

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION
OF THE ATA'S LITERARY DIVISION

NO. 56

SUMMER 2012

IN REMEMBRANCE



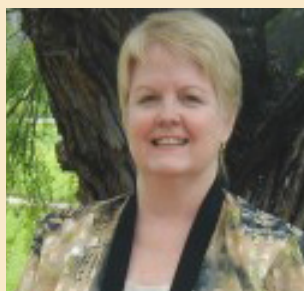
"If you *really* loved me you'd open *all* my attachments."

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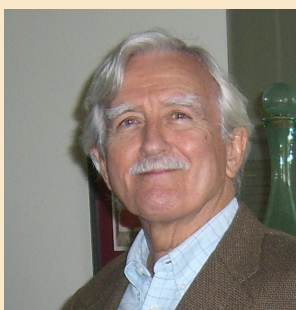
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BTW Cartoons by Tony Beckwith

FROM THE EDITORS



Michele Aynesworth
Editor



Tony Beckwith
Associate Editor



Patrick Saari
Chief Copy Editor



Traci Andrighetti
News Editor

The summer issue of *Source* offers a series of remembrances, both public and private. Tony Beckwith's *By the Way* column salutes Carlos Fuentes, the great Mexican writer who died a few months back, with a look at "The Writer and His Translators."

Françoise Herrmann honors Darfurian Daoud Hari with a review of his memoir *The Translator*. She makes a poignant call to remember the genocide in Darfur and this courageous interpreter's journey into hell and back.

Ruth Crispin offers her translation of poems by Spaniard Martín López-Vega, whose poetry she finds "often centers on memory and on the implication of memory for the self."

Ames Dee's contribution is a fictional recollection of her spiritual quest to learn Greek.

With an eye more to the future, *News and Views* editor Traci Andrighetti interviews Michael Reynolds, editor in chief of Europa Editions, and Christopher MacLehose, publisher and founder of MacLehose Press (an imprint of London's Quercus), to explore the effect that popular literary translations have had on the demand for international fiction.

THE FALL ISSUE

Our Fall issue will focus tangentially on a topic that came up on the Literary Division's listserv: the translation of spiritual texts. As a complement to her novelistic excerpt in the current issue, Ames Dee's essay "Old Lang Sine: Seeking Truth in Ancient Texts" will explore the linguistic hurdles involved in reading ancient documents.

ABOUT THE EDITORS

Michele Aynesworth specializes in translating Argentine and French authors.

Tony Beckwith, a native of South America's Southern Cone, now lives in Austin, where he works as a writer, translator, poet, and cartoonist. E-mail: tony@tonybeckwith.com.

Patrick Saari writes, translates, edits and interprets in English, French and Spanish. Contact at patricksaari@netlife.ec.

Traci Andrighetti is a prize-winning literary translator and author, editor, and creator of the Italian language and literature blog **italicissima**.

Special thanks to Jamie Padula for proofreading and to LD officers Emilia Balke and Clayton Causey for their support.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

For upcoming issues we're particularly interested in contributions relating to:

- the translation of children's or teen books, crime fiction or thrillers, and subtitles;
- "real life experiences" of literary translators.

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American Translators Association
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Alexandria, VA 22314

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Submit articles up to 1600 words, font size 12,
Word or text file, single-spaced.
Indent paragraphs or put a space between them.
Include a brief bio of two or three sentences and,
if convenient, a photograph.
Illustrations and links, etc., are encouraged.
Submissions may be edited.

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

Send general submissions for future issues to
michele@mckayaynesworth.com.
News and Views submissions go to
itraci@hotmail.com

Fall submissions deadline: November 1
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FROM THE LD ADMINISTRATOR

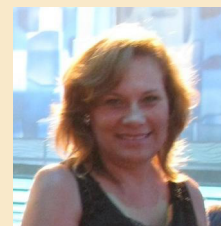
I am very pleased that the Editorial staff of *Source* has grown. This will allow us to offer a larger variety of content without overloading Michele. As usual, I read Tony Beckwith's column with great interest. The article provides not only an insight into the life of a great writer, but also touches upon the creative relationships between an author, his translator, and the editor. Carlos Fuentes cooperated with his translators and editors and valued their contribution to the success of his novels. Literary translation requires, among other things, a deep understanding of the original literary work of art and its author. I would be very interested in reading more stories about author-translator-editor relationships and interesting, creative solutions of literary translation problems.

Traci Andrighetti's "News and Views" article would have been a great introduction to the panel discussion with distinguished speakers Steven T. Murray, best known for the translation of Stieg Larsen's novel *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, and his wife and award-winning translator Tiina Nunnally, whom I had invited this year. Unfortunately, after the deadline for submissions of distinguished speakers, Mr. Murray and Mrs. Nunnally suddenly became unavailable

to present at the ATA Conference in San Diego. It would be very helpful to me, and to future Literary Division Administrators, if more of you would share any interesting information pertaining to the selection of distinguished speakers that you may come across throughout the year.

Our Division Annual meeting this year will be only 15 minutes long. I hope to see many of you at this meeting since I have to select a new Leadership Council for 2013; also a Nominating Committee needs to be approved to nominate candidates for Division Administrator for the election in 2013 and to discuss goals for 2013. I encourage all of you who are interested in taking a leadership role to attend the pre-conference volunteer trainings on October 24: *Jurassic Parliament: Running Smooth, Efficient, and Fair Board Meetings* held by Ann G. Macfarlane and *Leadership Training for Division, Chapter, and Affiliate Group Leaders* held by Karen Tkaczyk and Tess Whitty.

At the Guadalajara Book Fair this year, the host provides three nights free hotel accommodation, and the ATA will have a table at the fair. If you are interested in volunteering



Emilia Balke is a freelance translator, interpreter, and voiceover talent. She translates from Russian, German, and Macedonian into English and Bulgarian, and from Bulgarian into English.

to staff the table, please contact Lois Feuerle at (503)236-5593 or LoisMarieFeuerle@cs.com.

And finally, if you would like to attend an informal lunch on Thursday, October 25, please contact me at ebalke@language-web.net or come to meet with us at 12:30 p.m. by the conference registration booth.

I look forward to seeing you at the 53rd Annual ATA Conference in San Diego.

Sincerely,
Emilia Balke

Literary Division
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ebalke@language-web.net

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P. Clayton D. Causey
literarytranslator@gmail.com

To register for the Guadalajara Book Fair:

http://www.fil.com.mx/ingles/i_prof/i_registrese.asp

NEWS AND VIEWS



Traci Andrighetti
News and Views Editor

IF 2011 WAS “THE YEAR OF THE TRANSLATOR,” WHAT IS 2012?

American and British publishers have long cited the apathy of English-speaking readers toward international fiction as a good reason not to publish literature in translation. But in light of the recent tremendous successes in the United States and Great Britain of foreign authors such as Muriel Barbery, Haruki Murakami, and, in particular, the late Stieg Larsson, it's more and more difficult to accept the argument that literature in translation doesn't sell. In fact, the achievements of these and other international writers have led many in the U.S. and British press to speak of a “surge of interest” in foreign fiction that extends not only to newer authors but also to literary greats like Umberto Eco, Roberto Bolaño and Péter Nádas. Robert McCrum, associate editor of *The Observer*, even went so far as to declare 2011 “the year of the translator” because of this newfound “appetite” for international literature as evidenced by such phenomena as the celebrations of the 400th anniversary edition of the King James Bible and the enduring presence of Stieg Larsson on bestseller lists, in movie theaters and in the media.

All this editorial enthusiasm about the state of literature in translation prompts those familiar with the publishing industry to question whether the present situation is really all that bright. It's common knowledge that translators of foreign fiction are still hard-pressed to find publishers for their work, and many publishers of international literature remain partially or even wholly dependent on grants from cultural institutes and foundations to fund their translations. Furthermore, foreign governments, including Romania, Catalonia and Iceland, have actually been stepping up their subsidization of books in English in an attempt to increase their countries' share of the U.S. literary translation market, a market accounting for a paltry three percent of all books published annually. So, precisely how have these popular literary translations impacted their publishers, and, more importantly, how has their success affected reluctant readers and other publishers? Michael Reynolds, editor in chief of Europa Editions, and Christopher MacLehose, publisher and founder of MacLehose Press, an imprint of Quercus (London), both of whom graciously agreed to be interviewed for this article, have somewhat different views on these matters.

In 2008, Europa Editions and MacLehose Press enjoyed great success with the respective publications of Muriel Barbery's *The Elegance of the Hedgehog*, translated from the French *L'Élegance du hérisson* (Gallimard, 2006) by Alison Anderson, and Stieg Larsson's *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, translated from the Swedish *Män som hatar kvinnor* (literally, "Men who hate women") (Norstedts Förlag, 2005) by Reg Keeland, a pseudonym for Steven T. Murray. *The Hedgehog*, as the novel is affectionately called by Reynolds, stayed on the New York Times Best Seller List for a combined total of almost 60 weeks. *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, together with Reg Keeland's translations of the two subsequent novels in the so-called "Millennium Trilogy," *The Girl Who Played with Fire* (*Flickan som lekte med elden*) (MacLehose Press, 2009) and *The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet's Nest* (*Luftslottet som sprängdes*) (MacLehose Press, 2009), dominated bestseller lists and movie theaters through 2011.

Both Reynolds and MacLehose admit that the successes of these translations came as something of a surprise to those at Europa and MacLehose Press, but they each stated that the popularity of the books in their native France and Sweden and in other parts of Europe was an influencing factor when these titles were initially considered for publication. According to Reynolds, however, *The Hedgehog* was not an "easy" choice for the U.S. market, as some have tried to claim in light of its success, because: "It's French, it has little or no plot, it contains pages and pages of discursive passages about French and German philosophy, and it was published by a tiny publishing house with very limited resources that had been in business for three years." Conversely, the noir thriller *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* was an obvious choice for English-speaking audiences and for MacLehose Press, which at the time had yet to publish a single book. But, as MacLehose explains, there was reason for muted optimism because "Britain has often been a tough nut to crack. America too."

As it turns out, the successes of *The Elegance of the Hedgehog* and *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* have impacted Europa and MacLehose Press differently in terms of how they publish and market their translations. Reynolds says that *The Hedgehog* changed Europa's relationship with its retailers to a certain degree. Suddenly, booksellers were no longer doing business with Europa because they respected its brand or supported its efforts to publish translations but because they were earning significant revenues doing so. And thanks to *The Hedgehog*, Europa now feels somewhat more stable, has a little more flexibility with respect to the publishing and marketing support it can provide for its books, and publishes more titles per year than it did four years ago (Europa publishes twenty-five books annually, fifteen of which are translations, while MacLehose Press publishes twenty-three works of translation per year, with the occasional original English-language book).

By contrast, when asked whether *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* altered the way MacLehose Press publishes or markets literature in translation, MacLehose

responded, “Not in any way at all.” *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* had no effect on the publication and marketing strategies of MacLehose Press because, as MacLehose explains, it was an “embryo publishing house” when the Swedish publisher Norstedts approached it (as a last resort, no less!) with the Millennium Trilogy.

Reynolds and MacLehose believe that *The Elegance of the Hedgehog* and *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* have increased the profile of literature in translation among Americans and the British—at least to some extent. In reference to *The Hedgehog*, Reynolds remarks, “We’ve witnessed a work of contemporary fiction, not a contemporary classic, not a canonical work of literature, but a contemporary novel by a living foreign writer become a bestseller, touch the hearts and minds of hundreds and thousands of readers in the U.S. That’s got to mean something.” MacLehose is more cautious in his assessment of the impact of *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, only conceding that “perhaps some of the success that Jo Nesbø presently enjoys (even if he is a terrific storyteller himself) could be put down to the doors that Stieg Larsson opened.” He also thinks it’s possible that subtitled films, which have long been shunned by American and British audiences, may now be more popular owing to the success of the Swedish versions of the Millennium Trilogy films.

As for the question of whether *The Elegance of the Hedgehog* and *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* have convinced other American and British publishers to consider foreign fiction, Reynolds is convinced that the success of *The Elegance of the Hedgehog* “has prompted editors everywhere to pay closer attention to the submissions of works in translation that cross their desks.” MacLehose was not available for further comment on this issue, but Chad Post, the director of Open Letter Press, made the case for the effect of *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* on publishers quite nicely in a 2010 editorial when he commented, “I’m sure every publishing house in Manhattan would overpay by a million dollars to find the next ‘Girl with a something something.’” And, if a recent cartoon in *The New Yorker* is any indication, the Millennium Trilogy is continuing to make its mark on the industry. In the cartoon, a publisher looks scornfully at a manuscript and asks its hapless author: “Can’t you make it Swedish?”

So, where exactly does literature in translation stand with readers and publishers in 2012? Only time will tell. One potential source of trouble for literary translation, however, is that publishers disagree about why so little international fiction is published in the United States and Britain. For instance, Reynolds believes the problem lies with the publishing industry. In his view, “American readers have always been willing to read literature in translation. It’s American publishing that has been unwilling or incapable of properly publishing literature in translation.” MacLehose, on the other hand, thinks the problem lies with readers, explaining

“the reality is that every year, every season, outstanding books which have sold well or very well indeed in their original European editions will find only a modest readership in America and a yet more modest one in Britain.” How will publisher disaccord on this issue affect the present and future of international fiction for English-speaking audiences? Regardless of the answer, it’s safe to say that Scandinavian crime fiction will continue to sell.

OTHER NEWS AND VIEWS

Resources for Readers and Literary Translators of French and Swedish

While we’re on the subject of French and Swedish literature in translation, I would like to call your attention to the following websites:

French Book News at <http://www.frenchbooknews.com>

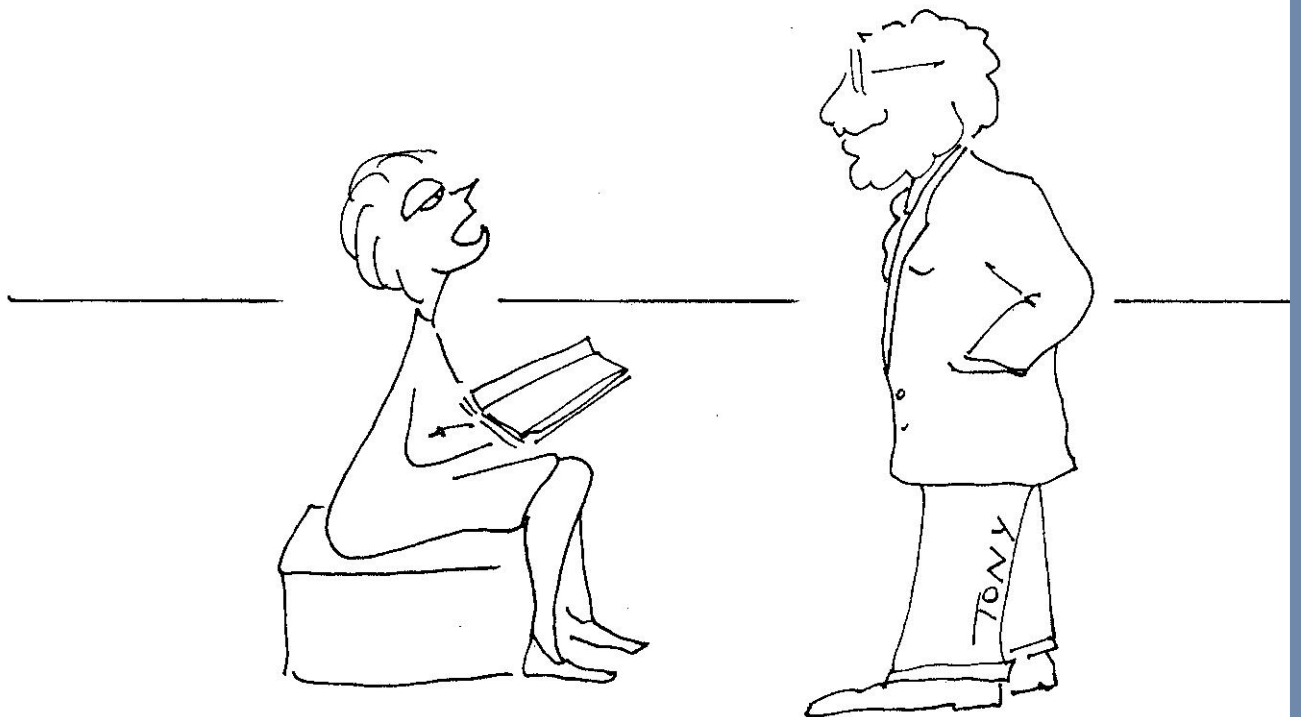
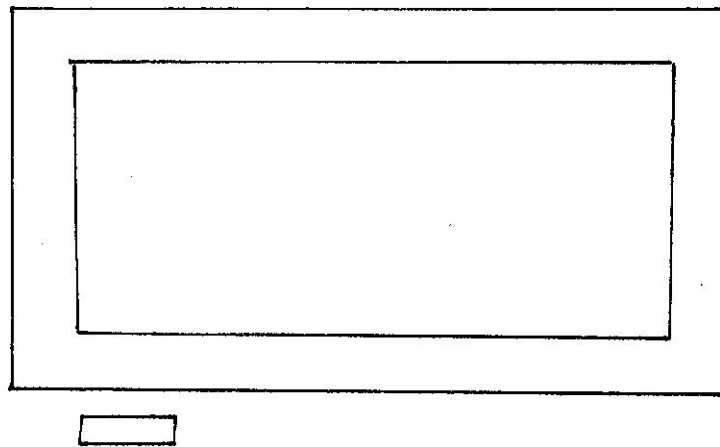
French Book News, a joint venture of Book Office UK and Book Department USA, two agencies operated by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, promotes the translation of French literature into English. This site provides important information for literary translators and publishers of French, including grants and prizes; festivals and book fairs; a directory of translators, publishers, booksellers and libraries abroad; and a database of French books in translation.

Swedish Book Review at <http://www.swedishbookreview.com>

The Swedish Book Review (SBR), which is published twice a year, is aimed at introducing English speakers to Swedish literature. The first issue of 2012 is of particular interest because it presents a new series called “Translator’s Choice,” which invites literary translators of Swedish to translate texts that they find especially appealing. Submission requirements, as well as information about SELTA, the Swedish-English Literary Translators’ Association, are available on the website.

To contribute news, interviews, profiles, or reviews, please e-mail Traci Andrighetti at itraci@hotmail.com (see submission guidelines on page 4).

BTW



“Apparently, one man’s aesthetic is another’s, like, total anesthetic.”



CARLOS FUENTES

THE WRITER AND HIS TRANSLATORS

BY TONY BECKWITH

"Nothing disappears completely, everything is transformed."

– Carlos Fuentes, *Terra Nostra* (trans. Margaret Sayers Peden).

Carlos Fuentes died on May 15, 2012 in Mexico City. He was 83. He had lived the fullest of lives, and was widely regarded as one of the grand old men of Latin American letters. With his passing, a major chapter in the literature of the Spanish-speaking world comes to an end.

Fuentes once told NPR (National Public Radio) that when he was a boy living in the United States, his father, a career diplomat, taught him "the history, geography, the values of Mexico. Then I went and saw the real country and this created a conflict in me ... In the tension between my imagination and reality, my literary possibilities as a novelist were born.... I see criticism as our way of being optimistic in a growing nation such as Mexico. To abstain from criticism is, I think, a way of being pessimistic; to engage in criticism is to be concerned with the matters at hand and with the country."

I met Fuentes briefly in 1977, when he came to address the American Literary Translators Association (ALTA) Conference and the Texas Book Fair. He was that quintessential Latin American figure — the public intellectual. He was an articulate force in social, political, and academic circles, well-endowed with the courage of his convictions which he expressed with a natural urbanity and sparkle that made him a welcome guest on interview shows all over the world. As a journalist he was provocative and known to wield "a fearsome pen." During his visit I wondered what it might be like to translate his books, and mused on the many ways there might be to prepare for an opportunity of that kind.

News of his death made me think of his legacy of words and ideas, and of his penchant for promoting his fellow writers. As I looked at the long list of his works, my eyes hovered over the names of the translators who have introduced him to the

English-speaking world over the last fifty years. I began to think of Fuentes in terms of those who knew him and his work rather better than most, and what they remembered about translating his stories and essays and novels. Three of them graciously agreed to be interviewed for this article: Alfred Mac Adam¹, Suzanne Jill Levine², and Margaret Sayers Peden³.

Mac Adam first collaborated with Fuentes in 1984 on the book *Christopher Unborn*, and remembered accepting the assignment “with tremendous misgivings. After all, the novel is long, unimaginably complex and contains a huge range of styles, including long passages in the local slang of Mexico City. My Spanish, my English and my sanity would all be put to the test. This was unlike anything I’d ever translated in my life, but the honor of translating the author of *The Death of Artemio Cruz* was an opportunity I would never turn down.”⁴

Indeed, what a magnet! And not without immediate rewards. The project included a trip to Mexico with Fuentes and the editor from the publishing house for a one-week marathon editing session in a secluded country house. Mac Adam recalled that “this collaboration was a shock for Carlos. Our daily reading exercise was actually the first time he’d ever gone over his Spanish original with an editor. The editor—as we know that person in U.S. publishing—had only recently come into existence in the Spanish-speaking world. In the past, it was simply assumed that the author would watch over his own work. Because of the editor’s suggestions, Carlos found himself making changes in the English text he wished he could have made to the original, paring and deleting to make the narrative more fluid. Producing the translation actually changed the author’s perception of the original.” For most translators, such a close working relationship with the author is the exception rather than the rule, but it was not unusual when working with Carlos Fuentes.

Suzanne Jill Levine translated Fuentes’s *Holy Place* in 1972. She was not quite 25 years old at the time, and the writer must have recognized a familiar precocity in the young translator. They became friends as they collaborated on the translation, and the correspondence between them is a fertile source of insights into their process. In a letter from Mexico City in November, 1971, Fuentes says that Levine makes him “read like Henry James.” He goes on to say: “I have only one basic desire: that the Claudia-Mito dialogs should be a lot harder, rougher, biting, more vulgar. As long as he narrates in the 1st person, the Jamesian tone with baroque overtones is just perfect; when the mother and son engage in verbal battle, there should be (as in the Spanish original) a marked difference; Claudia, particularly, should be much more bitchy and almost gangster-like in her speech: like something out of Raymond Chandler or Ross MacDonald.” When I asked Levine

how it felt to have the author coaching from the sidelines, she said: “I loved Carlos’s guidance when translating *Holy Place*. He told me to make Claudia’s quips more Raymond Chandler-esque, which was excellent advice, as he was doing a takeoff, in those sections, on the hardboiled American roman noir; indeed one of the books that most influenced him in its style and treatment of social and political corruption was Dashiell Hammett’s *Red Harvest*.”

Levine, a life-long academic and prolific translator of Latin American writers, met Fuentes in 1969 through her partner and mentor 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 that spanned the 1960s and 70s. Monegal and Fuentes were close friends, and thanks to their efforts *Mundo Nuevo* introduced 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 key figures in twentieth-century Latin American literature because they facilitated a literary dialogue between North and South America at a very difficult time. Literature and politics were uneasy partners in a complicated relationship, and initiatives such as *Mundo Nuevo* provided a channel for dialogue. It was always about the dialogue.

Levine was at Columbia University writing her MA thesis on Gabriel García Márquez and remembers having lunch with him and Fuentes and Monegal in Barcelona during a trip to Europe in the summer of 1970. She recalled how generous Fuentes was in his support of “Gabo” (Gabriel) and other writers, a quality that is always mentioned when people talk about Carlos Fuentes. She said that his generosity of spirit was “an expression of the grass roots of politics in the world of literature; he understood that writers need defenders, they need champions.” I asked Levine what had interested her most about this book from a translator’s perspective and she said it was the shrill dialogue, the conversations with unspoken tensions beneath.

A translator must obviously be skilled in working with dialogue, especially when it includes a lot of slang. Fuentes was prone to put slang expressions into his characters’ mouths. Alfred Mac Adam translated six of his books, so I asked him about that aspect of the work: “The major challenge was his vast vocabulary in Spanish and his ability to make puns in several languages. Keeping up with that was hard. Translating slang is also difficult, especially if the slang in question is from another era. What do you do—try to replicate 1960s Mexico City slang in some kind of New York 1960s slang? Impossible.”

When Fuentes came to Texas I interviewed him for the Austin newspaper and asked which of his own books satisfied him most. With no hesitation he said: “*Terra Nostra*.

It is the hardest to read. Many readers shy away from it, but my best readers are the readers of *Terra Nostra*." One reason people shy away from it is that it is a long book, and I wondered what steps a translator would take to keep track of things when working on a book of that size. Margaret Sayers Peden translated it in 1976, and was subsequently asked if she "made a special effort, for the sake of consistency, to keep track of the way you've translated particular words that reappear throughout the work?" Peden said she did, and added: "I also believe that the same word, given the fact that words are slippery and treacherous, needs to be translated differently within different contexts."

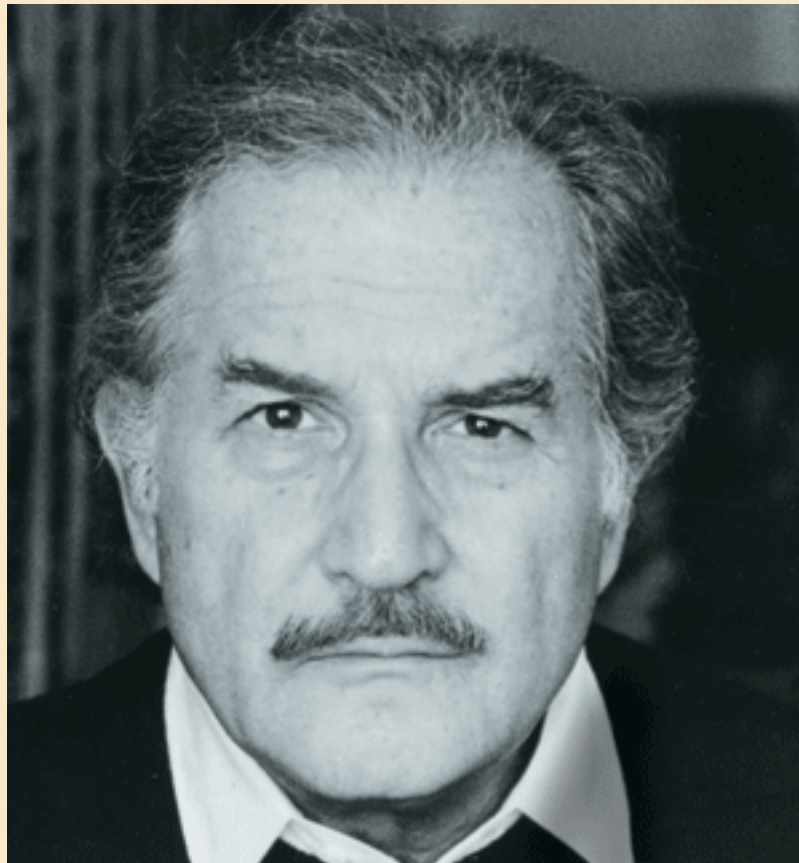
Sayers Peden went back to school in 1962 to get her master's degree, but claims to have done nothing literary or academic before then. She was "drawn to translating by forces I ... still don't understand. But once started I wasn't going to be stopped.... It never dawned on me that I couldn't translate anything I wanted." As she evolved as a literary translator she realized that she had "a very persistent flaw. I wanted to stay too close to the Spanish. That was something very difficult for me to unlearn." That process of "unlearning" sounds like an excellent way to develop the flexibility a translator requires to handle the endless subtleties of language and meaning. "Problems are essentially the same among the genres. There's music in prose, information to be communicated in poetry." Sayers Peden went on to translate six Fuentes books, including *The Old Gringo*, which was made into a movie.

So, what was it like working with him? Alfred Mac Adam said: "After working on *Christopher Unborn*, I became Carlos's regular translator. Meaning that when he had one of his manuscripts (he usually wrote in longhand) transcribed—by his daughter from his first marriage (to the actress Rita Macedo)—he would have a copy sent to me. I would then get right to work on it so the translation would be out in a timely fashion." I asked him about being Carlos's regular translator: "It was like having a second job. For a couple of decades he was a part of my life, so his words were constantly ringing in my ears."

Levine's correspondence with Fuentes tells many stories. There are so many enticing side tracks in their letters that it is a challenge to keep the focus on the matter at hand. A relevant item, however, that gives us some idea of how Fuentes approached the collaboration, is a request for clarification on a word that elicits this answer: "*Escuincle* is the Mexican equivalent of the Río de la Plata's pibe or the Chilean *cabro*. From the Nahuatl *itzcuintle*, a very small hairless dog. 'Brat' will do." In response to another query, Fuentes writes: "...Actually, *Chole* is a nickname for women called Soledad." He then adds, in his trademark tongue-in-cheek style: "Cien años de Chole".

In discussing the relationship between writer and translator, Levine said: “The relationship an author establishes with the translator is different from that with scholars and critics; authors may be willing to open up to translators in ways they would be reluctant to do with critics and scholars. There is a more intimate relationship at times, which may have to do with the shared experience of the materiality of writing.”⁵

As translators we are not only doing what Margaret Sayers Peden describes as “bringing something new to people who wouldn’t have it otherwise.” We are also flowing the other way and sojourning in a time and place — created by a writer — as we describe it in another language. In this case the writer was Carlos Fuentes, who will be greatly missed by his readers and his translators.



¹Alfred Mac Adam, Columbia University.

²Suzanne Jill Levine, University of California at Santa Barbara.

³Margaret Sayers Peden was unexpectedly unavailable at the last minute and unable to participate in the interview. She is quoted here from “The Intimate Presence of the Other: An Interview with Margaret Sayers Peden by James Hoggard” for *Translation Review*, Volume 56, 1998.

⁴“On Becoming a Fuentette” by Alfred Mac Adam [from: AARP VIVA, Spring 2011].

⁵Excerpt from “For Women and Translation. Suzanne Jill Levine interviewed by María Constanza Guzmán.”

BTW



“...so I said: ‘Would you rather be right or happy?’ and I haven’t seen him since.”

THE UNKNOWN TREE: THREE POEMS FROM MARTÍN LÓPEZ-VEGA'S ÁRBOL DESCONOCIDO

INTRODUCED AND TRANSLATED BY
RUTH CRISPIN



Ruth Katz Crispin is Professor of Spanish at the University of the Sciences in Philadelphia. She translates Spanish poetry and prose into English.

Martín López-Vega is a young Spanish poet—and translator!—as well as a prose and travel writer with a novel to his credit, who is also, or has been, blogger, bookseller, critic (editor of the newspaper *El Mundo*'s cultural supplement) and editor of a publishing house. Born in 1975 in Asturias, in the northwest of Spain, his eleven books of poetry, several of which have received prizes, include five in his native Asturian. *Árbol desconocido* (2002), from which the following few poems come, won the first Emilio Alarcos prize for poetry. He has lived in Italy and in Portugal and resides currently in Madrid, where he translates for various presses and continues to write.

Árbol desconocido reveals López-Vega's original voice: conversational, intimate, it centers on memory and the implications of memory for the self. It evokes the everyday and the exotic: a Chinese goblet in a museum, an orange left on a garden table, forests, water, old loves. His poetry captivates with an immediacy only apparently belied by the unfamiliar names or the defamiliarization of places and things: in almost every case, these are made to create a sense of self that is nourished by memory and includes the future, which is at once both full and empty. It also includes the reader, as the sense of place fills her own imagination and makes each scene and its implications for the poet personal to the reader as well.

Translating is normally solitary work, but it was not in this case. With these poems, I had for the first time a provocative sounding board, who alerted me to a couple of careless wordings (as a result, I found a few more on my own), challenged me with alternative nouns, verbs and even (or perhaps especially) prepositions, and presented me with a different view of the poet and his goals. Needless to say, this was both difficult to confront and ultimately rewarding. It forced me to rethink some of my favorite phrasings; it allowed me in some cases to see that I needed to bring my translations closer to the sound of the original Spanish. Although I know that one is never completely satisfied with a translation, rereadings of one's translated work not only inevitably uncover infelicities not noticed before, but can renew inspiration as well and lead to fresh (and, one hopes, improved) wording.

CONSTRUCCIÓN DE LA DICHA

sólo con los andamios del recuerdo
se construye la dicha

se construye sosteniendo la tarde
con las cerezas encendidas de la infancia

se construye erigiendo contra el tiempo
una tarde una sola en Düsseldorf que fue vida

se construye sustituyendo esta plaza vacía
por la piazza San Egidio en el Trastevere

se construye sustituyendo lo que la vida es
por lo que la vida fue

HOW TO BUILD JOY

only on the scaffolds of memory
can you build joy

you build it by nourishing the afternoon
with the fiery cherries of childhood

you build it by raising against time
a single afternoon in Düsseldorf which was life itself

you build it by replacing this empty square
with the Piazza Sant'Egidio in Trastevere

you build it by replacing what life is now
with what it once was

BOSQUE

Una mañana de hace algunos años,
 en un bosque de Bretaña,
 desperté cuando aún todos dormían.
 Parecía la primera mañana del mundo.

Salí en silencio de la tienda de campaña
 con cuidado de no despertar a nadie
 y me adentré en el bosque,
 sin más brújula que el olor de la madrugada.

Parecía la primera mañana del mundo.
 Bebí en el agua cristalina de un arroyuelo
 y sentí en la boca una frescura que nunca había conocido.
 Todo era nuevo, el agua, las flores, el rocío.

Cuando volví, Anne Christine y Nadège untaban pan
 con mantequilla y preparaban café. Me preguntaron dónde
 había andado. *El bosque*, les dije. *¡Y no te topaste*
 con ningún jabalí, con ningún animal salvaje?

No, respondí. No podían existir
 los animales salvajes de las viejas historias en el lugar
 por el que yo había andado. Volvía de un lugar que no estaba
 en parte alguna, regresaba del secreto.

Fue hace algunos años. Desde entonces
 cuando soy feliz siento que acabo de salir de aquel bosque
 donde he dejado perdido al adolescente desorientado
 que era (y vuelvo a ser a veces)

y que Anne Christine y Nadège preparan café.

WOOD

One morning some years ago,
in a wood in Brittany,
I awoke while everyone else was still asleep.
It seemed like the world's first morning.

I silently left the tent
careful not to wake anyone
and I entered the wood,
with no other compass than the scent of dawn.

It seemed like the world's first morning.
I drank crystal clear water from a brook
and in my mouth I felt a freshness I never had known.
Everything was new, the water, the flowers, the dew.

When I returned, Anne Christine and Nadège were buttering
bread and making coffee. They asked me where
I had walked. *To the wood*, I told them. *And didn't you run into
a wild boar, or any savage beast?*

No, I answered. The wild beasts from the old tales
couldn't exist in the place where I walked.
I was coming back from a place that wasn't
anywhere, I was returning from the secret.

That was some years ago. Since then,
when I'm happy I feel as if I had just come from that wood
where I'd abandoned the bewildered adolescent
I was then (and sometimes still am)

and as if Anne Christine and Nadège were still making coffee.

CENTRO

Remontamos a pie el lecho del río, sin saber
muy bien qué buscábamos; hundimos los pies
en charcas repletas de insectos, pisamos zarzas
para evitar cascadas, nuestra piel se llenó de cortes
y se aceleró el corazón. Finalmente, más arriba aún
de donde manaba el agua, la encontramos: una
enorme pirámide de piedra —era el secreto.
No lo desciframos, pero alcanzamos su localización exacta;
no lo desvelamos, pero sabemos al menos que existe.
Pienso —y éste es el motivo que me trae al poema
desde las charcas llenas de huesos de animales—
si habrá también dentro de ti un camino
que lleve a tu centro, al secreto: aunque sea
un camino así, lleno de zarzas
y precipicios —¿qué importa eso,
si las heridas de ese camino ya las tengo?

CENTER

We walked upstream along the riverbed, not knowing
very well what we were looking for; we sank our feet
in puddles full of insects, we stepped on brambles
to avoid the waterfalls, our skin was scratched all over
and our hearts beat faster. Finally, even higher
than the river's gushing source, we found it: an
enormous pyramid of stone—it was the secret:
We didn't decipher it, but we reached its exact location;
we didn't reveal it, but we know at least that it exists.
I think—and this is what brings me from those puddles
replete with animal bones to the poem —
about whether inside you there is also a trail
that leads to your center, to the secret: even if it is
a trail like this one, full of brambles
and cliffs—what does it matter?
That trail has already left its scars.

REMEMBERING DARFUR

A REVIEW BY FRANÇOISE HERRMANN

*Françoise Herrmann is a freelance French, English
and Spanish translator and interpreter.
She also teaches scientific and technical translation.*

THE TRANSLATOR

A Memoir

By Daoud Hari

as told to Dennis Michael

Burke and Megan McKenna

Random House Trade Paperback, 2008, 207 pp.

Darfur has been in the news for a while now. It rhymes with genocide. Daoud Hari, author of this memoir, is one of the many witnesses who have been able to lay bare the horrors of the Darfur war. A Darfur native, displaced with his family by the Janjaweed (the government-backed militia of Sudan), refugee, trilingual inter-preter, outfitter for dangerous expeditions into Darfur, escort and guide, Daoud Hari begins his book with the following African saying: "If God must break your leg, he will at least teach you how to limp".



Why?

In the Zaghawa language of eastern Chad and western Sudan (Darfur), "Dar" means land, and "fur" means tribespeople (see map). The short story of Darfur is 2.5 million displaced people in Darfur and more than 240,000 who fled to refugee camps in neighboring eastern Chad.*

*These figures are taken from an interview with Daoud Hari:

<http://www.randomhouse.com/rhpg/features/thetranslator/daoud-hari-author.html>.

The reason, in Daoud Hari's own words:

Nearly half of Africa is covered with pastoral lands of herding villages and much of that land has great wealth below and poor people above. They are among three hundred million Africans who earn less than a dollar a day, and who are often pushed out of the way or killed for such things as oil, water, metal ore, and diamonds. This makes the rise of rebel groups very easy. (6)

This is a book about Darfur — the culture, the history, the conflict, the genocide, the details — seen and told in the exceptionally kind and generous voices of Daoud Hari and Suleyman Abakar Moussa, Hari's alias in the Sudanese refugee camps of Chad. It is the memoir of a young man whose two names reflect the schism of the political and geographic situation, a man driven by the desire to help his people and reclaim life in Darfur before the atrocities of the genocide.

Hari found his calling as a trilingual (English, Zaghawa and Arabic) interpreter for prominent journalists, UN and US investigative officers, and humanitarian relief workers.

Translating in Darfur

Hari is an exceptionally courageous trilingual interpreter. Once his reputation was established via satellite phone, almost every assignment meant working as an outfitter to plan trips for crossing back into Darfur from Chad into what is now an extremely dangerous area. Once in Darfur, he assumed the dual roles of guide and interpreter, risking his own life to show the plunder, the devastation and unspeakable barbarity of the situation, and to serve as interpreter for all interviews with anyone still alive and roaming the area.

Hari recalls one expedition with the BBC:

At the edge of one village, in a thickly forested place, the village defenders had made their last stand wedging themselves high in the trees with their rifles. They were all shot and killed. It had been three days or more since the men in the trees had died, and on this steamy spring afternoon, their bodies were coming to earth. (112)

Some of the BBC people had to return to Chad, where they were in a medical clinic for three days to recover from what they saw, and smelled, and learned about the nature of what simply must be called evil. (113)

As for interpreting on safer grounds at the refugee camps in Chad, Hari comments:

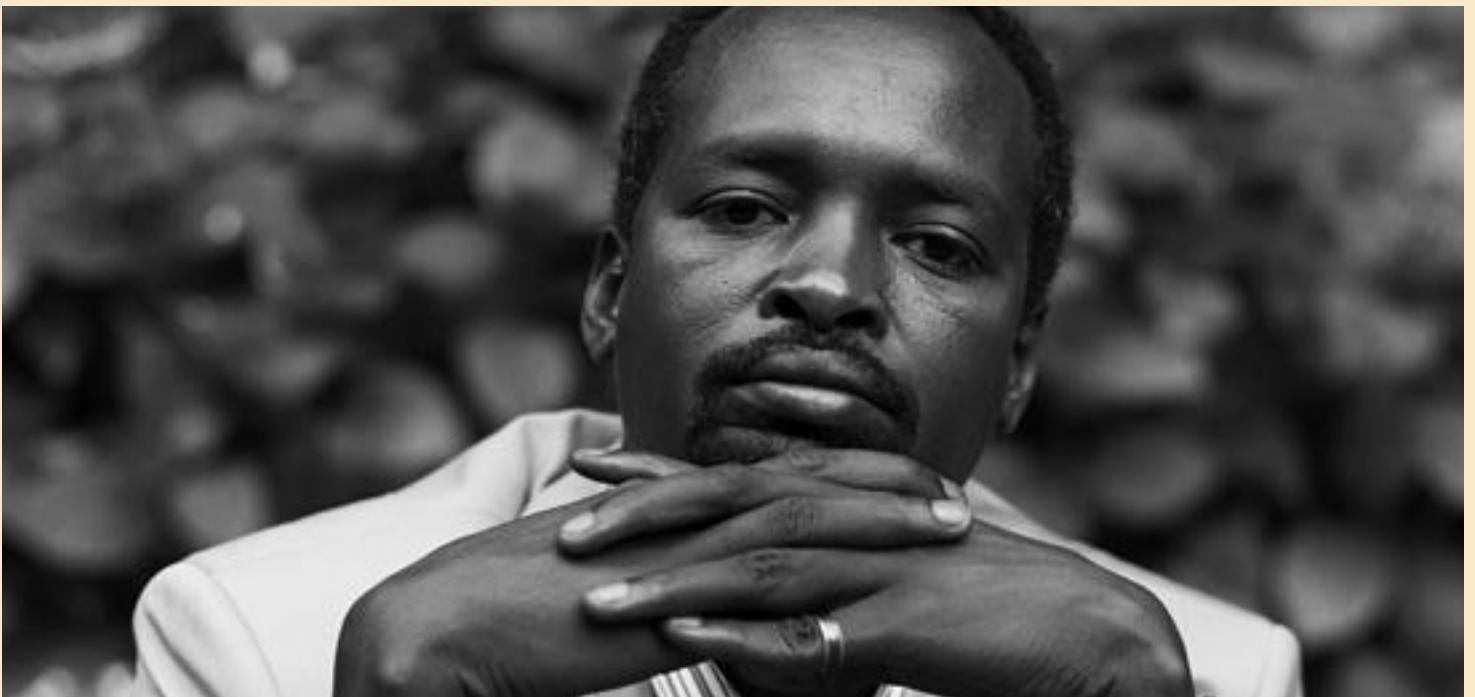
It is interesting how many ways there are for people to be hurt and killed, and for villages to be terrorized and burned, and for children to die in deserts, and for young mothers to suffer. I would say that these ways to die and to suffer are unspeakable, and yet they were spoken: we interviewed 1134 human beings over the next few weeks, their stories swirled through my near sleepless nights. (84)

Memoir and asylum

On Hari's final expedition to Darfur for Paul Salopek, a Pulitzer-prize winning journalist from the *Chicago Tribune* working freelance for *National Geographic*, all three members of the expedition — Paul Salopek, Daoud Hari and the driver, Abdulrahman Anu — were arrested, tortured and charged with espionage. After much international pressure and negotiations, including the intervention of then Senator Barack Obama, release was secured for all three men. Six months after their arrest, they were sent to the United States, where Hari's memoir was completed.

Must read

This book will push the frontiers of your familiar world of interpreting and translation to the outer limits. It will honor your affiliation and raise the bar of what you ever thought could possibly be happening in your field. Beyond professional satisfaction, however, it will supply you with insight into an inconceivable beastliness, through which only an extraordinarily gentle and beneficent soul could safely escort you.



GREEK

BY AMES DEE

This excerpt from "Gospel Truth," an autobiographical novel-in-progress about a spiritual journey, is about the baptism of fire that comes with studying a new language when no longer young.



*Ames Dee is a writer, poet, and dabbler in languages in the Pacific Northwest. Since 2007 her work with Spanish, French, and Sanskrit has been published by the American Translators Association in **Beacons and Source**.*

©

Her father, whose enthusiasm for a joke was boundless, was washing the family car outside their New York apartment building when a neighbor ruefully passed a finger through the dust on his own car, and said, "How about doing mine when you're through?"

"Sure," said her father. And he did, just as carefully and cheerfully as he washed and polished his own car. He did it for a laugh. The energy he expended was nothing compared to the delight of surprising his neighbor, enjoyed again every time afterward that he recounted the story.

His favorite joke with her school friends was the Greek joke. "I know lots of languages. Test me," he'd say. "I can speak any language but Greek."

The girls would raise their eyes in thought and then challenge him with what they imagined was of the highest difficulty. "Okay, say something in Russian."

Her father would shake his head slowly. "That's Greek to me."

"No, say something in, um, Latin."

His face would sadden. "That's Greek to me."

"How about Italian?" the girls would giggle, starting to get into the rhythm of the joke.

"That's Greek to me," her father would grin.

©

Coffee hour at the university church is a revelation. Hugs abound. People she's become acquainted with through Bible study and people she hardly knows crowd around her with congratulations, cards, and gifts. She had no idea that standing beneath the high dome of the majestic church and receiving the ancient sacrament of baptism at the age of thirty-five would provoke such a stir.

The chaplain gives her a book of visions by a fourteenth-century anchoress and mystic, Julian of Norwich. He inscribes in it, in Greek, a quotation from St. Paul: how the face of Moses shone when he conversed with God, and how we as Christians are being "transfigured into his likeness, from splendor to splendor." She looks up the quote by chapter and verse, which the chaplain has mercifully included, but she can't read the Greek inscription. She is living her father's Greek joke.



She does not quite know what to expect from baptism. The experience of light and joy did not surprise her, since light and joy are what brought her to this day. But afterward? What happens next? There is so much more to learn.

She is not the sort of person who skims lightly over the surface of things. When something attracts her, she gives it her full attention. She reads books, seeks out people with similar interests, and thinks a great deal about the subject.

Her past work, at best, was meaningless, though lucrative and intellectually challenging. She was good at it, but doesn't want to return to it. Her mind is full of theology, scripture, and questions about God and the meaning of life. It's all she wants to think about. The center of her life is the white marble altar in the sanctuary of the university church. She has talked the chaplain into giving her a minimum-wage job at the church and spends all her time there. If she scrimps, she can eke out several months of liberty from real, respectable, meaningless work.

The chaplain is a professor of New Testament. She wants to audit one of his classes, but she knows that he teaches them from the Greek. He even leads his Bible study from a Greek text, the limp red binding resting in one hand as he flips through the pages, translating on the fly, throwing around terms like *pericope* and *kerygma*. He dwells on the nuances of tenses and voices. Evidently this is a new Christian language she will have to learn in order to be part of the church.



Every weekday morning she turns off her alarm clock, dresses in the dark, wipes the dew from her bicycle seat, and pedals through town, through the arches, past the eucalyptus grove, past the redwood trees to the university church.

Often the first to arrive, she lights the candles, chooses a communion liturgy, and lays out copies around the altar. Then she walks down the chancel steps to the pews, where she has the best view of early light rising through the pearlescent layers of the stained-glass windows. For God alone her soul in silence waits.

On the day after her baptism she comes to early morning communion as usual. Afterward, she takes the chaplain aside and says, "I would like to be able to study Greek. Is there any way for me to do that?" She knows it's a stretch.

The chaplain smiles. "The chairman of the Classics department happens to be a buddy of mine. I suspect he'd enjoy having you as an auditor in his program. There's a summer intensive in Greek starting in a few weeks. I'll give him a call. Let's just make this a part of your job."



She wins a place in summer Greek by impressing the chairman with her motivation and her language skills. "I've just been baptized, and I want to be able to read the New Testament in the original," she says. "I have two years of Spanish, seven years of French, and a high school medal in Hebrew. I'm good at languages."

Many of the best sayings are from the Bible. *Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall* is from the Book of Proverbs. She will have occasion to learn that proverb well.



She no longer has time to think about right livelihood. She's studying Greek.

She's memorizing pronouns, conjugating irregular verbs, and mastering a non-Roman alphabet. It's definitely Greek to her.

She learned languages easily because she began when she was young. She is not young anymore, at least not in terms of language learning.

She learned languages easily because she is a good mimic and could imitate her teachers as they spoke. Her California Spanish class was taught by a professor who had studied in Spain and spoke Castilian Spanish. Most of the students were from Mexico and Central America, and wanted to learn their parents' mother tongue. The professor let the class choose which accent they would learn.

"Mexican!" they all said.

"I'll speak the way the teacher speaks," she decided, "because that's how I learn best."

Thus, alone among the hisses, she lisped. The city of Zaragoza that was "Saragosa" to the rest of the class was "Tharagotha" to her. It made the dictations easier to follow, and like Mandarin and Cantonese the written language was the same.

Now the written language is all she has. This summer class is not a conversation class. Learning classical Greek begins with memorizing the twenty-four ways to say "the."

She is behind from the start, being neither a sorority girl nor a mathematician. The one good thing about Greek is that it is phonetic. The accents tell you precisely how to pronounce the words. The obverse of this raft of hope in an ocean of omicrons and omegas is that you have to memorize the accents along with the spelling.

The class crams an entire academic year of Greek into six summer weeks.

She is in a whirlpool, slowly being sucked down the funnel into the depths of

Homer's wine-dark sea. In addition to six class hours, there is homework every day. There are long lists of vocabulary words to memorize. There are translations from Greek to English and from English to Greek, though not anything she'd be interested in saying in either language.

As the weeks go by, her discouragement grows. A few students have dropped out, but the rest of the class seems to be chugging along. She clings to her homemade flash cards in hopes that the Greek letters will somehow transfer through her fingertips into her brain. The chaplain thinks she's smart and expects her to do well. The head of the Classics department has given her a space in the class on the expectation that she can keep up with it. She staggers toward the finish, hoping like St. Paul to be able to say, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race."

She confesses her inadequacy to the instructor, a young graduate student who is warmly sympathetic. This business of admitting she's at fault and apologizing is new to her. She didn't learn it in her family; it's one of the gifts of baptism she hadn't expected. Her embarrassment is temporary and her relief lasting. She's surprised to find that her confessors are kinder to her than she is to herself.

The Eucharist keeps her going. She continues her early morning practice of communion in the university church and turns out to be its most faithful participant. She feels more peaceful and self-assured after receiving the sacrament, no matter how much she dreads another day of Greek. *Me genoito!*

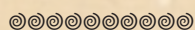
Thus the summer passes, one gloriously sunny day at a time. The church secretary goes on vacation, the chaplain goes on vacation, her friends all go on vacation while she soldiers on in a cramped classroom, grateful for the bike rides to and from campus which are her only exercise. After each long day of translating from Greek and into Greek, memorizing vocabulary, and trying to absorb the subtleties of grammar that are the reason she is enduring this ordeal, she makes do with a quick sandwich and scribbled homework before climbing the stairs to her cottage bedroom.

Meditation is what started her on this journey, so she meditates, sitting crosslegged on her bed, finding it hard to stay awake and harder to focus.

Newly baptized, she is learning to pray. The hardest part of prayer is listening to God. She has experienced this in meditation, but she wants to learn *Christian* prayer and *Christian* listening, though no one so far has been able to tell her the difference. The best teaching comes from the Jesuits, but it will be years before she meets one.

At the back of her mind is the need for a livable income and a job that will leave her mind free to continue its theological explorations. God is already answering this unspoken prayer, but she doesn't know that. She just keeps being buffeted by waves and struggles to stay afloat, awash in a sea of Greek.

It's still Greek to her.



CREDITS

P. 15 Photo of Carlos Fuentes
www.rankopedia.com

P. 22 Map of Darfur
<http://www.randomhouse.com/rhpg/features/thetranslator/translator-resources.html>

P. 24 Photo of Daoud Hari
Amnesty International website
<http://www.amnesty.nl/over-amnesty/resultaten/de-tolk-darfur-dummies>

P. 25 Ames Dee, self-portrait

P. 28 MS 2649, Leviticus, Egypt, late 2nd century manuscript
<http://www.schoyencollection.com/bibleGreekNT.html>