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Letter from the Editor

When we got to the point of fully mapping out the chronological spectrum of contributions for Issue 3 of *Alchemy*, we were delighted to notice its impressive range, from adaptations of ancient indigenous myths to work from young contemporary writers. It is tempting to infer that this speaks to the good health of an international literary student body, one which acknowledges and respects past literary traditions and continues to strive towards innovation.

Maria Cristina Fernández works with contemporary Catalan writers such as Pere Antoni Pons; and along those same lines we have William Vanherhyden, who translated a short story from one of Chile's young rising stars, Carlos Labbé. While on the other side of the chronological spectrum we would find Yvonne Kendall's work with 16th century Italian dance manuals; as well as Lilibeth Moreno, who presents us with a fascinating adaptation of a Raramuri myth.

We are proud to have received so many international submissions: Joanna Witkowska, a PhD candidate at the University of Edinburg, translated Boleslaw Leśmian's "Springtime Nightmares"; Clara Lois Lozano (Spain) renders Virginia Woolfe's "The lady in the looking glass" into Spanish. Other exciting features of this issue include Sam Jack's translation of a section of Rainer Maria Rilke's "The Book of Hours" — these early poems are not widely available to the English reading public, and therefore will likely be novel even to fans of Rilke — and Katie Assef's translation of Henri Michaux's "Plume at the Restaurant."

And on a final note, it was particularly interesting, perhaps because I was born in Peru, to receive a high number of South American contributions to this

issue of *Alchemy*. Aside from Labbé, we have Amanda Martin Sandino's translation of selected passages from "The Sonnets of Death," by Gabriela Mistral, one of two Nobel prize poets from Chile. And it is an honor to offer, in such solid company, my own translations from one of Peru's most important contemporary writers, Rafael Espinosa.

I would also like to take a brief moment to acknowledge all the hard work from our amazing Editorial Staff, none of this would be possible without them. They are truly *Alchemy's* engine.

Welcome to Issue 3.

Jose Antonio Villarán, Editor

La dama en el espejo

UN REFLEJO

La gente no debería dejar espejos colgados en sus habitaciones del mismo modo que no debería dejar a la vista talonarios abiertos o cartas confesando algún crimen atroz. No pude evitar mirar, aquella tarde de verano, en el largo cristal que colgaba en el recibidor. El azar así lo dispuso. Desde las profundidades del sofá en la sala de estar, podía ver reflejada en el cristal italiano no solo la mesa de mármol enfrente sino también un trecho del jardín que se extendía más allá. Podía ver un largo camino de hierba que transcurría entre bancos de flores altas hasta que, haciendo un ángulo, el dorado marco lo cortaba.

La casa estaba vacía y me sentía, pues era la única persona en la sala de estar, como uno de esos naturalistas que, cubiertos con hierba y hojas, yacen en el suelo observando a los más temerosos animales (tejones, nutrias, martines pescadores moviéndose libremente), ellos mismos, los naturalistas, sin ser vistos. La habitación aquella tarde estaba llena de tales temerosas criaturas, luces y sombras, cortinas movidas por el viento, pétalos cayendo; cosas que jamás suceden, o eso parece, si alguien está mirando. La vetusta y silenciosa habitación de campo, con sus alfombras y sus chimeneas, sus hundidas librerías y sus armarios dorados y escarlatas, estaba llena de tales criaturas nocturnas. Llegaban haciendo piruetas, dando delicados pasos elevando las patas, con las colas extendidas y moviendo simbólicos picos como si hubieran sido grullas o bandadas de elegantes flamencos cuyo color rosado hubiera desaparecido o pavos reales cuyos penachos estuvieran velados con argento metal. Y había asimismo oscuras emanaciones y enturbamientos, como si una sepia hubiera de

repente teñido el aire púrpura; y a la habitación venían sus pasiones y cóleras y envidias y lamentos y la nublaban, como a un ser humano. Nada permanecía inmutable durante más de dos segundos.

Pero fuera, el espejo reflejaba la mesa del recibidor, los girasoles, el camino del jardín tan exactos e inmóviles que parecían estar apresados en su realidad sin escapatoria. Era un contraste extraño: aquí todo mudaba, allá todo era quietud. No podía evitar alternar la mirada de uno a otro. Mientras tanto, pues todas las puertas y ventanas estaban abiertas por el calor, había un sonido perpetuo de suspiros interrumpidos, la voz del errante y del maldito, que parecía ir y venir como la respiración humana, mientras que en el espejo las cosas habían dejado de respirar y yacían inmóviles en el trance de la inmortalidad.

Hacía media hora que la señora de la casa, Isabella Tyson, había bajado por el camino de hierba con su fino vestido de verano, portando una cesta, y se había desvanecido, cortada por el brillante marco del espejo. Probablemente se había dirigido al jardín inferior para recoger flores o, como parecía más natural suponer, para recoger algo ligero y fantástico y frondoso y trepador, clemátide, o uno de esos ramilletes de campanillas que se enroscan alrededor de los muros y brotan dando flores blancas y violetas. Ella fue quien sugirió las fantásticas y trémulas campanillas en lugar del correcto aster, la vigorosa cinia o sus propias rosas ardientes, encendidas como lámparas en los rectos postes de sus rosales. La comparación mostraba lo poco que tras todos aquellos años sabía sobre ella, pues es imposible que cualquier mujer de carne y hueso de cincuenta y cinco o sesenta años deba ser realmente una corona de flores o un zarcillo. Tales comparaciones son más que vagas y superficiales, son crueles incluso, pues como la campanilla misma se interponen temblorosas entre mis ojos y la verdad. Tiene que haber verdad; tiene que haber un muro. Y aún así era extraño que después de conocerla todos aquellos años no pudiera decir cuál era la verdad sobre Isabella; aún me inventaba frases como esta sobre la campanilla y la clemátide.

En cuanto a los hechos, era un hecho que ella era una solterona; que era rica; que había comprado esta casa y había coleccionado sin ayuda de nadie (a menudo de los más oscuros rincones del mundo y corriendo un gran riesgo de sufrir picaduras venenosas o enfermedades orientales) las alfombras, las sillas, los armarios que ahora vivían su vida nocturna delante de mis ojos. A veces parecía como si ellos supieran más sobre ella que lo que a nosotros, que nos sentábamos en ellos, escribíamos en ellos y pisábamos sobre ellos con tanto cuidado, se nos permitía saber. En cada uno de estos armarios había muchos pequeños cajones y cada uno casi con certeza contenía cartas, atadas con lazos de cinta, rociadas de ramitas de lavanda o pétalos de rosa. Pues otro hecho era (si eran hechos lo que una quería) que Isabella había conocido a mucha gente, había tenido muchos amigos. Y así, si una tenía la osadía de abrir un cajón y leer sus cartas, encontraría el rastro de muchas perturbaciones, de citas a las que atender, de recriminaciones por no haberse reunido; largas cartas íntimas y afectuosas, violentas cartas de celos y reproches, terribles últimas palabras de despedida (pues todas las entrevistas y asignaciones no habían llevado a nada); es decir, nunca se había casado y aún así, a juzgar por la indiferencia enmascarada de su rostro, había vivido veinte veces más pasión y experiencias que aquellos cuyos amores son pregonados a los cuatro vientos para que el mundo entero sepa de ellos. Sometida a la presión de reflexionar sobre Isabella, su habitación se volvió más sombría y simbólica; las esquinas parecían más oscuras, las patas de las sillas y las mesas más largas, estrechas y jeroglíficas.

De pronto, estos reflejos cesaron de forma violenta y, aún así, no se escuchó nada en absoluto. Una figura negra y grande surgió amenazante en el espejo; emborronó todo, esparció sobre la mesa un paquete de tablas de mármol con vetas rosas y grises y desapareció. Pero la imagen cambió por completo. De momento, era irreconocible e irracional y estaba completamente desenfocada. Una no podía relacionar estas tablas con ningún propósito humano. Y entonces, gradualmente, algún proceso lógico se puso a persuadirlas y comenzó a

ordenarlas y a disponerlas y a traerlas al aprisco de la experiencia común. Me di cuenta, al fin, de que no eran más que cartas. El hombre había traído el correo.

Allí yacían, en la mesa de mármol, todas ellas goteando luz y color al principio y burdas y sin absorber. Y entonces fue extraño ver cómo se ahogaban y se disponían y se componían y formaban parte de la imagen y se les otorgaban aquella quietud e inmortalidad que el espejo confería. Yacían allí investidas de una nueva realidad y trascendencia y de una mayor pesadez también, como si se hubiera necesitado un cincel para separarlas de la mesa. Y, fuera fantasía o no, parecían haberse convertido no solamente en un puñado de cartas cualesquiera sino que parecían ser tablas talladas con verdad eterna; si pudiera leerlas, sabría todo lo que se podía saber sobre Isabella, sí, y sobre su vida también. Las páginas dentro de aquellos sobres de apariencia marmórea debían de estar heridas en lo más profundo, escritas y cargadas de significado. Isabella entró y las cogió, una a una, muy despacio, y las abrió y las leyó detenidamente palabra por palabra, y después, con un profundo suspiro de comprensión, como si hubiera llegado el fondo de todas las cosas, hizo pedazos los sobres y ató las cartas todas juntas y cerró el cajón del armario con el propósito de ocultar aquello que no deseaba que se conociera.

El pensamiento sirvió como reto. Isabella no deseaba que la conocieran, pero ya no debía escapar. Era absurdo, era monstruoso. Si ocultaba tanto y conocía tanto una debía abrirla haciendo palanca con la primera herramienta que encontrase a mano: la imaginación. Debía fijar mis propios ojos en ella en ese momento. Debía cerrarla allí. Debía negarme a posponerlo más con dichos y hechos tales como los que las circunstancias creaban con cenas y visitas y conversaciones educadas. Debía ponerme en sus zapatos. Si tomaba la frase literalmente, era fácil ver los zapatos que llevaba, abajo en el jardín inferior, en aquel momento. Eran muy estrechos y largos y elegantes: estaban hechos del más suave y flexible cuero. Como todo lo que llevaba, eran exquisitos. Y ella estaba de pie debajo del alto seto en la parte baja del jardín, elevando las tijeras

atadas a su cintura para cortar algunas flores muertas, algunas ramas ya demasiado crecidas. El sol caía a plomo sobre su rostro, en sus ojos; pero no, en el momento crítico, un velo de nubes lo cubrió, haciendo que la expresión de sus ojos fuera incierta. ¿Era burla o ternura? ¿Era brillante o apagada? Sólo podía ver el indeterminado contorno de su ya marchito y afilado rostro mirando el cielo. Ella pensaba, quizá, que debía hacer un pedido de una nueva red para las fresas; que debía enviar flores a la viuda de Johnson; que ya iba siendo hora de coger el coche e ir a visitar a los Hipposley a su nueva casa. Aquellas eran ciertamente las cosas de las que hablaba durante la cena, pero una estaba cansada de las cosas de las que ella hablaba durante la cena. Era el estado más profundo de su ser el que quería atrapar y convertir en palabras, ese estado que es para la mente lo que respirar es para el cuerpo, lo que una llama felicidad o desdicha. Al mencionar aquellas palabras se hizo evidente: por supuesto que ella debía de ser feliz. Era rica; era distinguida; tenía muchos amigos; viajaba; compraba alfombras en Turquía y añiles jarrones en Persia. Avenidas de placer irradiaban este camino y aquel desde el que ella se alzaba para cortar las trémulas ramas mientras las nubes de encaje velaban su rostro.

Con un rápido movimiento de tijera, cortó el ramillete de clemátide y éste cayó al suelo. Mientras caía, sin duda, algo de luz llegó también; sin duda, pude penetrar un poco más en su ser. Su mente estaba entonces llena de ternura y pesar... Cortar una rama ya demasiado crecida la entristecía porque ésta una vez había vivido y la vida era muy preciada para ella. Sí, y al mismo tiempo la caída de la rama le sugería cómo ella misma debía morir y la futilidad y evanescencia de las cosas. Y entonces, de nuevo, recuperando rápidamente aquel pensamiento, con su inmediato buen juicio, pensó que la vida la había tratado bien; incluso si debía caer, sería para yacer en la tierra y descomponerse dulcemente entre las raíces de las violetas. Así que permaneció de pie pensando. Sin pensar en nada concreto, pues ella era una de esas personas reticentes cuyas mentes guardan los pensamientos enredados en nubes de silencio, estaba llena

de pensamientos. Su mente era como su habitación, en la cual las luces avanzaban y retrocedían, llegaban haciendo piruetas y dando delicados pasos, extendían sus colas, se abrían camino picoteando; y entonces todo su ser se tiñó, de nuevo como la habitación, con una nube de algún profundo saber, algún arrepentimiento secreto, y de repente ella estaba llena de cajones cerrados, rebosante de cartas como sus armarios. Hablar de «abrir la haciendo palanca» como si fuera una ostra, de usar únicamente las más finas y sutiles y más flexibles herramientas en ella era impío y absurdo. Tenía que imaginármelo... aquí estaba ella en el espejo. Hizo que me sobresaltara.

Estaba tan lejos al principio que no podía verla con claridad. Llegó entreteniéndose, pausando: aquí enderezaba una rosa, allá cogía una clavelina para olerla, pero nunca se detuvo y cada vez se iba haciendo más y más grande en el espejo, convirtiéndose más y más por completo en la persona en cuya mente había estado intentando penetrar. Fui corroborando que era ella paulatinamente, haciendo concordar las cualidades que había descubierto con su cuerpo ya visible. Allí estaba su vestido gris verdoso, sus largos zapatos, su cesta y algo centelleante en su cuello. Llegó tan poco a poco que no pareció trastocar el diseño en el cristal sino, tan sólo, traer un nuevo elemento que con gentileza movió y alteró los demás objetos como si les estuviera pidiendo, con cortesía, que hicieran sitio para ella. Y las cartas y la mesa y el camino de hierba y los girasoles que habían estado esperando en el espejo se separaron y se abrieron para que ella pudiera ser recibida entre ellos.

Finalmente, allí estaba ella, en el recibidor. Se detuvo. Estaba de pie junto a la mesa. Estaba de pie totalmente inmóvil. De repente, el espejo comenzó a verter sobre ella una luz que parecía fijarla, que parecía ácido, para arrancar lo esencial y lo superficial y dejar únicamente la verdad. Era un espectáculo fascinante. Todo se desprendió de su cuerpo: nubes, vestido, cesta, diamante; todo aquello que yo había llamado planta trepadora y campanilla. Aquí se encontraba el firme muro que yacía debajo. Aquí estaba la mujer misma.

Permaneció de pie desnuda bajo aquella despiadada luz. Y no había nada. Isabella estaba totalmente vacía. No tenía pensamientos. No tenía amigos. No le importaba nadie. En cuanto a las cartas, eran todo facturas. Mira, mientras permanecía allí, vieja y angulosa, venosa y avejentada, con su nariz puntiaguda y su cuello arrugado, ni siquiera se molestó en abrirlas.

La gente no debería dejar espejos colgados en sus habitaciones.

By Virginia Woolf

translated, from the English into Spanish, by Clara Lois Lozano

Clara Lois Lozano is a 22-year-old Spanish translator who is currently pursuing a Master's Degree in Audiovisual Translation. A literature and film aficionado, she often devotes time to writing fiction and short-stories.

Considered one of the most important women writers of the twentieth century, **Virginia Woolf** (1882-1941) wrote Modernist novels and critical essays, such as *Mrs. Dalloway* and "A Room of One's Own," which remain widely read and studied.

co ‘má ko áame

Fueseis’que’antes’fuese’antes’esto—

Juntase habíase’ una vez juntado hombre (hombre uno rarámuri) y
mestizo (mestizo sólo uno)
que con

liquido (uno) dicen: dicen uno habíase que puase haber puesto entonces
liquido tal a rarámuri
hombre y a mestizo (mestizo hombre) pa’que que pa’ ellos os lo tomase:

(uno cactus)....

DI-CEN no nopal no’pal era no

(uno moco)....

Mo’co’ este mestizo que moco habíase que habéis tomado—sí SÍ rarámuri
(rarámuri tu no);

Puase pues que moco mo’co verde es el (cash) habéis que tenéis tu:
MES’TI’ZO (rarámuri tu no);

Es que fuese que te hubiese gustado tanto gustado tal moco, tal, tanto decís:
“venga pues que rico que m’agrada el este (cactus’moco)”

Rarámuri tu no;

Tu no rarámurí-hombre tu no y tu no cash tenéis pues que pues tal mo’co
hubiese a ti no gustad pues si habíase si una vez hombre (hombre uno rarámuri)
que hubiese pues comido Mo’co pues que ara vos hubiese pues tenéis el cash-
plata ¿sabéis?

Pues pensad
Pensad y pensaos en aquesto:
que’si (utd.)
habíase haber habido bebido
(uno moco),
pues
comprad
to’do

Vosotros
podéis

¿sabéis?

Raramuri myth

*a poem in Spanish, adapted, from Gabriela Caballero and Bertha Fuentes’
transcription, by Lilibeth Moreno*

Lilibeth Moreno is a third-year Literature/Writing Major at UC San Diego. She has studied French and Spanish Literature at the Universitat de Barcelona. Though her native language is Spanish, she’s also fluent in English and French.

The Raramuri, or Tarahumara, are an indigenous people of northwestern Mexico who are renowned for their long-distance running ability. The Tarahumara language belongs to the Uto-Aztecan family; today its usage is in decline due to pressures from the Spanish language, but it is still widely spoken.

Variations of the Forest

No one can serve two masters

GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Emerge, hate first myself and then the mechanical sound of the alarm clock. Be grateful, bury my face in the pillow, put first one foot and then another on the cold floor. Turn on the water heater, run naked to the shower, piss, touch my nipples, sing gringo songs from the radio that have the word God in them, turn off the hot water first so as to freeze, for an instant, my hairy hide. Plug in the electric razor, splash my face with cologne, dry each of my toes and suck my palm because it tastes like soap. Open a window, feel the nakedness of my back against the air coming in from the street, stretch socks over my calves, dress in yellow overalls, draw my damp hair back, pause and close my eyes. Eat oatmeal with milk. Murmur a name, press the elevator button, wave to the crying doorman, hear honking horns, take the colectivo, plead, want, fake, pay, slam the car door as hard as possible, go into the gas station, greet or not greet, put the marker on zero, squeeze the trigger of the nozzle, fill the tank, fill the tank, fill the tank, perspire, guess the color of the next vehicle, touch the crotch of the calendar model and feel that it is paper. Three o'clock, take off my hat, wash each finger of my hand, find the scissors and take them with me, put the tip of my index finger in my left eye, feel I have something and that something comes to life. Say goodbye with a curse for my coworkers, spit for the last time on the floor of the gas station, enter the park, into the forest, continue toward the oak, the clearing on the left, leaves of the oriental banana and the aroma of jasmines, lower the zipper of my overalls, undress myself and lie down naked under the

bush—I don't know the plant's name—until the dimú come. The dimú walk on my abdomen, they build a palace and a village, sometimes just a colony, they converse amongst themselves, they found a lineage and defy it, some of them leave traces of pollen on my thighs, a fine grey and yellow powder.

Today there was a variation. All at once I had to open my eyes, disturbed by human footsteps. Amid the occasional drops of rain that fell, shining on every leaf, the dimú told me they heard a girl's feet echo through the forest. A girl entertaining herself spitting on bushes and cutting branches. Relax they said and covered my body with four hundred leaves. Stay relaxed, listen: the girl was walking nervously and suddenly a man appeared. I don't know if they were hiccups or moans or sighs, or who was doing what, although at a certain point the girl gave up and laid down on the grass, with her hands open and her arms crossed over her chest. Then the man sat down next to her and asked her to stay still. The dimú came to my ears, in this way I was able to listen to the end of the conversation between the girl and the man just before she tried to run and I noticed the flash of the scissors in his hand:

"I was lost in the forest in the center of a really ugly city, surrounded by dimú, right? I was being pulled away and you came to save me?"

She doesn't manage to scream. I don't scream either.

When it gets dark I am cold, the dimú are hidden. So I get up, stretch, comb my hair, put on the overalls and shoes, I whistle a melody I heard in the gas station, I leave the forest, the park, I am grateful, I take the colectivo back, I greet the yawning doorman, go to the elevator, press the button, feel the cold of the key between my fingers, I enter, lie down, watch a telenovela, eat bread with margarine. Again I am grateful, I put on my pajamas, brush my teeth, wash my feet, thoroughly rinse the scissors, put my nose in the stream of the bidet, talk on the telephone, wash the dishes, close the red curtain in my room, turn out the light, program the television because I know that in half an hour I'll be asleep.

By Carlos Labbé

translated, from the Spanish, by William Vanderhyden

Will Vanderhyden is a translator of Spanish and Latin American fiction. He is currently enrolled in the MALTS (Masters of Arts in Literary Translation) Program at the University of Rochester.

The Chilean writer **Carlos Labbé** is the author of three novels (*Libro de Plumas, Navidad y Matanza, and Locuela*), as well as a collection of short stories (*Caracteres Blancos*). He has also co-written two screenplays, published a hypertext novel, and recorded several albums of pop music.

Plume at the Restaurant

Plume was having lunch at a restaurant, when the *maitre d'hotel* approached, frowned at him and said in a low, mysterious voice, “What you have there on your plate is not on the menu.”

Plume excused himself at once.

—Ah, well—I was in a rush, and didn’t bother to consult the menu. I asked for a pork chop off the top of my head, thinking that perhaps you’d have one, or could find one nearby, but ready to ask for the next thing if no chop was to be had. The waiter didn’t seem to mind—he hurried off and, not long after, brought it here and *voila...*

Naturally, I will pay what I must. It’s a nice little morsel, I won’t deny it. I will pay for it without a moment’s thought. Had I known, I would have gladly chosen some other kind of meat, or perhaps an egg...in any case, I’m not so hungry anymore. I’ll pay you right away.”

But the *maitre d'hotel* didn’t budge. Plume found himself terribly uncomfortable. After a while he looked up and...hmm! It was the owner of the establishment who stood before him now.

Plume excused himself at once.

—I had no idea that pork chops were not on the menu. I didn’t look, because I’m very short-sighted, and I didn’t have my spectacles with me, and then reading always gives me an atrocious headache. I asked for the first thing that came to mind, not so much to state my preference as to invite other suggestions. The waiter was surely preoccupied and didn’t think twice about it; he brought me this, and rather distracted myself, I began to eat, and, well, in short...I’ll pay right now, since you’re here.

But the owner didn't budge. Plume was making himself feel more and more nervous. As he held out a bill, he suddenly saw the sleeve of a uniform. It was a policeman standing before him now.

Plume excused himself at once.

—So, an old chap comes in here to rest for a bit, when all of the sudden he's being hollered at...'And for *Monsieur*? What'll it be?' 'Oh...a glass of beer,' he says. 'And then...?' cries the waiter, in a huff; so, more to get rid of him than anything, 'Alright, a pork chop!' The chap has already forgotten about it by the time the chop arrives, but since it's right there in front of him...

Listen, if you would be so kind as to settle this matter, I'd be very much obliged. This is for you.

And he handed him a note for one hundred francs. When the policeman had gone, Plume thought he was free; but now it was the Chief of Police who stood before him.

Plume excused himself at once.

—You see, a chap has a rendezvous with a friend who doesn't show up, and he spends all morning looking for him. He knows that his friend crosses this street on his way home from work, so the chap comes in here, takes a table by the window, and since he might be there a while, he asks for a pork chop, just to have something in front of him. Not for one second does he consider eating it. But having it there, he begins to eat without thinking, without even realizing what he's doing.

You must know that nothing in the world could compel this chap to go to a restaurant. He only ever ate lunch at home. This was a case of pure distraction, of the sort that might affect any restless man...a moment of thoughtlessness, nothing more.

But the Chief of Police had already telephoned the Chief of Security.

"Go on," he told Plume, handing him the phone. "Explain yourself once and for all. It's your only chance to be saved."

Another policeman gave him a hard shove. “You’d better shape up now, hey?” And watching a bunch of firefighters rush in, the owner said, “Look, you! What a disaster for my establishment. A real catastrophe!” He pointed to the dining room, which all the customers had fled in haste.

Now Plume was surrounded by agents. “This is about to get ugly,” one said. “We’re warning you,” said another, “It’d be better to confess the truth. It’s not the first time we’ve dealt with your kind, and we’ll tell you something. When we get this far, it’s serious.

Meanwhile, another big, hulking security guard was leaning on Plume, saying, “Listen, I can’t do anything. It’s orders. If you don’t talk into the phone, I’ll bash your head in. You understand me? Say you understand me! If I don’t hear you say it, I’ll bash your head in.”

By Henri Michaux

translated, from the French, by Katherine Assef

Katie Assef holds a B.A. in French from Sarah Lawrence and is currently an M.F.A. candidate in Fiction from Brooklyn College. She lives in Berkeley, California, where she is working on a novel.

Henri Michaux, born in Belgium in 1899, is best known for his highly idiosyncratic verse and prose poetry (and was also an accomplished painter). Michaux wrote in French, took French citizenship in 1955, and died in 1984 in Paris.

The pig speaks

Don't pity me for confusing food with dung
and dung with bed. In this manner, without separating, I am
at ease. The anality of the heavens to you, instead
any time precipitates a passenger bus
over while you till the land and we'll have to count
one more victim. Now, I speak in metaphor.
I am talking about a destination, a restaurant called
Paradise, a limitless vineyard, and then
waiting rooms suddenly empty, from which you even
have to leave with tears of gratitude.
Such moment presents itself, without being freed
by offshore accounts with which fields were purchased
to be parceled. It arrives and was always there, seized
in a flower vase. Don't disturb me while it happens.
I am at peace, on a river rock, content
with mixing. I don't retain my own disgrace. I drink
crystalline water with my snout and shit in the river.

By Rafael Espinosa

translated, from the Spanish, by Jose Antonio Villarán

illustrated by Sonia Liapounova



Jose Antonio Villarán received his BA in Writing from SFSU in 2005. He Published “la distancia es siempre la misma” in 2006, and “el cerrajero” in 2012. He is the Creator of [the AMLT project](#). He’s currently an MFA candidate in Writing at UCSD.

Rafael Espinosa is one of Peru’s most important contemporary poets. Among his recent work we find “El Anticiclón del Pacífico Sur” (2007) and “Amados transformadores de corriente” (2010). The poems published in this issue of *Alchemy* belong to “Hombres Rana,” published in December 2012.

Artist **Sonia Liapounova** is a sophomore at UC Davis majoring in computer science. Working in traditional media, she likes to paint animals and fantasy creatures, illustrating the lives they lead in her head and on paper.

The clouds will remain clean

Not for future generations
but around my body
i have built, without being a glazier,
a transparent cubicle.
My associative chains,
which I have, draw
a deity of pain inside.
Slow inaudible blahblahblah
carved in bone that keeps me
company and then calls
the herd of humans.
The reporters can come,
the visual artists can come,
their egos in plastic bags.
With the double sale that an image
of devastation be at one time
an ephemeral sculpture.
I am inside, a plane,
in other words outside of what I
could represent as myself, as if
I carried an earring
without an ear. I have a stanza,
I have a comb; what I don't see,
pressed against the glass, is a hairdo
that is also a man,
possesses a song.

By Rafael Espinosa

translated, from the Spanish, by Jose Antonio Villarán

To the Most Serene Queen of Spain, Lady Marguerite of Austria

Margherita, pearl and bloom ascendant
Flower of beauty, pearl of worth divine.
Such a pearl resplendent
Exotic gleam, the flower we espy
Exudes Arabian spice.
Scent — each one inspires,
Light — each soul admires,
Perfume & light supreme,
Prove you immortal, of the seraphim.

Cherubino Ferrari, known as “The Ethereal One”.

By Cesare Negri

translated, from the Italian, by Yvonne Kendall

Yvonne Kendall is currently an MFA student in creative nonfiction with a translation sub-concentration at Columbia University in New York City. Trained at Stanford University, she is a published musicologist with a dance history emphasis.

The poems in this volume are part of the dedication pages of **Cesare Negri's** *Le gratie d'amore* (1602), a dance manual published in Milan Italy. The poets were all members of a humanistic academy known as Accademia degli Inquieti.

“Madrigals,” from “Le gratie d’amore”

For those who wish to learn
To move their steps, now faster, now more slowly.
With grace and lightness turn
To instruments, their sounds in harmony
Peruse this book, midst honored ones discern,
Sylvia, Nissa, Egeria, Lia,
Chloris, Daphne, Callisto, Amaryllis,
Flora, Syringa, Phyllis
With gentle bow, and then a step, a spin
They touch you deep within
Yet strokes so welcome, held so very dear,
Every hour, lovers all revere.

Cherubino Ferrari, known as “The Ethereal One”

O gentle loving sires
Who dancing wish to go
With your belovéd, where twin’d hearts cavort.
Here, there, so many styles,
Look where fond gazes land,
Your flair wins pleasure’s glance.
For good and worthy sport
Love holds dominion ‘mongst the noblest sort.

Gherardo Borgogni, known as “the Wanderer” (16thc)

At every gracious dance
Kind docent, to the sound
Your steps well measured, free of happenstance
To harp chords that resound
You reunite the loving soul and senses,
Of the celestial muses.
With no peer, you're worth the muse's song
Learnéd master who directs the throng.

Giacomo Antonio Tassano (16th century)

By Cesare Negri
translated, from the Italian, by Yvonne Kendall

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Generational

The cradle's sturdiness lied,
the breasts with their warm milk lied,
the soothing hand on the forehead lied
and the colorful ball, and the yielding bread lied.
If they promised us a party
with cake and joys and garlands,
what are all these ropes doing
hanging from the ceiling? And this plate
on the table, full of teeth?

By Pere Antoni Pons

translated, from the Catalan, by María Cristina Fernández Hall

María Cristina Fernández Hall is a Creative Writing student at Columbia University. Her work and translations have been published in *New Poetry*, *Surgam*, *Fair Observer*, and *Apogee Journal*, amongst others. She was editorial intern for Sterling Publishing and *BOMB* magazine.

Pere Antoni Pons (1980—) is a Majorcan novelist, poet and journalist. His published works include, among others, the poetry books *El fibló i la festa* (2003) and *Fervor tan fosc* (2006), and the novels *La felicitat dels dies tristos* (2010) and *Tots els dimonis són aquí* (2011).

Assumption

Straight into the mirror
you pull off your shirt,
cover your hand with a white glove,
and with an easy looking motion,
touch your breast.
You feel what you already knew:
A rumble of Roman Colosseum,
lions, slaves,
and the guttural zeal of a crowd
commanding irascible teeth,
lacerated clothing,
and open bloods.
At first you're —admittedly— afraid.
But all of a sudden, you're outraged to see
a hand so sheltered—
dishonest on such a filthy breast.
So you peel off the glove and fling it:
Now the rumble feels stronger.
It's the emperor
that just appeared
on the Colosseum's benches,
who with an easy looking motion
sits implacably on the pulpit.

By Pere Antoni Pons

translated, from the Catalan, by María Cristina Fernández Hall

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The Book of Hours

From the sequence titled "The Book of Pilgrimage"

You are what is to come, a great sunrise
above the levels of eternity.
You are the cock's cry ending timeless night.
The dew, the morning matins, and the maid,
The unknown man, the mother, and demise.

You are, yourself, that ever-shifting form
which always rises from astringent fate,
remaining always unknown and unpraised,
as unremarked on as a wild wood.
You are the apex of the deepest things—
the last, unuttered word of His creation.
The other words are always being altered:
the ship becomes the coast, the land the ship.

*

You are the Cloister of the Painted Wounds.
With thirty-two old cathedrals
and fifty churches made of opals
all underpinned by chunks of amber.
On every part of the cloister-house
your song lays a stanza,
and the massive gate opens.

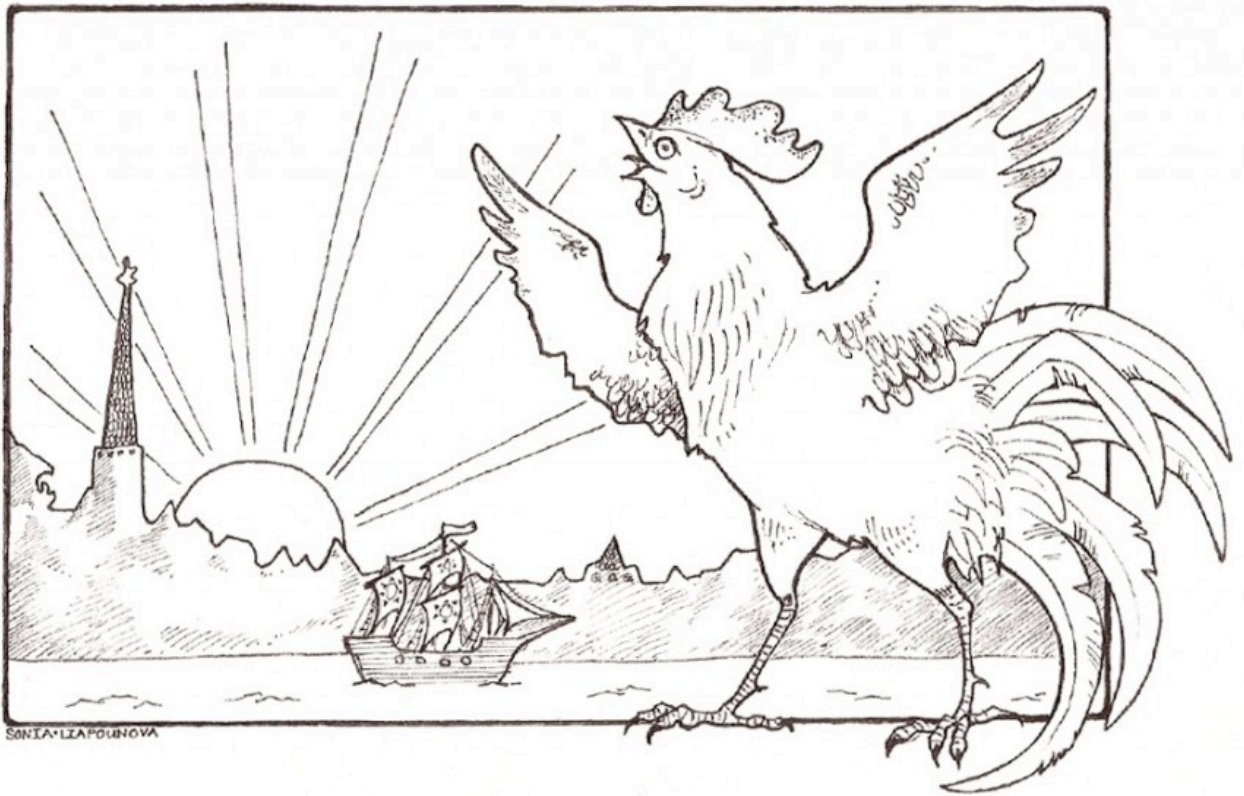
In long houses the nuns live,
the black sisters, seven hundred and ten.
Sometimes one comes to the fount,
and one stands as though cocooned,
and one stands in the evening sun,
stands slender in silent alleyways.
But most you never see.
They remain in the silence of the house,
as in the sick hollow of a violin,
a melody no one will—
And in rings around the churches,
overrun by jasmine flowers,
are graveyards, which quietly, always
in the matter of stones, speak to the world.
Speak from a world that no longer exists
despite its having once surged through the cloister,
bedecked with baubles on idle days,
quite ready for romances and reversals.
They are past—and lo, thou art.

They passed in a riot of lights
across the indifferent year.
But you, the evening, and the poets,
among these running faces,
look to be shadowed things.

*

The world's kings grow old
and will produce no heirs.
The sons will die as babes,
and pale daughters will wear
corrupted crowns of power.
The rabble clamors—for coin
the modern king of the world.
They mint it in great presses,
relentlessly do its will.
But the mob is out of luck:
the copper is homesick. It wants
to leave the coins and wheels
that give it so little scope.
And from factories and tills
it returns to its veins.
The gaping wounded mountains
stitch themselves back up.

By Rainer Maria Rilke
translated, from the German, by Sam Jack
illustrated by Sonia Liapounova



Sam Jack is an MFA poetry student at the University of Montana.

Rainer Maria Rilke (1875 — 1926) was an influential Austrian-Bohemian poet whose best-known works include *The Duino Elegies*, *Sonnets to Orpheus*, and *Letters to a Young Poet*.

Artist **Sonia Liapounova** is a sophomore at UC Davis majoring in computer science. Working in traditional media, she likes to paint animals and fantasy creatures, illustrating the lives they lead in her head and on paper.

The Sonnets of Death

I

From that frozen niche the men have put you,
I will lower you down to the humble, sunny earth.
That I have to sleep there, the men do not know,
and that we must dream on the same pillow.
I will lay you in the sunny earth with the
sweetness of a mother for her sleeping child,
and the earth must be the soft cradle
to receive your broken childlike body.
Then I will sprinkle earth and rose dust,
and in the bluish, faint moon dust,
your light remains will become imprisoned.
I will leave singing my beautiful vengeance
for the hand of no other woman will
descend to such depths to fight me for
your handful of bones!

II

One day, this long weariness will be greater,
and the soul will tell the body that it doesn't wish to continue
dragging its mass along the frosted road
to where the men go, content to live...

You will regret that you dig deeply with such spirit,
that another dreamer comes to the quiet city.
I will wait until they have covered me completely...
and then we will speak for an eternity!
Only then will you know why, immature,
(for in those depths, your flesh still dreams)
you had to descend, without fatigue, to sleep.
There will be light in the place of destiny, obscured;
You will know our new covenant was a sign of the stars
and, having broken that enormous pact, you had to die...

III

Wicked hands took your life from day
as, from a sign of the stars, I left your crib
in a snow of lilies. In joyful bloom.
Wicked hands tragically entered it...
And I said to God "The paths you take
mortals on. Beloved shadow who knows not how to guide!
Tear him out, Lord, from those fatal hands
or sink him in the long sleep that you can give!
"I can't shout to him, I can't pursue him!
Your ship pushes a black wind storm.
Return him to my arms or remove him from the flower."
He stopped the pink boat of his life...
Don't you know of love, didn't you have pity?
You are going to judge me, you know it, Lord!

By Gabriel Mistral

translated, from the Spanish, by Amanda Martin Sandino

Amanda Martin Sandino is a recent graduate of the M.A. in Cultural Studies program at the University of Washington, Bothell and current MFA student in Writing at UC San Diego. Her poetry is available for viewing at the [Northwest Comedy Network](#), [Clamor Literary Arts Journal](#), the [3:15 Experiment](#), and her [personal blog](#).

One of two Nobel Prize winning poets of Chile, **Gabriela Mistral** (1889-1957) was a poet, educator, activist, feminist, and diplomat.

Springtime Nightmares

A girl runs through the forest. Her time bathed in green...
Behold her hair blown by the breeze, trees rustling in the wind!

The sun fumes from the anthills in golden dust — a haze.
A fear is rising in her breast of strange, marvelous spring days!

Of a werewolf fierce in a dark wood she dreamed at night-time deep,
Two armoured knights and angels three she sighted in her sleep!

She dreamed of song and dancing, and every bird and beast!
A mighty sword and blood and fire! Dreams crossed from west to east!...

She runs towards reality, right to the edge of woods —
And after her a tiger-may! A May in a savage mood!...

The maiden, hot with anger, clenches her ivory hand...
Around her fragrant flowers grow, graced by God's command!

Around her fragrant flowers grow, a brook is drowned with the sun!
The purple and the green and gold! Blooming in a mad, fierce run!

Thundering spring and pounding heat! The throat-cut roses bleed!
Oh, happy, happy, happy! Now or never, indeed!...

Hey, now, lovely girl! Our time is green as May!
I used to love — not only once — and now I love again...

Oh, girl, I was with you in dreams, in glens and forests deep -
I — angels three, two armoured knights — followed you in your sleep!...

I am the song and dancing, and every bird and beast!
I am the sword and blood and fire! Dreams crossed from west to east...

I crossed the dream while chasing you, your faithful tiger-may!...
I am this whole deep forest, right to its edge, away!

*By Bolesław Leśmian
translated, from the Polish, by Joanna Agnieszka Witkowska
illustrated by Sonia Liapounova*



Joanna Witkowska was born in Poland in 1986. In 2011 she received her Master's in English Philology at the Institute of English Studies of Warsaw University. She is currently a PhD candidate in Medieval Studies at the University of Edinburgh.

Bolesław Leśmian (1877-1937) was born in Warsaw, Congress Poland, Russian Empire, to a family of Polonized Jewish intelligentsia. He was one of the most influential poets of the early 20th century in Poland.

Artist **Sonia Liapounova** is a sophomore at UC Davis majoring in computer science. Working in traditional media, she likes to paint animals and fantasy creatures, illustrating the lives they lead in her head and on paper.

Credits

Alchemy is committed to publishing quality, contemporary translations of poetry, fiction, and non-fiction creative writing. By dedicating our journal to the publication of high quality translations by students, we aim to encourage a new generation of translators. We publish creative translations and adaptations, including homophonic, homolinguistic, and other poetic forms. It is our belief that translation can teach us new things about writing and about language itself. We look forward to publishing work that is fresh, engaging and thought provoking. Alchemy is based in the University of California, San Diego's Literature and Linguistics departments, and is edited and published by UCSD students.

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