

**Spanish Language and Culture Guide to Tessa Bridal's
The Tree of Red Stars**

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The following is a brief guide to the pronunciation and meaning of the Spanish words that appear sprinkled throughout The Tree of Red Stars. Some cultural references have also been explained. Where one word appears many times in the novel, I have cited it only once, at its first appearance. (If you see a Spanish word that is not cited, check on previous pages here, it has been mentioned earlier.) I have tried to use a modified phonetic description that should help English speakers to pronounce the Spanish words. Underlined syllables are the stressed (loudest) syllables. Plurals are formed by adding –s or –es; I have not repeated a citation just to give the plural (tía/tías).

- **2nd epigraph**, from Mario Benedetti (famous Uruguayan novelist, short-story writer, poet and essayist), translation =

“ . . . Words from the ashes . . . to serve as a bridge between those who stayed and those who left and later will return . . . we will help them to remember what they saw. And also what they didn't see.”

This is a suggestion that writing about the tragedies of the period of military dictatorship and the “dirty war” is a good way to reunite two groups: those who stayed in Uruguay (the same is true for Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, Brazil...) for the duration of the dirty war even though they were against it, and those who left the country for the duration. People left for various reasons—some had to escape to save their lives; some who had been kidnapped and tortured and let go then went abroad for fear of being kidnapped again—or worse. Some left out of philosophical opposition to the regime, some for artistic freedom. When exiles started to return after the end of the military regime, some of those who had remained in the country in spite of their opposition to the dirty war (we're not talking about the dictatorship's sympathizers here) felt somehow angry at those who had left—“you left, we stayed and suffered through it to the end.” Even though many exiles had protested the dirty war from abroad, the people who fought from home often felt estranged from their returning compatriots. There has been a long period of reconciliation between the two groups. Bridal left and protested from abroad; perhaps this book is her way of showing solidarity with those who remained.

- P.4 **the disappeared** = The 1970s-1980s were one of the darkest periods in the history of much of South America (in parts of Central America, 1970s-early 1990s; and Colombia is in one of its darkest periods right now). “Los desaparecidos,” the disappeared, is the term used for people who literally disappeared during the dirty war between the ultra-rightist military regimes and the leftists in general. In the 1960s, probably inspired by the Cuban Revolution, small guerrilla groups began to spring up in almost all of the Latin American countries, some in urban settings, some in rural settings. This is also when Liberation Theology started, Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights movement in the United States, protests against the Vietnam

War in the U.S., and a consciousness raising about the plight of indigenous people and the poor in general. The poor start to speak up, to claim their human and civil rights and stop being abused by the rich. The upper class, conservative right and the military saw the guerrilla movements as a real threat to the capitalist economy, the upper class' control of society and "national security" in general. Remember, this is just after the 1950s "Red Scare" paranoia about communists in the United States, the Cuban Revolution's triumph in 1959, and the beginning of the Cold War between the superpowers. The military took over civil governments and started a plan to control national security, which meant wiping out the guerrilla movements and eliminating all "subversive" elements. It was common practice for the military to storm into a "suspicious" or "subversive" person's house in the middle of the night and kidnap the person. (This is why Gaby, the little girl in the movie "The Official Story" screams in terror when the boys playing army with the toy guns suddenly burst into her bedroom when she is putting her doll to bed.) The kidnapped person was blindfolded and taken to rooms somewhere (a warehouse, a concentration camp) and subsequently interrogated and tortured. Most were killed, many were kept for years and then released, some like Ana in "The Official Story" were released after a few weeks or months but then immediately fled the country. Friends and family knew nothing of the whereabouts or condition (dead or alive) of the loved one who had disappeared.

There are many books and documentaries on this subject. I recommend that you read Jacobo Timerman's short book (in RIT's library) Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without A Number, to learn more about the dirty wars: who the military suspected of possible treason (anyone who could influence public opinion against the dictatorship, anyone who assisted or educated the less fortunate classes, definitely anyone who openly criticized the government, all leftists, liberals, socialists, activist students, newspaper editors, political cartoonists...); the connection between a prosperous capitalist economy for the upper class and a repressive fascist government; and the military's paranoid Jewish world conspiracy theory. Timerman also explains what it was like to be kidnapped, tortured and imprisoned, from his own experience.

- P.4 **barrio** [bah-rreeo]= neighborhood.

Spanish pronunciation note: 1) R and RR—mid-word r (Caramba) is pronounced as a single flap of the tongue on the alveolar ridge behind the upper teeth, as in our tt in "butter," almost a d. Word-initial r (Roberto) and mid-word rr (barrio) are pronounced as multiple trills, as in "Ruffles have ridges." 2) b=v, in free variation, usually more like our b (Alva/Alba, Vasco/Basco= the same pronunciation). The sound is much softer mid-word, more plosive at word-initial position.

- P.5 **Mamasita** (should be spelled "Mamacita.") [mah-mah-see-tah]= a diminutive form of "Mamá" and "Mamita." In this context, similar to

“Mommy,” except that it is a nickname for her grandmother (abuela), so it is like our “Nana,” etc.

- **criollo** [kree-oh-yo]= native. In the colonial period, a criollo was first-generation New World—someone born in the New World of European-born parents. Today it tends to mean something typically local, native. Here, it refers to the horses. Before the interior of the country was colonized by the Spaniards, few people lived there, the Indians were nomadic. In 1603, Hernando Arias de Saavedra, the Spanish governor of Paraguay explored the Uruguayan interior and saw the potential for raising cattle there (gently rolling hills, vast meadows with few trees except at riversides) and ordered a hundred cattle and a hundred horses set loose there, which gradually multiplied and the herd increased. Criollo in the context of horses, then, refers to a descendant of one of these horses, now a native breed peculiar to that region.
- **Caupolicán** [cow-pole-ee-kahn], Araucanian = The Mapuche Indians of Chile claim never to have been conquered by the Spaniards. The Spaniards referred to the Chilean Indians as the Araucanos but the Indians called themselves the Mapuche. A classic text of colonial literature, the epic poem “La araucana,” is about the native struggle to save their land from the invaders (and also the Spaniards’ impression of the beautiful land). Caupolicán was the last Mapuche king; he refused to give in to the Spaniards.
- **campo** [kahn-poh]= countryside
- p.6 **this determined disobedience to authority**= Consider this not only as a modern reference to people in countries ruled by military dictatorships, but also an inheritance from the brutal Spanish conquest of native peoples and 300 years of colonial rule, not to mention the repeated dominance and intervention by the United States into Latin America throughout the 20th century.
- **Río de la Plata** [ree-oh-day-lah-plah-tah]= One of the largest rivers in South America, it joins the Atlantic Ocean between Argentina and Uruguay, forming one of the most important ports in the world. It was a key route for transporting silver in the colonial period, hence its name, plata (silver).
- P.7 **Preciso coraje, amigo** [pray-see-soh-koh-rah-hay-ah-mee-go]= I need courage, friend.
- **Aquí, señora, siéntese.** [ah-kee-sen-yo-rah-see-en-tay-say]= Here, ma’am, sit down.
- **Has vuelto** [ahs-bwel-toh]= You have returned.

- **Volkswagen**= Volkswagen Beetles are still manufactured in Brazil. They are the best taxis in Mexico City (and the green ones use super-unleaded gasoline, which pollutes less).
- **Avenida** [ah-veh-nee-dah]= avenue
- **Brasil** [brah-seel]= Brazil is spelled with an s in Spanish (and Portuguese).
- P.8 **tipa** [tee-pah]= a kind of tree
- **trim hedges and orderly bushes**= styles imposed by the government, seen in parks, giving the illusion of order and control (cf. explanation of this in Women of Smoke by Chilean writer Marjorie Agosín.)
- **front doors [of] solid, unbreakable wood; bars covered the ground-floor window**= so no one could break in (cf. my explanation about storming in and kidnapping, above).
- **Estrella federal** [ehs-tray-ya-fay-day-rahl]= “federal star” = poinsettia tree = the tree of red stars
- **long-sleeved pinafore . . .** = Most children in Latin America, especially in private Catholic schools, wear uniforms to school.
- **guaranteed to speak English . . .** = Most countries have an American School, British School, German School, etc., private schools originally designed for the children of foreign diplomats but open to others, where many of the subjects are taught in the language of the sponsoring country (English, German, French....)
- p. 12 **August of 1954/ President Vargas of Brasil/his victims**= Getúlio Vargas [zheh-too-leeo-bar-gahs]. In his second period of presidency, violence at a national level increased and there was an assassination attempt on a muckraking journalist, which forced senior officers to demand Vargas’ resignation. He responded by committing suicide. He was in his 70s.
- **señora Ortega** [sen-yo-rah-or-tay-gah] = Mrs. Ortega
- p. 13 **the lords of sugar and coffee** = a remnant of the (medieval) feudal system of the colonial period, the owners of big coffee plantations, sugar cane plantations, and sugar mills, were upper class whites, usually descendants of the Spaniards. This is still true today. The vast majority of the land (in all of Latin America) is owned and controlled by a tiny percentage of the population, a handful of families in each country, who control the economy and all the wealth.

- **churrascos** [choo-rrahs-kohs]= steaks
- **ostia**—should be spelled **hostia**—[ohs-teea]= the host, the Catholic communion wafer
- **biting**= Children are told that if they bite the host it will bleed blood, which scares the children significantly.
- P. 14 **Magdalena** (the protagonist's name) [mahg-dah-lay-nah]= a common Spanish name for girls, here an interesting allusion to Mary Magdalen and our protagonist as a compassionate rebel figure. **Magda** [mahg-dah]= a shortened form of the name.
- **Mamá** [mah-mah]= Mom
- **cerro** [seh-rroh]= hill, **cerros**= hills.
- **Monte vide eu** [mohn-tay-vee-day-A-ew]= old Portuguese, “mountain see I.” Recently the meaning of the word Montevideo has come under a great deal of scrutiny. Some have suggested that the old interpretation of the word deriving from the Portuguese is not accurate, that it is really derived from an old Guaraní word for “hill.”
- **Montevideo** [mohn-tay-vee-day-oh]= capital city of Uruguay.
- **Indians / disappeared / distance**= The nomadic Charrúa Indians lived in Uruguay at the time of the Spanish exploration and conquest. Whatever Indians remained in the Argentina-Uruguay area that were not killed in the battles of the conquest or did not die from diseases brought by the Spaniards, or did not commit suicide, were sent off to fight in the border wars in later years. While many 19thc. gauchos had Indian blood, and some slaves were brought to the area from Africa, most of the population of Argentina and Uruguay today is European white. There was significant British presence and Italian immigration in the early 20th C.
- **lived on the hillside. . .** In virtually all of Latin America, the city limits are the poorest areas, “squatters” often build shacks on the outskirts of town (usually hillsides surrounding the valley city), using whatever they can find to build shelter—earth, cardboard, corrugated metal sheets for rooves, scraps of tin, wood, plastic, various materials.
- P. 15 **bath. . .** Magdalena's mother shows Gabriela how to bathe the baby for the same reason that new mothers are taught how to bathe babies when they are born in hospitals; it is simply one of the techniques handed down from one woman to another.

- P. 16 **bichicomes** [bee-chee-koh-mehs], as the book explains, an Anglicism for beachcombers, probably nothing to do with “eats insects.”
- P.17 ¡**Madre de Dios!** (no accent mark) [mah-dray-day-dee-ohs]= Mother of God! ¡**Una a la vez!** ¡**No oigo nada!** [oo-nah-ah-lah-vehs] [no-oy-goh-nah-dah] = One at a time! I can't hear anything!
- P. 18 **chocolatines** [cho-koh-lah-tee-nays] = chocolate candies (little chocolate bars.)
- **farol** [fah-roll]= lantern, streetlight (her coppery-blond hair in a sea of dark hair; like our “You stick out like a sore thumb.”)
- **pit with a large pot over it on a metal grid**= for cooking
- p. 19 **Es una linda casita, Gabriela.** [eh-su-nah-leen-dah-kah-see-tah-gah-bree-eh-la] = It's a pretty house, Gabriela.
- P.20 **Ha desaparecido** [ah-dehs-ah-pah-reh-see-doh]= He has disappeared. (These words have double strength impact in this context.)
- **Gervasio** [hair-vah-seeo] = a man's first name
- ¡**No puede ser!** [no-pwe-day-sair]= It can't be!
- ¿**Dónde está Gervasio?** [dohn-day-eh-stah-hair-vah-seeo]= Where is Gervasio?
- P. 26 **Papá** [pah-pah]= Dad.
- **Caramba** [kah-rahm-bah]= the name of the pet Parrot. The word's usual use is a mild (inoffensive) curse word.
- **crema de chocolate** [kre-mah-day-cho-koh-lah-tay]= literally, chocolate cream; in this book, chocolate pudding.
- **The family cook . . .** = Most upper middle class and upper class families have a maid (or a cook, gardener, cleaning maid, etc.), who either lives in the house in separate quarters or comes to the house every day. Rather than elitist, this ends up to be a way to employ people who need a job. Latin Americans are more imaginative at creating such jobs than we are in the U.S. (the knife sharpener, the bread man, the ice cream man, the park litter cleaner, the street sweeper, the laundry lady, etc.) In countries with a large indigenous population, the servants tend to be Indian. Household servants usually only have Sundays off, and they often live quite far from their own families.

- P. 27 (–31) **gourd, mate tea**= In the Southern Cone, especially Argentina and Uruguay, the most popular traditional tea is **yerba mate** [yair-bah-mah-tay], usually called simply **mate**. This is an herbal tea, a tradition since at least the era of the gauchos. Traditionally, one drinks it in a sort of pear-shaped gourd, loose tea leaves are packed in the bottom, the boiling water is added. One drinks the tea through a metal straw called a **bombilla** [bohm-bee-ya], which has a spoon-shaped strainer on the bottom to strain out the tea leaves. The custom is to share, passing the gourd around from person to person in your group. Mate contains caffeine and it is helpful in combatting allergies.
- **tea**= Although we think of Latin America as a coffee-producing and coffee-drinking area, many countries have tea-time around 4:00pm, and they drink tea. Some countries observe the same break but drink black coffee.
- **siesta** [see-es-ta]= a traditional rest time after the mid-day meal, which is the main meal of the day. Helpful in regions where mid-day temperatures are very hot, this quiet time probably also aids digestion. Some people take a nap, others just have quiet time and read, sew, play cards, watch TV, talk with friends, etc. In fast-paced big-city life these days, siesta is not always observed by everyone.
- **Pepe** [peh-peh]= Joe, nickname for José.
- **Señora** (see above) = Mrs.
- **Josefa** [ho-seh-fah]= woman's first name
- P. 28 **tortas fritas** [tor-tahs-free-tahs]= fried cakes
- **chicas** [chee-kahs]= girls
- p. 30 **ay, ay, ay** -- ay = Oh!
- **Sí, m'hijita** [see-mee-hee-tah]= short for Sí, mi hijita. Literally, “Yes, my little daughter,” like a woman saying “Yes, sweetie,” or “Yes, dear,” to a younger girl.
- P. 31 **Lucía** [loo-see-ah]= woman's first name
- P. 33, 34 **tías** [tee-ahs]= aunts
- P. 34 **Fidel Castro** . . . Castro did not formally declare himself Communist until quite a while after the Revolution.

- P. 35 **wearing trousers to mass**= At the time (1959) in Latin America, women always wore a dress to mass, and really to any public function.
- P. 35-36 **piropos** [pee-roh-pohs]= flirting comments made by men to unaccompanied women on the street as they pass by. The comments range from complimentary to vulgar. The custom of Latin women is to remain silent and act as if nothing had been said. American women have trouble with that, since even if the piropos seem flattering at first, after a while they feel like an invasion of privacy, and the vulgar ones really get on your nerves. American women also suppose that if men can flirt openly, then women should be able to flirt openly, too. Thus Miss Newman has taken to answering back. Latin women never do. (I advise you never to insult a man who gives a vulgar piropo; I did once and got attacked.)
- P. 37 **I do wish they wouldn't touch us . . .** Piropos are sometimes accompanied by a pinch or intentional brushing up against a woman, especially on a crowded street, bus or subway. (Now you can understand the women's frustration and annoyance.)
- P.38 (top) . . . **Miss Newman is . . .?** = probably asking if she is a lesbian (although the same women would probably disapprove if the gossip were about her not being a virgin).
- P. 39 **Coca**= Coca Cola
- P. 41 **protect our good names / you were seen**= The reputation and virginity of daughters was very strictly protected by older relatives, to the point of exaggeration.
- P. 42 **casa de cita** [kah-sah-day-see-tah]= "date house." Since young men and women typically did not move away from home, these houses were set up to receive couples in complete anonymity for a few hours of privacy.
- **tranquila** [trahn-kee-lah]= calm down
- **el señor Javier** [el-sehn-yor-hah-vee-air]= Mr. Javier (the children in the neighborhood call the adults by their first name but add the title Mr. or Mrs. or Miss to show respect and politeness.)
- **puta** [poo-tah]= prostitute
- **cállate** [kah-yah-tay]= shut up. The syllable stress is shifted to kah-yah-tay, spelled without an accent mark, in countries like Uruguay and Argentina that normally use the vos form instead of tú for familiar "you."
- P. 45 **single** (English)= only

- **Mario** [mah-reeo]= man's first name
- **returned home to lunch . . .**= In most Spanish-speaking countries, the main meal of the day is "lunch" (more like our Sunday dinner), at mid-day, usually any time between 1:00-3:00, depending on the family and country. Schools and businesses close for lunch, and people go home to eat if it is nearby enough. Students go home for lunch. Some business people in large cities eat at a restaurant, because it would take too long to get home. Business lunches (entertaining a client) are common. Some people eat at work if there is a dining room or cafeteria for employees. Siesta follows lunch, and then school and businesses start up again later in the afternoon for a few more hours.
- **peso** [peh-soh]= the national monetary unit.
- p. 46 **Parque Rodó** [pahr-kay-rroh-doh]= Rodó Park, probably named after José Enrique Rodó (1872-1917), famous Uruguayan essayist of the period known as Modernismo. He was a positivist, idealist, anti-materialist and anti-yankee, most well-known for his essay Ariel.
- **esclava** [ehs-klah-vah]= slave; here, a name for a gold bangle bracelet.
- **"Que los cumplas feliz! Tío Alberto."** [kay-lohs-koom-plahs-feh-lees, tee-oh-ahl-beah-toh]= Have a Happy Birthday, [from] Uncle Alberto.
- p. 47 **niña** [neen-yah]= little girl
- p. 48 **chaperones**= Girls used to have to be accompanied by a chaperone on a date. (In more contemporary times, going out in a group took over.)
- p. 49 **to manage a family**= The señora is responsible for the reputation of her children, the image of her house, etc.
- p. 51 **conga** [kong-gah]= a Cuban dance; here, a game.
- p. 52 **idiotas** [ee-dee-oh-tahs]= idiots
- **claro** [klah-roh]= of course
- **criada** [kree-ah-dah]= maid, servant
- p. 52 Hollywood movies were popular everywhere at the time, public movie theaters in Uruguay would also have been showing Argentine, Spanish and Mexican movies, possibly also French and Brazilian.

- p. 54 **galletas** [gah-yeh-tahs]= crackers (also the word for cookies).
- p. 55 **patio**= From traditional Spanish architecture (Arabic influence) brought to the New World, most/many houses and public buildings in Latin America have an open-air interior courtyard (**patio** [pah-teeo]); some are at the back of the house rather than in the center.
- **high walls**= high walls protect the patio or back yard from outsiders.
- p. 56 **guaraní** [gwa-rah-nee]= the name of the indigenous people of Paraguay and their language. There is a large population of Guaraní Indians in Paraguay, and the country is almost bilingual Spanish-Guaraní. In contrast, there are not many Indians in Uruguay, where the population is mostly white European.
- p. 57 **frail widow**= Older generation widows usually dress in black for the rest of their life after being widowed, and many older women go to mass every day.
- **British teachers**= see above; Magda attended the local British School.
- p. 60 **Usted es . . . mixed genders**= Mr. Stelby does not yet have command of the rules of gender agreement in Spanish, and his sentence mixes up masculine and feminine agreement in several places. (It should be, Usted es una rata. Este perro es mío.)
- p. 61 **Rubén** [rru-ben]= a man's first name (= Reuben)
- **Francisca** [frahn-sees-kah]= a woman's first name
- **Gómez Pérez** [go-mehs-peh-rehs]= last names. People have two last names in Spanish, first the paternal surname and then the maternal surname. Some people choose to go by only the paternal surname (Carlos Fuentes), or the paternal plus the initial of the maternal (Carmen Castro J.), many people go by both names (Gabriel García Márquez).
- **Arteaga** [ahr-tay-ah-gah]= Ruben's last name, the girl's paternal surname.
- **Punta del Este** [poon-tah-del-ehs-tay]= an Uruguayan beach resort.
- p. 65 **Fighting . . . Always fighting**. Guerrilla groups, in opposition to the military dictatorship.
- p. 67 **Magdalita** [mahg-dah-lee-tah]= a diminutive for Magdalena.
- p. 70 **Pereira** [peh-ray-rah]= a last name (Marcos & his brothers)

- p. 71 **bombilla** [boh-m-bee-yah]= mate straw (see mate, above)
- **puta** [poo-tah]= prostitute; here, mistress
- p. 72 **sabés** [sah-behs]= vos form (tú=sabes), = You know?
- **tío** [tee-oh]= uncle
- **Copacabana** = Brazilian beach resort
- p. 75 ¡**Lilita, mirá! ¡Es Cora!** [lee-lee-tah, mee-rah, es-koh-rah]= Lilita, look, it's Cora!
- p. 76 **Tomasito** [toh-mah-see-toh]= Tommy
- **novio** [noh-veeo]= boyfriend
- p. 77 **Hola** [oh-lah]= Hello
- p. 78 **Bueno, preciosa** [bweh-noh-preh-see-oh-sah]= OK, dear
- p. 80 **garden** = yard
- p. 81 **chaná** [chah-nah]= ? (a kind of bird). **Rhea** (Spanish= rea)= a large, tall, flightless South American bird similar to the ostrich but smaller. **Capibara** (Spanish= capibara)= a tailless, largely aquatic South American rodent often exceeding 4' in length.
- **in the interior** [of the country]= not on the coast, but inland
- **bichos** [bee-chohs]= animals, insects
- p. 82 **Caupolicán** (see above)
- **Pepita** [peh-pee-tah]= a girl's nickname; here, the dog's name
- p. 84 **Pibe** [pee-bay]= "kid"
- p. 85 **pizza**= There are a lot of Italians in Argentina and Uruguay.
- p. 88 **loco** [loh-koh]= crazy
- **Tupamaros** [too-pah-mah-rohs]= leftist guerrilla group named after the ancient Inca rebel Tupac Amaru, a martyr who led an Indian rebellion against

the Spaniards 1780-1783 and died fighting. The Tupamaros fought to topple the military dictatorship.

- p. 90 **¡Sí! ¡Claro! Las flores mejicanas!** [see, clah-roh, lah-s-floh-rehs-meh-hee-kah-nahs]= Yes, of course, the Mexican flowers!
- **señorita** [sehn-yo-ree-tah]= Miss
- p. 91 **alegre** [ah-leh-gray]= happy
- **Carnaval** [kar-nah-vahl]= Mardi Gras
- p. 93 **radio novela** [rrah-deeo-no-veh-lah]= soap-opera story on the radio
- p. 95 **Pocitos** [poh-see-tohs]= the name of Magda's neighborhood. The word is a diminutive of pozo (well, spring), so it means something like "little wells."
- **"Battle"**—should be spelled **Batlle** [baht-yay]= Early 20th century president of Uruguay, complete name José Batlle y Ordóñez, famous for his liberal social reform programs, especially universal health care. He was elected president for the periods 1903-07 and 1911-15, and dominated the country's political scene from 1903-1929.
- p. 96 **gavilanes** [gah-vee-lah-nehs]= sparrow hawks (birds).
- p. 98 **caramelos** [kah-rah-meh-lohs]= candies
- p. 101 **Che** [cheh]= Ernesto "Che" Guevara (1928-1967), Argentine revolutionary of the 1950s and 60s, who helped with the Cuban Revolution and fought with the guerrilla in Bolivia until he was killed. Extremely popular in Latin America.
- p. 103 **Rambla** [rrahm-blah]= a rambla is a dock or a sandy flood plain on the shores of a river (area filled in with sand after a flood), so this is probably an old flood plain that has been filled in and now is a riverside area of docks that also has stores, cafes, etc.
- **el** = the
- **yanqui** [yahn-kee]= Yankee. The 20th century is filled with U.S. intervention into the politics and economics of Latin America, in the interest of the U.S. economy, U.S. business, U.S. military, U.S. political power, and capitalism.
- p. 103, 104 **compañeros** [kohm-pahn-yair-ohs]= (literally, friends, companions)= comrades

- p. 106 **18 de julio** [dee-eh-see-oh-cho-day-hu-leeo]= July 18th, the name of a big avenue in Montevideo.
- **¡Alto!** [all-toh]= Halt!
- **Gaboto** [gah-boh-toh]= the name of a street. Gaboto is another version of Caboto, referring to Sebastián Caboto (1476-1557), Italian navigator who explored Argentina and the Río de la Plata for Spain. He also sailed up the Paraná River and the Paraguay River looking for legendary riches (1528). He founded the Sanctis Spiritus fort on the shores of the Paraná River, and died in England. His father was Juan Caboto, Italian navigator who explored for England's King Henry VII and discovered the coasts of what is now the United States (1497).
- **vamos** [bah-mohs]= Come on (literally, Let's go.)
- **dale** [dah-leh]= Come on, get going (literally, Give [it] to her).
- **Julio, ¿venís?** [hoo-leeo, veh-nees]= Julio (man's first name), are you coming?
- p. 108 **vengo** (should be **voy**) [behn-goh]= I'm coming.
- **Fernando** [fair-nahn-doh]= man's first name
- **Laura** [l-ow-rah] (ow as in ouch)= woman's first name
- **Bueno, nena** [bweh-no-neh-nah]= OK, little girl.
- **Carrasco** [kah-rrahs-koh]= a last name; here, the name of a neighborhood
- **Pocitos** (see above)= the name of a neighborhood
- p. 109 **Ortega** [or-tay-gah]= a last name; Magda's paternal surname
- **Grey**= Magda's maternal surname, English
- **¡Ay, ay!**= Oh, oh
- p. 111 **Bulevar España** [boo-leh-vahr-es-pahn-ya]= Spain Boulevard, the name of a street.
- p. 114 **cédula** [seh-du-lah]= identification card
- p. 116 **Ya sé, ya sé** [yah-say-yah-say]= I know, I know [already].

- **Juan** [hwan]= John
- **Stroessner's men**= General Alfredo Stroessner, military dictator of Paraguay for 35 years (1954-1989).
- **hook . . . airplane . . . dropped**—Believe it or not, things like this really did happen.
- p. 119 **15th birthday** (la fiesta quinceañera)= “Sweet 15.” In Hispanic countries, 15 marks the passage from childhood to womanhood. Most girls have a really elaborate 15th birthday party, as much as their family can afford. In rich families, it is like a debutante ball. Many traditions are kept at a typical celebration, including certain dances. **Fiesta de quince** [fee-es-tah-day-keen-say]= 15th birthday party (fiesta=party, quince=15).
- **inflation at 422 percent**= not unusual in South American countries in the 60's-70's.
- p. 120 **tonta** [tohn-tah]= stupid, silly
- p. 120 Notice the colonial mentality of the upper class Euro-centric.
- **bombachas** [boh-m-bah-chahs]= baggy trousers, knickers. The gaucha pants referred to are mid-calf length skirt-like pants, very wide-legged. They were popular in the U.S. in the late 60's, inspired by the wide-legged pants worn by the 19th century Argentine cowboys (gauchos), which were boot-top length.
- p. 121 **hermanas** [air-mah-nahs]= sisters
- **School of the Americas**= When the novel was written, this school was located in Panama, but run by the U.S. Now at Fort Benning, Georgia, this school is where the U.S. Army trains Latin American soldiers in torture, human-rights abuse, anti-leftist tactics. Graduates of the school include dictators, death squads, and soldiers responsible for the most heinous killings in Central America and South America. Your tax dollars have paid for this. Many activists are trying to get the school closed. (See the documentary, “School of Assassins.”)
- p. 124 **Prado** [prah-doh]= A very large park in Montevideo with a famous rose garden. The name also refers to the neighborhood surrounding the park.
- **churros** [chu-rrohs]= slang for “cute.” (The word had several meanings, but here means cute, similar to the “chulo” in other countries.)

- p. 126 **doña** [dohn-yah]= polite title to use with the first name of an older woman (masculine form = don [dohn]). It is less formal than “señora” plus the last name, but shows respect, which the first name alone would not.
 - **azul** [ah-sool]= blue
 - **corso** [kor-so]= parade
 - p. 126-127 **Carnaval** = Mardi Gras. P. 127, line 5 and following: this is a pretty good description of traditional Carnaval as celebrated in Latin America and Spain, but most notably in Brazil and the Caribbean (and New Orleans).
 - **candombe** [kahn-dohm-bay]= South American dance of African origin.
 - **murgas** [moo-r-gahs]= bands of street musicians
 - p. 127 **summer**= Remember, Uruguay is south of the Equator, so it has the opposite seasons from the U. S., thus February is the last month of summer, not winter.
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- **long African drums**= “tamboriles.” (See picture.) The African slaves that ended up in Uruguay brought their tamboril drums with them from Africa. The drummers were able to produce sounds from the tamboriles that expressed all aspects of their life, from birth to adolescence, marriage, moments of happiness, and the sadness of funeral rites. In the colony, the tamboril became a powerful tool of communication when the masters forbade the slaves to assemble in groups and talk to each other—they used the drums to communicate with other slaves. It was a language that permitted them to transmit messages, announce escapes or secret meetings. When the masters realized this was going on, they allowed the slaves only to play the drums on Sundays in Christian religious ceremonies and on holidays or other special occasions. Today, descendants of the first Africans in Uruguay still play the tamboril in religious ceremonies and to accompany dance and song. Its influence is felt in the various styles of music and art of

Uruguay. When the sound is heard today, as in the little street parade in Magda's neighborhood (while the musicians are on their way to the Carnaval celebration), people break into happy, carefree dance.

- p. 130 **empanadas** [em-pah-nah-dahs]= turnovers (filled pastries, usually filled with meat)
- **milanesas** [mee-lah-nay-sahs]= (meaning, "from Milan"). Very thin cuts of meat dipped in beaten egg and bread crumbs and fried. Sometimes they are stuffed with ham and cheese.
- **masitas** [mah-see-tahs] = "little doughs," pastries
- **palmitas** [pahl-mee-tahs]= a kind of pastry
- **jesuitas** [heh-swee-tahs]= "Jesuits," a kind of pastry
- **dulce de leche** [dool- say-day-lay-cheh]= a caramel made from cooking milk and sugar, very popular in Latin America. The thickness varies from country to country (from a syrup to a fudge-like consistency), and some places give it a nickname (cajeta in Mexico, arequipe in Colombia, manjar blanco in Peru). A shortcut is to boil a can of unopened sweetened condensed milk for two hours, covered with water in a tall pan.)
- **Paredes** [pah-red-ehs]= a last name
- p. 131 **8:00 / 8:30-9:00**= In Latin America, most people tend not to arrive promptly at the hour a party starts, but fashionably late, as is the custom. (That way, the host is always ready. It would be rude to arrive too early.)
- p. 132 **Who will we get?**= Typically, the birthday girl dances the opening waltz of the party with her father. They need a substitute for the father.
- **preparatorio** [preh-pah-rah-tor-eeo] = the two years of school after *liceo* (high school), before entering university. Equivalent to a two-year college.
- p. 133 **farándula** [fah-rahn-doo-lah] Described on p. 133; like a conga line that becomes a circle around anyone who chooses to step into the middle; named after the word for a troupe of strolling actors and musicians.
- p. 134 **Jaime Betancourt** [hi-may-bet-ahn-coor]= a name
- p. 135 **10:00pm**= In some countries, supper is later than we are used to, and people sometimes go out much later at night.
- p. 136 **boite** [boy-tay]= a very small nightclub (disco)

- p. 142 **Lanconis** [lahn-koh-nees]= the Lanconi family (last name)
- p. 147 **Aurelia Ponce de Aragón** [ow-reh-leea-pohn-say-day-ah-rah-gohn] = name
- p. 148 **profuse affection . . . their embraces . . .** = Latin people hug and kiss more at greetings and stand closer than British people do.
- p. 149 **don** [dohn]= polite title to use with first name of an older man you know well (when a title and last name would be too formal). It shows respect at the same time as familiarity. (See above.)
- **Leopoldo** [lay-oh- [lay-oh-pole-doh]= a man's first name
- **tacuara** [tah-coo-ah-rah]= bamboo
- **¡Hola, corazón!** [oh-lah-koh-rah-sohn]= Hi, sweetie!
- p. 150 **Charrúas** [chah-rroo-ahs]= the nomadic Indians who lived in Uruguay when the Spaniards arrived. They resisted conquest, so colonization was difficult and slow.
- **Amapola** [ah-mah-po-lah]= poppy (flower); the horse's name
- **gaucho** [gow-cho]= a cowboy of the pampas (plains) of Argentina and Uruguay.
- p. 166 **cariños** [kah-reen-yohs]= with affection
- p.168 **piñas** [peen-yahs]= punching someone in the face with your fist, or some kind of instrument that is a cluster like a pine cone or pineapple that you hit someone with.
- p.169 **Palacio de la Luz** [pah-lah-ceeo-day-lah-loose]= Palace of Light (a government building?)
- **milicos** [mee-lee-kohs]= slang for militiamen, soldiers
- p. 178 **ranchos** [rahn-chohs]= farms, ranches, camps; here, huts.
- **curandera** [koo-rahn-deh-rah]= literally, someone who cures; a person trained in medicine by the oral tradition that is passed from generation to generation in the indigenous community. Curanderos use natural medicine—herbs, etc. A young person does an apprenticeship with an experienced curandero from the older generation to learn the trade.

- p. 181 **Ramiro** [rah-mee-roh]= a man's first name
- p. 186 **Díaz Varela** [dee-ahs-vah-reh-lah]= Walter's last name
- p. 189 **Orsino** [or-see-no]= a man's first name
- **Rivera** [ree-beh-rah]= a last name
- **Castilian**= meaning from the central region of Spain
- **Adriana** [ah-dree-ah-nah]= a woman's first name
- p. 191 **Ya pasó, corazón** [yah-pah-so-ko-rah-sohn]= It's over, sweetie.
- **Prego** [pray-go]= a last name (Italian)
- p. 193 **Jorge Blanes** [hor-hay-blah-nays]= the deceased friend's name
- p. 196 **Santo Domingo** [sahn-toh-doh-ming-goh]= capital of the Dominican Republic. Refers to the 1961 CIA assassination of the dictator Rafael Leónidas Trujillo (his regime=1930-1961).
- **Marcha** [mahr-chah]= apparently a leftist newspaper
- p. 198 **El Pinar** [el-pee-nahr]= the name of a place (literally, the pine grove).
- p. 199 **hijo de puta** [ee-ho-day-poo-tah]= son of a bitch
- p. 200 **Teniente** [ten-ee-yen-tay]= lieutenant
- p. 201 **estancia** [es-tahn-seea]= ranch
- **La Paloma** [lah-pah-low-mah]= name of a place (literally, the dove)
- p. 211 **Tupas** [too-pahs]= short for Tupamaros (see above)
- p. 220 **máquina** [mah-kee-nah]= machine
- **submarinos** [soob-mah-ree-nohs]= under water
- p. 225 **ombúes** [ohm-boo-ehs] (plural of ombú)= ombu, a type of tree
- p. 240 **¡Paren! ¡Soy yo! ¡Yo soy la culpable!** [pah-rehn, soy-yo, yo-soy-lah-kool-pah-blay]= Stop! It's me! I am the guilty one!

- **Señorita . . . por favor** [sehn-yo-ree-tah, por-fah-vohr]= Miss, please...
- p. 241 **bueno** [bweh-no]= OK
- p. 250 **Punta Carretas** [poon-tah-kah-rreht-tahs]= name of a place (Cart Point)
- p. 255 **Bienvenidas, compañeras** [byen-veh-nee-dahs-kohm-pahn-yer-ahs]= Welcome, comrades.
- p. 265 **Adiós, esposo, compañero, mi mejor amigo** [ah-dee-ohs-kohm-pahn-yer-oh, mee-may-hor-ah-mee-go]= Goodbye, husband, comrade [companion], my best friend.
- p. 283 **Punta Arenas** [poon-tah-ah-ray-nahs]= (now an Uruguayan beach resort)= A town on the coast. She refers to it as her torture location in the novel, but in reality it was not a known torture location.

 This is my translation of a notice printed in the “Hispanic World” news section of HISPANIA magazine, a professional journal for teachers of Spanish and Portuguese, in March of 1977. It is taken from the Mexican magazine PLURAL, quoting an article by Esteban Álvarez, June 6, 1976.

The Hispanic World
 Subsection “Life and Society”

“Uruguay Today”

“This is today’s black panorama of culture in Uruguay. Artists, scientists and professors are prisoners, tortured, persecuted, exiled. Cultural institutions are closed by the government or subjected to rigid control. The press and opinion platforms are eliminated. Activity by musicians, actors and film directors is prohibited. Teaching is totally subjected to the will of inspectors who obey the regime. Expression [free speech] is muffled. Research institutions are dismantled (“Whatever technology we need, we buy,” say the official spokesmen). Publishing houses are torn down and books are confiscated. There is control and intimidation of foreign journalists. UNESCO and other international organizations have been attacked. Relations with the regimes of Chile and Paraguay have been increased. There have been massive dismissals of elementary school teachers, high school teachers and college professors. There has been a brutal reduction in the national budget for education, but an increase in budget entries corresponding to the Armed Forces and the police.

“The scene does not differ, except in minor details, from that seen in neighboring countries that are subject to military dictatorships of the same kind. The repression of culture is, in Uruguay as in Argentina, Brazil or Chile, only one aspect of the general plan of submission designed for these countries. For Bordaberry, as for Pinochet, Geisel, or Videla, education, art, science and culture are, inevitably, bad words.”