

Jazmin Rymberg

From Buenos Aires to Winnipeg: A Personal Reflection through Translation¹

Translator's Introduction

In the 1990s, Argentina was a nation grappling with various social, political, and economic challenges that significantly impacted its Jewish community. The country faced a wave of terrorism, including the devastating bombings of the Israeli embassy in 1992 and the AMIA Jewish Community Centre in 1994, leaving the Jewish population feeling vulnerable and insecure. Political corruption and economic instability, exacerbated under President Carlos Menem's administration, rising unemployment, and the devaluation of the Argentine peso caused many Jewish families, including mine, to seek new opportunities abroad.

In 1997, we became the first Argentinian family to move to Winnipeg through the Grow Winnipeg initiative, an effort by the Jewish Federation of Winnipeg to revitalize the local Jewish community by welcoming new immigrants. Although I was only eleven months old at the time, the journey my family undertook and the reasons behind it have profoundly influenced my life and worldview.

The economic crisis in Argentina deepened in 2001, leading to the implementation of the *corralito*, a government policy that froze bank accounts and restricted access to cash. This event triggered a new wave of Argentine immigration, with many seeking stability and security in countries like Canada. My parents, with remarkable foresight, decided to make the move before the crisis peaked, positioning our family as part of an earlier wave of immigrants who sought a better future in Canada.

These letters were written by my father, Gustavo Rymberg, in February and April 1997, shortly after our family's arrival in Winnipeg from Buenos Aires, in January. The letters capture the early days of our new life in Canada; they reflect the excitement, challenges, and adjustments my family faced as a result of our new beginning. On top of juggling the never-ending responsibilities that inevitably come along with two very young children (my sister and me) and building a career, my parents were in a foreign country. They were committed to learning English quickly—a language that neither of them spoke fluently.

The letters were written to close family friends back in Argentina, with whom my parents shared many memories before our move. The tone is lighthearted and affectionate, filled with humorous observations about the cold Winnipeg winters and the many changes that were happening in our lives.

I decided to translate these letters after my dad received a whole bag full of them following the passing of his best friend, Karina, in March 2020. Translating these letters has been both an academic and emotional exercise. As a translator, I am often tasked with translating more technical texts or texts that are not closely linked to my personal life. In my master's program in translation at York University, we frequently discussed the translator's role in bridging languages and cultures, to ensure

the meaning of the original text remains while making it accessible to the target audience. When dealing with primary texts that hold deeply personal significance, this task proved challenging.

These translations aim to preserve the conversational tone and spirit of the original Spanish, reflecting both the joy and the sense of adventure that marked our early years in Canada. As someone who grew up straddling two cultures, translating these letters served as a reminder of the resilience and optimism that defined my family's immigrant experience.

As I worked on these translations, I was reminded of how much my early life was shaped by movement and change. My father's professional trajectory working in Jewish community centres and federations meant that we moved frequently during my formative years. In 2005, when I was nine years old, we moved to Ottawa when he took up a position at the city's JCC. This transition was challenging; the reception we received was not as warm as it had been in Winnipeg. The Jewish day school in Ottawa, with its Orthodox traditions, was a stark contrast to the inclusive environments I had previously known. This made me question my Judaism at a young age. After two years of petitioning my parents for a change, they finally agreed to enroll me in public school. Ironically, this switch allowed me to reconnect with my Jewish identity and share our traditions with new non-Jewish friends, even introducing them to matzah pizza. In 2010, when I was fourteen, we relocated to Toronto, where my was hired by the UJA Federation. I attended a public high school in a predominantly Jewish neighborhood, where about 98 percent of the student body was Jewish. Each move presented unique challenges, becoming more complex as I grew older. By the time we arrived in Toronto, we had learned to adapt to the dynamics of a larger city.

This constant uprooting instilled in me a deep empathy for the immigrant experience, even as I learned to find optimism and opportunity in every new place we called home. My parents have always insisted that they never regretted leaving Argentina—a sentiment that is clearly expressed in their early letter, with the exciting stories they shared about our new home.

In the April 1997 letter, my dad writes about life's journeys. His words resonated with me on a profound level, especially as I now find myself working alongside him in a Jewish organization in Hamilton, Ontario, giving back to the community that welcomed us so warmly when we first landed in Manitoba. The sense of continuity—of being part of a journey that began decades ago—adds an extra layer of meaning to the translation process. It is a reminder that the narratives we preserve are not just historical records but living legacies that continue to shape our lives.

I write this reflection during a time of renewed instability for Jewish people globally. As a young Jewish professional in a Jewish institution, I find navigating these chal-

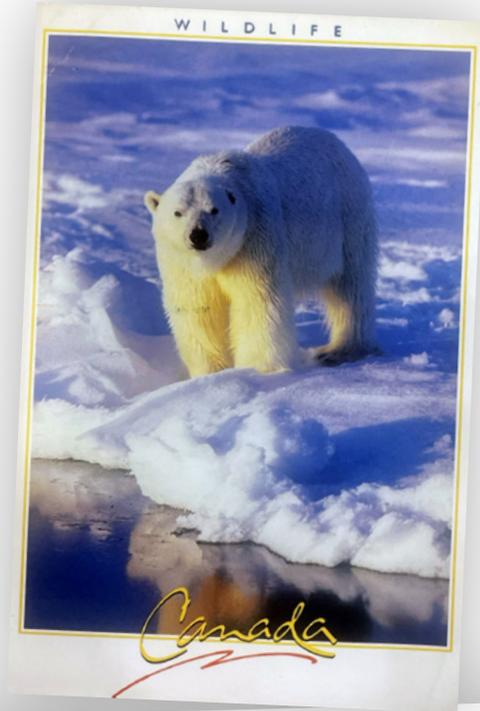
lenges both debilitating and extremely frightening, especially as I am now almost the same age as my parents were when they made the life-changing decision to move to Canada. Their courage in the face of uncertainty is a source of inspiration as I strive to continue to be an effective leader in our community.

Through these translations, I hope to offer readers a glimpse into the lived experience of Argentinian Jewish immigrants in Canada, while also reflecting on the broader themes of identity, memory, and the power of language to connect us across time and space.

Jazmin Rymberg holds a BA (Honours) in cinema studies, history, and Italian from the University of Toronto. She earned an MA in translation from Glendon College at York University and is working towards ATIO certification. Her translation work spans various genres, including technical and literary texts. She arrived in Canada on January 16, 1997, when her family moved to Winnipeg from Buenos Aires. She has since lived in Ottawa, Toronto, and Oakville, and currently serves as the communications coordinator at the Hamilton Jewish Federation.

Disclaimer: Some names have been changed to protect individuals' privacy.

Postcard



Winnipeg 11 de Fe. Nuevo de 1997.

C A N A D A

querido tío, Foti y Juide,
 cómo están, espero que estén todos muy bien, me
 imagino que después de Puerto va? (suotro) están super contentos
 y realmente muy felices con esta nueva vida, pero estamos blanco
 de teta, porque hace un frío increíble y hoy me he caído en el hielo.
 Pero se aguantan perfectamente, bien chapados y así estar mucho tiempo
 pelotudosando en lo colé. Alquilamos un departamento en un
 campo bajo copado con pibla
 albino, jacuzzi y piscina,
 estamos en el piso 21 con una
 vista super copada. Lo alquilamos
 hasta el verano y después vamos
 a viajar a buscar casa. Los
 esperamos mucho y espero que
 pronto se vayan y estén.
 } Fleu Rymberg un super beso
 los Rymbergs.

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Winnipeg 11 de febrero de 1997

Queridos Kari, Fabi y Guido

¿Como están? Espero que estén todos muy bien, me imagino que negros de Punta. ¿no? Nosotros estamos super contentos y realmente muy felices con esta nueva vida, pero estamos blancos re teta, porque hace un frío increíble y hay nieve hasta en el inodoro. Pero se aguanta perfectamente bien abrigado y sin estar mucho tiempo pelotudeando en la calle. Alquilamos un departamento muy lindo en un complejo copado con pileta cubierta, jacuzzi y gimnasio, estamos en el piso 21 con una vista super copada. Lo alquilamos hasta el verano y después vamos a empezar a buscar casa.

Los queremos mucho y esperamos pronto su visita y cartas. Escribannos y un super beso.

Los Rymbergs

Winnipeg February 11, 1997

Dear Kari, Fabi and Guido,

How are you? I hope you're all doing very well. I imagine you must be all tanned from Punta, right? We're all really happy and excited about this new life, but we are really pale, because it is incredibly cold here, there's even snow in the toilet! But we're managing just fine, staying warm and not fooling around too much outside.

We rented a really nice apartment in a great complex with an indoor pool, jacuzzi, and gym. We're on the twenty-first floor with a super cool view. We rented it until the summer, and then we'll start looking for a house.

We love you all very much and look forward to your visit and letters.

Write back! Sending you a big kiss!

The Rymbergs

Letter

Winnipeg, 26 de Abril de 1997.

Queridos tati, Feli y Guido,

Hala!!! cómo están? Nosotros realmente muy contentos al recibir carta de ustedes y saber que están muy bien y en la búsqueda del próximo. Nos encanta, que sea con suerte y felicidad. Ni bien confirmen nos avisan, no?! Que lindo!! Mucho amor de todos nosotros.

Bueno a nosotros también nos encanta recibir noticias suyas, Melina se fue muy contenta al saber de Guido suena (Guido chiquito es de [redacted] ahora estamos finalizando lo sueno y música de asociaciones de Paraguay también tiene porque mis labores son en lo Comunitario y en Jewish Post and News, así que en autor puede denunciar un poco. Pero lo verdad que estoy muy contenta con el trabajo, además de estar obligado a poner en práctica el inglés todo el tiempo.

Avista no a su colegio todas las mañanas dos horas y yo voy los sábados 4 horas de 9 a 13h, es muy cansado, pero muy importante y necesario. Dio a día habla mejor y entendemos más, hal!! por lo menos la gente nos felicita como profesoras, eso nos hace muy bien para seguir estudiando.

ah!! no se si saben que [redacted] se casa el 25 de octubre en Uruguay (maria es de allá) y antes del casamiento viene a conocer Winnipeg porque a fin de año se vienen a vivir acá, no es genial!!! parece muuuuuu los uultra, que do lo uide no?

Hablando de uultra, cuando vio por ustedes? acordense de amarnos con tiempo así nos podemos encontrar aquí o en algún lugar intermedio (New York, Chicago, Toronto) voyare muchísimo. Aprouchen ahora, que 4 es más caro y quitando. Calalo fue para cuando voyare ya vamos a estar mudados vamos a tener un montón de huéspedes, sus fudo fue lo estremo. nosotros nos vamos a mudar el 1º de octubre. El mi fue un un un

Winnipeg, 26 de abril de 1997

Queridos Kari, Fabi y Guido,

iiiHola!!! ¿Como están? ¡Nosotros realmente muy contentos al recibir carta de ustedes y saber que están muy bien y en la búsqueda del próximo, nos encanta! Que sea con suerte y Felicidad. Ni bien confirmen nos avisan, ¿no? que lindo!!! Mucha suerte de todos nosotros.

Bueno, a nosotros también nos encanta recibir noticias tuyas, Melina se pone muy contenta al saber de Guido Grande (guido chiquito es de Gabriela y Gerardo) ahora estamos finalizando la semana y media de vacaciones de Pesaj, yo también tuve porque mis laburos son en la comunidad y en el Jewish Post and News, así que en ambos pude descansar un poco. La verdad que estoy muy contento con el trabajo, además de estar obligado a poner en práctica el inglés todo el tiempo. Marisa va a su colegio todas las mañanas dos horas y yo voy los sábados, cuatro horas de 9 a 13 horas, es muy cansador pero muy importante y necesario. Día a día hablamos mejor y entendemos más, bah!!! Por lo menos la gente nos felicita como progresamos, eso nos ace muy bien para seguir estudiando.

iiAh!! iiiNo sé si saben que Alejandro se casa el 25 de octubre en Uruguay (novia es de allá) y antes del casamiento vienen a conocer Winnipeg porque a fin de año se vienen a vivir acá, no es genial!!! ¿Parece mentira las vueltas que da la vida no?

¿Hablando de vueltas, cuando viajan ustedes? Acuérdense de avisarnos con tiempo así nos podemos encontrar aquí o en algún lugar intermedio (New York, Chicago, Toronto) vayan meditándolo. Aprovechen ahora que cuatro es más caro y quilombo. Calculo que para cuando vengan ya vamos a estar mudados y vamos a tener cuarto de huéspedes, seria lindo que lo estrenen. Nosotros nos vamos a mudar el 1 de octubre. El mes que viene vamos a empezar a buscar casa no se si para comprar o para alquilar, más Adelante les contamos.

Un gran abrazo les mandamos desde acá con mucho cariño y lleno de recuerdos hermosos e inolvidables. Los queremos y recordamos siempre,

Marisa, Meli, Jazmin y Gustavo

Winnipeg, April 26, 1997

Dear Kari, Fabi and Guido,

Hello!!! How are you? We're so happy to receive your letter and to know that you are doing well and trying for another one! We love it! May it come to you with luck and happiness. As soon as you know, let us know, okay? How great! Best of luck from all of us.

Well, we also love hearing news about you. Melina is very happy to hear about Big Guido (Little Guido is Gabriela and Gerardo's son). We are now wrapping up a week and a half of Passover break. I also had time off because I work for the Jewish community and the Jewish Post and News, so I was able to rest for a bit from both places. Honestly, I'm very happy with work, it also forces me to practice my English all the time. Marisa goes to her class every morning for two hours, and I go on Saturdays for four hours, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. It's very tiring but very important and necessary. Day by day we speak better and understand more. Well...at least people compliment us on how much we've improved, which is good motivation for us to continue studying.

I'm not sure if you heard, but Alejandro is getting married October 25 in Uruguay (his fiancé is from there) and before the wedding they are coming to visit Winnipeg because they're moving here at the end of the year. Isn't that great? Life's journeys are unbelievable, aren't they?

Speaking of journeys, when are you traveling? Remember to let us know in advance so we can meet up here or somewhere in between (New York, Chicago, Toronto). Think about it. Take advantage now, because four is more expensive and chaotic. I guess by the time you come we will have moved in and we will have a guest room, it would be nice if you were the first to use it. We are going to move out on October 1. Next month we are going to start looking for a house, I don't know if we are going to buy or rent, we will let you know later.

Sending you a big hug from here with lots of love and full of beautiful and unforgettable memories. We love and remember you always.

Marisa, Meli, Jazmin, and Gustavo

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I would like to thank my family for their bravery and efforts in preserving our heritage as they established themselves so beautifully in Canada. You've instilled in me a deep sense of adventure that I carry with me always. I also thank my best friend and best proofreader, Megan, to whom I owe every A.