

VOLUME 15 *Number 2*

Ezra, with this issue, celebrates its fifteenth year. If this puts you in a festive mood, you may make a gift to the Ezra Fund (supporting copyright negotiations for translators, and the Ezra Residencies—write to the editors). Our gift to you is this month's feature. If your hair needs curling, this should do the trick. Elektra-fying work from Fortunato Salazar.

We tip our hat to the New Orleans Poetry Festival, just concluded—in April as every year (Poetry Month). This year at least one panel featured translations. The event is staged by Trembling Pillow Press and by that lion of New Orleans, William Lavender (and his Lavender Ink Press/Diálogos Books imprint). The latter imprint, as we've noted in this space, is one of the top translation presses in the country.

We want to salute the great Abdelwahab Meddeb, in part because his *Talismano* (and its translation from the French by Jane Kuntz) is so fine, and also because a scholarly journal has just released an issue in tribute: *Expressions Maghrébines*, volume 19, no. 2 (winter, 2020). Problems/possibilities/destinies of language are richly enacted in his writing, as is the case with much of Maghrebin literature. The same journal celebrated Nabile Farès (volume 17, no. 2) whose great trilogy, *Discovery of The New World*, is just out in translation.

Still on the North Africa beat, John Cullen's translation of Kamel Daoud's *The Meursault Investigation* has achieved some note, but its publisher, Other Press, should be more widely known to translators. Abdellatif Laâbi (see our last issue) has a huge reputation (poetry, prose, drama) but we point out that he also translates, from Arab to French. A less known Moroccan running a fairly new press (Virgule Editions), is Rachid Khaless. He is not only a writer and visual artist but also a translator—and is active in getting his press's books translated. We point out that his poetry (*Vols, L'Eclat*) has won a prize and that one of his novels, *Quand Adam a décidé de vivre* (about a potential suicide bomber), is especially strong.

In this *Ezra* Andrés Neuman shines as always, and Meschonnic and Gamoneda further their big reputations in new translations. José Pedro Leite and Kirin Fellner are discoveries, for us. Brian Glaser's Hölderlin is perhaps the most beautifully rhythmmed version of this long piece to date.

Note a July 12 registration date for ALTA—both virtual and in-person (Tucson). Our fall issue arrives too close to the event, so this is your pep talk! The funnest congress of humanists you could ever hope for.

Ryan Bloom and John Repp have won summer Ezra Residencies. Exciting work in the offing.

There are four reviews and a publication notice in this issue.

FEATURED WRITER: **Fortunato Salazar**

Fortunato Salazar's translations from ancient Greek are at Asymptote (Sophocles), Denver Quarterly (Sophocles), jubilat (Sophocles), The Brooklyn Rail/InTranslation (Meleager), The Spectacle (Meleager, introduced by Patricia A. Rosenmeyer), and elsewhere; other work is at The Atlantic, Ploughshares, Conjunctions, Tin House, PEN America, Guernica, and elsewhere.

Six blackbook explications of the third stasimon of Sophocles' *Electra* drafted in Krink K-70 in Reggio Emilia

[Third stasimon = lines 1384-1397.

Performance example

here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RAO53cXDtyY&t=4454s> (1:33:05-1:33:45)]

Six blackbook explications of the third stasimon of Sophocles' *Electra* drafted in Krink K-70 in Reggio Emilia

Nikola: .yahweh, disheveled surface of. and when I went to see L-beloved at once in
5 places

obstacles afford an opportunity to meet up with weather breather

distant relative .F2

.RAUL: thnk gdness u removed everything excxpt the 2 bows and y socks and shoes!

Named after the passenger train. You know how you open a duffel and scat

Chanel engraving, L official. an instance of how a long time is almost as large as a
mini Earth

*

.RAUL: Cyclamen-theme changing room!! L does not take off on the body

bleached decoded NO in gunfight font

and CHILD or childlike phantomlike HANDS. L will slowly try a listening test

Nikola: If only I heard half the things I like so MUCH in you when I listen closely. IN

rolling out the. out of the the. strap-shaped ray yahweh. :L-beloved convent mascot

Xonversely I have all this equipment

k how to us stamina. silver tarot and war. now in frontier shoes. Last exit etc.

++

a photon staring straight ahead at the front of its mouth

palm it open. UNREASONABLE!!!!!! and Nikola sort over it. palm it open you. WUZ

SAND in the basket. WHAT must be protected somm mcuh?! FRANKINCENSE! the saucer

a cHiLd in headgear like a fox version of a lion dance. to strategize WHILE

oton. The MORPHINE tag along trailing thier lineages I'm SORRY?!! the entire Nikola Vivian: CENSER. or r the MORPHINE lkie the trees of Ghoor either side of the wady

Nikola: I am attracted to the narrative of the basket. The sand in the basket tickles

Fredun killed the serpent

Sâme killed the serpent

the serpent breathed sand

*

the MORPHINE are not related to us, no matter how much they tell us we;re a hard question to answer overall. Vivian: CENSER!! or r the MORPHINE leik the Helliadus

Vivian: two years ago the two teams I swam for came in second

horrocean. Nikola: to strategize WHILE Nikola is pretending to sleep is leik the

IF they CLD .shirt flesh .and blood two-legged quail posing wtih mannequin, Nikola

Nikola: What if SOMEONE thought the comforting rain streaks wrre sparks and took the precaution of standing at a distance (*Abstand*) frm the great outdoors?

Nikola: I'm not a professional on the road, but I went to such places and listened to the story and

did agriculture

++

Nikola what do you think. Laying into me too! chimes in M

itwasn't me. A Nikola error. ERRor. Can't move the word around their dia-
mond. Mund. Nikola WHAT did she just say? ERRor. Vivian WHAT did she jsut

rainy ion pattern

Vivian: Seeing YOU in YOU but addressing some other WRIT. Rist. WHERE
xtingusighing wi th around the MORPHINE. Ok. So-called side dish ERRor sjtu

Vivian: garb a one and then a one. OK bud WORM. The fuck. WJERE ARE the
the two people with the same name and the same name???? WJERE ARE the

huddle skive in-house

such a time zone of tonight. If it thinks it is now, it disappears immediately

*

O flame stained emerald pearl, declaration, Kant kit, valve of Kant, Kant piezoelectric

Nikola: WHERE r the mignardises of expression which markthe eh the ddmnating of

Vivian: OK. Oath. JUST happened to be present?!?! I'm a brother to my genetic projection?!?!?

point the butterbur. itwasn't M. butterbur KANT. M the enemy of MORPHINE gives M migraine. Point with butterbur at Nikola. the FUCK?!?! BUTHELOISETERBUR

Genovefa suncrust

accelr. slung from punching thru. pnch thru make pcket pucng thruNO that IZ the

Nikola: It IZ sed that MORPHINE cannt be touched by anything Oster thn hmns. I.

++

th Ordinances relating to Prin z L.A.E., butchers,poisons, etc. fr leivies on.on Octo^r

nd reaped the well keeper obviously unwell and asked him what iz the matter .hmm

he sez *Lb O Jha O.O F.A. /1 thn made him bring me what he had left. at brkfst. Ooofff

andsetup .in the dark ran up against .and in aRcrnoon once cut at this place :grounds

guh .rgrounds, to test him 1 asked him .when last hewent to look at the wells by.nght

Jha n Lb . he sez *Yak. lie went to look at the wells by ngiht wh turned .and ever smcc

*

labor costs. he sez *one *two days ago. eat you too, sec, eat you too, sec. sent for hiL

O Jha.hands fluttering still dewy from wells,so is E, belly, Auct.A.F LGR, dew winging

ahnds, cutting off, the pain is comaparble to .Liovc :fair estimate of wh had consumd

rEALy consumd. 1 hiking everything againsst torrential, found little doubt eej dnnk

sent from him suddenly :GfciL at the top of their voices in hiz blue eyes .1 giving fact

by seeing the quantity he too, sec, at a time, checking it THUS at brkfst cld arri/c at a

++

Fcht hday, and L Abbot(t). all .incidents controlled by Abbot's eyes head nd. Fchte.achi

L.had sworn wld it give nothing frm upstaris and will put a fen so he can't go out at.

fen, cold, piece.blockprecise, balanced,cille L of L anf .ignorant of Fche .Fche.cld of L

big dreadfully svere htter w/ either cliffy baking powder .stand EnterntmntAttorney

w/ tooth tnks embedded and w/ breakers, tufted, smile inside the tooth, otas, elsve

Æo:00 L L fen peering into the Abbbbot. all vchr lies in the power of w/w/ L Abbot(t

*

chachles wear at cille L, they drift off,Fchte .drool wears at cille L,they Fchteoff.Fchte

earlobe on top, tinted, correct. + L pawing at their reflection in affot FchteFchte fr L::

all achromatic thread of life contains the energyof. vchr. :: all vchr drawn unto otas, (

drohn to caarry ffo /wh becomes necessary as.soon as the desert becomes popuLous

fen day of their own time in the. drawn unto Abbot at the heart of all the vchr, + en L

L.iz. halves the put fen so half can go out at. wingsand + + .begin filing. liek Fch ttbrsh

++

Hig, ver, L autho, haL ve felt the power of such charisma wtihout prompting. liek

minatory inflame omething NOT wrong and bloo is goo!! Yet. How L shld go live

AI, O, and winter vivid expenditure St. fire, we don't fall in love with everyone .ick

nooo. Dagger dagger lets drop Weiss white grapes nd look where they ended up!! L

slicing pineapple soon. Where EE AIAI in smooth exchange with pineapple Kunst

ignites this I am the dry hail of .PHEU clink clink .IO clink clink go the annealed Ls

*

liek of this .OT long spell .OTOTOT .in brightly calls out white water droplets .UP UP

IA frowrwm the wall sile ebrates and L the solidity, dit, dit, Vittorio De Marco .si

heat. I w ld .sit barefoo if winter known for its violent noises stayed at the far endd

.so far .and mottled with absolute secrets .metallurgy .wrestle chained pennants sile

and icing .ick. TALAINA .in ll loud cold NOT bloo on roo!! illuminatedfromwithinsock

droooooo IO in in windle windle white, seedle .lodged red in the four corners. L L L L

traduttori/traduttrici:

Ashaq Hussain Parray (Parmar)

Don Boes, Gaby Bedetti (Meschonnic)

Marshall Malin (Neuman)

Richard Simas (Pedro Leite)

Brian Glaser (Hölderlin)

Benito del Pliego, Andrés Fisher (Gamoneda)

Jonathan Fu (Horace)

Zane Johnson (Fellner)

A Dalit Poet's Testament

~~translated by Ashaq Hussain Parray

What does a Dalit

Poet leave behind?

A blood dipping paper

Over the dome of night

Black sun

Below the nib of a pen

River of fire

An ancestral lantern

He never attacks you by:

Symbols

Metaphors

Titles

A wounded shadow

Donkey's heavy load

He is no different than

A broken cup

Without a being.

A painter of pictures

From cow dung and mud

At least knows:

In the hourglass

In the exiled scent of soil

In the rebellious sunflower

In the spear of pen

And the inkpot's ink

Art lives eternally!

But he is now in search

Of his self

He seeks himself

He proudly calls himself

JAYANT PARMAR

(VULNERABLE CATHEDRAL)

~~translated by Marshall Malin

Its beauty is the gift of the lost:

Already it seems so long since the faithful
left this house.

Since then its defenseless walls,
its actual stones

and bitten corporeal eternity
understand themselves in wind and rain.

Now, because of weakness, its music is human.

This emotional decay
is the only prayer I understand.

(THE LEAK)

Youth doesn't end with age
but with the certainty of some damage.

Youth is not tender skin
nor infinite force, but someone
who feels intact at heart,
someone whose hope
is more effortless than a brilliant urn.
The opposite certainty isn't called experience.
It's simply dirty.

Death dirties, stains,
muddies your summer shoe,
captures your unsprained ankle,
reaches for your immaculate calf.
Death is the inaugural leak,
a tooth in the roof,
the ways of a young wolf.
When another death becomes your own
another life begins.
Another, far more brief,
and far more charged with want.

ANDRES NEUMAN

Bread and Wine—for Brenda Hillman, from Hölderlin's "Brod und Wein"

~~translated by Brian Glaser

1.

The sleeping city surrounds us; the lit streets are falling quiet
And the coaches rush away, adorned with their torches' fire.
People are headed home, contented by what was good in their days
And cheered by the reckoning that sets their profits against their losses,
Well-weighted scales. No more grapes or flowers in the markets,
No more handicrafts for the many who visited there today.
But string-music can be heard from distant gardens;
A lover, perhaps, is playing, or a lonely man is practicing
And thinking of distant friends or his youth; the fountains, as always
Just learning to speak, and the fragrant flowerbeds astir.
The dusk seems still as the bells ring out across the sky
And a guardian calls out the hour he has watched approaching.
Now, too, a breeze stirs the crowns of the trees in the wood,
And—look!—the shadow-image of our Earth, the moon
Comes out in secret; wild-minded, the night comes out,
Full of stars and not very much concerned about us,
Shining with astonishing intensity, utterly alien to humankind,
In sadness and ravishing beauty breaking over the mountain heights.

2.

The benevolence of night, the exalted, is like a miracle—
No one knows how or when she works her transformations.
She moves the world and the hopeful souls of us humans,
And even the wise cannot say what she is preparing—
The almighty God who loves you ordains it to be so.
And so, to you, the clarity of day is more dear,
Though sometimes even clear eyes long for the shadows,
Trying the pleasure of sleep before it calls to them,
And a good man can desire to look deeply into the night.
So it is right to consecrate garlands and sing of her

Because she is sacred to those lost in madness and the dead,
She who partakes of the eternal, a free spirit for all time.
She also allows to descend upon us oblivion and spiritual ecstasy,
We who live in the trembling medium of time,
So that there is something perdurable for us in the dark,
A word like a stream, like sleepless lovers,
And a goblet full of wine and intrepid thirst for life,
And sacred memory, too, to keep us wakeful at night.

3.

In vain we think we can hide our hearts in our chests,
In vain we sequester our daring—for who would
Stand in our way and forbid us to know the heights of joy?
A godly fire burns by day and by night to break out
And liberate us. So come with me—the open calls to us,
Promising what is uniquely ours, far though we may go.
One thing is sure: whether in the middle of the day
Or at midnight, that which is given to all waits for us,
Though there is also that which belongs to each one of us only,
And in our comings and goings we reach the horizon we can.
Ah! Jubilant madness will turn mockery against the mocking
When, in the holiness of night, it possesses the poets—
So let's go to the isthmus where the open sea roars
By Parnassus and the snow shines on the Delphic rocks,
The land of the Olympians, to the heights of Cithaeron,
By the pines and the vineyards rich with grapes,
The land of Thebes, the land of Ismenos, and Cadmus—
From there he came—he leads us back—the god to come.

4.

Blessed Greece! You, abode of all the heavenly ones—

Is it so, that which we once heard in our youth?

Festal hall whose floor is the sea, whose tables are mountains,

Truly built for one cause by the ancients.

But where are the thrones? And the temples? And the vessels

Filled with nectar? And the songs to please the gods?

And where are the shining oracles, claiming distances still?

Delphi sleeps—where is the great music of Fate?

Where is the fast one? Where does it dawn on us,

Out of a serene air, thundering, ubiquitous joy?

Father Ether! the chant that went from one mouth to another

A thousand times: none of them lived life alone.

Freely given, such goodness brings happiness; shared with strangers,

It brings joy; the word grows in power as it sleeps.

Father, serene one! The ancient sign we are heirs to

Echoes as far as it can—piercing, creating.

So the heavenly ones arrive, and with a deep shudder

Their day reaches its fullness, out of the shadows, among men.

5.

At first they go almost unseen as they appear, children rush

To meet them—the excitement is too bright, too blinding—

So that the people shy away from them, and a demigod hardly knows

By what name to call those who bring him gifts.

But their courage is striking. Their joy fills his heart

And he hardly knows what to do with the goodness they bring.

He makes, he broods; the ordinary almost becomes holy to him,

Touched by the blessing of his foolish, gentle hand.

The heavenly ones tolerate this for as long as they can,

Then in true passion they themselves descend, and humankind
Grows close to happiness and daylight and to really seeing the visible—
The apparitions of those who long ago were called One and All
Filling deeply the hearts of those who had given up on expression,
And consummating every longing, first and alone.
It must be human nature—when goodness is there before him,
As a god has made it to be, he doesn't see it or know it,
He feels he must suffer for his gift. Now, however,
He calls it his most beloved in words that blossom like flowers.

6.

Now it is his intention to honor the blessed gods in earnest.
Sincerely and truly may all share in the act of praise.
Nothing that is unfit for the holy ones should see the light of day.
Half-heartedness, mere presence, is as nothing to them.
So that they can be worthy to stand before the gods
The masses create a dream of order amongst themselves
And from this they build beautiful temples and cities
That preside like enduring nobility over the shores—
But where are they? Where are the flourishing festal sites?
Thebes and Athens have faded. The din of weapons
Has fallen silent in Olympia. The golden chariots of war games
Are gone. And the ships of Corinth go undecorated now.
Why have they fallen silent, the ancient, holy theaters?
Why is there no joyous dancing among the sacred rites?
Once a god could mark a man as chosen—why not now?
To be marked by a god once was to be transformed;
Or the god appeared himself in human form and as a comfort
To those rejoicing brought an indelible end to his feast.

7.

But, friend—we come too late. Yes, the gods are alive,
 But up beyond us, over our heads—in another world.
Their existence is endless, and they seem to care very little
 If we survive—they offer us this indifference as salvation.
For a weak vessel cannot always be a fit home for them;
 Only rarely can humanity bear the full presence of divinity,
And so to dream is to know them best. Wandering helps us,
 Like sleep, and our need and the night make us stronger,
Until the heroes have grown enough in the brazen cradle
 And hearts grow strong as they had been, like those in the heavens.
They come in thunder. And so now sleep seems
 Better to me than to be so bereft of holy companionship
And to wait in dark hope and to be so uncertain of what to do
 Or to say—I don't know—what of poets in a dark time?
You tell me they are like holy priests of the wine god,
 Who travel from land to land in the sanctity of night.⁸

8.

And once in the past—to us it seems long ago indeed—
 All those who had made our lives joyous ascended
And the Father turned his face away from humankind
 And grief was felt earnestly on this earth,
Until at last a quiet spirit, the genius, appeared, bringing us
 Heavenly comfort, he who proclaimed the end of days
And then disappeared, leaving, as a sign that he had been here
 And would come again, the gifts of a heavenly choir,
That humankind may find themselves in rejoicing,
 For joy in the spirit of greatness had grown for too long
Among us and even now there is a dearth of the strength
 That can bear the limits of joy—so quietly our thanks live on.

Bread is the fruit of the earth, blessed by the light of day,
And from the god of thunder we are given the joy of wine.
So these turn our thoughts to the spirits of the heavens
Who once were here and will return again in time,
And so the poets sing earnestly of the wine god
And offer their praise to the ancient—something true.

9.

Yes—they are right to say he reconciles day and night
And leads the stars of the heavens to rise and set,
Always joyful, like the evergreen branches of the spruce,
Which he loves, and the ivy garland he has chosen
Because it survives—it preserves traces of the departed gods
For the godless ones, those left in darkness.
What the ancient song foretold of the children of God—
Look! It is fulfilled—the fruit of Hesperia.
Wondrous—just as he foretold, he is ours;
It is right for us to have faith—but so much resists;
There is a fault in us; we are as unmoved as shadows until
Father Ether is truly known as ours to one and all.
But in our time the exalted son comes, reaching us from Syria,
Amongst the shadows brandishing his torch.
The blessed wise ones perceive; laughter is born in the hearts
Of prisoners, and their eyes thaw to the light.
Titans sleep and dream gently in the arms of the earth,
And even the hound of jealousy, Cerberus—even he sleeps.

FRIEDRICH HOLDERLIN

Ode LXI

~~translated by Jonathan Fu

You shouldn't seek, 'tis wrong to know, what limit the gods have given
to me, to you, Leuconoë, nor experiment with the
Babylonian numbers. How much better to suffer whatsoever!
Whether Jupiter assigns, the many winters or the final one,
debilitating the Tyrrhenian Sea, on opposing cliffs,
Be wise, liquify the vines, and prune the long hope,
as the time is brief. While we talk, the envious time
flees: pluck the day, awaiting nothing in the next.

HORACE

1.

~~translations by Don Boes and Gaby Bedetti

you are my escape once I rise and I
escape you are my
sleep deep inside my body while the
sailors of the boat are frantic you
are my storm and the sea where I am
thrown to revive because in
your body I recognize myself but when I
distanced myself I distanced myself from me that's
why I'm not in you but I
am you returning reviving my body it's through

me that your eyes have my lines I have
decided the prize I have set
the time and it is indeed in the same boat that we
translate my story as yours without
our knowing it because I have not
chosen not to understand to be a
fish in the air a bird in the water not
breathing but through your skin and twice I
left my life through my own mouth when
your sleep has made me I start where I
interrupt myself

2.

we liked all the colors
the shapes we liked the
noises moving through us
to harm us we were courting
silences we caressed them
now others
are our thoughts

HENRI MESCHONNIC

Selections from "The Invention Of Summer"

The Flame's Furrows

~~translated by Richard Simas

Don't look for the only door that exists

when fire burns

in the morning

and still the sound of weapons

time counted from the start

living

and death binding your lips

in the uterine solidness of the house's shadow

Just seek

otherwise

under the mortal weight of flesh

all things around

vigilant active matter

the sea

breadknife

desire

this basket full of apples

the revolver of a dead language

finally

the days

silence first previous and terrible

Everything will be muted

Some words

carry the lonely tenderness

with which we toss bread crumbs

for some hypothesis of birds

improbable salvation of the days' trash

Others come from a distance

from the sound of cats near the flame

The sun's urgencies

carry the smell of the house

and in the earthly syllables

the cleansed hands of childhood

Others still

and these arise since the invention of time

or summer

Words of salt

bring

the awakened glow of wisteria

honeycomb

magma

fire

the memory of your mouth

Every day

Words are born

As such

Morning

shoulder

bird

sap

vessel

will always be eternal syllables

in the breath of water

Like summer

they will always return to the renewed stem of lips

Others die

So I say

star

magnolia

silex

mouth

Because even your mouth can perish

if barely an empty house of spit

far from the poem

The Craft of Knives

As a lamp

light the poem

protect it in breath
and the mouth's palate

Then

taste it

swallow it

sprinkle it in the wind of hands

And with it

feet dirty from snow

or mud

rocky path

or weary naked flame

body

intimate places

murmured

in night

and sea

Repeat the poem often

say it within the terror of fire

spell it in the uproar of water

until

all things measured

winter antidote

it fills and inhabits all the dark places

As such

full and round

one

complete like sun or fruit

Craft of knives

and arrival

JOSE PEDRO LEITE

Summer 1966

~~translated by Benito del Pliego & Andrés Fisher

When I lay down beside the sea,
the water and its beating exist
and a blue sky whose depth
is too big for me.

To feel the sea, its living slowness,
is magnificence and oblivion,
but to feel the comrades' life
is to be one's own comrade.

The motionless sky has its reason, I know,
but the reason within us
will exist even when this sky
has been erased by the wind and cold.

Landscape

I saw
hills without a flower, red gravestones,
empty

towns.

And the lowering shadow. But the light
boils in the hawthorns. I don't understand. I only
see beauty.

I distrust.

ANTONIO GAMONEDA

Six Poems from the **Qapla** cycle

~~translated by Zane Johnson

Qapla, says the Fool to the wind
and wraps it around her little finger
with which she swears never more
to forget all the quaking people
and as from a hangar or hung
by adhesives all would spring free
in the great billowing of the spheres

She calls to the cannibals
of the blazing metropole
and guides nuclear
saucers over
tracks of gnashing torpor
she steps into the emptiness,
lays wind down in hallowed wind

The Fool collects shoes
shoes of shame, shoes of fire and
plants them in snowless soil
between the mosses and hydrants

that their skins might branch
up into verdure into
the open *shoshoshoo*
she conjures joints and soles:
arise, arise from the dung

The fool folds her face
back like an ark
to admit the plasmic
hue of morning

She sits like this in a lounge
of tired bureaucracy
all lady with bared knees
courted by pigeons

the great yolk is running
embryo yolks from
the cloud cluster over
the ruins in her throat

The fool creeps red
and slippery from the mouth
of a matryoshka, greets
termites, bunkers and
cash registers stolen away
by the storm

She slips on her cap
so she may speak
of the people rejoicing
who have gone to the worms
to rhizobia and deeper
cosmetic surgery

In the city park the Fool feeds
three old karmic creatures
shines their foreheads and calls them
hausverk, svefni and snjor

Harnessed to her skateboard
they begin to gallop
through slaughterhouses, realms
of flipcharts, bandits, and dust

till the liquids
in their rumbling bellies
are pressed and transformed
into high-proof light

Granite wafts to the fool like firm:
as old as if the seven-
legged spider were still spinning
sphere upon sphere around this star

as if the first bang of laughter
and gas were still here
amidst the tireless rolls
of gamma waves against
firewall and chimney

will will willkommen. gleams
a sign above the pavement.
With a single hair she cuts
into the grid, crystal by crystal

KIRIN FELLNER

REVIEWS:

THE BUTCHER'S REINCARNATION: VISIONS OF THE NUCLEAR AGE, by Óscar Hahn, translated by G J Racz. Dos Madres Press, 2020. 108 pp. \$19.00

In 'The Task of the Translator' (1921), English translation by Harry Zohn, 1968, Walter Benjamin describes translation through metaphors of clothing and disguise: 'While content and language form a certain unity in the original, like a fruit and its skin, the language of the translation envelops its content like a royal robe with ample folds.'

Such is the feeling the reader gets from G J Racz's translation of *The Butcher's Reincarnation*, Óscar Hahn's latest collection. While fully aware of the formal choices rather than simply translating meaning, G J Racz attends to the form of the original Spanish poems and finds a way to reimagine it in English.

I am not a speaker of Spanish but as a Romanian, it is easy for me to grasp the musical touch of the original poems and the commonality of the Latin family in both languages. As a translator myself, I am drawn to understanding the craft choices in the translation process and this bilingual collection is a clear reflection of the compatibility between poet and translator.

First, the translation is the same length as the original, with exactly the same number of lines. A translation without such limitations would have been longer than the original poems, altering the rhythm and the occasional rhyme. The poems are kept unpunctuated, preserving the original impression of the Spanish poems. The same thing can be said about rhyme that the translation equally follows, without destroying the poem's integrity, as in this sonnet:

Está la sangre púrpura en la nieve
tocando a solas llantos interiores

al soplo de memorias y dolores
y toda la blancura se conmueve
Fluyendo van en ríos de albas flores
los líquidos cabellos de la nieve
y va la sangre en ellos y se mueve
por montes de silencio silbadores

The blood lies purple on the pristine snow
though touches inner weeping it unchains
from sorrow stirred by memories and pains
all former whiteness moved to suffering woe
The slush's liquid hair runs off in strains
like rivers of white flowers as these go
cascading mixed with fresh-spilled blood to flow
down hills of whistling silence near vast plains

This is proof of the translator's technical skills and shows emphasis on form, mainly in the sonnets for which Óscar Hahn is known. The translation is clear and fluent, with no apparent literary artifice and the translated poems in *The Butcher's Reincarnation* are good poems – retaining the literal sense of the Spanish originals, while attempting to provide the musical stance of the source language. The Spanish poems also stand as living things and invite the reader to respond actively with the text. For instance, color is the red thread in the collection, and both poet and translator have the force of rendering any image alive and powerful:

All at once the pink mists
those dense portly mists
released white doves from their clutches:
winged teeth forming mid-air
the sky's set of dentition

Sometimes the metaphors (“the crimson of a wound drive mad by fission”) and personifications (“pregnant bridges”) are surprising, yet never fail to ignite a vivid echo in the reader’s mind, seducing senses and sensitivity alike.

The Butcher’s Reincarnation astonishes us with the realization that there is hope and redemption beneath rivers of blood, deep in this dystopian vision, a paradoxical kind of beauty to be unveiled in moments of terrible violence.

~~Clara Burghelea

A GAP IN THE CLOUDS: A NEW TRANSLATION OF THE OGURA HYKUNIN ISSHU.
Translated by James Hadley and Nell Regan. Dedalus Press, 2021.134 pp.

As described in the introduction of the book, Ogura’s 100 Poems by 100 Poets or The Ogura Hyakunin Isshu is one of the most important collections of Japanese poetry. Compiled around 1235, the collection represents a historical document that reflects on universal themes such as love, loneliness, mortality, the passage of seasons, and spectacular natural phenomena.

One fifth of the poems are written by women, some of them famous poets such as Ono No Komachi and Murasaki Shikibu, two excellent representatives of the Heian or Classical period. The rest of the poems are written by emperors and empresses, courtiers and high priests, ladies-in-waiting and soldier-calligraphers.

The original poems share the page with the English translations and their visual blending equally seduces and puzzles. The poems are written in the tanka form of 31 morae, arranged in the order of 5,7,5,7,7. On the page, the Japanese poems are delicately shaped, suggesting the poet’s emotional reaction to a single moment suspended in time.

The English translation is one of accessibility, capturing the immediacy and directness of the original verse. The classical language has been reworked and rethought so as to convey, when needed, the cultural references, without distancing the reader from the emotional core. Though the original tanka form is not replicated in the English translation, each poem follows the 5-line pattern in order to preserve tension and the open-endedness of the Japanese lines. More specific grammatical choices are generously explained by the two translators in the introduction to the collection.

The strength of this project lies within the ability of reading out loud the translation and sensing the melodic original language, as well picturing the specific geographic references. Despite a certain similarity in composition, the poems ignite a wide range of emotions and vivid imagery:

Is this the white
Of the chrysanthemum
or first frost?
My spirit thrills-
to pick or not?

The Japanese calligraphic versions and symbolic drawings stand in visual contrast with the English translations, inviting the reader to artistically consider the depth and beauty of such work that bears the mark of time. Metaphors, epithets and personifications are to be found throughout the collection that seduces with simplicity of language and rich images; the verses sparkle in the reader's mind.

This translation in particular does not disguise its modern touch by stylistic tricks, rather takes into account cultural references, where needed, while encouraging the readers to understand the fact that these are two different texts, each with its own musicality and fullness.

In her Translator's Note to *The Odyssey*, Emily Wilson says that "a translator has a responsibility to acknowledge her own agency and to wrestle, in explicit and conscious ways, not only with the multiple meanings of the original in its own culture but also with what her own text might mean, and the effects it may have on its readers". Indeed, the translation of *Ogura's 100 Poems by 100 Poets or the Ogura Hyakunin Isshu* pays attention to details of the natural world and human emotions, capturing the enduring beauty of the original.

~~Clara Burghelea

HIGH TIDE OF THE EYES BY BIJAN ELAHI. Translated by Kayvan Tahmasebian and Rebecca Ruth Gould. The Operating System, 2019.103 pp.

Bijan Elahi was an Iranian modernist poet and translator whose poems were posthumously published in two volumes, *Vision* (2014) and *Youths* (2013), from which the translations in this collection have been drawn. Known for his poetic formal innovations and his work in translation, Bijan Elahi is still considered "the most important, the most talented and the most wide-ranging literary figure of the last three decades" as attested by the distinguished literary critic Qassem Hasheminejad.

This bilingual collection also includes Elahi's writings on the theory and practice of translation, as well as an interview with the two translators meant to give context and weight to both process and final product. Above all, it is meant to bring to light the uniqueness of Elahi's erudite mind and verse alike, and his legacy as an accomplished translator of T.S. Eliot, Arthur Rimbaud, Henri Michaux, Friedrich Hölderlin among others.

His notes on translation are relevant and detailed, an invitation to ponder on dichotomies such as original/translated text or fidelity/infidelity. Bijan Elahi's preoccupation for the interlingual process—for instance, he used Italian, English and French versions of Federico Garcia Lorca's poems when translating them into Persian—was detailed in the prefaces to the translations he edited and produced. Such attention given to the both language and cultural context is to be found in his own poetry.

The poems selected to be included in this collection abound in surrealistic images – “I swear by young dreams that I believed/ the innocence of your eyelids, / the innocence of leaves, / whitened in light. / I swear by all that is white.” and cultural references to Edgar Allen Poe, Arthur Conan Doyle, Hafez, Icarus, *A Thousand and One Nights*, etc. His poetic language is filled with figures of speech such as epithets – “hasty sun”, personifications – “your skin moves like breeze and water beasts” and metaphors – “each word is an angel trembling from nakedness”. Apart from the complex metaphors, his poems display an interest for chromatic images and whereas “white” is the dominating color, though instances of crimson, red, black, green, blue, scarlet pop along.

At dawn, your summit will turn scarlet
from your fear
from anything you have but
you don't have for fear ...

Desire for air-that you don't breathe
in yet it breathes
in you
is lovely blue.

His poems address themes such as love, loss, nature, family, myths, old age -everything that makes us humane, flawed, curious, appreciative, nostalgic, unique, yet universal: “Wild grass is wild grass. Otherwise, it's nameless”. The translation captures the inner musicality of the

Persian language and renders the vivid imagery of his verses. To a certain extent, it inevitably pays tribute to Bijan Elahi, the erudite translator, who considered “translation as a re-creation even more difficult than the original. If creation is viewed as a dance, translation is a dance in chains.”

The two co-translators, as they call themselves, sought words beneath the surfaces of meaning, while capturing the vulnerability and versatility of Elahi’s original poems in the English translation. Together, they celebrate the genre-breaking freedom of the imagination while challenging, at the same time, the limits imposed on this freedom by the linguistic channel. The inherent tension is beautifully captured in a translation that inspires the reader, introducing them to a unique poetic voice and a remarkable translator.

~~Clara Burghelea

AMKOULLEL, THE FULA BOY. Translated by Jeanne Garane. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2021. 349 pp.

One of the major intellectual and literary figures of twentieth-century Africa, a historian, translator and collector of ethnological texts, Amadou Hampâté Bâ (1900–1991), is the author of the novel *The Fortunes of Wangrin* and numerous books in French.

In *Amkoullel, the Fula Boy*, Amadou Hampâté Bâ shares the story of his childhood and youth in the aftermath of the war between the Fula and the Toucouleur peoples and the advent of the French colonialism. The work of a great storyteller, the book is filled with humor and drama alike, tracing the author’s everyday life in Bandiagara and later in the colonial Mali, while

showcasing his preoccupation with oral history, tradition, anthropology, initiation, religion, fate etc.

In her note prefacing the book, translator Jeanne Garane, briefly summarizes the importance of the political and social context to the development and life of Amadou Hampâté Bâ, who plays his “dual historical and emotional heritage”—Fula and Toucouleur—against the fickleness of fate. Part of his inheritance is the ability to record oral traditions and stories that will later become a collection of Fula and Bambara tales to be translated into French.

In his book, A. H. Bâ addresses the “rupture in the oral transmission of traditional knowledge” caused not only by World War I but, mainly, by the blows of colonial violence. As any other work that falls under the cultural context of colonialism, A.H. Bâ’s book in translation does not only expand knowledge of the African continent, French Sudan mainly, but it also introduces both author and work to a new readership. Circulation in a new widening readership is, to a certain extent, fighting the erasure of the colonial past and reframing the discourse of contemporary perceptions of Islam, in France mainly, where the A.H. Bâ’s work has been introduced in the secondary school curriculum.

In her essay, “The Invisibility of The African Interpreter”, Jeanne Garane quotes A.H. Bâ’s famous speech where he declares his appreciation for the African oral tradition:

L'écriture est une chose et le savoir en est une autre. L'écriture est la photographie du savoir, mais elle n'est pas le savoir lui-même. Le savoir est une lumière qui est en l'homme ; héritage de ce qui lui a été transmis. La parole EST l'homme. Le verbe est créateur. Il

maintient l'homme dans sa nature propre. Apprenez que dans mon pays, quand un vieillard meurt, c'est une bibliothèque qui brûle.

His well-known saying “Know that in my country, when an old man dies, it is a library that burns” is proof of his belief in the importance and preservation of the spoken word. An interpreter himself for the white man, A.H. Bâ provides in his memoir some important information on the essential role played by such people in the French colonial landscape.

Jeanne Garane's translation pays close attention to such essential personal details so as to preserve the oral tone of the memoir in English as well. A.H. Bâ's obsession with the living tradition and its oral form is a mark of his humanity and writing identity, for whom literature was “de la parole couchée sur le papier/ word lay down on paper”, as he describes it in his book, *Littérature malienne*. His memoir is an invitation to reflect on *how we can ensure the continuity of oral traditions threatened by the rapid socio-cultural changes and the audio-visual illiteracy promoted by modern media.*

One of the purposes of translation is to bridge the language and cultural barriers by helping understand different worlds. In translating A.H. Bâ's work, Jeanne Garene—Professor of French and Francophone literature and film at the University of South Carolina—conveys his beliefs, preoccupations, concerns to a non-Francophone audience, helping the Western readers acquaint themselves with this African writer whose legacy is imbued with his love for the living memory of his people.

Garane, Jeanne. “The Invisibility of The African Interpreter”. *Translation: a transdisciplinary journal*, Fall, 2015, <http://translation.fusp.it>

Bâ, Amadou Hampâté: *Littérature malienne*, Notre Librairie, Paris, 1984

~~Clara Burghelea

PUBLICATION NOTICE :

Discovery of The New World, by Nabile Farès, comprising the volumes *The Olive Grove*, *Memory and The Missing*, *Exile and Helplessness*. Translated by Peter Thompson. New Orleans: Diálogos Books, 2021. 412 pp.

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