

Doris Sommer

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Curriculum Vitae

Education

- Ph.D., Comparative Literature, Rutgers University, 1977.
Dissertation, "Mann, Midrash, and Mimesis."
- M.A., Comparative Literature, Rutgers University, 1975.
- M.A. Hispanic Literature, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1970.
- B.A., English Literature, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1970.
- B.A., *cum laude*, Spanish Language and Literature, Rutgers University, 1968.

Academic and Research Appointments

- Director of Graduate Studies, Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, Harvard University, 2003 – 2008.
- Director, Harvard Seminar of Latino Cultures, Harvard University, 1997-2004.
- Ira and Jewell Williams Professor of African and African American Studies, Harvard University, 2006-present
- Ira and Jewell Williams Professor of Graduate Studies in Latin American Literature, Harvard University, 1991-present.
- Visiting lecturer, School for Criticism and Theory, Cornell University, 2001.
- Professor of Spanish and Women's Studies, Amherst College, 1989-1991.
- Assistant, then Associate Professor of Spanish, Amherst College, 1980-1989.
- Assistant Professor of Spanish and Comparative Literature, Livingston College, 1978-1980.

Administrative Positions

- Director, Cultural Agents Initiative, 2002- See www.culturalagents.org
 - Developer of Pre-Texts to train trainers in arts-based literacy. See www.pre-texts.org. Week-long trainings include Boston, Cambridge, Mexico D.F, Guadalajara, Puebla, Puerto Rico, Bogotá, Medellín, San Salvador, Hong Kong, Santiago Chile;

- Arts advisor for United Nations Safer Cities Program [Habitat] violence prevention among youth.
- Faculty Director, Harvard Winter Institute (Puerto Rico), DRCLAS. January 2005
- Committees, Harvard University:
 - Executive Committee, DRCLAS
 - Ethnicity, Migration, Rights
 - American Studies
 - Latin American Studies
 - Committee on Degrees in Literature
 - Committee on Degrees in History and Literature
 - Public Service Committee
 - Social Engagement, African and African American Studies
 - Institute for Afro-Latin American Studies
- Conference Coordinator, Harvard University:
 - “The Jewish Latin Mix: Making Salsa,” October 2005
 - “Bilingual Aesthetics, II,” March 2001.
 - “Bilingual Aesthetics,” December 1999.
 - “Africa in the Americas,” February 1998.
 - “Politics and Performance,” April 1994.
 - “Nationalisms and Sexualities,” April 1989.
 - “The Americas/Cultural Agents,” an ongoing seminar at the Humanities Center, September 1996-present.
 - “Bilingual Benefits: Interdisciplinary Perspectives,” April 2004
 - “Cultural Agents,” Graduate Student Conference, Feb. 2005
- Conference Coordinator, “Cultural Agency in the Americas,” Social Science Research Council (SSRC); Cuzco, Peru, January 2001.
- ¡Culturas en el Aire!: Indigenous radio in the Americas” Santiago Chile, Oct.2005
- “Visible Rights: Photography by and for Youth”, Sao Paulo, Brazil, Dec. 2006
- Research Council of Norway, Canada,
- Editorial Boards: *Revista canadiense de estudios hispánicos*
 - *LETRAL*, Spain
 - *Modern Language Notes*
 - *Latin American Literary Review*
 - *Aesthetica*, Argentina
 - *La Habana Elegante* www.habanaelegante.com
 - *Cuadernos literarios*
 - *Transmodernity*
- Katherine Singer Kovacs Prize Committee, MLA
- Bryce Wood Book Award committee, LASA

Grants

- John Simon Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship, January-December 1995, and

- ACLS Fellowship, January-December 1995, for the completion of *Proceed with Caution*.
- Program grants for Performance and Politics, DRCLAS, 1994.
- American Express Grant, Ethics in the Professions, Summer, 1992.
- Amherst College Faculty Research Grant, Summer, 1988.
- Fellow, W. E. B. DuBois Institute, Harvard University, 1982-83.
- National Endowment for the Humanities Research Fellowship, 1982-83, for the completion of *One Master for Another*.
- Principal for group grants:
 - “Cultural Agency in the Americas,” a multi-year project through the SSRC, funded by the Ford Foundation.
 - “New American Studies,” a 4-year conference series at Harvard University, funded by the Rockefeller Foundation.
 - “Cultural Agency” workshop grant for Bellagio, October, 2001.
 - Radcliffe Institute Exploratory Seminar on Cultural Agency, December 2003.
 - “Winter Institute, DRCLAS and San Juan” for January 2005, from Wilbur Marvin Foundation.
 - “Interfaculty” grant for “Cultural Agents Initiative” from Associate Provost for Arts and Culture, Harvard University, 2005-2006
 - Barr Foundation for Cultural Agents; “Youth Arts” community classes
 - “Culture for Change,” multi-year program in 20 sites in Boston
 - Fundacion Mi Sangre, Medellin, Colombia, 2009
 - Cambridge Arts Council, 2010-2011
 - “Pre-Texts” from Boris Lurie Arts Foundation, New York City 2011

Publications

- **Books:**

Forthcoming: *The Work of Art in the World: Civic Agency in Art and Interpretation* (Duke University Press, 2014) <https://www.dukeupress.edu/The-Work-of-Art-in-the-World/>

Celebrating art and interpretation that take on social challenges, Doris Sommer steers the humanities back to engagement with the world. The reformist projects that focus her attention develop momentum and meaning as they circulate through society to inspire faith in the possible. Among the cases that she covers are top-down initiatives of political leaders, such as those launched by Antanas Mockus, former mayor of Bogotá, Colombia, and also bottom-up movements like the Theatre of the Oppressed created by the Brazilian director, writer, and educator Augusto Boal. Alleging that we are all cultural agents, Sommer also takes herself to task and creates Pre-Texts, an international arts-literacy project that translates high literary theory through popular creative practices. *The Work of Art in the World* is informed by many writers and theorists. Foremost among them is the eighteenth-century German poet and philosopher Friedrich Schiller, who remains an eloquent defender of art-making and humanistic interpretation in the construction of political freedom. Schiller's thinking runs throughout Sommer's modern-day call for citizens to collaborate in the endless co-creation of a more just and more beautiful world.

1. Editor, *Cultural Agency in the Americas*, (Durham, Duke University Press, 2006)

<https://www.dukeupress.edu/Cultural-Agency-in-the-Americas/>

2. *Bilingual Aesthetics: A New Sentimental Education*, (Durham, Duke UP, 2004).

<https://www.dukeupress.edu/Bilingual-Aesthetics/>

Knowing a second language entails some unease; it requires a willingness to make mistakes and work through misunderstandings. The renowned literary scholar Doris Sommer argues that feeling funny is good for you, and for society. In *Bilingual Aesthetics* Sommer invites readers to make mischief with meaning, to play games with language, and to allow errors to stimulate new ways of thinking. Today's global world has outgrown any one-to-one correlation between a people and a language; liberal democracies can either encourage difference or stifle it through exclusionary policies. *Bilingual Aesthetics* is Sommer's passionate call for citizens and officials to cultivate difference and to realize that the precarious points of contact resulting from mismatches between languages, codes, and cultures are the lifeblood of democracy, as well as the stimulus for aesthetics and philosophy.

Sommer encourages readers to entertain the creative possibilities inherent in multilingualism. With her characteristic wit and love of language, she focuses on humor—particularly bilingual jokes—as the place where tensions between and within cultures are played out. She draws on thinking about humor and language by a range of philosophers and others, including Sigmund Freud, Immanuel Kant, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Hannah Arendt, and Mikhail Bakhtin. In declaring the merits of allowing for crossed signals, Sommer sends a clear message: Making room for more than one language is about value added, not about remediation. It is an expression of love for a contingent and changing world.

3. Editor, *Bilingual Games*. New York: (New York, Palgrave, 2003).

4. *Proceed with Caution, when engaged by minority writing in the Americas* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

In Spanish: *Abrazos y rechazos: Cómo leer en clave menor*, (Bogotá: FCE, 2006)

5. Editor, *The Places of History: Regionalism Revisited in Latin America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999).

6. Editor, with Andrew Parker, Mary Russo, and Patricia Yaeger, *Nationalisms & Sexualities* (New York: Routledge, 1991).

7. *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

In Spanish *Ficciones fundacionales: La novela nacional en América Latina* (Bogotá: FCE, 2005)

8. *One Master for Another: Populism as Patriarchal Rhetoric in Dominican Novels* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984).

• **General Articles:**

1. "Choose and Lose," *Multilingual America*, ed. Werner Sollors, New York University Press, 2002.

2. "Contrapuntal Languages: The Games They Play," to be published in a collection edited by Marc Shell.

3. "Counterdependency: Puerto Rico, the Semi-Colon(y)," to be published in a collection edited by Arcadio Díaz Quiñones.

4. "Art and Accountability," *Review 72*, The Americas Society (Nov. 2005)

5. "El contrapunteo latino entre el inglés y el español: notas para una nueva educación sentimental," forthcoming in *Prácticas*, ed. Mabel Moraña (Pittsburgh, PA: Instituto Iberoamericano).

6. "American Projections of One-derland," *Latin@s in the 21st*, ed. Marcelo Suárez Orozco (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002).

7. "For Love and Country, Fundar y fundir: Latin America's Romances with Modernity," in *Il romanzo*, ed. Franco Moretti. Ed. Einaudi, 2001.

8. "Invitation to Bilingual Aesthetics," *MLA, Profession* (2003).

9. "For Love and Money: Of Pot-Boilers and Precautions," *PMLA* (Spring 2001).

10. "Puerto Rico Afloat," *The Cultures of the Hispanic Caribbean*, ed. Conrad James and John Perivolaris (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2000).
11. "Ilán Stavans, el José entre sus hermanos," *Revista Iberoamericana* 191 (abril-junio 2000). 413-419.
12. "Be-longing and Bi-Lingual States," *Diacritics* 29.4.
13. "A Vindication of Double Consciousness," *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, ed. Henry Schwarz (New York: Blackwell, 1998).
14. "Either And," with Alexandra Vega, the introduction to *Yo-Yo Boing!*, Giannina Braschi (Pittsburgh, PA: Latin American Literary Review Press, 1998).
15. "La pienezza della narrativa romantica: Mármol, Mera, Galván, Issacs," *Storia della civiltà letteraria ispanoamericana*, vol. 2, eds. Dario Puccini and Saúl Yurkievich, (Torino: UTET, 1995).
16. "Irremediabilmente humana: El Cetro de Sor Juana," *Lazarrillo* 8 (1995).
17. "Introduction" and "Mirror, Mirror, in Mother's Room," *Mama Blanca's Memoirs*, Teresa de la Parra, trans. Harriet de Onís and Frederick Fornoff (Pittsburgh, PA: Pittsburgh University Press, 1993).
18. "Borrón y cuenta nueva: Comienzos tardíos y (t)razas tempranas en Enriquillo, Cumandá, y Tabaré," *Casa de las Américas* 187 (1992).
19. "Irresistible Romance: The Foundational Fictions of Latin America," *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi Bhabha (New York: Routledge, 1990).
20. "Allegory and Dialectics: A Match Made in Romance," *Boundary 2* 18.1 (1991).
21. "El mal de María: (Con)fusión en un romance nacional," *MLN* (March 1989).
22. "When History Was Romance in Latin America," *Salmagundi* 82-83 (Spring 1989).
23. "Sab c'est moi," *Hispanamérica* 48 (1987); and in *Genders* 2 (Summer 1988).
24. "El género desconstruido: Cómo releer el canon a partir de La Vorágine," *Ensayos sobre La vorágine*, ed. Montserrat Ordóñez (Madrid: Alianza, 1988).
25. "Plagiarized Authenticity: Sarmiento's Cooper and Others," *Do the Americas Have a Literature?*, ed. Gustavo Pérez Firmat (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990).
26. "Galván's Foundational Fiction and Populist Revisions by Bosch and Marrero Aristy," *Revista Iberoamericana* 142 (1988).
27. "The Boom in Spanish American Literature: A General Introduction," with George Yúdice, *Postmodern Fiction: A Bio-Bibliographical Guide*, ed. Larry McCaffery (Westfield, NY: Greenwood Press, 1986).
28. "America as Desire(d): Nathaniel Tarn's Poetry of the Outsider as Insider," *American Poetry* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico, 1984); and in *Dialectical Anthropology* 2.2-4 (1986).
29. "National Romance and Populist Rhetoric in Spanish America," *Europe and its Others* (Colchester: Essex University, 1985).
30. "Thomas Mann's Gentle Prophetic Voice," *Poetic Prophecy in Western Literature*, eds. Jan Wojcik and Ramond-Jean Frontain (Cranbury, NJ: Fairleigh Dickenson University Press, 1984).
31. "Populism as Rhetoric: The Dominican Republic," *Boundary 2* XI.1-2 (Fall/Winter 1982-83).
32. "Good-bye to the Revolution and the Rest: Aspects of Post-1965 Dominican Narrative," *Latin American Literary Review* (Sept. 1981).
33. "Pattern and Predictability in the Stories of Julio Cortázar," *The Contemporary Latin*

- American Short Story*, ed. Rose Minc (New York: Senda de ediciones, 1979).
34. "History and Romanticism in Pedro Mir's Cuando amaban las tierras comuneras," *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos* (Río Piedras, PR: Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1979).
 35. "Art and Accountability" in "Special Supplement on Cultural Agents," *Review 71*, The Best of Review, 40th Anniversary. The Americas Society, Routledge, Nov. 2005 pp. 261-314. pp 261-276.
 36. "Crisis Means Turning Point" *Future of the Humanities*, edited by Humanities Center, SUNY, Buffalo, NY.
 37. "Ethical Asymmetries: Learning to Love a Loss", chapter 9 in *The Ethics of Latin American Literary Criticism: Reading Otherwise*, Edited by Erin Graff Zivin (New York: Palgrave, 2007)
 38. "Useful Humanism" in *PMLA* October 2006, pp 1670-1673.
 39. "For Love and Money: of Potboilers and Precautions," in *A Companion to Latin American Literature and Culture (Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture)* edited by Sara Castro Klarén, (Blackwell, 2008)
 40. "Schiller and Company," *New Literary History* (Vol 40, no. 1, Winter 2009)
 41. "Absent Causes, or el secreto a voces" in *Human Rights and Cultural Studies: Current Approaches and New Challenges* editor Ana Forcinito
http://spanport.cla.umn.edu/publications/HispanicIssues/Online_Summer2009.html
 42. "Human Rights and Responsibilities" proceedings of April 2008 symposium on "Human Rights in Latin America," at the University of Minnesota;
http://spanport.cla.umn.edu/publications/HispanicIssues/pdfs/SOMMER_HRLAIC.pdf
 43. "Classroom Cartonera," U of Wisconsin Press
 44. "Art as Agency," special issue on Cultural Agents *New Directions in Youth Development*, (2009)
 45. "Arte y responsabilidad" in *Pensar los Estudios Culturales desde España. Reflexiones fragmentadas*, ed. Marta Elena Casaús Arzú (Madrid, Editorial Verbum, 2011)
 46. "Choose to Lose: Darío Escobar's Winning Game" *A Singular Plurality: The Works of Dario Escobar* (December 2011) pp. 309-316.
 47. "Bi-Musical Moves In Luis Humberto Crosthwaite and Little Joe Hernández," With Elijah Wald, in *Multi-Lingual 2?*, (2012) edited by David Gramling
 48. "'Make a Plan': Pre-Texts for Zimbabwe" with Naseemah Mohamed, in *Translation in Postcolonial Literature: Multilingual Contexts, Translational Texts*, edited by Simona Bertacco (2012 NY Routledge)

Articles Related to *Proceed with Caution*:

1. "Slaps and Embraces: A Rhetoric of Particularism," *Ungovernability*, ed. Ileana Rodríguez, forthcoming from Duke University Press.
2. "Where the Accent Falls," *Our America and José Martí*, ed. Raúl Fernández, forthcoming from Duke University Press.
3. "Attitude, its Rhetoric," *The Turn to Ethics*, ed. Marjorie Garber et al, (New York: Routledge, 2000).

4. "No todo se ha de decir: Cecilia no sabe; Beloved no cuenta," *Casa de las Américas* (Summer 1999).
5. "Syncopate the State," *Performance Studies*, ed. Peggy Phelan (New York University Press, 1998).
6. "Puerto Rico a flote: Desde Hostos hasta hoy," *El Caribe entre imperios: coloquio de Princeton*, ed. Arcadio Díaz Quiñones, et al (Río Piedras, PR: Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1996).
7. "Conocimiento Interruptus: una ética de lectura," *Las culturas de fin de siglo en América Latina*, ed. Josefina Ludmer (Rosario, Arg.: Beatriz Viterbo, 1995).
8. "About Face: The Talker Turns," *Boundary 2* 23.1 (Spring 1996).
9. "At Home Abroad: El Inca Shuttles With Hebreo," *Creativity and Exile*, ed. Susan Suleiman, *Poetics Today* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998).
10. "Mosaic and Mestizo: Bilingual Love From Hebreo to El Inca," *Jewish Studies*.
11. "Grammar Trouble: Cortázar's Critique of Competence," *Diacritics* 25.1 (Spring 1995).
12. "Our Ame-Ríca," *Fieldwork*, ed. Marjorie Garber, (New York: Routledge, 1995).
13. "Taking A Life: Hot Pursuit and Cold Rewards in Testimonial Novel," *Signs* 20.4 (Summer 1995)
14. "Textual Conquests: On Readerly Competence and 'Minority' Literature," *MLQ* (1994).
15. "Who Can Tell?: Filling in the Blanks for Villaverde," *ALH* 6.2 (1994).
16. "Resisting the Heat: Menchú, Morrison, and Incompetent Readers," *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, eds. Donald Pease and Amy Kaplan, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994).
17. "Cortez in the Courts: The Traps of Translation from Newsprint to Film," *The Dissident Spectator*, ed. Marjorie Garber (New York: Routledge, 1993).
18. "Cecilia no sabe, o los bloqueos que blanquean," *Revista de critica literaria Latinoamericana*.
19. "No Secrets," *The Real Thing: Testimonial Discourse and Latin America*, ed. Georg M. Gugelberger (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996)
20. "Resistant Texts and Incompetent Readers," *Poetics Today* 15.2/3 (Summer/Fall 1994).
21. "Rigoberta's Secrets," *Latin American Perspectives*, Testimonials Issue, ed. Georg M. Gugelberger 18.3 (1991).
22. "Not Just a Personal Story: Women's Testimonios and the Plural Self," *Life/Lines: Theoretical Essays on Women's Autobiography*, eds. Celeste Schenck and Bella Brodzki (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988).
23. "A Nowhere for Us: The Promising Pronouns of Cortázar's 'Utopian' Stories," *Dispositio* IX/24-26; and in *Discurso Literario* 4.1.
24. "Whitman: The Bard of Both Americas," *Approaches to Teaching Whitman's Leaves of Grass*, ed. Donald D. Kummings (New York: Modern Language Association, 1990).
25. "Supplying Demand: Walt Whitman as the Liberal Self," *Reinventing the Americas: Comparative Studies of Literature of the United States and Spanish America*, eds. Gari LaGuardia and Bell Chevigny (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985); and in *New Political Science* 15 (Summer, 1986).

26. "Sacred Secrets: A Strategy for Survival" Chapter 14, pp 197- 207 *Women, Autobiography, Theory: A Reader*, Edited by Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, Wisconsin Studies in Autobiography (University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1998)
27. "'Make a Plan' Pre-Texts in Zimbabwe" with Naseemah Mohamed, in Simona Bertacco, ed. *Translation and Postcolonial Literatures* (forthcoming, Routledge)
28. "Bi-Musical Moves: In Luis Humberto Crosthwaite and Little Joe Hernández" in David Gramling and Chantelle Warner, eds. In *Critical Multilingualism Studies*. Vol. 1 Number 1. (October 2012) 57-74.