

VOLUME 10 *Number 1*

Ezra flaunts a new suit of clothes, entering our tenth year—impatiently, it would seem, as the new format appeared with the Fall 2015 issue. We’ve tweaked it again, so that you can now find archived Reviews through their own navigation button.

It is an oddity of rediscovery: in rediscovering Gertrude Stein’s lectures (University of Chicago, 1935) on “Narration,” we find her praising the writer’s sense of “discovery” in creative writing, and disparaging newspaper writing. “There is no discovery there is mostly no discovery in a newspaper or in history, they find out things they never knew before but there is no discovery and finally if all this goes on long enough it is all too easy.” In a separate lecture she warms to the subject of recognition, the creative writer’s (let us say, in the source language) recognition—during the process—of what he or she wants to say. Stein then compares this to the process of translation: “Hitherto I had always been writing, with a concentration of recognition of the thing that was to be existing as my writing as it was being written. And now, the recognition was prepared beforehand there it was it was already recognition a thing I could recognize because it had been recognized before I began my writing, and a very queer thing was happening.” And here Ezra reels with astonishment, that Stein does not sense—in the act of translating—a new “concentration of recognition of the thing that was to be.” This is a feeling any translator knows. There may indeed be a “recognition” beforehand of something in the source text, but it always yields to some new thing in the act of translation.

Probably the most balanced way to re-cast this look at translation is to admit, as Steven Stewart does in his “proposition” (*Translation Review*, no. 91, 2015), that we recognize something incomplete in the source text, something that was attempted at: “Most literary translations give the impression of having reached for something grand and come up short. So do most literary source texts.” We see, build on, and change something large in the source text. Thus Levitin’s citation of Paul Valéry (same issue of *Translation Review*): “A poem is never finished, it is only abandoned.”

But the pros in the room don’t need to be told this.

FEATURED WRITER:

Sergio Waisman is Professor of Spanish and Latin American Literature at The George Washington University. He has translated, among others, *The Underdogs: A Novel of the Mexican Revolution* by Mariano Azuela (Penguin 2008), three books by the Argentine Ricardo Piglia, and three titles for Oxford’s Library of Latin America series. His book *Borges and Translation: The Irreverence of the Periphery* has been published in English, Spanish, and

Italian. In 2000 he received an NEA Translation Fellowship Award for his work on Ricardo Piglia's *The Absent City* (Duke). Sergio Waisman is also the author of the novel *Leaving*, which he self-translated into Spanish, and published as *Irse* in Argentina (Editorial bajo la luna). His latest book is *Target in the Night* (Deep Vellum), the translation of Ricardo Piglia's *Blanco nocturno*. He is currently translating the book of poems *La educación musical* [Musical Education] by the Argentine Yaki Setton.

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Yaki Setton was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina in 1961. He has published five books of poetry, including *Niñas* (bajo la luna, 2004), *Nombres propios* (bajo la luna, 2010), and *La educación musical* (bajo la luna, 2013). His other publications include *La revuelta surrealista* (Libros del Quirquincho, 1990), the compilation *Cartas a sus padres* by Franz Kafka (Imago Mundi, 1991), and *Vidas posibles* in collaboration with Maite Alvarado (Eudeba, 2000). The poems translated by Sergio Waisman for EZRA were originally published in Spanish in *La educación musical*. His latest book of poetry, *Lej-Lejá*, is forthcoming from Editorial bajo la luna in Argentina.

Music

Poems by Yaki Setton,

~~translated by Sergio Waisman

He asks for a guitar. We look at several. *Whatever*, he says. I
point one out while he studies a harmonica that he'll get with
his own money. Picks it out like an expert. Checks it out,
makes it dance in his left hand, brings it to his lips
to make it vibrate.

Thirty years after the fact I hear *London Calling*
for the first time. He teaches me as we listen together
and already there is something lost and gained. At his sixteen I find
what I was not able to know at my eighteen.

The argument is over the meaning of the materials: if CDs
or MP3, if original or 180-gram vinyl.

I get lost in this system of suspicions. We are
amateurs but speak like specialists. *I'll*
be quiet already, I'll stop listening already, I think.

Corbijn's *Control* helps me get Joy Division, the monotonic
and thick about-to-crack singing by Ian Curtis. We see him
one Christmas eve lying hypnotized on the bed although
I am overcome with a certain unrest, why show one's son
the existence of suicide?

He's been studying harmonica for over two years and I've never heard him play. There are so many enigmas in the mystery of his silence, the loss of not seeing his expression as he takes the instrument, places it lightly on his lips and blows.

For Vera

Should we thank Morrissey?

From low to falsetto his voice invades our house day by day while his solitary adolescence, his taste in movies, literature, music are an authentic sentimental education.

Traduttori/traduttrici:

Alexis Levitin

(Salgado Maranhao)

Jill Levine

(Enrique Sacerio Gari)

lifts up
your brilliance over
Paris
and its adolescent
tulips.

I cling to the spark
of your ophidian gold

where your existence
is me dying in the shadow
of my words;

you inhabit the fervor
desire enflames
instead of my eyes,

and a dreaming detour
erects illuminated letters
beneath your steps.

Myriads of excruciating time
conjuring
your disappearances

oh frightened doe
amid the lava!

The unveiled gaze
cries a mesh of sun
that bleeds. And
I accept these beams, these rays,
through which your distant
pain continues its migration.

I come from a lubricious land, I come
from the beam of light
that illumines
silence's frontier;

I dock in the shadow
of that chord
where your existence
 is the refuge of my language.

Before the abandoned orchard
(a vestige of your motion)
I erect this wandering
 constellation.

And alive love
crackles in the moving
 shell
like sun tearing
at one's flesh.

Things die
from the outside. Things
die without pity. And
I cling
 to your shape
amid the rubble
of an imaginary city.

I reinvent you,
and the words break
upon your ice.

Along the via-crucis
days burn
without ritual
 and without promise.

And alive love crackles
a tearing without a cut,
a surrender to the rhythm
of the music of your petals.

Oh phoenix of the saga that bleeds!

SALGADO MARANHAO

Interfaces

~~translated by Alexis Levitin

To the desert traveler, to the one
who sees the flaming

bush;

to the unexpected wanderer, to the one
who examines entrails

beneath the stars;

singing

of the afternoon spilled

in his tracks; driving himself

to where only the voice

persists

redeeming from desire

its crust of selves.

SALGADO MARANHAO

Without is a Sin

~~translated by Jill Levine

There is nothing more
to discuss.

This can is green
and weighs
nothing because
it's empty,
half a lemon
left untouched
squeezed dry.

What color
were your eyes?
Looking without seeing.
Is seeing possible
without looking?
Gradually
fingers and brow
begin to lose
the sense of things.
Your body

by my side
your absence
before me.

There is nothing
but however.

Untouched
in your gaze
without bread
in the oven
without silence
with no words
no leaving
no returning
no break

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with no excess

there is nothing

more

however to sa

y.

Then the night

dust collects in

the mirrors and

flows from the
wells of the
blind.

ENRIQUE SACERIO GARI

from **“Crooked Cup of Awe”**
based on the Dao de jing

~~translated by Dian Duchin

1 Crooked Cup of Awe

A path that can take you places
is not a continuing path.
A name that can describe things
is not an eternal description.

There's no way to describe
the beginning of the universe.
Description is the source of all things.

Forget about desire
if you want to see wonders,
or indulge in desire
if you'd rather admire distinctions.

Both awe and water pour from
the same spout, yet how different
they seem after they're out.
You might call their similarity
a dark mystery.

Darkness as darkness
as doorway to mystery.

2 Go Ahead

Go ahead—whistle at beauty;
she'll spin around to show you
ugliness stuck to her back.

Pin a medal on goodness,
and evil will start oozing out
through the puncture holes.

All because nothing
keeps giving birth to
its mother something.

The unwinnable prize
and my unmerited eyes
depend on each other.

The longest marriage
and the briefest flame
define each other.

Yesterday and tomorrow
make time for each other.

That's why those who know
find fulfillment without effort,
leaving silence unshivered.

Sea glass surges onto the beach,
the moth shrugs out of its cocoon,
none declines the invitation.

Best to live without controlling,
act without expecting,
perform well without dwelling on it.

Only those who don't claim things
will never lose them.

3. Nothing Doing

No longer on the lookout for the worthy and gifted,
we're free from envy.

No longer on the lookout for the precious and rare,
we're free from theft.

Listen, the desirable can look after itself;
the heart would rather be at ease
than always at attention, and wisdom—

doesn't it?—comes down to this:
to empty the mind and fill the stomach,
to soften ambition and strengthen muscles.

Before we know it, we're without
boast or thirst, and best of all
we're stabbing no one with our sharp wit.

Oh
we do nothing.
And the universe takes care of itself.

4. Never Mind

The universe is an empty bottle in constant use

one that never drains or fills

unfathomable source

from which all things pour

It takes the edge off sharpness

smoothes out the kinks

softens the razzle-dazzle

makes every first-to-last one of us from the same atomic dust

Unimaginably deep unbelievably clear but never mind

it seems to exist anyway

we have no idea

where it came from

it's nobody's baby

born even before the ultimate ancestor

5. Words

The universe couldn't care less
when the downed live oak crumbles into mushrooms and worms

and if you're wise, you won't care either
when your beauty's been marred by the switchblade of age

Isn't the universe a vast black hat?
Empty but full of magic

The more you reach in, the more you pull out:
the rabbits of humble and tremble and holy

Words, words, words—
such a fortune wasted

Better to burrow quietly into the center

Cemetery by the Sea

(after Paul Valéry)

~~translated by Leonore Hildebrandt and Tony Brinkley

This quiet roof where doves alight appears
to sway between the graves and cedar.
The rightful noon burns, overflowing,
and the sea, the sea renews its gift!
O recompense—after long thought,
long gazing at the gods' repose!

When diamonds leap, glittering
from foam, how purely the lightning burns;
peace so it seems remembers its own force!
Sun is braced there, on the sway of the abyss
as eternity's pure work—time
turns to radiance, dream to knowledge.

Ceaseless treasure, Minerva's temple veil,
reservoir of rest and fullness of beholding,
water's reserve—and the eye, awake in flame,
that broods to hide such vast sleep,
oh my silence!... This quiet roof! Raise
in my soul a golden ridge of a thousand shingles!

Temple of time, in sighing I am reconciled,
already tuned, I climb the pure hill,
my sea-gaze saturates around me;
on the heights I offer to the gods,
and shimmering seems to surge—lifting—
rising wholly unencumbered.

Just as the fruit dissolves in savoring,
absence in the end turns to delight
in the mouth where the form ceases—
I am breathing smoke—my future—
sky is singing to the consumed soul
soundscapes in the transposed lands.

Regard me, beautiful true sky—transformed:
after the graceful airs, after the many
idling losses holding still such power,
I offer myself to this light space;
my shadow crosses the houses of the dead
and tames me oddly with its tender ways.

Soul exposed to the torch of the solstice,
with my whole life may I endure
your court of light that knows no mercy!
And you arrive, pure in your first site!
Oh one-time mirror! ... But who may offer
brightness without shadow as its severed other!

For me alone and only by myself, arranged
within this heart that authored me,
between the nothing and pure deed,
I wait — if inner magnitude will resonate,
a cistern, gloomy, bitter sounding—
and unsurpassed for everyone, its hollow tone.

False dungeon-entrance, vined, hungry gulf
of rattling frames, do you know
when dazzled, blind, I close my eyes,
what body pulls me to a tired ending,
what skull-face I gaze down into? A spark within
thinks those who are no more.

Blessed, enclosed, its fire brimming, purified
of matter, an earth-fragment, open to astonished

light—and how I like this flaming ground,
woven of tree and gold and marble
and so much stone, the swell toward so much shadow—
the sea is sleeping—faithful, on my world of graves.

Like a shepherd's dog, drive off the foolish,
the misguided with your brilliance!
When you see me tethered here among
my flock of graves—be gentle,
let me be faithful—protected from the clever
doves, the brooding spells and tempted angels.

The future arrives here listlessly. The hard-shelled
beetle is the drought's saw-blade—
all is burnt, spent . . . and succumbs,
coalescing somehow into sterner essence . . .
Nothing's rapture shatters life's confines,
and bitterness is sweet, and spirit pure.

The dead are happy in the ground,
feel warmed, their secrets dried.
Overhead, noon, noon at a standstill
thinks itself, finds within its gain . . .
Head without remainder, the completed
crown—in you, I am the slightest change.

For you, I am the only one to harbor fear,
duress, and doubt—these forces, such slight
shadows on your diamond's facets!
But underneath the marble, grimly
deceived, a people nesting at your roots
have gradually pledged themselves to you.

They vanish into nothing's density.
Red earth drinks the light-filled other--
and life knows—flowers!
Where are the arts, the words the dead
are missing, where are the distinguished
souls? Larvae spin where tears once lived.

Girls' out-cries, skin ticklish,
eyes, teeth, the moistened lids,
the breast, renewed, sweet, radiant,
the blood-filled lips, self-given,
fingers raised—paused before the last—
all goes down and shuffles in the game.

Radiant soul, do you still wish
for things not colored by the lies
of waves and gold? Lost
to the air, will you still sing?
No! All escapes! My life has pores,
and sacred unrest perishes!

Gilded, black, eternities distorted—
Condolence, sullen, offering death
as mother of our senses—
oh beautiful lie, pious false elation!
Who does not know and who would
not avoid the skull with its eternal sneer?

Fathers below, unfathomed, heads
without guests, burdened by the work
of shovels—to them our steps are only dust—
the worm, the gnawing no one counters,
not you, not for your resting place—
but me, it lives on life, it never leaves!

Love of myself—or is it hate?
Your teeth grip, bite so deeply,
find no name distasteful! This feeling:
it sees me, wants me, takes me,
likes my flesh, lives off me always!
Even my bed marks me as prey!

Zeno, grim Zeno, your menacing words!
Have I been finally wounded by the arrow?
It hums and flies and does not fly at last.
The sound gives birth—the arrow wants my burial!
The sun, alas! And there . . . the turtle's shadow,
Achilles, inflexible and hounded.

No! ... Rise! Move in the succession! ...
Body, without thinking, submit to wandering—
drink the wind that urges from itself
and from the sea—in its current
my soul lives ... Saline forces! ...
Approach the wave from which life springs!

Vast sea! Yours is the torrent, yours,
a panther's fur, coat where the sun's
myths dazzle, thousands perhaps,

drunk with blue, snake unrestrained
who seeks to capture its own blaze,
like stillness an upheaval.

The wind rises! I will try to live!
Vast air is leafing through my book,
and there, the water, splintering to dust!
The pages gleam and scatter from my lap,
and you! Wave! With a breaker's joyful thrust,
shatter the roof beneath the flock of sails.

RAINER MARIA RILKE

Note

Rilke discovered Valéry's poetry in the aftermath of World War I and its traumas when work on the "Duino Elegies" felt blocked. Valéry had abandoned poetry at the turn of the century but in 1917, in the midst of the war, he published "La Jeune Parque," and in 1921, "Le Cimetière Marin." For Rilke, Valéry's work was revelatory: "I was alone, I was waiting, all of my work was waiting. One day I read Valéry, and I knew that my waiting had come to an end." Rilke translated "Le Cimetière Marin," then returned to the "Duino Elegies" which he completed—together with a new sequence of poems, the "Sonnets for Orpheus"—in 1922. Of his translation of "Le Cimetière Marin" he recalled that he was able to find an "equivalence" between French and German that he had "not deemed possible between the two languages." That feeling of equivalence seems to have been essential for the poetry that followed. Between 1922 and Rilke's death in 1926, he translated all of Valéry's "Charmes," in many ways Rilke's last major work as a poet. In translating Rilke's "Der Friedhof am Meer" into English, we have worked for an equivalence as well that we hope will honor Rilke's achievement.

Let Days

~~translated by Omar Osman Jabak

Let days do what they will and be content when fate treats you ill

Don't be afflicted by nights' events for transient are their short moments

Be a man of fortitude in adversity let tolerance and loyalty be your quality

If your sins multiply as time goes by let it please you to pass them by

Let charity cover all your sins as charity covers a multitude of sins

Never show humiliation to the enemy for his joy at your trouble is a calamity

Never ask a miser to be lofty for fire gives no water to the thirsty

Patience doesn't reduce sustenance just as drudgery makes no extra finance

Nor sorrow or pleasure lasts forever nor wretchedness or welfare either

When your heart is contented you and the richest are equaled

When one is struck by disasters no earth or heaven is their protector

Allah's land is big and vast yet in trouble it turns to dust

Let days act on stealth for remedy doesn't stop death

MOHAMMAD BIN IDRIS AL-SHAFI'I (767 – 820 A.D.)

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