Celebrating Our Translator Supreme Edith Grossman

In the Beginning







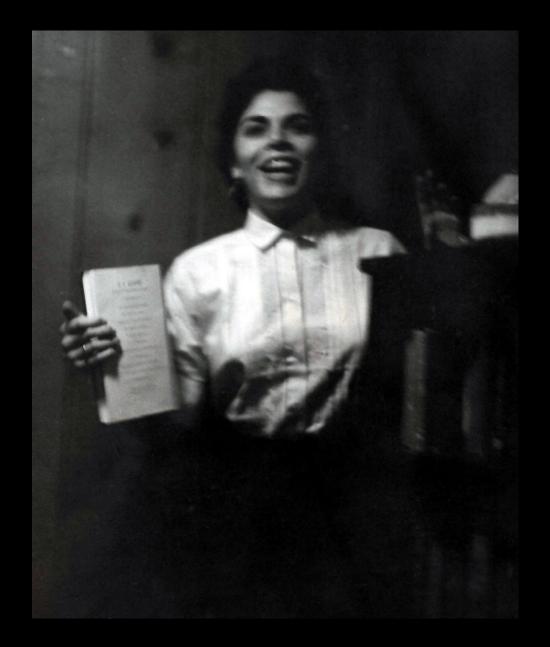


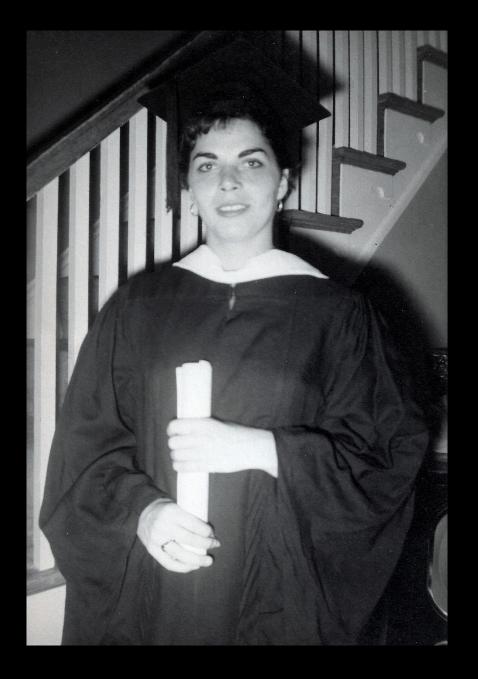






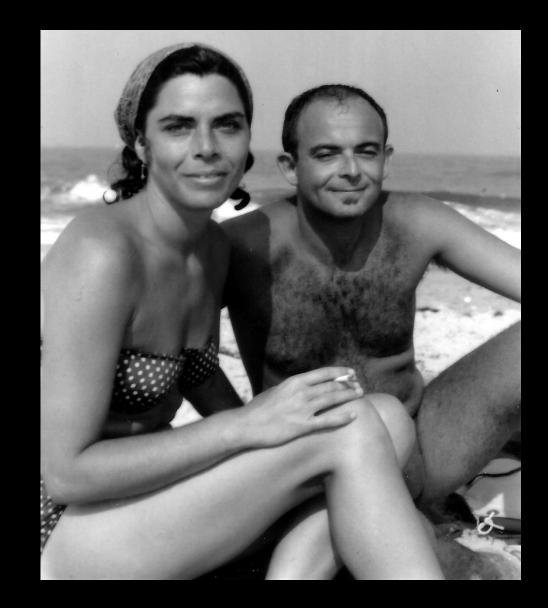
















The Literary Life

THE ANTIPOETRY OF NICANOR PARRA: ITS THEORY AND TECHNIQUE

Advisor

BL Edith Grossman June, 1972

A Thesis in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at New York University

THE ANTIPOETRY OF NICANOR PARRA: ITS THEORY AND TECHNIQUE

The Surgery of Psychic Removal

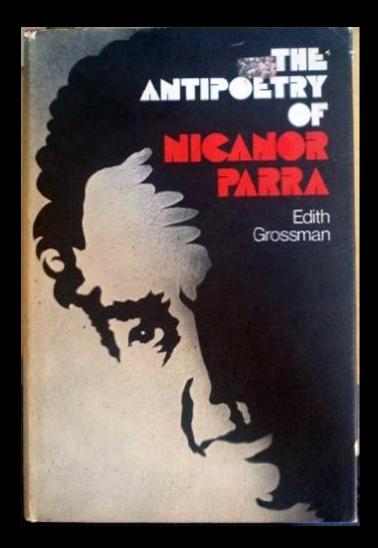
MACEDONIO FERNANDEZ

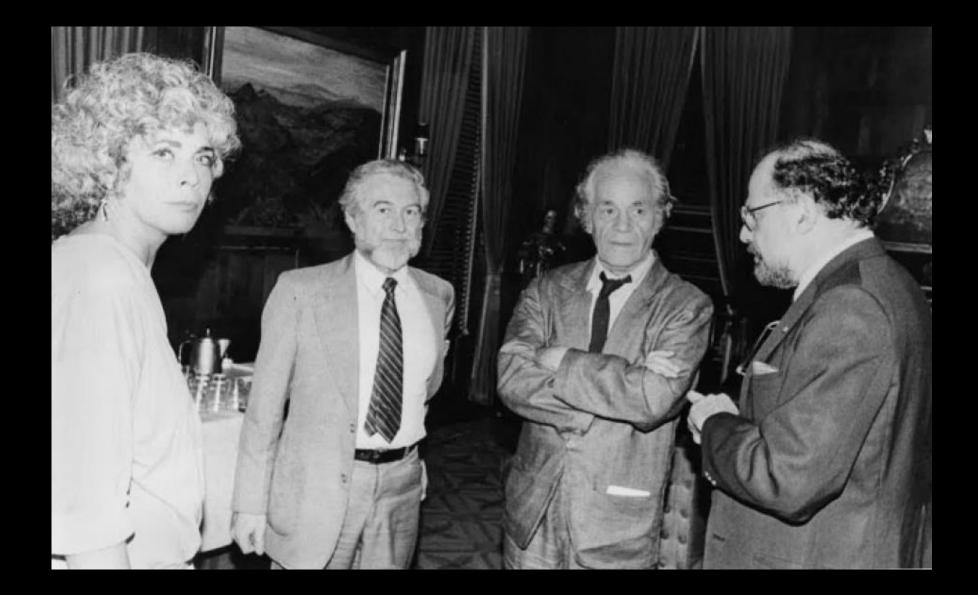
Actually a brilliant and witty writer in the vanguard of contemporary fiction, Macedonio Fernández (1874-1952) is more often thought of as either a mad metaphysician or an influence on Borges. But Fernández'special genius shows, surprisingly and delightfully, in this short story published first in South America's foremost literary magazine *Sur* in 1941 and translated into English here for the first time. The following autobiographical note was written by the author at our request:

I was born in Buenos Aires, very much in the year 1874. Not just then but very soon afterwards, Jorge Luis Borges started to quote me with so little diffidence concerning acknowledgements, that on account of the awful risks his enthusiasm exposed him to I began to be the author of his best writing. What an injustice, dear Jorge Luis, poet of "The Trick" and "General Quiroga Rides to his Death in a Carriage," you who were the real master of that period.

Just as psychology is the science of everything we don't know about the soul, my first book concerning Waking and Sleeping (Not All Open Eyes Mean Insomnia) contained nothing except every possible question I could think of. In compensation, I think of myself today as one who has all the answers. But this will not make my book of questions more popular. All the copies of A Newcomer's Papers were distributed free of charge, and judging by its enthusiastic reception it was a book that would have sold well, too. In it all my many toasts were mixed together into a single draught, which gave rise to the idea that I had planned this really pleasant way out inspired by the herbal therapy, so popular some years ago, which either killed you or cured you.

Naturally the successes I have described meant that only thirty years of silence passed before I felt the desire to write again: first, The Beginning of a Novel and then, before the audience can leave, for they tend to believe implicitly in amouncements of Most Recent Productions and they must hear about this one: A Continuation of Nothing, the latest bad novel (long and mild-mannered) and the first good novel (Adriana Buenos Aires); although they will be sold together as companion volumes, two for the price of one, they are not the Dual Novel which, according to my theory of fiction, constitutes or contains

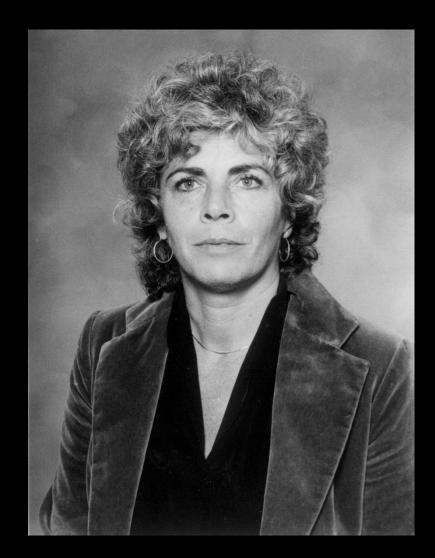




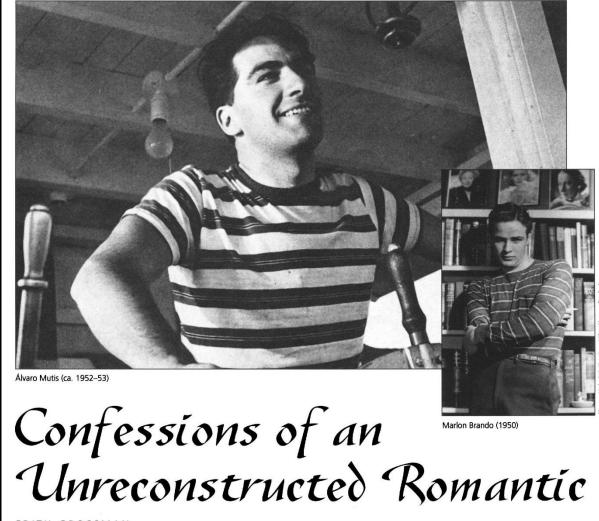












EDITH GROSSMAN

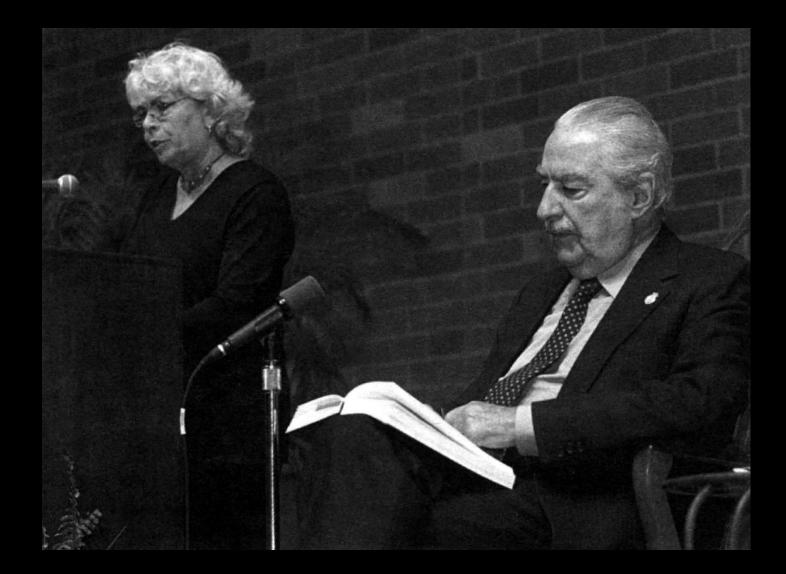
 ${\cal I}$ have written only one fan letter in my life, and that was to Álvaro Mutis. This is what happened.

Confessions of an Unreconstructed Romantic

EDITH GROSSMAN

I have written only one fan letter in my life, and that was to Álvaro Mutis. This is what happened.

Edith Grossman. "Confessions of an Unreconstructed Romantic." *World Literature Today* 77.2 (2003): 28-30.

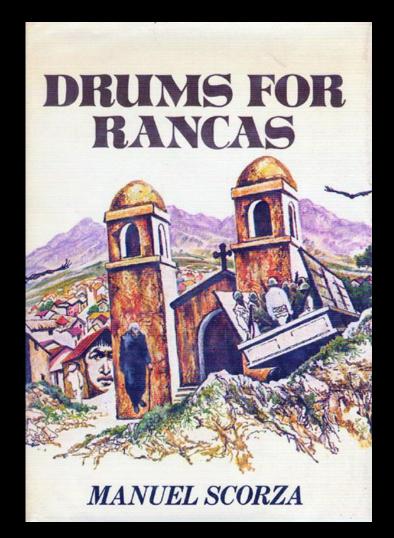


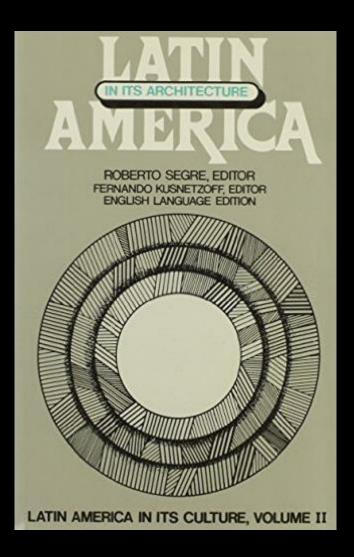


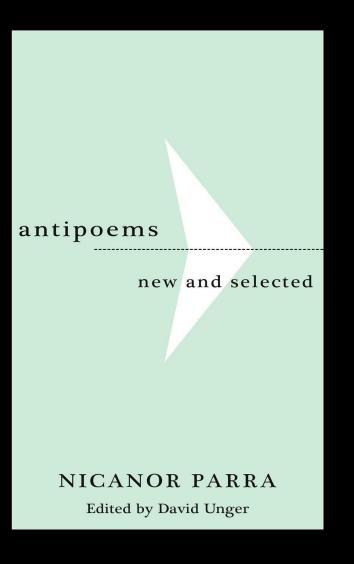


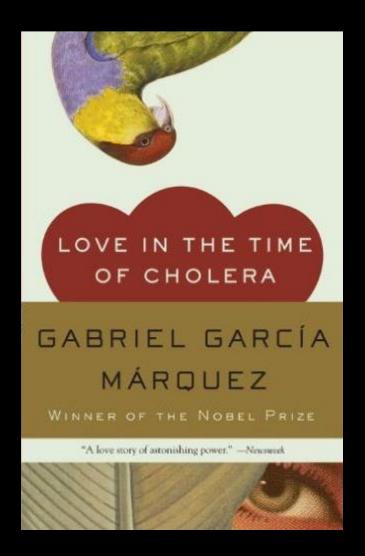


Books & Books



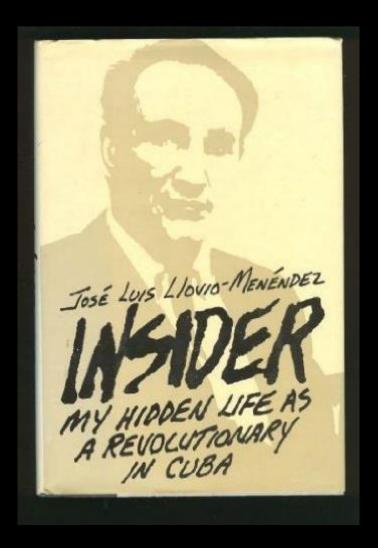


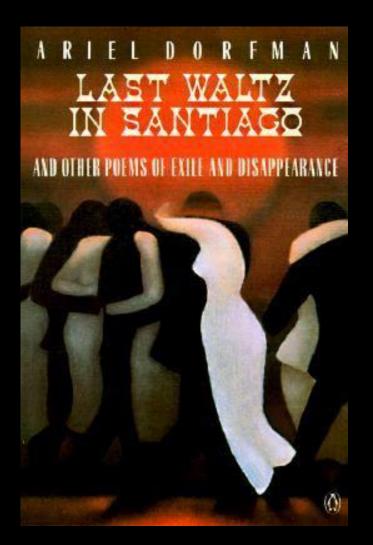


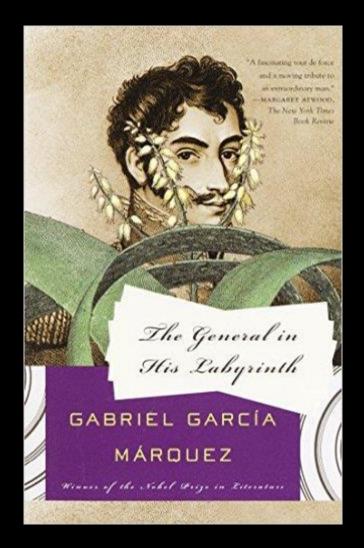


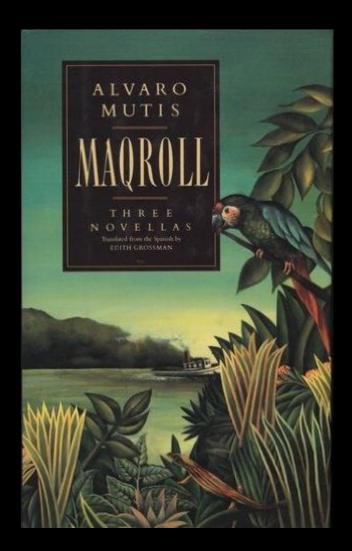
The only regret I will have in dying is if it is not for love.

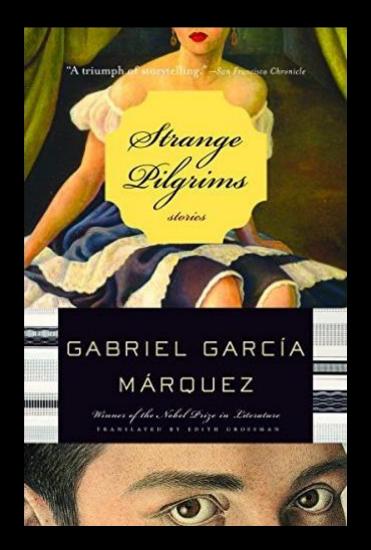
-Gabriel García Márquez, Love in the Time of Cholera

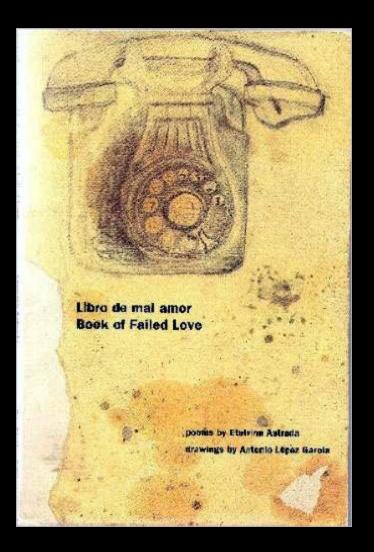


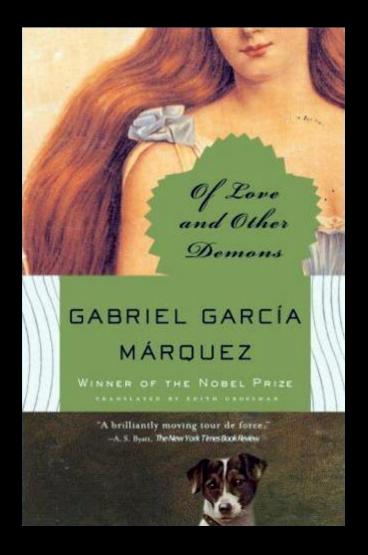


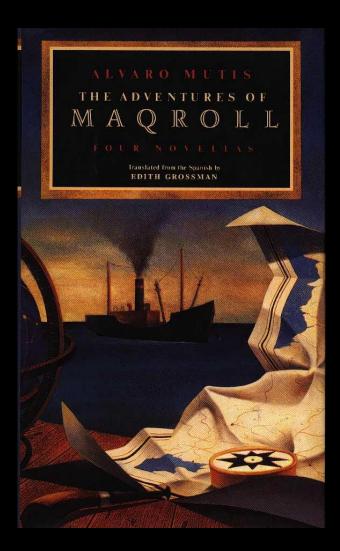


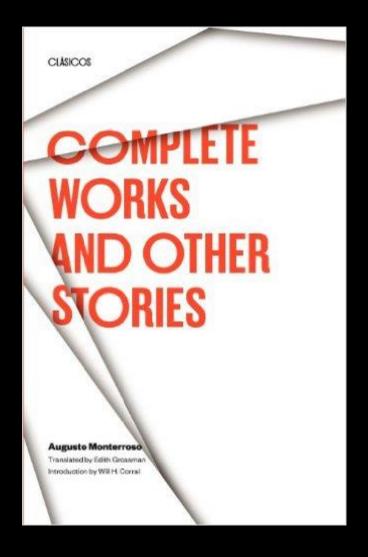


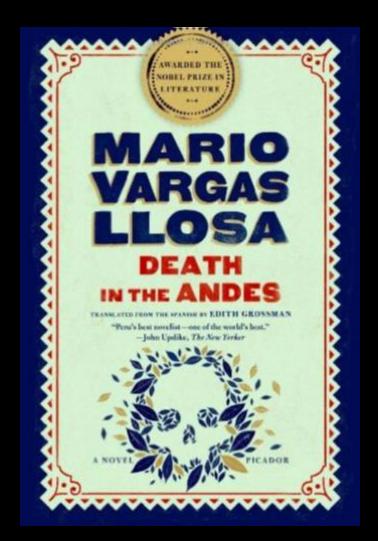


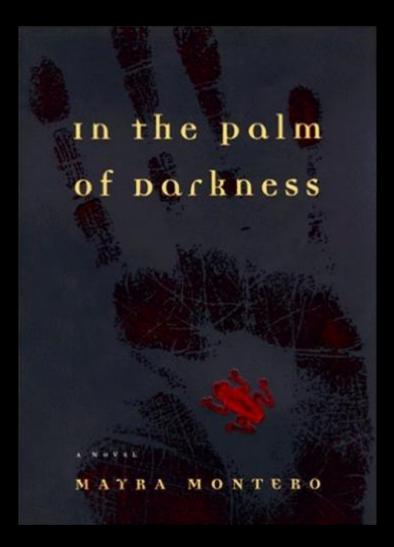


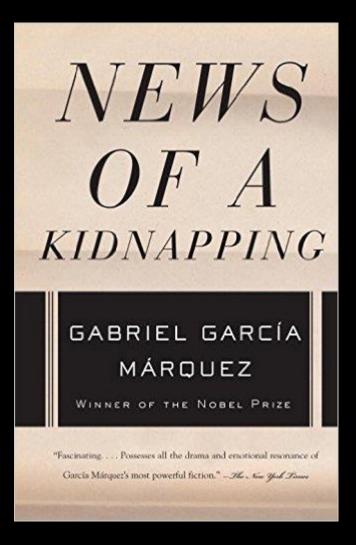












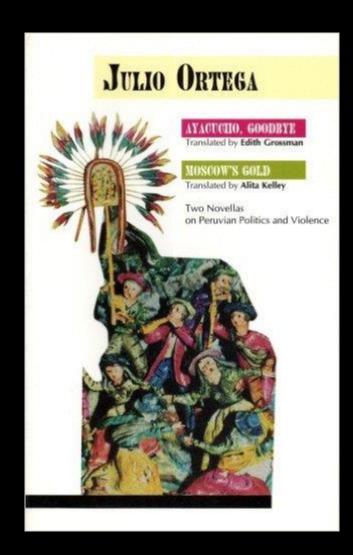
MY NIGHT WITH MI NOCHE CON FEDERICO GARCÍA LORCA

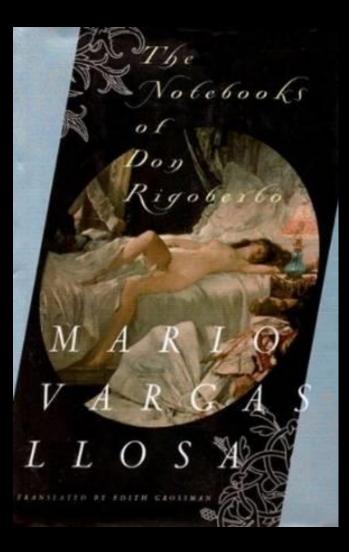


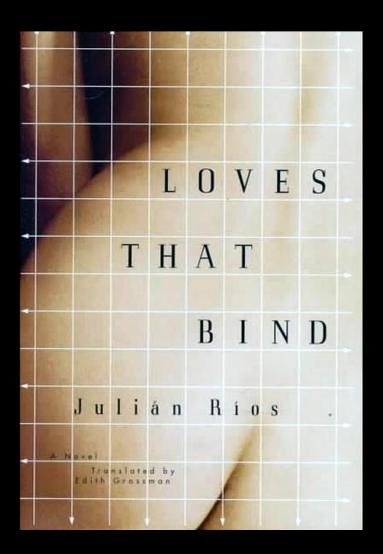
JAIME MANRIQUE

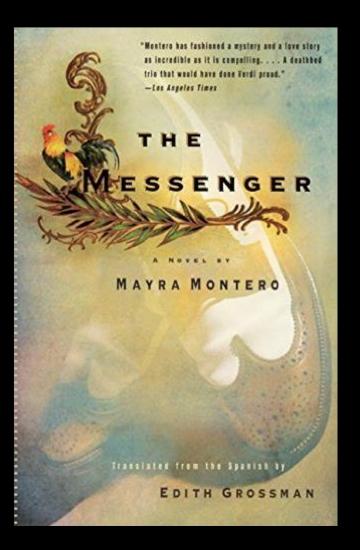
Translated by Edith Grossman and Eugene Richie

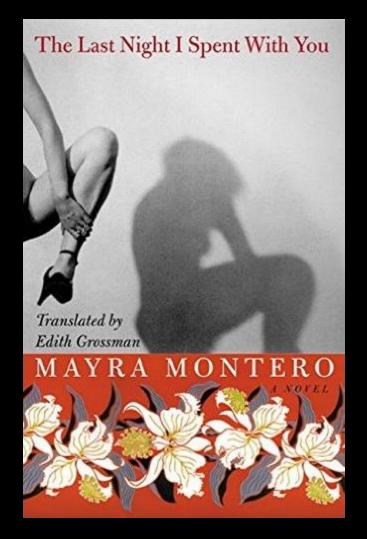
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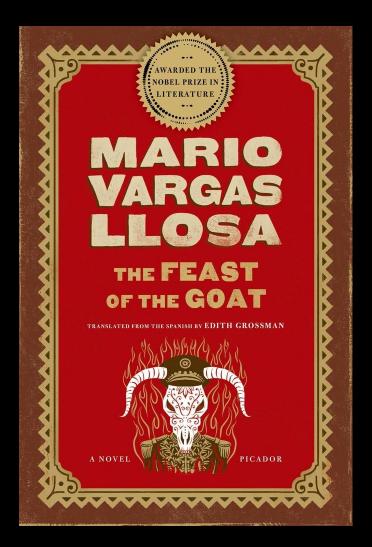














THE RED OF HIS SHADOW



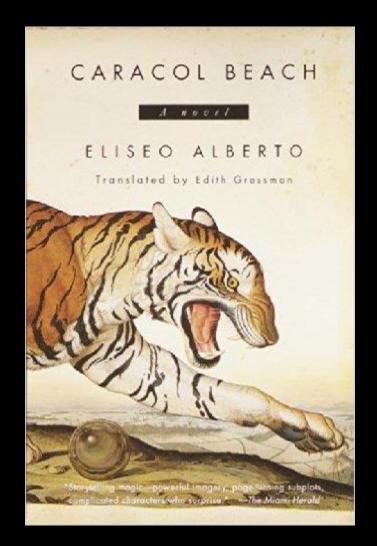
A NOVEL MAYRA MONTERO Translated from the Spanish by EDITH GROSSMAN

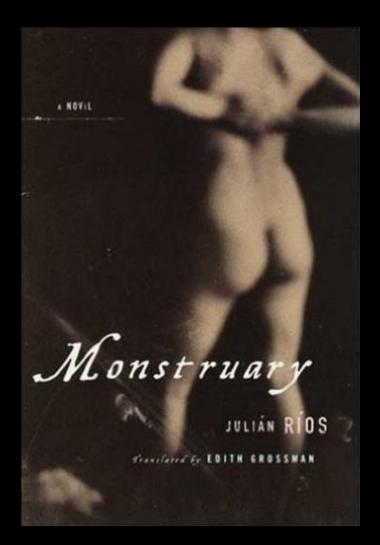


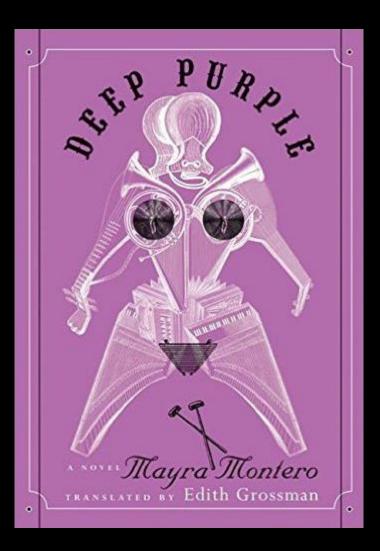
tarzan my body christopher columbus

by Jaime Manrique

translations by Edith Grossman & Margaret Sayers Penden introduction by Reinaldo Arenas







DON QUIXOTE

MIGUEL DE CERVANTES A NEW TRANSLATION BY EDITH GROSSMAN INTRODUCTION BY HAROLD BLOOM

BOOKS OF THE TIMES

N

Beholding Windmills and Wisdom From a New Vantage

By RICHARD EDER

So many have written wisely and cogently about "Don Quixote" since it first appeared. And as they spur at this literary edifice, they suggest the mournfully countenanced knight himself, charging his windmill and ending up unhorsed. Note, though, that before his undignified sprawi he

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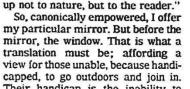
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was flung, for a moment, inspiredly aloft.

Cervantes's great humpbacked book of travels, through life's dreams and the Mancha's dust, incites insight and evades it. It is stuck like a pincushion with the most piercing and varied of critical enthusiasms, and never pinned down.

Unpinned, the greatest of all novels (whether you cite a poll of 100 writers chosen by the Nobel Institute, or the introduction to Edith Grossman's new translation by Harold Bloom, who submits to no polls but his own) has continued to revolve and draw up water for its readers for nearly 400 years.

Which makes any attempt to write about it both onerous and oddly light. Mr. Bloom all but throws up his hands after an elegantly thoughtful juggle by remarking that no critic's account agrees with any other critic's. Cervantes wrote "a mirror held



capped, to go outdoors and join in. Their handicap is the inability to enter the original language. Ms. Grossman's window, just installed, stands today as the most transparent and least impeded among more than a dozen English translations going back to the 17th century.

The Spanish of "Don Quixote" is entirely of its time. But the language has changed relatively little since then. Apart from a couple of obsolete verb forms and some grandiloquent pastiche (imitating contemporary books of chivalry), the book alternates between earthy and soaring in a fashion entirely recognizable in Spain to this day.

English has changed considerably more. Translators must pick their way between what sounds unforced to its readers and what embeds "Don Quixote's" voice — because the voice transmits the heartbeat — in its century. Two recent translations go overboard trying to be currently colloquial: the British one populates the Mancha with "blokes." Such a choice uproots the book from its time and place, paradoxically depriving it of universality. Hamlet ruminates, "To chill or not to chill."

After two years' work Ms. Grossman, whose translations of Gabriel García Márquez make readers wonder if they don't speak Spanish themselves, has provided a Quixote that is agile, playful, formal and wry.

Once in a while there are odd choices and, in the translation's 940 pages, some occasional flagging, but what she renders splendidly is the book's very heart. Two figures raft through Mancha and universe upon flows and counterflows of supple, whirlpooling and continually reversing discourse; a model — as the book has been to so many later masterpieces — for Huck and Jim's drifting catfish-and-cornpone cosmics and particulars.

Ms. Grossman finds a way to fashion in English the sudden wry descents and ascents — a verbal snakes and ladders — with which the knight switches from lordly to redolently human and Sancho switches the other way.

To take an example, one of my favorites, though 100 readers will have 300 others: Don Quixote, accompanied at this point by a most miscellaneous group of followers among them two priests, a notary, a pair of lovers, a nobleman — proclaims his barber's bowl to be a helmet. The company holds a vote and agrees. Others at the same inn are incredulous and then indignant. A terrible fight breaks out. The knight stands amusedly apart. They must have all gone crazy, he reflects. Throughout, in fact, Don Quixote

attracts a bevy of groupies; notably,



Edith Grossman DON QUIXOTE

By Miguel de Cervantes A new translation by Edith Grossman. Introduction by Harold Bloom. 940 pages. Ecco. \$29.95.

in the second part, a duke and duchess who treat him royally while arranging "adventures" to display his delusions. On one level they are making elaborate sport of him, and there is a precooked smell to some of these pages.

On a deeper level, seeking to toy with him, they are toyed with, just as readers have been ever since. (In Part 2 Don Quixote keeps meeting people who read about him in Part 1. It is metafiction, if you like; or it is the first celebrity cult.) Reading Cervantes we keep stumbling against ourselves: Iraq, of course, when the knight frees a group of prisoners only to have them stone him. Suddenly the giants of our day shimmer in a

haze of windmills.

Don Quixote wields an enchantment deeper than laughter, though laughter is part of it. He is the Pied Piper of the imagination; he draws others into his serious game. They become his plagiarizers. When the duke's servants wash his guest's hands at dinner and go on, jokingly, to wash his beard, the duke demands that his own beard be washed.

"I have immortal longings in me," Cleopatra declared as she applied the asp. Don Quixote stands for the immortality of the imagination, but it would have no traction if it were not set against homely, intractable people and things. They keep defeating-him of course, and he proclaims the defeat an illusion.

The Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno likened his knight to Jesus, more existential than biblical, though. The comparison is not mainly in virtue — though the knight starts as Alonso Quijano the Good, and ends that way; and a delicate kindness keeps breaking in — but in incarnation. Windmills, lions, cudgelwielding shepherds, the beatings, rough sleeping, the mockeries are the reality that human life confronts. Transformations do not change them, but they change the confronter.

Nine hundred and seventy-three pages (in Spanish). One hundred and twenty-six chapters. Samuel Johnson, who said of "Paradise Lost" that "no man ever wished it shorter" wished, Mr. Bloom tells us, that "Don Quixote" were longer. The daughter of a friend of mine, a college student, limits her reading to three chapters at a time so as to make it last. In fact it will. Ms. Grossman finds a way to fashion in English the sudden wry descents and ascents — a verbal snakes and ladders — with which the knight switches from lordly to redolently human and Sancho switches the other way.



mistakes for giants have something in common with the madeleine that makes Marcel's memory buds salivate: both occur conveniently early in very long books that are, in English at least, more praised than read. And Cervantes may resemble Proust in another way. Both are comic writers, properly snagged in the mundane, whose fiction has too often been etherealized out of existence. Miguel de Unamuno, the relentlessly idealizing Spanish philosopher, considered "Don Quixote" a "profoundly Christian epic" and the true "Spanish Bible," and correspondingly managed to write about the novel as if not a single comic episode occurred in it. W. H. Auden thought that "Don Quixote" was a portrait of a Christian saint; and Unamuno's unlikely American supporter Harold Bloom, in his introduction to Edith Grossman's marvellous new translation (Eccc; \$29.95), reminds us that "Don Quixote," though it "may ciple that "it is in the nature of good ser- has translated Garcia Márquez and Varnot be a scripture," nonetheless captures all humanity, as Shakespeare doeswhich sounds more like religious lament than like secular caution. So it is worth reminding ourselves

of the gross, the worldly, the violent, and, above all, the comic in "Don Quixote"-worth reminding ourselves that we are permitted the odd secular guffaw while reading it. If all of modern fiction

farcical to the delicately ironic. First, there is the comedy of egotism-the "But enough about my work, what do brilliantly exploited by Tartuffe, and by Jane Austen's Mr. Collins, who proposes to Elizabeth Bennet by listing all the ways in which he will benefit from marriage. Don Quissote is the great chivalric egotist, never more egotistical than After he and poor Sancho Panza have the earthy Sancho Panza and his mudbeating by some drovers from Yanguas and being tossed in a blanket by a gang of men, Don Quixote has the nerve to tell his servant that these things are evil enchantments and so are not really happening to Sancho: "Therefore you must za's demotic Spanish than Grossman's not grieve for the misfortunes that befall me, for you have no part in them." This is the knight who, finding that he can't sleep, wakes up his servant, on the prinvants to share the griefs of their masters gas Llosa, has produced the most disand to feel what they are feeling, if only for appearance's sake." No wonder that Sancho elsewhere defines a knight adventurer as "someone who's beaten and then finds himself emperor."

laughing at himself, laughable though he often is. Cervantes has a wonderfully undulating scene in which the Knight

Cervantes's masterpiece, though extelled as "profoundly Obristian," bristles with small blasthemies; it is the founder of secular comedy.

xote's melancholy was not so great that he could resist laughing at the sight of Sancho, and when Sancho saw that his master had begun, the floodgates opened with such force that he had to press his sides with his fists to keep from bursting with laughter." Don Quixote gets cross with Sancho for laughing at him, and hits him with his lance, complaining, "In all the books of chivalry I have read, which are infinite in who talks as much with his master as you do with yours," As so often in "Don Quixote," the reader travels, in a page you think of my work?" grand manner, or two, through different chambers of laughter: affectionate, ironic, satirical,

Panza weeps with terror, and Don Qui-

xote is moved by his tears. When they finally discover that the noise comes from "six wooden fulling hammers," pounding away in a cloth mill, Don Quinote looks at Sancho, and sees that "his cheeks were puffed out and his mouth full of laughter, clear signs that he would soon explode, and Don Qui-

harmonious. Edith Grossman's English sensitively captures these shifting registers, as we move from the Knight's ornate, sometimes pompous diction, via the narrawhen he appears to be most chivalrous. tor's fluent and funny recounting, to suffered several adventures, including a dier music. We are fortunate to have at present three excellent translations of "Don Quixote": in addition to Grossman's, there is John Rutherford's recent version for Penguin Classics (which takes more liberties with Sancho Pandoes), and Burton Raffel's rendering for Norton. All are scholarly and elegant; in some places they are almost indistinguishable. But Grossman, who tinguished, and the most literary, of them, and those qualities are amply displayed on every page. "Don Quixote" is the greatest of

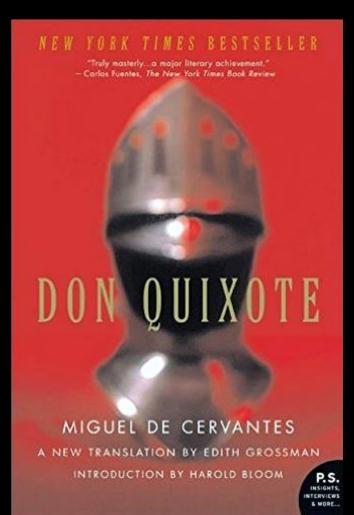
all fictional inquiries into the relation The egotist is never very good at between fiction and reality, and so a good deal of the novel's comedy is selfconscious, generated when one or more of the characters seems to step out of comes out of the Knight's cape, one rea- and his servant are riding in the hills the book and appeal either to a nonficson might be that Cervantes's novel con- and are stopped by a loud noise. Sancho tional reality or directly to the audience

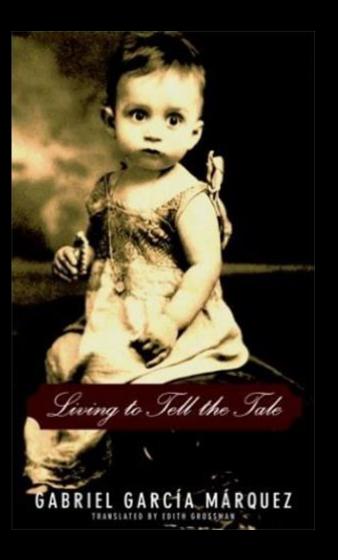
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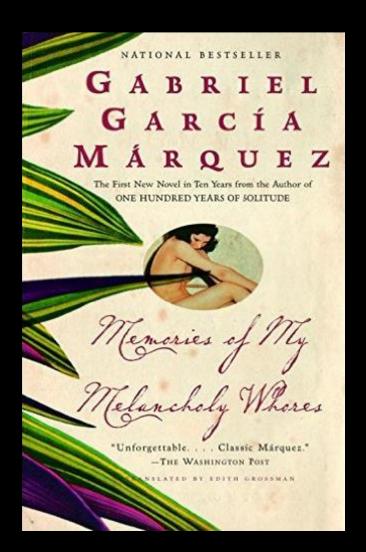
Edith Grossman's marvellous new translation (Ecco; \$29.95), reminds us that "Don Quixote," though it "may not be a scripture," nonetheless captures all humanity, as Shakespeare does which sounds more like religious lament than like secular caution.

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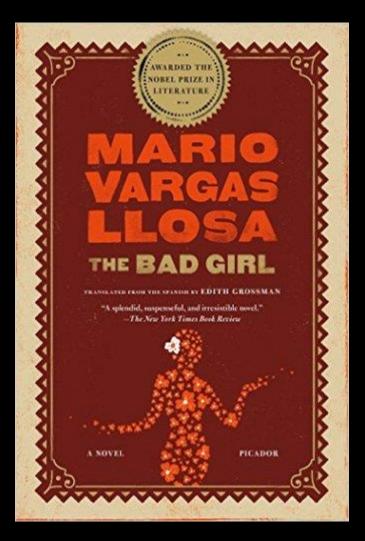


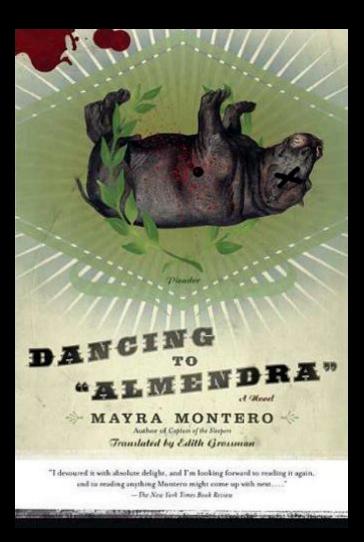


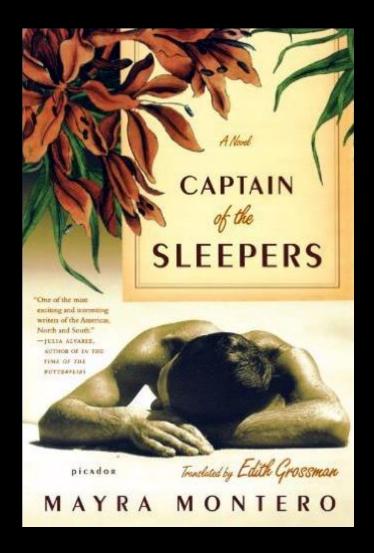


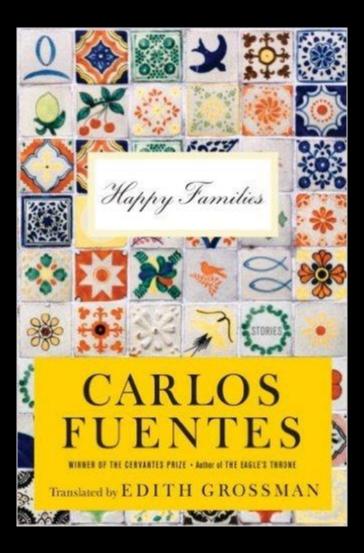
Pablo Bachelet **GUSTAVØ CISNEROS** Pioneer Foreword by Carlos Fuentes

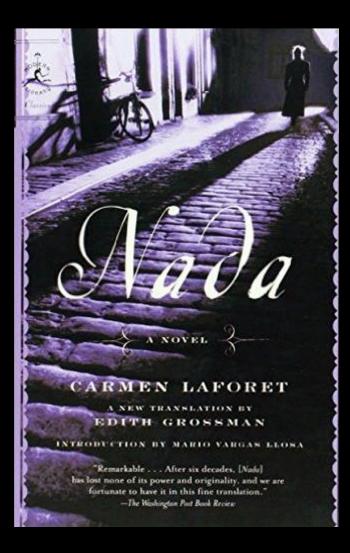
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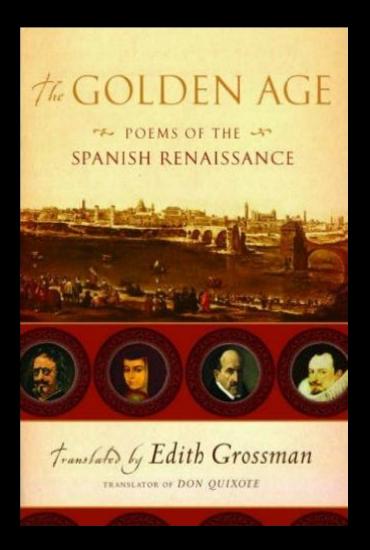


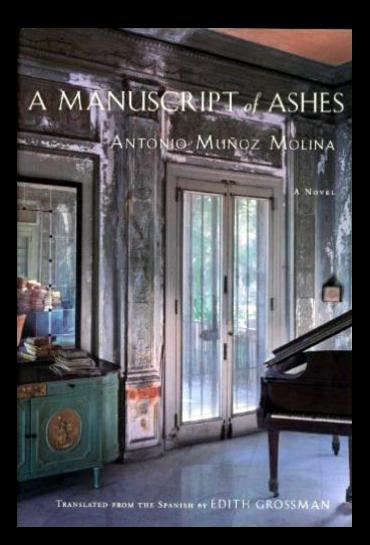




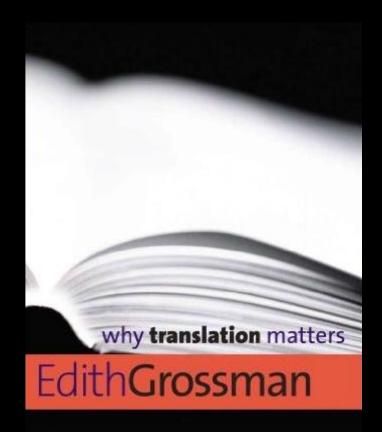








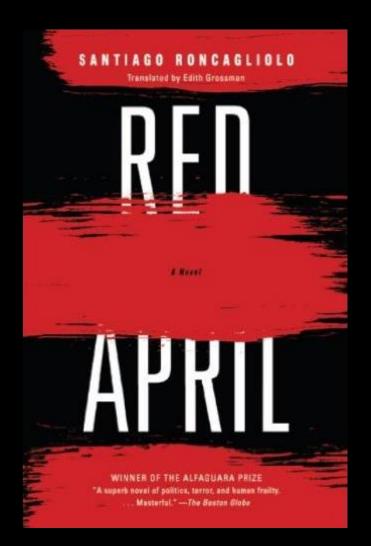
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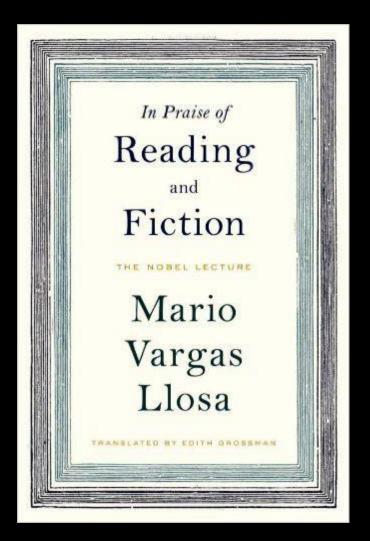


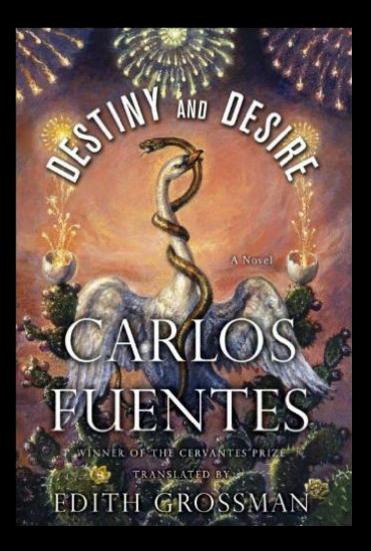
"Edith Grossman, the Glenn Gould of translators, has written a superb book on the art of the literary translation. Even Walter Benjamin is surpassed by her insights into her task, which she rightly sees as imaginatively independent. This should become a classic text."—Harold Bloom

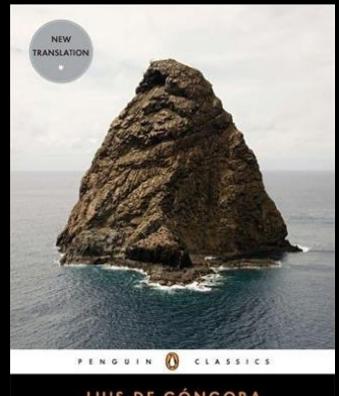
why translation matters EdithGrossman

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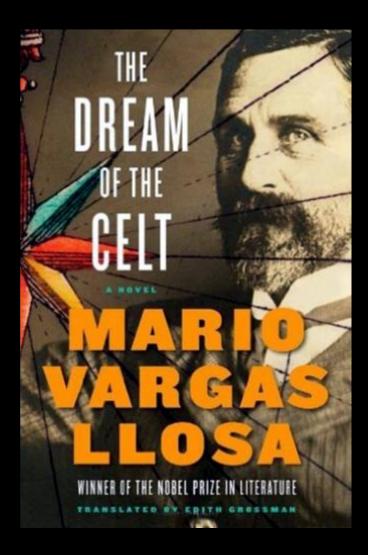


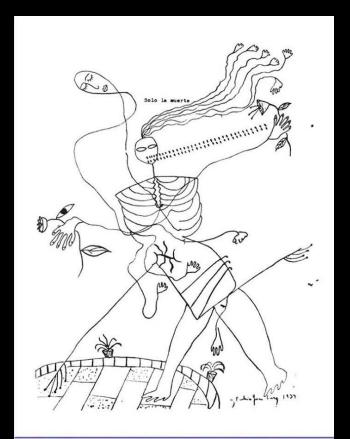


LUIS DE GÓNGORA

The Solitudes A Dual-Language Edition with Parallel Text

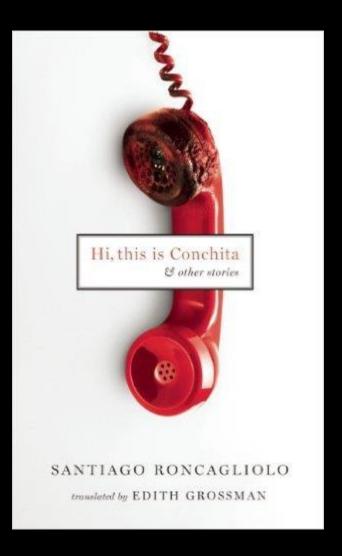
> Translated by EDITH GROSSMAN Introduction by ALBERTO MANGUEL

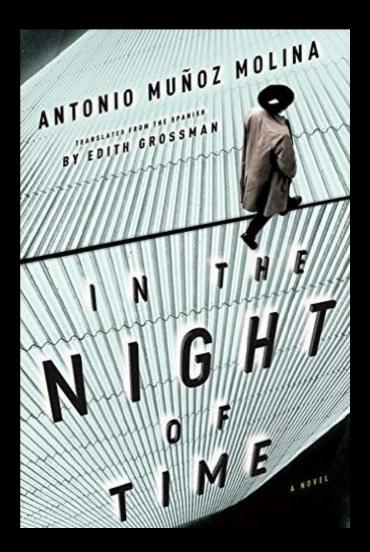


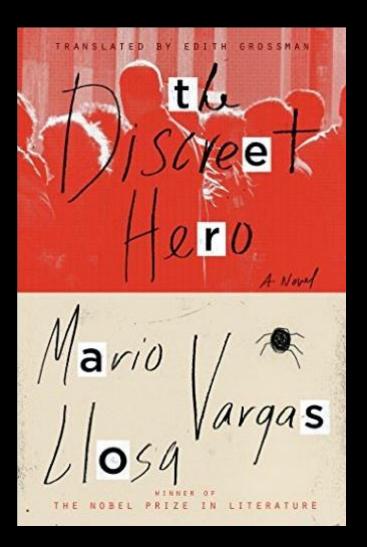


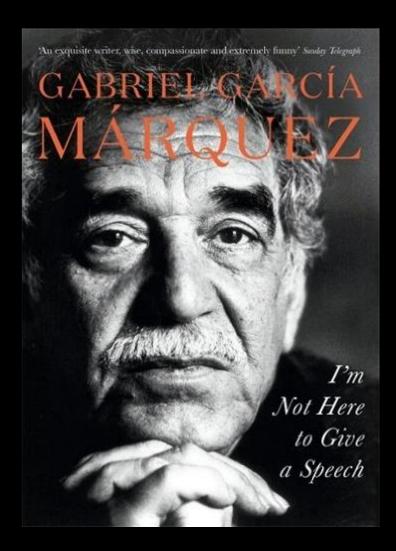
The Ingenious Gentleman and Poet Federico Garcia Lorca Ascends to Hell CARLOS ROJAS Translated by Edith Grossman

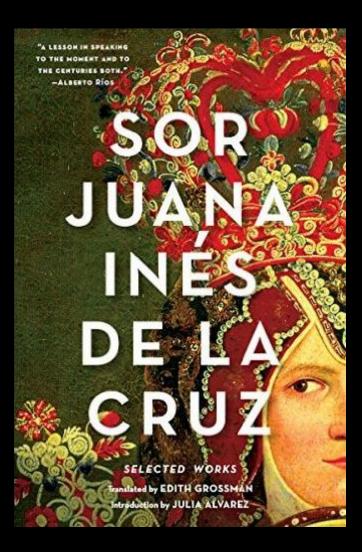


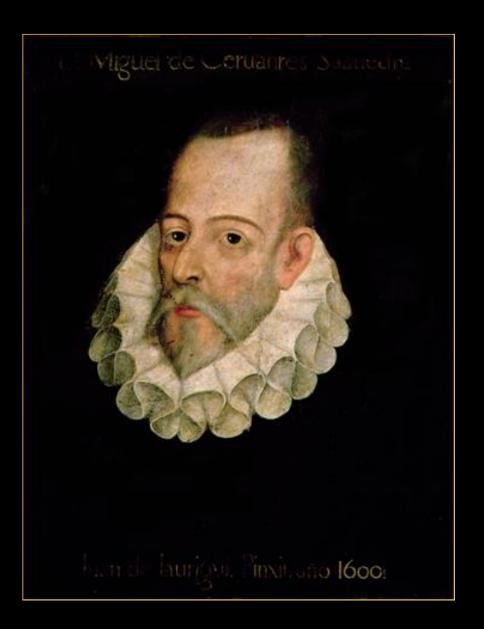
















Edith Grossman Specialty: Spanish

of Books Translated: "Somebody told me the other day it was 60. I don't know if that's true."

First Notable Translation: *Drums for Rancas,* by Manuel Scorza

Noteworthy Authors: Miguel de Cervantes, Macedonio Fernández, Gabriel García Márquez, Mario Vargas Llosa, Mayra Montero

Known for: Don Quixote, by Miguel de Cervantes

Process: "I translate as carefully as I can for the first draft, because the more care I take in the beginning, the less time I have to spend at the end doing revisions."

Next Up: Exemplary Novels, by Miguel de Cervantes

Why does translation matter, and to whom? I believe it matters for the same reasons and in the same way that literature matters—because it is crucial to our sense of ourselves as humans.

-Edith Grossman, Why Translation Matters

