC, however, things had changed. Alexander the Great conquered Egypt in 332 BC and Greek became the language of the ruling class. The general population continued to speak Egyptian, though, so official messages were often communicated in bilingual form, as has happened in many countries ever since. The Rosetta Stone is a tantalizing example of this practice; a stela whose inscription—a decree passed in Memphis, Egypt in 196 BC—is chiseled in three different scripts, Greek, ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs, and demotic. It is a large piece of granite which, in its original state, was probably rounded at the top. It unfortunately suffered considerable wear and tear after it was removed, for reasons unknown, from the temple where it had been placed, and subsequently used as construction material for a fortress erected in a village in the Nile Delta called Rashid, better known to Europeans as Rosetta. In 1799, during the French campaign in Egypt, Napoleon's soldiers were refurbishing that fort, and found the battered stela while demolishing a wall. They understood the stone's significance and took it to French headquarters in Cairo for safekeeping.

Standing nearly four feet high and weighing almost three quarters of a ton, the stone was later confiscated by the British and transported under cover of darkness on a gun-carriage to the docks where it was loaded onto HMS *Egyptienne*, a captured French frigate, and brought to England. Copies of the inscriptions were made and sent to a number of scholars, igniting a firestorm of interest since it was clear to all that they might help to solve the enduring mystery of Egyptian hieroglyphs. It was assumed that all three texts inscribed on the stone said the same thing and, since the Greek portion was understandable, interested parties hoped it would help them to decipher the other two scripts.

The earliest English translation of the Greek text on the Rosetta Stone was presented to the Society of Antiquaries in London in April 1802. A French translation was already available, and a Latin version had been produced a year earlier. But the other scripts were nowhere near as accommodating. Deciphering the two Egyptian scripts took many years and alternately frustrated and elated some of the finest

linguists of the day. Very briefly, there were two main “detectives” involved.

Thomas Young (1773–1829), an English physician, physicist, and exceptional student of language, was the first to realize that Egyptian writing was based on both alphabetic and non-alphabetic signs. When he examined the Rosetta scripts closely, in 1814, he understood that hieroglyphs and demotic were closely related. His method consisted of finding a word in the Greek text which appeared more than once, and then looking for signs in the demotic script that appeared with similar frequency. He assumed that the signs that appeared on almost every line stood for ‘and’ in demotic. He also theorized that the groups of signs which appeared most frequently after that were demotic for ‘king,’ ‘Ptolemy,’ and ‘Egypt.’ He was thus able to identify certain demotic signs and associate them with the appropriate Greek words. He then went on to show that the elongated ovals or cartouches in the hieroglyphs were used to refer to a royal name, which in this case was Ptolemy.

Thomas Young shared the results of his research with the French scholar Jean-François Champollion (1790–1832). Champollion had studied Coptic, the language of the Christian descendants of the ancient Egyptians, which helped him to go further than Young had been able to do. He deciphered the phonetic values of many syllabic signs and identified a number of characters whose meaning he had ascertained from the Greek text. Champollion presented his findings in 1822, and continued to work on the Rosetta Stone puzzle until his untimely death just ten years later. His scholarship laid the groundwork for our knowledge of the ancient Egyptian language, and he is rightly considered the main “code breaker” of those mysterious hieroglyphics.

A couple of centuries later I stand peering at the inscribed surface. The quality of the work confirms what we already knew, which is that fine chiseling was not a recently-acquired skill, but the presence of three different scripts on the same stone was, at the time it was found, unprecedented. This was essentially the first bilingual document ever discovered. For a translator, that was a wildly exciting idea.

The inscriptions on the Rosetta Stone are written in two languages, Egyptian and Greek, but in three different scripts. The first of the Egyptian texts is written in hieroglyphs, the formal pictorial script in use since the beginning of the First Dynasty nearly 3,000 years earlier. Hieroglyphs were used primarily as a monumental script for incising into hard materials or for painting in elaborate, colorful detail on plaster or wood. They appear in almost every medium; but on papyrus from an early date they were generally superseded by hieratic, a cursive script derived from hieroglyphs. The second Egyptian text on the stone is in demotic, an extremely cursive script which evolved from abbreviated and modified hieratic and which replaced hieratic as the script used for all but religious texts from about 643 BC. The third inscription is written in Greek capitals.¹

Who translated that decree? Given that Greek was the language of the bureaucracy in 196 BC, I would speculate that the original text was written in Greek, and the other two versions were translations. Did one translator produce both the hieroglyphic and demotic versions, or would there have been two translators involved? Again, I would speculate that there was just one, and I would also posit that he or she was employed or paid by the official entity that authored the decree. By that time, the Egyptian authorities had been dealing with their bilingual situation for over a century, so this can hardly have been the first time that a document had to be translated. Although the translator would have had to be fluent in Greek to be on the government payroll, he or she would probably not have been a member of the ruling elite and therefore would also have been familiar with both the vernacular and the official/religious versions of the Egyptian language.

I suggested earlier that the translator might have been either a man or a woman but of course I have no idea. I feel more confident suggesting that a man would have done the chiseling, given the physical nature of the work, and wonder whether whoever incised the decree on the Rosetta Stone might have been a budding sculptor, making a little money on the side at the government print shop. For surely, in certain simple, fundamental ways, we 21st century translators are not

that different from those who lived in Egypt over two thousand years ago, are we? Whoever translated this decree very likely grew up bilingual, and was obviously sufficiently educated to have acquired the linguistic skills needed to translate a government document. In the early days of writing, many centuries earlier, scribes held a privileged position in society. Very few people could write in those days—even the king was often illiterate—so anyone who could do so became part of an inner circle, as an interpreter still does today. Once a burgeoning bilingual society put pressure on the authorities, it is not hard to imagine translators enjoying the patronage of palace scribes and becoming part of the hierarchy. Moving up in the world.

As I peer at the Rosetta Stone I imagine our translator reading her assignment, the decree that established the divine cult of King Ptolemy V, the new ruler. She runs the words through her mind. “In the reign of the young one who has succeeded his father in the kingship, lord of diadems, most glorious, who has established Egypt and is pious toward the gods...”² She screws up her eyes. *Diadems?* Hmm. She takes a sip of water, looks back at the source text. “This decree shall be inscribed on a stela of hard stone in sacred [hieroglyphic] and native [demotic] and Greek characters and set up in each of the first, second, and third [rank] temples beside the image of the ever-living king.”³

A very polite guard taps me on the shoulder and tells me the museum is about to close. I snap back to the present and head for the exit. Around the corner, at a fish & chip shop, the menu is in five different languages.

Endnotes

- 1 *The Rosetta Stone*, by Carol Andrews; British Museum Press; 1981; page 12.
- 2 *Ibid.*, 25.
- 3 *Ibid.*, 28.

CREDITS

Cover

Cervantes: *Miguel de Cervantes (copy)*

Oil painting, ca. 1877 by Eduardo Balaca y Orejas Canseco

Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain

<http://bit.ly/1ZpSThC>

Shakespeare:

The Cobbe portrait of Shakespeare (1610) is an early Jacobean panel painting of a gentleman which has been argued to be a life portrait of William Shakespeare. It is displayed at Hatchlands Park in Surrey, a National Trust property, and the portrait is so-called because of its ownership by Charles Cobbe, Church of Ireland (Anglican) Archbishop of Dublin (1686–1765).

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cobbe_portrait_2009-03-09.jpg

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Book cover, *Season of Infamy*:

<http://bit.ly/1XKZxOc>

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Photo of student production of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* courtesy of Sarah Roberts, who directed the play for The Julius Caesar Project. Photographer: Sally Gaule.

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Franz Kafka at 23 (1906), photo taken by Sigismundi Jacobi (1860-1935).

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kafka1906.jpg>

Source: http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/news/2008/2008_july_02

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Sancho Panza, 1839 oil painting by Charles Robert Leslie

© Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

<http://bit.ly/25kjOrt>

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Laughing Buddha. © Godong / Getty Images

<http://buddhism.about.com/od/buddha/a/laughingbuddha.htm>

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Matisse: *Goldfish (Les Poissons rouges)*, 1911, Oil on canvas

Pushkin Museum of Art, Moscow

<http://www.mcs.csueastbay.edu/~malek/Matisse/Matisse13.html>

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Photo of Erik Camayd-Freixas from Florida International University:

<http://dll.fiu.edu/people/faculty/erik-camayd-freixas/>

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Image of the British Museum:

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:British_Museum_from_NE_2.JPG

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Image of the Rosetta Stone:

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/bf/Rosetta_Stone.jpg