

THALIA PANDIRI

IN THIS ISSUE

The spring/summer 2022 issue marks the end of a chapter for *Metamorphoses*, and an exciting new beginning. As some of you may know, I have been Editor-in-Chief for close to 23 years—hard even for me to believe! I have loved almost every minute, and I have learned a great deal. I have come to know many remarkable translators who have introduced me to authors from all over the world, and at times led me to see from a new perspective works with which I was already very familiar. Now I am happy to report that I can pass the journal into the very capable hands of Lara Matta, Assistant Director of the Translation Center at UMass Amherst. Lara is a native speaker of Arabic, French and English, a comparatist with a doctorate from the University of Massachusetts Amherst, and a translator. She has taught French at Mount Holyoke College. Her qualifications, her love of this journal, and her enthusiasm are just what *Metamorphoses* needs to continue being an excellent literary translation journal focused on the translations themselves, privileging practice over theory.

For the fall/winter 2022 issue we have already received submissions into eight Indian languages (Kannada, Malayalam, Mizo, Hindi, Bangla, Odia, Telugu, and Nepali) as well as a poetry translation from Kannada into English. I will be working with Lara as she takes over the fall/winter 2022 issue, to ease the transition, but she will be in charge.

More exciting news: in the works for 2023 is a special double issue dedicated to Catalan literature, guest-edited by Hillary Gardner and Guillem Molla. The last full issue dedicated to Catalan came out in 1997. We have published translations of poetry and prose from Catalan over the years, but the time has come for a full issue. We are grateful to the Institut Ramon Llull for supporting this ambitious project!

The current issue is, serendipitously, a poetry issue. I am happy to say that we have a number of returning contributors. G. J. Racz offers a baker's dozen of poems by renowned and prolific Chilean poet Oscar Hahn, masterfully recreated in English. Swedish poet, cinematographer, and documentary filmmaker Thomas Wahlberg is back with five succinct and evocative poems, translated by Sarah Hollister and by Cassandra Blomberg. Alexis Levitin gives us poems by Salgado Maranhão, from the collection *Opera de Nãos* (*Opera of Nos*); the poet has won all

METAMORPHOSES

of Brazil's major poetry awards, and four collections of his work have already been published in English, translated by Alexis Levitin. With co-translator and Nava scholar Ricardo Vasconcelos, Levitin also brings us six poems by Portuguese poet Luís Miguel Nava (1957-1995), who is often described as the most original and daring Portuguese poet of his generation. His life was cut short at thirty-seven, when he was brutally murdered in Brussels by an "occasional partner," and some have seen the darker vision of his later poetry collections as a "premonition" of his violent death.

We are fortunate to have more new work from Sonia Alland. She has given us five poems (translated from Catalan) by Narcís Comadira, poet, playwright, critic, translator, painter. She has also brought us work by the acclaimed Iraqi-French poet and writer, Salah Al-Hamdani. Born in Iraq (1951), he was imprisoned and tortured as a young man under the dictatorship. It was in prison that he began to write poetry. When he was released from prison, he was able to leave Iraq in 1975 and settle in France, where he spent the next 30 years of his life without returning to visit Iraq until the fall of the dictatorship. He has published more than 50 books of poetry and a number of narratives, in both Arabic and French. Alland has published two volumes of his work, translated from French: *Baghdad, Adieu, Selected Poems of Memory and Exile*, and *Baghdad, mon amour*. In this issue, we have powerful, evocative, deeply moving poems and prose poems translated into French from the Arabic by the poet in collaboration with poet and translator Isabelle Lagny, and into English, from the French, by Sonia Alland.

In addition to old friends, we have translators (and authors) new to us. From Otilie Mulzet, who has published translations from Hungarian of works by many poets, novelists, and other writers, we have poems by poet and fiction writer Gábor Schein. Her translation of his novel *Autobiographies of an Angel* is due to be published this summer by Yale University Press. Also from the Hungarian, a poem by Jenő Rejtő, translated by Zary Fekete. Jenő Rejtő, born Jenő Reich in Budapest in 1905, was a journalist who wrote in a number of genres but was best known as a popular, prolific and acclaimed writer of pulp fiction. He died in January 1943, in a forced labor camp under Nazi Occupation in the USSR.

From German, Marc James Mueller offers a translation of José F.A. Oliver's "In the Spirit But Not Imitating Gertrude Stein," with an accompanying critical essay that addresses both the poet's work and the translator's challenges. The poem's linguistic playfulness, the use of dia-

lect as well as register, intertextuality (like “bonjour tristesse”) made this poem a lot of fun for me. I hope you will enjoy it as I did. Playful and allusive as well is Henri de Régnier’s short ekphrastic poem “Fête d’eau” (“Watersport”), inspired by but not a literal description of the fountain redesigned by Louis XIV in 1668 and completed in 1689. The poem is inventively translated from the French by Philip Christensen, who also provides very useful background information that makes it easier to appreciate the poem’s cleverness.

Also from what is now Europe but from the early years of the Roman Empire, a selection from the *Odes* (*Carmina*) by the Roman poet Horace (Quintus Horatius Flaccus), translated from the Classical Latin by Ruth Evans. The *Odes* are well-known and have been translated often into many languages for roughly the past couple of millennia. English translations from many centuries abound, but Ruth Evans’ translations are fresh, colloquial, playful, and irreverent; both I (a classicist) and the anonymous readers got a kick out of them. In a translator’s comment, Ruth Evans talks about how she decided to render these poems.

From the Eastern Mediterranean, two very different authors. Lara Matta, who herself is Lebanese, translates from the Arabic a long, ekphrastic, contemplative poem by contemporary Lebanese poet, journalist, editor, and translator Bassam Hajjar (1955-2009): “Passerby in a Night Scene by Edward Hopper.” Matta provides a brief but astute and illuminating essay that gives us background information about the poet as well as a very useful interpretation of the poem.

From Turkey, a translation (with a translator’s essay) by Iclal Vanwesenbeck from the Ottoman Turkish, poems by Nigâr Hanım (1862-1918). A woman born into an upper-class household, Hanım was educated in a French boarding school and by private tutors, and she spoke eight languages; she established herself as a pianist, lyricist, writer and translator, and, being popular and well-connected, she entertained famous intellectuals and other respected and influential people in her weekly salon. Her work has been relatively inaccessible not only to those who do not speak Turkish but to the vast majority of modern-day Turks. Her work is composed in the Ottoman-Arabic script that was replaced by Kemal Atatürk in 1928; the alphabet reform, substituting a western alphabet for the Ottoman-Arabic, was intended both to distance the new, nationalist Turkish Republic from the literature and culture of the Ottoman Empire, and from its multi-ethnic composition and its tolerance—at least before the turn of the 20th century—of religious, cultural and linguistic differ-

METAMORPHOSES

ence, and to facilitate the new nation state's entry into the modern world dominated by the West.

I hesitate to indulge in a personal digression, but that won't stop me. My father was born in Turkey, the twelfth child of a Greek Orthodox priest and his considerably younger wife, herself the daughter of a Greek Orthodox priest. Like others in his community, my father was completely bilingual in Greek and Turkish. Throughout his life, he spoke Turkish with both Asia Minor Greek and Turkish friends whenever he could and wrote in the Ottoman Arabic script until his death, to keep his hand in and not lose his skills as a calligrapher. After the slaughter and expulsion of "minority populations," he and his family became refugees, but that bitter experience did not take away his love of the Turkish language. Whether in Greece, the United States, France, or Switzerland, he kept up with reading and writing in Ottoman Turkish. No one of his background and generation is alive anymore, and now only the few who study Ottoman Turkish in universities have access to texts that have not been transliterated into the western alphabet of Modern Turkish. We have included both the Ottoman script and a transliteration into the alphabet of Modern Turkish along with the translation, so that readers of Turkish for whom only the Arabic script is a barrier to understanding can read a version of the original poems.

Two reviews round out this poetry issue: Marguerite Itamar Harrison on *Mestre dos disfarces*, the translation into Portuguese by Maria Lucia Milleo Martins and Maysa Christina da Silva Dourado of Charles Simic's *Master of Disguises* and Gregory Racz on Rodolfo Hinostroza, *Contra natura*, translated from the Spanish by Anthony Seidman. Both reviewers are also translators, sensitive to what makes a translation excellent, and what makes it flawed. I found both reviews very interesting, and trust you will as well, dear readers.

Before acknowledging our debt to others, I would like to say how grateful I and everyone who has been a part of this journal are to Maria and Ron Banerjee and to Jim Maraniss, who have supported *Metamorphoses* from the very beginning, and whose loss we mourn. During the past few months, death has robbed us of far too many old friends. They will be remembered by all who knew them, and they will continue to be missed.

As always, thanks to contributors (authors, translators, reviewers), to all the rights holders who have granted permission to publish original texts and translations, to subscribers and all readers. We are grateful to

the institutions that support this journal: Amherst College, Five Colleges Inc., Hampshire College, Mount Holyoke College, Smith College, The University of Massachusetts Amherst, and the Translation Center at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

We owe a huge debt of gratitude to the anonymous reviewers for their generosity. Unremunerated and unsung, they give us their time and share their expertise; without them, we could not hope to evaluate translations from a multitude of languages, and to maintain high standards. I am personally extremely grateful to Danielle Colburn, who has kept on as production editor while juggling a demanding new job in publishing. I could not have survived without her these past few years. This will be her last issue. I wish her success, and a bit more sleep and free time in the future!