

ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF SERVITUDE

"IT'S LIKE A MARRIAGE. You don't need a public explanation why you divorce." The speaker is Carmen Balcells, Barcelona-based literary agent for such writers as Gabriel Garcia Márquez and Pablo Neruda, and it is over the former author's interests—most particularly his latest novella, entitled *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*—that she's ferociously combating established American publishing practices. What it is she doesn't want to talk about is why, after 13 years, Garcia Márquez is parting company with Harper & Row and Avon, his American hardcover and paperback publishers. Neither does she wish to discuss the terms she is currently engaged in closing with Ballantine and Knopf, the new suitors.

"For more than a year we attempted to reach an agreement," says Edward L. Burlingame, publisher for trade books at Harper's. "We met with Garcia Márquez personally here and with Carmen Balcells here and in Europe." Sadly, he adds, "It's a wonderful book," referring to *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*. Even more sadly, Harper & Row had already listed it in their fall catalogue, hoping everything could be worked out in the end. "Last November, after a long and difficult negotiation, we thought we'd reached an agreement. So we took the chance of proceeding even though the contracts hadn't been signed."

The ostensible sticking point for Harper's and Avon, but not, presumably, for Ballantine and Knopf, is Balcells' insistence on a 10-year limited license clause. What has always been the ordinary practice in this country, if not in some sectors of international publishing, is to allow a hardcover house to publish a title as long as the book's kept in print. (On the other hand, paperback rights, sold by a hardcover house, are subject to limited license in America, and, after a time, do come up for renegotiation.) Balcells thinks this is a form of slavery for authors and sees herself (as does her client, Garcia Márquez) as fighting for authors' rights. Contacted in Spain, she seems aware that she is casting a long shadow across the Atlantic. Angrily, she explains the way she sees it: "The author is always alone in front of these big organizations and he is at the mercy of very complex contractual clauses. Ten years is already a very long time in an author's life."

Here's Ed Burlingame: "From the publisher's point of view, you take chances on writers, especially young ones. You need incentive to take risks against the odds. We can't offer these terms to other Harper & Row authors. The irony is," he goes on, "that we made a commitment to Garcia Márquez way before there was any profit in it." However, there's a red herring aspect to the "limited license" demand being the cause of the Harper-Garcia Márquez breakup. You see, Balcells was also demanding to renegotiate all the rights to the Garcia Márquez books on the Harper & Row backlist. It's just possible they might have gone along with the one outrage but never never never the other.

Some more factors do come into play, not the least of which is the precedent set by any American publisher going along with a limited license hardcover arrangement. "This is a free country," Burlingame says, some emotion creeping into his tone. "They [Knopf] compete—the government says that's the way to do it—and if they've signed a contract with the same sort of provisions we were asked to . . ." His voice trails off. "It's just incredibly depressing to lose an author that you're as proud of as we are of him."

At Knopf, William Loved, director of publicity, can't help sounding like a cat with a canary lodged in his throat. "I can tell you only one thing. Ballantine Books is negotiating for the right to publish Garcia Márquez in this country, with the likelihood that Knopf would become his hardcover publisher." What do Ballantine/Knopf plan to do about the completed Gregory Rabassa translation that Harper's had contracted for and that the British publisher, Jonathan Cape, is using? That's not worked out yet, it seems.

And, while we're on the subject, how did Cape deal with Carmen Balcells' demands? "I think we found a way around it," answers Tom Maschler, Cape's chairman, speaking from his office in London, "but obviously I'm not going to tell you how." ("That's because he gave her what she wanted," commented one cynical publishing executive.) Maschler did say, however, that "technically, the Rabassa translation belongs to Harper & Row" and that it "would

be perverse for them not to sell it and Knopf not to buy it." Other European industry figures, according to the British *Bookseller*, a trade magazine, are more tolerant of limited license than are the Americans. For example, Garcia Márquez' Swedish publisher considers such clauses "quite unexceptionable." Nonetheless, the bad feelings that are being generated and the defensiveness at Ballantine, Knopf and Cape, don't bode well for a trend towards limited license in the English language market—at this time.

HE'S GOT A SECRET

NOW THAT KIT WILLIAMS' *Masquerade* has ended, with 400,000 copies of the Schocken American edition alone in print, Byron Preiss (*The Dinosaurs, Dragonworld* and many others) is hoping that *The Secret* he's keeping will prove just as popular. Coming from Bantam as a trade paperback in October, *The Secret: A Treasure Hunt* holds out the promise of not just one jeweled hare but 12 gem caches hidden across North America. "It's been pretty weird travelling with my shovel through the airport metal detectors," Preiss, who's been working on the concept for 2½ years, told "Book Report." He went on to say, tantalizingly, that the dozen locations where he's left "secrets" behind offer "varying degrees of difficulty."

Involved in the *Secret* project are two other writers, Sean Kelly and Ted Mann, both senior editors at *National Lampoon*. However, Preiss quickly adds, "it's not *Lampoon*-style humor but it is whimsical." As he describes the book, it's more than a treasure-puzzle; it's an attempt to create an American mythology, based on all the legends and superstitions brought to these shores by immigrants—a sort of melting pot of fairies and little people. Leprechauns from Ireland, *louis-garous* from France, Spanish *hadas* and *duendas*, elves and brownies from England, and so forth.

"The roots of our society are very thin," Preiss pronounces. "We killed the Indians and then we grew up." Hmm. Well, what he'd like next, in addition to lots of people buying *The Secret* and trying to decipher the clues, is for the book's readers to send in their own ideas of what "native" American fairies, gnomes, etc. are. That way a sequel can truly feature the populist mythology he's trying to establish. Meanwhile, aided by illustrator John Palencar and photographer JoEllen Trilling, Preiss et al. have created such creatures as the Maitre D'eamon, the Geodesic Gnome, the Preps Ghoul, Elf S. Presley and the Djinn Rummy. The Left-Wing Symp and Right-Wing Trog, a two-headed political imp, is, of course, in the same category as the Pentagoragon.

MORE ON 'MASQUERADE'

IN ENGLAND, though Kit Williams' bunny hunt is over, there's another chapter unfolding. When, in late February of this year, the pseudonymous "Ken Thomas" unearthed the hidden and very expensive hare promised by *Masquerade*, he succeeded partly because of his sleuthing skills and partly by luck. Or so says Tom Maschler (see above), whose firm was Williams' original publisher in 1979. "One evening, after he'd been going to the same site for seven nights, he saw a new hole which he knew he hadn't dug. At this point, he went slightly bananas, dug practically a whole trench and found the treasure."

"However," Maschler went on, "right on Thomas' heels were two physics teachers from the north of England, who'd actually managed to solve all the clues in just the way Kit Williams intended. Hearing them talk about their solution, the real one, got us and Kit so excited! We'd been thinking of offering a new prize for anyone who really did do the entire puzzle and just then, they came along." At that point, with the first paperback edition about to come out, Cape realized that they could keep to the schedule and still add a page at the end, featuring the entire correct answer. Available in Great Britain on June 21, whether or not it will actually appear in any (so far unscheduled) American paperback edition is not yet known.

And here's another puzzle: what's Kit Williams planning next? Answers Cape's Rupert Lancaster, who'd worked on the *Masquerade* publicity campaign from the first, "His new book, which we probably won't publish until '84, will be every bit as exceptional in its own way as was *Masquerade*." Anything beyond that is a . . . secret.

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