

## THALIA PANDIRI

## IN THIS ISSUE

The fall 2017 issue opens with an exciting and unusual special section, “A Dossier of Contemporary Brazilian Ethnopoetics,” organized by Malcolm McNee, who has also translated the material from Portuguese into English. Josely Vianna Baptista, Sérgio Medeiros and Pedro Cesarino provide translations into Portuguese of poetry in several Amerindian languages: Mbyà-Guarani of Guiarà, the language of the Mbyà who are “only able to perceive themselves as a function of the word;” Bororo; Marubo (a language of the Pano family). Amerindian mythopoeitics, and the rich variety of poetry in a range of indigenous languages of Brazil, were wholly new to me. I suspect that many of our readers will also find this contribution new, and illuminating.

We are also fortunate to have a wealth of very diverse material in what will be the the last general issue until 2019; 2018 will see a special double issue dedicated to the literatures and languages of China and the Chinese diaspora, guest-edited by Sujane Wu. Kasey Waite offers a new translation of the Old English poem “Wulf and Eadwacer,” from the 10th-century CE Exeter Book, and Craig Davis provides context to enable those not familiar with the poet’s world to interpret this powerful and enigmatic text. Robert Painter’s translation from the Old Icelandic “Grettir’s Saga” captures the style of the original—no mean feat given the formal constraints of skaldic verse, which his brief introduction presents with economy and clarity.

Beowulf has been translated not infrequently, and relatively recently by Seamus Heaney, but Peter Ramey’s approach to translation brings something new: he has chosen to keep some of the Old English words in his translation into Modern English, glossing them in the margin (or in our case, on a facing page). This approach preserves the integrity of words that might otherwise call for footnotes, cumbersome paraphrases, or anachronistic inaccuracies, while enabling the reader to experience the poem without interruption or distraction. Our expert readers were slightly skeptical at first, but then enjoyed the experience of reading the translation. J. Derrick McClure’s translations into Scots from the German of poems by Heinrich Heine also demand active reading and linguistic flexibility. He assumes (correctly) that with some help—a Scots-English glossary that prepares the reader for words that are likely to be unfamiliar, whose meaning an English reader might not guess—

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anyone comfortable with English will understand the Scots.

Samuel N. Rosenberg, a frequent contributor to these pages, gives us a new translation of four poems by the 19th-century Decadent poet Paul Verlaine, with particular attention to reproducing rhythm and rhyme. Miltiades Matthias, a musician as well as a translator, has once again turned his hand to the Greek poet George Seferis (who was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1963). His translation of “The Cistern” reproduces the rhythms and the slant rhymes of the original, respecting the musicality of Seferis’ language.

Also from the French, Tony Brinkley gives us three poems “to Victor Hugo” by the 19th-century poet best known for his *Fleurs du mal* (*Flowers of Evil*), Charles Baudelaire. Although not a few of Baudelaire’s poems are widely known and often quoted both in French and in translation, these three are less familiar, and we welcome Brinkley’s sensitive and fresh translation. Welcome, too, are Samuel Danon’s translation of poems by Eugène Guillevic, who published forty volumes of poetry before his death in 1997 and is one of the most highly respected French poets of the 20th century. Despite Denise Levertov’s translation of selected poems (New Directions, 1969), little attention has been paid on this side of the Atlantic to Guillevic until recently: *Carnac* (trans. John Montague, 2000); a collection of interviews *Living in Poetry* (trans. Maureen Smith, 2000); *The Sea & Other Poems* (trans. Patricia Terry, 2007); *Euclidiennes* (1967) published as *Geometries* (trans. Richard Sieburth, 2010). Another figure well-known in France but little-known to American readers, as far as I know, is Albert Londres, an investigative journalist and writer whose report on the penal colony at Cayenne (1923) was instrumental in moving the authorities to close that forced labor camp. His denunciation of colonialism in 1929 seems ahead of his time, while his sensitive and astute observations about immigrants from Syria (1926), which Nicole Ball translates elegantly in this issue, are particularly relevant in these parlous times. One indication of Londres’ importance and the recognition his work has earned him is that the Albert Londres Prize is the French equivalent of the Pulitzer.

From Italian, Elena Clementelli’s powerful and evocative “Etruscan Notebook” (translated by Mary Dalton) and two short stories reminiscent of his fellow-Sicilian Giovanni Verga by the prolific playwright, novelist, short fiction writer, essayist and poet Luigi Pirandello, whose 1921 play *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore* (*Six Characters in Search of an Author*) revolutionized modern theatre and gained him international fame. Steve Eaton has translated two stories from Pirandello’s *Novelle per*

*un anno* (*Short stories for a year*), written 1922-1937 and collected in 15 volumes. Both “*Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine!*” and “*Male di luna,*” are among the five short stories which the Taviani brothers used in their (magnificent) 1984 film *Kaos*.

The Mexican poet Xánath Caraza, who writes poetry in Spanish, sometimes recreates her own poems in English, and occasionally incorporates her mother’s native Nahuatl in her work, has generously offered us four poems on violence against women in Mexico that were translated into Italian and used in an installation in Italy (Verona) on June 18, 2016. We have here the Spanish originals, with Italian translations by Claudia Iglesias and English by Sandra Kingery, as well as an image from the installation. Peruvian poet Carlos Germán Belli’s socially engaged poem (translated by Annette Beauchamp) and Argentinian poet Débora Benacot (translated by Margaret Young with Robert Kaplan) round out our selection of contemporary Spanish language poetry.

From the Mediterranean, inclusively understood, ancient and modern, we have (in addition to Matthias’ translation of Seferis) a graceful new translation from the Latin of Horace’s fifth ode from *Odes* I, by Ranald Barnicot; a collaboration of two poets translating each other, Stratis Haviaras (Greek) and Nina Pick (English), from the 2016 Paros (Greece) Symposium; and the opening chapter of Moroccan writer Aicha Bassry’s novel *Silk Nights*, translated from the Arabic by Mbarek Sryfy.

South Asian literatures are represented in this issue by the poetry of Vinod Kumar Shukla, translated from the Hindi by noted poet, translator, anthologist and literary critic Arvind Krishna Mehrotra, and a short story by Parashuram translated from the Bengali by Suranjana Banerjee.

East Asian literatures include an uncharacteristically nationalistic poem in the “new style” composed by Natsume Sōseki at the moment Japan won a decisive battle at the Yalu River against Russia during the Russo-Japanese war (1904–05), translated from the Japanese by Erik Lofgren. Sōseki is arguably the preeminent early-modern writer in Japan, well-known as a novelist and poet for whom the tenor of this war panegyric seems alien. We are grateful to Quan Manh Ha for persevering in his mission to introduce Vietnamese fiction to an American audience. He brings us a poignant story by Nguyen Minh Châu, a writer known for his humane, realist depictions of the life of the common people.

As a complement to the Swiss-French (Romande) one-act play by Isabelle Sbrissa published in the spring 2017 issue, we include in this

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issue a one-act play in the absurdist tradition, *Affaires privées* (*Private Affairs*) by one of the new Romande (French-Swiss) playwrights and directors, Dominique Ziegler, translated by Kiki Gounaridou with Rosine Schautz.

On a light note, we hope readers will enjoy a whimsical essay on the “pettability” of animals, and another on the majestic independence of cats, by Dutch poet, translator and essayist Rudy Koesbroek, whose essays won him the Hooft Prize. Born in Sumatra (then the Dutch East Indies), he is best known for his critical essays on a range of topics related to the East Indies. He is translated here by Margie Franzen.

### REVIEWS IN THIS ISSUE

David Ball and Charles Cutler review Eduardo Chirinos, *Still Life With Flies* (translated from the Spanish by G.J. Racz). Chirinos was able to see this bilingual collection ready to go to press, but died in February 2016 shortly before it was published. Chirinos was writing poetry until the last moment, when he was cut down in his prime by cancer. He left behind many unpublished poems. The loss of such a talented poet and exceptional human being is cause for mourning, but this collection deserves celebration, both for the original poems and for Racz’s exceptional translations.

Tom Roberts on Yevgeny Baratynsky, *A Science Not for the Earth: Selected Poems and Letters*, translated from the Russian by Rawley Grau, edited by Rawley Grau and Ilya Bernstein.

Mohamed El-Sawi Hassan on Youssef Rakha, *The Book of the Sultan’s Seal: Strange Incidents from History in the City of Mars*, translated from the Arabic by Paul Starkey.

Marguerite Itamar Harrison on Zulmira Ribeiro Tavares, *Vesuvio/Vesuvius* (bilingual, translated from the Portuguese by Hugh Hazelton)

C. John Burk on Yusuf Atilgan, *Motherland Hotel* (transl. from the Turkish by Fred Stark)

Shannon Scott, on Jules Barbey, d’Aureville, *Diaboliques: Six Tales of Decadence*. INTERVIEW with the translator, Raymond N. MacKenzie.

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We hope you enjoy this issue!