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
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- Billy Collins
- Gabriel García Márquez
- Kazuo Ishiguro
- Denis Johnson
- Michael Joyce
- Norman Mailer
- David Mamet
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Gabriel García Márquez

- *Memories of My Melancholy Whores*
- Macintosh IIcx
- Mac OS 7.5
- MacWrite Pro
- Early 2000s
La vigésima de mis ochenta años quiso regalarme una noche de amor romántico. Me acordé de Rosita Carbajal, la dueña de una casa clandestina que solía visitar a sus buenos clientes cuando tenía una novedad disponible. Nunca sucedía a eso ni a ninguna de sus muchas tentaciones obscenas, pero ella no creía en la puesta de mis principios. Tampoco la moral es un asunto de tiempo, decía, con una sonrisa maligna, y yo veía. Estaba menor que yo, y no sabía de ella desde hacía tantos años que bien podía haber muerto. Pero al primer timbre que le llamé, le dije a él en el teléfono, y le dije sin pensarlo:

—Hoy sí.

Ella respondió: ¡Ay, mi sabio triste, te despares en veinte años y sólo vuelve para pedir imposibles! Recibió enseguida mi llamada y me ofreció una media docena de opciones deliciosas, pero no te las, todas usadas. Llegué a pensar que no, que debía ser descuidada y para esa misma noche. Ella preguntó almorzada:

¿Qué es lo que quieres probar? Nadie, le replicó, hastiado donde más me delito, sé muy bien lo que puedo y lo que no puedo. Ella replicó impasible que los sabios lo saben todo, pero no todos los súbditos que van quedando en el mundo son ustedes los de agosto. ¿Por qué no me lo encargaste con más tiempo? La inspiración no avía, le contestó. Pero tal vez espera, dijo ella, siempre más resbalada que cualquier hombre, y me pidió que fueran dos días para encontrarse en el mercado. Yo le replicé 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 importa, así es más emocionante, qué carajo, te llamo en una hora.

No tengo que decirlo, porque se me destina a dejar: soy feo, tumbado y anestésico. Pero a fuer de no querer serlo he vuelto a simular lo contrario. Hasta el sol de hoy, en que resuelvo contente como soy por mi propia y libre voluntad, aunque sólo sea para aliviar de mi consciencia. He empezado a la llamada insólita a Rosita Carbajal, porque visto desde hoy, aquella fue la primera en que una mujer así en la mayoría de los asuntos están muertos. Vivos 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 deseó la cama y sin dolor. Mi padre la compró en un remate público a fines del siglo XIX, alquiló la planta baja para bandas de los a los conciertos de danzas, y se reservó este segundo piso para sus fiestas con la hija de uno de ellos. Floriana de Doni Carbajal, intérprete notable de Mozart, políglota y garbiñada, y la mujer más hermosa de más talento que hubo nunca en la ciudad: mi madre.

El ambiente de la casa es amplio y luminoso, con arcos de sebo y puertas de madera de gran tamaño, y cuatro puertas vidriadas que van al balcón donde mi madre se sentaba en las noches de manso a cantar arias de amor con sus primas italianas. Desde allí se ve el Parque de San Nicolás con el azote y el establo de Cristóbal Colón, y más allá las benditas dunas del suelo español y el vasto horizonte del río Grande de la Magdalena a verter lo que de su estuario. No sé de quién es la casa que en el sol de hoy resulta de ventanas en el transcurso del día, y hay que cerrarlas todas para tratar de dormir a la sarta en la penumbra ardiente. Cuando me quedé solo, a mis treinta y dos años, me mudé a la que fuera la abuela de mis padres, abrí una puerta de paso hacia la biblioteca y empezó a subir cuanto me dije sobre vivir, que terminó por ser casi todo, salvo los libros y la planilla de rol.

Durante muchos años fue el preditor de cabinas al Diario del París, que consistía en renovar y completar en prisa indígena las noticias del mundo que atrapábamos al vuelo en el espacio exterior por los ochos coster o el código Mares. Hoy me resulta mal que bien con mi paseo de aquel oficio estudiando; me instinto menos con la de maestro de gramática castellana y latín, casi nada con la nota dominical que he escrito sin
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Julia Alvarez

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

- DOS
- VolksWriter Deluxe
In the summer of 1963 my family emigrated to the United States, leaving the Soviet Union. In New York we found a small apartment with a Catholic school nearby, taught by the Sisters of Charity, nuns in long black gowns and bonnets that made them look like dolls in mourning. I liked them a lot, especially my grandmotherly sixth grade teacher, Sister Zoe. As the only immigrant in my class, I was put in a special seat in the first row by the window, apart from the other children so that Sister Zoe could correct me without disturbing them. Slowly, she taught me the new words I needed to repeat.

When writing articles for the PC World, I often use my childhood memories in my stories. For me, it was a time of change and growth. I learned that life is not always easy, but it is possible to overcome difficulties. My experiences in New York taught me the importance of perseverance and determination.

After graduating from high school, I decided to pursue a career in journalism. I worked as a reporter for several years, covering a wide range of topics. In 2001, I founded my own publishing company, where I continue to work today. I am grateful for the journey that led me here, and I am excited for what the future holds.
J.M. Coetzee

- Disgrace
- MS-DOS
- Wordstar
- Late 1990s
I beheld the monster.
One of them, anyway. There were six according to the indictment; 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 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 lank form onto the metal seat. The irony wasn't lost on me: Becker himself was now in the care of a prison guard. Qui 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.

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, undressed, and gets into bed. The bed sheets 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 brown 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. She is a property in the background. She is also rather morbid in her opinions; he is surprised to find her in this line of business, but doesn't 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, he 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 $200. 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 Paderewski. Call no man happy until he is dead.

Snakes, occupying in their dry heat, their minds elsewhere, could be rather easily killed, he imagines. One could come upon them unexcited and stamp on them, or drop 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 faked. 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
Christine Brooke-Rose

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