**Volume 17 number 2**

 **Ezra**, as always,urgesyou to attend the translators’ Bacchanalia, ALTA 46, in Tucson (Nov. 8-11). Registration is in July, but proposals for panels or roundtables must be in by June 20.[**https://literarytranslators.org/conference/alta46/faq-2023#reg**](https://literarytranslators.org/conference/alta46/faq-2023#reg)**.** You will never have more fun at a conference.

 We repeat our call for a translator: Abdelhak Serhane’s *Eros Maudit: Le Sexe des Arabes*. An extremely important (and 600 page) work by a Moroccan novelist and psychologist.

 Somewhat awkwardly, we also call your attention to the English translation of *La Grotte* *Eclatée*, a fiction work based on the Algerian War by the great Assia Djebar. Not wanting to call attention to the recent translation (English), which appears to be a machine translation, it’s simply important to note that this short work cries out for a translator.

 Coming soon from Diálogos Books: *My Soul Has No Corners*, Souad Labbize. Translated by Susanna Lang. Lang’s work has appeared before in *Ezra,* and she will be the Featured Writer in volume 18 number 1, winter, 2024. Diálogos needs no introduction, as a top publisher of North African work in translation.

 Note, in this super-eclectic issue, that the Guzmán Gómez poems translated by Kiran Bhat were submitted both in Spanish and in Tseltal—a Mayan language. And note that even in translation the 5-7-5 (syllable) form is preserved!

 And our Feature is *Ezra* stalwart Annetta Riley. Her work with Claude Cahun is so important that we have archived the entire text of *Views and Visions* (Special Editions tab, above).

FEATURED WRITER: Annetta Riley

**Annetta Riley** is a translator and veteran teacher of French, having taught 25+ years at all levels of the language. In 2020 she received her Masters in Foreign Languages and Literatures from the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Riley credits her interest in modern and contemporary French poetry, translation and translation studies to her mentor there, Dr. Alexander Dickow. In her Masters thesis in French, Riley presented research and analysis of the work of contemporary French Poet Pascale Petit, and subsequently translated her poem *Le Parfum du jour est fraise*. That research culminated in her article, *Sous Pression : La performativité dans* Le parfum du jour est fraise *de Pascale Petit,* published in the ***Dalhousie French Studies Journal, vol. 120, Winter 2022.*** Riley's translations of a number of poems by Petit from her recent work *L'Audace* have been published in the online translation journals *Ezra* and *Asymptote*. Riley is currently teaching in a French Immersion program in Chesterfield County Schools in Richmond, Virginia. Riley grew up in Richmond, where she currently lives with her family.

***VIEWS AND VISIONS*** by Claude Cahun

***“THE ARRIVAL”***

*Le Croisic, 1912. --* Weary of the rumors from Paris, I am coming to Le Croisic to rest.

After a trip, however short, hot water, a clean bed, are precious things to you. I’m making use of them, and, the window open, I breathe the pure air; I am dreaming, and I wait for sleep. My head, filled with the noise of the city, will find delightful calm at the fishing port.

God! How noisy the sea birds are! and the seamen, it’s frightful!

Disoriented, never have I slept so poorly.

*Rome. August*. -- Pollio is inviting me to Rome; alas! I must leave you, oh Mantua!

After a trip, however short, hot water, a clean bed, are precious things to you. I’m making use of them. Then, the window closed tight, I breathe an impure air, all perfumed. I am dreaming of my new life, and I fear insomnia. My mind, accustomed to the quiet of our fields, will ring in pain at the noisy fever of the queen of the world.

How thick these silk drapes are! I barely hear a muffled whisper that cradles me…

Disoriented, never have I slept so soundly.

***“THE ENCOUNTER”***

*Le Croisic.* -- Two boats are sailing toward each other, sails full. The white sky, the white sea, in full sun.

One is green, very pale, with her hull pale as yellowed ivory; her large pale blond yard seems a ray of dawn. She bends, quite frail, under the weighty burden of her golden masts; inert, she obeys the breath of wind that dominates her.

While she moves away from the port, too quickly for my liking, the other boat draws closer and I can make it out better. She is red, very dark, with her brown nets. Her dark hull, a bit tarnished, discolored by the burning sun, is, in the sunlight, strewn with flecks of gold. Her large bright red yard seems a ray of sunset. Long and thin, she carries her full sails effortlessly, she gives herself completely to the breath of wind that she subjects to her will.

In full sail they approach one another, and despite the immensity of the deserted sea, they graze each other in passing; their reflections in the calm water commingle for a moment, for a moment they slow their course, then the breeze separates them and each regains her own reflection…

But my eye, seduced by this too brief vision, unites them without merging them.

*Rome. Titus.* -- Dressed in jewels and silk, two courtesans cross the Suburra. The white sky, the white stone, in full sun.

One of them is fully wrapped in green silk; her skin is pale as yellowed ivory; her eyes are two emeralds set in the gold of her long painted lashes. She seems to bend, quite frail, under the weighty burden of her golden hair which a crown of emeralds holds imprisoned.

While she moves away, too quickly for my liking, the other woman approaches and I can make her out better: she is fully wrapped in red silk, her brown skin, a bit darkened, bronzed by the burning sun is, in the sunlight, sprinkled with flecks of gold. Her slanted eyes are burnt topazes, set in the red copper of her long painted lashes. Tall and thin, she wears her fully spread curls effortlessly; she willingly abandons her hair to the disorder of the wind that makes it stand out.

Dressed in jewels and silk, they approach one another, and despite the immensity of the deserted square, they brush each other in passing; their bluish shadows commingle for a moment, for a moment they slow their walk, then separate and each regains her own reflection.

But my eye, seduced by this too brief vision, unites them without merging them.

***“THE FIGHT”***

 *Le Croisic.* -- Everything is silent. I watch, and melancholy seizes my soul. I see only the sea, and I do not hear it. It brushes the dock without breaking. It is dark and has no definite color. Evening is falling...it is barely perceptible; it is perceptible in the melancholy that cuts through you along with the night. Yet the silent sea is restless. Short, regular ripples cover it out of sight. It’s a continuous lapping that we think we hear and that we do not. This silence speaks louder than a hurricane. Looking at the sea, we hear its complaint that lulls and that hurts. Its waves are born and die. We would like to oppose it and we cannot. Time flows with regularity, death approaches slow and sure. I watch the sea, its vain efforts, and the monotony seizes my soul.

Awakened, without knowing how, everything brightens at the joy in my ears: the sea is no longer crying, it is singing.

 Intrigued, I get up, I listen. It’s a child’s laughter. I understand: it’s the cabin boys fighting at the harbor.

***“THE KISS”***

*Rome. Nero. --* Nothing is moving. We listen; and the melancholy takes hold of my soul. I hear the flute player and I do not see him. The music is sweet, intoxicating, sad without passion. Evening is falling… is it barely perceptible. It is perceptible in the melancholy that cuts through you along with the night. Everything is quiet as after an orgy, everything is weary. The notes follow each other, short and regular. The harmony of rapid sounds evokes changing visions within me. Eyes wide open, I imagine the child who sheds light or darkness upon me at will. His vague shadow becomes clearer, and his pale face changes with the sounds of the magic flute. Blond, ashen and dreary, his sad eyes hurt me. The song seems to die out at every moment, at every moment to be reborn. I would like to stop it and I cannot. Time flows with regularity, death approaches slow and sure. I listen, and the monotony takes hold of my soul.

Awakened, without knowing how, everything brightens in my eyes; the expressive features of the child are embellished with the smile of his age, mocking and tender.

Intrigued, I get up and look: it’s a lovers’ kiss. Two shadows that I recognize well are standing, entwined in the union of lips and souls.

***“SEA GAMES”***

*Le Croisic. --* The sea is calm, too calm, covered with ugly blackish spots: the sky is calm, the horizon all foggy.

 Brown dinghies are anchored over there and form a semi-circle. In the middle, gulls are flying and gleaming, sometimes black, sometimes white. One of them, wings folded in, falls from the sky. I follow his slow fall attentively, but suddenly he disappears…

 This is no game! The sea buries him beneath her dirty dress.

***“SAILOR GAMES”***

 *Rome. Caesar’s Consulat. --* The slum is quiet, too quiet. The old rug, on the ground, is covered with ugly blackish stains. The room is all smoky.

 Sailors dressed in brown, sitting on their heels, form a semi-circle over there. In the middle, five dice are flying and gleaming, sometimes black, sometimes white. One of them accidentally falls before its turn. I follow its fast fall, but it suddenly disappears.

 This is no game! a cheater buries it beneath his dirty robe.

***“ UNDECIDED AND PRECISE”***

 *Le Croisic. --* In the foreground, clear and precise, it’s a dinghy; a dinghy, you know, with a sail: it couldn’t be called a boat, it’s so small. It is bedecked in blue, a bright, artificial blue, and here and there, pink-yellow spots suggest a previous coat of paint. The red sail is tinged with pink, fully transparent as a halo, like a light surrounded by a diadem.

 The landscape is vague, foggy; the dinghy launches clear, with the narrow sandbar beside it, long, precise, warm and golden with light. Barely distinguishable, in the distance, is the pink glow of the sun, which forms orchid shapes in the mist.

 But as clear as the dinghy, bitter and sweet to my awakening senses, is the marine scent of invisible seaweed.

 *Paris. Greek Revival.* -- In the foreground, clear and precise, it’s a child; a child, you know, with a shadow on his lip; he couldn’t be called a young man, he is so small. Thin and supple, dressed in a translucent, artificial bright blue, which his protruding hip stains with a pinkish yellow; his light red hair is tinged with pink; a halo of light gives it diadem.

 The room is vague, filled with smoke; the child breaks clear away, with the delicate, ambiguous statuette near him, golden with light. Barely distinguishable, in the distance, is the strange pink glow of a crystal orchid.

 But as clear as the child, as sweet to my awakening senses, is the childish odor of Château Yquem with a touch of ether.

***“HOLIDAY”***

 *Le Croisic*. -- The sun rises radiant, from my open window, I breathe joyfully the fresh morning air, quite happy with my Sunday rest. A knock at the door: it’s the mail. There’s a phone call for me; the bell rings for lunch, like at school; the church bells call the faithful back to forgotten prayer; the fishmonger proudly announces the fish market: the clock chimes with repeated strokes, yet with a slam of the door I’m being asked what time it is.

 A car whistles and passes by -- out for a drive, no doubt; for these folks, whose ceaseless activity invades even pleasures, rest is speed, and this very short life is too long for their fancy.

 *Rome. Nero.* -- It is raining. It is not raining hard; this morning the weather is not in a hurry. Quiet, the storm is transformed drop by drop into slow, heavy weeping. It is raining for the feast of Adonis and the women are wailing. Their long, distant cries are barely perceptible: the doors are discreet, the streets are peaceful, our way is clear!

 I will go rest at Nero’s thermal baths; I will meet my friends there. Discussing philosophy, we will spend long, quiet hours together heedless of the time; and this very slow life will be short in my opinion.

*Traduttori/traduttrici:*

Nelly Shulman (Paustovksy)

Henry Walters (Testa)

Richard Prins (Bin Haji al-Ghassaniy)

Andrew Gebhardt (Ivo)

Kiran Bhat (Guzmán Gómez)

Alex McKeown (Fay)

**Farewell to the Summer**

*~~translated by Nelly Shulman*

For several days a cold rain poured down ceaselessly. A wet wind rustled in the garden. At four o'clock in the afternoon, we were already lighting the kerosene lamps. It somehow seemed that summer was over forever. The earth was drifting further and further into deafening fogs, inhospitable darkness, and cold.

It was late November, the saddest time in the countryside. The cat slept all day, curled up in an old chair. It shuddered in the sleep when dark water gushed into the windows.

The roads were washed away. A yellowish foam, like a whipped egg-white, drifted along the river. The last birds hid under the eaves. Nobody called on us for more than a week: neither grandfather Mitryi, nor Vanya Malyavin, nor the forester.

The evenings, when we lit the stoves, were the best. Fire rustled, crimson lights trembled on the log walls and an old engraving of the artist Bryullov. Leaning back in his chair, he looked at us. It seemed that he, just like us, putting aside the open book, has thought about what he had read and listened to the rain humming on the plank roof.

The lamps burned brightly. The half-broken brass samovar sang and sang its simple song. As soon as it was brought into the room, the comfort enveloped us; perhaps, because the windows were fogged and we could not see the lone birch branch knocking on the window day and night.

After tea, we read by the stove. On such evenings it was most pleasant to leaf through the sentimental winding novels by Charles Dickens or the heavy volumes of *Niva* and *Picture Review* magazines from the bygone years.

At night, Funtik, a small red-haired dachshund, often cried in his sleep. I had to get up and wrap the dog up with a warm woolen cloth. Funtik thanked me, carefully licking my hand. The dog fell asleep with a sigh.

The darkness rustled behind the walls in the splashes of rain and blows of the wind. It was scary to think about those who, perhaps, were spending this stormy night in the impenetrable forests.

One night I woke up with a strange sensation. It seemed to me that in my dream I turned deaf. I was lying with my eyes closed, listening for a long time. Finally, I realized that I was not deaf. An extraordinary, deadly silence reigned outside. The rain stopped, the wind calmed down, the noisy, restless garden fell silent. One could only hear the cat snoring in its sleep.

I opened my eyes. Even white light filled the room. Getting up, I went to the window. Everything behind the glass was snowy and silent. In the misty sky, lone moon shone at dizzying heights. A yellowish circle shimmered around it.

When did the first snow fall? I went up to the grandfather clock. It was so bright that the arrows were clear black. They showed two in the morning.

I fell asleep at midnight. In two hours, the earth changed so extraordinarily. In two short hours the cold has bewitched the fields, forests, and gardens.

Through the window, I saw a large gray bird perched on a maple branch in the garden. The branch swayed, snow fell. Slowly rising, the bird flew away. The snow kept falling like a glassy rain dripping from a tree. Everything went quiet again.

Reuben woke up. Looking out the window for a long time, he sighed.

– The first snow suits the land very well.

The earth donned an ornate attire of a shy bride.

In the morning, everything crunched around: frozen roads, leaves on the porch, black stalks of nettles sticking out from under the snow.

Hobbling for tea, grandfather Mitriy congratulated us on the first winter road.

– The earth has washed, – he said, – with snowy water from a silver trough.

 – Whence did you get such words? – Reuben asked.

 – Is not it true? – the grandfather grinned.

 – My late mother said that in the bygone beauties washed with the first snow from a silver jug​, thus their beauty had never withered. It was even before Tsar Peter, my dear, when robbers ravaged merchants in the local forests.

It was difficult to stay at home on the first winter day. We went to the woodland lakes. Grandfather accompanied us to the forest clearing. He also wanted to visit the lakes but complained about his aching bones.

The woods stood solemn, light, and quiet.

The day seemed to be dozing. Lonely snowflakes occasionally fell from the gloomy high sky. Carefully breathing on them, we turned the snow into pure drops of water. Freezing, they grew cloudy and rolled to the ground like beads.

We wandered through the woods until dusk, bypassing familiar places. Flocks of bullfinches huddled on the snow-covered mountain ash.

We plucked several bunches of red berries, touched by the frost, the last memory of summer and autumn.

In a small lake, called the Larin's pond, always floated a lot of duckweed. Now the pitch-black water became transparent. All the duckweed sunk to the bottom by winter.

A glass strip of ice has appeared along the lakeshore. The ice was so clear that it was difficult to distinguish it even up close. Noticing a school of roaches in the water, I threw a small stone at them. The stone rang, falling on the ice. The roaches, flashing their scales, darted into the depths. Only a white grainy impact trail remained on the ice.

That was the only reason we guessed a layer of ice had already formed. We broke off pieces of ice with our hands. Crunching, they left on my fingers a mixed whiff of snow and lingonberry.

Somewhere in the glades, birds squeaked pitifully, flying over. The sky overhead was very light and white. On the horizon, the lead color was thickening, carrying forward the slow snowy clouds.

The woods grew darker and quieter. Finally, it began to snow. The snowflakes melted in the black water of the lake, tickling the face. The fluttered over the forests as a gray smoke.

Winter began to reign over the land, but we knew that by raking the loose snow with our hands we could still find fresh forest flowers. We knew that fire would always crackle in the stoves, that the tits remained with us, and the winter seemed to us as beautiful as the summer.

 KONSTANTIN PAUSTOVKSY

**Untitled**

*~~translated by Henry Walters*

the carp a century old and motionless

in mud on the bed of the frozen pool

the shy snake hunkered down

under talus an east wind batters

the lizard’s still life of torpor

hidden in a crack of the wall

all in their winter dormancy

near the eternal thing.

Like us, sleeping

**Untitled**

the villas’ gray spires along the lake

profess holiness, whisper money.

By the bank fierce swans keep aloof

from humble fleets of ducks in line.

The train stops.

Her voice on the telephone is far away

sometimes garbled or cutting out.

*Sortie* a sign says.

This isn’t a station. Or possibly

– hisses someone from behind –

yes it is: the last

 ENRICO TESTA

**Diving Into the Dry Earth**

*~~translated by Richard Prins*

My perceptive messenger, aren't these people perverse?

Ask them to reconsider; maybe they'll inhale some smarts.

Their delusions of grandeur are going to get them hurt.

Diving into the dry earth will scrape the skin off your face.

Tell me, how many were there? Like elephants, hanging around,

Making the little guys scared and stuffing them in their mouths.

Now try asking where they are; the jealous don't make a sound.

Diving into the dry ground will scrape the skin off your face.

Here I am at the finish. Leave your stubbornness behind.

It's better to be gracious, considerate and refined.

The universe is precious, so don't try to force its hand.

Diving into the dry land will scrape the skin off your face.

 MUYAKA BIN HAJI AL-GHASSANIY

 (Swahili, Kenya)

**The Sound of the Sea**

*~~translated by Andrew Gebhardt*

On Sunday afternoon, I return to Maceió’s old cemetery

where my dead never stop dying

their tubercular and cancerous deaths

that pass through the sea’s vapors and the constellations

with their coughs and groans and curses

and darkened phlegm,

and in silence I summon them to return to this life

which from childhood they lived heavily

with the bitterness of long days bound to their dreary existence

and the dread of dying of those who watch as dusk falls

when, after rain, Tanajura ants spread

across the mother ground of Alagoas and can no longer fly.

I say to my dead: Rise, come back to this unfinished day

that needs you, your persistent coughs and your listless gestures

and your paths through the tortuous streets of Maceió. Return to your insipid dreams

and to the windows open to the thick haze.

On Sunday afternoon, among mausoleums

which seem suspended by wind

in the blue air

the silence of the dead tells me they will not come back.

No use calling them. From the place where they are, there is no return.

Just names on gravestones. Just names. And the sound of the sea.

**Our Lady of Corrente**

Only God and bats inhabit

the Church of Our Lady of Corrente.

The invisible spirit hovers between the gnawed altars

and the wind of Penedo

slowly blinding the eyes of the saints

that tourists and antique dealers failed to steal.

God is baroque. God is like the bats:

flying at night between celestial spaces

seeking to suck the blood of men

who blacken the day with their sins.

In the dome of the church that the river sometimes invades

bats conceal the allegorical sky

eternally withheld from sinners.

O black sky of men! Under the battered floor

rats bow to the Eucharistic Presence.

And Our Lady of Corrente, patron saint of rats and bats,

between paper flowers and fetid candles

shares in the divine solitude.

O Mother of men, smiling radiantly in your abandonment

like my own mother, pray for me!

**The Dream of Fish**

I can’t accept that dreams

are the privilege of human animals.

Fish also dream.

In the murky lake, among miasmas

aspiring toward the thickened dignity of life,

they dream with eyes forever open.

Fish dream motionless, in the bliss

of fetid water. They’re not like people,

who churn in our awkward beds. In truth

they differ from us, who have not yet learned to dream,

and we flail, as though drowning, in muddy water

among rancid figures and the bones of dead fish.

Along the lake that I myself demanded to be excavated,

bringing to the surface a disturbing dream from childhood,

I examine the dark water. Tilapia withdraw

from my suspicious imperious eye

and refuse to teach me how I might dream.

**The Lagoon**

Never forsake being water,

the cradle of water from which waters flow

towards the open river and the sea

in the desert of life. Never spurn

your sovereign origin

arising from the teeming mangroves

and enemy of the sacred simulacrum

where death is a venomous centipede that lurks.

Never diverge from the clear current

that rocked you in the aurora, the radiant aura

of the ship anchored in the lagoon,

flag unfurled in the nowhere

land that is the native land of water and source.

And on the fullest and most expansive day

of life spent in an instant,

as if it were just the sketch

of the luminous play of lightning

between darkened wound and sheer wonder,

always be pure like wind and water.

 LEDO IVO (Brazil)

**Haiku**

*~~translated by Kiran Bhat*

A weak light filtered

by the evening sunset

over the sidewalk.

Dry bushes covered

in the soft threads of the birds

at work weaving nests.

The extensive blue

is a mantle made of sun

to veneer the earth.

The sun drips between

branches and candied blossoms;

what a sweet orange.

The branches and wind

dance away the evening

through the vast meadow.

 ANTONIO GUZMAN GOMEZ

**Four Poems**

*~~translated by Alex McKeown*

The gods are speechless,

time has no exit nor entrance,

history no door.

But the light finds in you

its source and you shine

In the buried rocks and the ashes

of fallen nations, in the forgotten words

and the seasons’ patience.

Here you are again, the inhabitant

of an infancy. Peering through the door

you glimpse a tree, hunchbacked and fretful. You’d like

To help it find its stability. From the soil

it draws a damp darkness that the sun

Can’t seem to pierce. There’s somebody

under the branches and so many plausible worlds

in the gaze of that nameless man.

What's left of you? Words and paths

fall from everywhere

like cards in the old game.

You call from the pit of your throat

all the words of the world.

These words, which are no-one's,

for the grand nocturnal harvest,

the black mass of memory.

You no longer write, the gap

between yourself and you grows thin:

you're trapped in the rotting of the world

Neither living nor dead. *Words*

*are my homeland* you said.

What is this lamp

which doesn't light?

This brightness gone from your sight?

 LIONEL RAY (France)

REVIEWS:

THE LOOSE PEARL*,* Paula Ilabaca Núñez. Translated by Daniel Borzutzky. Coimpress, 2022. 148 pp 148.

Chilean poet Paula Ilabaca Núñez received The Chilean Literary Critics Prize for poetry collection, *La perla suelta,* in 2010. Its translation from Spanish, *The Loose Pearl,* by Daniel Borzutzky was awarded the 2023 Pen Award for Poetry in Translation. This is a bilingual collection that addresses trauma and the layered identity that attempts to process its aftermath.

The poems are reflective of the speaker’s struggle to usurp patriarchy. Written in the form of a monologue, the loose one, the pearl and the mare are all parts of the same woman who is negotiating her wholeness, while scrutinizing the body. In the preface to the collection, the poet addresses her process of working on the collection which incorporates prose poems she had started writing on a person blog in 2007.

In these poems, she forged a persona, the pearl, and matched the texts with images she found online. By integrating the virtual space as public space in her work, the poet voiced the personal struggle and discomfort the writing of these poems encompassed. Having strangers or Internauts read and respond to her work offered the poet the lenses she needed to distance herself from the painful subject of her work.

The anger that fuels her work is a response to the presence of patriarchy in her life: “a young working-class woman to be single, without children, to sustain herself with her own money, to live in her own apartment, with her own things, without a man interceding between her and the world” (VIII). Poetry became the vehicle of her frustration and suffering and Paula Ilabaca Núñez feels it helped pave the way for other women in Santiago, Chile who needed permission to acknowledge such feelings. The poet herself is a writer, teacher, editor, and founder of a small press, dedicated to teaching and literary workshops.

The poems are written as prose poetry or journal entries, enticing the reader to read aloud. The language the poet uses is violent, angry, sexual. An exercise in forging, shaping, birthing. This natural ability to procreate transcends the biological function and in birthing her poems, Paula Ilabaca Núñez imparts her labor and pain upon the reader. The burden of patriarchy is at times the master, the eunuch, the king or the jeweler, masculine symbols that crush her spirit and use her body:

 Intoxicated from the poison left by his neglect and apathy. Intoxicated from my master, my lord, who moves without me, who looks for action in other neighborhoods, other bodies, other latitudes, other roadsides. Intoxicated because this is the last drop that drips on my apron, on my caricature, on my twin indiscretion, on the sound of the color white, on the itch that causes a spot on my eye, or a rash on my coccyx, the scabies that recently appeared on my writing hand, the fuzz on a leg turned white, gray. All for a gold heart with a missing half (12).

The speaker is also morphing from mare to the loose one to pearl. This negotiation of identities is the consequence of a rupture, an opportunity to exit one body and enter the other:

 Now this woman took a name: the loose one. And she has a homologue, who is herself, who is the other, who is all of them, who follows the tantrums, and the forms she takes to get it on with whoever is into it, so that later she can dump them: the pearl (19).

At times, the pearl is stuck between the jeweler and the king, referencing the effects patriarchy has upon women, and this idea of belonging to one man only. This translates for the speaker into both rebellion and doubt:

Already worn out by words, I lie down to think about the most recent

events.

Am I beautiful?

Will he remember me?

And then I would yell at them, at my master, at those who know:

never again will I let myself be chained to love.

Or be forced to eat out of his hand,

in this city of night

or in any other city (15).

The speaker finds love and feelings to be her weakness, where sex is used both as a weapon, a means of empowering her and providing a sense of control, as well as an instrument of subjugation. Patriarchy is a wound that “takes many forms, names, and twisted, languid memories” (27)

Daniel Borzutzky’s translation illuminates the original text, while also retaining its original flavor. Certain language associations are seductive, activating the reader’s senses: “she recites in a swarm of honeyed-up words that stick to her body” (36). The speaker keeps on making herself up, reinventing actions and feelings, relations, and interactions: “finding herself in the intricacies of the weavings, in the itchiness of the night’s entanglements” (38). His translation captures the morphing of identities, and the way the form complements the content, rendering the gradual empowerment of the mare, the loose one and the pearl. In the end, after peeling layers and shedding skins, they are “all joined in the skein of yarn which, when collected, knows itself to be whole” (45).

The inclusion of the original Spanish verses in the collection does not only honor the original text but has the two of them in conversation, two singular pieces that are bonded in their creative journey, reflective of the way the poet’s multiple identities share a symbiotic relationship.

 *~~Clara Burghelea*

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