

VOLUME 15 *Number 3*

Ezra takes seriously, as always, the duty to harry, to chivvy—to urge you on to the translators’ convention, Tucson, November 11-13. This is ALTA 44, and has an all-online version before the Tucson in-person event. Great writers and a unique bookstore. If you’re new to the art, some panels offer insights into translation theory (and practice). For everyone, there’s always help with editing and publishing.

Sadly we note the passing (October 8) of Eric Sellin, a large figure among us. One of the earliest to promote North African literature, he was a translator and long-time friend and contributor to *Ezra*. Mostly translating from French, he also worked with Mbarek Sryfi on such fine poets as Hassan Najmi. His *The Magic Mirror of Literary Translation* appeared last year (Syracuse). There will be at least one posthumous book.

The recent *Translation Review* features, as it usually does, articles and an interview. But we want to look at a review; Gary Racz has heroically taken on a review of Lawrence Venuti’s *Contra Instrumentalism: A Translation Polemic* (U. Nebraska Press, 2019). The piece brings to light the reasons to view translation as “interpretive” rather than “instrumental,” and cites the eminent Venuti’s railing against more than one deleterious result of the latter approach. One of Venuti’s self-styled “provocations”: STOP using moralistic terms like “faithful” and “unfaithful” to describe translation.

The review, like the book, is important reading. Venuti implicitly echoes what was included in one of his earlier compendia, an essay by William Frawley in which he says a good translation exists in a “third code.” *Ezra* has carried on about the third code before in this space, so let’s take a slightly different approach to it, and to “interpretation.” The Original Version *evokes* (especially if it’s poetry or poetic prose). The more evocative it is—as opposed to a denoting of action or description—the more the translation will be a poetic act. That is, the less the translation can mechanically (as Venuti says) substitute the denotations with target versions.

What the Dark Ones don’t realize—those who say great literature can’t be translated—is that the translation *starts over*. The translator has no choice. Using cues or landmarks from the original, the translator *evokes* anew. And it should be obvious how new, and poetic, the target version thus becomes.

Those who want translation to be a mechanical equivalence do so, *Ezra* thinks, out of embarrassment that we can’t explain *how* this evoking anew works. Just as we can’t explain how poetry (the good stuff) gets written. To be scientific about it, the above description (or Venuti’s) of the process is serviceable even though some element of it is a mystery. Just as Newtonian physics was (is) an accurate description of processes while grossly incomplete because it ignores quantum physics. Mystery may be engendered by a lack of obvious “mechanics,” but a successful translation is utterly convincing despite the mystery

We are thrilled with our feature writer and our discovery of Miriam Drev, and, among other riches, the prose piece by Ez fave Roberto Arlt.

There are four reviews in the issue.

FEATURED WRITER: Barbara Siegel Carlson

(translating **Miriam Drev**, from the Slovenian)

Barbara Siegel Carlson is the author of 2 poetry collections *Once in Every Language* and *Fire Road*, co-translator of *Look Back, Look Ahead Selected Poems of Srečko Kosovel*, and co-editor of *A Bridge of Voices: Contemporary Slovene Poetry and Perspectives*. She is one of 5 poets featured in *Take Five*, a collection of prose poems published in 2020 from Finishing Line Press. Carlson is Poetry in Translation Editor of *Solstice*. She teaches in Boston.

Miriam Drev is a poet, writer and literary translator from English and German, as well as a literary critic and publicist who was born in Ljubljana, Slovenia in 1957. She has translated more than ninety books by authors such as Margaret Atwood, Ian McEwan, Emerson, Tagore, Hemingway, Philip Roth, C.S. Lewis, Arundhati Roy, Maxine Hong Kingston, A.S. Byatt, V.S. Naipaul and Siri Hustvedt into Slovenian.

She graduated from the Ljubljana's Faculty of Arts, Dept. of Comparative Literature and English. With her family she spent seven years in Vienna where she wrote a book for children *Šviga does Wee-Wee* (1995) and her first book of poems *Time's Square* (2002). Poetry collections *Births* (2007), *Water Line* (2008) and *In the Kitchen a Cherry Tree Would Grow* (2012) followed. In 2017 her fifth book of poems, *Tirso*, was published.

Drev has two novels: *In the Gilded City* (2012) and *Restless* (2014). Her poems have been translated into English (*Voices of Slovene Poetry 3*), German (*Stymmen slowenischer Lyrik 4*), Italian, German, Polish, Czech, French and Croatian and are published in several anthologies of Slovene poetry as well as in literary magazines abroad. In 2014 and 2016 she was among the nominees for the literary award »Mira«, PEN.

She lives as an independent writer and translator in Ljubljana.

SPECIES (from *Tirso*)

In another decade of high tech communication
we'll all be hermits. Seven billion cocoons
in neoprene. Larvae of a new
jungle. Like the parentie of the Old World:

on the run at a peep. Those wired in
without qualms might endure.
Someone I see through the window
counters with karate moves.

Data in sheaves above the stratosphere, our species
in fast-track genetic adaptation. Some traits
still in cellophane; all in due time.
Beyond experiment in a lab.

Some areas sealed off.

YOU CAN'T AVOID IT (from *Tirso*)

At the station – platforms and corners, faces,
their expressions; I watch the movement.
A far-off screech. A car rattles.
The tracks go on in both directions;
a train jolts to a halt in front of me.

To keep our humanity first. The many platforms
and tracks draw us in. Below the sleepers, gravel
is being spread in a place hard to mark.
Such heaviness has no accurate measure. Arrivals and departures
ticktock on screens. I used to expect counterweight or
countergravity, but now no more.

I stay put on a bench. A man, a stranger drinking beer
at a table outside a bar mentions something
about renovations. He has a voice that could sing.
We nod at each other from afar:

things get rearranged first
on the less visible platforms.

SUSPENDED (from *Tirso*)

Our grandmothers' calloused skin
slides from our hips in scales.
We divide our movement into many steps.
Even when drained of energy
growth goes on; though not enough,
it's not a complete disaster,
for inbetween, seemingly
in retrograde from east to west.

Disparities attuned.
There's a tendency to level
fluctuating watermarks,
as in lowering the floodgates
working the pumps.

After awhile persistent,
unrealized as yet thoughts
reconfigure when they're folded
with care, as women long ago
lay linen in a chest.

When spread out and aired
for further use.

SOOTY HEADS (from *Tirso*)

She's not religious.
After certain episodes
during her training at seamstress school
in the parish extension,
she didn't want to hear
about transcendence.

But from an early age
she'd witnessed one phenomenon
after another. Still, unknowns remain,
eagerness for something whole.
Her sense of the sublime
unaltered.

In November she begins to look
for sooty heads in the woods.
The elderly woman brings two baskets
lined with old newspaper sheets.
Bent low she digs beneath masses of leaves
between the fallen trunks
as if she's unearthing meaning itself.
Deftly, she cuts with her knife
each at the root
to spare the mycelium,

sniffs at some, then peels
a piece of fern clinging to a gray cap
and heaps it all on the paper bed;
at home, she'll pickle the mushrooms

with laurel and mustard seeds
for the coming winter,

still with a premonition
--in fingers more than mind—
of something not yet known
coming.

PERHAPS INADVERTENTLY (from *In the Kitchen a Cherry Tree Would Grow*)

With calls,
countless calls
you sneak into my thoughts,
wrecking them,

your elliptical clauses
a hungry trap, snapping
at my freedom.

I'm numbed by your claims.

When I was a girl
and you my caregiver,
when you seemed all-knowing and strong,
you were barely aware of me.

And so a rift is made.

As you would not give,
you now steal me.

INSIGHT (from *In the Kitchen a Cherry Tree Would Grow*)

I see a street,
»The Street of a Thousand Puddles,«
lined with poplars.

I see a girl with a gray dog,
a pest,
hard to shake off,
then run past my old elementary school:
in a concrete yard
a chalk drawing of hopscotch
with its regular squares.

A gust of wind drives
wispy seeds to the ground.

At the next building,
in front of the supermarket,
I catch sight of my father on a bike,
his nape as he whizzes past;
he's dressed for summer
in a short-sleeve shirt;

its checkered pattern
fleeting on my retina,
the geometry
of a retreat resumed.

EXISTENCE (from *In the Kitchen a Cherry Tree Would Grow*)

The space is immense, vast.
I realize: simplicity from a simple world has been professed.
 simplicity in a convoluted world impossible.

But there's also this uncomplicated labyrinth.
In the first chamber a barn owl,
she is wisdom and strength;
in the second colliding boulders, high walls
that could crush you unless you're an stunt woman.
In the third, a man retreating. Affection freezes
at a stinging gesture of touch
in sync with the paradox of a seductive gaze.

You're a speck in the maze.

Then an ancient scent of tea
with hunks of soaked bread,
a woodfire.
Inwardly composed, aware
you keep moving down the corridors,
gliding around each bend
like water sliding over oil,
immune to the toxins, the pressures, the chill,

having the natural flair of a zillionth's quark.
A woman can hide. Even simpler: vanish.

Or else just sit on the fence for a time.

ii.

Baking pastry isn't enough.
First there's a house with a courtyard,
initial teachings, and you adopt
those teachings
till they become a shell.

Spreading flour on the counter, kneading the dough
I grow immune to the toxins, the pressures and the frost,
though in this stance I'm aloof.

Then there was an icehouse. Whatever hearth
is found by sheer luck.
One gets along.
I overturn the pastry tin and cut.

Big cuts in life.
Days you waste, days you fast.
Care. Provision. Saving
until the crust crumbles.

And then again, love. Emerging
as a need
or a snare, not so much willful,
rather a well
filling the layers: bottom, middle, top.

I've gotten thirsty,
crave some food.

Time to make the topping; outside it's windy;
nothing is known yet
of who will next sit at my table.
I stay attentive, open,
softly kneading fresh hopes.

I traduttori/traduttrici:

Olga Zaslavsky (Ryzhy)
Mario Frömml (Garic)
John Brugaletta (Michelangelo)
Andrew Sunshine (Zeitlin)
Jake Sheff (Mayakovsky)
M. G. Diaz-Cortez (Arlt)

James Richie (De La Vega)
Rex Bowman (Pavlova)
Adam Zulawnik (Shuntaro)
Patrick Williamson (Cupani)
N. Al Qassaby (Al-Hussein)

Untitled

~~translated by Olga Zaslavsky

Remember the rain that fell on Titov road,
it paused a little and, then, down it came
after tears and those words we said?
No, you have no memory of that rain!

Remember, it was under the shivering bushes
you and I stood while an hour had passed,
and the trams' sleepy-eyed pupils
stared somewhat wearily at us?

Sleepy trams that cast those backward glances,
while the water poured down their snouts,
Irina, dear, don't know what else counts,
there was music in the air, no doubt.

Hidden violins were playing softly
or was there something else?
If you have two lovers in an alley,
music should be playing, just for them.

I will wait a little at the doorstep,
then depart and never reappear,
this time, without music, but retracing
the very road that had brought us here.

And since my heart has not forgotten
your gaze, I must also not forget
to give thanks to you for what has happened,
since there is really nothing to forgive.

BORIS RYZHY

EPIGRAPH

~~translated by Mario Frömmel

In the mornings I call my mother.
Or in the afternoons, on my way back from
the mosque; the scent of blossoms rushes
through a crack in my car window.

White tree tops line the streets
like the kind words I often miss.

It dawns Here when
Bosnia prays the *zuhr* .

A day is at its zenith when Their
maghrib brings it to its close.

Time is Here a gold dust.

Prospectors all over the place pitch
their tents on the slopes of their days.

Gold, buried in the pits of time,
is running out, ever so dwindling.

I notice that the sky is blue,
and green is the grass, the soil
so wet, right after the rain.

Thus, everything's the same,
and -- then again -- nothing is.

I do not speak out of melancholy,
but for the sake of Truth.

ADEM GARIC (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

The Hereafter's Hereafter Is Here

~~translated by Andrew Sunshine

The Hereafter's Hereafter is here,
This here world: behold!
The ghosts of the Hereafter's beings
Are we who populate this sphere,

Sphere of activity, realm of trouble.
I, Aaron from Here,
Am ghost of an Aaron from Over There,
And what I do here affects my double,

Who I know and don't know:

Either this is that Aaron's Eden
Or his Inferno.

Aaron from Here:
Do not torture that one There—he is you.
Fortify him with what you do.
Radiant and elevated one: Shine
upon him from Here, from this earth.
Do not hide from your own kind.

New Tongue

From some distant tongue
There issued sounds
Like orphans flung
Far and wide, nowhere bound.

Hung up on nails,
Run down every trail.
Whence comes its shape?
From cherub? From ape?

When the others have deceased,
Will this offbeat language
Keep vigil at their crypt?

Perhaps it will become a bridge
Built of vowels and script
Between heaven and man and beast.

AARON ZEITLIN (USA/Poland)

An Evening Zigzag in the Great Big City

~~translated by Jake Sheff

Windows carnage the hell-scape civil,
Damn to brightness-slurping drams.

Cloven red's vehicular evil
Horns my ear with beeping flames.

"Herring from Kerch" – beneath that ad
A skid-marked geezer gropes for lenses
Drenched in tears; the evening's speed
Excavated socket-senses.

Pockets of skyscrapers blaze
And tunnels pile up iron streams –
Propellers steer their shrieking gaze
Into the yellow eyeball's screams.

The hyper-sexual city's pimped
Out night, to writhe and soak on bed-
Sheets of municipal lamps, out-limbed
Moonlight puked on streets too dead.

VLADIMIR MAYAKOVSKY

Sonnet CXLVII

~~translated by John Brugaletta

Swindled and lost, the race of my life run
On stormy seas, and in a fragile boat
Put in to public port where one must give
Records and reasons for deeds, wicked or devout.

The source of my affected imagination,
Of which Art made me the idol and emperor,
I understand now, charged as it was with error
And things that lead to ruin and all men desire.

Those erotic thoughts, once so frivolous and glad,

What good are they now, as I waver between two deaths?
Certain of the one, the other menaces me.

Painting no longer, nor sculpture, works to hinder
My soul from turning to that cosmic Love
Opening its arms to embrace us all from the cross.

MICHELANGELO BUONAROTTI

Universes

~~translated by James Richie

I love the songs that carry the air
water, fire, and earth within them
the songs that are clear, light, and diaphanous,
living as worlds, thrown into the blue,
with some prodigious magic
whose soap bubbles do not burst.

I sing so that they dance beneath heaven
those who will see one day.

The world is not getting older, it rejuvenates,
It becomes purer, more agile and sincere,
and when the future comes, it will still be young.

Life is goodwill and beautiful,

and art is the most subline game of games.

The visions of the word are profound
in the deepest and calmest waters,
but your gaze must be pure.

Damned are those who produce
mud by disturbing the waters

The crystal sphere gathers the rainbow orb
And it, itself, is a subtle, transparent orb.

RAFAEL LASSO DE LA VEGA

Untitled (between 1856 and 1858)

~~translated by Rex Bowman

An outpost in a field: the Russian frontier;
A single step -- and I'm out of Russia. It is done --
Yet somehow strange to take this step ...
You look against your will ... And then
To where my thoughts run,
Along a distant line from end to end,
Where everything that can replace happiness
And swell the chest with the strength of life is.
There, ahead – everything in the whole wide world,
All mountains and all seas, all cities
And all art. Ahead, all lands,
Such as the world possesses! Behind --
One parcel with the name Motherland.
I say goodbye to her, good luck. ... Now forward!
How to know? Perchance ...

KAROLINA KARLOVNA PAVLOVA

A Wonderful Mystery

~~translated by Adam Antoni Zulawnik

At sea it's great waves, jellyfish, cholera
At the mountains it's falling rocks, falls, man-eating bears
On the road it's hit-and-runs, collisions, snatchers
At home it's burglars, the tax office, double suicides
Everywhere it's earthquakes, typhoons, volcanic eruptions
Or revolutions, civil unrest, jet accidents
Mentally ill are left wild and free,
as are nuclear tests
But even so, oh even so,
I'm pumping full of life
Under a blistering 37 degrees
Balancing sweat and beer

His Autumn

It is Autumn so,
Bald patches appeared to the eye
The Japan series began so,
he watched television
There was an auto-mobile show so,
he got a catalogue
It seemed to be the elections so,
he read the newspaper
It was reading week so,
he also read a book
It was peace so,
he put up with peace
And that is but all
He is not a dreamer

Boy's March

Willy is sharp
just like a rocket going to the moon
Fly willy, fly
whilst the demons have their eyes closed

Willy is soft
and looks like a tiny beast
Dash willy, dash
faster than a snake

Willy is cold
An open flower bud
Open willy, open
The pot is going to overflow with honey

Willy is hard
resembling a robber's gun
Shoot willy, shoot
the lead soldiers are all dead

TANIKAWA SHUNTARO

The Parochial Poet

~~translated by María Gabriela Díaz-Cortez

Juan burst into laughter.

-I don't know about those things... say, do you want to come with me and see a poet?! He's published two or three books, and as a library assistant, I'm in charge of stocking it up with books. So we visit every writer. Would you like to come?! We'll go to see him this evening.

- What's his name?

- Alejandro Villac. He wrote *The Muses' Cave* and *The Velvet Necklace*.

- What are those poems like?

- I haven't read them. He's published in *Caras y Caretas*.

- Oh! If he publishes in *Caras y Caretas*, he must be a good poet.

- And *El Hogar* published his picture.

- Did *El Hogar* publish his picture? -I repeated in amazement-; but then, he is not just any poet. If *El Hogar* published his pictureoh, my! ... to get something published by *Caras y Caretas* and his picture by *El Hogar* ... this very evening we'll go see him –and struck by a sudden fear- but will he receive us? Since getting his picture published by *El Hogar*! ...

-Well, of course he will receive us. I'll take a letter from the librarian. So then, you'll pick me up this evening! Ah! Hold on, I'll bring you “Electra” and “Città Morta.”

When we walked away, I wasn't thinking about the books, nor the job or the sincere generosity of Juan the Magnificent. I was excited thinking about the author of The Muses' Cave, the poet who published in *Caras y Caretas* and whose picture *El Hogar* would gloriously exhibit.

The poet lived three blocks away from Rivadavia Street on a non cobbled narrow street, with gas streetlamps, uneven sidewalks, aged trees and little houses decorated with insignificant pleasant gardens, that is, on one of those streets which, in *porteño* suburbs, have the power to remind us of a field of illusion and constitute the charm of the Flores parish church.

Since Juan didn't know exactly where the author of The Muses' Cave lived, we had to find that out in the neighborhood, and a girl leaning against a pilaster in a garden helped us find our way.

- It's the poet's house the one you are looking for, right? Mr. Villac's?

-Yes, miss, the man whose picture appeared in *El Hogar*.

-Then we are talking about the same person. Do you see that white little house?

-The one where there's a fallen tree?

-No, the other one; the one that's right before the corner, with a grille gate.

Oh! Yes, yes.

-That's where Mr. Villac lives.

-Thanks very much –and we left after saying goodbye to her.

Juan still had that skeptical smile. Why? I still don't know. He would always smile that way, somewhere between skeptical and sad.

I felt excited; I could clearly feel the throbbing of my veins. No wonder. In a few minutes, I would be right in front of the poet whose picture had appeared in *El Hogar*, and hurriedly I thought of a subtle and flattering phrase that would allow me to curry favor with the bard for good.

I grumbled:

-Will he receive us?

As we had reached the front door, Juan's only response was to clap his hands loudly, which seemed to me an act of disrespect. What would the poet say? Only a collector in a bad mood would call that way.

We heard the rubbing of somebody's soles against the floor tiles; in the dark, the maid knocked a flowerpot down, and then a white shape was delineated, to whose questions Juan responded by handing in his letter.

While we were waiting, we could hear the clashing of dishes in the dining room.

- Come in; my master will be here soon. He is finishing his dinner. Come in this way. Take a seat.

We remained alone in the lighted room.

In front of the curtained window, a piano covered with a white cloth. In the four corners of the room, there were slim little columns, where begonias in copper flowerpots showed their striated leaves with vinous veins.

On the desk decorated with portraits in portable frames, there could be seen in poetic abandonment a sheet of paper with the beginning of a poem written on it, and—forgotten on a certain pink colored stool—a bunch of musical pieces. There were also little pictures and delicate knickknacks, which—in the corners, over the furniture, and hanging from the chandelier—bore witness of a prudent wife diligence. Through the window panes of a mahogany bookcase, the leather spine of the bindings duplicated with titles in golden letters the prestige of the contents.

I was browsing around the portraits and said:

-Look, this is a picture of Usandivaras and it has a dedication on it.

Juan said mockingly:

-Usandivaras... if I'm not wrong Usandivaras is a nobody who writes Pampean poems... similar to Betinotti, but far less talented.

-Let's see ... this one... José M. Braña.

-That's a long-haired poet. He writes clumsily.

We heard the footsteps of the bard who published his poems in *Caras y Caretas* coming down the hallway. We stood up in excitement when the man appeared.

Tall, with a romantic mane, aquiline nose, curly moustache, and black pupils.

We introduced ourselves and, in an extremely cordial fashion, he directed us to the armchairs.

-Sit down, young men... So, you are here representing the Florencio Sanchez Center, right?

-Yes, Mr. Villac, and if you don't have any ...

-Not at all, not at all, my pleasure... Would you like a cup of coffee?

He stepped out into the hallway and was back with us at once.

-We had a late dinner, because the office, our duties...

-Certainly...

-In fact, the demands of life.

And chatting while enjoying his coffee in a little cup, with charming simplicity the poet said:

-These requests are a pleasure. No doubt they encourage the honest worker. I have received several of them and I have always tried to meet them. Don't bother, young man ... its fine there –placing the cup on the tray. As I was saying, last week I received a letter from an Argentine lady living in London. Just imagine! The Times has asked her to inform them about my work, which was hailed by Argentine newspapers.

- You have published *The Velvet Collar* and *The Muses' Cave*, is that right?

-And another volume as well, the first one. It is called *From My Gardens*, but, of course, it has defects ... I was nineteen at that time.

-I understand critics have discussed your work a lot.

-Yes, I can't complain about that. Mainly the *Muses' Cave* has had a good reception... A critic used to say that I combine the simplicity of Evaristo Carriego and the patriotism of Guido y Spano and I can't complain... I do my best –and with a magnanimous gesture he moved the hair on his temples to his ears.

-Do you write?

-The gentleman does -said Juan.

-Verse or prose?

-Prose.

-I'm glad you do; I'm glad you do... Should you need a recommendation...? Bring me something to read... If you would like to visit me on Sunday mornings, we could go for a walk to Olivera Park. I usually write there. Nature helps so much!

-Sure! Thanks, we'll take advantage of your invitation.

Juan, seeing that the conversation began to languish, asked lying:

-If I'm not wrong, Mr. Villac, I've read one of your sonnets in *La Patria degli Italiani* newspaper. Do you also write in Italian?

-No, it may have been translated; it wouldn't be strange at all.

Juan insisted:

-Yet, I'll see if I can find that issue and send it to you. Beautiful language, right, Mr. Villac?

-Certainly, sonorous, grandiloquent ...

I naively asked:

-And who moves you more, Mr. Villac, Carducci or D'Annunzio?

-As a novelist, Manzoni... right? More life, right? He reminds me of Ricardo Gutierrez.

-Yes, that's true, more life –replied Juan, looking at him almost surprised.

- Besides, Carducci frankly ... Carducci ... er, don't you think ? ... frankly ... sincerely ... there are few poets I like as much as Evaristo Carriego, that simplicity, the emotion of the young seamstress who took that false step... those sonnets ... probably because I'm a sonnet writer myself and

“The sonnet is a lyre of golden threads”

“A box...

-Certainly –observed Juan impassive. Certainly, I have noticed that critics praise you a lot as a sonnet writer.

“A box full of charms”

I wrote a while ago in *Caras y Caretas* ... and I was not wrong. Our century prefers the sonnet, as I point out in a stud...

The maid came in carrying a bundle containing The Muses... and other volumes, interrupted him, and unfortunately we were unable to know what the man whose picture appeared in *El Hogar* pointed out about his study.

To avoid being indiscreet, we got up and -escorted to the front door- effusively said goodbye to the sonnet writer. I promised him I would come back.

When we walked past our informant's house, the girl was still at the door. With a shy voice, she asked:

-Did you find him?

-Yes, young lady ... thank you ...

-Isn't it true that he is a talent?

-Oh! -said Juan – a bestial talent. Would you believe it that even The Times is interested in knowing who he is?

= ===== =

ROBERTO ARLT

Extracts from **LE BEAU MOT DE CHRIS**

Toccata

~~translated by Patrick Williamson

Let's gather everything he wrote, my friends,
the verses, of course, but also childhood things,
the tickets on the fridge door, signatures
in the register's dusty volumes, let's gather
everything, everything, the fifteen-year old's love letters, the scribbles
in the air no one else has read, the still youthful gems of unborn poems,
all the broken branches, the merely-imagined branches that made
the sky that much broader, the wind more involved.

Let's gather. Let's weave these papers into a blanket, sail or
parachute, it's not too late, no,
it's never too late, let's continue,
let's complete, let's amend the condemnation
of time that wants each of us to be different
from the other, let's make more of him for him,
make us him, look,
his words are still here,
nouns articles adjectives,
this glow, this always:
he had them all, he left
them well ordered,
clean.

Minuet

To my quip

– *I am a non-believer churchgoer* –

you answered simply

– *I believe though,
but stopped attending
church for a while now* –

And now,
heavenly as a being forever

healed of evil,
I know you'd say

– I stopped attending

life, it's true, but I

still believe in it –

Prelude

From your counter-space vantage point,
controtempo

the child too
that yesterday we heard around the world

shout
through the bars of hatred

dada dada
dada dada dada dada dada dada dada dada dada dada dada dada dada

he's stopped crying now
he's gripping the big strong hand

that held his head as a newborn. Your
preceding us into the hereafter

compresses to a sigh
the fifth dimension of pain.

Nowafter, you dry the eyes
of other people's children.

Here, we will dry your
children's eyes.

GUIDO CUPANI

Desires

*~~translated by Neveen Al-
Qassaby*

I wish to go to the village

to pluck cotton and smell the air

I wish to return to the city

in a truck full of peasants and sheep

I wish to take a river path

under the moonlight

I wish to see a moon

in a street, a book or a museum

I wish to build a room

to accommodate thousands of friends

I wish to be a friend

to a league, air and the stones

I wish to build a sea

in a cell

I wish to steal cells

and throw them in the sea.

I wish to be a magician

to put a knife in a hat

I wish to reach for a hat

and to take a white song from it

I wish to own a gun

to shoot wolves

I wish to be a wolf

to prey on those who shoot fire

I wish to hide in a flower

fearing a killer

I wish a killer died

whenever he saw flowers

I wish to open a window

in each wall

I wish to place a wall

in face of those who close windows

I wish to be like an earthquake

to shake those lazy hearts

I wish to pour

an earthquake of wisdom into each heart

I wish to kidnap a cloud

and hide it in my bedroom

I wish thieves would steal my bed

and hide it in a cloud

I wish a word would be

a tree, bread or a kiss

I wish those who do not love trees

bread

and a kiss

could not speak.

PUBLICATION NOTICE:

THE BELLY, Peter Thompson. Translation of Tchicaya u Tam'si's *Le Ventre* (1978 edition). New Orleans: Diálogos Books, 2020. 213 pp.

REVIEWS:

RUMI, POEMS FROM THE DIVAN-E SHAMS. Translated by Geoffrey Squires. Ohio: Miami University Press, 2020. 244 pp.

The book under review is edited and for the most part ably translated by Geoffrey Squires. It starts with a brief, informative Preface and the collection ends with more extensive Notes, Text And Context, and a Select Bibliography.

It is a substantial and varied bouquet, offered along with this paradox: we're obliged to enter the deep silence at the core of these poems via the painted (stained?) door of translated words. In the Text And Context section we're shown two long lines in Farsi, which generate four short ones in English. Printing a poem in the original next to its English would have offered a look at line length and perhaps the chance to tell if rhyme might be distinguished or not. Matters of grammar and caesura cannot be compared with European languages. We both hear the voice and experience the light cast by these versions through mediated time and place. Squires has taken a kind of Rayogram of Rumi which develops then sparks in the reader's mind. Most are successful, lovely even as fragments, an image of the ur-image, preserving flow in a new frame.

One of the great pleasures for this reviewer has been to read these as English poems radiating references from elsewhere and elsewhere; some seem quite contemporary, replete with echoes from songs and poems from our tradition. Each page affords many points of contact and connection; readers will graze according to their temperaments, increasingly aware of something unusual coming into our ken. There are mysteries here that invite yet defy interpretation, and a measure of humility arises in the struggle to feel, to grasp, what is at first unfamiliar.

Rumi's dates are 1207-1273. This aligns him with certain kindred spirits in the Western canon such as Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179), Meister Eckhart (1260-1328), and Dante (1265-1321). He was blissfully unaware of their existence. Only one other poet from the East, Kabir (1440-1518), from India, has entered the Anglophone current with a like force.

While delving into the book I was reminded of the exclusive privileges of initiation, of

having a guide, as one might hire when exploring a stretch of wilderness. For those not acquainted with Sufism, its mystic traditions and practices, these poems can be accessed and enjoyed as literature while their spiritual depths remain elusive. Reading them rekindled a story told about a slavish disciple angered because his master's secret mantra was being shouted out to the crowd. His teacher simply asked: "When a dog runs through a field of cotton does it come out wearing a suit?" A poem such as Roethke's "The Waking" allows for similar points of entry. No matter our intellectual cultivation or emotional availability we all "wake to sleep and take our waking slow." Shifting from one level of consciousness to another is a departure from "the normal"; this once jarring sensation slowly fades into continuum. These poems chart the course of attentive catch and release. They also reveal what might be caught, and kept. Rumi (Squires) shares a deeply registered inwardness. In him (them) we have a bon companion du voyage.

The poems are numbered; first lines serve in the index as titles. Although the reader will benefit from a thorough perusal I have listed only those which, as they say, spoke to my condition. After a few immersions in the text I have almost convincingly tricked myself into believing I've been reading an unknown Irish or Welsh poet, someone whose doors of perception have been opened to let fresh air into the room, along with a faint aroma of jasmine.

#28: "are simply constructs fictions" introduces too modern a touch. "fables", or "thought-forms" are more in keeping with the poem's antique diction.

#31: "Come closer O come closer/my faithful friend" issues an invitation from Whitman, whose cosmic "I" is present here. Last lines: "I have said enough and will be silent/for it is in silence/that the speech of the soul truly finds its voice". This radiant absence is also insistent presence, an echoic vibration. Distilled essence.

#63: Can anyone else discern the plaintive songs of Leonard Cohen here? Certain rhymes ("band/command"; "breast/steadfast") offer a closure which opens wider; when a woodwind instrument is fingered shut its range expands.

#66: A lovely inversion (avant la lettre) of Yeats's poem "What Then", with its refrain of "What then?" sang Plato's ghost. "What then?" Last lines: "if the soul exists then who is the soul-mate/if the light that lights the world eternally/is neither faith nor disbelief then what"

#69: a tone familiar from such diverse poets as Robinson Jeffers, Marianne Moore, and Auden. Last lines: "be silent now and cease/for poetry is of little interest and ignorance even less"

#71: Last lines: "all dervishes are a mixture/of good and bad/whoever is not is not a true dervish//whoever leaves his place his place is his heart/in all this world there is no home but the heart"

#72: Last lines: "they said to me follow the straight path/but what way can I take since my one true guide has gone/my beloved is my way and my companion/his face is both my faith and my religion". The feeling-tone of this puts me in mind of Machado's line, translated as "The traveller is the sum of the road" and also this from St. Catherine of Siena (1347-1380), pertinent to the whole book: "All the way to heaven is heaven, for He said I am the Way".

#73: "since light is his food how could I offer him bread" proposes another medium of exchange; "he does not seek fame or renown and is not/like some princes are entranced by poets/so how could I charm him with my flowing lines" continues this quest for self-knowledge as the more worthy reciprocal of celebrity.

#76, entire: "When we occupy the centre he goes to the margins/but when we are beside ourselves he moves centre-stage"

#77: Beautiful. Too long for citation. Buy the book.

#78, entire: "You ask how is it/that ideas come to us/well think of sleep and that unpicks the knot"

#80: Its joyful chant of Spring recalls Arcimboldo's "Flora" as well as Spenser's "The Shepherd's Calendar".

#81-89. Just because.

#92: Its playful scorn recalls some passages in Bob Dylan, Irving Layton, and Philip Roth. First then final stanzas: "Shame on the people of this world/shame/sons of bitches imposters idiots//for a few coppers you can get/two or three ass-loads of these quacks"

#94: Should be read entire. Another reason to order...

#96: one of Rumi's greatest. Two pages. Worth the price of the whole thing.

#98: A nice instance of rhyme: "Hush//although we might be love's meanest slave/like love we wait in ambush"

#99: Although its form is longer, this poem parallels those delights in certain Haiku and Tanka. Final stanza: "in our inner being we have many things in common/not only what is visible on the surface/now that we are seated together/with wine in hand and roses concealed about us"

#102 celebrates wine as both an inner and outer gift. In Paris Spleen, Baudelaire writes: "One should always be drunk. That's all that matters...But with what? With wine, with poetry, or with virtue, as you choose. But get drunk."

#103 contains a shocking image familiar to those who have seen the Taviani brother's film. Its second stanza: "if on the road you see/a severed head/rolling towards where you are/inquire of it the secrets of the heart/for from it you will be inducted into/the nature of the mystery".

#104 shimmers with this line: "for reality is like water and I am like sugar in it".

#106 & #108: Again, too long for citation. But not reading them is a loss.

#109: Can you hear Robert Bly chanting: "In the end//get back to the roots of the roots of the self/get back to the roots of the roots of the self/get back to the roots of the roots of the self"?

#110 & #111: see #106...

#113: Towards the end: "even if you are footless make that inner journey/like rubies absorbing the imprint of the sunbeam/travel from your self into yourself/for on the way/the earth will become a gold-mine under your feet"

#115, entire: "God opens doors"

#117 tells us to "wash your wings of this mud and clay/and become light once again" among other luminous things.

#118, too long to quote, has something of Pound's translation of Li Po (8th C.), "The River Merchant's Wife: A Letter"

#121 sings Mutability.

#122 displays the kind of wishful thinking attacked and destroyed by Christopher Hitchens.

#121 ends: "where do these new things come from and where do the old ones go/if not beyond our sight into an infinite world/like the water of a stream which seems always the same/but renews itself constantly so where does that come from"

#124 reverses that remark of Terence (2nd C. BC): "Nothing human is alien to me." First stanza then final line: "O people members of humanity/do not expect to find/anything human in me//for I have mixed with death and flown to not being"

#126 & #128 both score a direct hit. No quote does them justice.

#130 has one line, "That placeless place", which Philo of Alexandria has equated (place) with God.

#131 contains the seeds which bloomed so lavishly in that longing so well expressed by the Italian and Provençal troubadours. In this case the soul, that unattainable Lady, is courted man to man, a riff on Cavalcanti's (1255-1300) "Donna mi prega"/ "Because a lady asks me..."

#132 begins in direct contrast to Auden's "Lullaby": "Go lay your head on your pillow and leave me alone/to wander broken through the night/I and the waves of melancholy alone from dark until morning" vs. "Lay your sleeping head, my love,/Human on my faithless arm;". The poem is a hymn to paradox and a plea for its resolution.

#134: one line, "(That encounter that meeting)" turns us to Whitman once more, a lovely bit from Leaves of Grass set to music by Ned Rorem: " Stranger, if you passing meet me and desire to speak to me, why should you not speak to me? And why should I not speak to you?"

#138 brings Maurice Chevalier's song: "Even the breeze seems to whisper Louise" to us, though in this case it's Tabriz: "I have grown old through grief for him/but when you say the name Tabriz/all my youth comes back again"

#140 echoes (predicts) the first line from D.H. Lawrence's "Song of a Man Who Has Come Through": "Not I, not I, but the wind that blows through me!"
Rumi: "It is not I who speak these words love speaks them"

#141 traces Calvino's If On A Winter's Night A Traveler back to its origins. Its last stanza begins: "it is as if/the soul had always resided in that country"

#142: Here Rumi is enclosed in parenthesis as between Sham's two arms: "(That presence)"

#143 is, again, one of the poet's finest, a twin of Kabir's poem translated by Robert Bly as "Friend, hope for the Guest while you are alive"; Rumi begins with "Anyone to whom the mystery of love/has been revealed/is no more/because he has effaced himself in love" while Kabir writes toward the end: " If you make love with the divine now,/in the next life you will have the face of satisfied desire."
The entire poem is here cited in full in in(di)visible ink.

#144 rings changes in a similar fashion as does Yeats in "Sailing to Byzantium": "Once out of nature I will never take/My bodily form from any natural thing". Once out of nature I...as if there would be an entity...with agency...

#145 has the usual vivid imagery and beauty to which we've become accustomed, though I find the line "since the how was drowned in the how-less" awkward. The final lines: "since my mouth was full of water/and a dose of opiates" reads a tad Sacklerish. "Opium" would be better.

#146: This three line declaration can be imagined as arising in any culture since the dawn of humanity: "For forty years wisdom oppressed my mind/now at the age of sixty-two/I am on the run from prudence"

#147 & #148 are worthy of your time. See for yourself.

#150 has three lines: "Whoever does not have in him/that tint that hue of love/in the eyes of God is only wood or stone".

#151 is perfection itself, ending with: "he is the soul of the soul spirit of the spirit/if he cannot be contained in one place what of it"

#152 has something reminiscent of what's written on Yeats's tombstone: "Cast a cold Eye/ on Life, on Death./Horseman, pass by." Its last lines sing: "when your mouth closes here it will open there/and your song of triumph will be in the placeless air"

#153: in two lines, Rumi demonstrates an experimental faith with scientific inquiry: "If the holy spirit were to unveil itself/the mind and soul would seem as real as flesh"

#154, like a fragment of Sappho, presents: "(That being)"

#155 throws a lifeline (a living death line) summoning Virginia Woolf: "O send a wave of nothingness/to sweep me away/how long must I pace nervously/the shores of the sea"

#157: In two resonant lines: "All things are indivisible/the world's harp has a single string"

#158 turns its reader inside out and upside down. The third stanza: "from these upturned candles of stars/this deep blue awning of heaven/a wondrous host has come down/so that the mystery might be made clear"

#159, entire: "I have prayed so much that my life has become a prayer/to the point where/ when people see my face they turn to pray"

#160: Final poem, in which a joyous recapitulation first takes then gives (expands) place. It starts: "If wheat should grow from my grave/the bread they make would make people tipsy/the baker and the dough would both go crazy/and the oven itself sing drunken ditties" and the penultimate stanza: "I am the essence of drunkenness itself/in the wine of love lie my beginnings/tell me what drinking leads to if not this"

The language enacting this charged meeting of Rumi with Shams uses physical intimacy to portray a phase of their bond, as the Bible's "Song of Songs" is a love poem to both a woman and to her creator. Wine and women in Omar Khayyam's (1048-1131) "Rubaiyat" offer a literal metaphor, a real and an allegorical intoxication.

This relation of strong male artists is here transposed an octave higher; some of its music might well defy translation and remain in the realm of the ultrasonic. Van Gogh and Gauguin; Rimbaud and Verlaine. Who knows if a sexual/textual encounter took place, if this aspect of Rumi's work can be seen as one long "Sonnet to a Heart-hole"? All is possible on this unlevel playing ground, the empathic field of the page.

~~*Stuart Blazer*

Chilean poet Vicente Huidobro initiated the creationism (*creacionismo*) literary movement in 1912, wherein he implored his fellow poets to each become “un pequeño dios.” I cannot help but read his long prose poem – *Temblor de cielo* (1931/1942) and *Tremblement du ciel* (1928/1932) – as an act of emulating The Big Creator. (On looking at these dates, it makes me wonder if the poet needed some additional time to determine what is imitating and what is stealing.)

Huidobro wrote both the Spanish and the French in the present book. The translators worked from both to create the English.

“Ante todo...” “D’abord il faut...”

In the translators’ skillful hands, the opening of the poem – I will discuss the pair as if they’re one – becomes “First of all.” I can’t help but hear “In the beginning.” Like all reproduction, some fruitful infidelity to the original is to be encouraged in the offspring (if the aim is poetic truth); in the same sentence, they translate the singular – *el fin* de la tierra; *la fin* de la terre (emphasis mine) – into the plural “the ends of the earth.” What can be read as temporal – “the end of the earth” – can now be read as spatial. Thus, the translators have emulated the translatee’s process.

Immediately the reader is launched, with the persona, into the vortex that is mythopoeic praxis. Huidobro holds a mirror to life, its space gets filled with everything and every action, visible and invisible. And those possibilities, what the Romans called *materia poetica*, get turned – either around, inside-out, or upside-down (or in some combination of these) – and impossibilities are reflected back, spilling onto the page; hence the title, *Sky-Quake*.

T.S. Eliot called the poet a catalyst. Huidobro might have preferred a cataclysm.

The rhythms of life are represented by the poem’s repetitions. Anaphora takes flight in several passages: for example, early on – “Still, sometimes, we can see...” – begins nine consecutive sentences that go on to describe haunting nautical imagery: “...the sailboat like a cross on its interminable Golgotha.” Images recur: “Do you hear them nailing the coffin of the sea?”; “Do you hear how they’re nailing my coffin?” The poet frequently calls for Isolde, but never do we hear the name Tristan in return. Isolde is largely silent, perhaps because “beautiful speech” only belongs to “the announcer of nothingness”; similar, in kind, to a Grecian urn’s unheard melodies.

In one address to Isolde, the poet states, “The mystic is a dreadful man, the man who doesn’t want to be alone. He is the one who would rather become two from fear of solitude.” And the poem itself, having been twice-born from the poet, in Spanish and French, might be the mystic. The world, too, might become the mystic in a poet’s eye. And yet, the rather pathetic-sounding mystic may be on to something, as earlier in the poem, we’re told, “Two entwined bodies domesticate eternity. / And it is imperative to kneel.”

We see creation and destruction (always married by transformation): societal and natural; enacted and described:

“The castle transforms into a flower; the eye transforms into a river full of boats and all kinds of fish.”

“[T]rees in the forest have become serpents...”

“[B]ears were once flowers in the ice age. When the thaw came, they freed themselves and ran off in all directions...”

“Sometimes I become a sprawling jungle and rove around the world like an army.”

Sky-Quake skews in favor of deadly and destructive forces, being much more cataclysmic than catalytic. (But maybe this is true to life? In his *Anatomy of Criticism*, Northrop Frye refers to our world as, “mostly dead.”)

“A drum roll descends from the sky, as if a shower of rocks were raining down on the moon.”

“A violent gust shuts everyone’s eyelids. The judge reddens with rage.”

“When the mob pounced, thousands of raised fists smashed a marble statue that was gazing fixedly at the horizon.”

“Isolde, sometimes I want to drown myself in a female sea.”

“Isolde, Isolde, how many miles separate us, how many sexes between you and me.”

“The mouth of a loved man on a drum. / The bosom of the unimaginable girl nailed to a tree pecked by nightingales. / And the hero’s statue at the pole. / Destroy it all – everything – with bullet and knife.”

If you ask the poem, ‘Why the preference for destruction?’, the poem might answer with the same reply the persona gives Isolde in the following passage:

“In the midst of the catastrophe and general confusion.../ Isolde, is that you? / Such a calamity was needed for us to meet again.”

The poem might ask you to consider whether “us” can be the world (Isolde) and the reader, since much poetic reproduction is, in fact, reintroduction.

The language of the translators is so crisp and clear, it effortlessly will transport the willing English readers today, as it did the willing French and Spanish readers before them. In the beginning, it expertly echoes creations and creators of yore. “[God’s] obsession is blindness,” if Homer is the original little god. “Forty days and forty nights clambering from branch to branch as in the time of the Flood.” “[Isolde] skims across the rainbow...[her] destiny is to be in love with danger, the danger within and outside [her].”

The many uses of Of are deployed, to demonstrate Of’s creative potential:

“[T]he horse of abduction...”

“[T]he grotto of candelabra in whose center sleeps, wrapped up in her own hair, the woman of flesh known to us all.”

“[I]n his prison of science...”

“Do you see the naked beauty in her aquarium of death?”

Of: the English language’s readiest adhesive: naturally, it rhymes with love. (John Hollander has more, and better things, to say on this in his book, *The Work of Poetry*, and its chapter titled, “Of ‘of’: The Romance of a Preposition.”)

This translation succeeds at refreshing the mysteries inherent to life on Earth for English readers. You will feel lost, as Huidobro’s prose poem shakes the dust from your senses. You will experience its strangeness, and afterwards, remember how strange experience is – in any language – to begin with.

~~Jake Sheff

MAPPING THE TRIBE O MAPA DA TRIBO by Salgado Maranhão. Translated from the Portuguese by Alexis Levitin. New York City: Spuyten Duyvil, 2021. 148 pp.

Poetry and music have been intertwined for thousands of years, from the ancient Greeks to the Middle Age troubadours to the ballads of Emily Dickinson and Robert Creeley’s declared love for jazz. In a matter of speaking, poetry has always sought the company of music, sharing together tone, rhythm and cadence. Brazilian poet, Salgado Maranhão and translator Alexis Levitin happen to embrace the same preoccupation for the musicality of language, as it is beautifully rendered in *Mapping the Tribe*, their fourth bilingual collection of poetry.

Acclaimed and prolific poet, Salgado Maranhão is known for writing song lyrics and having made recordings with some of Brazil’s leading jazz and pop musicians. Alexis Levitin confesses in the Translator’s Brief Remarks and Acknowledgments that they have been tied together by a warm friendship, an excellent working relationship, and above all, by a “shared love of the sound of language.”

Language choices, their vividness and pulsating auras are the first thing that catches the reader’s eye, right off the collection’s opening suite of poems, “Lamentations and/or Verbal Snapshots”:
I go back home trotting
on the hours

to the incurable
shelter
of the
boondocks of my past.
I return spelling out the tracks,
facing the enclave of dream,
facing the lyre of sunset.

Mapping the Tribe invites the reader to contemplate the unique things that define poet and his work—language, literature, myth, experience and history—emotionally tracing and retracing his identity sources: Brazilian, Lusophone, Afro-Brazilian, Indigenous and *sertanejo*:

I am as old as
my memories.
I who crawl
between stones and song,
bellow to the four winds
an amphibian fever,
and not even my words are listening.

The question of belonging, influences and heritage marks every section of the collection and beautifully lands its breath in “Origins”:
Redeemed by the lash and the boot,
my ancestors came from the sea,
and I am the salt of their waves,
facing what was and will be.

Levitin captures the suave musicality of Portuguese in his translation, from free to rhymed lines, from numbered verse to lettered prose sections, always faithful to the original form and flow of language. Thus, Salgado Maranhão’s love for words and their vitality permeates the English translation in a seductive manner.

Whether these poems mirror Salgado Maranhão’s artistic path, the gifts of the past, his connection to landscape, the way desire becomes loss, with every metaphor and simile, their authenticity becomes potent in Levitin’s translation. Sound and cadence, cascading imagery, fleshy lines, they are all retained in the English translation, revealing themselves to the hungry poetry reader.

Known for the attentiveness paid to the need of rhythm in his translations, Alexis Levitin has found a fine match in Salgado Maranhão’s musical work, and everything that is not syllable or sound—the ellipses, the silences, the dainty details, the beautiful in-betweens—finds a vocal presence in the way Portuguese and English become one tongue in this collection.

~~Clara Burghilea

FEM by Magda Cârneci. Translated from the Romanian by Sean Cotter. Dallas, Texas: Deep Vellum Publishing, 2021. 236 pp.

This is the first novel by one of the most distinguished Romanian poets and translators, Magda Cârneci, written in the form of a long letter addressed to the man the woman protagonist is about to leave. Her poetic mastery of language transpires in the text and is beautifully captured in Sean Cotter's translation of a woman's dreamlike exploration of herself and the intimacies of her relationship. Instead of focussing on character and plot, the novel lures the reader with vivid language and rich imagery.

FEM is not easy to summarize in a few words as it walks the thin line between a feminist text in the line of Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray and sensual poetic prose. The unnamed modern Scheherazade unravels her experiences to the lover, evaluating moments that have "an interior illumination, a strange emotional power" and "sensations that exceed the scale, a series of expanded perceptions, strange states between waking and sleeping and super-wakefulness, amazing coincidences, the sum, in the end, of everything I have truly experienced."

A tamer of words like the character of *One Thousand and One Nights*, the female protagonist of *FEM* uses language as a tool to challenge the way the male–female relationship is perceived while probing its inner layers. This exploration begins with the body, from its intrauterine throb to teenage hormonal aggressions, one enlightenment after the other, to its connection to the mineral world, the senses acting as mirrors of "what we have inside, and what we have yet to know or to recognize is given to us, presented from outside. The beasts pour out from forests within us."

The lover's observation of the body is different "a simple tool, a kind of knife, an uncomplicated weapon, an appendix to excite your mind." To her, it is everything and such dichotomy seems to lie at the core of the relationship, giving room to much pondering on how her feminine essence is trapped in "this sexualized and dreaming fleshly uniform." However, there is also sweet surrender to the body of the other, "much beatitude" to be experienced with all senses.

Entering and exiting the dream realm gives respite to the reader and mesmerizes equally, since Magda Cârneci's writing exults of surrealist nuances and constantly binds the female/male to the unknown mysteries of the world: "Because what is love but the supreme intelligence—fusional, alive, conscious—of the universe? If the universe is eternal and harmonious, then the universe is conscious; if the universe is conscious, then the universe means attraction, union, love, interpenetration."

The rich layers of her writing are beautifully rendered in the living, organic nature of the English translation. Sean Cotter acts like a time mechanic creating a pathway between the two cultures, translating with an element of surprise and excitement that mirrors both the nature of Magda Cârneci's work and his ability to produce a seductive new writing. He works with the text in a very intimate way, capturing the powerful emotions and the intricate meanderings of this multi–faced narrative.

Abundant in strong imagery and seductive in capturing the little moments that sum up the narrator's life, *FEM* is not just "a unifying vibration, a mental geyser, a bridge to *the other world*" but a remarkable presence in the international feminist literature.

~~Clara Burghlea

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