



Homage at SGAE, 1997. L. to R.: José María Rodríguez Méndez, Jerónimo López Mozo, Jaime Salom, Paloma Pedrero, Santiago Moncada Phyllis Zatlin, Antonio Gala, Alfredo Castellón, Agustín Gómez Arcos, Pilar Enciso, Luis Riaza, Itziar Pascual, Fermin Cabal. Photo by Candyce Leonard.

WRITERS TO REMEMBER:
MEMOIRS OF FRIENDSHIPS IN SPAIN AND FRANCE

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were aware of the impending operation but public discussion centered on the performance. Well wishes were conveyed individually. The surgery went well. The subsequent infection was scary, to say the least, but Paloma fully recovered.

I have not read all of Paloma's newspaper articles, but I have an indelible memory of one in which she wrote movingly, from the perspective of the mother, about a young man who was beaten to death in the street. There is no doubt that Paloma is deeply concerned about those who are marginalized by society. She has created a theatre group for the homeless somewhat in parallel to Elena Cánovas's work with women prisoners. Her play in response to the terrorist attack in Madrid in 2004, *Ana, el once de marzo* (*Ana 3/11* trans. Zatlín) reveals sympathy for immigrants and for women who have lost loved ones in the bombing. In Spanish and in English it has been widely staged around the world.

When I think of Paloma I also think of her affectionate admiration for older playwrights. Her tribute to Antonio Buero Vallejo is the one I recall most vividly, and I have quoted from it in the section devoted to him. I know because we spoke of it often how much her friendship and that of her family meant to José María Rodríguez Méndez, and I know how often she visited him during his final months in Aranjuez. No one could ask for a better friend than Paloma.



Itziar Pascual, Paloma Pedrero and Candela, Beth Escudé i Gallès, and Elena Cánovas, at Rutgers, 2002.

HISPANICS DISGUISED AS FRENCH?

In France, in the spring of 1987, I was hoping to track down native Spaniards who were active in the French theatre world. With helpful hints from people that I consulted, I achieved that goal, dealt with the subject in articles, and highlighted *Espagnols déguisés de Français* in my book on connections between the theatres of Spain and France. My secondary goal was to revive my fluency in the French language; I told people I was there *à la recherche de mon français perdu*. The allusion to Proust's masterwork usually drew smiles and encouragement. My initial project had unanticipated spinoffs that have given me great satisfaction. I realized that I should extend my net to locate Latin Americans as well as Spaniards, and that decision ultimately led to a book about Cuban-French playwright and novelist Eduardo Manet. A few years later, after Jaime Salom made contact in Paris with literary agent Geneviève Ulmann, she in turn invited me to translate plays by several French authors.

Before my trip, I identified translator and critic André Camp as a potential source from going through back issues of *L'Avant-Scène Théâtre*. I sent a letter to him in French telling him of my research plans and giving him my itinerary. I would be going from the United States to Spain and then on to France. He wrote to me in Madrid and asked me to call playwright José López Rubio with a question. When I arrived on André's doorstep in Paris, he said he was eager to meet me, and not just to get the answer to his inquiry. He wanted to see in person an American who taught Spanish and also could write correct French. We started our friendship on a note of humor—and an indirect compliment to my French professor at Rollins College, Robert Morgenroth, who not only taught language skills but urged me to study theatre.

André Camp's father, Jean Camp, had translated plays by Federico García Lorca and Alejandro Casona. André could provide me with information on the current French stage and also go back in the past farther than his own long career. He

often invited me to attend plays with him. As a critic, he received pairs of comps, and his wife had long ago lost her enthusiasm for going with him night after night. Because of André I also met Claude Demarigny, who lived for years in Argentina while in the diplomatic corps and wrote plays in Spanish as well as French. Dana Pilla translated his *Cajamarca* for her master's thesis in Spanish translation. Claude and André kept me informed of activities by Ibéral, the new group that was promoting Hispanic theatre in France.

These memoirs are filled with references to lost friends. For me André's death in 2004 was especially sad. Born in 1920, he lived all his life in a fourth floor walk-up apartment near the Sorbonne, close to the hotels where I have stayed in Paris. As he got older, he said he'd have to move because he could no longer manage stairs. The building landlord installed an elevator just in time. At my last visit with André, he had trouble walking and even typing. He answered a phone call while I sat in his study, across from him at his desk, but then could not put the phone back without my help. I think of him often when in "our" neighborhood, just as I think of José María Rodríguez Méndez in Madrid when I pass by his old home just a couple of blocks from my hotel in that city.



Claude and Marie at their home outside Paris, c. 2008.

Claude Demarigny in his final years battled cancer and no longer made frequent trips into Paris from Gometz-le-Chatel. He twice invited me to join him and his family for lunch at their home in the country; his wife Marie or their son picked me up and took me back to the train station.

During my fall 1987 travels to Madrid and Paris, I met Jorge Díaz (1930-2007) at his favorite café, the Chiqui Pub near Puerta del Sol. Although born in Argentina, Jorge was generally considered Chilean—despite being a longtime resident of Madrid. For Latin Americanists he was a major playwright; one of my translation students, Kerstin Crane Schnatter, chose several of his short plays for her master's thesis. Jorge and I had several conversations over the years, and I always learned something useful from him.

On the first occasion Jorge told me to be sure to look up Agustín Gómez Arcos (1933-1998) in Paris, and naturally I did. Agustín began his career as a playwright in Spain but ran into censorship problems under the Franco regime; he moved to France in 1966 and wrote novels in French. My one interview with him was in Paris, but he was among those who attended my SGAE homage a decade later in Madrid, not long before his death. Agustín was proud of being a bilingual writer who achieved notable success in two languages. He surmised that he was exceptional in this regard; my research established that he was less alone than he thought. Nevertheless, to paraphrase an old Spanish proverb, the author who writes two languages is worth two authors.

I first went to meet Geneviève Ulmann and her husband Pierre at Jaime's insistence in 1992. I did not realize that Pierre was legally blind and thought his repeated comment "Vous n'avez rien de professeur" referred to my casual clothes, running shoes, and pony tail. What he really meant was that I had a sense of humor he did not identify with scholars. When he asked if I could translate from French as well as Spanish, I began to get the idea. I would later choose on my own to translate plays by Carlos Semprun-Maura, one of my Spanish-French authors, and Eduardo Manet, but my

first play translations French to English were in response to invitations from Geneviève.

Jean Bouchaud (b. 1936), actor, director, and author, is well-known in French theatre circles, and I considered it an honor to create an English version of his 1978 script, *C'était comment déjà?* (*Is That How It Was?*). In May 1993, during my next trip to Paris after completing the translation, he invited me to his home to have dinner with his wife and family. What I remember most clearly from that pleasant evening was his questioning if my translation was too close to his original. I didn't think it was, but it certainly took a long time before we could share the work with others.

In 2007, 15 years after I did the translation, Adam Versenyi inaugurated *The Mercurian*, an on-line journal of play translations. He and his advisory board liked *Is That How It Was?* It was published in Vol. I, No. 1. *The Last Inca: The Glory and Infamy of Pizarro*, Dana Pilla's translation of Claude's *Cajamarca*, was also in that issue.

I've learned that in promoting theatre, one needs patience, but the Bouchaud play has pushed mine to the limit. Six years after such a long-awaited publication, the English translation was read by artistic director Rebecca Nesvet, who recommended it to Origin Theatre Company in New York City. It was chosen to lead off their May 2013 series of professional script-in-hand readings. In theory professional readings can lead to full-fledged stagings. I thought the reading was wonderful, and those in attendance, including the director and cast, made glowing comments about the quality of the translation. The highest possible compliment is one I heard a number of times that evening: "I couldn't believe it was a translation." So Jean was perhaps wrong in his initial concern. All present glowed with even greater enthusiasm about the play itself. But we are still waiting for fame to knock on our doors because of *Is That How It Was?*.

The time from translation to publication and performance for *Le Cimetière des éléphants* (*The Elephant Graveyard*) by Jean-Paul Daumas (b. 1941) was considerably shorter, but

again we await the arrival of fame in the U.S. While I have only seen Jean Bouchaud once in person, Jean-Paul and I have spent time together in Paris, Nice—where he lives—and New York City. Like Emmanuel Roblès, Jean-Paul was born in Algeria. Like Jaime Salom, he has had a dual career as a theatre practitioner and doctor—a doctor of physiotherapy in his case.

Le Cimetière des éléphants had its premiere in Avignon in 1990 and reached the Paris stage the following year. It was also published in 1991; Geneviève gave me a copy of the book. The author and I exchanged letters about my questions on the script. The major change I felt necessary was to shift the intertext—lines from Racine's *Phèdre*—to Shakespeare's Cleopatra, a tragic heroine that American audiences would recognize more easily. Jean-Paul assured me that his character had played both roles in her acting career and had no objections.

Jean-Paul does not know English but he has friends in Nice who do. They, like Geneviève, gave their thumbs up to my translation. By 1994 *The Elephant Graveyard* was in print, in the journal *Modern International Drama*, and in December 1998 it received an excellent professional script-in-hand performance at NJ Repertory. The whole process was rapid, but Hollywood has not yet called.

In 1993 I decided to travel to southern France on my way from Paris to Spain. I had been in Nice briefly for Mardi Gras in 1961 and thought it was time to visit there again. Jean-Paul picked me up at my hotel, took me for an automobile tour of the city, and invited me out for dinner. He suggested I not wait 32 years again before returning, and I have followed that good advice. It was a mere seven years before my husband and I arrived there, after a trip to Italy.

In 2000 I planned to go to Monte Carlo to review for *Western European Stages* an opera, directed by Georges Lavelli, that was based on the Cuban novel *Cecilia Valdés*. Eduardo Manet had written the libretto. The last thing in the world that my husband George wanted to do was go to an

opera, so he was happy to give Jean-Paul his ticket. My friend picked me up in his little sports car, and off we went. George took a photo from the hotel balcony that he then used for a while as a screensaver.

When I say that George gave Jean-Paul his ticket, I speak figuratively. Eduardo told me that they would not give him comps but that he personally paid for two tickets, left at the box office in my name. He said he asked for the best seats in the house, and I have no doubt that he did. The person in the box office had no knowledge of the matter, however. Our solution was to ask to speak to someone in authority. Jean-Paul convinced the man that I was an important theatre critic, and he gave us seats—although higher up, not the ones Eduardo had chosen. I once was turned down at the Puerto Rican Traveling Company in New York City when I went to a play of Jaime Salom's. Jaime was standing next to me and assured the man in the box office that he had turned in my name. I finally spotted a Phyllis (or something similar) on the list: it was under Sanjuan, not Zatlin. There is no telling what slippage there was in France when Eduardo gave them my name.

Jean-Paul had previously renewed our acquaintance in Paris a couple of years after my first visit with him in Nice. He made more than one trip to the capital while I was there. Geneviève and Pierre invited both of us to lunch near Notre Dame, where she had her office for many years.

Somewhat less predictable was an afternoon together in New York City. Jean-Paul made the trip to the U.S. with friends, who planned to head to Miami after spending a few days in the Big Apple. They were staying near Rockefeller Center. While the others continued their sightseeing, Jean-Paul waited for me at their hotel. None of them spoke English and Jean-Paul wondered if the cab driver from Kennedy Airport had cheated them. He asked me to interpret for him at the reception desk so he could confirm what they should expect to pay for the cab when they were leaving town. Jean-



Jean-Paul and Phyllis in Nice. Photo by George Kelly.



Jean-Paul, Geneviève, Pierre and Phyllis at lunch in Paris.

Paul does know Spanish, so I asked him why he didn't speak for himself. "This is the United States," he replied. "The language here is English."

Well, yes and no. The man on the desk wore a tag with the name Pedro. To keep Jean-Paul happy, I asked his question first in English—and then switched to Spanish. Pedro, bilingual like many New Yorkers, answered in Spanish and Jean-Paul realized that there was no longer a language barrier.

For Miami, I told him that he could readily communicate with many people, but my son, who used to work in a restaurant in Fort Lauderdale, alerted me that sometimes service for speakers of French was poor because French Canadians didn't tip well and French tourists might expect service to be added automatically to the check, as is true in France. If you tip American style, you'll be treated better. Jean-Paul told me to thank Bill for his advice.

José Martín Elizondo (1922-2009)

My first stop while seeking Spanish theatre people in France was Toulouse. It was an obvious choice because that city, so close to the border, had been a place of refuge for many during and after the Spanish Civil War. From my research, I knew that a key player there was José Martín Elizondo. Born in San Sebastián, he emigrated to France in the 1940s, studied in Paris, and then moved to Toulouse, where in the 1950s he founded the Amigos del Teatro Español. Discovering that the person you're seeking no longer lives where you think he does can be even more disconcerting than learning that no ticket awaits you at the box office. How could I possibly find him?

On the other hand, I had little difficulty interviewing several university professors whom I had identified in my ongoing study. Among them was Frédéric Serralta; he introduced me to his wife Marlène Archet, who gave me an extra copy of the master's thesis she had recently written

precisely on the history of Spanish theatre in Toulouse. Her work, of which I had been unaware, was an invaluable source for my study. Moreover, they gave me José Martín Elizondo's contact information in Fontainebleau. He and his family were now living in that town, 55.5 km. from Paris, where I would be continuing my research. What a pleasant and productive evening I spent with Frédéric and Marlène!

In the following years, I spent many pleasant visits with the Martín Elizondo family, sometimes in France and sometimes in Spain. José's French wife, Madeleine (Madou) Poujol, is a Spanish teacher; like Fernando and Luce Arrabal, the couple collaborated in making José's scripts available in both Spanish and French. In 1987, had I not learned of José's whereabouts from Frédéric and Marlène, I could have found out from André and Claude because José was also a founding member of Ibéral.

Our first meeting was in Paris, near the Tour Saint-Jacques at the Café Sarah Bernhardt on the Place du Châtelet, a square that is home to two important theatres. He suggested we meet to have coffee there, as it was one of his favorite spots. Giving me a history lesson, he told me that the tower was the departure point for pilgrims hundreds of years ago who walked from France on the Camino de Santiago to Santiago de Compostela. He also helpfully told me to go to a branch of the Sorbonne where in the Gaston Baty Library I would find some of the materials I was looking for that were not available in other libraries in Paris.

José invited me to spend a day in Fontainebleau with his family, which at that point included one son, Pablo, born in 1985. I asked if I could bring an American friend, who was living in Paris with her husband for several months and would doubtless like to visit that famous little town. He said yes, and thus Patricia (Pat) Santoro and I took the train together from the Gare de Lyon one Saturday in May. Pat was learning French during her time in France, had taught Spanish for years, and was finishing a Ph.D. in our department at Rutgers, so communication would not be a problem.

Madeleine prepared a lovely lunch, including wine and other items brought from Spain. I already knew that restaurants in Paris were typically twice as expensive as equivalent ones in Madrid, but Pat had experience buying groceries in order to cook at their apartment. She asked how anyone could afford to eat in France, and our hosts both laughed. They said they missed inexpensive Spanish wines and food and always brought back as much as they could when they visited Spain.

Something else José said he missed in Fontainebleau were lively streets. In Spain people love to walk, sit at sidewalk cafés, and go to the park. In Fontainebleau on Sundays, even in nice weather, you might see no one outside.

Long after I stopped asking questions for my book on the relationship between the Spanish and French stages, I continued to learn many things from José and Madou. When I was seeking videotapes of French movies for the language lab at Rutgers, they directed me to a store in Paris that had just what I wanted. A comment of his that I often quote reveals his feelings about his bicultural experiences. When he wrote in Spanish, native speakers never tried to correct his innovative language. When he wrote in French, invariably he was told, "On ne dit pas ça." New metaphors or turns of phrase simply jarred the French ear. José concluded that Spanish is like a cape: each person puts it on in an individualistic way. French is like an overcoat: everyone looks the same.

José gave me an historical explanation for the use of two surnames in Spanish that I had never heard before and have not yet read anywhere. I just Googled the term and find several explanations of how the father's last name and the mother's are used but nothing that duplicates José's comment. He said the custom started when Queen Isabella told the Jews to convert to Christianity or leave the country. Revealing both surnames made it harder to conceal Jewish ancestry. The closest I have come to his information is a website affirming that the nobility class of Castile adopted the custom.

In July 1988, José's play *Antígona entre muros* was so well received at the Festival de Mérida that the couple decided to end his voluntary exile. They moved to Spain in September 1989 and remained there until July 1993. Madou states that they expected the Spanish stage to welcome him but it didn't turn out as planned. With feelings of sorrow, they returned to Fontainebleau some months before Diego was born in January 1994.

I visited the Martín Elizondo family in Madrid each spring during their stay there. The warm welcome they had extended to me in France continued. I recall in particular that José in June 1990 highly recommended that I see a play by the recently-deceased French author Bernard-Marie Koltès at the María Guerrero National Theatre. José had already been to *Combat de nègre et de chiens* (*Combate de negro y de perros*) but he met me in the theatre café before the performance. Spanish spectators had stayed away and critics had little good to say about the work, but José correctly alerted me that the staging was magnificent. I saw it with two young Spanish friends, who also were favorably impressed. None of us understood why the theatre was empty.

My friendship with José, Madou and their sons continued in Fontainebleau. I watched Pablo grow into a big boy and enjoyed meeting little Diego. We often walked in the castle gardens, but José was an artist as well as a writer, and our strolls at times included art galleries. Given his dual interests, it was not surprising that he sometimes wrote ekphrastic plays, bringing paintings to life.

The big painting on the wall behind my photo of the family is titled "El Quijote huyendo de Guernica." (See following page.) José created his image of Don Quijote fleeing from Guernica when Picasso's famous Guernica painting was at last transferred from the modern art museum in New York City to Madrid.



Pablo, Diego, José and Madou at home in Fontainebleau, c. 1996.

In 1998, when Madou was granted a teaching position in Revel, 48 km. from Toulouse, the Martín Elizondos moved again. Their new home brought them back to a region where they had close ties from years before, but it put them away from my travel routes. I expected to renew our friendship in 2003 when I went to Toulouse to do research for my theatrical

translation book, but because of a transportation strike, we merely chatted on the phone. I could have hired a cab but once again I made a decision that prevented a last visit with an old friend.

In the process of reconstructing my memories, Madou and I have initiated email correspondence. She has sent me Manuel Aznar Soler's comprehensive 2010 book on *Los Amigos del Teatro Español in Toulouse (1959-2009)* and *Teatro combatiente*, a book she prepared after José's death. In addition to the biography she wrote about her husband, it includes nine previously unpublished plays that José chose a few months before his death for a group of university professors who are recovering work of exiled Basque authors, artists, and other intellectuals. There is no doubt that José Martín Elizondo took a combative stance in his politically-committed theatre. The book will give me and others an opportunity to relive our friendship with him.

Eduardo Manet (b. 1930)

My acquaintance with Eduardo Manet did not begin like my first meetings with other authors who became subjects of my books. Not only had I read only a couple of his plays, but I also had no intention of focusing on him in my research project. After all, my speciality is Spain, not Cuba. I found references to him in *L'Avant-Scène Théâtre* and asked my Cuban-American friend Ileana Fuentes, who was then director of the Rutgers Office of Hispanic Arts, what she knew about him. She said he was an important writer and urged me to get to know him and his works. Besides, she wanted to invite him to a conference she was organizing on our campus in the fall of 1988 on Cuban literature in exile. She hoped that by meeting him in person, I could encourage him to accept her invitation and make the trip to New Brunswick, New Jersey the following year.

I contacted him during my second trip to Paris, in October 1987. We sat and talked in a left bank café at the

intersection of the boulevards Saint Germain and Saint-Michel. I had promised Ileana to prepare a paper on Eduardo for her conference, so I knew I would be reading more of his plays before I saw him a year later in the United States. I asked if I would discover his Cuban identity under the French language. "J'espère que non," he responded. In 1979 he had become a French citizen and was trying to leave Cuba behind. I subsequently did find a fairly obvious Cuban subtext in the plays he wrote in exile before changing his citizenship and wondered how he'd react when he read "Cuban Playwright in French Clothing?" His response, much to my relief, was, "You're probably right."

Eduardo is a native speaker of Spanish, but he is fluent in French and has an amazing command of English and Italian as well. Saying that he no longer speaks Spanish, he has always spoken French with me. A few years later when Ileana met him at a conference in Italy, she said they had a wonderful conversation. Knowing that she speaks neither French nor Italian, I asked her in what language they had communicated. "In Spanish, of course," she replied, surprised at the question. When I later confronted Eduardo with this information, he laughed. He said it was easier for him to speak French after so many years in France, and my French was good enough that he felt no need to resort to Spanish or English. I accepted his explanation as a compliment. It reminded me that two people with different dominant languages tend to switch automatically to the stronger common language. If I found myself speaking English to students whose first language was Spanish, I knew they really were bilingual.

Eduardo's attitude on speaking French was unlike that of other bilinguals I met in my travels. My conversations with José Martín Elizondo, Fernando Arrabal, and their respective wives, were in Spanish unless there were other French speakers present. Once when Fernando was away I went to visit Luce, and she kindly let me brush up my French even though her Spanish is stronger than my French. In the case of

these two couples, both spouses are bilingual so they, like many of my students, are adept at such code-switching.

More curious was the example of Emmanuel Roblès, who lamented that his family was French and he hardly ever had a chance to revert to his childhood identity as Manolo Robles. He happily spoke Spanish with me. At the opposite end of the spectrum was Argentinean-French director Jorge Lavelli. I interviewed him in his office at the Colline National Theatre. We started in Spanish. The phone rang and he answered in French; after the call, he had trouble switching back. Then someone came in with a question—in French. I realized that Jorge—or should I say Georges—had less practice at code-switching than I, so I changed to French to make it easier for him. We carried on in French and I don't think he even realized that had happened.

I sent Eduardo my conference paper before I saw him again in Paris in the spring of 1988. This time he invited me out to lunch, as he would do many times over the years. The restaurant was just a few blocks from the one star Grand Hôtel Saint Michel on Rue Cujas in the 5th arrondissement where I was staying. He told me that my inexpensive hotel had been a favorite with many Latin American writers when they came to France to study. He spoke of the eccentric owner, Madame Sauvage, who must long since be gone. I assured him that she was still alive and still eccentric. A few years later, after her death, new owners remodeled and tripled the prices. I moved across the street to the Hôtel Excelsior.

Eduardo said he had received Ileana's invitation and would be delighted to attend the gathering of Cuban writers in exile. He expected to travel with his good Cuban friend José Triana, a playwright I had met the previous year at a Dartmouth College conference, and translator Lillian Hasson. I told Ileana that I could help her by meeting that particular plane from Paris. When the passengers disembarked, Eduardo was not among them. His ex-wife had died in Germany and he went there to be with their grieving son.

My disappointment was brushed aside by the hectic activity of the next several days during the Cuban Literature in Exile conference. Among new friends from that event were Carlos Miguel Suárez Radillo, playwright Matías Montes Huidobro, and Matías's wife, Yara González Montes. Matías and Yara were both university professors in Hawaii and were among a small group of participants who would have to wait for hours after the conference for their plane departures. I invited several of them to our home for a modest lunch. I made a salad before leaving the house in the morning and George helpfully put the chicken in the oven when I called to alert him that the guests I was rounding up would arrive within an hour.

I might have started out looking for Spaniards in French theatre, but my project evolved in unexpected directions. Ultimately there were chapters on Algerian-born Emmanuel Roblès and the Cuban Eduardo Manet. Along the way I wrote a series of conference papers and articles on Eduardo's plays, one of which was published in *Ollantay Theater Magazine*, edited by the Cuban-American playwright Pedro Monge Rafuls. After the book on connections between the Spanish and French stages was completed, I decided to do a monograph on Eduardo Manet. At a critical moment in the publication process, Pedro lent support through the Ollantay Art Heritage Center. The book appeared in 2000.

At the outset of the project, when I told José Triana of my intentions, he said the book would surprise many Latin Americanists in the United States who overlooked Eduardo because they didn't read French. José might be considered by some to be, internationally, the best-known living Cuban playwright, on the island or in exile, but he said his friend Eduardo in fact was the author who could make that claim.

Carlos Miguel Suárez Radillo (1919-2002) moved to Madrid in the 1950s. In addition to publishing a series of travel books, he wrote extensively on theatre. I began seeing him during my annual trips to Spain, starting in 1989, and eventually arranged for him to return to Rutgers to give a talk.

When I first mentioned my Manet project to him, he not only answered my questions but let me consult his personal library on Cuban theatre. His fascinating apartment, in an old section of Madrid, included a dining room with a big table on which he spread out journals and books for my use. With Carlos Miguel's assistance, I was able to place Eduardo's early theatre in its context.



Carlos Miguel's dining room. With Mary Makris, in his study.

When I called Carlos Miguel each year upon arrival in Madrid, he was hardly ever home but I could leave messages on his answering machine, which humorously declared, "Mi amo y señor no está en casa." Not hearing the familiar message was a sad jolt in 2002.

Although I found materials on Eduardo Manet in Paris libraries, there was little information on Cuban theatre in Spanish libraries. So I was surprised to locate a manuscript of the original text of Eduardo's *Las monjas* at the Fundación

Juan March in Madrid. It was the promise of a staging in Paris of his French version, *Les Nonnes*, that served as his exit permit from Cuba in 1968 and that launched his career as playwright in France. Eduardo said he no longer had a copy of the play he wrote in Havana and had no idea how the script got to Madrid. With his written authorization, I was able to photocopy the Spanish text.

During a phone conversation some time later, Pedro Monge Rafuls casually mentioned a volume of five works by Cuban playwrights in exile that was being edited by Rine Leal and that Pedro would publish in New York City. They wanted to include *Las monjas*, but Eduardo responded that he had no time to do the translation himself. Obviously Eduardo had forgotten the treasure I found in Madrid. I told Pedro he could stop looking for a translator. The anthology, *Teatro: 5 autores cubanos*, was published by Ollantay Press in 1995 with Eduardo's own original play. As my Cuban friend Ricardo Aguiar always said, "El mundo es un pañuelo."

When I began teaching at Rutgers in 1963, my office mate was Matilde Castells, who had recently left Cuba. Ricardo arrived the same year and was right across the hall. Ileana at some point declared me to be a "cubana honoraria" because I joined in some of the activities she organized. But Latin American literature in general, and Cuban in particular, was only peripheral to my scholarly interests until I began to study Eduardo Manet. That study was my springboard to participating in a series of Latin American theatre conferences; my usual topic was Eduardo Manet. After Matías read my monograph on Eduardo, he told me it was the kind of book that Cuban writers in exile wished someone would write about them: an objective study by a non-Cuban.

A second book on a Cuban writer was not in my plans then or now, but Mary Alice Lessing translated one of Matías's plays for her master's thesis in translation. Matías and Yara have often invited me to participate in conferences and publications. I accepted an invitation in 2012 for a program on Cuban theatre in exile, held in Miami, to speak on

the challenge of translating Cuban theatre. Eduardo could not make the trip, but two of the three playwrights I used as examples were sitting on either side of me on the panel: Pedro and Matías. What if they rejected what I said? I need not have worried. They both asked to publish my paper.

I could not have predicted these good outcomes from building on my articles about Eduardo to write a book.



Pedro, Yara, Matías, and Phyllis

As a point of departure, I interviewed Eduardo in Paris. The first issue was his date of birth. Was he really younger than previously stated: was he really born in 1930? As had happened with Elena Quiroga, I accepted his explanation—and duly footnoted him as my source. However, my Chilean-born colleague at Rutgers, Gabriela Mora, said she, too, was younger than her official file showed, for similar reasons: her parents thought she was ready for school before the rules would have allowed, so they lied. Her comments reinforced my willingness to take Eduardo at his word.

Mindful of my experiences with Jaime Salom, I then inquired if I could ask him personal questions. With a smile, Eduardo said I could—but there was no guarantee he'd give me truthful answers. I would soon meet his wife, Fatima Soualhia Manet, and wondered if she were, in fact, his third

wife. He more or less answered “maybe.” But he also invited me to their apartment in the 3rd arrondissement. It is small enough, with limited storage space, that he really does not keep many clippings and papers, but whatever he had was available for my use. For the book he lent me invaluable production photos and programs. Fatima, an Algerian-born actor, on this and other occasions invited me to lunch. In part because he does not have voluminous, well-organized files, for a decade or more Eduardo routinely referred questions about his life and work to me. At the least, I have been able to screen some emails and pass along the more interesting ones. He has written so much since I completed my book that I no longer qualify as a Manet expert but sometimes scholars find contact information for me more readily than for him.



Fatima, actor Jean-Claude Fernandez, and Eduardo, 1996.

New acquaintances I owe to Eduardo are not limited to Cubans. One of them is the American writer Janet Burroway. Eduardo gave me a copy of Janet's spellbinding novel *Opening Nights*. Her fictional theatrical company stages *The Nuns*. The author knew her play-within-the-novel well from designing costumes for its English-language premiere. Having not set aside my tendency to scatter shoot, I digressed and published an article about her ingenious metanovel.

Eduardo has written autobiographical statements and, expanding on reality, a series of fictionalized autobiographical

novels. He made no effort that I noticed to keep anything secret, but he must have thought he did. In 2008, when I met him in a café for lunch, a woman was waiting with him at his table. That seemed natural enough to me, in that when we went to a homage for Jorge Edwards or he invited me to the theatre he might have other guests as well. He introduced Véronique Petit as his ex-wife and said he never told me they had been married so I wouldn't know that when I read her positive reviews of his work. I may have forgotten in the intervening years, but I did know when I wrote my book because I see that information is in one of my footnotes.

Eduardo and Véronique remained friends after the divorce and have collaborated on writing projects.

It was my interest in theatre that first drew me to Eduardo, but he had already written several novels and I needed to take them in consideration. I already knew that it was hard to get plays in print and publishers were more receptive if a writer also pursued narrative, which sold better. Over time, Eduardo began to dedicate himself more and more to novels, which won prizes and critical acclaim. His 2011 novel, *Le Fifre*, focuses on the great French painter, Édouard Manet; it is the first of his works to be translated to Spanish for publication in Spain: *La amante del pintor*. Years before, Eduardo told me he had reason to think his father, who was born in Spain, was the illegitimate child of the artist. Eventually he had enough information to pursue the subject, but his earlier novels place more emphasis on his mother.

At the end of the first of several fictionalized autobiographies, *La Mauresque* (1982), his main character learns that his mother, who came to Cuba from Spain, is not Moorish but Jewish. The boy, like the author, is thus half Jewish. It is my dual heritage as well, one that we have had reason to discuss. Eduardo has a deep interest in this aspect of his ancestry and is quick to catch anti-Semitic comments. Once as we were eating in a restaurant, he started to eavesdrop on men sitting at a nearby table. They were farther away from me and I could barely hear them. Eduardo said they

were followers of the right-wing politician Le Pen and what they were saying about Jews was frightening. Since early childhood, I have heard many anti-Semitic remarks from people who did not realize I would take them personally. This sensitivity and concern is something that Eduardo and I share.

As long as I have known him, Eduardo has maintained a hectic schedule. He seems to have endless creativity and energy. Some of that is spent helping Fatima in her career, of which he is noticeably proud, and some has led him to be on awards panels and advisory boards. Most recently he serves as honorary president of the French Authors' Council (Conseil Permanent des Écrivains). He travels a great deal. One year, when I arrived in Paris and he had been called away, he thoughtfully sent a beautiful bouquet of flowers to my hotel with a note assuring me he'd be back in a couple of days.

Naturally I tried to see as many of Eduardo's plays on stage as possible, in France and in the United States. In 1990, my son Bill and I went to New York City to see William Hunt's Off-Off Broadway staging of *The Nuns* (trans. Robert Baldick). While chatting with the director after the performance, I suggested that he do *Lady Strass*, which I might translate. In 1992 George and I went to Philadelphia to see an excellent production of *The Day Mary Shelley Met Charlotte Brontë* (trans. Cox) at Society Hill Playhouse. Deen Kogan not only later provided a photo for my book but also in 2010 arranged for a performance at her theatre of my translation of José Luis Alonso de Santos's *Visiting Hour*.

Eduardo can keep secrets. When I asked him about translating *Lady Strass*, he did not tell me that Vivian Cox in England had already done so. I would not knowingly have undercut another translator. After I discovered that I had, Eduardo said he liked my work much better. I never saw the British script, but it is possible that I had better intuition for playing with multilingual games because of my knowledge of Spanish as well as French and English. The three characters are an elderly British woman, a middle-aged Frenchman, and a young Guatemalan. On the other hand, Vivian Cox probably

had a better ear for the speech patterns of the two famous English authors in the play staged in Philly.

Translating *Lady Strass* was an adventure with many ups and downs. First I did a scene by scene analysis for William Hunt. We met one day in 1991 at Ubu Repertory, a theatre in New York that staged French-language plays in English translation. After the production, William said glowing things to the artistic director's assistant about Manet's play, which he had not read, and my translation, which I had not yet done. We thought we gave a brilliant performance in that animated conversation. I went home eager to produce the English script and submitted it to the artistic director, Françoise Kourilsky.

After an appropriate period of time, the assistant called to say that Françoise Kourilsky was not interested in the script. Aside from a negative reaction to the play itself, the assistant's comments led me to understand that showing up at Ubu Rep with a director had been a bad move. Whenever Françoise chose a play, she personally decided who would stage it.

I then submitted the script to George Wellwarth at *Modern International Drama* where it was published in 1992. He had previously returned my translations of Paloma Pedrero's one-act plays with acerbic comments but reacted as favorably to *Lady Strass* as he did to Jean-Paul Daumas's *The Elephant Graveyard*. I don't know if anyone ever read my translations in that journal, but Eduardo also placed the English-language script on file at the Société des Auteurs et Compositeurs Dramatiques (SACD) in Paris. Eduardo's plays have been translated and staged in many countries, but a production in London's West End would be a major coup. We were both pleased when Interact Stage Company in the U.K. signed an option with SACD for just such a performance within a year from the date of the contract. The contract named me as translator; the option fee was split between author and translator in accord with the standard 60-40 formula.

For many cultural phenomena, including stage plays, there are no barriers between the U.S. and the U.K., but for play translations there is a pattern of rejection, particularly of American English for potential British audiences. My euphoria over the projected London staging faded when Eduardo mailed me a revised first act of *Lady Strass*. A British “translator” had carefully written the date of his “copyright” on the script; I could find few constructive differences between his unauthorized version and my registered one. Eduardo asked me what I thought and said he would do whatever was best for me. He added that a staging in London would be nice, of course, but my careful study of his works was more valuable and he did not want to risk our friendship. And he had no reservations about my translation.

Because Eduardo held firm, the artistic directors of Interact responded that the new “copyrighted translation” was a mistake and they would like to meet me to talk about the script. As it happened, in 1995 I would be in London for a conference. While there I had a cordial, constructive session with Nigel Bowden and Marlene Sidaway. We agreed to change the play title and the name of the British character, and I said I’d have a British friend and fellow translator in the U.S. read the script and offer any necessary linguistic changes. Carys Evans-Corrales helped choose the character’s new name and recommended British equivalents for a few words; the revised script was soon ready and met with Nigel and Marlene’s approval. I think the process was a useful learning experience for all of us.

The premiere of *Lady Strass* in English came about in New York City, not London. Interact had repeated difficulties signing a star to play the title role at a time when an appropriate theatre would be available. The option ran out and the staging never took place. Interact Stage Company was established in 1992 and dissolved ten years later, so even an expanded window of opportunity is no longer possible.

In the meantime, Françoise Kourilsky met Eduardo Manet in Paris and was quite charmed by him. She asked him

where she could get an English translation of one of his best known plays. He advised her to go to SACD and ask for *Lady Strass*. Apparently not remembering she had rejected it already, this time she loved the text and opted to produce it.

Her love was not unconditional. She asked me to take out all the multilingual games. The characters were to speak English only. I said I would have to consult the author before revising his play so radically. This time Eduardo said he’d go along so that our text would be produced. Françoise chose André Ernotte as director. I know he read carefully my scene by scene analysis and distributed it to his cast; I had retained a copy of what I prepared for William Hunt and sent it along to Ubu Rep. I don’t know if André read the original French text, but I suspect he did. He diplomatically requested that I invent some use of Spanish and French for the male characters. That was easy to do: I simply pulled out the version prior to the revised one done according to Françoise’s instructions.



Phyllis and Eduardo, on way to performance of Lady Strass.

Eduardo had missed out on Ileana’s conference in 1988, but in October 1996 he visited Rutgers to give a talk in conjunction with the production of his play in New York. As was the case with Fernando Arrabal in 1990 and Paloma

Pedrero in 1991, we had chartered a bus to take a group from Rutgers to the theatre with the playwright. This time we left New Brunswick early enough so that those who wished to could eat together in a Cuban restaurant not far from Ubu Rep. It was fun for all of us.

How can I reduce a friendship of more than a quarter century to just a few pages? Basically I can't, so I shall skip over to my most recent trip to Paris, in 2012. I was there for just over a week at Easter with my friend Lola Oria de Rueda, who joined me from Spain for her vacation from the Escuela Oficial de Idiomas where she teaches. We decided to speak French and only French. She was probably as surprised as I that we managed to do so. We visited Geneviève Ulmann together, and Geneviève in turn put us in touch with people she is working with. Among them is an Algerian-French playwright, Rayhana, author of *À Mon âge je me cache encore pour fumer*, a fascinating play, with an all female cast, about violence against women in Algeria. The play is powerful enough that the author was attacked in the street by Islamic extremists and had to move to a new neighborhood.

Rayhana, who planned to invite Lola and me to her apartment for supper one evening, mentioned that she wanted to make a movie of her play and was looking for bilingual women actors for the cast. Immediately I thought of Fatima. Rayhana said she would be honored if Eduardo and Fatima would come, too. I invited them on her behalf and the five of us had a truly remarkable get together. Once again Ricardo Aguiar's observation, "El mundo es un pañuelo," proved true. This time our small, interconnected world consisted of France-Algeria-Spain-United States.

Fatima and Rayhana found they had much in common. From my perspective, it seemed as if they were old friends who welcomed a chance to be with one another again. The hours flew by. Whether or not the movie will materialize, I don't yet know but look forward to an update the next time I get to France as well as a chance to learn firsthand what exciting new ventures Eduardo has undertaken.

ORGANIZING THE CONFERENCE IS BETTER YET

Attending conferences organized by others can be a wonderful opportunity to network, but helping to organize an international symposium is even better, making it worth all the effort. I served as co-director for two *Estreno* conferences and each time was able to strengthen old friendships and make new friends. I took advantage of those opportunities to invite some of our guests from Spain to the Rutgers campus as well. I helped Martha Halsey with her event at Penn State in 1997 and Sandra Harper with hers at Ohio Wesleyan in 2002

For the 1997 conference, titled "Entre actos: Diálogos sobre teatro español entre siglos," Martha had funding to invite five playwrights: Luis Araújo, Josep M. Benet I Jornet, Jerónimo López Mozo, Paloma Pedrero, and José María Rodríguez Méndez. I already counted Paloma and José María among my friends and share my reminiscences about them elsewhere in these memoirs.



Robert Muro, Jerónimo, Martha, José María, Josep, Paloma, Peter Podol Seated: Luis. At Martha's house, 1997.