



Signs Preceding the End of the World

By Yuri Herrera

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Signs Preceding the End of the World is one of the most arresting novels to be published in Spanish in the last ten years. Yuri Herrera does not simply write about the border between Mexico and the United States and those who cross it. He explores the crossings and translations people make in their minds and language as they move from one country to another, especially when there's no going back.

Traversing this lonely territory is Makina, a young woman who knows only too well how to survive in a violent, macho world. Leaving behind her life in Mexico to search for her brother, she is smuggled into the USA carrying a pair of secret messages – one from her mother and one from the Mexican underworld.

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Signs Preceding the End of the World By Yuri Herrera Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Review

"Yuri Herrera is Mexico's greatest novelist. His spare, poetic narratives and incomparable prose read like epics compacted into a single perfect punch – they ring your bell, your being, your soul. *Signs Preceding the End of the World* delivers a darkly mythological vision of the U.S. as experienced by the 'not us' that is harrowing and fierce. The profoundly dignified, mind-boggling Makina, our guide and translator, is the heroine who redeems us all: she is the Truth." Francisco Goldman, author of *Say Her Name*

"Yuri Herrera must be a thousand years old. He must have travelled to hell, and heaven, and back again. He must have once been a girl, an animal, a rock, a boy, and a woman. Nothing else explains the vastness of his understanding." Valeria Luiselli, author of *Faces in the Crowd*

"Herrera never forgets the turbulent and moving humanity of his protagonist: adroit, angry, ineluctable, Makina is destined to become one of the essential characters of Mexico's new literature . . . Herrera creates a radically new language . . . and condenses into a few pages what other authors need hundreds to convey." Jorge Volpi, author of *In Search of Klingsor*

"Yuri Herrera's *Signs Preceding the End of the World* is a masterpiece, a haunting and moving allegory about violence and the culture built to support and celebrate that violence. Of the writers of my generation, the one I most admire is Yuri Herrera." Daniel Alarcón, author of *At Night We Walk in Circles*

"*Signs Preceding the End of the World* by Yuri Herrera confirms his status as a storyteller skilled at creating intense storylines and using original language. It is as adept at depicting wretched conditions as it is of elevating the humble and everyday to symbolic dimensions. And that symbolism, to be sure, has something of the Kafkaesque." Arturo García Ramos, *ABC*

"It's fair to say that Yuri Herrera follows in the footsteps of compatriot Juan Rulfo, perhaps the master par excellence of creating limbos, spectral spaces in which the characters—real Schrödinger's cats—reside halfway between the living and the dead." Javier Moreno, *Quimera*

"The book amazes with the precise and persuasive beauty of its words. New words are created or transformed in order to tell what cannot be told." María José Obiol, *El País*

"[T]his marvellously rich, slim novel is working on many levels . . . Herrera's great achievement lies in elevating the harsh epic of "crossing" to the "other side" to soaring myth. There are allusions to Odysseus, Orpheus and the Styx, the river of Greek mythology that was a border to the Underworld; as well as Mesoamerican stories of shapeshifting and rebirth . . . Herrera's metaphors grasp the freedom, and the alarming disorientation, of transition and translation . . . Translator Lisa Dillman has found a language both blunt and lyrical for Herrera's many neologisms." Maya Jaggi, *The Guardian*

"Short, suspenseful . . . outlandish and heartbreaking." *New York Times*

"Herrera's writing is poetic and defamiliarizing; translator Lisa Dillman has done well to capture his neologisms, which shift the setting into the surreal . . . In this legend-rich book, to immigrate is to enter forever the land of the shades." Sam Sacks, *Wall Street Journal*

"Indeed, the nine short chapters tell a very straightforward quest story, and Herrera plants dangerous criminals and vigilant border patrollers around every corner. But it's the imagery, by turns moving and nightmarish, that makes this brief book memorable . . . This is a haunting book that delivers a strange, arresting experience." *Publishers Weekly*

"Francisco Goldman's declaration on the cover of this book, that Yuri Herrera is Mexico's greatest novelist, sold me. I admire Goldman's own work, so the recommendation couldn't have come from a more trusted source." Jonathon Sturgeon, *Flavorwire*

"This is a gravity greater than earth's norm. Incidents, phrasings that suggest the novel could shift to another realm continue. They are pregnant with potentiality, and tension of potentiality is one of life's great pleasures, even, especially, in the discomfort that comes with it. It creates only one of the ways that Signs Preceding the End of the World holds you in rapture . . . Signs is a novel of language, meant to be translated because it is so aware of the journeys language takes, from one to another, and within their boundaries." P.T. Smith, *Bookslut*

"This is a gorgeous, crisp little thing. And although Signs . . . is no epic – accounting for chapter breaks it clocks in at under 100 short pages – Yuri Herrera has managed to achieve such extraordinary scope, of space and meaning, without any sense of hurry or clutter . . . Signs... is an important work, given the tenor of the immigration debate in the US and internationally. Herrera and Makina make a mockery of old-order American patriotism, which is easy to do but tough to actually pull off. The whole book is in fact a tiny exercise in bold and clever writing done with verve." Angus Sutherland, *The Skinny*

"[A] short, brutal, urgent missive of a book . . . Herrera's prose, as translated by Lisa Dillman, has some of McCarthy's doomy intonations, his terse impressionism, and his obvious debts to Beckett, Hemingway and Faulkner . . . There's the same nervy hovering around the edge of allegory and never quite committing to the jump. And the landscape, of course, is the same . . . But Herrera is—well—better . . . Herrera writes literature. Signs Preceding packs a fractal complexity into its furiously concentrated sentences; it's slangy, impish, iterative, slightly manic even at its saddest. Herrera has everything McCarthy doesn't: humour, kindness, politics that don't stink." Pete Mitchell, *The Quietus*

"Signs Preceding the End of the World is filled with layers of meaning and symbolism, with Herrera's brilliant command of visual metaphors effortlessly weaving together a host of narrative threads . . . his use of complex symbolism throughout, and his gift for transforming abstract idioms and metaphors into concrete images makes Signs Preceding the End of the World a worthy examination of what it is to 'cross the border.'" — Debjani Biswas-Hawkes, *Literateur*

"Signs Preceding the End of the World is one of the most arresting novels to be published in Spanish in the last ten years. Yuri Herrera does not simply write about the border between Mexico and the United States and those who cross it. He explores the crossings and translations people make in their minds and language as they move from one country to another, especially when there's no going back." *Literalab*

"Yuri Herrera is one of Mexico's proudest literary exports, and his Signs Preceding the End of the World . . . reads like scripture, the received words of an all-knowing wise man." Jane Graham, *The Big Issue*

"Perky crowd-funded publishers & Other Stories are rapidly gaining a name for unearthing hidden gems of world literature and this novel by Mexican author Yuri Herrera can only enhance that reputation. Set on the Mexican/US border, it tells a deceptively simple tale that is simultaneously beguiling and harrowing . . . In nine short chapters and barely 100 pages, Herrera gives us the beating heart of his protagonist. Resourceful

and feisty, Makina pursues her twin tasks with determination but with a shrewd appreciation of her chances of success." Peter Whittaker, *New Internationalist*

"The story's tough young heroine is Makina . . . The author has created Makina both street-smart and observant and we can see how she is capable of defending herself. We hear too, in her inner voice, the by-play of the two languages, what she calls 'latin' and 'anglo', and how they can fuse into a third with varying proportions according to circumstances . . . Talented, polyglot translator Lisa [Dillman] has risen to the challenge by creating a language that is not jarringly americanised and still conveys the thought processes of a latin-tongued protagonist in an exciting English translation. This is another example of the sterling work of the publisher & Other Stories." Michael Johnston, *Akanos Publishing*

"In *Signs Preceding the End of the World*, Yuri Herrera has given Spanish-language literature the code we needed to name the birth of the new border cultures; the creation of a new world that is changeable, volatile, sweet and terrible." Ignacio Padilla

"Both author and translator deserve praise for creating and successfully interpreting this distinctive voice, which stays with you long after the book is finished." *Workshy Fop*

"Herrera has written a novel that connects the contemporary with the timeless." Jason DeYoung, *3:am*

"Herrera's work is a double edged sword, poetic for its sparseness, but leaving the reader hungry for more. A highly-rewarding gulp of a novella, jam-packed with all the intrigue of an epic." Eloise Stevens, *Sounds and Colours*

"It might be a re-telling of the Odyssey at the Mexican border." Janet Potter, *The Millions*

"Yuri Herrera's *Signs Preceding the End of the World* is one of those rare volumes that manages to explore language in a new way, tell a compelling story, and create memorable characters all at the same time . . . The author's immense talent is evident in each page, in just about every sentence of the novel . . . The author employs language and a literary perspective you won't soon forget, his images haunting like a dream." Alina Cohen, *The Rumpus*

"Stunning . . . It's not the story itself, but Herrera's brilliant telling of it, his ability to capture his subject's thoughts, fears, and desires and so eloquently convey all that she's experiencing, that will leave you spellbound, aching for more." *Typographical era*

"To write in such a short and simple style, yet to deliver something as moving and memorable takes great skill." David Dickinson, *The Journal*

"The narrative invites reflection on the migrant experience and cultural difference; it also supplies the excitement of an adventure with gangsters, guns and false leads . . . Yuri Herrera combines a dreamlike setting with vigorous style." Anthony Cummins, *Times Literary Supplement*

"Two words: Read it. In nine short chapters you encounter all the magic of Alice in Wonderland, the darkness of Dante's Inferno, the dystopia of McCarthy's *The Road* . . . The language is wonderful, at times completely original, to capture the feel of the original." JM Schreiber for *Guardian Books Blog*

"There's grit, and there's an attention to detail, but reality drifts in through filters throughout. It gets under your skin in weird ways." Tobias Carroll, *VollBrooklyn*

"A profoundly important book, and one of the few such works to also have the distinction of being a profoundly enjoyable book." *Pop Matters*

"In its hundred-odd pages, *Signs Preceding the End of the World* manages to be many things at once: an allegory, a dark myth, an epic, a compelling meditation on language." Adam Levy, *Music and Literature*

"This is a novel of carefully rendered details, given to the reader gracefully, as if they are simple or casual observations . . . The brilliance of this novel is that, as grounded as it is in physical experiences, it is this psychological space that it most inhabits . . . A novel whose thinness belies its depth, *Signs Preceding the End of the World* makes me rejoice that more of Herrera's work will soon be published for English readers. It is such a blessing that this work, first published in Spanish six years ago, has made the crossing." *Literary Review US*

"Signs is full of exhilarating moments, sharp, economic turns, both at plot and sentence level . . . Personal and expansive, dense but compact, *Signs Preceding the End of the World* offers its readers a timeless and timely epic in miniature." *Biblioklept*

"A dazzling little thing, containing so much more than the width of its spine should allow. I am in awe-filled love with its heroine: Makina is a vibrantly real presence in a shadowy world of constant threat; her voice perfectly rendered; her unflappable poise tested, but never broken." Gayle Lazda, London Review Bookshop, London

About the Author

Yuri Herrera was born in Actopan, Mexico, in 1970. He received his PhD for Hispanic Language and Literature from UC Berkeley. *Signs Preceding the End of the World* (*Señales que precederán al fin del mundo*) is his English-language debut novel. It was shortlisted for the Rómulo Gallegos Prize and is being published in several languages. His latest novel, *The Transmigration of Bodies* (*La trans migración de los cuerpos*), is forthcoming in English from And Other Stories in 2016. He is currently teaching at the University of Tulane in New Orleans.

Lisa Dillman is based in Atlanta, Georgia, where she translates Spanish, Catalan and Latin American writers and teaches at Emory University. Her recent translations include *The Frost on His Shoulders* by Lorenzo Mediano, *Op Oloop* by Juan Filloy (longlisted for the Best Translated Book Award), *Me, Who Dove into the Heart of the World* by Sabina Berman and *Rain Over Madrid* by Andrés Barba. She is obsessed with words, running, cooking and her dog, Maya.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Pauline Jefferson:

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James Furlow:

Reading can called brain hangout, why? Because when you find yourself reading a book mainly book entitled Signs Preceding the End of the World your mind will drift away trough every dimension, wandering in most aspect that maybe unidentified for but surely can become your mind friends. Imaging every single word written in a reserve then become one contact form conclusion and explanation that will maybe you never get just before. The Signs Preceding the End of the World giving you a different experience more than blown away your mind but also giving you useful details for your better life in this particular era. So now let us demonstrate the relaxing pattern the following is your body and mind will probably be pleased when you are finished reading it, like winning an activity. Do you want to try this extraordinary shelling out spare time activity?

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