



# TRANSLATORS' RINCON de TRADUCTORES CORNER



“A Bad Girl”

by Montserrat Ordóñez

*translated by*  
Clara Eugenia Ronderos

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## Introduction

**Montserrat Ordóñez**, a Colombian and Spanish author, was born in Barcelona in 1941 and died in Bogotá in 2001. With a Colombian father and a Catalan mother, she grew up with a double identity. She lived in Bogotá, where she was a writer and professor of literature at Universidad de los Andes. She obtained a PhD. in Comparative Literature at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She specialized in literature written by women and her articles appeared in numerous journals in the Americas and Europe. Her critical work includes an edited volume of articles on *La vorágine* (Bogotá, Alianza Editorial, 1987), a critical edition of this Colombian novel (Madrid, Cátedra, 1990) and a critical edition of the work by Colombian writer Soledad Acosta de Samper (Bogotá, Fondo Cultural Cafetero, 1988). Her poetry appeared in *Ekdysis* (Roldanillo, Ediciones Embalaje del Museo Rayo, 1987). She described herself as “someone who always played and lived with words as a reader, a student and teacher of languages and literature, editor, translator, public speaker, journalist, literary critic, researcher, traveler and writer [..., someone who] has discovered unexpected worlds.” In 2002, after her death, she received the *Premio Internacional de Literatura Latinoamericana y del Caribe “Gabriela Mistral”*, and in 2014, the book *De piel en piel*, a compilation of her poetry, was published by Universidad de los Andes.

Prof. Ordóñez read the story translated here, **“Una niña mala”**, to a group of fascinated students in her “den,” the place where she worked and lived, and where forbidden books came off shelves and feathers turned into pens as if by magic. In this story, we recognize her voice as an independent intellectual, who chose not to be a “good girl” but a dedicated scholar, translator, poet and teacher. Clara Ronderos, the translator, was part of that group of students. Many years later, she ran into this story in the anthology *17 narradoras latinoamericanas* (Bogotá: Coedición Latinoamericana, 1996), and saw the importance of translating it into English, to include it in her course on Contemporary Latin American Women Writers at Lesley University. This has allowed generations of students to enjoy this wonderful story, which she is now sharing for a wider public.





### About the translator

Clara Eugenia Ronderos is a Colombian born poet, critic and translator. She is a retired Professor of Spanish from Lesley University. Ronderos holds a Ph.D. in Hispanic Literature from University of Massachusetts Amherst. Her recent publications include: *The Poetry of Clara Eugenia Ronderos: Seasons of Exile* (Lewiston NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2015) –Mary. G. Berg’s translation of her prize-winning collection *Estaciones en Exilio* (2010); *Ábrete Sésamo* (short stories) (Madrid: Torremozas, 2016); *De Reyes y Fuegos* (poetry) (Madrid: Torremozas, 2018); *Después de la Fábula* (poetry) (Madrid: Verbum, 2018); as well as *Agua que no has de beber* (short stories) (Córdoba, Argentina: Alción, 2019).

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## A BAD GIRL

Her power is her own. She will not give it away.  
Sandra Cisneros. *The House on Mango Street*

I want to be a bad girl. I don't ever want to do the dishes and I want to run away from home. I won't help anyone with their homework or make my bed. I don't want to stand on the balcony anymore, sighing and holding back my tears while I wait for my Dad; not even with Mom or anybody else. When I turn into a bad girl, I will scream and cry, yelling until the house falls down. When I turn into a bad girl, I will no longer feel nauseous and throw up. Because I will not get in any car that I don't want to, nor go on any rides and outings that I don't want to go on, nor eat what I don't like, nor have to fear anyone telling me: "if you throw up you'll have to swallow it"; but Dad never has to swallow it. I will be a bad girl who throws up whenever I feel like it and not when they force me to eat.

I will come home with traces of red lipstick on my shirt, I will smell of sweat and alcohol and I will go to bed wearing my dirty clothes. Then I will snore until I wake up the whole family. They will all be awake, each of them in their own corner, exhaling fear. I want to be the ogre who eats all the children, especially those who don't sleep when I snore and choke. Cowardly children are irritating to me. I want bad children and a bad girl who is never afraid of anything. She doesn't mind paint or blood, she prefers stones to bread to mark the way back home, and she howls to the stars and dances with her cat by the fire. That is the kind of girl I will become; a brave girl who can open and close the door; open and close her mouth. A brave girl who can say yes or no whenever she pleases; a girl who knows when she is pleased. A girl, drenched; her feet wet, in a puddle of tears, her eyes on fire.





The bad girl won't have to visit or greet anyone, bending in a curtsy; nor sit with her skirt spread out, her hands still, her legs not crossed. She will cross them, her ankle over her knee, and she will open them at an angle wider than ninety degrees, her head held high and her back wide and straight and she will touch herself wherever she feels like. She will never again do her homework, nor carry her book bag, nor let anyone braid her hair, pulling it, every morning at dawn, over eggs and coffee. No one will put ribbons on the crown of her head or take terrifying pictures of her. Her hair will be like a wolf's<sup>1</sup> and she will shake herself from her ears to her tail before she faces the woods.

Don't mind me –the bad girl who wants to be alone will scream. Do not look at me. Do not touch me. All alone, all alone the girl will climb over the chairs and cupboards with her cat. She will open boxes and reach for books from forbidden shelves. When she has her own house and she closes the door, hunger will never get inside her soul, nor will trained monkeys, nor priests or nuns get inside. The afternoon air will envelop her in a translucent sun. Doves and blackbirds will jump on the roof and the terraces, and their feathers will wait for her in the most secret corners and they will be confused with pens and pillows. Cats and burglars will sneak in and maybe sometimes, by mistake, or just because, a rat; for they go after their own desires and don't know anything about little girls, good or bad. She will make herself a den in which to howl and laugh. To play and dance and curl up. To lick her chops.

Now the balcony is closed. The cat still runs and checks out for breathings. It's late and the good girl, without a tear, clutches her knees to her chest and falls asleep.

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<sup>1</sup> Translator's note: In the Spanish original the word used is "loba." I am translating it to "wolf" because the term "she-wolf" in English has connotations the Spanish word does not have.





## *Rincón de Traductores/Translators' Corner*

Disponibles en/available at: <http://cervantesobservatorio.fas.harvard.edu/en/translation-corner>

1. RT/TC 001 (2019). "A Letter of Federico García Lorca to his Parents, 1935". Author: Federico García Lorca (Spain); Translator: Christopher Maurer; Genre: Letter.
2. RT/TC 002 (2019). "Like a Night with Legs Wide Open". Author: José Alcántara Almánzar (Dominican Republic); Translator: Luis Guzmán Valerio; Genre: Short Story.
3. RT/TC 003 (2019). "In the Parks, at Dusk" and "I Only Think of You". Author: Marina Mayoral (Spain); Translator: María Socorro Suárez Lafuente; Genre: Short Story.
4. RT/TC 004 (2020). "The Guide through Death" and "The Fat Lady". Author: Guadalupe Dueñas (Mexico); Translator: Josie Hough; Genre: Short Story.
5. RT/TC 005 (2020). "The Case of the Unfaithful Translator". Author: José María Merino (Spain); Translator: Erin Goodman; Genre: Short Story.
6. RT/TC 006 (2020). "The Guerrilla Fighter" and "May as Well Call it Quits". Author: Albalucía Ángel Marulanda (Colombia); Translator: Daniel Steele Rodríguez; Genre: Short Story.
7. RT/TC 007 (2020). "Miguel Hernández' Speech to His Companions in the Ocaña Jail". Author: Miguel Hernández (Spain); Translator: Constance Marina; Genre: Speech.
8. RT/TC 008 (2020). "On the Road to Houmt Souk". Author: Soledad Puértolas (Spain); Translator: Francisca González Arias; Genre: Short Story.
9. RT/TC 009 (2020). "Rincón de Traductores / Translators' Corner – Volume 1: Compilation 2019-2020". Various Authors; Various Translators.
10. RT/TC 010 (2020). *Waiting for the Revolution: Cuba, the Unfinished Journey* (excerpt). Author: Gustavo Gac-Artigas (Chile); Translator: Andrea G. Labinger; Genre: Chronicle.