



A POETRY THAT DANCES MAKES UP BILINGUAL WRITER MARÍA BALOGH'S BOOKS

María Balogh sometimes finds herself composing poems as she sweeps the bright colorful skirt of her traditional folkloric dress to the music of her home country, Colombia.

"I've been told my poem 'Caribeña' – song to the Caribbean woman – just dances away," says Balogh, MFA 2007, who feels drawn to combine the two art forms in her books.

"Bailar Caribeño," meaning "Caribbean Dance," was Balogh's first book of poems published by Ediciones Torremozas, a Spanish press based in Madrid.

A bilingual poet, she's transferred the poems from their original English forms, many of which she features in her second book of poetry, fiction and nonfiction "Cumbia Soul," published by Cool Way Press.

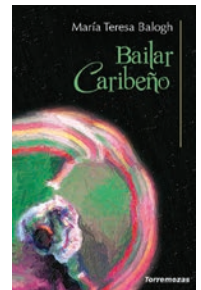
Balogh originally started creative writing in English to honor and tell the life story of her grandmother, an avid dancer herself.

"Pretty soon her character came to life," she says. "She was my grandmother, yet she wasn't. She became a character of her own."

But Balogh's poems find inspiration in other characters as well, from the newspaperman to children begging on the street.

"I'm especially drawn to social issues," she says. "I feel the need to talk about it and show it."

Balogh studied languages at Universidad del Atlántico in Barranquilla, Colombia. She moved to the U.S. in the late '90s to earn an MA in foreign languages and literature from Southern Illinois University Carbondale. Balogh is an associate teaching professor of Spanish at UMSL. She dances for Grupo Atlántico, a folkloric dance group in St. Louis and continues to write. ≡



Left: The vivid, sweeping motions of Colombian folkloric dance inspire María Balogh's writing, particularly her first book of poetry "Bailar Caribeño."