

Volume 12 *number 2*

Ezra, remembering that the Fall issue will likely appear after ALTA, urges you now to plan on this meeting (<http://www.literarytranslators.org/conference>). This is the translators' bacchanal. Get your hotel room early—space is a little tight this year (Indianapolis, IN). And plan early to get your books into the event bookstore.

In this issue we celebrate young translator Jonathan Wlodarski, who won the Ezra residency in 2017. He translates Baldomero Lillo.

And an *Ezra* staffer has a piece in this issue, from Mohamed Loakira's book about Arab Spring (*...and spring is veiled over*, from Diálogos Books).

We're happy to have more prose than usual. There's also this stunner: James Wilcox's beginning to the Iliad. A "push back retrothrust abpellent apothaic" – indeed! Makes you want to go out and translate everything anew. Everything!

The feature book, published by Luces de Gálibo in Spain, is gorgeously produced. It combines two books, the haikus and a selected writings edition called *Portuaria*. The haikus are, as Luque says, "paradoxical concreteness." And of course, they transcend the concrete; haiku is the simplest exemplar of transcendence.

There is a review in this issue.

FEATURED WRITER:

Aurora Luque is a poet, educator, newspaper columnist, translator, editor, scholar and feminist. With her thirteen books, she has long been one of contemporary Spain's key voices. Among her works are translations of both contemporary and ancient Greek poetry. The work below is from her *Haikus de Narila, Portuaria* (bilingual edition, 2017).

María Elsy Cardona is Associate Professor in the Department of Languages, Literatures and Cultures at Saint Louis University. The present work was published in Spain by Luces de Gálibo. Along with language and literature teaching, she specializes in gender studies and the graphic novel.

CARPE NOCTEM

Carpe noctem, love. Seize the abrupt desire
blind as a fortune teller,
the clusters of the pubis and the constellations,
the smash and mash
of kisses drawing waves and swirls.
Thousands of arteries flow,
swaying like kelp. *Carpe mare*.
The Seduction of the light,
of the open sexes, soft as anemones,
of the spume in the groin and the waves
and the hair on the edges, sprinkled with thirst.

To desire is to carry
the sea's fate inside your body.

MUTATION

Manius made me for Numerius.

Inscription on the Praenestine fibula.

--A punctilious artisan made me,
rejoicing in the rosy shoulder
where would rest, weightless,
a destiny, the weight of his name.

--They made me, why? I am an object,
a mass of piled up words.
Outside, eyes can read me
in the bright corner of the room.

--A woman made me. I am a poem
already detached from memory:
the wobble the syllables inherited
won't contaminate the curve of a lip.

-- Time always made me in a rush,
Vertigo interrupted by more vertigo.
I have been wrecked again and again.
I am a bitter, deathless thing.

HAIKUS FROM NARILA

Tenuous afternoon.
The watercolor palette
fades in winter.

Mulberry trees.
She bred silk worms
that spun metaphors.

Fear
Rain floods the street.
Thunder and lightning,
the little girl's room.

A blue fan.
I paint on it
Sappho's verses.

Winter. Do I plead to
the moon above
or to yesterday's little girl.

Woodpile.

Wind storm.

The mind needs a woodcutter.

Damp poplar.

Leafy den.

Scent of fairytale mushrooms.

The robin did not grab

the lizard firmly.

Bounced off the awning.

Patient land,

free wind, yellow,

burka-blue sky.

I traduttori/traduttrici:

Jonathan Wlodarski (Baldomero Lillo)

Art Beck (Horace, Martial)

Alessandro Funari (Fernando Pessoa)

James Wilcox (Homer)

Lorne Mook (Rilke)

Peter Thompson (Mohamed Loakira)

David Capps (Paul Celan)

Nina Kossman (Boris Khersonsky)

“Gold”

~~translated by Jonathan Wlodarski (Ezra Residency winner 2017)

One morning, when the sun surged forth from the abyss, launching itself into space, its flaming carriage swayed and grazed the peak of a mountain.

In the afternoon, an eagle, returning to his nest, saw in the black mountain's spire a brilliant sparkling that shined like a star. He flew down and saw, imprisoned in the rock's face, a glimmering ray of sun. “Poor thing,” said the bird pityingly. “Don't you worry. I'll grab you in my beak and scale the clouds, flying faster than a chariot, then plummet down to the sea.”

Clamping the ray in his mouth, he leapt into the air and flew up to the stars that fled each morning. But when he was almost in reach of the fugitive heavens, the eagle felt the sunbeam, proud and ungrateful, sear his curved beak, the very same one that was returning it to the sky.

Incensed, then, the eagle opened his jaws and dropped the ray back into the void.

It descended like a falling star, splatted against the ground, bounced, and returned to falling. Like a marvelous firefly, it erred through the fields, and its glow, infinitely more intense than that of a million diamonds, was visible in the midst of the day. At night it sparkled in the dark like a sun in miniature.

Man, amazed, searched endlessly for an explanation of this extraordinary event, until one day the mages and necromancers deciphered the mystery. The errant star was a detached strand of the sun's hair, they said, and added that he who succeeded in capturing it would be able to

trade in his ephemeral existence for a life immortal. However, in order to pick up the ray without being consumed by it, it was necessary to remove all vestiges of piety and love from the soul.

Every familial bond untied itself—there were no more fathers, nor sons, nor brothers. Lovers abandoned each other and all humanity, like a pack of unruly wolves, pursued the celestial pilgrim across the roundness of the earth. Night and day, thousands of avid hands reached without ceasing toward the flashing ember, contact with which reduced the bodies and the egotistical, proud hearts of the audacious hunters to nothingness, leaving behind only a fistful of dust the color of mature wheat that looked to be made of the sun's light.

And that terrible marvel, repeated without cease, wasn't enough to stop the swarms of those who sought to conquer mortality. The ones who succumbed to the bodily destruction were, without a doubt, those that conserved in their hearts a vestige of the adverse sentiments: they believed in the victorious power of their ambition without dismay and without suspicion, and thought themselves assured of victory at last in the interminable hunt.

The ray wandered across the four corners of the earth, marking its passage with that trail of golden, brilliant dust that, seized by the waters, penetrated through the earth and deposited itself in the cracks of rocks and in the beds of the torrents. Finally, the eagle, his rancor dissipated, picked it up again and put it in the path of the sun as it rose toward its zenith.

Time passed. The bird, many hundreds of years old, saw innumerable generations rushing toward nothingness, arms outstretched. One day, Love spread his wings and soared up to infinity. He found the eagle, flying through the blue and the black, and said to him, "My time down there has come to an end. Look."

And the bird's penetrating gaze made out men, busy extracting yellow dust, blonde as wheat spikes, from the earth and from the depths of the water, contact with which infiltrated their veins with an unfamiliar, fatal flame. Seeing the mortals, the essence of their souls unsettled, fighting one another like wild creatures, the eagle exclaimed, "Yes, gold is a precious metal. A mixture of light and earth, it has the same pale hue as a sunbeam. Its carats are measured in pride, egoism, and ambition."

BALDOMERO LILLO

Untitled

~~translated by Alessandro Funari

As if every kiss
Bade us both farewell,
Let us kiss, my Chloe, in love.
Mayhap we soon shall
Feel the touch which calls
The barque which comes but deserted,
And sheaves together
Our mutual selves
And the uncaring sum of life.

Ricardo Reis (FERNANDO PESSOA)

Fountain

~~translated by Lorne Mook

Now lost and wholly out of reach
Is the fountain-poetry, lovely and old,
That once in a clear spring from each
Crevice in Triton's shell lent speech
To nearby alleys as it babbled.

By the pipe-housings every evening,
Pair after pair gathered around;
For the fountain showed delightful shining
And her sound, to deep calm inclining,
Was omen as sweet as could be found.

But then workmen the fountain's flowing
Altered, and water climbed uphill;
The god became (when pairs stopped showing)
Misogynist: green rust was growing
Inside the shell—and he was still.

RAINER MARIA RILKE

Homecoming

~~translated by David Capps

Snowfall, wading into words,
dove-colored, like yesterday,

snowfall, as if even now you were
sleeping.

Distance layered white. Above it,
endless sleigh tracks of the lost.

What's below, concealed, presses
itself up, strains the eyes,

hill after hill, no longer visible.

On each one, hauled home into

his today, slipped away into
muteness, an I: wooden, a post.

There: a feeling,

blown across by an ice wind,

its dove— its snow pinned on
colors of a cloth flag.

PAUL CELAN

A Collage In Lieu of an Essay: Two variations on a Roman theme, some hundred years apart, with an after-comment by Rilke.

~~translated by Art Beck

Odes Book II , 3.

Remember to keep a balanced mind at the heights
of difficulty, and when you've won,
temper your insolent joy,
Delius: you have to die,

whether you barely make it through each miserable
week, or celebrate the festive days, lazing
in arcadian meadows, sequestered
in vintage Falernian.

What makes the great firs and white poplars love
to join their branches in shadowy welcome?
Why does the panicky creek struggle to
escape, downhill to the river?

Send for wine and perfume and charming
all too brief rosebuds. Now, while you're alive
in this world, while the three sisters
still patiently spin. Soon enough,

you'll surrender the forests you've bought up,
and your house, and the country house the yellow
Tiber washes. You'll give them up, and everything
you've piled so high will be divided by your heirs.

If you were a child of the ancient nobility,

it wouldn't do you any more good to beg
than a pauper loitering under the open sky.
We're all victims of pitiless Orcus.

We're all being herded to the same place.
Everyone's number gets shaken in the urn.
Sooner or later it rolls out, and we're
on the boat to eternal exile.

HORACE

Epigrams Book VIII, 44

Take my advice, Titullus, start living: it's always
past time for that. Even when you were a schoolboy,
it was past time. But old as you are, poor Titullus,
you don't even try to live. Polishing every threshold
making your patron calls. Out early, sweating and trading

wet kisses with half the City. Hitting all three Forums,
mud-spattered at the statues on horseback, the Temple
of Mars and Augustus' Colossus. You're in a constant
rush every hour of the day. Grab, collect, finagle,
hoard all you can: You'll still lose it all when you die.

Your proud strongbox is packed with pale coins,
but your heir will swear you left nothing to cover
the notes coming due. While you're laid out on a plank
or stone and they're stuffing the pyre with papyrus,
he'll be arrogantly kissing your weeping eunuchs.

And that sad son, like it or not, will sleep
with the boy you loved best, that very night.

MARTIAL

Sonnets to Orpheus Part One, 10

You, for whom I've never lost my
feelings, I greet you, ancient sarcophagi
through whom the same glad water of Roman
days flows like a running song. Or one

of those others, vacated in the graveyard -
as wide open as the eye of a shepherd
awakening to joy – flitting with charmed
butterflies – full of quiet and honey inside.

I greet those gaping re-opened mouths
torn away from any doubts,
who know now, what silence means.

We know, friends – or we really
don't? The choice becomes a hesitant
meditation on the human face.

RILKE

Poetry (like translation) is its own explanation, so I don't want to add much to this sequence.
Except to say poems can also be an ongoing conversation between those no longer able to
converse, or who don't even speak the same language.

Art Beck

Untitled (to the Tunisian, Bouazizi)

~~translated by Peter Thompson

Out of the wafting of his ashes, his immolation,
scattered past the outskirts,
the spark of the explosion.
Rubble of stone, fossils of blood,
shreds of flesh,
strips spiraling in the flames,
heaving with intoxicating scents, moving off after breaking up,
proliferate
hard against the far-off
Jasmine, musk, clove or cumin.

What is the transient flame
of the smoking hand-cart
hiding from me?
And now a sight-line inviting me
to spread my wings in a sky tormented,
a sky that's lost its wake.

MOHAMED LOAKIRA

Untitled

~~translated by Nina Kossman

do not look at these people at their faces
their flaming eyes their gaping mouths
do not listen to their songs their hysterics in a microphone
a microphone is but a trick of technology everything else was there since the dawn of time

they believe in God and that we are evil
that we came into this world from a servile darkness
walking through hellfire like in a cold rain
diving into a curse like an athlete into water

some believe we are killers of their unborn children
they know that the devil has chosen us for his schemes
some believe that Kiev was damned by us, and Galitchina too
that a curse is a trick of technology but technology is forgiven

I saw the one in a red dress plant a cross on the stage
I heard their graphomaniac speech like a pestle in a mortar
I read those slogans over the sea of their empty heads
I heard chants merge into a disgusting poem

versification is a trick everything else is but fallen spirit
spirit of the masses named after a bird called Red Rooster
better to be alone in a trench than in a column on the pavement
better with the noose around your neck than with the slogan over your head

do not look at these faces look through them
A regime is feet together -- love is feet apart
this is how the image of protection by an attack is made
the more you blend with the crowd the less you think

the crowd is a trick of technology don't stick your Jewish nose
if your legs carried you away safe and sound jump into a car
there is a cliff on the Volga there is Ataman Stepan
there is a flat TV Procrustean special state security it's good it's good

BORIS KHERSONSKY

THE VORTEX OF FIRE

~~translated by James Wilcox

The searing passion, pierce and thrill, sing through me, goddess, ring and drill, dance the light, bounce the ball,—bright-inspiralling brilliant-fluming—color-inject the killing rage—single-aimed disaster-shot—of son of Sepia-Spewed-&-Clouded Peleus, kratic He-Man of Pain Akhilleus!

Ventilate me, Kalliope Beautiful-Voiced, rainbow-toned, heartbeat-timed, with the lethal frenzy, fierce and sawing, which unleashed, set swarming stings, pointed pangs, inclement aches, redhot clingfasts, stuck and hooked, upon the becratered skull-colliding push-&-pull-hard Akhaioi, Steamrolling Noisemakers, oboe-blowers, cymbal-bashers, tom-tom-pounders,—quantum-charged rhythm ranks—and by degrees in quick succession, forced submission, acquiescence, tumbling rows, brought them to their knees,—

a fit of wrath which—somber-tracing limber-chuting—undercast, shot, propelled to the gloaming abyss, blackholed Ais the Invisible Sphere, way down low, sped ahead,—bubble-traced neutrino-whooshed—praemissive proiaptic—hypospatial hypertemporal—teleported atom-twinkles—whizzing droves and robust teams of clingbright icebound flameblown souls—shrill osmotic sublimated—pale discolored punctured heads—

of commandos all pumped up,—anabolic glamour-cranked—single-x-rayed double-y-beamed 3D-z-engirdered—shadow-jagged, glowing shrapnel!—glory-dyed, crystallized—and made the bodies, spear-ribbed blood-spilled, snatchable spoils,—fire-divorced, storm-detached—plunder galore for roving packs of rabid dogs

and big and assorted circling birds, wheeling vultures, diving buzzards, haunting hulking scavengers,—vortical adumbration—severed feasts for gashing beaks and ripping teeth, plucking talons, razored claws; and thus the will of Indigo Zeus was being fulfilled,—future-laden heavy casualties—human-pressured tribe-wandering—bathusternous altimammic—mound-profound ravine-ribboned—strata-colored mobius-stripped—deep-embreasted bright-expanding dark-contracting axis-whirring earthball—bluebunch mountains, greensweep valleys—omnipastic globe pambotorous—rich all-feeding fruit-exuberant fish-abounding song-&-bird-about orbit-nimble friction-fanned war-revved man-slashed.

Keen and sway, potent-chant, outsweet from the time indeed when first colliding,—face-loss, *bam*, radical impact,—stinging fire-ant bite-packed backhand, swift imperial rocket-smack—before the tambourine of boxing, flute-&-drum-paced, polarized,—perstatic severed diastemmic—standing apart, strife-split, maiden-separated,

son of Atreus, ruler of men, and sparked Akhilleus, loyal to gods,—fire-slit, royal-slighted, rank-spit rep-slapped—stepped off the mat and out of the ring.

Now *which* of the *gods* slammed them together,—harsh-committed stark-engaged—lodged in

abrupt, splash-patterned, board-stiff bare-knuckled breach and strife—brutal headbutt, savage symponp—thunder-thrust lightning-spiked—cloudburst core-spark stormpop—to modify features, transform kisser,—black-eye nose-bleed—rearrange face, knock out teeth,—jaw-breaker cheekcrusher—slug it out?

The—klutotoxic clariarced—bow-famed son of—kuanopeplous caerulecic—blue-veiled twinpumper Leto and Zeus, who—horizon-ignites weather-deploys—bangs and rattles the changing skies, for he, irked, quick-provoked,—deep-piqued, royal-enraged—whipped up fast a nasty, locust-like plague,—brain-eating heart-sucking enzyme-energized heat-generated gene-deranged organ-fortified mutants—nucleotide-enucleating chromosome-incorporating—bare, repellent, wide-pervading, spurred a sudden sullen sickness, breaking brigades, sweeping the beach, spanning the camps, and people and dogs were neutralized,—surgically purged, expelled, taken out—gasping, bleeding, subito dying, promptly downed and decimated,

due to the son of Intrepid Atreus, who disrespected, honor-neglected, sacred, aged, bright-haired Khruzes, fragile-eyed, twilighthooded, loosely wrapped with a—star-erasing planet-winking—detonant dotted roaring-dawn-adorned—fire-spitting-dragon cape,—Golden-Crimpled Silver-Crinkled color-wheeled aurora-dancing waterfall-singing—sweep-sparkle snap-twinkle swirl-blast blow-flicker whip-glitter—

priest of Apollo. For *he* had come to the—clutch-popping revved-down—sea-clipped ships of the Akhaioi

to save, redeem his daughter, bringing boundless gleaming amber, rich *beaucoups* of compensation,

holding out in his bony hands the dangling bands of Killer Apollo,—hekebolic proculjective—long-range-casting,

brightly colored, tightly wound ornately about, neatly upon a golden baton, and duly besought, implored the corps of the Akhaioi,

but above all, the royal-purpled double-conducting sons of Atreus Untrembles, the brilliant-ordering, chevron-towered marshals of the battle-people:

'Sons of Atreus, and all you weaponed Akhaioi, stocked with rock-and-shockproof shin-guards,—*eu*knemic beneocreal—ankle-clasping spear-catching shield-tapping—bong-thwap! klang-donk!—sand-flecked sun-flicked—

may the high gods who possess and inhabit Olympian homes, luminous palaces, splendid-erected, graciously grant, permit and allow you

to pull down, empower, torpedo, unplug the city of Priam the king, glory-redeemed, triumphant, supreme, and return to your homes,—nuclear dens, focus-fires, hearths of earth—safe and sound,

but please release my precious daughter, take the appropriate, *more* than adequate reimbursement,—fabulous ransom, crimson wampum, precious electrum—

out of utter trepidation, *sheer awe* of the son of Zeus,—lucent-pommelling inky-wavering—distant-pulsing nearby-pounding flamepacked potent KO Apollo, gunner supreme of the gamma rays.'

Then the rest of the Akhaioi, all the other tattered troops,—epieuphemic benedecorative—luminous-favoring loud-proponing,—radiating approbation—viable, valid sound and light—cheered in accord

to strictly honor, revere and esteem the importuning, migrant suppliant, holy man and take,

accept the recompense,
but *this* did not please the cell-clashing heart of the son of Atreus Unrunaway, Agamemnon
Superabider,
so as a result, he fiercely dismissed and sharply imposed, laid down upon him a spiky command,
jagged injunction—imperative, epitellic—purple earthquakes, red typhoons, orange monsoons,
yellow simooms, green tsunami, blue tornados, pink volcanoes, lavender landslides, indigo
cyclones, violet-crumbling avalanches:
'Let me not *find* you, see your face, *bump* into you again, old man,—space-broken time-bent—
by the hollow ships,—paint-chipped rust-wracked—trunk-tremble ax-hack branch-tumble leaf-
flash—
shadow-lingering, lowly lurking, either now or—beach-slinking surf-sloshing—coming back
prone and crawling later,
lest the awe-fraught,—electrum-chased diamond-dotted wild-warding dayglow-stick—propy
baton and oracular bands of the decimator god no longer protect, guard and defend, avail even
you.
And her I will not release, unhand; sooner, too, aetatic age—undodgeable scraggy *hard-hitting*
surprise-enlipped senectitude—will come upon, clasp, encrust, increase and sudden-reach,
approach her, warping her looks
in the hold of my house in Argos, the land that glows, far from her home,
looping the loombeam,—bright and vertical—sliding the shuttle and cozily sharing, gladly
engaging, romping about in my bed—raw repulsive cramped oppression, pale robotic stark
percursion—blank inert perpetual organized sullen dull perfunctory pattern.
Now beat it! Scram! Get outta here! Go away, don't prick, provoke or stoke my ire, stir me
up, so you can still leave,—conscious, intact, alert, alive—depart in one piece.'

Strident-blazing, thus he declared, and the old man, shocked and alarmed, submitted, yielded,
did as directed, obeyed his command,
and keen-uncontained, quietly anguishing, seeming serene,—way out of enemy earshot—iron-
hush vacuum-roar—walked on down the mound-bright dune-stacked sunstoked mooncooled
tide-wing-anged *beach* of the—poluphloisbous multistrepitous—shingle-tinkling shell-cling-
clangling—creature-rich life-lush—tangle-helical surf-teeming purple-percolating blue-
slamming green-waving yellow-pebbled orange-julius red-night-glowing fizz-popping boom-
crashing sea.
Then going apart, the old man, shaken,—hard-imploring, hurt-beseeking—ritual-layered—
prayed in profusion
to brilliant Apollo, lord of light, Power-Beam Paramount, whom charm-embellished—
benecrinic *oukometric*—tight-braided color-beaded photogenic Leto of the beautiful swing-
bright hair bore:
'Hear me, lord of the silver bow, golden-arrowed sun god—argurotox, argentarc—target-whiz,
sure-shot, you who looms as a blinding, stark and powerpacked, rocky colossus,—amphibatic
ambigressive—high-bestridding, bright-encompassing, shields and shadows shining Khruse,
City of Gold,
and super-sacred Killa—land of race-cars—fending as a force-field, who wonderful-governs,
domineers in squadron-hiding Tenedos, energy-cored, succinct with might.
Precious Smintheus Mouse-Repeller,—Spectrum-Crowned Pied Piper—rodent god of Phrugia,
drum-banging block-knocking—shriek-shot shrill-shelled—if ever I topped a temple out—

apsidal-walled floor-gorgeous roof-adorned—bright-ingraced, delightful to you,
or indeed if I ever enkindled and torched in culty combustive sacrifice—katakaustic
deinflammative—plump thigh-bones
of bulls and goats for you, fulfill for me this burning wish, ignited by desire:
let and allow the Danaoi Luminades to pay quite dear and severe for my tears by your—fast-
colored multispectral—ultracosmic-penetrating—darts!

So he prayed,—rich-beseeking fervid-invoking sparkle-catching—hoisted sounds! plunging
light!—and Phoibos Apollo Gleaming Destroyer high up heard and heeded him,
and down he stepped, swift-descending, bounding bright from the combed peaks of Olumpos,
heart-hot, blue-fumed, brain-inflamed,
beweaponed with his clinging 2-piece bow of horn and quarrel-tube, glitter-painted lidded
quiver,—ampherephic ambitective—tighthooded, shoulder-slung.
Airborne arrows rattled, rang,—featherjoggle!—clattered, clacked—tipclang! plumeplash!—
swish and knock—on the craggy, padlike, bluffblown shoulders—bumper-glowing amber-
grinding—of the god, sore-miffed, dark-irked, core-exasperated,—space-heated tracer-
bolting—cloud-rack-seared, disassembled—
as he moved. He came like the night, released by the night, vacuum-limned in glimmering violet
ice-cube-cold suffusion.

Then, entrenched, propinquitous, he struck a pose, steely, stylized, lined in light, took his
position, semi-lit, apart from the ships and disengaged,—splendid-ejecting, candid-arcng—
iridescent storming discharge—popped the line, let it go,—subito velocity-glow!—and
launched a gleaming single shot—spot on! hot hit!—color-whipped, sonic fire!
The twang of the bow of illuminous silver and golden vibration, diamond-sparked, was—toing!
ting! whoosh! whish!—wow! keen! tremendous!—brilliant rippled dinical rainbow, micant
flavored sulfur tonepops!

First with a blitz he blasted the mules and the twinkling hounds,—wound-unproof, encamped,
exposed, mixed and mongrel sniffers—target-inspecting juncture-embracing cat-string-
twingling missile-succeeding—
and then the men he lashed, assailed—sudden dark unraveling doom—molested with his
unexpected, penetrating—welkin-constructed luminous-launched high-powered death-dealing
actinoid projectiles,—whizzing cone-pine poisonous—beach-pointed pet-panting fire-tipped
enstreaming darts,
long-shot, wide-shed, lavishly unleashed. Burning flesh, whiff-warped, rank-reeked, stunk in the
sandpapered sulfur air. Stacks of bodies, static, sticky, stuck in grisly twisted angles,—
gruesome tangents, lateral dangles—stark-immobilized, bare-dissolved beside the sea below
the moon and many stars—flickered, flamed and faded out in cindered tart profusion.

Nine days straight the sticks of the god descended swiftly, nonstop-dropped, came down hard
and rained in ruin—venom-rinsed organ-swelling fever-building—volleyed on the army,
but on the tenth, Akhilleus Man of Pain prompted, called the troops to assemble;
accordingly Here, sky-involved,—candiulnic, limbs of light, leukolenous—the white-armed
goddess, queen of remote control, placed, infused the distant thought and bright design
embedded in his mind,
for shaken up, horribly troubled, too perturbed, she solely cared and sorely cried for the Danaoi
Daylight People, seeing several dying.

So when they were gathered together assembled,
then Akhilleus, quick to the feet, quirkily anxious, steeled with concern, firm-disturbed,—
instemmic anastatic—arose and addressed them—metaphaic interlucent—cone of light, surge
of sound:

'Son of Atreus, now I deem we shall shift in reverse, drift and sail, be ocean-driven, wayback-
pedaling,—swack! swish!—palimplangkhtonic retrovagative—seawander moonunder
windwinder starwonder—

globe-roaring home-bound, balked and baffled again,—tendrill-tangle stormdrop—if perchance
we do avoid death, somehow do dodge doom,
indeed if both the blow of war and brutal infection—germs and gear—to boot do trounce, tame
and subdue, break and shellac the Akhaioi.

But come, you can lead, let's go and seek, ask some flaming mystic mind—buoyant brilliant
wingbright keen—or immolative holy man,

or even grill a dreamranger, phantom-chief,—oneiropole somnipervagant—image-monger
sphere-musician form-framer vibewright—chronovision-generator vacuotic vector—let's *do*
explore, outquest, pursue, for dreams *too* educe from Zeus—

who could tell, reveal, expound the cause and occasion, reason why—hydrogenic
spectroluminous—Radioactive Chromosome Smasher, Phoibos Apollo, is so upset:

if he—epimemphous improbatic—blames us for blatantly breaking a vow,—blowing an oath—
or for missing an oxen firepool,—ill-performed sacrifice or inefficient immolation—
hekatombe centibos—a hundred bright-horned heads—

and so by inhaling the steam and aroma of roasting unblemished goats and lambs,
he may be game, inclined perhaps to drive away, repel the plague.'

So he spoke and—kathedral desident—sat straight down, and *then* among them rose, stood up
Kalkhas the seer, Murex Man, mutant-haloed, son of Thestor Sky Man, of the ultraviolet glitter-
vectored holograph-pulsing brainwaves,—auspex, oionopole—best by far of bird-rangers,—
flight-patterns eagle-altitudes swoop-parabolas crane-formations—buzzard-squawks vulture-
screams predator-configurations—

he who knew about things that are and things that will and things that were,

the seer uncheered, who had steered and guided the fleet of the Akhaioi to Ilios—falling statue
flamed and filched—

by oracular skill, a gift bestowed—vivid-furnished valid-flashed—by Phoibos Apollo Bright
Destroyer.

With good intent, truthbent, and a mind becrammed with brilliant matter,—benecordial
euphronic—he spoke among, addressed the assembled—metaepic intradictive—mutant letters,
amoebic numbers—interchanging volatile syllables—surging swerving bungee blizzard:

'O Akhilleus dear to Zeus, you urge and exhort me to spell out and mouth—keen-declare—
the fatal knell, the mortal cause, the mere excuse of the flammable rage of Apollo the king, Far-
Striker,—Sky-Streaker, Fire-Flinger, kratiaktinic Lord of the Air Raid.

Therefore I shall *speak*, so pay attention, listen to me,—synthesize hark compose—and truly
swear—cross your heart—

praecordial alert prophronic—vanminded glad-ahead—you will succor, duly aid me, ward with
zeal and words and might,—the knuckled force of fists—

since I deem I shall indeed no doubt enrage a man,—badly bile-embitter—the chief in charge,
the king who rules, commands robustly, governs gravely and *hands down*, can cogent-control

and swiftly sway, imperate,
all of the soldiered Argeioi Luminary Warriors, and whom the Akhaioi, imbeached, obey.
For a king can be quite cranky, burly,—flamed up, fused and barreling down—more ominous,
dreadful, bullying, mean when crissed and crossed, blown to anger, redhot rage by a weaker
man, not so strong, of far less standing.
If, somehow, successfully, he gobbles and downs, swallows and quells, digests his instant anger,
—sudden laddered looming storm, mutant-hued tornado boom—consuming ripped ransacking
rage—at any rate, for a single day,—autemeral ipsedietic—katapeptic stark-concocted
demitescent black-choked—
all the same he later clings to the burning poison, naked bane of brutal acerbity, viral hard
dragooned divergent—retrospective metopisthic—long-term hard-grained—rearview-mirrored
—deep-constrained cancer-rancor—abysmal embedded resentment—until he fulfills
his heart's desire, dreadful dark disaster-laden. So speed-perpend and quick-denote if you will
protect and be prepared in the end to defend, redeem, look *out* for me.

Then to him in response, spoke—amutative apameibic—Akhilleus, pocked in light, quick to
the feet:

'Be bold right now, declare, *take a dare!*—huperphanic superluminal multidimensional
flashlighting—any see-through—helical glassblown—oracle,—axis-glittering orbit-sparkling
—rich and deep, diaphanous pulsing afterglow—you know, proclaim and broadcast any
prophecy—phase foreboding or propitious—let the godlight through!—theoprope! diviclare!—
sift and sing the clear darkness!—just like jungle-mountain outline after rushing massive rain
—that glimmers in your mind—quantic-relayed bright-batoned.
I swear Apollo, precious to Zeus, whom you, Kalkhas,
beseech and surge with vows and prayers whenever you clear and wipe away the turbid debris,—
edge and exhibit—anaphane ray-o-vac—spotlight expound—true-reveal oracles,—overcast
causes, voltcloaked plights—blind and future affairs, to the sober, surprised, receptive and
bleak Danaoi Sandpaper Men,
no one as long as I live and can look upon, register—scope and absorb—the cool-soiled root-
coiled coruscating earth,
will harm, impair—pound and pommel—weapon-braced—or possibly—make a wrong move—
lay a hand on you, by the hollow tunneling painted ships,—ax-echoing tree-unringed saw-
gnawed—no member or man
of the hardfighting body of Danaoi,—sumpantic co-omnial corps—not a single one, not even,
alas, if you finger and nail, name Agamemnon Obdurate,
who now, inflated, parades in a puff, self-proclaimed martial paragon, boast-built best, as the
pride of the Akhaioi.'

And then indeed, self-energized, the blameless seer,—probal orthic ruled enragent—brave,
undaunted, bare, emboldened, bucked and spoke up:

'Not does he scold, take to task or issue blame, cast and allot iniquitous dark and wicked things,
apply punishment, baste, dress down, demand, or send a pointed reprimand for a failed and
broken vow, or upon us chalk up, berate, pin a mooing firepool, variegated shambling drove of
long-gone lost forgotten oxen,—pretty 2-tone hookhorns—
but because of the brusque unroyal rudeness, rolled out, aimed at, launched and rammed,—
potent, stiff, cold, perfunctory—sighting, dissing his prayer-driven priest whom Agamemnon

Arch-Unbender curt-declined and crude-dishonored, *cut short*,
and did not free, release his daughter, nor accept redeeming coin—crimson-splished scarlet-
splashed ruby-rushing timbre-flashing orbital-clanging atoms—blue-anviled yellow-tonged
red-hammered matrix—electric pressured polished gems.
For this the god of the wrecking ball has doled out jagged holes of pain,—punctured mangled
plangent scars—sullen perforated piebald mars—elident and indented—and will still steer, deal
and direct, dole out woes,
nor *indeed* from the dug-in sandbagged Danaoi Combusteurs will he push back, retrothrust—
abpellent apotheic—the mashed and icky—panic-crammed chaos-packed inelegant havoc—
rank unseemly reeking sour wet insickening ruin—
until we hane over, give back, to be sure, surrender to her heart-aching father the—orbit-
sparkling rainbow-irised—helikopidic versocular—breathcatching headspinner—green-filtered-
flashing-eyed girl, unpassed, unransomed uncrossed, unredeemed and bring a sacred 2-tone
oxen, *helical-horned* firepool
to Khruse of the golden atoms. Then we might prevail upon, make nice with him, sway his favor,
render kind, propitious.'

Beginning of *The Iliad*, HOMER

REVIEWS:

Wine of Reunion : Arabic poems of Rumi / translated and edited by Nesreen Akhtarkhavari and Anthony A. Lee
Michigan State Univ. Press, 2017. 94 pp.; \$19.95

By way of introduction, let me quote the opening of the editors' preface (p. vii) : "Mawlana Rumi (1207-1273) has been known to Western literary audiences for well over a century and has become almost a household name. The poems of this thirteenth-century Islamic teacher, scholar and Sufi poet... have shaped Islamic consciousness for some eight hundred years."

The editors have translated a selection of short poems from Rumi's multivolume work, *Kulliyat Shams ya Divan-e Kabir*, which are (to put it too simply) a sequence of mystical love lyrics. The mysticism stems from the deep traditions of Sufi Islam; the love is addressed primarily to Rumi's elder teacher, companion and mentor, Shams e-Din Tabrizi. Shams is represented and celebrated

in these poems as both the beautiful beloved of Rumi's passionate adoration, and as a kind of incarnation or avatar of an infinitely free and loving, divine, universal Source of life.

Freedom is a keynote : Rumi's songs are simultaneously erotic and metaphysical. Love alone grants insight, love alone brings joy and renewal to all things. The poet's central symbol for the love-filled heart, in fact, is wine and drunkenness – a highly-charged, even scandalous metaphor within the ascetic world of medieval Islam. The fury of love, according to Rumi's generous vision, leads not to jealousy, violence and destruction, but rather to openness, mercy, forgiveness and joy – to spiritual ecstasy. In a chapter titled "People of Damnation", the editors highlight a sequence of the poems devoted to praise and encouragement for specific peoples and cities singled out for curses and damnation in the Qu'ran; they provide a sense of the Sufi tenets of radical mercy which inform Rumi's message.

The translations in *Wine of Reunion* are simple, direct and clear – retaining the literal sense of the Arabic originals, while attempting to provide an analogue in English for Rumi's patterned rhymes. These versions, suffer, however, from an occasional hackneyed idiom – caused, primarily, by some awkwardness in the attempt to replicate Rumi's rhymed line-endings. There are too many clichéd phrases, such as "glad tidings", "stunning intensity", "blackest night", etc. The rhymes too often depend on rather dull latinized abstractions ("generosity / luminosity / immensity", etc.). There is also a kind of jarring contrast between colloquial phrasing and predictable rhymes. It makes this reader wonder if there might not be a closer, more fine-grained approximation of the poet's distinct style. Yet these minor complaints are overshadowed by the impression of the whole. *Wine of Reunion* includes many flashes of metaphorical and conceptual lightning, sparkling in the flow of Rumi's effervescent, joyous magnanimity. Here, for example, is "Returning" :

Soon, I'll be returning to my Master,
and soon I will obey his kind command.
He'll buy me in the morning when he wakes,
and I will sell myself at his demand.
The hungry man devours his first meal.
I'm starving for his glance, you understand?

I will find him. Soon we'll be together.

Did you think I'd be lost down here forever?

The book is beautifully designed, very much in keeping with the spirit of the poems. The concise, engaging preface offers new readers a welcoming gateway to this sample of thousand-year-old Persian-Arabic literature. Like a good translation of Gilgamesh, Sappho, Homer, or the Bible, *Wine of Reunion* astonishes us with the realization that great poetry keeps ancient thought and language eternally fresh and new.

~~*Henry Gould*