

THALIA PANDIRI

IN THIS ISSUE

Nearly two years after our lives were dramatically changed by Covid-19, we are more grateful than ever to our contributors, who bring us works of literature from many languages, time periods and places; they remind us that human beings can think, create, remember, communicate. In the particularly turbulent and alarming state of this country, any glimmer of hope is welcome. So it is with real pleasure, and guarded optimism for the future of *homo only-occasionally-sapiens*, that I introduce you to this 2021 fall/winter issue. I do want to apologize for the delayed publication of the previous (spring/summer 2021) issue; we are still a little slower than we wish with the current fall/winter 2021 issue, but we hope for increasingly fewer obstacles, going forward. We are already considering submissions for the 2022 spring/summer issue. Looking ahead, we are very excited that Hillary Gardner and Guillem Molla have agreed to co-edit a special double issue dedicated to contemporary Catalan literature, to appear in 2023.

Spanish is well-represented in the current issue. We are particularly pleased and honored to have G.J. Racz's breathtaking translation of poems by the late-nineteenth, early twentieth-century Mexican poet Amado Nervo, a selection that represents a cross section of his voluminous output. Also translated from Spanish, new poems by internationally acclaimed poet and artist Xánath Caraza (translated by Sandra Kingery); we are very thankful that she has shared her work with *Metamorphoses* on numerous occasions, sometimes in trilingual versions. She is a prolific poet, generous with her time, talents and prodigious energy. Her work has been translated into many languages. A bilingual edition of her collection *Lágrima roja* (Editorial Nazarí, Spain, 2017) is forthcoming: English translation *Red Teardrop* (tr. Sandra Kingery) and a superb translation into Greek by Natasa Lambrou, *Κόκκινο δάκρυ*. Matthew Byrne gives us a poem by the Salvadoran poet and Los Angeles based journalist Róger Lindo. Ruth Murphy has translated a soul-shattering story by Spanish writer and journalist Manuel Chaves Nogales, a piece specific to the Spanish Civil War that also transcends time and place, a depiction of brutality, suffering endurance and courage. An astute and informative review by Gregory Racz of a new translation of Susana Thénon's *Ova completa* offers valuable insight into the originality and complexity of Thénon's work, and engages us in a discussion of the challenges her

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translator must attempt to overcome.

Alexis Levitin, who has published 47 books in translation, mostly poetry, and mostly from Portuguese. A man of epic energy, he responded to Covid-imposed isolation by turning to the writing of short stories drawing on his own experiences. He is a welcome returning contributor, bringing more poems by the leading Brazilian poet and environmentalist Astrid Cabral and, with Ricardo Vasconcelos, a haunting poem by Brazilian poet Luís Miguel Nava. New to me, and an exciting discovery, Brazilian poet, essayist, novelist, journalist Lêdo Ivo, a selection of whose poems are translated here by Andrew Gebhardt, who captures the poems' varied formal features, registers and genres (metaphysical and lyrical; gritty; ironic social satire).

Three poems by Paul Valéry are masterfully translated from the French by poet Dwayne Barrick, and veteran translators Allan and Guillemette Johnston have met the daunting challenge of re-producing Abdellatif Laâbi's impassioned experimental long poem "Race" (written in 1967). Another especially challenging work, Rainer Maria Rilke's "Seventh Duino Elegy," is translated from the German by Christiane Marks, who has honored us with her outstanding translations in the past. Her metered translation of Rilke's "Sonnets to Orpheus" was published to critical acclaim by Open Letter Press in December of 2019 and was soon in its second printing. She has now completed a translation of Rilke's "Duino Elegies."

Ukrainian poet Dmitriy Blizniuk, a new contributor to this journal, offers a poem in Russian, translated by Ukrainian-based writer, poet, and translator Sergey Gerasimov. Housseem Ben Lazreg translates from the Arabic a love poem (ghazal) by the Palestinian poet, columnist and political scientist Tamim Al-Barghouti. And from Holland, poet and translator Arno Bohlmeijer returns to these pages with translations (from the Dutch) of two iconic women poets, M. Vasalis and Ida Gebhardt, introduced by a charming personal account of his coming to know these *grandes dames* when he was a young poet and they were already legendary.

From Italy, a quirky psychological portrait of a woman by Palmira De Angelis (translated by Jamie Mackay). The story is ostensibly a third-person narrative, with some *discours indirect libre* or—a term I prefer—*erlebte Rede*. We have the disquieting feeling of being cool observers but at the same time, of being trapped inside this woman, drawn along inexorably to an ending both unexpected and inevitable.

I thought I had some familiarity with Rabindranath Tagore's work, but the detective story he wrote in 1898 came as a surprise to me. This

is an enthralling and humorous psychological portrait of the first-person narrator who hides more from himself than from us readers and whose success as a would-be sleuth has unwanted consequences. I am grateful to Shampa Roy, who translated this story from the Bengali, for broadening my view of Tagore and providing an entertaining read.

From a somewhat less distant country but a more removed time period, excerpts from the thirteenth-century Icelandic *Eyrbyggja Saga*, translated from the Old Icelandic by Robert K. Painter. Chapter headings: “Holy Ground at Thor’s Ness” followed by “Rivalries Over Lavatories” and ending with “Peace and Progress” to return to a loftier register. It’s a whole lot of fun.

Much gratitude is owed to the contributors, to the anonymous reviewers on whose expertise and generosity we depend, to subscribers and supporters. We thank Five Colleges, Inc. and the member institutions (Amherst College, Hampshire College, Mount Holyoke College, Smith College, UMass Amherst), as well as the Translation Center at UMass Amherst, for continued financial support. I am especially grateful to Danielle Colburn, who has continued in the position of Production Editor throughout this seemingly endless pandemic unreality. Her competence, work ethic, grace and endless patience are beyond the ordinary and beyond price. And of course, we thank you, our readers! I hope you will find much to interest you and give you pleasure.

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