

# THE TRUTH OF THE STORY LIES IN THE DETAILS:

CHALLENGES OF PROVIDING CONTEXT IN THE BORN DIGITAL MATERIALS OF WRITERS



ABBY R. ADAMS

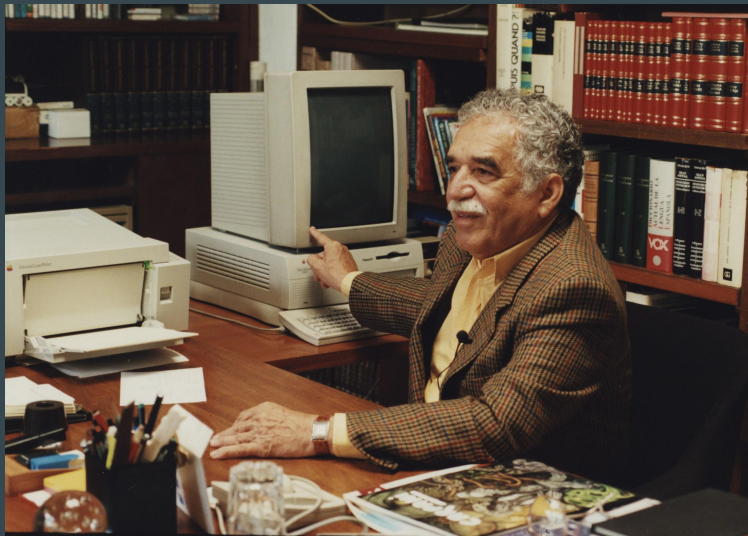
HARRY RANSOM CENTER

MAY 24, 2017

TEXAS CONFERENCE ON DIGITAL LIBRARIES

- Julia Alvarez
- Russell Banks
- Christine Brooke-Rose
- J.M. Coetzee
- Billy Collins
- Gabriel García Márquez
- Kazuo Ishiguro
- Denis Johnson
- Michael Joyce
- Norman Mailer
- David Mamet
- Peter Matthiessen
- Ian McEwan
- Terrence McNally
- McSweeney's
- Iain Sinclair
- Warren Skaaren
- Arnold Wesker
- Geoffrey Wolff
- Gregory Vlastos

# Gabriel García Márquez



- *Memories of My Melancholy Whores*
- Macintosh IIcx
- Mac OS 7.5
- MacWrite Pro
- Early 2000s



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# 1

La víspera de mis ochenta años quise regalarme una noche de amor loco con una adolescente virgen. Me acordé de Rosa Cabarcas, la dueña de una casa clandestina que solía avisar a sus buenos clientes cuando tenía una novedad disponible. Nunca sucumbí a ésa ni a ninguna de sus muchas tentaciones obscenas, pero ella no creía en la pureza de mis principios. También la moral es un asunto de tiempo, decía, con una sonrisa maligna, ya lo verás. Era algo menor que yo, y no sabía de ella desde hacía tantos años que bien podía haber muerto. Pero al primer timbrazo reconocí la voz en el teléfono, y le disparé sin preámbulos:

--- Hoy sí.

Ella suspiró: Ay, mi sabio triste, te desapareces veinte años y sólo vuelves para pedir imposibles. Recobró enseguida el dominio de su arte y me ofreció una media docena de opciones deleitables, pero eso sí, todas usadas. Le insistí que no, que debía ser doncella y para esa misma noche. Ella preguntó alarmada:

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¿Qué es lo que quieres probarte? Nada, le repliqué, lastimado donde más me dolía, sé muy bien lo que puedo y lo que no puedo. Ella replicó impasible que los sabios lo saben todo, pero no todo: los únicos Virgos que van quedando en el mundo son ustedes los de agosto. ¿Por qué no me lo encargaste con más tiempo? La inspiración no avisa, le contesté. Pero tal vez espera, dijo ella, siempre más resabida que cualquier hombre, y me pidió aunque fueran dos días para escudriñar a fondo el mercado. Yo le repliqué en serio que en un negocio como aquél, a mi edad, cada hora es un año. Entonces no se puede, dijo ella sin la mínima duda, pero no importa, así es más emocionante, qué carajo, te llamo en una hora.

No tengo que decirlo, porque se me distingue a leguas: soy feo, tímido y anacrónico. Pero a fuer de no querer serio he venido a simular todo lo contrario. Hasta el sol de hoy, en que resuelvo contarme como soy por mi propia y libre voluntad, aunque sólo sea para alivio de mi conciencia. He empezado con la llamada insólita a Rosa Cabarcas, porque visto desde hoy, aquel fue el principio de una nueva vida a una edad en que la mayoría de los mortales están muertos.

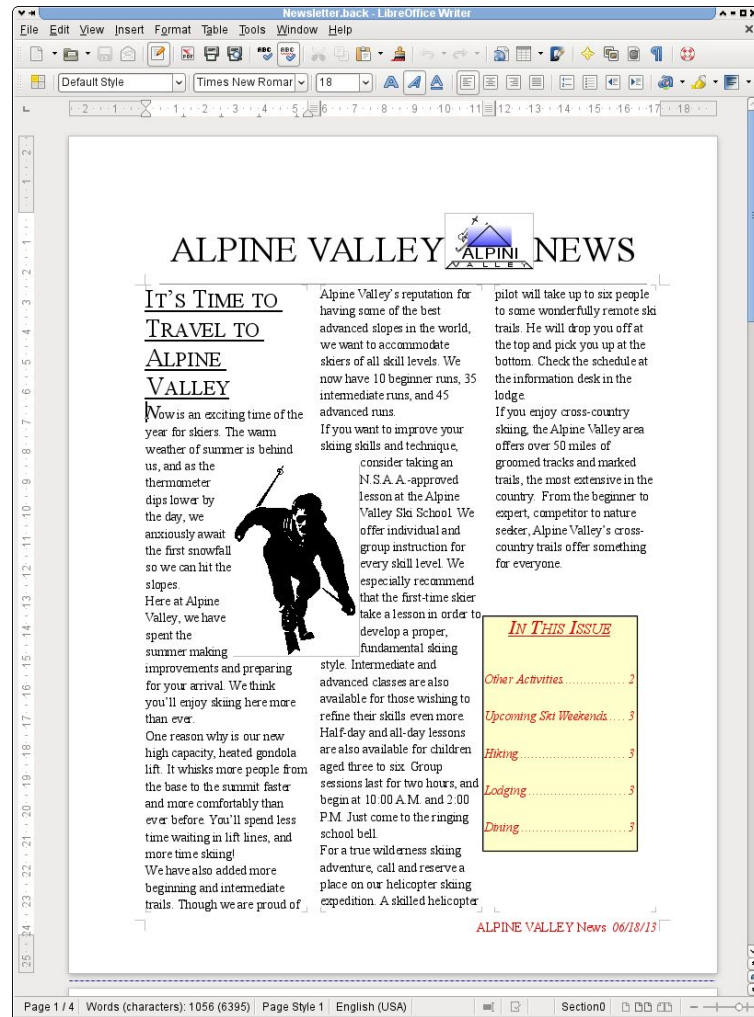
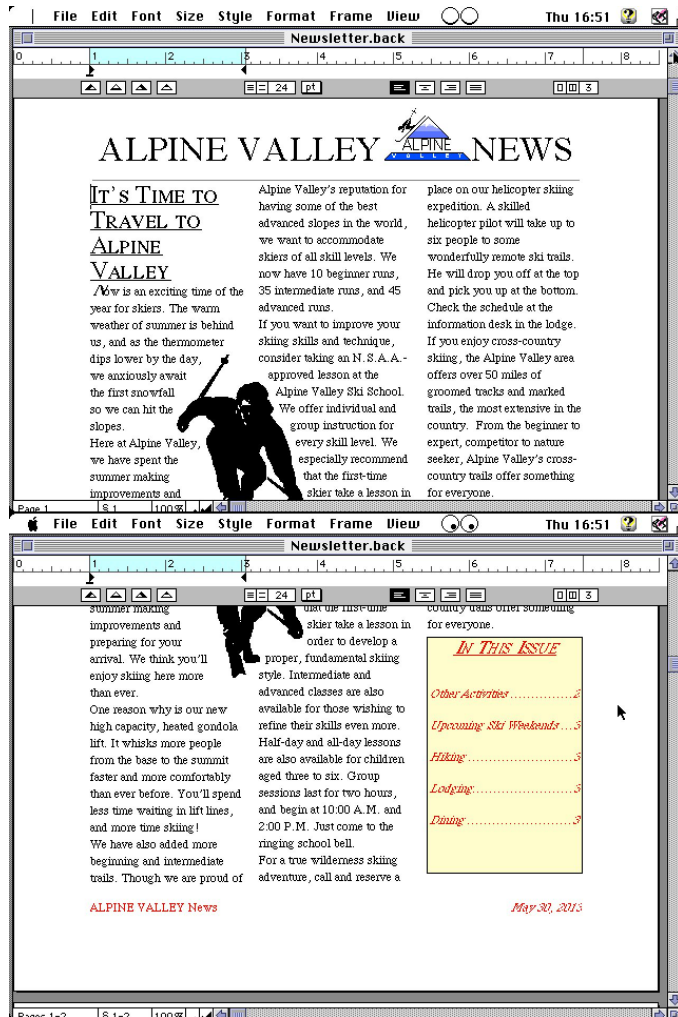
Vivo en una casa colonial en la acera de sol del Parque de San Nicolás, donde he pasado todos los días de mi vida sin mujer ni fortuna, donde vivieron y murieron mis padres, y donde me he propuesto morir solo, en la misma cama en que nací y en un día que deseo lejano y sin dolor. Mi padre la compró en un remate público a fines del siglo XIX, alquiló la

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planta baja para tiendas de lujo a un consorcio de italianos, y se reservó este segundo piso para ser feliz con la hija de uno de ellos, Florina de Dios Cargamantos, intérprete notable de Mozart, poliglota y garibaldina, y la mujer más hermosa y de más talento que hubo nunca en la ciudad: mi madre.

El ámbito de la casa es amplio y luminoso, con arcos de estuco y pisos ajedrezados de mosaicos florentinos, y cuatro puertas vidrieras sobre un balcón corrido donde mi madre se sentaba en las noches de marzo a cantar arias de amor con sus primas italianas. Desde allí se ve el Parque de San Nicolás con la catedral y la estatua de Cristóbal Colón, y más allá las bodegas del muelle fluvial y el vasto horizonte del río grande de la Magdalena a veinte leguas de su estuario. Lo único ingrato de la casa es que el sol va cambiando de ventanas en el transcurso del día, y hay que cerrarlas todas para tratar de dormir la siesta en la penumbra ardiente. Cuando me quedé solo, a mis treinta y dos años, me mudé a la que fuera la alcoba de mis padres, abrí una puerta de paso hacia la biblioteca y empecé a subastar cuanto me iba sobrando para vivir, que terminó por ser casi todo, salvo los libros y la pianola de rollos.

Durante cuarenta años fui el inflador de cables del Diario del la Paz, que consistía en reconstruir y completar en prosa indígena las noticias del mundo que atrapábamos al vuelo en el espacio sideral por las ondas cortas o el código Morse. Hoy me sustento mal que bien con mi pensión de aquel oficio extinguido; me sustento menos con la de maestro de gramática castellana y latín, casi nada con la nota dominical que he escrito sin





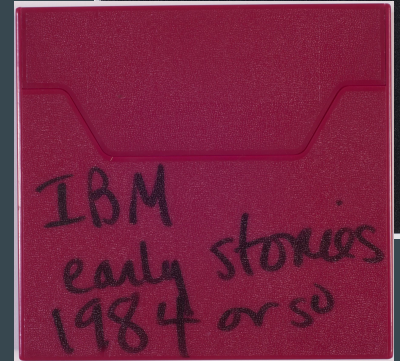
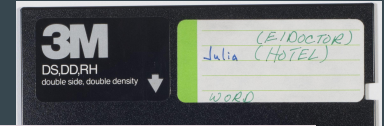
# Julia Alvarez



- *How the Garcia Girls Lost their Accents*
- Early 1980s
- IBM PC



- DOS
- Volkswriter Deluxe





Snow

Soon I picked up enough English to understand holocaust was in the air. Sister Sue explained to a wide-eyed classroom what was happening in Cuba. Russian missiles were being assembled, trained supposedly on New York City. President Kennedy, looking worried too, was on the television at home, explaining we might have to go to war against the Communists. At school, we had air raid drills: an ominous bell would go off and we'd file into the hall, fall to the floor, cover our heads with our coats, and imagine our hair falling out, the bones in our arms going soft. At home, Mother and I said a rosary for world peace. I heard new vocabulary: nuclear bomb, radioactive fallout, bomb shelter. Sister Sue explained how it would happen. She drew a picture of a mushroom on the blackboard and dotted a flurry of chalkmarks for the dusty fallout that would kill us all.

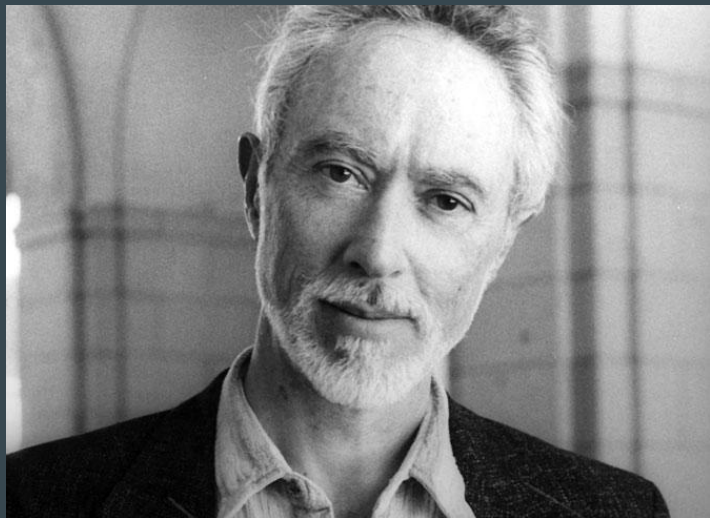
The months grew cold, November, December. It was dark when I got up in the morning, frosty when I followed my breath to school. One morning as I sat at my desk daydreaming out the window, I saw dots in the air like the ones Sister Zoe had drawn—random at first, then lots and lots. I shrieked, "The bomb! The bomb!" Sister Zoe jerked around, her full black skirt ballooning as she hurried to my side. A few girls began to cry.

But then Sister Zoe's shocked look faded. "Why, dear child, that's snow." She laughed. "Snow."

"Snow," I repeated. I looked out the window warily. All my life I had heard about the white crystals that fell out of American skies in the winter. From my desk I watched the fine powder dust the sidewalk and parked cars below. Each flake was different, Sister Zoe had said, like a person, irreplaceable and beautiful.

00000000000000000000000000000000

# J.M. Coetzee



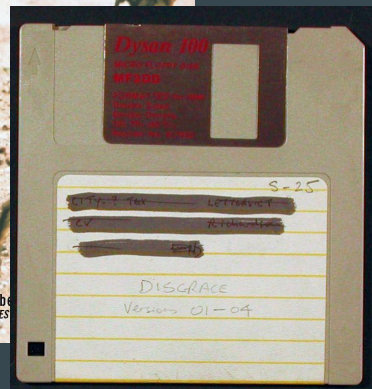
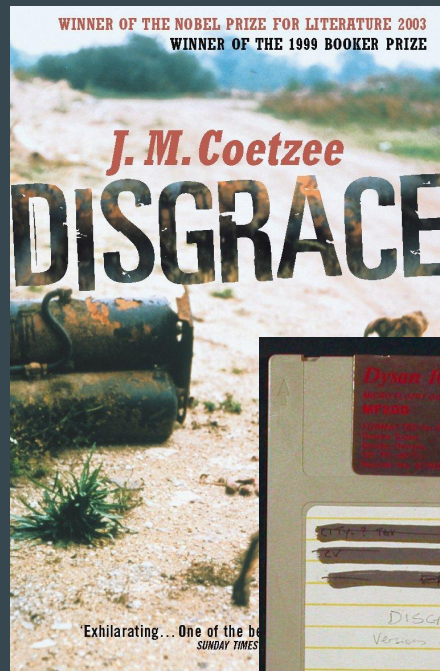
- *Disgrace*
- MS-DOS
- Wordstar
- Late 1990s

☐ GOODMIEK  
☐ HOPE.REV  
☐ LESSING.NOT  
☐ LESSING.REV  
☐ MAHFOUZ.NYR  
☐ MAHFOUZ.REV  
☐ MAZRUI.REV  
☐ MOSTERT.REV  
☐ OZ.NOT  
☐ OZ  
☐ PATON.REV  
☐ PHILLIPS.NOT  
☐ PHILLIPS.NYR  
☐ PRINGLE.REV  
☐ ROOKE.ESS  
☐ RUSHDIE.BIB  
☐ RUSHDIE.NOT  
☐ RUSHDIE.REV  
☐ SUZMAN.REV

DISGR-06.V14  
Based on DISGR-06.V13

21 July 1998

The hearing is held in a committee  
seated at the foot of the table by the  
Studies, who will chair the inquiry.





3 April 1996

For a man in his fifties, divorced, alone, not particularly well-off, he has resolved the sexual business rather well, he thinks. On Wednesday afternoons he drives out to Green Point. At two p.m. punctually he rings the bell at 13 Windsor Court. The door is opened by Soraya. He kisses her on the cheek, goes to the bedroom, which is dimly lit, undresses, and gets into bed. The bedsheets are always fresh. Soraya emerges from the bathroom wearing a robe; she drops the robe and gets into bed beside him. She is a tall, slim woman in her thirties, with long black hair and dark liquid eyes. Technically he is old enough to be her father; but then, technically, one can be a father at twelve. He has known Soraya for two years; he finds her, though not beautiful, deeply desirable. His desire for her, for their Wednesday afternoons, has become part of his life, lending to Mondays and Tuesdays a pleasing tingle of anticipation.

She is not sexually ostentatious. In fact she is of a rather quiet temperament, quiet and obedient. He suspects a strong father somewhere in the background. She is also rather moralistic in her opinions: he is surprised to find her in this line of business, but does not ask how it came about.

Their congress is leisurely and entirely satisfying. Sexual pleasure, he believes, cannot be pleasure unless it is mutual. Therefore it is not possible for her to give him the pleasure she does without feeling some of it herself. As he is lucky to have found her, she is lucky, he believes, for having found in him a man who will not only please her but pay her too.

He takes pleasure in her, there he feels affection for her. This affection is not love, but is close to it.

For his weekly hour he pays R250. He pays it to the agency for which she works, in the form of a monthly cheque. From what she tells him he guesses that she gets half. It seems a pity that the agency should get so much. But the agency owns the flat; in a certain sense it owns Soraya too.

He has toyed with the idea of asking her out. He likes the idea of a whole night with her. But he is not sure about the morning after. He generally avoids mornings after. He is too cold, too bad-tempered in the mornings.

He knows his temperament. His temperament is not going to change, he is too old for that. The temperament is fixed, set. The bones, then afterwards the temperament: the two hardest things in the body.

He lives according to the principle that one should follow one's temperament. It is not a philosophy, he would not dignify it with that name. It is a rule, like the Rule of St Benedict.

He lives within his temperament, within his emotional means. He is in good health, he is productive. Is he happy? By some measurements, yes. However, he has not forgotten the chorus at the end of *Oedipus*: Call no man happy until he is dead.

His sexual temperament is intense but not what he would call passionate. When he searches for an analogy in the animal kingdom, he thinks of snakes. He imagines that the copulation of snakes must be rather like his own: lengthy, absorbed, but rather abstract.

Snakes, copulating in their dry heat, their minds elsewhere, could be rather easily killed, he imagines. One could come upon them unnoticed and stamp on them, or chop off their heads with a spade.

Is Soraya a snake too? He does not know. Perhaps with other men she is quite different. Perhaps that is where the talent of the prostitute lies: in being different things to different men.

Nevertheless, he is convinced that, at a certain level, her affinity with him cannot be feigned. In a limited way he trusts her, trusts her instincts. In the hour for which he pays, sometimes extended to an hour and a half, he talks to her. She knows some of the facts

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## QUANTUM NIGHT

By Hugo and Nebula Award-winner ROBERT J. SAWYER

"A really good book. Just the sort of science fiction  
I'd like to be writing myself if I had the time."

--John Gribbin, author of *In Search of Schrödinger's Cat*

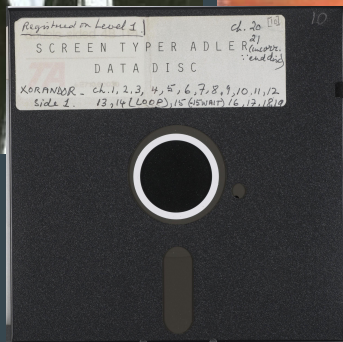
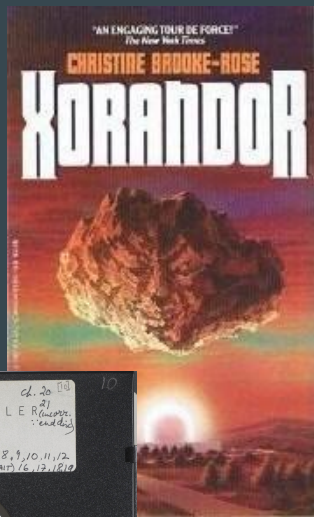
I beheld the monster.

One of them, anyway. There were six according to the indictments; nine, if you believed the *Huffington Post*, which argued that three other corrections officers who should also have been charged had gotten off scot-free. But this one, everyone agreed, had been the ringleader: Devin Becker was the man who had incited the other guards -- and he was the only one who had actually killed somebody.

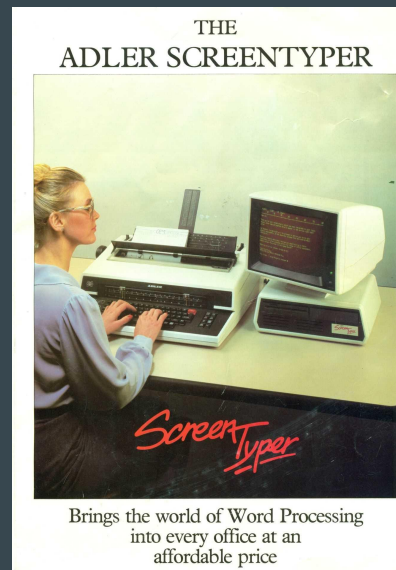
"Thirty minutes," said a burly sergeant as Becker folded his lanky form onto the metal seat. The irony wasn't lost on me: Becker himself was now in the care of a prison guard. *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?* Who indeed watches the watchers?

Becker had high cheekbones, and the weight he'd lost since the notorious video had been recorded made them even more prominent. That the skin pulled taut across them was bone white only added to the ghastly appearance; put a black hood over his head and he could have played chess for a man's soul.

# Christine Brooke-Rose

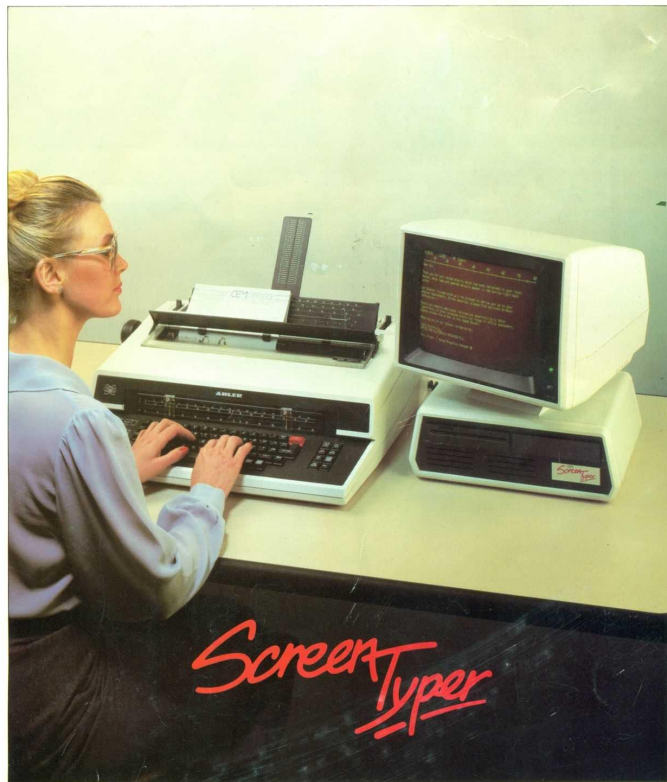


- *Xorandor*
- Triumph-Adler ScreenTyper
- CP/M-80 (8-bit)
- Mid 1980s





# THE ADLER SCREENTYPER



*ScreenTyper*

Brings the world of Word Processing  
into every office at an  
affordable price

-----T-----M-----  
-----J 30 -J 3-----

The first time we came across Xorandor we were sitting on him.  
Correction, Zab. Sitting True, came across False. We didn't come across Xorandor, he contacted us.

True, Jip. We'd come to our usual haunt by the old carn and we were sitting on this large flat stone.

It was the middle of our summer eprom and we'd taken Pocom 2 out with us to play on. That was the very little one, we're using Pocom 3 now.  
When suddenly there flashed on the miniscreen, in yellow but out of the blue, the words GET OFF MY BACK.

Peccariously spelt, G, E, T, was okay, then O, F, then M, A, I, then B, A, K. That's for the print-out. Right. And you swore you hadn't done it.  
Correction, Jip, there was no need to swear. In fact it's important at this stage to say we often read each other's thoughts almost as fast as a computer calculates. We stared at each other and knew at once the other hadn't done it.

Stubs, it's tough dictating this, Zab. It'd be much easier typing it straight on the keyboard. But then it'd all come from one of us only, even if we took turns. One, it's important to be two, and two, it's easier to interrupt on vocal than to push hands away. You agreed, Jip, you even dubbed it flipflop storytelling, which was superdiodic of you. We'll get used to it.

But we could use two keyboards, and program-interrupts with WAITS and other subroutines. Not the same, Jip. Even if it turns out to be complementary storytelling, say bubble rather than flipflop -

You're mixing your computer-levels a bit.  
-talking's better than subroutines, cos it strays, it should be like a, let's see, like a butterfly-net, taken out and waved around to catch a fitting word or idea. It's going to be harder than we thought, as you're realising, to recapture all the details after eight or nine months. We can dump the net later.

Dump data network as butterfly-catcher, not bad, Zab, smart terminal. The ideal would be dynamic dumping, which empties a memory during program-run.

That's whacky, Jip, we won't know till much later what to dump or scratch.  
Stubs! Let's get on with it. And we'd better get better. How did the bard's manage? We haven't said anything yet.

That's called suspense, Jip.  
Or waste instruction.  
Well the bards used plenty of that. Come to think of it even in some classic tees nothing happens for 60 pages, it's all datasink and flutter-byes.

Don't drag out every joke, Zab or we'll never get into it. We shouldn't have begun the way we did. After all we named him Xorandor but not till later, and it didn't even catch on at once. So?

Flipping flipflops it seems harder to tell a story, even our own, than to make up the most complex program. Or at least to choose how to tell it. Where to start for instance. There are endless beginnings. And if we feed'm all in and ask Pocom 3 to choose, why, just the process of thinking'm up and feeding'm in would take ages. And probably convince us of the answer long before we'd finished.

That's the flutterby-net, Jip. Anyway, isn't that exactly what we're doing? Feeding in things as we think of them and leaving it to the processing stage to scratch or add or shift around?

Hey, Zab, maybe we should first introduce ourselves. Lots of stories start with the storyteller saying who he is.

But everyone knows us now.  
Now, yes, because of the hooah. But when we're grown-up, or maybe sooner, it'll all be forgotten. Or at least the details.

True. It's loopy, Jip, everyone gets used to the most offline discoveries so fast, and at the same time they take decades to change their mental habits.

And of course the whole point is to give our own version, not those of the media. We know things dad doesn't know we know. And we'll have Xorandor's version if he keeps his promise as he always does.

On the other hand we were youngertoo, and understood less, even than we do now.  
Garbage, Zab. If anything it seems the other way about, we know less now, isolated here in

**What are our responsibilities to researcher?**

# Thank You!

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