

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION
OF THE ATA'S LITERARY DIVISION

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TRANSLATION AS METAPHOR, METAFICTION, AND PLOT DEVICE IN SHAKESPEARE, CERVANTES, AND UMBERTO ECO



Alonso Quijano becoming unhinged by books of chivalry. One of the engravings from Gustave Doré's illustration of the 1863 edition of Cervantes' *Don Quixote*.

PLUS LYDIA RAZRAN STONE
ON HER TRANSLATION OF PYOTR YERSHOV'S
THE LITTLE HUMPBACED HORSE

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BTW Cartoons by Tony Beckwith

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FROM THE EDITORS



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In the Spanish Golden Age and Elizabethan England, the two towering figures who now deserve our attention for the impending celebrations of the 400th anniversary of their deaths in 1616, Cervantes and Shakespeare, took translation so seriously they even made jokes of it. Not one to lag behind, Umberto Eco picked up centuries of slack by jokingly claiming that his bestseller was also but a translation.

In this issue, curated by Patrick Saari, Sue Burke explains the inspiration behind Cervantes' mischievous metafiction that his novel *Don Quixote* was a true story written in a foreign language (Arabic) and translated into Spanish. Patrick examines this metafiction even further, again in Cervantes but also in Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*, and finds that translation may not be such a laughing matter after all.

Alexa Huang not only highlights the wide variety of translated works that were at the origin of many of Shakespeare's plays, but also looks at Shakespeare's use of translation as a metaphor for comical and political effect throughout his plays. In a contemporary bilingual Mandarin Chinese and English production of *King Lear*, translation becomes the central plot device to speak of communication gaps, cultural divides, and tragedy.

Tony Beckwith, in his "By the Way" column, is inspired by memories of La Mancha to take us on a stream-of-consciousness journey through the heart of Spain.

In our interview for this issue, Lydia Razra Stone talks about translating Russian poetry into English and how a light-hearted fairy tale, *The Little Humpbacked Horse*, viewed as children's literature, made fun of the Tsar and his henchmen in the nineteenth century.

LD Administrator Mercedes Guhl's Letter from the Administrator speaks about literary track activities for ATA's upcoming Annual Conference in Miami.

Post-Miami Winter Issue:

Our next issue will focus on events and news from ATA's Annual Conference in Miami, November 4-7. The submission deadline is November 21. News, reviews, photos, and video links are encouraged!

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

For the Winter Issue

Our next issue will focus on events, news, and inspiration from ATA's Annual Conference in Miami, November 4-7. The submission deadline is November 21.

As its nickname, the Capital of Latin America, implies, Miami includes a sizeable percentage of Latinos from the Caribbean and the rest of the continent. It is the quintessential port city, a bridge connecting cultures, and as such is a hotbed of art, language, and literature.

News, reviews, and interviews, as well as photos and video links relating to the conference or to culture in Miami are encouraged!

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

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.

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 Winter issue: November 21.

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LETTER FROM THE LD ADMINISTRATOR

Dear LD members, This year's ATA Annual Conference (November 4-7), that annual gathering to meet up once again with fellow colleagues, is rapidly approaching. Let's take a look at what's on offer for literary translators, both aspiring and experienced. The literary track program is quite varied, although we will not have as many sessions as in previous years. In the pre-conference seminars for 2015, the spotlight moved to other fields of translation, which is fair enough since we had two last year. So you can have that first day free from conference duties, either for getting to Miami or for enjoying some of our recommended sites in the literary mini-guide, which will be available by the end of September. You will get news of it through our social media and the Literary Division's webpage.

On Thursday November 5th, we have three sessions dealing with various problems of literary translation from Chinese, Arabic, Kurdish, French from different parts of *la francophonie*, and Spanish. The presenters will analyze both the process of translation and the

process of creating a literary work, as well as the connections between the two.

On Friday November 6th, the two sessions centering on case studies will explore not only the process of translation but also translation's place within the book industry. The focus will be on topics related to reception and success of the translated text and also to the nuts and bolts of working for a publisher, negotiations, workflow, and team work. Interestingly enough, none of them deal with fiction or poetry, the obvious texts when we think of literary translation, but rather with essays, which are often disregarded as literary works in their own right. One of them is Thomas Picketty's *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* published in English by Harvard University Press and the other is a travelogue by Daniel Vaugelade, *Comments on the North American Travels of La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt: 1794-1798*, whose English translation is being published by Commonwealth Books of Virginia. Another reason to attend one or both sessions is that essays and non-fiction form the core of potential translation projects with university presses.



Mercedes Guhl
LD Administrator

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



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

On Saturday morning we have the cherry on the cake: our Division Distinguished Speaker, Esther Allen, will be discussing the timely subject of the normalization of US-Cuban relations and its impact on translation, not only in the literal sense but also in more symbolic approaches like the contact between cultures that result from globalization, changing them all.

In the program of non-educational events, on Thursday afternoon, just after the last block of sessions, we have our Division Business Meeting, with news and reports on what the LD has done in the past year, and also the new division officers, administrator and assistant administrator, will be announced. It is important to be there to meet our newly elected officers and to have the chance to hear them and voice your ideas and proposals for the LD. In the second half of the meeting we will have a presentation on how to collaborate as readers with the Awards and Honors Committee for ATA grants.

Don't miss the After Hours Café (aka poetry reading) on Friday

evening from 9:00 to 11:00, the only non-educational event of the whole conference that is directly related to translation! Come and enjoy the work of our fellow translators, or prepare one of your texts for the reading.

ATA has organized a small book fair: the Book Splash. On Friday early evening you will be able to browse among the books authored or translated by conference attendees, chat with authors and translators, or exhibit your books. Learn more at <https://www.atanet.org/conf/2015/events.htm>.

But before making plans for Miami, enjoy this Fall issue of *Source*, loaded with interesting material about three great writers and their relation to translation, Shakespeare, Cervantes, and Umberto Eco, who used translation as a metaphor, a metafiction, and plot device.

Hoping to see you in Miami! And keep in mind that the editors of *Source* will be looking for reviews and photos related to Miami and the conference for its December issue.

Sincerely,
Mercedes Guhl

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If you live in the Miami area and find the idea appealing, help us plan for ATA's 56th Annual Conference. Also, if you have information about Miami's literary secrets, please contact us to start compiling the mini-literary guide.

READERS' CORNER UPDATES

Rhoda B. Miller, winner of a subsidy from France's Centre National du Livre, announces recent publication of the U.S. version of a book she translated a few years ago: *Contemporary China* by François Godement (Rowman & Littlefield, August 2015). Originally published in France as *Que Veut la Chine? De Mao au Capitalisme* (Odile Jacob, 2012).



Lisa Carter is pleased to announce two brand new online courses plus completely updated and relaunched versions of three well-established courses via her website, Intralingo. All are aimed at established and aspiring literary translators. Sessions begin September 2015, October 2015 and January 2016. Four of the courses are eligible for five (5) ATA Continuing Education Points, plus a \$50 discount for ATA members! To learn more, go to <http://intralingo.com/onlinecourses/> or contact Lisa by email (lisa@intralingo.com).

READERS' CORNER continued



Paula Gordon had her translation of "**The Death of My Parents in the Village,**" a poem by Serbian author Dragoslava Barzut, published in *Words without Borders*, June 2015: **The Queer Issue VI**.
<http://bit.ly/1NDqyQG>

Anne Milano Appel's latest translations include two books and an article:

*Vito Bruschini, *The Prince*.

(Atria/Simon and Schuster, 2015)

*Marco Franzoso, *The Indigo Child*.

(Amazon e-book, 2015)

*"**Skirting the Juniper Brambles: A Translator Narrowly Misses Getting Trapped in the Copyright Thicket,**"

with Erach F. Screwvala, Esq.

Publishing Perspectives, April 23, 2015:

<http://tinyurl.com/mjtbvvv> and

The ATA Chronicle, April 2015.



WHY CERVANTES CLAIMED HE DIDN'T WRITE DON QUIXOTE

BY SUE BURKE



Sue Burke is an American writer and translator living in Madrid, Spain. Her translation of a novel by Angélica Gorodischer, **Prodigies**, was released in August by Small Beer Press. A translation of a short story by Nilo María Fabra, "The Dragoon of Montesa," was published in July by Parsec Ink in the anthology **Triangulation: Lost Voices**. As a hobby, she is translating the medieval Spanish novel of chivalry, **Amadis of Gaul**, as a blog at <http://amadisofgaul.blogspot.com>.

In front of Spain's National Library in Madrid, a statue of Miguel de Cervantes stands with one foot resting on a pair of books. One of them is spine-out, and we can read its title: *Amadís de Gaula* (Amadis of Gaul).

That book tells the story of Amadis, from the fictional kingdom of Gaul, who was the greatest knight in the world. This Spanish novel of chivalry, written by Garci Rodríguez de Montalvo and published in 1508, became Europe's first best-seller. It was reprinted 19 times,

translated into 7 languages, spawned 44 direct sequels in several languages, and fueled an entire genre that lasted a century. Most notably, around 1600, it inspired *Don Quixote of La Mancha*.

In many ways, Cervantes satirizes (or pays homage to) that tale, including a characteristic element of novels of chivalry that began with *Amadis of Gaul*. An earlier version of *Amadis* had existed since the 1300s in the form of a three-book novel, but Montalvo's edition was different, as he explains in his prologue:

I corrected these three books of *Amadis*, such as they could be read, due to poor writers or very corrupt and dissolute scribes, and I translated and added a fourth book and a sequel, *Sergas de Esplandián*, which up until now no one has seen. By great good fortune, a manuscript was discovered in a stone tomb beneath a hermitage near Constantinople, and it was brought by a Hungarian merchant to eastern Spain in such ancient script and old parchment that it could only be read with much difficulty by those who knew the language.

Of course, Montalvo himself wrote the fourth book and *Sergas de Esplandián* (Exploits of Esplandian). Why lie about it? Because, as he himself put it, the novel "had been considered rank fiction rather than chronicles." By proclaiming it an ancient story and perhaps even forgotten history rather than fiction, it could obtain the status of works by Homer and Cicero.

He doesn't seem to have fooled anyone, but he did set a pattern. Supposedly, the manuscript for the sequel *Lisuarte de Grecia* (Lisuarte of Greece) by Juan Díaz (1514) had been written in Greek in Constantinople and taken to Rhodes when the city fell to the Ottomans. *Amadís de Grecia* (Amadis of Greece) by Feliciano de Silva (1530) had been found in a wooden box behind a wall in a cave in Spain, hidden



during the Moslem invasion in 711. *Silves de la Selva* (Silves of the Jungle) by Pedro de Luján (1546) was encountered in the magical sepulcher of Amadis himself, written in Arabic.

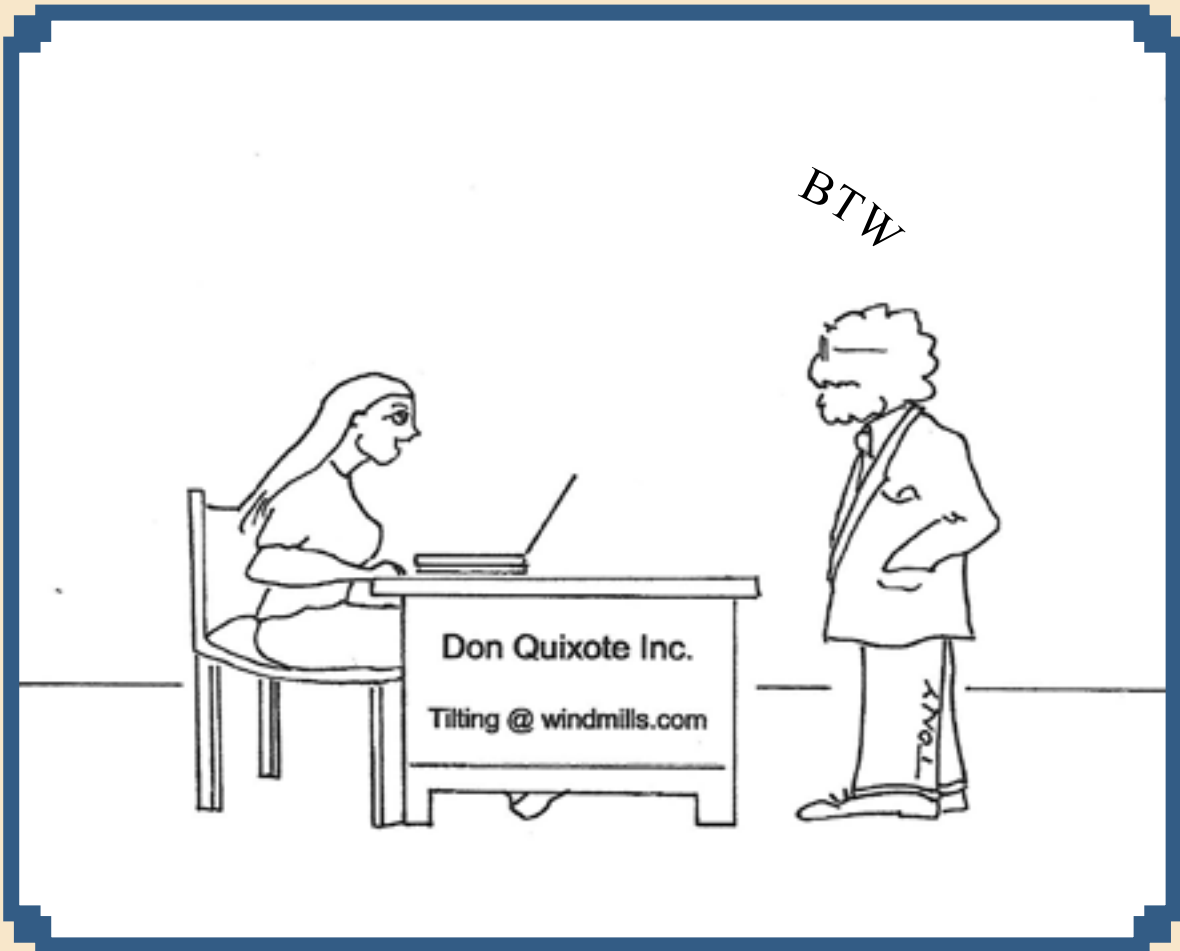
And so on. Manuscripts were discovered in distant castles and during voyages to far-off lands. Some were written in Hungarian, Latin, Tuscan, German, Chaldean, and “Indian” (Sanskrit, perhaps). A few were even supposedly written by characters from earlier novels.

Among the many jokes in *Don Quixote* whose punch line we have forgotten today is the one in Chapter IX. It recounts how, in a market in Toledo, a boy was selling some old papers to be reused. Cervantes looked at one of the pieces of paper, a pamphlet, and it turned out to be part of the *History of Don Quixote of La Mancha*, written in Arabic by Cide Hamete Benengeli. He purchased a translation of the pamphlets for two arrobas of raisins (50 pounds) and two bushels of wheat. This discovered manuscript, Cervantes said, became the basis of the rest of the first part of his novel.

Rather than being found in some exotic place after a search filled with drama, difficulty, and great cost, *Don Quixote* was rescued from the garbage and translated on the cheap.

Besides that satire in *Quixote*, there’s another joke based on one of Montalvo’s books that we’ve forgotten to laugh at. An imaginary island described in *Exploits of Esplandian* overflowed with gold and was ruled by a califa. Spanish conquistadors had read many novels of chivalry and sometimes compared the wonders of the New World to the marvels in those books, but when they sailed up the western coast of what we now call Mexico, they found a place that offered little besides rocks and condors. To entertain themselves, they started calling that barren land after the fabulously rich island in the book: “California.”

Despite being almost forgotten, Montalvo’s books have made their mark on the world.



*"No, they're all out tilting at things.
Would you like to leave a message?"*

CERVANTES AND UMBERTO ECO, LOST AND FOUND MANUSCRIPTS, TRANSLATION AND ANARCHY

BY PATRICK SAARI

Me parece que el traducir de una lengua en otra (...) es como quien mira los tapices flamencos por el revés; que aunque se ven las figuras, son llenas de hilos que las escurecen, y no se ven con la lisura y tez de la haz.¹

It seems to me that translating from one language into another (...) is like viewing Flemish tapestries from the wrong side, when, although one can make out the figures, they are covered by threads that obscure them, and one cannot appreciate the smooth finish of the right side.²
Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, Part II, Chapter 62

Arabic, Aljamía, Greek, and phantom pre-texts

Don Quixote, which, over the centuries, has turned out to be the world's most translated book after the Bible, is itself, as if by a mere coincidence, a translation (in Cervantes' plethoric imagination, to be sure). The novel is the Spanish translation of an earlier, lost text in Arabic, or rather in Aljamía, an Arabic script used to write Romance languages, whether Latin, Portuguese, or Spanish, although in this specific case probably a dialect of Spanish spoken by *moriscos* (Spaniards of Moorish origin converted to Catholicism who may have continued to secretly practice Islam).



Pages of a sixteenth-century handbook written in Aljamía, *Regimiento de lunas*, providing a calendar of festivities based on the moon's phases (Biblioteca Tomás Navarro Tomás, Madrid)

The text has been authored by Sidi Hamid Benengeli, an Arab historian of La Mancha, and is discovered by a Spanish-speaking reader, identified by Cervantes himself (or the unidentified “first author”) as the second author (*segundo autor*), who must resort to a bilingual Moor (*morisco aljamiado*) to decipher the Arabic script and provide him with a full translation, or rather, as it turns out, a transliteration into Spanish. This second author then publishes Quixote’s story interspersed with his own comments and possibly editing, although it can also be construed that it is Cervantes himself who has adopted the translation/transliteration, provided annotations, come up with his own version of the story, and ultimately published it, thus becoming a mere commentator and editor rather than author.

This metafiction holds true for almost all the chivalric romances on which *Don Quixote* was patterned, purported in their fictional universe to be translations of earlier, lost, degraded texts, identified by the Cervantes scholar Carroll B. Johnson as “phantom pre-texts,” many written in a language of divine knowledge, mostly Greek (the language of the New Testament and Classical Greece). These original texts were supposedly lost, because they had been abandoned, buried, or hidden near or in a sacred place. They were then rediscovered and subject to a kind of “processing” involving translation and “popularization,” a rewrite for the riffraff who would not have been able to understand the original ancient tongue or the arcane mysteries embedded in the text.³ Because the Ur-texts, so to speak, of these romances are irretrievable in the fictional universe erected by Cervantes and his fellow predecessors and therefore all the more so in our own real world, any glimpse of the original story or knowledge, whether imaginary or real, imparted to us by Sidi Hamid Benengeli or Cervantes can only be caught “through a glass, darkly,” like Quixote’s description of translation as the underside of a Flemish tapestry with loosely hanging threads obscuring the figures on the other side.

By opting for Aljamía as the original “language” from which Quixote’s story is drawn and translated/transliterated, Cervantes

chose a Romance language, albeit no more than a dialect of Spanish, akin to Mozarabic, spoken by people of Arab origin. In the context of Spain at the time, because Aljamía was written in Arabic script and spoken by Moors, it was viewed as Arabic and many scholars continue to insist it is Arabic. In fact, Aljamía is a hybrid that mixes the script of one language to utter another, neither being standard, much less classical, whether by the yardstick of classical Arabic, on the one hand, or Augustan Latin, courtly Spanish, or even vernacular Spanish, on the other.

By using this “mongrelized” language as the source for his book, Cervantes was no doubt hinting that all language is hybrid, cross-bred, and half-blooded, the messy outcome of dialogue and communication, and their corollaries, that is, understanding and tolerance. He might have been making fun of the highfalutin claims of chivalric romances and their sacred origins, but it could also have been an oblique way for him to challenge the holiness of ancient classical texts and question the validity of the powers-that-be that upheld these “pure” languages against the pidgins spoken in the street. It is also worth recalling here that, in 1567, when Cervantes turned 20, Philip II issued a Nazi-style decree formally banning the use of Arabic to read, write, or speak, in short suppressing all that was Arabic. Claiming that his novel was based on an Arabic text could have been, for Cervantes, a veiled statement of dissent.

The Name of the Rose, wisdom lost and regained

This mish-mash of languages as the source of storytelling is picked up by Umberto Eco when, in his fictional preamble “Naturally, a Manuscript” to his bestseller *The Name of a Rose*, he resuscitates the notion of translation as a “wilderness of mirrors” unveiling or concealing layers of understanding and transformation, while stressing the risk of adulteration and how inherently comical this is:

On sober reflection, I find few reasons for publishing my Italian version of an obscure, neo-Gothic French version of a seventeenth-century Latin edition of a work written in Latin by a German monk toward the end of the fourteenth century.⁴

Like *Quixote* and chivalric romances, Eco's book is also, of course ("naturally"), a lost manuscript that was transcribed, edited, translated, and retranslated. This notion of knowledge or wisdom lost, regained, interpreted, and retransmitted is a stock-in-trade of myths, legends, and tales, an archetype arising from our collective unconscious as Jung might have said, the innermost recesses of the psyche rising to the surface of the conscious ego, the cycles of katabasis and anabasis (descent and ascent) appearing in the stories of Orpheus, Christ, Osiris, and Ulysses, the quest for the Holy Grail, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, and the One Ring in Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (not to mention Dan Brown's dubious but popular novel *The Da Vinci Code*).

This pattern repeated countless times over the millennia and still cropping up in all manner of books and movies is not confined to stories. In 1945, in Egypt in the town of Nag Hammadi, a farmer dug up 12 leather-bound papyrus codices containing Gnostic Scriptures written in Coptic buried in a sealed jar probably belonging to a nearby fourth-century monastery. In 1946, a shepherd of the West Bank in Palestine fell in a cave and discovered the first of what would later be called the Dead Sea Scrolls, close to a thousand texts from the Hebrew Bible and Jewish religious writings, some apocryphal or sectarian, dating back to a period ranging from 408 B.C. to A.D. 318.

The story behind these texts, their deterioration over decades after discovery because of exposure to the elements, humidity, careless handling, and even burning, the haggling over their ownership, the laborious scholarly work of their translation, the academic controversies surrounding their authenticity and what they mean, and ultimately why they were concealed (no doubt to avoid destruction by powerful political and religious interest groups bent on suppressing them, but also to make sure they would eventually be rediscovered) are a testament to the complications involved in any quest for truth and to the persistent belief that somewhere there lies attainable universal wisdom, albeit hidden, mysterious, and difficult to decipher.

Translation as a metafiction

In contrast, the *Don Quixote* manuscript (fictional, that is), as precisely explained by Cervantes, or rather the anonymous writer who, in the ninth chapter of Part One, takes over the narrative, is comprised of “old notebooks and loose sheets of paper” being carried by a boy in the street on his way to a silk merchant to sell them as fodder for silkworms. A passerby, an obsessive-compulsive reader who will “read anything, even scraps of paper lying in the gutter,” haphazardly catches sight of the notebooks and randomly picks up “some Spanish-speaking Moor in the street, and it wasn’t very hard to find one,” to ask him what the notebooks are about. When he discovers it is the story of Don Quixote, he haggles with the paper-selling street urchin over their price and ends up paying him one-twelfth of their true value (half a *real* instead of six). Rather than resorting to a scholar to decipher the Arabic script (*carácteres arábigos*), this reader has the improvised “translator” he found in the street stay at his home for a bit more than a month and a half to finish the entire translation, and pays him 50 pounds of raisins and 2 bushels of wheat for his trouble. A few paragraphs later, in a hostile, almost malevolent digression, this ungrateful “reader,” commonly known as the “second author,” intimates that the original author Sidi Hamid Benenegeli is unreliable, a liar, a “dog of an author” (*galgo de su autor*), thereby undermining his own credibility. Hard to imagine a more flippant retelling of the ancient archetypal story of wisdom lost and regained.⁵

As for *The Name of the Rose*, it first appears as a French book published in 1842 which is being read by the fictional Eco in Prague just before the August 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. Eco narrowly escapes the Soviets, then travels to Vienna to meet his girlfriend and does a “quick” Italian translation of the book’s several hundred pages. Sailing up the Danube, the lovers have a spat before reaching Salzburg and the young lady vanishes taking with her the “original” book (actually the third of a series of transcriptions and translations). Over the ensuing dozen years, the fictional Eco attempts to authenticate the story behind his translation (which would be the fourth in the series and which in our real world became a smash hit and was, in turn, translated into dozens

of other languages), first in Paris, then in Buenos Aires where he finds a Castilian version of a book translated into Italian originally written in Georgian by a fellow with a Hungarian name (Milo Temesvar) and published in Tbilisi in 1934, which includes quotations of the “original” manuscript, although failing to provide any clues that it might be a true story.⁶

In short, Eco’s metafictional preamble is a slapstick account of the origins of his book, a nonsensical maze of incongruous elements and events leading to absolutely nothing. Echoing the parodic origins of *Don Quixote* and discovery of the Sidi Hamete Benengeli manuscript, Eco’s “translation” of the French translation of a manuscript in Latin is done extemporaneously and implausibly at the speed of light, with many droll aspersions cast on its dubious, albeit erudite, sources. In a genuine rather than fictitious account of the making of the book, Eco confesses it had a more gruesome origin: “I began writing in March of 1978, prodded by a seminal idea: I felt like poisoning a monk.”⁷ He actually goes on a killing spree, leaving behind him mayhem, destruction, and a pile of corpses (in the fictional world of his book).

Translation as a metaphor for the transmission of knowledge

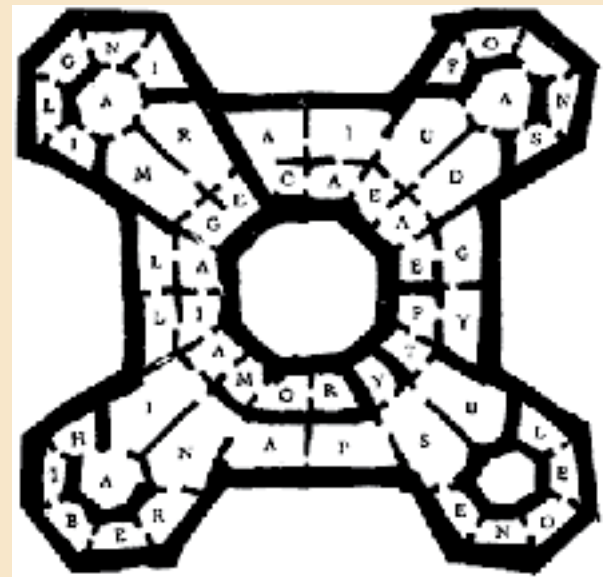
The Latin translation of Arabic and Hebrew writings from the Islamic Golden Age (A.D. 750-1258), which in turn had been nurtured by translations from the Greek, Persian, and Sanskrit, was supposed to have led to the flowering of the High Middle Ages. Likewise, the abandonment of Latin and Greek for the vernacular with Luther’s translation of the Bible and the translation of the “pagans” into the budding European languages, as well as translations between the many European vernaculars (including chivalric romances), were the key turning points for Humanism, the Reformation, and the Renaissance. In the context of Cervantes, caught smack in the middle of this rousing upsurge, or rather at the tail end of it as many scholars have sadly pointed out, translation may be seen not so much as a metaphor, which it is, or a privileged activity for the transmission of knowledge, which it also is, but rather as one of the many activities that are transformative and participate in the flux of change, for better or for worse.

From that angle, it is not difficult to view *Don Quixote* as an ironic footnote on a century of breakthroughs in learning (the Cinquecento) leading not to wisdom but to intolerance, repression, and anarchy, if not madness, and whose epitaph could have been both T.S. Eliot's question in *Four Quartets* "Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?" and the sanguine reply given more than two thousand years earlier in Ecclesiastes 1:18: "For with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief." The same holds true for Eco's *The Name of the Rose*, a footnote both comical and tragical on the Middle Ages (as well as on the twentieth century), and whose central symbol is a repository of knowledge, a labyrinthine library rivaling Antiquity's fabled Library of Alexandria.

In the case of *Don Quixote*, a contemporary translator must work with what is supposed to be, in the fictional world created by Cervantes, a dim reflection, an off-the-cuff translation, of what was originally written, knowing that this may also be a key metaphor that Cervantes would like us to take seriously in the real book we hold in our hands. It is not surprising that translators are drawn to Cervantes: they intuitively feel that, with this book, their skills transcend the mere mechanical work of switching words from one language into another, so powerful is the sense that the novel's many episodes are veiled allegories about the human condition that need deciphering. Translators, in this case, are the alchemists helping Cervantes, the second author, Sidi Hamid Benengeli, and Quixote himself interpret the world, translate human experience.

Comedy, anarchy, change

Where is then the connection with comedy?
Tragedy is static, monolithic as it is hardened



The layout of the Aedificium, the library of the Benedictine monastery in northern Italy, which plays a pivotal role in Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*

by the rigidity of pride and ends in the stiffness of death, therefore governed by strict, unbending rules (Aristotle). Translation, however, is pliable, ductile, and therefore comical because it cannot stand still, there is no single version that is ever the “true” version. It is constantly “interpretive,” that is, hermeneutic rather than dogmatic. As such it is highly individualistic, idiosyncratic, and therefore anti-totalitarian.⁸ No one single translation is ever satisfactory, carved in stone. Because translation is, by its very nature, myriad, it mirrors the many dissonant voices of comedy.

The imperfections inherent in transmitting and sharing knowledge are pure comedy, farce, circus gags, all the more so for being done with a very straight face and a bossy know-it-all attitude. In the interstices of “imperfect” translations and the errors of transcription by, let’s say, the cloistered clerks in the library of Umberto Eco’s medieval Italian abbey often lie the absurdities of creativity and the great leaps of human progress and regression (the abbey burns down at the end of *The Name of the Rose*, along with the entire library and Aristotle’s long-hidden treatise on comedy, and the question of whether or not Jesus ever laughed remains unanswered).

The search for understanding, even when it triggers misunderstanding, is a key element to survival, to the sound functioning of the human mind, to participation in the ebb and flow of the tide of life itself. Apart from the comic relief provided by the virtues of anarchy in a world of rigid, deleterious hierarchies and dogmas, the ultimate message that might be gathered from *Don Quixote*, and *The Name of the Rose* as well, is that “the search for truth is truth.” Romantics the world over could paraphrase their many-worded yearnings with the adage that “the quest for love is love itself.” And monks might rightfully claim that “the search for God is God.”

Chewing and interpreting

Harold Bloom, in *Genius*, may argue that “so much of Cervantes is beyond our literary parameters,” that Cervantes “cheerfully makes himself uninterpretable,” and that the episode of Montesinos’ Cave is “deliberately beyond interpretation.”⁹ But he is mistaken. He simply has trouble interpreting Cervantes’ wise insight that it is the world, the human experience, that is uninterpretable and beyond interpretation and literary

parameters, despite the repeated folly of each newborn to automatically take up the challenge of interpreting and understanding it. And to help us satiate that constant obsessive-compulsive craving, which is at the very marrow of the human experience and the source of our evolution and disintegration as a species, Cervantes has given us the perfect text, where all possible interpretations coexist and are equally valid, a nutritious fiber-rich fodder that we can endlessly chew on.

Are we readers like the silkworms about to feast on the *Don Quixote* manuscript before it was saved by the “second author” who did his own “chewing” and regurgitation or are we more like Umberto Eco’s insane Spanish monk Jorge de Burgos who, before being accidentally burned to death, eats the poisoned pages of Aristotle’s learned subversive treatise on comedy?

*I have come to believe that the whole world is an enigma,
a harmless enigma that is made terrible by our own mad attempt
to interpret it as though it had an underlying truth.*

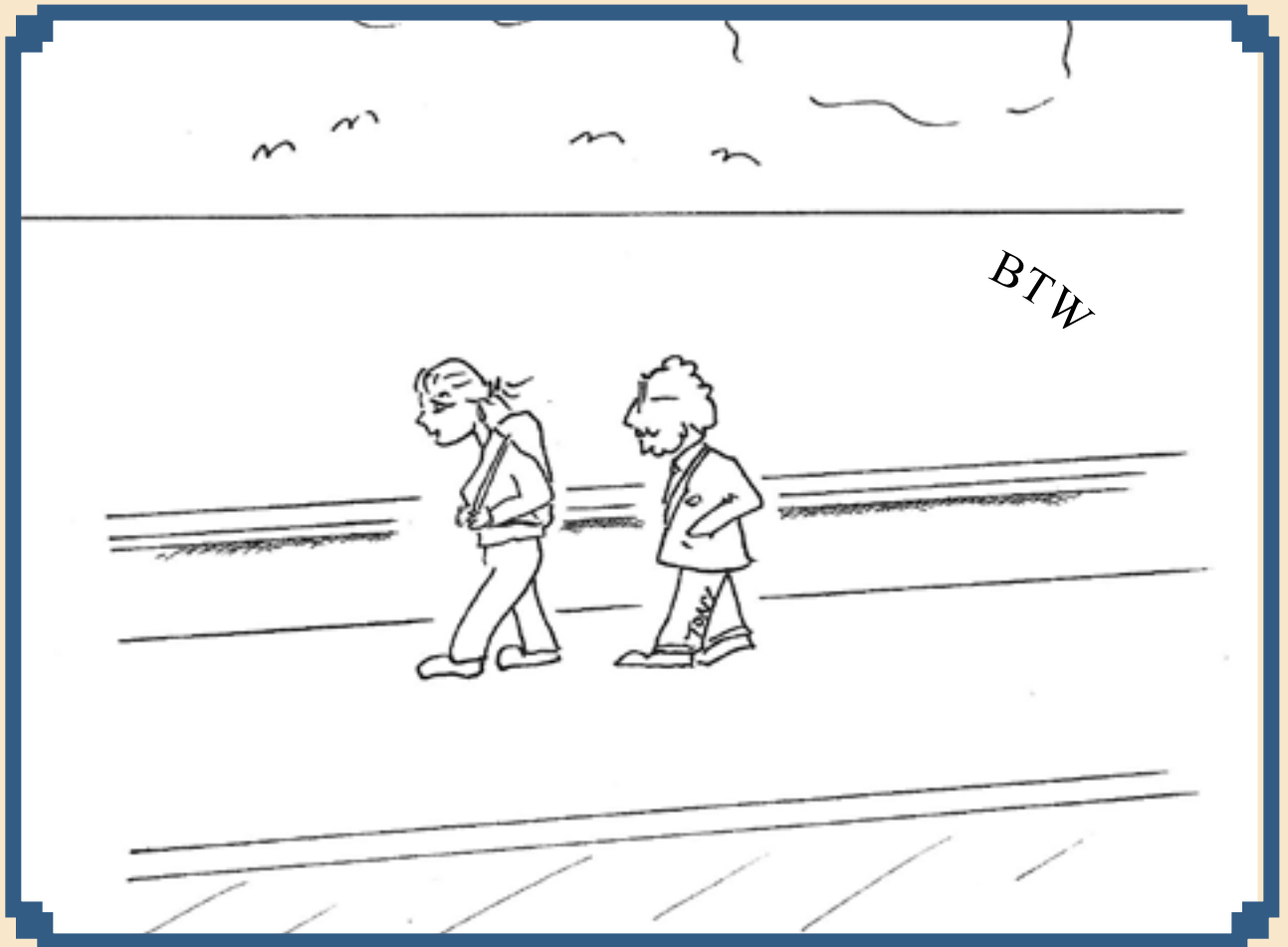
Umberto Eco, *Foucault’s Pendulum*



St. Michael's Abbey and the Alps in the Susa Valley in Italy's Piedmont, source of inspiration for Eco's monastery in *The Name of the Rose*

Notes

- 1 Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, ed. Francisco Rico, ninth edition (Madrid: Punto de Lectura, 2013), 1032.
- 2 Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, trans. John Rutherford (New York: Penguin Books, 2001), 915.
- 3 Carroll B. Johnson, "Phantom Pre-texts and Fictional Authors: Sidi Hamid Benengeli, Don Quijote and the Metafictional Conventions of Chivalric Romances," *Bulletin of the Cervantes Society of America*, 27.1 (Spring 2007 [2008]), 179-199, <http://www.h-net.org/~cervant/csa/articles07/johnsons07.pdf>
- 4 Umberto Eco, "Naturally, a Manuscript," *The Name of the Rose*, trans. William Weaver (New York: Everyman's Library, 1983), 10.
- 5 The episode is in Part One, Chapter 9. Spanish: Cervantes, *Don Quijote*, ed. Francisco Rico, 85-88. English: Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, trans. John Rutherford, 74-75.
- 6 Eco, "Naturally, a Manuscript," *The Name of the Rose*, 7-12.
- 7 From Eco's book *Reflections on 'The Name of the Rose,'* quoted by David Lodge, "Introduction," in Eco, *The Name of the Rose*, ix.
- 8 David Lodge, "Introduction," in Eco, *The Name of the Rose*, xx-xxiii.
- 9 Harold Bloom, *Genius* (New York: Warner Books, 2002), 38-39.



*"Now that we have an embassy in Havana,
how long do you think it will be before we see
Fidel Castro on Dancing with the Stars?"*

TRANSLATION AS A THEME IN SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS

BY ALEXA HUANG



Alexa Huang teaches at George Washington University where she co-founded and co-directs the Digital Humanities Institute and directs the Dean's Scholars in Shakespeare program. At MIT, she has co-founded the MIT Global Shakespeares open-access digital performance archive (<http://globalshakespeares.org>).

Catherine: I cannot tell vat is dat.

King Harry: ... I will tell thee in French ... Je quand sur le possession de France, et quand vous avez le possession de moi,--let me see, what then? ... It is as easy for me, Kate, to conquer the kingdom as to speak so much more French....

Catherine: Sauf votre honneur, le Francois que vous parlez, il est meilleur que l'Anglois le quel je parle.

King Harry: No, faith, is't not, Kate: but thy speaking of my tongue, and I thine, most truly-falsely, must needs be granted to be much at one. But, Kate, dost thou understand thus much English, canst thou love me?

—Henry V, 5.2.169-183

Cultural exchange was an unalienable part of the cultural life in Renaissance England. Translation, or *translatio*, signifying “the figure of transport” (Parker 1987, 36-45), was a common rhetorical trope that referred to the conveyance of ideas from one geo-cultural location to another, from one historical period to another, and from one artistic form to another. London witnessed a steady stream of merchants and foreign emissaries from Europe, the Barbary coast, and the Mediterranean, and thousands of Dutch and Flemish Protestants fled to Kent in the late 1560s due to the Spanish persecution. In 1573, Queen Elizabeth I granted Canterbury the right to have French taught in school to “those who desire to learn the French tongue” (Cross, 1898, 15).

The drama of the time reflected this interest in other cultures. Only one of Christopher Marlowe’s plays, *Edward II*, is set in England, and he translated Book 1 of Lucan’s *Civil Wars*, an epic canvassing the geographical imaginaries from Europe to Egypt and Africa. Thomas Heywood’s *The Fair Maid of the West* explores the role of woman and cross-cultural issues. Most of Shakespeare’s plays are set outside England, in the Mediterranean, France, Vienna, Venice, and elsewhere. Even the history plays that focus intently on the question of English identity and lineage feature foreign characters who play key roles, such as Katherine of Aragon in *Henry VIII*, and the diplomatic relations between England and France. Thomas Kyd flirted with the idea of multilingual theatre in *The Spanish Tragedy* through a short play-within-a-play scene, “Soliman and Perseda,” in “sundry languages” (4.4.74). Pidgin English is masqueraded as fake Dutch in Thomas Middleton’s *No Wit, No Help Like a Woman’s*. Other examples abound.

Within Shakespeare’s plays, the figure of translation looms large. Translational moments create comic relief and heighten the awareness that communication is not a given. Translation also served as a metaphor for physical transformation or transportation. Claudius speaks of Hamlet’s “transformation” (2.2.5) and asks Gertrude to “translate” Hamlet’s behaviours in the previous scene (the closet scene) so that Claudius can “understand ... the profound heavens” (4.1.2).

Gertrude not only relays what Hamlet has just done but also provides her interpretations, as a translator would, of her son's deeds.

More so than *Hamlet*, *Henry V* contains several instances of literal translation, including the well-known wooing scene quoted above. Translation serves as a figure of transport, theft, transfer of property, and change across linguistic and national boundaries, as the characters and audience are ferried back and forth across the Channel. The peace negotiations dictate that the English monarch marries the daughter of Charles VI of France, uniting the two kingdoms. The "broken English" (5.2.228) in the light-hearted scene symbolises Henry V's dominance over Catherine and France after the English victory at the Battle of Agincourt. However, the Epilogue reminds us that the marriage is far from a closure (Epilogue 12), for it produces a son who is "half-French, half-English" (5.2.208). The English conqueror pretends to be a wooer to Catherine of France who cannot reject him freely. One is unsure whether Catherine is speaking the truth that she does not understand English well enough ("I cannot tell") or just being coy — playing Harry's game, though Catherine eventually yields to Henry V's request: "Dat is as it shall please de roi mon père" (5.2.229).

Likewise, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is saturated by translational scenes. Mistress Quickly receives a language lesson in Latin (4.1), and the French Doctor Caius makes "fritters of English" (5.5.143). Shakespeare takes great delight in wordplay, and many comic puns rely on orthographic contrasts and resemblances of pronunciations of words in different languages and dialects. *Love's Labour's Lost*, a polyglot "feast of languages" (5.1.37), features a critique of Armado's Spanish-inflected orthography by Holofernes (5.1.16-25).

The idea of translation is given a spin in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* where the verb to translate is expansive and elastic, signifying transformations most wondrous and strange. Upon seeing Bottom turned into an ass-headed figure, Peter Quince cries in horror: "Bless thee, Bottom, bless thee. Thou art translated!" (3.1.105). Other characters use the verb in similar ways to refer to a broad range of transformations.

Helena desires to be “translated” into Hermia (1.1.191), and a love potion transforms characters that come across its path. Indeed stage performances subject actors to various forms of “translation.” In the case of the first performance of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in London, the stage transforms a Chamberlain’s Men actor to the character of an Athenian weaver named Nick Bottom to the role of a tragic lover, Pyramus, in a play-within-a-play, and to an ass-headed monster—an object of obsession in Titania’s fairy kingdom.

Language barriers emerge as a moment of self-reflection for Portia in *The Merchant of Venice* even as she uses it to typecast some of her suitors from all over the world. In the first exchange between Narissa and Portia, when asked of her opinion of “Falconbridge, the young baron of England,” Portia goes right to the heart of the problem. Since Falconbridge “hath neither Latin, French, nor Italian,” it is impossible to “converse with a dumb show.” Portia is aware of her own limitations, too. She admits “I have a poor pennyworth in the English,” which is why she can say nothing to him, “for he understands not [her], nor [she] him.” Falconbridge’s odd expression of cosmopolitanism does not fare any better, as Portia observes snidely: “I think



“Bless thee, Bottom, bless thee. Thou art translated!” William Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (3.1.105). Oil on canvas by Johann Heinrich Füssli (Henry Fuseli), *Titania Caresses Bottom with the Donkey’s Head* (1793-94), Kunsthaus Zürich.

he bought his doublet in Italy, his round hose in France, his bonnet in Germany, and his behaviour everywhere" (1.2.55-64).

As products of an age of exploration, Shakespeare's plays demonstrate influences from a rich treasure trove of multilingual sources in Latin, Italian, Spanish, and French. Arthur Golding's 1567 English translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, a Roman collection of mythological tales, provided a rich network of allusions for Shakespeare's comedies (e.g., the story of Diana and Actaeon). In *Titus Andronicus*, the mutilated Lavinia is able to translate and communicate her thoughts via Ovid even though she is unable to speak or write. While other sources provided stories for Shakespeare to embellish, the *Metamorphoses* was an important stockpile of allusions for Shakespeare. Thomas North's 1579 version of Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans* is a major source for Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* and other Roman plays. Shakespeare rendered North's prose in verse and made numerous changes. Shakespeare knew Latin and French, and was up to date on the translated literature during his times. He probably read Giraldi Cinthio's *Hecatommithi* in Italian before penning *Othello*, and regularly looked beyond English-language sources for inspiration for stories to dramatize. It is by no accident that Shakespeare put Julius Caesar's famous last words in Latin, as "Et tu, Brute?" (3.1.77) rather than Greek in Plutarch, the play's source. Perhaps, as Casca complains in another scene, "it was Greek to me" (1.2.278). Shakespeare was a great translator in the sense of transforming multiple sources, and he was a talented synthesiser of different threads of narratives.

The important role of translated literature is indisputable in the development of Shakespeare's art. Shakespeare became a global author—both in terms of his reading and the impact of his work—long before globalisation was fashionable. In 1586 a group of English actors performed before the Elector of Saxony, marking the beginning of several centuries of intercultural performances of Shakespeare. *Romeo and Juliet* was staged in Nördlingen in 1604, and *Hamlet* and *Richard II* were performed on board an English East India Company ship anchored near Sierra Leone in 1607. Four hundred years on,

Shakespeare has come full circle. Given Shakespeare's talents and interest in translational literature, it is fitting that his works have found new homes in such a wide range of languages and genres.

...

Translation as a metaphor: a contemporary bilingual version of *King Lear* in Mandarin and English

The theme of generational gap in *King Lear* lends itself to experiments with languages.

Chinese-British director David Tse staged a Mandarin-English bilingual version of *King Lear* in 2006 with his London based Yellow Earth Theatre in collaboration with Shanghai Dramatic Arts Centre. The Buddhist notion of redemption and reincarnation informs some of the design elements and presentational styles. The production opens and closes with video footage, projected onto the three interlaced floor-to-ceiling reflective panels, that hints at both the beginning of a new life and life as endless suffering. Images of the faces of suffering men and women dissolve to show a crying newborn being held upside down and smacked. The production toured China and the UK and was staged during the Royal Shakespeare Company's Complete Works Festival.

Set in 2020 against the backdrop of cosmopolitan Shanghai, this futuristic adaptation reframed the epistemological gap between Lear and Cordelia in terms of linguistic difference. The play is close to Tse's heart, as he believes that *Lear* speaks strongly to diaspora artists and audiences who maintain links, but are unable to fully communicate, with their families residing in their home countries. As the poster [see below] makes abundantly clear, the production focuses on the questions of heritage and filial piety. The tag line, in Mandarin and English, reads "Which of you shall we say doth love us most?" Each of the characters has a primary language: English or Mandarin. On rare occasions, the characters may switch between two languages. Bilingual supertitles are provided.



Poster for David Tse's bilingual production of *King Lear* in 2006, with Shanghai's skyline as a backdrop and Lear's fatal question to his daughters just beneath him, in Mandarin and English: "Which of you shall we say doth love us most?"

Lear's famous test of love in the division-of-the-kingdom scene is framed within the context of Confucianism. The Confucian family values implicate family roles into the social hierarchy, and the Shanghai Lear insists on respect from his children at home and in business settings. Lear, a business tycoon, solicits confessions of love from his three daughters. Residing in Shanghai, Regan and Goneril are fluent in Chinese and are ever so articulate as they convince their father of their unconditional love of him.

Cordelia, on the other hand, is both honest and linguistically challenged. She is unwilling to follow her sisters' example, but she is unable to communicate in Chinese with her father, either. Her silence, therefore, takes on new meanings. A member of the Chinese diaspora in London, Cordelia participates in this important family and business meeting via video link. Ironically but perhaps fittingly, the only Chinese word at her disposal is *meiyou* ("nothing"). In the tense exchange between Cordelia and Lear, the word nothing looms large as Chinese fonts are projected onto the screen panels behind which Cordelia stands. Uninterested in the ontological or lexical significance of nothing, Lear urged Cordelia to give him something.

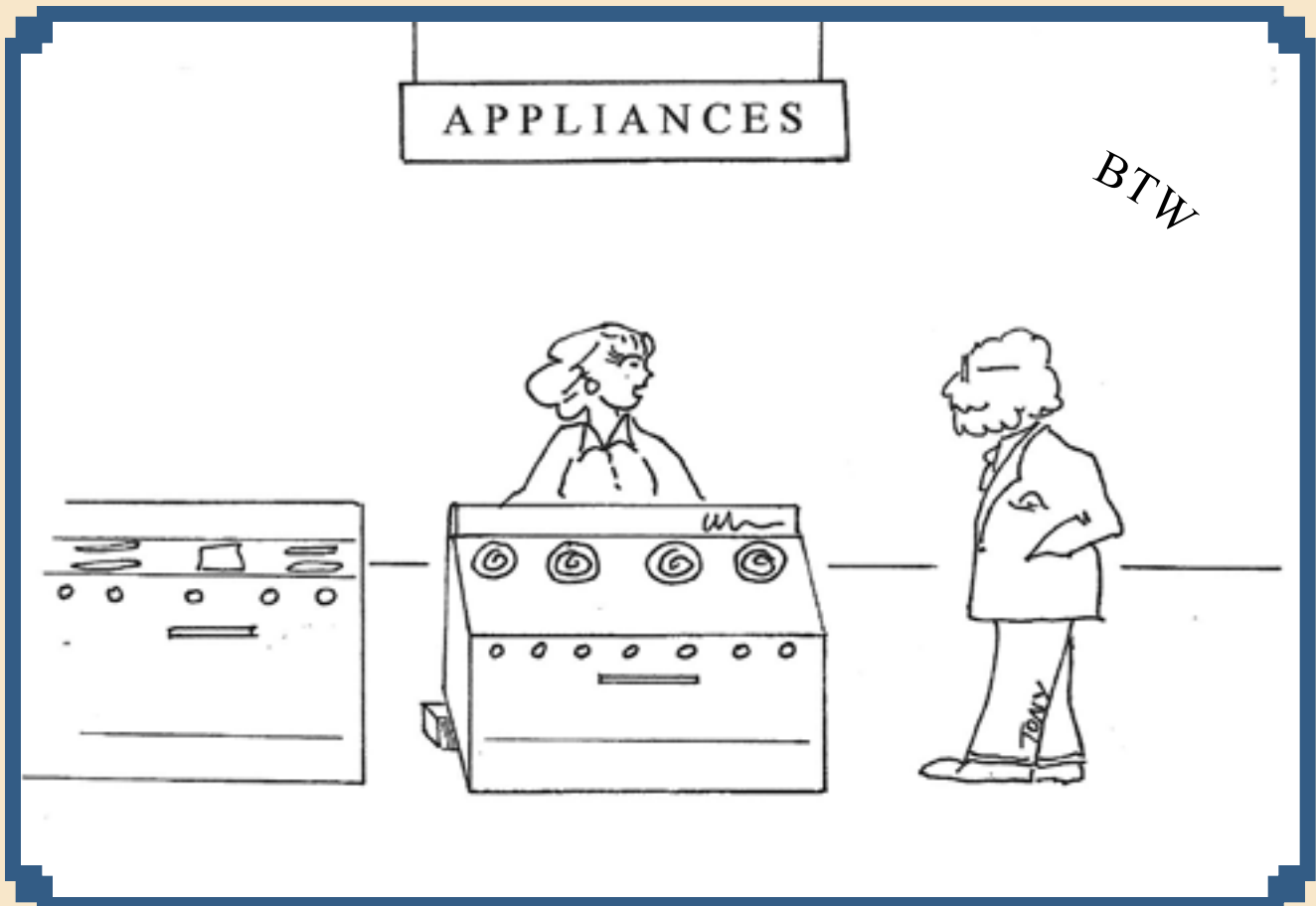
The production capitalises on the presence of two cultures and the gap between them, and the bilingualism on stage is supplemented by bilingual supertitles. Whether in the UK or China, the majority of its audiences could only follow one part of the dialogue at ease and had to switch between the action on stage and the supertitles. The play thus embodies the realities of globalisation through translation as a metaphor and a plot device.

Excerpted from Alexa Huang, "Shakespeare and Translation." *The Edinburgh Companion to Shakespeare and the Arts*, ed. Mark Thornton Burnett, Adrian Streete, and Ramona Wray (Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 68-87. <http://globalshakespeares.mit.edu/blog/2012/02/07/shakespeare-and-translation-excerpt/>

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*"And this is the Procrastinator model. As you can see,
all the burners are at the back."*

AN INTERVIEW WITH LYDIA RAZRAN STONE: PYOTR YERSHOV'S THE LITTLE HUMPBACKED HORSE



Lydia Razran Stone is a first-generation American who has worked as a technical and literary translator from Russian into English. She earned a Ph.D. in cognitive psychology and spent 10 years working for NASA, tracking and writing about Soviet biomedical research relevant to space flight. She is the editor of **SlavFile**, the quarterly publication of ATA's Slavic Languages Division. After retiring from technical translation, she has concentrated on poetry and other literary Russian works. In addition to individual pieces in journals, she has published five bilingual volumes of poetry. Her translation of Ivan Krylov's **The Frogs Who Begged for a Tsar and 61 Other Russian Fables** was published by Russian Life Books in 2010 and Pyotr Yershov's **The Little Humpbacked Horse** in 2014, also as bilingual editions. Both these books and others are available on the publisher's website <<http://www.russianlife.com/books/fiction/>> and on Amazon.com.

What are your personal connections to the Russian language, its literature and poetry?

I am a first-generation American, and my family on both sides came from the Slavic world. Both my parents recited poetry on the slightest pretext, my father in many languages, but mostly the Russian classics. I grew up with the unquestioned belief that poetry was the highest form of human endeavor (and Russian poetry its pinnacle) and that if you liked a poem you memorized it. I assumed that I too would be a poet, but after the turmoil of adolescence had passed, I decided I had the mind for it but not the requisite poetic soul. I studied Russian straight through college and was given *War and Peace* to read in three weeks when I was 19, which forced me to learn to read Russian without translating it into English in my head as I had been doing until then. Although I continued Russian literature in graduate school, earned an MA, and finished all my course

work for a PhD, I went back to school to study psychology and ended up earning a doctorate in cognitive psychology. An unsatisfactory career in social science during the Reagan years led me to try my hand at translating, which I have been doing ever since—first as a technical translator for 10 years at NASA when I had a family to help support, and then specializing in poetry after the nest was empty. I have been heavily involved with ATA—in particular editing *SlavFile*, giving presentations at conferences, and, most years, running the ATA Literary Division's After Hours Café, aka Poetry Reading.

How did you first get involved in translating Russian poetry, especially Krylov and Yershov?

My father's repertoire, as well as my college and grad school curriculum, focused mostly on nineteenth- and early twentieth-century poetry—almost all of which is in classical (or at least semi-classical) rhymed and metric form. I have always believed that, to produce an analogous artistic object, a translator of poetry has to replicate both the form and the meaning. For decades, I did not think I could do this, at least according to my own standards. Then, between 25 and 30 years ago, I became friends with a visiting Russian scientist who wanted me to help him render various Russian songs and poems into English as part of various courtship campaigns he was waging. Faced with the choice of accepting his versions or correcting them, I opted to correct. I found I was able, with some effort, to strike a balance between formal and semantic fidelity.

Poetry is especially difficult to translate. What has been your approach?

Once I felt that I had acquired this skill, I decided I preferred translating rhymed metric poetry precisely because it is more challenging. I think of translating poetry as a kind of solution to simultaneous equations—a series of compromises among the demands of various aspects of meaning, tone, and voice, on the one hand, and aspects of form, on the other. A literal rendition of lines is almost never possible. To determine how much of a tradeoff is acceptable, I have to feel that I understand

every aspect of the poem. I eagerly use whatever tools I can get my hands on to understand the poem and then render it into English: collaboration with the author when possible and with other native speakers of Russian and/or poetry translators, published analyses of the work, and my library of unilingual and multilingual dictionaries, thesauruses, and rhyming dictionaries.

What led you to specifically work on *The Little Humpbacked Horse*, which is usually classified as a children's book?

The Little Humpbacked Horse [LHBH] is currently considered a work for children by Russian speakers and by publishers of English “versions” paraphrasing and illustrating the main folkloric plotline in English, but I disagree with this opinion. When LHBH was written in the 1830s, there was no distinction between children's and adult literature, at least for works of this caliber. In 1928, the great and opinionated children's writer and philologist Konstantin Chukovsky voiced amazement that neither Yershov nor his contemporaries understood that the true audience for Yershov's work, however pleasing it could be to adults, consisted of children aged five to seven. My hunch is that one of the reasons he made this statement was to encourage small Soviet children to read something seditious.

I personally chose to specialize in translating Russian children's poems for three reasons: 1) I am less likely to be troubled by doubts about fully understanding the original, and I do not feel guilty if I sacrifice an original semantic nuance for sound or humor; 2) because of nineteenth- and twentieth-century censorship and repression of even imagined dissent, many Russian poets in the nineteenth century wrote in a folkloric style, as if for children, and many truly great poetic talents in the twentieth century preferred to become primarily children's poets and/or translators, confining themselves to the exploits of fairy tale-like heroes and even animals and to other children's concerns rather than concentrating on serious adult poetry, which would have risked incurring the wrath of the authorities; and 3) most of the adult poems I would love to translate—or have translated and would love

to publish—have already been published by those with bigger names and better connections than mine. So I am delighted to have found this niche and the publisher for Yershov's tale and some of my other work, Russian Life Books.

Wasn't Yershov actually writing social and political satire as well in this poem? From the very start he makes fun of the Tsar and the bootlickers surrounding him.

LHBH was actually banned for 13 years during the nineteenth century because the poem was thought to portray the Tsar as laughable. In subsequent editions, certain paragraphs were cut by the censor. No wonder, as in this work the Tsar shows no greater dignity, elegance or nicety of feeling than Ivan the Fool, the peasant boy who, along with the humpbacked horse, is the tale's hero. Ivan debunks the legendary beauty of the Firebird and Tsar-Maiden, and when the Tsar and the Moon Queen talk, they behave exactly as Ivan the Fool imagines they would. The Tsar's geriatric and understandably unrequited passion for the young Tsar-Maiden is presented by Yershov unambiguously and satirically.

What are the choices you made in terms of the meter? I noticed the narrower column of the Russian and the sing-song qualities of the English.

Russian is anything but staccato—Thomas Mann keeps referring to it in *Magic Mountain* as "spineless." The Russian to my ears sounds at least as lulling as the English. The visible difference in line length is mainly a matter of typography and spaces between more and shorter words in English. Most Russian words are longer, while many prepositions are one consonant pronounced as part of the next word. The Russian poem is written in dactylic tetrameter, which is the standard Russian meter for authentic literary folktales. Because of the inflected nature of Russian, the two-line rhyme pairs alternate between ending on a full dactyl and ending on the fourth stress (so that half the lines contain seven syllables and the other half contain eight).

The English is in iambic meter—which is the most common meter for nursery rhymes in English, therefore the cultural, if not the actual, equivalent of the original. I thought it too difficult to write such a long narrative piece in dactyl, which would have required that no line start with an unstressed article or preposition. I estimate that two-thirds to three-fourths of the lines end in a stressed syllable, making the English lines longer, on average, by one syllable. However, I do throw in some dactylic lines to break up the monotony some modern readers might feel in absolutely regular poetry. The translation's lines contain the same number of metric feet (four) as do the Russian lines.

The poet rhymes consecutive lines in pairs and I have done the same. He, or his publisher, divided the verse into stanzas of irregular length, starting a new one when he moved on to a new topic. My stanzas may be slightly longer or shorter than the corresponding originals—I used whatever number I needed to tell the story. The total length of the translation is just 18 lines shorter than the original 2,500.

I have tried to use a neutral, clear poetic diction that is not daunting to a readership that may include young people. For tone or meter, I have sometimes allowed myself nineteenth-century locutions or archaic terms, such as might be found in English works of the same period, for example, those by Longfellow. In a very few cases, I have changed an unimportant detail to make the story more accessible to an English-speaking audience. In the original, for example, Ivan's father offers him peas and beans as a reward if he will stand guard; in the English, his father tempts him with sweets. Readers may not approve of these compromises, but they are the result of decisions consciously made rather than lapses in translation.

Could you tell us something more about Yershov? Is there any truth to the rumor that Pyotr Yershov was Pushkin's pseudonym?

Pyotr Pavlovich Yershov (1815-1869) was born in a village in the Ural Mountains in an area of Russia that borders what is now Kazakhstan. When his father, a civil servant, was transferred to St. Petersburg, Pyotr and his brother entered St. Petersburg University, where he studied philosophy. In 1831, the 16-year-old Yershov reputedly presented an

early version of *The Little Humpbacked Horse* to a circle of poets and academics, to great acclaim. Alexander Pushkin, Russia's greatest poet, was said to have remarked that the work was so good that Pushkin saw no need to continue writing his own folk tales in verse.

When *LHBH* was published in 1834, when Yershov was 19, it was an instant critical and financial success. His private life, however, was tragic. Soon afterward, both his father and his brother died within a week of each other. Yershov moved to Siberia where he found employment first as a teacher and then as a school director. He then lost his mother and first wife in rapid succession. His second wife and 9 of his 15 children also pre-deceased him. He continued to write and also made modifications to *LHBH* throughout his life. The Russian version from which my English translation was made was published in Moscow in 1992.

As for the rumors that Pushkin was the true author of *LHBH*, they come from certain literary scholars who believe that Yershov was asked to claim authorship so that Pushkin could evade the censors and/or earn money unbeknownst to his wife. I myself believe that this is a brilliant and very sophisticated work, and that a provincial and very young man would have had to be of surpassing genius to create it. The fact that this young man never wrote anything of even passable talent again and that his "corrections" of the work made after Pushkin's death are deplorable, as well as its similarity to Pushkin's other fables and a number of details from the biographies of both men, has convinced me that Pushkin was the author. However, even if he was not, the fact he is suspected of being so is a convincing testament to the work's quality.

The work is beloved of almost all educated Russians, who can recite large portions of it. Except for the short period during which it was banned, it has been in continuous publication since 1834. *LHBH* has inspired a famous ballet, innumerable cartoon features, and other spinoffs in the Russian-speaking world. Although there are quite a few prose retellings of the storyline in English and some other languages, there have been only a very few attempts at poetic translation.

RUSSIAN

Месяц с радости заплакал,
Ну Ивана обнимать,
Целовать и миловать.
“Ах, Иванушка Петрович! —
Молвил Месяц Месяцович. —
Ты принёс такую весть,
Что не знаю, чем и счесть!
А уж как мы горевали,
Что царевну потеряли!..
Оттого-то, видишь, я
По три ночи, по три дня
В тёмном облаке ходила,
Все грустила да грустила,
Трое суток не спала,
Крошки хлеба не брала,
Оттого-то сын мой красный
Завернулся в мрак ненастный,
Луч свой жаркий погасил,
Миру божью не светил:
Все грустил, вишь, по сестрице,
Той ли красной Царь-девице.
Что, здорова ли она?
Не грустна ли, не больна?” —
“Всем бы, кажется, красotka,
Да у ней, кажись, сухотка:
Ну, как спичка, слышь, тонка,
Чай в обхват-то три вершка;
Вот как замуж-то поспеет,
Так небось и потолстеет:
Царь, слышь, женится на ней”.
Месяц вскрикнул: “Ах, злодей!
Вздумал в семьдесят жениться
На молоденькой девице!
Да стою я крепко в том —
Просидит он женихом!
Вишь, что старый хрен затеял:
Хочет жать там, где не сеял!
Полно, лаком больно стал!”

LITERAL

*The moon wept with joy
And embraced Ivan,
Kissed and praised him.
“Ah, Ivanushka son of Peter!”
Said Moon daughter of Moon,
“You have brought me such news,
That I do not know how to take it in!
We sorrowed so,
When we lost the tsarevna!..
And that’s why, you see, I went around
For three nights and three days
In a dark cloud,
I was grieving and grieving,
I did not sleep for three days,
I did not eat even a bit of bread.
And that is why my fair son
Turned away into the gloomy dark,
Extinguishing his rays
And not lighting God’s world.
He was grieving for his little sister, you see,
That same lovely Tsar-Maid.
Is she well?
She’s not sad or ill?”
“Everyone it seems thinks she’s a beauty,
But she looks to me likes she’s consumptive.
She’s like a match stick,
Probably only three vershok around the waist.
When she marries, she will manage,
I bet, to put on some flesh.
The tsar you know, is going to marry her.”
The Moon shrieked: “Oh, the scoundrel!
He thinks at 70 he can up and marry
A young maiden!
But I will make sure—
That he will never be more than betrothed.
Just think what the old goat has gotten up to!
He wants to reap what he has not sown!
This is one self-indulgence too many.”*

LYDIA STONE 2014

*The Moon was shedding tears of joy.
She threw her arms around the boy
And kissed his cheek most tenderly:
“What glorious news you’ve brought to me.
We thought her lost to us for good!
I grieved as any mother would!
I never slept; I never ate;
I veiled my face for three days straight!
The Sun wept too, his visage bright
He hid in darkness out of sight,
And that is why for three long days
Folk were denied his warming rays.
My son was grieving for his sister.
He loved Tsar-Maiden; how he missed her!
But tell me all there is to tell:
Is my daughter feeling well?
Is she content or full of care?
Is she still fairest of the fair?”
“The whole world praises her for that.
But as for me, I like them fat!
Your daughter’s scrawny as a stick —
A chicken’s legs are twice as thick.
Though when she’s wed, she’s sure to grow:
Our tsar’s proposed to her, you know.”
The Moon exclaimed, “Why that old goat!
That geezer in an ermine coat!
Why can’t he find himself a crone
And leave the fresh, young girls alone?
Let him look elsewhere for his pleasure.
I’ll never let him wed my treasure.
O’er my dead body will he be
My daughter’s groom or kin to me!”*

You have said that this is more than just a work for children. How does it appeal to adults and how different is that appeal from that for children?

Cute and/or fantastic animals, imaginative details, and frequent humorous pratfalls and the like have appeal for both children and adults. The archetypes of the wise, and most often virtuous, fool who stands as a symbol for the small, powerless, and derided triumphing over the powerful; the magic friend; and the three tasks successfully performed leading to coronation (or its analogue) have continued to appeal to audiences as long as literature has existed. Adults (and more sophisticated children) will enjoy the beauty of the verse, the remarkably amusing speeches and wordplay, and the sarcastic treatment of authorities, portraying them as no more (if not less) subtle or noble than the hayseed fool himself. Adults with more nuanced knowledge of literature and especially the history of Russian literature will be enchanted by how the author plays with the conventions of the folktale (in ways only described by Formalist critics a century later) and how the satirical portrayals managed to avoid censorship, at least for most of the work's life.

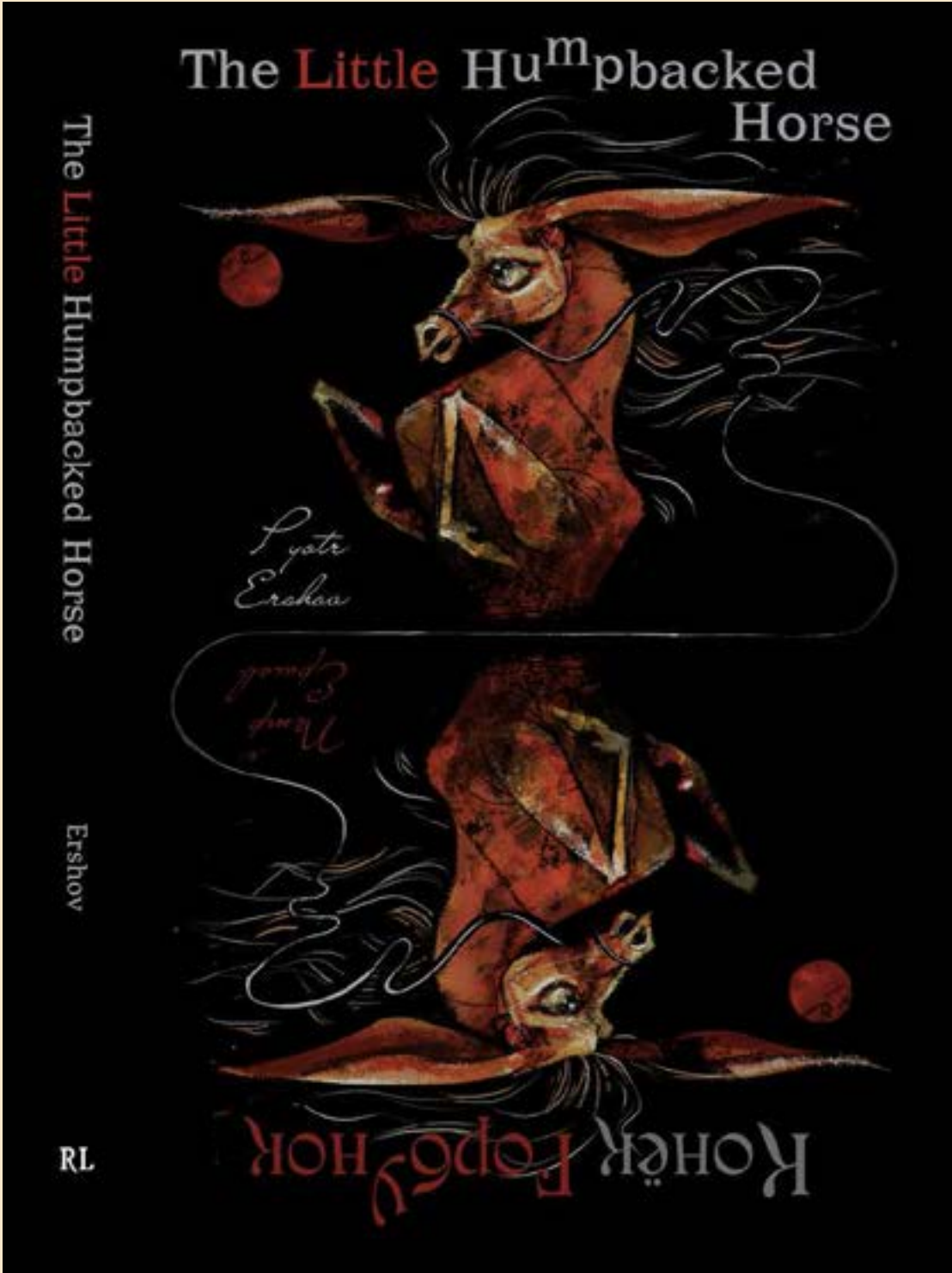
For me, who believes Pushkin to be the author, one of the work's greatest appeal is the chance to observe his genius at play. I see the work as a magnificent game he played — first of all deceiving the censors by attributing the work to a guileless boy with no history of rebellious writing, while receiving at least part of the remuneration for its publishing success (financial details of the lives of Pushkin and Yershov after publication appear to support this). Next, the work shows a great deal of play with words and literary and folk conventions, which must have provided endless enjoyment to the author. Finally, Pushkin was under the vigilant and personal authority of the Tsar. He had already been exiled twice, and the Tsar, who had appointed himself as Pushkin's personal censor, was at the time *LHBH* was being written openly flirting in a humiliating way with the poet's young and beautiful wife. Imagine how satisfying it must have been to create (and manage

to publish) the scenes where the beautiful Tsar-Maiden disdains her royal suitor.

What do you perceive to be the main characteristics of the world created in this tale?

Briefly, this work seems to me anything but a primitive description of a morally and ethically primitive world—in spite of its perfunctory Christian trappings (to avoid censorship no doubt). This is a pre-Christian world where one makes *quid pro quo* deals with the Gods, their supernatural minions, and other human beings. Just as the Tsar has no more noble or principled a character than Vanya, I see no evidence that any of the magical higher powers, whether secular or heavenly, do either. To put this another way, Vanya's world is primitive (in Freudian terms) because none of the characters including Vanya have anything like a superego. They are all basically out for themselves, and their desires are no more sophisticated than Vanya's: comfortable living conditions, freedom from punishment, torture and coercion, and shiny or otherwise desirable objects (including the beautiful object of the Tsar's geriatric lust). There does seem to be a certain amount of loyalty and obligation to keep one's word and do one's job.

The only exception to this is the horse, who of course was created (by the mare) for the purpose of showing selfless devotion. Vanya is neither a particularly wise nor a particularly virtuous fool, though he is more likeable than most of the other characters and slightly more honest. He earned his magic friend not by taking pity on a magical creature (as is the usual case in folk tales) but by humiliating and then making a deal with the creature's mother. The sin that causes all his difficulties (picking up the Firebird's magic feather) cannot be interpreted as having any kind of moral significance (other than not listening to good advice) and also paradoxically triggers the events that lead to his triumphant coronation. To quote Pushkin in another more serious context: "[It is clear] there is no justice (or truth) on earth, but neither is there any above." At least this is true in Vanya's world.



MEMORIES OF LA MANCHA

BY TONY BECKWITH



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

The mere mention of La Mancha triggers a host of memories, the very earliest of which takes me back to my childhood. A popular game at the elementary school I attended was called “Mancha.” It was the Uruguayan version of “Tag” and involved chasing your little friends around the playground, trying to touch them with your hand and calling out “*mancha*, you’re it!” Every culture, it would seem, has a version of this simple child’s game.

It was not until many years later that I learned that our playground game shared its name (though not its etymology) with the site of one of the most famous stories ever told. The story, of course, was *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, the novel by the Spanish writer Miguel de Cervantes, whose fictional hero—the knight-errant of the book’s title—played a sort of tag of his own invention, tilting at windmills in the company of his loyal squire, Sancho Panza.

La Mancha is a high, dry, windswept plain in central Spain, just southeast of Madrid, roughly speaking between the towns of Toledo

to the west and Cuenca to the east. Though arid, the land is fertile and has long been used to grow wheat, oats, barley, olives and, of course, grapes. It is actually the country's major wine region, and produces about fifty percent of Spain's wines. Those fortunate enough to have visited the area will surely have heard of the legendary *tempranillo* or *cencibel* grape, and will no doubt have pleasant memories of sitting in a tavern sipping a glass or two of sturdy, ripe, fruity red (with a nice balance of toasty oak). An afternoon can easily slip away in such a place, as one contemplates the fact that wine has been produced there for many centuries, all the way back to the Phoenicians who are said to have introduced winemaking to the Iberian Peninsula in the ninth century BC. History does not record whether the Phoenician traders, or the Roman conquerors who came after them, were aware that nothing goes better with a glass of the local red wine than a chunk of the local Manchego cheese and a few salty olives.

It is generally assumed that the name La Mancha is derived from *al-mansha*, the Arabic word for "wilderness" or "dry land." Such a claim is hardly surprising given the environmental conditions of the terrain and the fact that this part of Spain was under Moorish rule for centuries until King Alfonso VI brought it back into the Christian fold in 1085. The assumption is further bolstered by the fact that the Spanish word *mancha*—which means a mark, stain (on one's character or clothing), blemish, spot, or "tag, you're it!"—does not appear to be in any way connected to the name of the area.

I lived in Madrid in the mid-1960s and spent many pleasant weekends traveling here and there in the surrounding countryside. The Spanish Ministry of Tourism was doing everything it could to attract foreign visitors, and was refurbishing castles, monasteries, and palaces and converting them into *Paradores*, or state-owned hotels. For very little money, you could spend the night in a fourteenth-century castle near Toledo, for example, and remind yourself that you were sleeping not very far from where Cervantes was born, in a building that had already been standing for over two centuries by the time he published his famous book.

Franco had been in power for about twenty-five years when I arrived in Madrid, and the Spanish Civil War (1936–39) still prompted passionate debate in certain circles. The universal implications of the conflict intrigued me, as did its potent appeal to contemporary British and American writers and intellectuals, so I'd been reading about it and asking my older Spanish friends to tell me anything they remembered. One of them said, "You should talk to my mother. Her memories of the war are still very vivid." I said I'd love to, and as he gave me her address he added, "I can almost guarantee she'll tell you a story about an olive." He smiled enigmatically but would say no more.

So, one Sunday afternoon I set off to meet Margarita. She lived somewhere in La Mancha, in a village whose name I do not remember. Her house was on a narrow, winding street and I had to stoop as I stepped across the threshold. Inside it was dark and cool, sparsely furnished, rustic and spotlessly clean. We sat at her kitchen table and, with very little prompting, she talked about what she remembered. Her husband left soon after the war started, and never returned. "He went to join the *Republicanos* and left me with four small boys. Things went from bad to worse because, as you know the *Republicanos* lost, and we nearly starved to death."

I asked how they'd survived and she said, "I'll give you an example. One day I scavenged a dried-up old olive and a moldy crust of bread from someone's trash. I sat my boys at the table on the patio, each with a tin plate in front of him, and broke the bread into four pieces. I tied the olive to a long piece of string hanging from the lattice above them, and pushed it so that it would swing in a circle over their heads. When the shadow of the olive moved across their plates I told them, 'There, moisten your bread there and enjoy your lunch.'" She threw me an impenetrable look, her black eyes glinting in her lined old face. "You wanted to know about the Civil War. That was my Civil War," she said.

On the way back to Madrid the land was flat and the fields were the color of ripe grain. Grazing sheep dotted the landscape, working on their next batch of Manchego cheese. Small villages rushed toward me, crowded the windshield, then vanished behind me again, their houses huddled together in medieval proximity under corduroy roofs



Windmills of La Mancha

Photograph with permission from Ron Sutton
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of terracotta tile, with the late afternoon sunlight angling across the road from low in the west, picking out every detail with breathtaking clarity. Most beautifully of all, the light reflected off the whitewashed walls of the iconic windmills made famous by the “Ingenious Gentleman” who set out to restore chivalry, right all wrongs, and bring justice to the world some three-and-a-half centuries ago.

Don Quijote (with a *j* in Spanish) is considered the founding work of modern Western literature, and has been translated many times, into many languages. One of the recent English versions was translated by Edith Grossman as *Don Quixote* (with an *x*, which is the customary English spelling). In her “Translator’s Note to the Reader” Grossman explains that: “I hesitated over the spelling of the protagonist’s name, and finally opted for an *x*, not a *j*, in Quixote (I wanted the connection to the English ‘quixotic’ to be immediately apparent)¹.”

In her book *Why Translation Matters* ² Grossman discusses “some of the fears that plagued” her as she embarked on this epic project. “It was a privilege, an honor, and a glorious opportunity — thrilling, overwhelming, and terrifying.” One can only imagine. Among her early concerns was how to go about translating “the opening phrase—probably the most famous words in Spanish, comparable to the opening lines of Hamlet’s ‘To be, or not to be’ soliloquy in English.” She goes on to say: “The first part of the sentence in Spanish reads: ‘*En un lugar de la Mancha, de cuyo nombre no quiero acordarme....*’ I recited those words to myself as if they were a mantra, until an English phrase materialized that seemed to have a comparable rhythm and drive, that played with the multiple meanings of the word *lugar* (both ‘place’ and ‘village’), and that echoed some of the sound of the original: ‘Somewhere in La Mancha, in a place whose name I do not care to remember....’ It felt right to me, and with a rush of euphoric satisfaction I told myself I might actually be able to translate this grand masterpiece of a book.”

Anyone who has spent any time somewhere in La Mancha will know that there is more to the region than *El Quijote*, windmills, and wine. As you drive south from Madrid on your way to the storied plain, you soon come to Aranjuez, the town that the Catholic Monarchs, Queen Isabella I of Castile and King Ferdinand II of Aragon, once used as

their spring residence. These two were married in 1469, over a century before *Don Quijote* was published, thus forming the union that laid the foundation for modern Spain. In later years, the Habsburg and Bourbon kings all retreated to Aranjuez in the summer, and Philip II built a magnificent royal palace and gardens there in the late sixteenth century.

In 1939, Joaquín Rodrigo composed his masterpiece, the *Concierto de Aranjuez*, inspired—it is said—by the gardens and fountains of the royal palace. The *Concierto*, for classical guitar and orchestra, premiered in November 1940 in Barcelona and was a huge success. It has been immensely popular ever since, and is in fact one of the best-known pieces of music ever written for the classical guitar. It has been performed by an eclectic assortment of musicians in a remarkable range of styles³. The work was actually composed in Paris, where Rodrigo and his wife were living at the time, and the original score was written in braille, because the composer was blind.

Just as a sudden fragrance can take us back—the scent of freesias on the evening air, for example, or the first thick drops of rain on a dusty road—certain sounds can sweep us away. Rhythms and melodies can transport us to other moods, other moments, sometimes to places we’ve never even been. That’s what happened the first time I heard the *Concierto de Aranjuez*, long before I ever ventured south from Madrid to explore La Mancha. In time I came to know it as an unforgettable place of haunting beauty, steeped in a timeless sense of chivalry and the pursuit of noble ideals.

Notes

1 Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, trans. Edith Grossman (New York: HarperCollins, 2003), xviii.

2 Edith Grossman, *Why Translation Matters*, (Yale University Press), 2010, pp. 83-85.

3 Click here to listen to Paco de Lucía playing the Adagio, the second movement of the *Concierto de Aranjuez*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e9RS4biqyAc>

CREDITS

Cover

Alonso Quijano becoming unhinged by books of chivalry.

<https://weheartillustration.wordpress.com/illustrating-pioneers/gustave-dore/>

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Photo of cover of *Contemporary China* with permission of the publisher.

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Photo of Cervantes' statue by Sue Burke at the Biblioteca Nacional de España in Madrid.

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Pages of a sixteenth-century handbook written in Aljamía.

<http://tinyurl.com/arauco-org>

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The layout of the the library that plays a pivotal role in Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*.

https://cirsova.files.wordpress.com/2013/07/haft_library.gif

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St. Michael's Abbey and the Alps in the Susa Valley in Italy's Piedmont, source of inspiration for Eco's monastery in *The Name of the Rose*.

http://www.sacradisanmichele.com/eng/test_display/index/id/16/cat/8/

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Oil on canvas by Johann Heinrich Füssli (Henry Fuseli), *Titania Caresses Bottom with the Donkey's Head* (1793-94).

http://www.kunsthhaus.ch/de/sammlung/gemaelde-und-skulpturen/schweizer-malerei/johann-heinrich-fuessli/zoom/?redirect_url=title%3DL

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Poster for David Tse's bilingual production of *King Lear*.

http://globalshakespeares.mit.edu/wp-content/uploads/07.TseLear_poster.jpg

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Image of cover for *The Little Humpbacked Horse* with permission of the publisher.

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