

THALIA PANDIRI

IN THIS ISSUE

After the 2018 special double issue (with audio CD) dedicated to literatures of China and the Chinese diaspora, guest-edited by Sujane Wu, we have two general issues in 2019. In *this* issue, we are fortunate to have some loyal returning translators, others who are new to this journal, and still others who are new to literary translation.

From internationally acclaimed and beloved poet Xánath Caraza, we offer a selection of poems from two of her latest collections: *Donde la luz es violeta/Where The Light Is Violet* (translated into English by Sandra Kingery and into Romanian by Tudor Șerbănescu), and *Tinta negra/Black Ink/Μαύρη μελάνη* (translated into English by Sandra Kingery and into Greek by a group of select students in the Curso de Literatura Española e Hispanoamericana del Instituto Cervantes in Athens, under the supervision of Professor María Jose Martínez Rodríguez). Alexis Levitin, whose translations of poetry from Brazil, Portugal, and Ecuador have won prizes, and who with 41 books to his credit to date has established himself as the leading translator of poetry from the Portuguese, brings us poems from Astrid Cabral's collection *Waiting Room* and Leor Scliar-Cabral's collection *The Book of Joseph*. Astrid Cabral is not only a leading poet and environmentalist from the Amazonian region of Brazil, but a translator into Portuguese of Thoreau. Lior Scliar-Cabral, Professor Emerita at the Federal University of Santa Catarina in Brazil, is a psycholinguist as well as a prolific poet. Another award-winning and seasoned translator, Tsipi Keller, who has brought many contemporary Hebrew poets to an anglophone readership, offers a poem by one of Israel's leading poets, Maya Bejerano. Born in Kibbutz Elon in 1949, Bejerano lives and works in Tel Aviv. From Bolivia, another contemporary poet, Gabriel Chavez Casazola, is translated here by a fledgling translator Morgan Harden.

Christiane Marks, some of whose work on Rilke was published in vol. 25.1 of this journal ("Rilke the Stylist: Translating Rilke with Attention to Poetic Form" and "The Significance of Meter in Five 'Sonnets to Orpheus' with Translations") has given us "Requiem for a Friend" with an introductory critical essay ("Rilke's Last Poem"). Her translations of Rilke are unique: her attention to word choice, register, sound, rhythm and meter sets them apart from even the best of previous translations. I am happy to announce that her translation of the 55-sonnet sequence, "Sonnets to Orpheus," is forthcoming from Open Letter Press. Marks has also contributed

METAMORPHOSES

a poem by Gertrud Kolmar, a lament for the unborn child she was forced by her respectable family to abort. Kolmar was born in Berlin in 1894 to an assimilated German Jewish family. She stayed in Berlin to care for her aging father in the early 1940s and died in Auschwitz in 1943.

We also have new translations of another iconic poet, Charles Baudelaire, by eminent scholar and translator of medieval French literature Samuel N. Rosenberg, who has recently branched into the 19th-century, with books on Berlioz and Verlaine. Also translated from the French, Boris Vian's famous anti-war song "Le Déserteur," a rendition into lyrics that can actually be sung, by Desmond Manderson, Professor in the Australian National University Colleges of Law and of Arts and Social Sciences, and director of the Centre for Law, Arts and Humanities.

Our wide-ranging selection of poetry concludes with two poems by Marbod of Rennes (1035-1123), archdeacon of the cathedral school of Saint Maurice, in Angers, later bishop of Rennes in Brittany. His short "Against Seafaring" and a longer "letter" in elegiac couplets addressed to Samson, Bishop of Winchester, are translated gracefully from the Latin by Alan Altimont, who teaches literature and creative writing at Saint Edwards University in Austin, Texas.

Prose selections in this issue also cover a wide range of languages and cultures: a short story ("Fried Liver") by Danish author Tove Ditlefsen, an important figure for 20th-century Danish literature and feminism, translated by Sherilyn Nicolette Hellberg; "Loop the Loop," a wry, self-deprecating meditation on suicide by contemporary Russian writer Oleg Khafisov, translated by Raymond De Luca; "The Other Woman and Me," by writer, journalist, and painter Gabriella Kuruvilla, born in Milan to an Indian father and an Italian mother. Kuruvilla's first-person narrative, in the voice of a Milanese lesbian faced with encroaching middle age, vividly brings to life both the world in which her protagonist moves and her protagonist's inner life. We experience not only her sense of humor and self-irony but her vulnerability and anxiety as well. The idiomatic language, registers, and rhythms of the Italian are rendered accurately and powerfully into English by the team of Giovanna Bellesia Contuzzi and Victoria Offredi Poletto, who have collaborated on the translations of novels by Dacia Maraini, Igiaba Scego, Gabriella Ghermandi, and Cristina Ali Farah, among others.

Austrian writer Wolfgang Hermann is represented by two short stories. "The Park on His Shoulders" is a very short, lyrical piece—one might say minimalist—that leads us into the psyche of a retired factory worker (we glean this, glance at him out of the corner of our eye), who "carries the whole park and all its plants and trees on his shoulders." His work is

to witness the existence of the flowers and trees, to guard them: “he is the reason why the plants don’t die. He is waiting to be seen.” A longer story, “The Stairs,” gives us another protagonist to understand, pulling us into his world and his mind. This is the story of a man who sees the world with new eyes, becomes a “time thief,” and finds himself (and freedom) after being hospitalized. Hermann’s concise and beautiful prose is translated elegantly by Mark Miscovich, to whom I am particularly grateful for introducing me to an author I didn’t know and whose work I find very moving.

Sonia Alland has for some years been translating the prose and poetry of Marie Bronsard. The short piece in this issue, “Camille,” is an evocative reflection on her father’s death and on her fraught relationship with him.

Quan Manh Ha’s mission is to introduce an anglophone readership to contemporary Vietnamese fiction, and stories by several authors have appeared, in his translations, in previous issues. In the current issue, we have an example of Nguyen Thi Am’s minimalist fiction, “Twinkling Stars.” The straightforward simplicity of Nguyen’s style makes the understated tragedy of her subject all the more compelling. She is an emerging voice in Vietnamese women’s literature, breaking from the more traditional narrative choices of established women writers in Vietnam. Yoshiro Takayasu’s “The Nature Exploration Club,” translated from the Japanese by Toshiya Kamei, shows a city boy realizing how he has idealized “nature.”

Reviews: Matthew Fraleigh on *The Wind from Vulture Peak: The Buddification of Japanese Waka in the Heian Period*, by Stephen D. Miller with Patrick Donnelly (NY, Cornell East Asia Program, 2013); C. John Burk on *The Stone Building and Other Places*, by Asli Erdoğan, translated from the Turkish by Sevinç Turkkkan (San Francisco, City Lights, 2018).

As always, we thank the contributors and rights holders who have granted permission to publish, the translators for submitting their work, and the heroic and generous reviewers, unremunerated and anonymous, on whose expertise we rely for double-blind peer review. We also want to take the opportunity to thank subscribers, and the various institutions that provide support: Smith College; Amherst College; the University of Massachusetts, Amherst; Mount Holyoke College; Five Colleges Inc.; and the Translation Center at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. For their work, initiative and patience, I am grateful to our student interns. Last, but certainly not least, eternal gratitude to the incomparable Chrissie Bell for the many forms of help she provides so efficiently and graciously.

We hope you enjoy this issue!