



WE INTERVIEW...

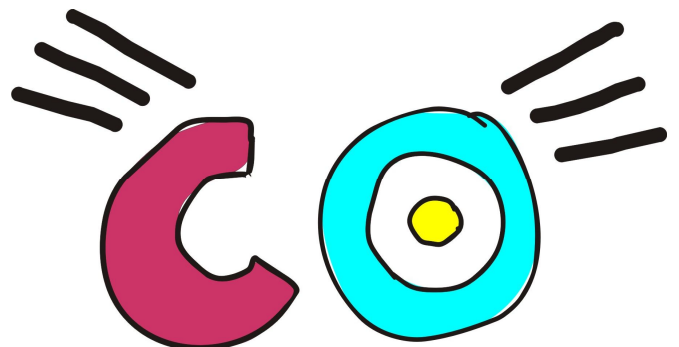
SUSO DE TORO

- writer -

IES MARUXA MALLO
ORDES



Education and Culture
Lifelong learning programme
COMENIUS



Xesús Miguel de Toro Santos (Suso de Toro) was born in Santiago de Compostela, Spain in 1956. He has published more than 20 books in Galician. He writes scripts for television and articles for newspapers. He is also a regular radio contributor.

He's got a great command of language and myths. His life and works are closely linked to Galicia. Deeply moved by the disaster caused by the Prestige's shipwreck he took part in all the demonstrations as a leader and was one of the founders of the "Never Again" platform.

One of his novels, '*Trece badaladas*' became a great success for both the critics and the public and was translated into Spanish in 2003. He was awarded the *National Narrative Award* and then the book was translated into several languages and was used as an inspiration for a film.

His works have been translated into several languages, and have been studied in some European universities. '*La sombra cazadora*', '*No vuelvas*', '*Conta saldada*' and '*Calzados Lola*' will be soon made into films.

AWARDS

Galician Critics' Award in 1988
Spanish Critics' award in 1993 and 2000
Blanco Amor of Novel Award in 1997
National Narrative Award in 2003

WORKS

Caixón desastre (1983)
Polaroid (1986) Galician Critics' Award
Land Rover (1988)
Ambulancia (1990)
Tic-tac (1993) Spanish Critics' Award
A sombra cazadora (1994)
Conta saldada (1996)
Unha rosa é unha rosa (1997), a play
Calzados Lola (1997) Blanco Amor Award
Círculo (1998)
Non volvas (2000) Spanish Critics' Award
Trece badaladas (2002)
El príncipe manco (2004)
Morgun (2004)
Home sen nome (2006)
Sete palabras (2010)

JOURNALISM

Parado na tormenta
Eterno retorno
O país da brétema
A carreira do salmón
Nunca mais Galiza á intemperie
Espanóis todos: As cartas sobre La mesa
Ten que doer: literatura e identidade
Outro idea de España: Mar de fondo
Madera de Zapatero
Outra Galiza



SUSO DE TORO: writer

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[What's Suso de Toro like, according to himself? Is he like he used to be when he started his literary career?](#)

Well, with the pass of time a person is, and isn't, the same. Adults usually see ourselves as we used to be when we were young. My character hasn't changed. I'm the same teenager who lives inwards, with imagination, who likes talking, sentimental. However, during your life things happen and make you change. When I was a teenager I used to be a very uneasy writer, who liked experimenting new things, and I still do. Each book is a challenge. So, I think that I am quite the same.

[What are the main differences between your first work *Land Rover*, and the latest, *Sete palabras \(Seven words\)*?](#)

As a matter of fact, the first book I published was a tale, in 1982, then in 1983 a book with different stories called *Caixón desastre*, and in 1986 *Polaroid*. These are my first books, which together with the novel *Land Rover*, were very experimental. I was telling a story but, at the same time I was trying out different ways of telling stories. *Seven Words* is, as it corresponds to my age, less experimental in the grounds, but in the format it looks more classical.

[Has Xesús Miguel de Toro Santos got the same perspective as when he becomes Suso de Toro, the narrator?](#)

Well, I started being "The old story man", as my auntie used to call me, because I liked listening to popular tales and stories and also telling them. I come from a humble family. My parents and grandparents have only basic studies and I began with oral literature. Then, as a teenager, I read 'cultivated' literature, from different countries and different languages, which educated me.

As Xesús Miguel, an individual with private life, I have to live according to my age and according to some rules and responsibilities, I have to be a responsible adult, although in my way. However, as a writer, I must be responsible too, but I must also be

free to write whatever I want to, although some people don't think the same way. With your books you influence people, in a positive and negative way. So a writer has to avoid being a negative influence, has to avoid transferring bad ideas, antihuman ideas to others, defending hateful things which can hurt people.

Let's say that 'the writer' has more freedom than 'the private person'. When Suso de Toro writes, he feels very free, and he writes the books he wants to write and that's why the books came out so different from one another.

[How and when was Suso de Toro born, as a writer?](#)

There was a boy who wanted to write when he was 13-14 and when he was 15-16 he started his literary education in a systematic way, that's to say, which books I wanted to read, which authors I had to read, which readings I must know... At that moment the name Suso de Toro didn't exist. But in 1982 one of my stories was awarded a prize and, when I saw that my name, Xesús Miguel de Toro Santos, was much longer than the story title *From 10 to 11*, I thought that nobody was going to remember my name. So when my second book, *Caixón desastre*, was published I chose an author's name, my pet name, Suso, and my first surname, de Toro. And then they told me it was a beautiful pen name, but it was just what people used to call me.



[You said in a former interview that "without imagination we are almost nothing". What did you mean?](#)

You must bear in mind that imagination and memory are located in the same place in our brains. Our imagination has some limits, which are related to what we have seen and lived. Nowadays we have our imagination enlarged due to the great amount of information we get through television. But some time ago things were different. Writers tend to tell stories based on what they have experienced and know about. There is a correspondence between what they say and

the world they come from.

Memory is the imagination moved backward. And imagination is the memory moved forward. We must know our past to be able to imagine our future. People without memory have no port to go to, they stand still. Memory is food for imagination.



If you had to choose only one of your works to remain for the History of Literature, which one would that be? Why?

I'd probably choose the latest one, *Sete palabras* ("Seven words"). But there is another one, *A Sombra Cazadora* ("The hunting shadow"), which I really love. I always say that it's the one nearest my heart. When you have many books, and I have more than thirty, each book has its readers. I usually meet people who tell me they liked such and such book. Others tell me that they are very fond of *Tic-Tac*. I know that a lot of people are keen on *Trece Badaladas* (13 Bell Strokes). I don't know, for me, I'd choose the latest one, *Seven words*.

Is writing scripts for a series, such as *Servicio de Urgencias* (Emergency Services), very different from writing a novel, such as *A sombra cazadora* (The hunting shadow)?

It's completely different. When you write a book you are in your house or office, alone, and you only need a paper and a pen. First of all, I take notes, ideas, sketches, in a small notebook. I decide what type of book I want to write, (a short story, a tale, a novel...), how many characters I need, who the narrator is going to be, the tone of the story (tragedy, humour...). When I've made up my mind about all these things I jump to my computer to finish my work.

But when you write a script, you do it for someone who asks you for something in particular, for a director who demands his requirements, for a producer who pays and decides, so the margin for creativity is lower. Writing scripts teaches you to be humble. It has bigger limits. In *Emergency Services* limits were at the maximum. I didn't have many resources, I was badly paid, I had

short time to write it (one week), it had to be very short (for 10-15 minutes), it needed humour, all the characters had to speak,...It appealed to me because it meant training in humbleness, absolute meticulousness and discipline.

You have been awarded the Spanish Critics' Award, the Galician Critics' Award, the Blanco Amor Award, the National Narrative Award ... what other prizes would you like to receive?

The Nobel Prize. Why are you laughing? My father asked me for it. But my father died and now I don't care. When he was alive I was in a hurry trying to get it. I'm saying this with a sense of humour because you know that the Nobel Prize is given at a certain age, usually when you are 70 (I don't know if I'll be alive by then) and, on the other hand, it is a question of power. I am a writer. I write in Galician language because I am Galician. I have responsibilities with my country, with the society where I was born. If I lived in China, I'd write in Chinese.

Our language is a great language. It's spoken by Lula, it was used by Pessoa and other great Portuguese writers, by Jose Saramago, it's the language of Brazilian and Angolan writers. But Galician language, due to political reasons, is enclosed in the four Galician provinces. Galician writers do not have a powerful state supporting it. When a writer is awarded the Nobel Prize, a particular country, a particular language is being awarded. Before the Portuguese author Saramago, got this prize, they had doubts about him or a Brazilian author.

The only writer who wrote in a language with no state behind was Isaac Bashevis Singer, who wrote in Yiddish, but the power of the Jews all over the world, and Israel, supported him.

If you don't write in a language with a great political power it's very difficult to win the Nobel Prize. I am telling you all this because my illusion is to receive it, ha, ha, ha...

All along your career as a writer you only published one theatre play, *Unha rosa é unha rosa* (A rose is a rose), which is a scary comedy, why haven't you written more plays?

I love theatre a lot. And as a matter of fact, a lot of my books have been adapted to theatre plays, three times, I think. I try to create characters which act and speak, I mean, it's very theatrical, very dramatic. Something which most of my readers usually point out is that my characters speak in such a natural way that it seems that you can hear them speak. All my works are very cinematographic, very theatrical. Now, why haven't I written more theatre plays? Probably because I've always considered myself a book writer, and probably, because there isn't a big theatre tradition in our country. Perhaps if I were a British writer, who lived in London, where there is a very rich theatre tradition, where students your age usually read and perform the plays by

Shakespeare at school, with that tradition I would have written more plays. But in my country, when I imagined myself as a writer when I was 15 or 16, there was no theatre in our cities. Now there are theatre companies but at that time in my city, Santiago, there was only a small company called Ditea which used to perform just one play a year. And that's why I haven't written more plays. But I'd like to, I really feel like doing it. Now I've started a new novel, but at the moment I am working on my latest book's promotion, but when I finish this novel, my next work will probably be a play. We'll see, we'll see.



Do you have any unpublished texts?

No, I don't. I have started a novel, where lots of characters from other books come together, characters from *Land Rover*, characters from *Lola's shoe-shop*, characters from *Thirteen bell strokes* and *Unnamed man*, all of them come together in this book as if they were my family or my friends. But it is at a standstill. I've only written 30 pages and, now, I've stopped. Literature requires time, tranquillity and continuity to get into the story. And my life now is full of interruptions which don't let me concentrate on the novel. A novel can't be produced now and then. You can write a tale this way, but not a novel. Novels demand continuity, you have to switch off the mobile phone, you can't check your e-mail, you can't go on errands, you can't travel, and you have to work on it all the time. Literary creation is a process which needs time. You can't write a novel in a few days. Although I wrote "*Land Rover*" very fast, in a couple of months, and *Ambulance* in about 25 days, it usually takes longer. And even so, when you sit down to write you have already worked on it previously. Sometimes people ask me, 'How long does it take to write a book?' Writing my latest book took me one year, but I had been working on that idea for seven years since I had told myself, 'I want to write this book'. So, the fact of actually writing took me one year, but working on it took me seven years.

You wrote a biography of the Spanish President Mr.

Zapatero, why did you choose that topic?

Well, let's say that in this book I put my expertise as a writer at the service of a politician whom I thought I should support. I've always had, since I was a child, a strong social commitment and then political commitment. First I took part in charities to help people, then in cultural Galician associations and then. When I was 17, under Franco's dictatorship, I entered an underground organization. So I've always been involved in politics, although I haven't been in a political party for 15 years because there aren't any which fully convince me, but I do have my own ideas, and at a certain time, after the Prestige disaster, after the way President Aznar's government treated us, the Galician people, and after the way they got into the war against Iraq, I understood that I should become active again, socially and politically, and I didn't want those people in the government any longer. So I decided to support a politician whom I considered very decent and honest and who wanted to stop all that and do things in a different way. And although older people always say, 'Have your own political ideas, but don't get involved', I've always got involved, and that was the way I got involved. I wanted to help a President of a government who was good for Galicia, good for Spain, good for the causes I believe in, and I wanted to defend him from a campaign of personal attacks and disqualifications which I considered very unfair, and on the other hand, as we are friends and I like him, I decided to write that book, but I did it, let's say, as a militant act. I don't belong to his party, but I thought he deserved my support, and that's why I did it. More than a writer's book, it's a citizen's act in support of a cause. If I had been an electrician, I'd have helped him as an electrician, but as I am a writer I helped him by writing that book.

You took part in the demonstrations about the Prestige and wrote *Nunca máis Galiza á intemperie (Never again Galicia at the mercy of the elements)*. How do you think this disaster influenced the recent history of Galicia?

The disaster was for the coast. Whatever they say the disaster affected the coast badly and it takes time to recover. If we hadn't been there, they wouldn't have even cleaned the coast. When the volunteers arrived to clean, the government tried to get rid of them, they lied and said that nothing had happened. If we hadn't been there the disaster would have become worse and the seamen wouldn't have received any money because they insisted that nothing had happened and they wouldn't have given the money to compensate their losses. So I think all the demonstrations were very useful. But apart from that, all that reply given by most of the Galician society also made Galician people realise that that we were not what they thought we were like, that they could insult us, they could cover our cost with dirt, and then laugh at us and call us 'dogs' as they did. They thought we were like that. But we showed them that we

were quite a different kind of people and that we had dignity and self-respect, both as people and as a country. So I think that it was very useful for Galician society because we became aware of ourselves in a different way. Galician society is more demanding now. We are different. That disaster changed us, for the better.



Which sort of relation do you have with the new technologies?

Well, more or less. In 1999, before blogs had been invented, I had a web page. I had been fired from the newspaper where I was working and I didn't have a place to publish. My name had been banned from many newspapers and so I opened this web page to have a place to say what I wanted. I called it 'Bottle to the sea'. (<http://botelhaomar.blogspot.com>)... Now I have a blog called <http://susodetoro.blogaliza.org>. But I'm not very interested in being on the Internet all day because you waste a lot of time. People who spend a lot of hours on the Internet don't read, don't pay attention, don't speak with others, they live in a virtual world. Internet is a wonderful tool but it has some costs and causes some problems, too. You need to know that. There is a reason for my blog. At a certain moment I had so many enemies, envies, enmities due to my political ideas and for showing them in public that a lot of people attacked me. When someone needed to introduce me as the speaker at a conference and looked for information in the Internet they could only find things such as 'Suso de Toro is a traitor, he is a Red (Republican), a separatist, a bad person, Suso de Toro has done many bad things'. They could only find attacks from my enemies. And I decided to open a blog where I can give my own version of myself, as a person and as a writer. But Internet is a very useful tool, which will become more and more popular. I use it for my mails, for my blog and I also look for some information. But it is also very dangerous and you must be very careful.

If you had to choose between 'pencil and paper' or 'screen and keyboard', what would you prefer?

Pencil and paper are better when you start. It's easier to read in paper and more beautiful. But on the screen you can correct as many times as you wish. I wrote my first five or six books by hand. I still have all the texts. When I wrote "Land Rover" I did it by hand and if I wanted to correct something, I crossed it out and re-wrote it. But then I had to type it on the typewriter and there, if I wanted to change, add or remove a word, line or paragraph I had to start again and repeat it from the beginning. For that reason I didn't change some things that I would have liked to. If I had written "Land Rover" on the computer I would have corrected other things and the book would be better. Because when you correct you improve the text. The screen has huge advantages, it allows you to go backward and forward adding and removing what you don't like.

I have a notebook where I write with a fountain pen, not a pencil. In this notebook I take notes, I write my ideas for a short story, for a tale, for a novel, for a conference or for a newspaper article. Then when I decide to develop that idea I sit in front of the screen and I write the text. So far I've had notebooks and a pen and also the screen and keyboard. But in the future a computer will probably be enough.

Do you think that computers can make paper books disappear?

I think paper books will disappear. Some people say they won't, but I think they will disappear. Books were a great invention which had been getting better and better but with the new technologies and the new materials they are creating things which are as good as books and will be better than books. In the future Internet won't probably need a keyboard, your voice will be enough. You'll speak and the computer will do the rest. Everything will change a lot. Instead of phones we'll probably use very small screens to talk to and see each other. So reading and writing won't be so important. Many things are going to change. And books will, too. When they invent something small and soft which works with a tiny battery and where you can read as many books, newspapers and magazines as you want, and you can take it everywhere, and that is very cheap, then the paper book won't be able to compete because there will be a an invention which is better. Some people prefer to believe in the romanticism of books and think there will always be books, but me, I love books, I write books, my books have been published, but I don't want to delude myself and I think that the new technologies are creating things which will leave books behind. Paper books will probably disappear, as newspapers will.

What's your opinion, as a writer?

Well, as a writer I don't know how it's going to influence my professional interests because at this moment we are suffering a great crisis, people who earn

their living as writers are in the middle of this crisis, the publishing world is going through a deep crisis which has several causes, but one of them is the concern for the future of paper books. They don't know what the literature market is going to be like, and that is affecting us. The electronic book is going to continue selling novels, selling poems, selling tales. Everything is going to change, there will be literature but in a different way. I don't know, but what is true is that it will have an effect on writers and on readers. But it is already happening, you, the new generations have a different relation with books from those who are older than 30. People under 30 read less books, they read more, but on the screen. You spend hours on the Internet chatting, reading and writing mails, with the Messenger, moving from page to page, and all that time spent in front of the screen is keeping you away from reading books, I mean, Internet-time is putting an end to book-time. Reading a book requires time, tranquillity, serenity, calm, disconnection from the outside world to get into the story. The good book is the one which traps you, one you can't stop reading. I am quite pessimistic about literature and books, but I may be wrong, I don't know.



European and so it is part of our tradition. So, I had an idea, but now if I want to develop that idea I have to think about it, I have to go to the Bible, to the New Testament and read about the life of Jesus, to learn about him, to read historians about Christ. I also need time to do all this, and maybe after some weeks or months I feel ready to start writing the novel. It's then when I sit down, I open my notebook with the ideas, I think about the characters and everything and maybe that day I don't write a single word, but then, one day I write a line or a paragraph. That's when it all begins. So, there are two parts, you know, the seed, the idea it comes to you all of a sudden, an inspiration, let's say, and there is a second part when you look after the seed, you work to make that seed become a tree.

[Was there a particular book which led you to be famous as an international Galician writer?](#)

I don't know. For Galician writers it's very difficult to be known abroad. When people speak about Spanish writers Galician, Catalan or Basque writers are not included. They only refer to writers who write in Spanish, in Castillian language. The rest of us are something strange, sometimes they even forget we exist. When publishers and critics from another country want to know about literature in Spain they check the press in Madrid and the newspapers in Madrid only give information about writers in Spanish, our books, although translated into Spanish don't appear in their lists of books, they don't consider us as part of their group. I remember once, when one of my books was awarded the 'National Narrative Award', that meant that my book had been chosen the best book published in Spain that year in any of the four languages spoken in Spain. Well, one of these critics said in a newspaper in Madrid, 'Well, he is not a bad writer, but why haven't you chosen one of ours, such as ...' Those names were their writers, but not me. I wasn't one of their writers. So, we are not considered as theirs. For the owners of the Spanish culture we are intruders, sometimes they let one in, but we are not



[Does a work by Suso de Toro come from a sudden inspiration or is it the result of systematic work? I mean, is it something you think about little by little or it appears all of a sudden?](#)

Both things. What appears all of a sudden is the seed, the idea, the notes taken down here in this notebook. But then when you decide to sow this seed, a second part starts. You have to water the seed, to look after it, to make it grow. Something similar happens with books. For example, here, in my notebook, I have an idea about Jesus Christ and his miracles. I know that it can sound old-fashioned because most of you don't go to church and don't know much about religion, but religion and Christianity is part of the history of Europe and of our culture. Culture in our country is deeply

welcome. It's very difficult for us to cross that line. We need to have our books translated into Spanish. A German publisher, for example doesn't read in Galician or Catalan, only in Spanish, so if your books are not



published in Spanish they won't be published in other languages either. So my career as an international writer started, let's say, when "Land Rover" was published in Spanish in the early nineties, a couple of years after having been published in Galician. And I also noticed something curious. At that moment I had four books published in Galician, and when my first book in Spanish appeared a lot of people in Galicia said, 'Now, you are a real writer'. You see, they consider you important because the book is in Spanish. But it was the same novel. The quality was the same in Galician and in Spanish.

*In 1997 you were a co-author of *Antología de cuentos contemporáneos españoles (Anthology of Spanish contemporary tales)*, which was used in Poland to make the Spanish cultural variety known. Why Poland? How did this project come up?*

Sometimes you don't know why things happen to you. I've just been to the Sorbone in Paris and I didn't know that so many students were reading my works there. Books are like bottles with a message, you throw them in to the sea and you don't know who gets them. Each book is read by a lot of people, but you don't know who. A lot of people like and appreciate your books and you have no idea. Something similar happened with Poland. They made an anthology of the 20th century

Spanish literature and they chose one of my stories. I don't know why. For me it was a great honour, and I was the only author alive, all the rest were dead, well, no, Camilo José Cela was also alive at that time.

How did it impress you?

I haven't read it, ha, ha, as I can't speak Polish. I went to Warsaw long ago and Polish is a very difficult language as Poles themselves say. That's maybe why they are so good at learning languages. Poles speak languages very well. They speak English very well and they used to speak Russian because they were part of the Soviet Union, they had to learn Russian at school, but if you asked them 'Can you speak Russian?' they used to say 'No', because they had to study Russian although they didn't want to. It is a country open to languages and when they learn a language they speak it very well.

Many of your books have been translated into Spanish, but have they been translated into any other European languages?

Well, yes. Let me think, I have some in French, Dutch, Greek, Czech, Italian, Polish, a play in German, apart from Portuguese, Catalan, Spanish, tales in English, I think that's all.

Lithuania and Poland, their people, landscapes or culture, did you get inspiration from them for a book?

I don't know. I've never been to Lithuania. I don't remember having written about Lithuania.

Do you think that you may write about these two countries in a near future?

Lithuania exists in the memory of the children who were brought up under Franco dictatorship because it had a special place on the map. Franco had an ideological fight to death against communism. Then Russia was the Evil and as you know, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania were three states conquered by the Soviet Union. When I was a child the three states appear on the map as part of the Soviet Union but, somehow, they were different. Under Franco, trying to





create hate against communism they were constantly telling us that these states were subjugated and occupied by the Russians. Our teachers sent us the message that there was something strange, something special about these countries. In Galicia, and in Spain, we have the idea that our history has been very hard because the Civil War was very traumatic, really terrible, but similar things happened to these countries. They were just in the centre of the worst conflict, they were the front of battle and they were devastated. These countries still have to go through a process which psychologists call 'elaboration', that is the time that someone needs, after suffering a trauma, to assimilate it. It's like when someone you love dies. You need a lot of time to assimilate it and be able to leave the memory of the dead person in a place in your brain and continue with your life. Those countries have a very traumatic history because some people collaborated with Nazism, others took part in the Jews' extermination and at the same time they were victims. Sometimes we can be both victims and tormenter. These countries found themselves between the Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union and their populations lived very complicated dilemmas. German people are still thinking about what their parent did during Nazism. And here in Spain we are still discussing about what we did to one another during the Civil War. These countries became free only a few years ago and they are starting to 'elaborate' their history. They still have to elaborate a history where sometimes they were victims, but sometimes executioners, with responsibilities. Anyway, history is always complicated.

[When you were a secondary student, what foreign languages were studied?](#)

Well, the 20th century in Europe is very interesting in relation to languages. During the first thirty years German was the language of culture. Up to the year 1936, when the Civil War broke out, university students belonged to well-off families and middle class. A lot of these people, after finishing their careers went to study

to Berlin. Doctors, engineers, chemists, physicians, philosophers moved there. Berlin was the centre of culture and German the most important language and so university students used to learn German. Nazism meant a disaster not only for the country but for the language, too. After the war the language which came into fashion in Spain was French. When Germany lost the war, Franco didn't want to be with the losers and German stopped being studied and French took its place. But when I started secondary education, I was 10 then, English was becoming more frequent at school, like nowadays, because of the USA dominance. Who won the World War? The Americans invaded us with their films, their music. I was part of the first generations who studied English instead of French. And it is a pity because English is not turning out to be a language, but colonization. I mean, English is important and useful but it shouldn't prevent us from studying French, Italian, German and other languages. What is happening in Spain is an absolute colonization. In Europe we should be able to listen to ourselves, music and cinema from Europe in European languages.

[Our school is taking part in a "Comenius" project together with Poland and Lithuania. Was there this kind of project when you were a teenager?](#)

When I was a teenager there was nothing. And if you wanted to travel abroad you needed a passport and even a certificate from the priest saying that you were a good



catholic, you used to go to church and you were a good person. And you also needed a certificate from the police saying that you were not a Red, that you were a good citizen under Franco. Otherwise you were not allowed to go abroad. Priests and military men controlled our lives and even to emigrate those papers were required and they could give them to you or not. You couldn't bring books or magazines into the country. The only channels on TV were Spanish and foreign radio stations were banned. However people used to listen, secretly, to Radio Paris because they broadcasted in Spanish or the BBC, which even had some programmes in Galician. These were democratic countries which gave true information, not like here where priests and military men only told lies at their

Do you think that these projects are a good method to improve students' level of English? Do you think that they can also help in some other ways?

Well, the simple fact of leaving your country, your land, your world and going to a different place is already a huge cultural experience, really interesting. You know, I didn't leave Galicia until I was 21, and I hitch-hiked to Barcelona. And then I went to Lisbon. At that time travelling was not only expensive but difficult and complicated. And I did it when I was an adult. This opportunity you have is very enriching, meeting new people from another country on the one hand and, on the other hand travelling to another place, another society with a different culture and different language is marvellous, a fascinating experience. Because once



convenience. We used to live in a closed world. Franco didn't want us to travel, except emigrants because they sent money to Spain and Franco needed the money. Emigrants travelled first to America (Argentina, Cuba, Brazil) and then in the 60s to Germany. Franco thought that travelling was dangerous because when people travelled to democratic countries they could see then that Spain was not a democracy. And so there were no trips of any kind. And there was no money, either, ha, ha.

you have visited another country and learned what to do there, in a country with a different language, where the way of life and customs are different, then you will be able to go anywhere. Learning all this is very important. And English is the international tool, as Latin used to be, it's the international language you need to catch a plane or to stay in a hotel.

Have you ever been to Poland or Lithuania?

I've been to Poland. It was long ago and it was very cold. I thought it was a very interesting country. And

with very intelligent people, by the way, people very open to languages and culture, people who had a very hard complicated history. Poland was an empire, although we sometimes forget it. But then, they were always crushed and divided by both the Teuton, (the German), and the Slav, (the Russian). They were in the middle of another two empires. They had a very hard time and a very difficult history. But that hard history made them humble, hard-working, very smart and very open. They can travel, learn other languages, and survive, very similar to us, the Galician people, but with the difference of not having the inferiority complex Galician people have, because they do have their state and we haven't had a state since the 15th century, since the times of Queen Isabella, the Catholic Queen.

[If you could make a wish knowing that it would come true, how far would you wish your literature to reach?](#)

Well, neither a short nor a long way. I mean, there is a literature which can be read by millions of people all over the world, but mine is not like this. However, I would really like to be translated into all languages, into most languages in the world. I know my literature is not for majorities, but not for minorities, either, it's for those people who look for an author literature, that's to say, there is kind of literature which is for all publics, literature with even a 'recipe', which has a particular topic, a particular way of telling the story, but that's not my case. Mine is author's literature. What I promise my readers is that each book is the book I wanted to write, not in order to earn money but because I wanted to write it at that moment. At the same time I try to make each book work. I don't seek millions and millions of readers. I respect Stephen King, I love Stephen King, especially his first books, but I don't intend to reach millions of people, but I do want to be translated to most languages in the world, above all in Europe, I consider myself a very European writer and, although Europe is a very tired continent, I think that during this century it's going to revive, against those who say that it will get older and older, I think it will revive. I would like to be read in all European languages.

[Let us ask you the last question, as inexperienced interviewers, is there a question you would like to answer but nobody has asked you?](#)

OK. Let me think, this question requires thinking because I've made hundreds of interviews. Yes, there is a question which Garcia Marquez answered in a quite exact way. The question is "What do you write for?" and you didn't ask me that. Do you want to ask that question?

[What do you write for?](#)

I write to be visible, to be seen by others. When I write I take things from inside myself and in that way I can express myself. But when I publish I want to be seen by others. And you want others to tell you that you have talent, that you exist and have talent. Garcia Marquez said something similar, he said, 'I write to be loved'. I'd rather say that I write to express myself and publish to be seen by others, to know that I do exist. Then there would be the second psychological part, 'Why does a person need to publish and be seen by others?' That's another question. Let's leave it for psychologists.

